

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"From a Different World with a Different Way"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 3:18-20; 1:27; Luke 9:23-24; 14:27, 33; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:31; Col. 3:1-3, 12

There are moments when what is really inside of us comes out. Someone frustrates us. We are exhausted. We are hungry. Things do not go the way we planned. Suddenly, that part of us that wants to defend ourselves, insist on our rights, win the argument, or simply get our way rises to the surface. And it is easy to excuse it: "I was tired. I was stressed. I had a rough day." But those moments can reveal something deeper. They show us whose way we are actually walking. Are we walking according to the mind of Messiah, or have we slipped back into the very natural, very earthly way of "me first"?

That is the contrast Paul brings before us in Phil. 3:18-20. He has just told the Philippians to follow his example as he follows Messiah, to walk according to the pattern they have seen in him. And **that way of walking—the *Halakhah* of Yeshua—stands in stark contrast to what is going on around them.** The way of Yeshua is self-giving, self-emptying, cross-carrying love. It is an otherworldly way because it comes from another world. Paul says there are those who walk as enemies of the cross, whose minds are fixed on earthly things. *"For our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah"* (Phil. 3:20). We are from a different world, and therefore we are called to walk a different way.

1. BE A LOVER OF THE CROSS, NOT AN ENEMY OF IT

Paul writes, *"For many walk who are enemies of the cross of Messiah. I have often told you about them, and now I am even weeping as I tell you"* (Phil. 3:18). Paul is not casually criticizing people. He is weeping. He is heartbroken because these appear to be people who know something of Messiah and yet are no longer walking in Messiah's way. That is what makes this warning so serious. Yeshua said, *"Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple"* (Luke 14:27). The cross is not merely something Yeshua died upon for us; it becomes the pattern of the life we are called to live with Him. His way is the death of selfish ambition, me-firstness, and the insistence that my desires must always come first.

By our sinful nature, we resist that way. We pursue what we want, when we want it, and how we want it. It goes against every fiber of our selfish nature to lay down our rights, surrender an argument, forgive when we have been hurt, or put another person before ourselves. Yet Yeshua says, *"If anyone wants to follow Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross every day, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it"* (Luke 9:23-24). That is the strange mathematics of the Kingdom: the world says that holding on is how you save your life; Yeshua says that

laying it down is how you find it. Lovers of the cross are people learning every day to say, “Not me first. Yeshua first.”

2. DON'T LET YOUR BELLY BECOME YOUR GOD

Paul describes these enemies of the cross more fully: *“Their end is destruction—their god is their belly and their glory is in their shame. They set their minds on earthly things”* (Phil. 3:19). Their “belly” speaks of appetite—the cravings, desires, emotions, comforts, and personal satisfactions that begin to rule a person. The tragedy is not simply that these people commit one particular obvious sin. Paul does not identify them here as drunkards, fornicators, or some category that would make it easy for us to say, “Well, that is not me.” His warning goes underneath the particular sins to the heart: **What rules me? What am I feeding? What do I worship?** Have my appetites become my master?

That question reaches every one of us. Sinful (*your name*)—selfish (*your name*)—tries to rise from the dead every day, and so I have to die daily. I can tell myself that because I am tired, hungry, stressed, offended, or frustrated, I have permission to respond in the flesh. But Yeshua is our model. After a sleepless night of betrayal, mock trials, abuse, humiliation, and unimaginable suffering, He did not surrender Himself to retaliation. His heart remained filled with love: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34). Being tired does not give me permission to become me-first. Being hurt does not give me permission to stop walking in the mind of Messiah. The question is not whether the flesh will speak; the question is whether my appetites will reign over me or Yeshua will reign over me.

3. REMEMBER WHERE YOUR CITIZENSHIP BELONGS

Paul then gives us the great contrast: *“For our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah”* (Phil. 3:20). The enemies of the cross *“set their minds on earthly things,”* but our citizenship belongs to the heavens. The word Paul uses, *politeuma*, (where we get the English word “polity/politics”) carries the idea of citizenship, public life, and the ordering of a community. We belong somewhere else. Our values, priorities, ways of thinking, and our way of treating people are supposed to be shaped by the Kingdom from which our citizenship—our *“politeuma”*—comes. Earlier Paul told them, *“Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the Good News of the Messiah”* (Phil. 1:27). In other words, live out your heavenly citizenship here and now.

That is why Paul can tell the Colossians, *“Focus your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Messiah in God”* (Col. 3:2–3). We are not supposed to look increasingly like the world around us; we are being renewed according to the image of the One who created us. Because we belong to another Kingdom, Paul says, *“clothe yourselves in tender compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience”* (Col. 3:12). That is what heavenly citizenship looks like on earth. It looks like Yeshua. We come from a different world, and therefore we walk a different way.

CONCLUSION

The contrast Paul gives us could hardly be sharper. One way ends in destruction; the other presses toward the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua. One way is ruled by the belly; the other is ruled by Messiah. One mind is fixed on earthly things; the other remembers, “My citizenship is in heaven.” And this is not merely a theological distinction between believers and unbelievers. It is a daily question for those of us who already know Yeshua: **Which way am I walking today?** When I am exhausted, disappointed, offended, overlooked, or inconvenienced, what kingdom becomes visible through me?

Perhaps our prayer today simply becomes the place where we stop excusing the places where “me first” has been ruling us. Not in condemnation, but in surrender. “Lord, there it is again. There is that part of me that wants to defend myself, feed myself, satisfy myself, and make myself the center. Help me put it to death.” Ask Him to show you the relationships, arguments, desires, comforts, and frustrations where your belly has been trying to become your god. Then place them before Yeshua again. We want to know Him—not merely the power of His resurrection, but also the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death. We are not who we were, and we are not yet completely who we will be. So, Lord, keep forming us. Teach us to live here as citizens of there. Make us people from a different world who truly walk a different way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was Paul weeping over those who were walking as enemies of the cross?
2. What does it practically mean to “take up your cross” in everyday relationships?
3. Where are you most tempted to excuse me-first behavior because you are tired, stressed, hungry, or hurt?
4. Is there an appetite, comfort, emotion, or personal desire that has been exercising too much control over you lately?
5. What would it look like this week for your heavenly citizenship to become visible in the way you treat others?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Yeshua, we love You and thank You that You are still working in us. We want to know You in the power of Your resurrection and in the fellowship of sharing in Your sufferings. Expose the places where selfishness, comfort, appetite, anger, pride, or the need to get our own way has been ruling us. We do not want our belly to be our god. We want You to reign over every part of us.

Teach us to die daily and to walk in Your way. When we face inconvenience, frustration, suffering, or offense, let those moments become opportunities to display Your character. Clothe us with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Remind us that our citizenship is in heaven, and form us more and more into Your likeness so that, while we live in this world, we will truly walk the way of another Kingdom

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.