

***“Paul's Letter to the Philippians — ‘The Witness of the Apostle Paul —
Enemies of the Cross’”***

Review:

- ***We are now in the very heart of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Remember those very important chapter 3 verses, and the one we focused on most deliberately, verse 9, where he states his goal so carefully:***

Phil. 3:9 . . . and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of [the] law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith

- ***These words “my own righteousness, which is of [the] law”, have such a critical role in Paul's teaching here. As we have already seen, the apostle of the Gentiles is speaking directly into the very heart of legalism here as he often does. For the issue of law versus grace is at the heart of his message and the enemy does everything he can to infect the heart of believers with the dangerous doctrines of religion and of legal, works-oriented requirements for access and fellowship with Almighty God.***

- ***So where then do we stand? When we have like Paul cast away all things “legal” and the righteousness that comes from this, what do we have left?***

The sure promise of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ is supposed to be our motivator and with pureness of motive we are then to live this life to the fullest enshrouded in the light and glory of the liberty that we find only in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

- ***Last Time - Our Highest Calling — To Be Found “in Christ Jesus”. I trust that by now we are all beginning to see more clearly what these few but most powerful works mean. He goes on in this chapter to explain this further in this way:***

Phil. 3:12-14

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

- ***We should not miss the race analogy in these verses, for it is directly relevant to the apostle's teaching here. Our lives as believers are compared to that of runners in a life-long race.***

Do we hear these words?

- ***The goal of the race and the “mind-set” needed for victory are all important as they always are in every sporting event.***
- ***Don't look back or to the side, focus and much endurance will be required. Paul's words here “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” are so relevant to this issue.***
- ***It was this specific “prize” or reward that Paul looked so earnestly for and so deeply anticipated. This was for him very special indeed and his expectations were strong and continuing. He counted it a great and enduring privilege to assume for himself always the mind-set of our Lord Jesus Christ. He continues now in chapter three with an emphasis on “perfection”:***

[READ] Phil. 3:15-17

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

- ***Paul is writing here of “perfection” in an entirely different sense, as opposed to perdition. This is a dispensationally distinctive and very important indeed. The next verses will make this so clear. In the end it will come down to “imitating Paul” as you might have anticipated. “Perfection” and “Perdition” are opposites. The contrast between the two is stark, indicating a fundamental and enduring reordering on the one hand, and an unraveling, disintegration or dissolution on the other.***

This is the theme of our study today:

Today's Scripture:

Phil. 3:17-21

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end [is] destruction, whose God [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Our Outline Today:

- ***Paul's Imitators are Exhorted to Have Much Discernment (verse 17)***
- ***Those Minding Earthly Things Should Expect "Perdition" (verses 18-19)***
- ***Those with a Heavenly Hope as A Constant Goal Should Expect Perfection (verse 20)***
- ***The Winners of the Great Race Have A Special Blessing Waiting for Them (verse 21)***

I. Paul's Imitators are Exhorted to Have Much Discernment:

[READ] Phil. 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, **and mark** them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

- ***The apostle's exhortation here is in its essence two fold, to have enough "discernment" on the one hand, that we might follow or imitate him, and secondly, to "mark" those that are doing the same.***
 - ***How many have this discernment? The false teachers are everywhere and how are we to know what it even means to "follow" him? There seems to be such confusion regarding this with so many others demanding that we all should be following them instead.***

- *Close study of Paul's letters is to be our constant occupation, and separation from those not following Paul will always be critically important.*
- *There is great dispensational significance to this. For the central question concerning our "walk" must always be, is it Pauline. Beyond that, everything is unimportant. Those diminishing Paul's distinctive calling, message, and ministry should be noted and as he writes here, "marked". They may indeed lead us astray if we are not very careful.*
 - *The issue as always is simply this: what is God doing today, under grace, and how is that to be distinguished from what he was doing before in other dispensational frameworks?*
- *So the heart ("crux") of the issue here comes down simply to what we are "minding" and verses 18 & 19 say so powerfully what that truly is. And, do not forget that we must never forget the continuing light of his teaching already on the profound distinction between law and grace and the corresponding difference between legal works and the fruit of righteousness under grace.*

II. Those Minding Earthly Things Should Expect "Perdition":

[READ] Phil. 3:18-19

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end [is] destruction, whose God [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

- *Verses 18 & 19 must be taken together or we will miss most of Paul's meaning. The point he is making has to do PRIMARILY with ones "walk" and its consistency with the principles of God's powerful and always sufficient grace.*
- *"Enemies of the cross": He will now explain with these words, "enemies of the cross", what the real issue is. It is all about having the wrong "mind-set", so often referred to here in this letter. That wrong mind-set will lead, he writes here, to varying degrees of inconsistency between one's life and one's heavenly calling as a*

believer. We are under the abundance of grace and not law and the two “rules” cannot mix without each being essentially changed.

- **“whose end is destruction”: This is often translated as “perdition” also - these are fleshly things - not at all “heavenly” - “earthly” things**
 - **The Gk. Word: “ἀπώλεια”: destruction, unraveling, missing the mark**
- **This is all about two radically distinct and different courses or directions in life: one leads to destruction and unraveling whether it seems that way or not. He promises that here. The other leads to what he calls “perfection”, or reaching the desired and appointed end described in detail earlier in the letter and about to be summarized here in verse 20. The one is based only on what is seen. The other on what is not seen. The one is temporal. The other is eternal. The one is by faith (plus works?), the other by the faith of Christ alone. The two are so very, very different.**
 - **“not my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Jesus Christ”**
 - **So much down through the ages and today was very religious and even went by the name “christian”. This has ever been works-oriented and NOT about grace and the finished work of Christ. Sacraments, priestly duties, and the rule of authority, not liberty have been its keynotes.**
- **We must also compare this with chapter 1’s reference to those that preached Christ with improper motivations.**
 - **There are differences between those warned of in chapter 1 and these here:**
 - **One preaches the true gospel, the other does not**
 - **Paul still is able to glory in the one, and not the other**
 - **One lives (walks) according to grace but the other does not**
 - **One promotes a better life now rather than a glory yet to come.**
 - **One has perdition and destruction awaiting and the other may not for reform is still possible**

- *One is compromised while the other is corrupt and beyond reform*

What would Paul say in response if he were alive today?

1 Tim. 6:9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

- *“ . . . will be rich ” speaks volumes. This is to be carnal and probably worldly indeed . . . seeking earthly things and not looking forward with anticipation to heavenly glory with its expected rewards. Our next verse sums it all up as the choice is between perfection and perdition:*
- *Conclusion: It is so important to keep our focus on the goal set before us. That means we need to turn away often from those that name Christ but who refuse the riches of his grace and continue clinging to this world and its passing glories.*

III. Those with a Heavenly Hope as A Constant Goal Should Expect Perfection:

- *Now for the good we should be seeking as grace believers and which the apostle calls “perfection”:*

[READ] Phil. 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

- *“our conversation”: More than “manner of life or living” is implied here, rather “citizenship”. And that is supposed to inspire a way of life far above what it might have been otherwise.*
- *What are the many implications of “citizenship”?*
 - *Well, the bottom line is that citizens are not aliens. Nor should they live as aliens.*
 - *So this is not a matter of morality (alone). But there is a qualitative difference and a much different and higher standard is implied here.*
 - *The morality should be there, of course, but it should be fruit born of a healthy tree, and not merely a legal*

compliance the religious requirement or expectation. If it is the latter it will be one's own righteousness every time, Paul has demonstrated in his letters.

- *Normally speaking good fruit trees bear good fruit. There may be dry seasons and bad fruit-bearing years, but overall the harvest will be plentiful.*
- *What about all of our other hopes and dreams? There are clearly some serious questions here. Are all earthly hopes and dreams vain, without a true and godly purpose? Paul does write about this in his letters, for example, in matters of marriage and family, business, personal finances, etc.*
 - *But we are truly citizens of a heavenly realm. Nevertheless, we are also “aliens and strangers” here on this earth. It is when those tables are turned that we are in the trouble the apostle is writing about here. But in this earthly realm we do have responsibilities before God and man and our lives are to be made of “whole cloth”, not a compartmentalized kind of quilting material, and followers or imitators of him as he is of Christ Jesus.*
- *What is “our conversation”? It is in heaven and not on earth!! Our hope is in him and in no one else. This affects the entire fabric of our lives.*

IV. The Winners of the Great Race Have A Special Blessing Waiting for Them:

[READ] Phil. 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

- *This is a promise given in the future tense. For whom is it written? Those who are like Paul because they are imitating him.*
- *Our confidence is to be like Paul's: God's resurrection power will accomplish the final transformation well-suited us for heaven's glory. This is to be our motivator, the same as it was for Christ himself: “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, despised the shame . . .”*

Our motives are to be as pure as Christ's were. We seek now not for

health and wealth now as something to be grasped onto firmly and held on to no matter what, but as what is given as a free gift (or removed, according to the Lord's perfect will). Our real focus ought always to be on the eternal glory yet to come.

- ***Paul is quite confident here. His hope is real. Is yours? Is mine? We must take the Word as our spiritual food so that the flame of spiritual desire for eternal reward is so bright that we are changed day by day as we continue to redeem the time. NOW!***

1 Thess. 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusions & Application: