

Text— Philippians 3:17-21

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Prior to our Scripture selection the Apostle Paul warned the Christians at Philippi about false teachers who pushed a reversion to Judaism with its teaching of works-righteousness in lieu of teaching that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah who has come and fulfilled all righteousness.

The temptation was always present to succumb to false teachers with their false doctrines rather than persevering in the faith of Jesus Christ and being fruitful therein, which is why Paul wrote in Philippians 3:1-9, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision [i.e. the flesh mutilators]. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Yes, Paul desired that his fellow Christians follow his example in valuing the perfect righteousness personally received through faith in Jesus, persevering in that faith, and being increasingly fruitful in the same. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul

declares in Philippians 3:13-16, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

Thus, fellow Christians, it is important that we too persist in the faith of Jesus Christ and be fruitful in the same since there is no forgiveness of sins, no righteousness and salvation personally had and held, without a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for Holy Writ relates: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:16, 36)

Therefore, our sermon text can be of help to us all in personally pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, for our Scripture selection in effect urges:

“WALK GUARDEDLY ARIGHT IN THIS WORLD”

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) How we are to walk guardedly aright in this world
- 2) Why we are to walk guardedly aright in this world

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Verse 17, ----- (Philippians 3:17)

Our text opens with the Apostle Paul addressing his fellow Christians, commanding them to follow himself and his fellow preachers of Jesus Christ,

rather than following any of the many false prophets, for Paul declared: *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.* Indeed, the Apostle Paul and his fellow faithful preachers of Jesus Christ were the pattern of behavior the Christians at Philippi were to strive to follow since they held uncompromisingly to Christ Jesus, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:6-11)

The Apostle Paul and his fellow preachers of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord never compromised God's truth, never elevated sinful man's works as being part of man's justification. Rather, Paul and his associates preached the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)

Furthermore, Paul and his faithful associates conducted themselves in a manner which showed their focus was on heavenly things, for they knew that all Christians are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10) Yes, all Christians are to show gratefulness and thanksgiving to God by striving to walk aright in full accord with God's Word, which instructs us Christians: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For

all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

Take it to heart that the Apostle Paul and his faithful associates in the ministry did not play the big-shot and lord over the people demanding that they bow to them and the like. No, for faithful preachers of Jesus Christ do as 1 Peter 5:2-3 instructs: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

My friends, we are to do as Paul commanded those early Christians in Philippi: we are to *be followers together of Paul, and mark them which walk so as we have Paul and other faithful preachers for an ensample.* We are NOT to compromise God's truth for anyone or anything! We are to stand firm in the faith of Jesus Christ, in His Gospel, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17) We are NOT to surrender any Biblical doctrines, for Romans 16:17-18 states: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Hebrews 13:8-9 adds, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

Remember Jesus commands us: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of

thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matthew 7:15-20) By heeding the foregoing warnings and instructions from God’s Word, we walk guardedly aright in this world, for Jesus says, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Verses 18 & 19, ----- (Philippians 3:18-19)

Here in our text the Apostle Paul warned the Philippians – and warns us – against false prophets, for Paul writes: *many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*

Note it well, the false prophets are MANY not few; and, they shall be known by their fruits, their walk in this world. Oh, Paul wept over the false prophets because they are in fact enemies of the cross of Christ, for they invariably preach another gospel, another Christ, than that which is revealed to us in the Holy Bible, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18) The false prophets always promote false doctrines and unbiblical practices as they teach salvation by one’s own works in whole or in part. The false prophets’ god is their belly in that their self-chosen mission is to acquire worldly gain in money, goods, and prestige as they mind earthly things and then glory in their shameful behavior.

Take a look around and you can observe that the vast majority of churches and their preachers ignore the real Jesus Christ and His true Holy Word while they are found worshiping Him “in vain” and

“teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Mark 7:7) They do what they do to rake-in big money so they can live a life of pleasure and ease in this present evil world. The false prophets are as Isaiah 56:11-12 describes them in the following words: “Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” Thus, we Christians are to walk guardedly aright in this world by NOT following the false prophets or lending them any aide in promoting their falsehood. For example, when those who pedal false doctrine start ringing bells near store entrances as they seek money from you, don’t donate lest you support them in spreading their falsehoods; don’t be so naive as to think all the money they gather simply goes to feed the poor.

Let us walk guardedly aright in this world by clinging to the Jesus Christ of the Holy Bible and ALL the doctrines found in His Word, for Holy Writ states: “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 3:23-27 6:23)

Take it to heart that all false prophets and all those who follow them in their falsehood will share the same destruction if they do not sincerely repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and amend their lives, for Holy Scripture clearly states: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (1 John 1:9; Mark 16:16) Hence, the end for all impenitent false prophets and those who follow them is destruction in hell, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44) Accordingly, let us walk guardedly aright in this world by clinging to the Jesus Christ of the Holy Bible and ALL the doctrines found in His Word, being daily repentant and fruitful in the true faith.

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As we ponder our text to its conclusion, let us consider why we are to walk guardedly aright in this world.

Verses 20 & 21, ----- (Philippians 3:20-21)

In the closing verses of our text the Apostle Paul reveals to all Christians why we are to walk guardedly aright in this world, the reason being: *our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

Think about it, fellow Christians. Our conversation – our gaze, our focus, our community – is in heaven, not in this world, for we look for the visible return in glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ— we long for that wonderful day when Jesus will come and take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven where there is no more sorrow, no more suffering, no more pain. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Indeed, we look forward to seeing Jesus’ return in

glory because at that time He will change our vile sin-infected body, *that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:53-54) Hence, it is obvious why we need to continue to possess a living faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, for “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Fellow Christians, thanks to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ a wonderful future awaits us, for “now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2) Thus, the day of Christ’s visible return in glory is certainly something for us to look forward to, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12) Jesus Christ is our all-powerful Lord and Savior!

Therefore, let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us walk guardedly aright in this world, ever watchful against those who would rob us of our faith, and clinging tenaciously to the genuine Jesus Christ of the Holy Bible and all the doctrines He has given us. God grant that we continue steadfast in the true faith unto life everlasting. Amen.

m.e.l.