

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Fleeing from Enemies

Scripture: Philippians 3:18-19

Code: 50-35

Let's open our Bibles then to Philippians chapter 3...Philippians chapter 3. And we are continuing our look at this wonderful subject of pursuing the prize...pursuing the prize. This is lesson number three and there will be four lessons because next time we'll cover what is remaining. You know from this particular text that the heart of the section is found in verse 14. Paul says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul says I pursue the prize, I press toward the goal.

We have noted all along that the prize and the goal is the same thing, it is to be like Jesus Christ. That was the single focus of Paul's life. Back in verse 8 he says, "I count everything else to be loss, I have one great quest, to know Christ Jesus my Lord." He says down in verse 13, "One thing I do, and that one thing is forgetting the other things, I press on toward the goal." So he had a life focus of knowing Jesus Christ so well, so deeply, so richly that he was becoming like Christ, that is the goal of every Christian's life.

Now, beloved, let me remind you that in all of the chaos, confusion and all of the myriad of options and complexity of contemporary Christianity, everything in our Christian experience can be boiled down to this one great truth...the goal of my life is to be like Christ. Everything else spins off of that. All my service, all my relationships, all my worship, everything spins off of being like Christ. If I am like Christ I will worship God in the way He worshiped God. If I am like Christ I will serve God in the way He served God. If I am like Christ, I will relate to people in the love in which He related to people.

In other words, the simple focus of my life is to be like Christ. That is why I must let the word about Christ dwell in me richly, as Colossians 3:16 says. That is why I must gaze at the glory of Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18, so that I can be changed into his image. That is why Christ must be fully formed in me, Galatians 4:19. That is why if I say I abide in Him I must walk the way He walked, 1 John 2. I'm to be like Christ. This is the goal of my life.

So the goal of my life as a Christian is outside of me, it is not in me, it is outside of me, it is beyond me. I am not preoccupied with myself, I am preoccupied with becoming like Christ. And that is something that only the Holy Spirit can do as I focus on Christ. I focus on Him and the Spirit transforms me into His image.

As you well know, there are many devastating things that have encroached upon the pure understanding of this truth in the church, not the least of which is humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology has had a devastating effect on Christians and on Christian theology for a number of reasons. But one of these reasons is built into the very basic humanistic philosophy that man exists for his own satisfaction. It is the very bottom line in humanism that man to be happy must have all of his perceived needs and desires met. And so humanism says that the goal of life is to have all of my wants fulfilled, all of my desires accomplished, all of my needs met. Man will be happy, say the psychologists, man will be content, man will be satisfied when his desires are met, when his longings are met, when his needs are met, when he is fulfilled. Contemporary presentations of the gospel have sucked up this humanistic psychology and philosophy unwittingly. And you have the good news of self-worth, the good news of the value of you as a person, the good news of security, the good news of significance, the good news of prosperity, of health, wealth and happiness, the psychological gospel, the prosperity gospel.

And even contemporary sanctification is fraught with this humanistic needs mentality that sanctification is a process by which all of my needs are being met so I can be an effective Christian. So if I've got a problem in my life, I have to discover that problem, iron out that problem, solve that problem, if I have some unfulfillment in my life, I've got to fill that pocket with fulfillment. If I have dissatisfaction in my life, I've got to get satisfaction in that area. If I am not able to accomplish everything that is in me, all my desires aren't being met, somehow I'll never be fulfilled until all of those perceived needs are met. That has encroached upon the church in a major way so that much of preaching, teaching, writing today has to do with problems and needs and satisfaction and fulfillment of one's own personal desires.

Tony Walter has written a book entitled "Need...The New Religion....Need...The New Religion." In it he says this, "It is fashionable to follow the view of some psychologists that the self is a bundle of needs and that personal growth is the business of progressively meeting these needs. Many Christians go along with such beliefs." Further he says, "One mark of the almost total success of this new morality is that the Christian church traditionally keen on mortifying the desires of the flesh, on crucifying the needs of the self in pursuit of Christ's likeness has eagerly adopted the language of needs for itself. We now hear that Jesus will meet your every need, as though He were some kind of divine psychiatrist or divine detergent and as though God were simply to serve us," end quote.

Now this kind of need mentality leads to a man-centered theology, a man-centered salvation and a man-centered sanctification so that the goal of Christian living has become for many Christians getting my needs met, being fulfilled, being happy, having a good self-image, a high standard of self-worth, etc., etc., resolving all my conflict, eliminating all my problems and I am focused on that. The satisfaction of my perceived need is the goal of my salvation and the goal of my sanctification.

That's not true. That is diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches. The satisfaction of human need is neither the goal of salvation nor is it the goal of sanctification. It's not the goal of either. The goal of salvation is that you might be conformed to the image of God's Son, thus that's the goal of sanctification. The goal of my life is not to make sure I'm satisfied but to make sure God is satisfied, that's the goal of my life. But, you see, humanistic need psychology has become quasi Christian need theology and so you have a man-centered sanctification instead of a Christ-centered sanctification. Man becomes central rather than Christ. This is a major change. All you need do is look back, for example, to someone like A.W. Tozier who simply said, "Faith looks out instead of in and the whole of life falls into line," end quote. Faith looks out instead of in and the whole of life falls into line. Christian sanctification is the pursuit of something outside myself, not something inside myself. It is the pursuit of Christ's likeness. It is not a matter of assessing me, it is a matter of knowing Him deeply. And the more I know Him and the more I am focused on Him and the more I am in communion with Him, the more the Spirit makes me like Him. The more I focus on myself, the more distracted I am from the proper path.

Now in the Christian life we are pressing toward a goal. That goal is not the satisfaction of my own needs. That goal is not the satisfaction of my own desire for greater significance, that is not the goal of my life. The goal of my life is to be like Christ.

Now let me approach this from another angle, as well. I have never met a successful person, an effective person, an impactful person in any realm of enterprise in the world who was not committed to reaching goals. The people who impact the world are pursuers. They're winners. They're competitors. They know what it is, and listen to this, to ignore personal comfort to reach a goal outside themselves. They make incredible sacrifices for the wrong reasons to reach the wrong goals. But the people who impact society, the people who affect society, the people who leave an imprint on society are not the kind of people whose lives are consumed with making sure their own needs are met, even from a human viewpoint, to say nothing from a spiritual viewpoint. Those in the spiritual dimension, however, who leave an impact are equally competitors, winners.

I don't think people really understand that. I have read enough biographies of famous Christians, I have heard enough messages and lectures, I have read enough articles, I have visited enough places in the world to see the memorabilia of famous Christian leaders to know this, there are no hidden secrets about an impactful life. It is the direct result of a maximum effort to reach a spiritual goal and in the process ignore your own personal situation. It is amazing what great preachers, great theologians and great missionaries have suffered in the process of reaching a spiritual goal. And they all have one thing in common, it was of little concern to them to consider their own human condition, apart from the fact that they considered it theologically, it was of major concern to them that they follow Christ, pursue Christ.

There are no secrets. Effective lives belong to people who pursue goals that are outside themselves and they pursue them almost blindly. The same is true spiritually. The people who leave an impact on the church and the world are those who have a spiritual goal on which they are focused, that goal of being like Jesus Christ. They pursue that with little thought of the conditions of their own human life. That's Paul...that's Paul. He says, "I'm not interested in anything else," verse 8, "I consider everything else a loss, all I want is one thing, I want the prize," verse 14. That's what made him great. It was that ability to be so totally focused on a goal. And that's what we're talking about, that's what we're talking about. We all are called to pursue the goal. And again, the goal is to be conformed to the image of God's Son, as we noted two weeks ago. We are pursuing that, let say it simply, as our total Christian duty. Can I simplify the whole Christian life for you? The whole Christian life can be boiled down, pursuing Christ's likeness. That's it. That's it. If that helps you clear up the fog, then that alone is a great service to your spiritual progress.

Now, what are the necessary elements in doing this? And that will bring us to our text, verse 17. What are the necessary elements? We've already gone through the rest of the chapter, that was just a review. What do we have to have? What will help us in pursuing the prize? Number one, we suggested last time that we must follow after examples...we must follow after examples. That was point one in verse 17. "Brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Remember I told you that Paul says, "Look, you've got to have somebody to show you the path." Now listen again, let me repeat this truth that I mentioned to you. Christ is the perfect model. Christ is the pattern of perfection. But Paul and others are the patterns of the pursuit of that perfection. I see in Christ what I want to be, but I cannot see in Christ how to get there. Why? Because Christ didn't follow some path to perfection, He was always perfect. You see? So if I look at Christ I see what I am to be, and if I look at Paul and other believers, I can see how to move that direction...as I see those who are able to deal with temptation and sin in the pursuit of the prize. So Paul says you need an example, you need someone to follow, you need a model, so follow me and those who walk according to the pattern that you have seen in us.

In other words, get some models and follow them. Now we're right in the heart of discipleship. That's what we're all about. We need a human pattern to follow. Beloved, here is the essence of the matter of church leadership. What is church leadership? I'll tell you simply what it is, it is not just speaking the Word and preaching the Word, it is being the model that people can follow in the pursuit of Christ's likeness. That's the high calling...that's the high calling. That is why leadership in the church is so highly regarded in the Scripture, and that is why a person's life has to be above reproach and blameless because that person is the pattern of pursuing Christ's likeness the people are asked to follow. And then they follow him and others follow them, and others follow them, and that's how the church functions. That's why when a person fails to be the pattern, it isn't enough still to be the preacher because now you've split the whole thing right down the middle and you've got a preacher who isn't a pattern and all you have are words but nothing is demonstrated.

So, Paul says, "Look, in this pursuing of the prize, follow the proper examples. Find those godly pastors and leaders who are above reproach, whose lives are blameless, who are walking the way a believer should walk, who are being obedient. They're not perfect, but the direction of their life is right. They're pursuing the prize and follow them."

Now flip that over, there's a negative side. That takes us to point two. Not only are we to follow after examples, but two, we are to flee enemies. We are to flee enemies. Paul is always concerned about this. Look at verse 18, "For many walk of whom I often told you and now tell you even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

Now what's he saying? He's saying, "Follow my example and the people who live the way I live in the pursuit of the prize, you follow us because so many others are the enemies of the cross of Christ." He's simply saying watch out that you don't follow them, that's the idea. In the pursuit of Christ's likeness, there are some to be followed, listen carefully, and there are many to be avoided. He narrows it down. He says follow me, verse 17, and those who follow the pattern that I have set. And then he says, "Many are the enemies of Christ." The word "many," do you see it at the beginning of verse 18? Not a few, many, they're everywhere.

Now, beloved, here's the challenge in the church, listen carefully. Here is the challenge, especially in a high-profile media society like ours, do you realize the exposure that bad examples get today? Do you realize the exposure that enemies of the cross of Christ find for themselves today through radio, television, books, and so forth? You have to be very careful and very discerning not to follow someone who is masquerading as a friend and is really an enemy of the cross. So in verses 18 and 19, and I want us to focus on this, he introduces us to the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Now let me suggest to you here that the implication of the text is that these people are not stated as enemies. They don't come down the road saying, "We're against the cross, we're against Christ, we deny His work on the cross, we deny salvation by grace through faith, etc." They don't do that. They're not subtle. Anybody who does that is not a threat, right? That kind of a person you can spot immediately, someone who denies Christ, denies His work on the cross, that's not subtle enough to threaten the church. But these are people who say they are the friends of Christ and the cross of Christ, who advocate Christ, who identify with Christ, whose names are on the church roll, who want spiritual leadership, but they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. They're very subtle. It takes discernment to recognize them.

Beloved, this is such a ringing constant theme in the New Testament that you almost feel like you're in a revolving door on this subject. Jesus said it, "Beware of those who come to you in sheep's clothing and inwardly they are wolves." Later on in Matthew 23 He described them again. He was concerned about the false teachers, the false leaders, the antichrists in chapter 24. You find it all

through the book of Acts. The false as against the true...the Simon Maguses, the Elimusus(?), the sorcerers, whoever they are, the false claiming in the name of God to cast out demons later on in the book of Acts. You find it in Paul's epistles as he warns, for example, stay away from endless genealogies, stay away from speculations, stay away from false teachers, know sound doctrine, pure doctrine, avoid the janglings and the harangings of those who are not true teachers. Peter gives an entire epistle, 2 Peter, to the unmasking of false teachers. Jude is concerned about it. John is concerned about it in his three epistles. It is all through the Scripture. We must beware of the enemies who masquerade as friends. That's the idea here. He has to tell the Philippians that they are enemies of the cross of Christ because they're very subtle.

And frankly, folks, the church lacks discernment. I continue to be absolutely astounded at the stuff and at the people that Christians will follow because they're so undiscerning. If you have a lack of precise biblical teaching, as we do today, if you have a lack of precise clear doctrine, as we do today, you have a lack of precise clear thinking. And if you have a lack of precise clear thinking, you cannot have discernment. And so people are victimized by the widespread exposure of those who in truth are enemies of the cross of Christ.

Now let's go back to verse 18 and look a little more particularly at what he says. "For many walk"...walk being the idea of daily conduct, manner of life, course of living, this is their pattern. He says, "Many walk of whom I often told you." Some see this as a reference back to chapter 1 verse 28 where he mentions not being alarmed by your enemies or your opponents. But that doesn't seem to be the best interpretation of that phrase. The fact that he says, "Of whom I often told you," probably refers to times when he was with the Philippians and he was repeatedly telling them about people who would come along outwardly identifying with Christ but who would be enemies of the true gospel. Paul was ever and always in a warning mode.

Do you remember back in Acts, that very familiar twentieth chapter where Paul gives so much teaching on ministry? He says in verse 31, to the Ephesian elders, "Be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I didn't cease to warn each one with tears." What an amazing statement. For three years night and day I warned each individual with tears about false teachers, false leaders, false doctrine. And then he says, "The only thing I can do is commend you to His Word which will build you up." You're protected by the Word. If you don't know the Word, you're not protected.

So, Paul was very concerned even with the Philippians that they understand the threat of false teachers. He said, "I often told you and now...present tense...I tell you even weeping." By the way, that's the only time in the New Testament when Paul actually says he is presently crying. In Romans he talked about having sorrow and continuous heaviness of heart over the lostness of Israel. And in Acts 20, as I just read, he said I warned you night and day with tears. But this is the only time he says as I write I cry, I weep. His heart is broken. He grieved over the lostness of people. He grieved over

the encroachment of false teachers that disrupted the church and brought a reproach on the name of Christ and led people astray. And here he is literally weeping as he recognizes that they will infiltrate Philippi and they will try to wreak havoc in the church. He is heartbroken. He says I now tell you even weeping. This is a passionate man. This is a tender-hearted man. This is a man with rich feelings. He loved genuinely. He ached over the lost.

You say, "Why is he weeping? What's he crying about?" Well, we don't know, it doesn't really specifically say but we can certainly surmise. He could have been weeping because these enemies of the cross were lost, for he did have sorrow over lost people, as Romans 9 indicates. He could have been weeping because he could see the terrible impact that they would have on the weak in the church and it was those same kind of tears that we noted in Acts 20, tears for the church because it could be so easily led astray by false teachers. So whether it was the damnation of the enemies or whether it was the destructive impact of their effort, it caused him to weep. He loved the church. He loved the Philippians because he loved the Christ of the church and the Christ of the Philippians. And he could see these enemies trying to seduce them and it broke his heart. After all, the Philippian church was the first church in Europe, a sort of beachhead for another world to reach. And it was so important that they stay pure and not get messed up.

Beloved, I just need to tell you from the bottom of my heart, I see the church in America today on the threshold of being deceived by a myriad of the enemies of the cross.

Now you say, "Well now who are these enemies of the cross of Christ that Paul is so grieved about? Who are they?" He doesn't tell us. We have two options. Okay? We'll reduce it down to two options. They're either Jews or Gentiles. That's fair enough. If they were Jews we could surmise that they were Jews who somehow identified with the church and yet were still enemies of the cross. What kind of Jews would those be? Those would be the Jews known as the...remember?...Judaizers. And what was their agenda? They didn't deny Christ and they didn't deny the gospel, they just said it was insufficient to save. It didn't go far enough. You had to be circumcized, physical surgery, and you had to keep the Mosaic law. So they said Christ plus the law. We accept Christ, we believe in His death, we believe in His resurrection, but that's not enough to save, you have to add circumcision, you have to add the keeping of the law, the ritual. So that...that would be one possibility that it was the Judaizers. It could fit the context because he's been talking about the Judaizers. Back in verse 2 he called them dogs, evil workers and false circumcision. And he definitely has the Judaizers in mind. They think they're doing what is right, they're actually doing evil. They think they've had a proper circumcision, all they've had is a mutilation...he uses the word mutilation. And they think they are sheep but the truth is they're dogs, curs, scroungy mongrels. So he really has lambasted the Judaizers who come in and say Christ did what He did but it isn't enough, you have to add some other works. That is an enemy of the cross of Christ.

Now notice, please, when he says enemies of the cross of Christ, the concept of the cross of Christ means all the atoning work accomplished on the cross. It's not just the wood. It's not just the death, it's the cross work of Christ. It signifies the whole of what He did there as the sacrifice for sin who alone could provide salvation for sinful men. That is the heart of our faith. That's why Paul said, "I'm determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified." We are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ plus nothing. We believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and by that faith God imputes forgiveness to us and righteousness. But these Judaizers said that's not enough, that's not enough, you've got to add to that.

Does that sound familiar to you? Any of you who were raised say in Roman Catholicism would experience that kind of thinking. No one in Roman Catholicism would deny Christ, they wouldn't even deny the deity of Christ, they wouldn't deny the cross of Christ, they wouldn't deny that He died as a substitute for sin, they wouldn't deny the resurrection, but they would say that's not sufficient, you must do certain works. You must accomplish certain spiritual deeds. You have to earn your way in. They would talk about grace and yet they're very definite works by which you earn favor with God. That's been around a long time. That's another form of a Judaizing kind of heresy. Anybody who comes along and says, "Well, yes, we believe in Christ and we believe that He died," and all of that, "but you have to keep the law," that's the same error.

So the enemies of the cross don't necessarily deny the cross, they add to it...like the Judaizers did. But, you say, "Well in verse 19 it describes them as their end is destruction, their God is their appetite, their glory is in their shame and they set their mind on earthly things, how would that relate to the Judaizers?" Well it could relate to them. Their end is destruction because they're not really saved. The word end, telos means their ultimate destiny. That's a very important New Testament word. It means their ultimate destiny is destruction. Why? Because to believe everything about Christ and to believe that it's all true and also believe you have to do something to be saved is to be damned forever. Did you get that? Anything beyond Christ is a damning belief. So they are headed for destruction. When it says "Whose God is their appetite," it means that they really worship their flesh, they worship their fleshly accomplishments, they worship all of the fleshly religious works that they do. They're very sensual in a religious sense. It could even be that that could include their appetite in the sense that they're into dietary laws and the Jews had a whole series of dietary laws which they prescribed as part of the observance of the law necessary for salvation.

And then when he says in verse 19, "Their glory is in their shame," it means they boast in the very works of which they should be ashamed. Because the best of their works are nothing but filthy...what?...rags, anyway. Here they are boasting in their accomplishments and they really ought to be ashamed of their accomplishments because apart from what God has wrought in us everything is filthy rags. Paul says everything is manure, back in this same chapter, verse 8.

And finally, they set their mind on earthly things if speaking of the Judaizers could refer to the fact that they're into ceremonies and festivals and feasts and sacrifices and new moons and everything that's physical, all the prescriptions that they went through. So it could definitely refer to Judaizers.

And I believe that it's fair to let Paul be as broad as he can be here and say he probably has that in mind. There are the enemies of the cross today, beloved, who come along and they side up alongside the church and they say, "We're the friends of the church, we're the friends of the cross, we're the friends of Christ, we want to lead you, we want to show you this direction," and the truth of the matter is they are adding works to grace. They believe they have to achieve something in their flesh and thus they are the enemies of the cross. Be very aware of that. We cannot coexist with those people. We cannot embrace them. And the church is prone to do that. And that is a very dangerous thing. The church had better get some discernment if it finds itself following people who believe that Christ is not sufficient, you have to add some human work, they are damning their own souls, to have to achieve something for salvation.

Now, on the other hand, he could be talking about Gentiles. Let's go at it a whole different way. He could be talking about Gentiles. Gentiles, too, could be the enemies of the cross. You say, "Well in what sense?" Well now remember they're not stated as enemies, they're subtle. There were in the church groups of people who said, "Yes, we believe in Christ, we believe in the gospel of Christ, we believe that He died for our sins and all of that," but they had a dualistic philosophy. They later became known as the Gnostics. They had a dualistic philosophy. The philosophy went something like this. They believed in that dualistic viewpoint that says spirit is good and matter is...what?...is evil. Okay, or bad. That is a long standing philosophy. Okay. So they said matter is evil, it is intrinsically evil, it will always be evil, it can't be anything but evil, spirit is good. So we are Christians in the spirit. Body is matter, body is matter is evil, therefore what your body does doesn't matter at all. It's inconsequential. Matter doesn't matter. That's their basic philosophy. Spirit matters, matter doesn't.

So they would say if matter is essentially evil, then the body is essentially evil. If the body is evil in essence, it is going to be evil no matter what you do with it. Since it is going to be evil no matter what you do with it, glut it, satiate it, don't worry about it. Be a glutton, be a homosexual, be a fornicator, be an adulterer, be a drunkard, it doesn't matter, it only effects the body not the spirit. That dualism went right into Gnosticism, it went right into what was called in theology antinomianism, it's right in the contemporary libertinism of today which basically says, "Sure, I'm a Christian, I received Jesus, He changed my spirit but it's inconsequential how I live, I live any way I want to live."

This kind of antinomian libertinism that says, "Well yes, I believe in the gospel," does the opposite of what the Jews did. The Jews said it's the gospel plus, they said it's the gospel minus. That when Jesus died He took care of our sins in the spiritual dimension, but it doesn't matter how we live. So they subtract from while the Judaizers added to. So you've got them infiltrating the church and they say it doesn't matter how you live, you're saved anyway. We just believe in Jesus at one point, we get

fire insurance out of hell, we live any way we want, after all, it's only the body, who cares?

That's common today. I know a pastor personally in a church that taught that. In fact, many that have taught that. He taught it in a rather extreme form...was well known even across the country and advocated certain gross kinds of evil things, eliminated all church discipline from his church. He said, "After all, why discipline the flesh? The flesh is the flesh, a body is the body, it's going to be evil all the time anyway, let it go, don't worry about it." That kind of thinking still exists.

One writer, defending this view, said, "I am persuaded that as God did not set His love on me at first for anything in me, so that love which is not at all dependent on anything in me can never vary on account of my sins. And for this reason when I sin, suppose by adultery or murder, God ever considers me as one with His own Son who has fulfilled all righteousness for me," end quote.

Now there's truth in that, isn't there? When I sin, am I not still one with Christ and God's imputed His righteousness to me? Yes. But look where he takes it. "There are no lengths then I may not run, nor depths I may not fall into without displeasing Him." In other words, I can't displease God no matter what I do. "I may murder with him," that is with David, "I may worship Ashtoreth with Solomon, I may deny Christ with Peter, I may rob with Onesimus, I may commit incest with the Corinthian without forfeiting either the divine favor or the Kingdom of glory," end quote. Now, see he's gone so far to say it doesn't matter how I live, it doesn't matter what I do, it's just my flesh, it doesn't matter. God didn't choose me on the basis of what I was so it doesn't matter what I am.

Is that true? "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." But I'll tell you, there are going to come people like this and they're going to say, "Oh, we love Christ, we love the cross, we believe all of that. Now it doesn't necessarily effect our lives, we may be drunks, alcoholics, homosexuals, fornicators, adulterers, group sex participants. We may be in to pornography, we may be in to stealing large sums of money, but when we get on TV and smile at you, we preach Christ." You seen them? You've seen them exposed, haven't you?

Now what kind of theology allows for that kind of living? It's that same kind of antinomian theology. Now look at that same text from that viewpoint. They are the enemies of the cross, then he says this, "Whose end is destruction." This is the doom they face. Their eternal destiny is sealed in damnation. They will be in everlasting torment in hell. Why? They're not true Christians. How do you know they're not true Christians? Because they subtracted from the gospel. They subtracted what? They subtracted the transforming essence of it. They have a useless kind of faith that never brought a true transformation so that they were new creatures desiring what was right in the inner man. They'll be doomed.

Church, watch out. Watch out for the people who come along and are the legalists who add all the stuff. Watch out for the people who come along and are the libertines who subtract the virtue.

Secondly, you see the deity they serve...not only the doom they face but the deity they serve. In verse 19, "Whose God is their appetite." The word "appetite" is koilia, the word colitis comes from it. It has to do with the mid-section, particularly the stomach. It's the...their God is their stomach, their appetite. It simply means their sensual desires, they're driven by their desires, their drives, they're sensual. They live off of unrestrained sensual pleasure. That's so typical of false leaders who are libertines, who name the name of Jesus, say we're the friends of the cross, but in truth are the enemies of the cross headed for destruction and you can tell they are because they have some kind of a gospel that has no virtue in it, no holiness in it, no transformation in it, no love of godliness in it. And they're driven by their sensual desire.

And then thirdly he says the disgrace that they bear, whose glory is in their shame. Literally, whose glory is their shame, glory means boast. What this means is...the disgrace is this, they boast about what they should be disgraced for. The very thing that should shame them, they boast in it. It's incredible. Like 1 Corinthians 5 where the Apostle Paul says to the church, "Not only do you have someone in incest, but you have someone in incest," he says in verse 2, "who is proud about it." This is a libertine. "Hey, look, this is the way I'm living, but, you know, I'm covered by the blood, I'm saved, it doesn't matter what I do. I can do whatever I want." They boast in the very thing that shames them.

On the other hand, the Judaizer is boasting in his self- effort which shames him, this person is boasting in his sin which should shame him. They're proud of their shameful life style.

This is so typical of a libertine. If you ever meet a libertine person, they will...they will celebrate and recite for you all of the things that they're free to do and they'll castigate...they do this to me...castigate me as a legalist and tell me all the things they're liberated to do, proud about their shameful life style.

And then finally, the disposition they display in verse 19, "They set their minds on earthly things." In the case of the Judaizers, they're into the earthly ceremonies, rituals, and stuff that is nothing more than earthly symbol. In the case of the libertines, hey, "They love the world and enmity with God is the result of friendship with the world," says James. "And if you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you," says John. They are what Paul Rees calls "thing minded." Have you read John Bunyan lately? You remember...you remember the man with the rake who was raking the muck, the manure? John Bunyan in his incredible way shows this guy who is totally unconscious that there's a heavenly messenger right above him with a crown, a golden crown, because his eyes are constantly on the ground where he's raking up the manure. Well that's these people. The gospel offers them a golden crown and they're raking the muck, obsessed with stuff in the world...houses and cars and money and bank accounts and trips and self aggrandizement and wardrobes and accumulating stuff.

You ought to be able to tell the enemies of the cross. Don't listen to what they say, look closely. Do they add to the gospel and say it's not enough, you need this to be saved? Do they take away and say it's too much, it's too much, all you have to do is believe? It doesn't matter how you live, it's only the flesh? Beware.

My prayer is that the church will be more discerning. I fear that the lack of discernment is causing people in the church to just run after all kinds of people who are enemies of the cross.

Well, if you're going to pursue the goal, you've got to follow the right example, avoid the wrong example, and there's one last great driving motivating necessary element but we're going to save it for next time and it's one of the greatest portions in the Scripture, verses 20 and 21, for next Lord's day. Let's pray.

Our Lord, we thank You this morning for meeting with us, for evidencing Your presence in our midst in the joy of the Spirit, the love of the Spirit, the peace of the Spirit, the righteousness of the Spirit which is the Kingdom, as Paul said to the Romans. We thank You for evidencing Your presence through the power of Your Word. We thank You, O God, for evidencing Your presence through the fellowship of others through whom You come to us to minister and encourage and strengthen us. And, Father, we thank You for directly revealing Yourself in our hearts by conviction, by eliciting repentance, by calling us to obedience, by cleansing and forgiving us. Thank You, Lord, for this wonderful congregation of faithful people with eager hearts who have come, as it were, to expose their lives to Your truth. Bless them, Lord, each one. May every real spiritual need be met in Your sufficiency and may they lose sight of the passing things of the world and be motivated not by personal comfort but by the pursuit of Christ's likeness. Help them to follow the right example, avoid the wrong, be discerning and find that true path to be like the Savior they love and the one in whose name we pray. Amen.

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