

"Be Ye Imitators Of Me"

"... and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:17f).

Here the apostle appeals to brethren to follow the example he set before them, as he makes a similar appeal elsewhere (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). He has stated his singleminded attitude that he set his eye on the goal and he would discard or disregard anything else which might detract him from reaching that goal and he urged Philippians to have the same spirit or disposition as he.

"Mark them that so walk." The Greek word *skepo* is twice translated "mark" in English New Testaments. In one instance in Romans 16:17 the word is used to warn brethren against certain brethren: *"mark them that are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling among you and turn away from them."* In our present study, "mark" is used to command that we pay attention, with the intent to follow the example they set. This Greek word is translated to "look" or to "heed" in two or three other instances.

But there are some whose behavior is something we must not follow and the apostle speaks of these whose behavior caused him to weep. Such were enemies of the cross of Christ. Without doubt, these who were in essence enemies of the "cross of Christ" were ones who feigned themselves friends of the Cross: those who, if asked, would have said, "I am a disciple of Christ, a Christian." Such fraudulent disciples pose a real threat to God's church and are an embarrassing "black eye" to it.

He speaks of "the cross" to embrace all that the cross embodies. The cross stands for redemption, forgiveness, God's eternal plan for redeeming fallen man through the noblest and greatest sacrifice ever made: God's sacrifice of His Son. It is true that all things are cleansed by blood and that *"without the shedding of blood there is no remission;"* as well as that *"it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin."* Man's redemption required the sacrifice Jesus willingly made (Heb. 9:22; 10:4). What a tragedy that one who ostensibly sets himself forth as an advocate of the cross of Christ should be its enemy! Of course none such person would avow they were enemies! Paul wrote to Titus: *"They profess that they know him, but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).*

Ere Paul defines those who are enemies of the cross, he asserts their final destiny: "*Whose end is perdition.*" Those who are enemies of Christ's cross will suffer eternal punishment. However hurtful they may be to the cross (and they are hurtful), they cannot ultimately defeat the cross! Some may follow their shameful examples and suffer their same fate, but the effectiveness of the cross is not lessened by their careless life. God's assurance repeatedly in the New Testament is that all His enemies either within or without His people will come to naught. Revelation is a wonderful tribute to this truth and the climax is reached in 20:7-10: "*And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall send forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth ... to gather them together to the war, the number of which is as the sand of the sea. And they went upon the breath of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints, the beloved city, and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ... and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*" Jesus shall say to those on His left hand at judgment: "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Mt. 25:41). Such fate awaits those who are enemies of the cross of Christ!

Jim McDonald