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Watch Who You Follow; Phil 3:17-21
GPBC
4.16.23

Introduction – Our ideas are not original. There is nothing new under the sun. We follow others and they in turn are following others. Who do you listen to? When we find ourselves in a bit of a jam, we look for a coach. We have all kinds of coaches offering all types of services; financial coaches, business coaches, health and fitness coaches, life coaches. We buy their books, we listen to their podcasts, we attend their seminars. When we realize we're not in a jam, we're in a crisis – then we reach out to counselors. And there are a number of specialized counselors in all kinds of fields as well.

So what do we do when we realize we need some help in our spiritual lives, or when we realize we're in a crisis spiritually? And often these other areas where we need help are really symptoms of a spiritual issue in our lives. Thank God for biblical counselors. There are people who know how to take the Scripture and help us see how the Bible speaks directly to whatever issue is troubling us. But I want us to see the Bible is our greatest spiritual counselor. And here in Philippians 3, Paul is truly a spiritual counselor and coach. You may find yourself this morning a little lacking in your spiritual life. For you, Paul is a spiritual coach to help you get back on track. Or you may be like many and realize you're in a bit of a spiritual crisis. For us, Paul is a spiritual counselor. That's how I want us to approach today's text. As if we have come to Paul and asked him for spiritual help.

I. Examples to Follow

- a. The first thing Paul would tell us is to surround ourselves with spiritual heroes. Find those men and women who are living all out for God and attach yourself to them. Find those believers who have grounded their lives in Scripture, and pattern your life after them. Find those Christians who clearly have Christ as first and foremost in their lives, and follow their example.
- b. That's what Paul means here when he says imitate me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. Watch who you follow. Take not of who you listen to. If you want to experience the joy and fullness of the Christian life, surround yourself with those who have it. Let them be your guide. Let them be your

example. And if you learn to walk the way they walk, you will soon learn the joy and fullness they have.

- c. Throughout ch3 Paul has described for us who to look for, particularly in a couple of key verses.
 - i. V8. Look for those who are willing to let any and every thing go if it comes between them and Christ – and have actually let things go because they value Christ as more worthy, as treasure.
 - ii. V14. Look for those who are running after Christ and have so oriented their entire lives around the goal of meeting Christ when they die. That’s the only way to live the Christian life!
 - iii. III. The most important second of your life. Do you know that’s my job as your pastor? To prepare you for the most important second of your life!
 - d. Do you have an example like that to follow? III. My 2 spiritual heroes.
 - e. Are you an example like that for us to follow? Am I an example like that for you to follow?
- II. Enemies of the Cross to Avoid
- a. Not only are we to surround ourselves with examples of the faith to follow, we are also to be aware of those who would lead us away from the faith, and avoid setting our lives in line with them.
 - b. Be careful who you choose to be your coach or your counselor. Make sure you are taking advice from those who have Christ as their goal.
 - c. Paul says there are many – MANY – who live their lives as enemies of the cross of Christ. That reality brings Paul to tears, and it should do the same with us. It’s heartbreaking to see people living their lives with little to no regard for Christ, who is their only hope.
 - d. 2 kinds of people who defy the cross. (1) those who deny the salvation of the cross. Now it’s fairly easy to recognize the outspoken unbeliever, the one who loudly and proudly admits their rejection of Christ as if it were a badge of honor. (2) those who deny the power of the cross. It’s a little more difficult to recognize those who claim to be a part of the faith, yet their walk, their lives, deny the cross of Christ. Their allegiance is clearly not Christ. Their attitudes and their behaviors and their actions and their answers have nothing to do

with Christ. They claim a relationship with Christ, but by their deeds they actually deny Him.

- i. It's heart breaking to see the world filled with deniers of the cross; it's heart wrenching to find them in the church. Those who claim to have embraced the cross and yet have never died to self are in fact enemies of the cross because their lives deny it's power and it's sufficiency and it's worth. The cross is not a trinket – it's the power of God to save, deliver, transform, make new!
 - ii. If you say "I'm a Christian" and yet in this area of your life you say I will do what I want to do not what God says to do – you deny the sufficiency and transforming, saving power of the cross. And we have a lot of that in the church today. But I wonder how many of us are heartbroken over it? How many of us realize the one who doesn't live for Jesus doesn't know Jesus?
- e. Paul says beware of the enemies of the cross. How do we identify these enemies? Paul gives three descriptions in v19.
- i. their god is their belly. Now what does that mean? All unbelievers are overweight? No. What Paul means is that the unbeliever lives for his own interest and his own selfish pleasure. Whatever he desires, that's what he does. His desire is his god.
 - 1. That's why the world's counsel to follow your own heart is so deceptive! Our hearts are tainted and corrupted with sin. They don't lead us to God, they lead us to destruction.
 - 2. We are either slaves of God's desires or slaves of our desires. Rom 6. Remember last week Eph 2.
 - 3. When what I want is king of my life, Jesus isn't!
 - ii. They glory in their shame. That means they take pride in their sin against God. They defend it. They rationalize it. They twist Scripture to make room for it. They do whatever they need to do in order to keep living they way they want to live because their have no interest in living to the glory of God!
 - iii. They set their minds on earthly things. They way they live their lives has no regard for eternity. They are not longing for Jesus.

Their life is not centered on Christ. So they seek their happiness and satisfaction on whatever they can get or do or go or have on this earth.

- f. Paul says don't follow them. Yet I'm amazed at how amazed we are with what people think who do not follow hard after Christ! Ill. I want to know what this BB star thinks about this situation, etc. etc. Don't follow them – here's why.
- III. It Matters Who You Follow Because It Matters Where You End
- a. Notice Paul says in v19, the end of those who are enemies of the cross is destruction. Eternal ruin and separation from God awaits all those who deny Christ – no matter their fame, beauty, wealth, influence, philanthropy, charm, ability – those who give themselves to sin and self will in the end be undone by sin and self! Don't follow them. Don't heed their advice or counsel. Don't be lured into their opinions. Avoid them as examples.
 - b. But our citizenship is in heaven. We don't even belong here when we belong to Christ. We're just traveling through and seeking to bring others with us! Our end is glory.
 - c. We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh that's the end for those who are running to Christ. He's going to return and run right into us!
 - d. Our end is glory! There's that resurrection power we talked about last week. Ill. Lazarus and us! Imagine Lazarus waking up in the tomb! Remember he was dead and Jesus called to him, and he heard and woke up! Life entered a lifeless body.
 - i. Imagine our own resurrection on the last day – Lazarus too! (Don't worry I've done this before!) 1 Thess 4:16 – a cry of command. "Wil!"
 - e. Watch who you follow, pay attention to where they are headed! Paul says we're headed to Jesus – come with us, follow us!

Conclusion – are you longing for Christ? When you compare the deception and emptiness of this world with the glory of heaven, do you say with John in Revelation – Come quickly, Lord Jesus? Or, have you set your mind on earthly things?

Do you have an example like Paul to follow? Can someone say of you that you are an example to follow?