

## Enemies of the Cross

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**Php 3:13** 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,

**Php 3:14** I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

**Php 3:15** 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.

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**Php 3:16** Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

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

**Php 3:18** (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:

**Php 3:19** Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

God's people who take the time to really think about their conversion, their security in Christ, and the certainty of eternal salvation do not treat this privilege as though everything else about their life is unimportant and does not figure into the scheme. According to Paul here in our text, the very knowledge itself should inspire believers to rise to the high privilege. The very description he gives of his own attitude about it gives us a word picture of one who turns away from the shame and life of the past, sees the future as an upward spiritual climb and a kind of challenge to excel as a competitor aiming for a great prize. He then strongly states that everybody who is mature in Christ should have the same attitude about it. He then (**vv. 16-17**) points out that some believers may not have come to this level of understanding or commitment about their new life in Christ, but admonishes those who have not to at least walk according to the spiritual ethics or principles that they have already understood (v. 16). Now, this bit of advice is a strong argument for each one of us to not violate our own spiritual rules by living a more carnal life than we know we should live. We may be self-condemning our own life styles when we have to admit, "I know I should...."

The advice Paul gives about spiritual attitude leads him into writing about the walk of different kinds of people in the spiritual community. We see two types described in vv. 17-19. The one type of individual that we are pointed to is the type which walk, or behave, like Paul. These are those which have set for themselves the great goal of living up to the high calling in Christ. Just as Paul took pains to labor over lost souls; took pains to be without blame; took pains to live soberly, righteously, and holily in the world, so did they. They believed that this apostle was setting the example for how they should walk.

The other type was described by Paul as those who were enemies of the cross (v. 18). Their profile is more fully described in v. 19, and that will be the subject of the rest of our message. Enemies of the cross are identified by behavior, because internal characteristics cannot be seen

by us: “For many walk....” The “walk” is an outward evidence of a mind that is at enmity with God. See how closely Paul ties together the actual works and the mind in the state of enmity with God: (**Col 1:21**) And you, that were sometime alienated and **enemies in your mind by wicked works**, yet now hath he reconciled

### **I. Their End Is Destruction**

- No other end can possibly await those who remain enemies of the cross
- Paul seems to consider this the most important description of their profile (he puts it first)
  - ▶ I believe that is because it represents the worst possible result or impact of their enmity (in contrast we often think of the damage, promotion of wickedness, and offense to God that is generated by the enemies of the cross...but eternal destiny is a much farther reaching outcome because it is everlasting...all the other things these people do, and are, has an end).

### **II. Their God Is Their Belly**

- In scripture, obsession with fleshly pleasures or fleshly fulfillment is often illustrated by reference to the belly...the symbol of fleshly appetite. So, the apostle is here referring to fleshly appetite...their god is their appetite...not just for food, but for fleshly pleasure.
- When a soul is preoccupied with fulfilling the desires of the flesh, they have set the flesh up as a God. Consider: fulfill the desires of God vs. fulfill the desires of the flesh.
  - ▶ In describing us in our lost condition and people still in a lost condition, Paul writes that, like the children of disobedience (**Eph. 2:3**) “...we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, **fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

### **III. Their Glory Is In Their Shame**

- Two things can be understood from this:
  - ▶ First, they gain their reputation, or fame, from the wicked and unspiritual things that they do
  - ▶ You might be thinking of some person who encourages and practices wicked behavior as the best type of this kind of individual, but the apostle is actually writing about someone who is having an influence over the church. So, what kind of person would this be?
    - Someone who promotes godless behavior and claims that upright behavior is not important nor central to Christian conduct
    - Someone who defends un-Christian practices by saying that those practices are not forbidden...or are even approved by scripture
    - Some religious figure who criticizes or degrades true believers who both teach and practice personal purity and commitment to the purposes of God
- They make their wickedness and the vile things they do to be their badge of notoriety, fame, honor, worthiness
  - ▶ They gain their fame and following from their behavioral heresy.
    - Peter describes them like this: (**2Peter 2:18-19**) “For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. **19** While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

#### **IV. They Mind Earthly Things**

- This last named mark of enemies of the cross is that their mental focus, their mental energy, is on earthly things.
  - ▶ When we start thinking about this characteristic we really have to use wisdom, because we know that throughout most of history, there have been believers that have sometimes been swept away from their focus on the things of the Lord by getting too caught up in the things of the world. So, how do we make the distinction between them and others that have their mental focus on the things of the world? Answer: we don't. The reason we don't is because for each one of us, if our life focus gets caught up in minding earthly things, our lives are at such a time at enmity with God.
- If we think about these enemies of the cross being in a religious setting, what would they be like?
  - ▶ Actual spiritual things would not be important to them
  - ▶ Earthly goals and pursuits would be more important than spiritual ones
  - ▶ They would not be able to focus on spiritual aspects of a worship service; any meaningfulness to them about gathering with a church would have to do with socializing or something to be gained from their mingling with the people of God
  - ▶ Looking after the best interests of things of the world would be more important than looking after the best interests of the church
  - ▶ Physical, human, emotional things would be more jealously protected by them than would be spiritual things.