

This morning, I am continuing in a sermon series through the New Testament book known as Philippians, which is a letter written by the Apostle Paul from a Roman prison to a church in Philippi that he had started. This morning, I will be in 3:17 – 4:3.

Philippians 3:17 – 4:3 - *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.* ¹⁸ *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.* ¹⁹ *Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.* ²⁰ *But our citizenship is in heaven.* And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ *who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.* **Philippians 4:1-3** *Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!* ² *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.* ³ *Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Paul begins this passage by encouraging them to follow his example, as well as others who follow the example of Jesus, like Timothy and Epaphroditus. We talked about this in an earlier sermon, but I want to again remind you of the importance of living examples. *As DL Moody put it, “Out of 100 men, I will read the Bible, and 99 will read the Christian.”* Paul is not saying to follow him because he is perfect. Remember that in the previous section, he said that he is not perfect, but he is pressing on to know Jesus more:

Philippians 3:10-14 - *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ¹¹ *and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.* ¹² *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* ¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Follow not my example of perfection, but the example of how I am pursuing Christ and not putting faith in my spiritual resume but in Jesus’ death for me.

In the passage we read this morning, Paul contrasts two groups of people. One group, he says, live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

The other group, he says, are citizens of heaven:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Paul encourages the Philippians to live as citizens of heaven, and to stand firm in the Lord. I want to try to understand what he means in the descriptive language he uses to contrast the enemies of the cross of Christ and the citizens of heaven, and what that means for us today.

The enemies of the cross of Christ

It's not just enemies of Jesus, but enemies of the cross of Christ. **What does the cross of Christ mean?** The cross was an instrument of torture in the Roman world, reserved for the worst of criminals, where Roman authorities would strip them naked or down to a cloth and nail their wrists and feet to display them as a warning, a deterrent to all who passed by. The cross is where Jesus, the eternal Son of God, died for the sins of the world. It declares that we are sinners who are separated from a holy God in need of a Savior. On the one hand, it declares that we are sinners, rebels against a holy and perfect God who can not save ourselves, and that nothing less than the death of the perfect Son of God could save us. But on the other hand, the cross declares that we are loved, so loved that the one against whom we have sinned would willingly lay down His life for us, that Jesus would choose to come to rescue us, to go to the lengths of the torture and humiliation of the cross to save us. God's justice and God's mercy and love meet at the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15 - When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having

*disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the **cross**.*

I think there are two main ways to be an enemy of the cross of Christ. The first is to deny that you are a sinner in need of a Savior, because by doing that you proclaim that Jesus' died for nothing, that it was not a supreme act of love but a meaningless tragedy.

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

This is those whose god is their stomach, whose mind is on earthly things. They are living for their own carnal pleasures, trying to find their meaning and purpose in this world, in life without God. This calls to mind the writer of Ecclesiastes:

***Ecclesiastes 2:1-11** - I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless...⁸ I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well-- the delights of the heart of man. ⁹ I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. ¹⁰ I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. ¹¹ Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.*

Certainly this can be very appealing. After all, those whose mind is on earthly things often tend to accumulate more earthly things, which can be tempting to emulate! But their glory is in their shame – the things they think will give their lives glory in the end will let them down and prove to be worthless. **Paul says this with tears**: they are wasting their lives running after things that in the end will not satisfy them or give them what they are looking for. They are chasing after the wind, running after things that they can never catch or possess.

Living for the things of this world is to live as an enemy of the cross of Christ. They are missing out on life to the fullest, on love eternal, settling for things that are ephemeral, temporary, here today and gone tomorrow.

The second way to live as an enemy of the cross of Christ would be to believe that you can be right with God on the basis of your own good works, that you can stand before God with your spiritual resume and be saved. Once again, you are proclaiming that Christ's death was meaningless, because you believe you can save yourself. This is the lie that Paul argued against in the previous chapter and in many other places in the New Testament:

Matthew 7:21-23 - *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*

Paul proclaims that for those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ, their destiny is destruction. They have rejected the only way of salvation, the only way to be right with God, either because they do not acknowledge their sin or because they have put too much trust in their own righteousness and morality. As Jesus put it:

John 3:16-18 - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

He does not say this callously or with vengeance in his heart, but with tears.

Philippians 3:18 - *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*

He knows that he was once in their shoes, completely misguided and ignorant and lost.

God's desire is that none would perish:

2 Peter 3:9 - *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Do we have that kind of compassion for those who are lost, who knowingly or unknowingly are living as enemies of God, enemies of the cross of Christ?

Pray that God would lift the veil and help them to see Him and know Him!

Paul exhorts the Philippians to instead live as citizens of heaven:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

What does it mean to live as a citizen of heaven? Even though I reside on planet Earth, I live according to the standards and pattern of my heavenly government, my heavenly King Jesus. My home and true treasure is elsewhere.

1) **Follow Jesus' example of humble, self-sacrificial love**

Philippians 3:17 - *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*

All throughout this passage he has expressed his sincere and fervent love for the Philippians. Look at the love with which he communicates:

Philippians 4:1 - *Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*

They are his joy and crown – their friendship and faith is his reward. And he exhorts them repeatedly to follow the pattern of Christ by putting the interests of others above their own.

Philippians 2:1-11 - *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human*

likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death **on a cross!** ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the supreme pattern they are to follow, the example to emulate. And in this passage he gives them a specific example of how he wants them to pursue self-giving love by humbly working for unity.

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Work through any disagreements, knowing that there are greater battles to fight.

- 2) **Stand firm and stay faithful through suffering, knowing your King will return and set things right**

*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. **Philippians 4:1-3** Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and **crown**, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*

We can stand firm and persevere because we know there is a Savior, a Deliverer, who will come and set things right, who will put everything under his control. Every authority, every enemy will become his footstool, even death!

***Hebrews 10:12-14** - But when [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his **footstool**, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

***Revelation 11:15-17** - **The** seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "**The kingdom of the** world has become **the kingdom of our Lord** and **of his Christ**, and he will reign for ever and ever." ¹⁶ And the*

twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

Revelation 21:4-5 - He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our **light** and **momentary** troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Our eyes are not earthly things. Not our bank accounts, for we are storing up treasure in heaven. Not our worldly possessions or pleasures, because we will have pleasures forevermore at his right hand.

Psalms 16:11 - You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal **pleasures** at your **right** hand.

1 Corinthians 2:9 - However, as it is written: "**No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him**"—

We can concern ourselves with His kingdom, with His glory, and serve Him, knowing that when He returns, He will exalt our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.

1 Corinthians 15:41-43 - The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. ⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

He will set our bodies right. And he will bring justice and set things right.

Romans 14:9-12 - For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge

your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God

Give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*