

Paul's Example
Philippians 3:17-21

Good morning.

Toby Mac has a song from 2007 titled, “**Lose My Soul**”.

Some of the lyrics say, “*Father God, I am clay in your hands, I wanna stay that way through all life's demands.*”

'Cause they chip and they nag and they pull at me, and every little thing I make up my mind to be.

Like I'ma be a daddy who's in the mix, and I'ma be a husband who stays legit.

And I pray that I'm an artist who rises above, the road that is wide and filled with self-love.

Everything that I see draws me, though it's only in You that I can truly see.”

Another one of the lines reads, “*America got no more stars, now we call 'em idols.*”

You sit idle as we teach prosperity, the first thing to prosper should be inside of me.”

Please open your Bibles to ***Philippians 3***, as we continue in our verse-by-verse study of Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

Last week, we learned how Paul was perfectly imperfect.

Perfected in the context of the previous week's passage means mature. Paul was mature but he was not done maturing in Christ.

With the words, “*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected*”, Paul made it clear that he was not **satisfied** with the spiritual things he had already achieved for Christ.

Paul instructed his readers to forget the past and serve the Lord.

Paul also said, “*Therefore, let us as many as are mature, have this mind.*”

Those who are mature will have the same mind as other mature Christians and if they do not, Paul said the Lord would reveal the **necessity** of becoming like-minded.

When we grow in Christ, we will automatically change.

Growth is at the very center of our Christian lives. In Christianity, you are either moving forward or you are backsliding. There is **no neutral** in Christianity.

Pressing on means we don't give up! When we realize how loved we are and how much Christ has done, we will ***press on***.

Today, Paul instructs his readers to follow his example and note others who follow it as well, since our true citizenship is in heaven.

I. An example worth following.

Read *Philippians 3:17*

Paul had been teaching throughout this epistle, for his readers to have a singular focus, just as Paul himself had with the mind and attitude of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

A Christian's main focus and energy should be knowing Jesus and making Him known to others. One of the main ways we can make Jesus known is by our **example** to others.

When a child looks up to a parent or other role model, many times they will imitate the things they see within that person.

When someone mimics a good attribute about someone else, this is how positive behaviors become contagious and are passed on.

Can you think of a time in your life where you looked up to a certain role model and mimicked their behavior?

Someone has said, *“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.*

To imitate someone is to pay the person a genuine compliment, often an unintended compliment.”

When we claim to know Jesus personally, whether we want to be an example or not, we are a witness to those around us, some for good and some not so good.

Acts 1:8 you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. NKJV

What kind of Jesus do those in your sphere of influence, see?

This is why Paul says to follow his example and note others who follow his example as well.

The words, “*Note those who so walk*”, literally mean **to mark** those who so walk, and it means to fix your attention on something with keen interest so, you can learn from them.

Rodney Adkins has a song titled, “Watching you”. Some of the lyrics say, “*He said I've been watching you dad, ain't that cool, I'm your buckaroo, I wanna be like you, and eat all my food and grow as tall as you are.*

We got cowboy boots and camo pants, yeah we're just alike, hey ain't we dad.

I wanna do everything you do so, I've been watching you.”

It is a high responsibility to ask another person to pattern their life after yours. Imagine the **accountability** to the Lord someone has when they instruct a person to follow their example.

We have a responsibility to live as examples of Christ.

The Apostle Paul is not with us today, but his words are as true today as they were back then, when he wrote this letter.

? Who are your examples or influencers in life?

As Toby Mac would say, “*America got no more stars, now we call 'em idols.*”

In this Instagram influencer world we live in, we should look to people who follow Paul's example rather than Kim Kardashian.

Who do you want to be like?

Who do you spend the most time with?

What attracts you to those people?

Chuck Smith has said, "*Water seeks its own level*", i.e., you cannot grow to a higher level in Christ if you only spend time with immature or worldly people.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

We are called to resemble our Heavenly Father so when we act according to our new **nature** as children of God, we are imitating Him.

Now, listen to how Paul describes those who are enemies of the cross.

II. Heading for destruction.

Read *Philippians 3:18-19*

We have learned several times that the *Book of Philippians* is the **epistle of joy**, but here, Paul was weeping because there were many enemies of the cross, who didn't follow his example.

But with these two verses, there are two schools of thought about who Paul was addressing.

Some say Paul was directly speaking about the Judaizers.

Warren Wiersbe said, “*The Judaizers were the “enemies of the cross of Christ” in that they **added** the law of Moses to the work of redemption that Christ wrought on the cross.*” (Wiersbe)

Paul said in *Galatians 2:21* ***I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.*** NKJV

Notice, that Paul said of these men, “***Whose end is destruction***”.

Ephesians 2:8 tells us that salvation is obtained by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, and not by works. If anyone adds work to salvation, they are actually enemies of the cross.

The Judaizers opposed Paul’s declaration about freedom in Christ through grace.

The commentators who believe Paul was addressing the Judaizers say, “***whose god is their belly***” is a direct reference to Jewish dietary laws.

Wiersbe said, “*Their obedience to the OT dietary laws would make a god out of the belly, and their emphasis on circumcision would amount to glorying in what they ought to be ashamed.*

These men were not spiritually minded; they were earthly minded.

They were holding on to earthly rituals and beliefs that God had given to Israel, and they were opposing the heavenly blessings that the Christian has in Christ.”

But then some commentators believe Paul was addressing a **different group** than the *Judaizers*.

Some commentators say the people Paul was addressing were the polar opposite of the legalists, i.e., people who were using grace as a license to sin while **indulging** the flesh.

Philippians 3:19 in the NLT says, ***“Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.”***

“Their god is their appetite,”

“A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Philippians,” says, ***“in some languages, this focus can best be brought out by reversing the clause order, thus “their bodily desires are their god”***

Richard Cimino said, ***“Your god is that which shapes your wants and desires.”***

“Whose glory is in their shame”, demonstrates the misplaced **priorities** of these folks who gloried in things they should have been ashamed of and denied the power of the Cross.

Some commentators say Paul was brokenhearted by the way some professing Christians were conducting themselves and did not have the mind of Christ.

Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. NKJV

Guzik said, “*Paul had to contend with people like this in his first letter to the **Corinthians** and again in his letter to the **Romans**.*”

“Some thought that as long as your soul was saved, it didn’t matter what you did with your body.”

Notice, “***They are the enemies of the cross of Christ***”

The Cross is not just an abstract symbol, rather it is the ultimate demonstration of God’s love for the people He created who had rejected and rebelled against Him.

The Cross is the actual place where Jesus died for our sins, taking the Father’s wrath against sin and paying the debt we owed and could not pay.

Paul’s heart was broken because there were professing believers whose examples were not reaching a lost and broken world because the believers looked just like the world.

Notice, “***Who set their mind on earthly things***”.

The Cross demonstrates the love of God, and the empty tomb demonstrates the ultimate **transforming** power of God for lost sinners.

To be “spiritually minded” does not mean someone has to be impractical and mystical.

To be “spiritually minded” means to look at everything in this life from heaven’s point of view.

These professing believers were living as enemies of the redeeming work of the Cross, with their ungodly examples.

Enemies of the Cross does not mean the physical Cross, it means these people are enemies of the truth that Jesus made atonement on the cross and its **ongoing** power to affect our lives.

Paul wept over the people who were living as if life here on Earth, was the only life they would ever live, and all that mattered to these people was their personal pleasure.

III. Our true transformation.

Read *Philippians 3:20-21*

For our citizenship is in heaven

The Philippians valued their Roman citizenship, and they were under Roman laws and customs.

Christians are told in scripture that we are citizens of Heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. NKJV

We learned this when we studied *Philippians 1*. Paul taught the saints at Philippi that they were serving in a foreign land, **representing** the King and the Kingdom of heaven.

The King of Heaven has a message that needs to be delivered, and Paul said **believers** in Christ are to deliver that message as though God were pleading through them.

Ambassadors speak for the King, who sent them into the foreign land, where they temporarily reside.

Ambassadors do not speak with their own authority, or with their own opinions. Ambassadors are sent with a message and a mission to represent their home while visiting another land.

Ambassadors are representatives who remember the honor and reputation of their homeland with their **conduct**.

William Barclay said, *“We have our home in heaven, and here on earth, we are a colony of heaven’s citizens.” Paul is saying:*

“Just as the Roman colonists never forgot that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.”

Notice, ***“From which we also eagerly wait for the Savior”***.

David Guzik said, *“Savior was a title given to Caesars.*

In 48 B.C. Julius Caesar was declared to be “the universal savior of mankind.”

It then became a common title for the ruling Caesar. Paul means something when he applies the title to Jesus in the context of citizenship. The title Lord was also applied to Caesars.

It wasn’t long after the time of Paul that Christians were martyred for refusing to call Caesar Lord, claiming that Jesus was the only Lord.”

? Are you eagerly waiting for Jesus to return and take us home?

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

Hebrews 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. NKJV

This life is temporary, and we need to be ever so mindful that the Lord is coming back soon. Those who have a close relationship with Him anticipate His soon return.

If this world is all there is, then as Paul would say, we are living our lives in vain.

We should have eager anticipation of Christ's return and be excited for the life we will have in heaven with Him.

But notice what Jesus wants to do with you as you eagerly wait for His return...

vs. 21, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.

Several weeks ago, we studied ***Philippians 2***, where God became one of us and we discussed the time Jesus was transfigured on the Mountain.

Transfigured, (“*metamorphoo*” in the Greek), is where we get our word metamorphosis, and it means to be changed in structure or composition, in a manner that is visible to others.

It is the same word used when we see the change of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. When Jesus left heaven, God placed Himself into a tent of humanity, but He never ceased to be God.

Once we are saved, the Lord wants to transform us as well.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

J. B. Phillips translates *Romans 12:2* as “***Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold any longer.***”

Jesus can and will transform His children into beautiful creations in Christ, something no person can do on their own.

The Greek verb “*metamorphoo*” is used in the present imperative meaning, being **continually transformed**.

Transformation is an invisible process that Christians go through as a maturity process and spiritual change into the image of Christ, by the Spirit.

John said in ***1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. NKJV***

As we are transformed, we don’t see the end of the metamorphosis, but we know when Jesus is fully manifest, we will appear with Him, and resemble Him with a glorified body.

Colossians 3:3, For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. NKJV

This Transfiguration teaches us so many things for our personal transformation, as well as teaching us who Jesus really is.

Our personal transformation begins when we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and will be completed when we arrive in Glory.

Metamorphoo emphasizes a total change from the inside out, so unlike the butterfly, a Christian doesn't physically look different on the outside, they are completely different on the inside.

1 Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed —

1 Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." NKJV

Because Jesus truly is the Glorification of God in the flesh, we must worship and obey Him.

Notice, “*According to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself*”.

This is possible only because the Lord is all-powerful!

Jesus can subdue all things to Himself and accomplish something as amazing as the resurrection of our bodies the same way He was resurrected.

F.B. Meyers said, “*Jesus really can subdue all things.*

“There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you...

*“But if you will hand over the **conflict** to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will bring them under His strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can.”* (Meyer)

IV. Practical Application.

It is not what you profess, but what you believe, that affects how you live.

We all have predetermined beliefs about the Lord and ourselves that keep us from changing. We need to learn the truth about the Lord and the truth of who He says we are, if we are in Christ.

Once we have correct thinking and realize who we are in Christ, then we should represent Him to a lost and hurting world.

A Christian's main focus and energy should be knowing Jesus and making Him known to others. One of the main ways we can make Jesus known is by our example to others.

C. H. Spurgeon said, *“What are we sent into the world for?”*

Is it not that we may keep men in mind of God, whom they are most anxious to forget?

If we are imitators of God, as dear children, they will be compelled to recollect that there is a God, for they will see his character reflected in ours.

I have heard of an atheist who said he could get over every argument except the example of his godly mother: he could never answer that.”

Sin left you orphaned in this world, but God sent Jesus to pay for your sins so He could adopt you. Imitating God is simply a part of living out our adoption as a new creation in Christ.

Creation can reflect the creative wisdom and power of God but, only a **redeemed** person can imitate the image of God's infinite, compassionate love.

As a new creation in Christ, we share in the Lord's Glory

When we are living in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, we then can imitate God and walk in His love.

As we imitate our Father, the lost world will want to be adopted into His family as well. So, walk in love, imitating your Father!