

KEEPING YOUR JOY - The Heartfelt Theology of an Isolated Prisoner – Part 16

Sunday, October 11th, 2020, 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2052

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ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST (Part 1)

Philippians 3:17-21 - "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. [18] For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. [19] Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. [20] But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

This is a fascinating text. **Verses 17, 20, and 21** are the easy verses. **Verses 18 and 19** are the difficult ones. The battle that bubbles around those two verses is **who are these "enemies of the cross of Christ?"**

Are they the same group Paul has just called "**dogs**" and "**evil doers**" in **verse 2**? Are they the **Judaisers** who are pushing these Christians into circumcision and the keeping of the law as a **tool** for Christian salvation and righteousness? And if these **are** the ones to whom Paul is referring how do we interpret the description Paul gives here - "**Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things**"(**Philippians 3:19**)?

Or are these "**enemies of the cross of Christ**" those who Paul calls the "**opponents**" of the Philippian believers in **Philippians 1:28** - "**....and not frightened in anything by your opponents....**"? Or are these people - these "**enemies of the cross of Christ**" - a different group entirely - a more general, undefined group of people in the churches who only pay lip service to Christ, but are given over to sensual, materialistic pursuits?

My own opinion is that these "**enemies of the cross of Christ**" are not the same group as the **Judaisers** Paul mentions in **3:1-2**. Nor are they the "**opponents**" Paul mentions

in 1:28. But we'll come to that in a few minutes.

I have four points I want to draw out of this text. We'll consider two this morning and two next Sunday morning. Here's how the passage unfolds:

- 1) **WE ARE TO MARK PEOPLE WHO ARE GOOD EXAMPLES OF WHAT IT MEANS TO COUNT ALL THINGS LOSS FOR THE SURPASSING KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS**

Philippians 3:17 - "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us."

Truth always looks better in a *life* than on *paper*. There are theological truths that, even though wonderfully true, don't sparkle in mere print. But they look incomparably wonderful when they shine in a life ablaze with the radiance of Christ. This is why, when Paul talks about how the life of the cross gets fleshed out, he paints a picture, contrasting his own life before and after Christ. He makes these verses live:

Philippians 3:12-14 - "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

As Paul will make very clear in a few minutes, not everyone who names Christ lives like that. In fact, Paul will say quite pointedly that "**many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ**"(Philippians 3:18). So it becomes a matter of life and death that

these Christians **seek out** genuine pursuers of Christ in the church.

Why? Why is this so important? Because if they just **hear** about this kind of **cross-centered** spiritual life but never **see** it, they will only see it as a **duty** without seeing it as something **joyful** and **beautiful**. But once they've **rubbed shoulders** with this kind of full-blooded Christianity they will come to see it as **desirable** and **possible**.

Please mark this truth carefully. If you don't have a tight, living, warm-blooded link - like a **one-flesh** link - with other passionate saints in the church of Christ, your Christian walk will never have the incredible **boost** of having the Holy Spirit stamp your soul with the encouragement and example of someone else renouncing all for Christ Jesus - and **loving** it. Your Christian life will be so much more difficult if all you have is the instructions on paper. Never forget that.

2) **A GREAT INDICATOR OF THE NATURE OF YOUR HEART'S TREASURE IS WHAT MAKES YOU WEEP**

Philippians 3:18 - “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.”

This blessed weeping is described too many times in the Scriptures to miss: **Psalm 119:136** - “My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.”

When you study the life of Paul you won't, I don't think, assess him as a touchy-feely guy. At times he has a wonderful spiritual stubbornness in His devotion to Christ. He makes tough, solid decisions. He frequently goes against the grain and doesn't seem to worry about it. He suffers a great deal never losing

the joy in his heart.

But there are times you find him ***weeping***. And they're instructive.

He wept as he ***warned*** the church at Ephesus - **Acts 20:29-32** - “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. [31] Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day **to admonish everyone with tears**. [32] And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

He wept as he ***rebuked*** the church at Corinth - **2 Corinthians 2:2-4** - “For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? [3] And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. [4] For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart **and with many tears**, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.”

Now, in our Philippians text, Paul looks at those who are enemies of the Cross of Christ and it ***moves him again to tears*** - **Philippians 3:18** - “For many, of whom I have **often told you** and now tell you **even with tears**, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.”

What a compact, yet fascinating verse! We wish we could creep into Paul's head. Whatever is churning in his heart has churned there many times before because he says he had “***often told***” the Philippian church this same truth. So we know this wasn't some strange, new issue. It was a problem Paul frequently brought to their

attention.

But it ***still*** moved him to tears. Whenever someone repeatedly goes over and over the same ground, and yet is ***still*** unable to control the tearful aching in his heart, you have found his ***passion***. I have wondered recently if these words from Paul might not have been on Fanny Crosby's mind when she penned her famous hymn and wrote - "***Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.***"

Detachment is ***sometimes*** a virtue, but ***never*** when the hearts and souls of people are concerned. It's a sin to be unmoved. The church won't ***pray*** for the lost and rebellious for an hour until it ***weeps*** for the lost and rebellious for an hour.

I think we can all apply these two aspects of Paul's testimony. The things that ***disturb*** your mind reveal the convictions you actually care about - the truths you don't just say you ***believe***, but the truths you ***live by***.

And secondly, the things that make you ***weep*** reveal what your heart ***cherishes***. The things you weep over reveal the presence of the Holy Spirit, driving you into eternal realities. It is always and even the role of the Holy Spirit to make you indifferent to trite things. Make sure this get bumped up higher on your prayer list this week!

Two more life principles from this text next Sunday.