

Philippians

CHAPTER 3:17-21

Lesson 12

Jesus Christ is the only perfect example. Only He was sinless; only He never failed. Paul readily admitted that he had not *already attained*. Yet, Paul set himself as an example to follow – not as a flawless standard, but as a pattern. As Christians, we should have both examples to follow and examples to flee. This was Paul's goal for this paragraph division as he aptly contrasted the friends and the enemies of the gospel. As friends of the gospel, we are reminded that although we dwell on this earth, we do not really belong here. Our real home is heaven, where one day we will be surrounded only by those who love the gospel; those who have been transformed into the image of our precious Lord Jesus Christ.

Read Philippians 3

1. In Philippians 3, Paul warns about the flesh. The first part of the chapter warns us against having any *confidence in the flesh*, while the last part warns us against living for the flesh. The middle section deals with *pressing on* in spite of the flesh. Share something from chapter 3 that inspires you to deny your flesh and attain spiritually rather than physically.
2. Philippians 3 begins with the instruction, *rejoice in the Lord*. Continue reading through this chapter and list the instructions to the recipients of the letter. Following the example below, record the verse reference in parenthesis after each instruction. Note: Include verses 12-14 and 20, Paul's example that should also mark our lives as believers.

1. Rejoice in the Lord (1)

- a. Instructions are commands. We are to obey each of them. Choose one of the instructions above and share something you are going to do to apply that instruction in your life.

Read Philippians 3:17

1. The early Christians, especially those in Macedonia, had no traditions of the Christian life. They were used to Pagan culture—a self-seeking, knowledge-hungry, pleasure-craving society. According to Philippians 3:17, who were the Philippians to use as *patterns* for their lives?

Challenge: Look up and define the words *followers* and *ensample* as they are used in Philippians 3:17, King James Version. What did you learn?

2. Think of someone who is a role model in your life. What do you admire most about them?
 - a. Who are the people that are watching you?
 - 1.) How does being aware of setting an example for others encourage you to set an example worth following?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:10-13 and answer the following:
 - a. Describe how Paul and his associates *behaved themselves* (verse 10)
 - b. What comparison did Paul use to describe the way they *exhorted, comforted, and charged* the believers in Thessalonica? (verse 11)
 - c. In your own words, describe how a *father is with his children*.
 - d. How do you think their godly example affected the people's response to the preaching of the gospel? (see verse 13)
4. Scan back through Philippians 1-3 and briefly describe Paul's example.

Read Philippians 3:18,19

1. Philippians 3:18,19 warn us about people who are very different from Paul. What did Paul call them (verse 18)?

- a. Remember, Paul was in prison, unable to personally protect the believers from these *enemies of the cross of Christ*. His concern brought him to the point of *weeping*. Paul was not referring to the legalistic Judaizers here, but to those who swung from the opposite side of the pendulum; those who practiced lawlessness. Describe them by filling in the blanks from verse 19.

whose end is _____, whose god is their _____, and whose glory is in their _____ -- who set their mind on _____.

- b. These *enemies of the cross* were governed by the desires of their own flesh. Why would setting an example of living for pleasure cause one to be an *enemy of the cross*?

- c. How was the example set by these men contrary to the example set by Paul?

2. These men *set their mind on earthly things*. According to Colossians 3:2, what is the Christian to *set his mind on*?

- a. Rather than yield to the desires of our flesh, what does Colossians 3:5 tell us to do?

- 1.) How do we practically *put to death* sinful desires?

3. Read Romans 8:5-7. What is essential if we want to *live according to the Spirit*?

- a. What is the result of setting our minds on *things of the Spirit*?

Read Philippians 3:20

1. Contrary to *the enemies of the cross who set their mind on earthly things*, we are to remember that this world is not our home. We do not belong here. We are simply passing through on a journey to our real home. Philippians 3:20 reminds us that *our citizenship is in heaven*. What does that mean to you personally?

2. What are you looking forward to in heaven?
 - a. How does reminding yourself that your *citizenship is in heaven* help you when you are tempted to *set your mind on earthly things*?

 - b. How should our *heavenly citizenship* affect our daily choices?

3. As a *citizen of heaven*, what are some ways that you feel like you don't belong here on earth anymore?
 - a. Read 1 John 3:2,3. In what ways does having the hope of the return of Jesus *purify*?

4. C. S. Lewis once wrote, "Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither". How does this statement attest to Matthew 6:33?

Read Philippians 3:21

1. According to Philippians 3:21, what will Jesus do when He comes?
 - a. Using 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, describe this transformation.
2. Compare the *lowly* body that you live in right now to what you think your heavenly body will be like.
 - a. Many people spend a great deal of money and time in an effort to change their bodies to be more youthful or more energetic. How long will it take the Lord to change our bodies into immortal, perfect bodies? (See 1 Corinthians 15:52)
3. The New American Translation states that He will *transform us by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself* (Philippians 3:21). What do the following Scriptures say about this?

Matthew 28:18

1 Peter 3:22

4. One day, believers will not only experience the glorious transformation of their bodies into the image of Jesus Christ, but we will see the transferring of dominions. We will see *all things subject* to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Describe what you think His rulership will be like.

*He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears.
He will remove forever all insults and mockery against His land and people.
The Lord has spoken! -Isaiah 25:8 NLT*

Review Philippians 3:17-21

1. Philippians 3:17 encourages us to *follow Paul's example* and the example set by those who *walk by the same rule*. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, the believers became followers of Paul's example and of the Lord's. What was the result of this according to 1 Thessalonians 1:7?

Personal: Do you live your life in such a way that you are an example to be followed? If not, what changes do you need to make?

2. Paul strictly warned against those in the church who were bad examples. Often, we think we can associate with them and not be affected. Why is this not true?

a. Rather than associate with them, what are we to do according to Romans 16:17?

- 1.) The Christian is to be known by his love. Why is avoiding someone who is divisive the loving thing to do?

3. Contrast those *who set their mind on earthly things* with those whose *citizenship is in heaven*. List some of the differences.

a. There is tremendous energy in the present power of a future hope. *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose maker is God* (Hebrews 11:8,10). What have you discovered from this lesson that inspires you to live for what is eternal?

*Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright;
for the future of that man is peace. - Psalm 37:37*