

Philippians 3:17–19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁷ Brothers *and sisters*, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even as I weep, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who have their minds on earthly things.

- 1) In this first verse we have two key words – example and pattern.
 - a) Paul claims himself to be the example – “follow my example.”
 - i) Literally, the word used here says “become my fellow imitators”
 - b) This is not boasting it is simply pointing back to many of the things that he has said in this letter thus far about what he is and how he lives.
 - i) 1:1 Bond servant
 - ii) Many verses He is Thankful
 - iii) 1:6 Confident in Christ
 - iv) 1:12-18 He is all about sharing Christ and the progress of the gospel
 - v) 1:18-20 Rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness
 - vi) 2:1-2 Not selfish, looking to the interest of others
 - vii) 2:14-18 Rejoicing in all circumstances
 - viii) 3:8-11 Considers everything to be a loss in comparison to knowing Christ
 - ix) 3:13-16 Presses on to the ultimate goal of being like Christ
- 2) Who among us would not want to **imitate** that life?
- 3) This list really defines the “pattern” to which he refers as well.
 - a) The word translated pattern here really means, according to BDAG, “an example or pattern in the moral life¹⁴”
- 4) So, what about the “us” – who are the “us” in which the pattern can be seen?
 - a) By definition it is Paul and likely his fellow workers and the other apostles.
 - b) I think the “us” represents those who fit the pattern but also obviously they are not the false teachers being described in verse 18.
 - i) Enemies of the cross of Christ.
 - ii) Their end is destruction.
 - iii) Their god is *their* appetite (they are selfish and gluttonous).
 - iv) Do not press on to the goal of knowing Christ – their minds on earthly things.

¹⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1020.

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- v) Glory is in their shame – they glory in thinking they are right.
- 5) I don’t think Paul is saying that **all** of these folks have **all** these characteristics.
 - a) The people whom Paul is talking about that do not fit the “pattern” in one or all these ways.
 - b) We surly do not want to have any one of these characteristics as a mark of our lives.
- 6) So, here’s a couple more of those “*personal contemplation*” questions for us.
- 7) If we drop back into the “checklist” mentality for a moment and we look at the pattern again:

Think about this (don’t answer out loud)

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being best), how would you rate yourselves on each of these 9 parts of Paul’s example pattern?

- Bond servant
- Being Thankful
- Being confident in Christ
- All about sharing Christ
- Rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness
- Not selfish, always looking to the interest of others
- Rejoicing in all circumstances
- Consider everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ
- Pressing on to be like Christ

(everyone scored all 10’s right?)

Now, the really serious question – (again for our contemplation not to answer here)

What kind of follower would a new Christian become if he or she imitated us or followed our pattern?

- 1) The idea here is to try to get us to bring ourselves into and make connections with Paul’s challenges.
- 2) The real question is **not** how we rate on these items or how others necessarily see us.
- 3) The TRUE question is how we are working toward being the imitator and follower of Christ that we should be.
- 4) After all, that is what the pattern is – **being like Christ!**
- 5) And to add one more hard perspective in the form of a question ...

Is there anything in this list that we should not have at least partly attained by now?

Philippians 3:20–4:1 (NASB 2020)

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²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

¹ Therefore, my beloved brothers *and sisters*, whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

- 1) As Paul continues in verse 20, he definitely spells out the great hope we have for our future.
 - a) Not just a move to a better place but a physical change for us all.
 - i) A new physical body and existence without all the pain and suffering we have in this current body.
 - b) Not to mention not having to deal with the emotional pain of this existence – as the old song says, “no more tears up there.”
- 2) Then, he concludes with the statement “stand firm in the Lord in this way”.
 - a) “in this way” most likely refers to verses 13 ff.
 - b) Meaning of course to:
 - i) Press on toward the goal.
 - ii) Have Paul’s attitude
 - iii) Living up to what they have attained (not slipping backwards)
 - iv) And follow his example and the pattern of being like Christ that we see in other faithful believers.

Who can you think of in the past that you have had in your life that you would want to follow their example and pattern?

- 3) I can think of two such individuals – J.R. Stone, and Bill Young.
 - a) J.R. because he was very faithful to his beliefs and the word but he never to my knowledge became over wrought in stating his views. He was a very gentle man.
 - b) Bill Young was as kind and loving a person as I think I have ever known. He was able to continue even in the face of trials without becoming bitter or resentful when in truth, he and Ann had every right to be just that. He was also, in my opinion, a great preacher and expositor of the word.
- 4) Paul continues in verses 2 and 3 speaking directly to a couple of ladies in the congregation...

Philippians 4:2–3 (NASB 2020)

Think of Excellence

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche (syn ta chi) to live in harmony in the Lord. ³ Indeed, true companion, I ask you also, help these women who have shared my

struggle in *the cause of* the gospel, together with Clement as well as the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

- 1) We begin here with Paul’s concern for the relationship of two women who were very important to him and the church.
 - a) They were two women who had worked alongside Paul in his ministry at some point.
 - b) It might have been in Philippi at the time he was there and founding the church – we really don’t know.
 - c) What we can say here is that they shared with him in his promoting of the gospel and we can infer they were probably instrumental in bringing some of these folks to the Lord.
- 2) This broken relationship is no small matter.
 - a) If we are to get anything from these few verses it would be that these women were important to the well being of the church.
 - b) And if their broken relationship continues it will cause great problems.
- 3) He is careful to show his concern that they work together toward this harmony.
 - a) He could have said I urge Euodia and Syntyche – instead, he deliberately repeated the verb I urge to each of them.
 - i) To me, this is an obvious stressing of the point and also, showing a total equality in the responsibility of each.
 - ii) The range of meanings here is very emphatic – to urge strongly, appeal to, exhort, encourage
 - b) By any definition this is a serious request.
- 4) We now have two mysteries.
 - a) First, the “true companion” who Paul asks directly to help with this situation.
 - i) We have no knowledge of who this person is.
 - ii) There are a few footnotes and even a few translations that treat the Greek word translated companion as a proper noun.
 - iii) The translation would then read *loyal Syzygus (SY ZY GUS)*. *NRSV*
 - iv) The caveat here is that that name has not been found in any external Greek literature.
 - (1) It is also not shown in any extant manuscripts, so though it makes sense, there is no extant basis in the assumption.
 - v) The Greek word is legitimately translated companion but in truth, I see where the proper noun would make more sense.
 - vi) Without this being a proper noun and without any other mention of the person involved in the body of the epistle, this would have to be someone that Epaphroditus singles out when the letter was read.

- vii) Remember – in the original Greek as it was written there were no lowercase letters – only uppercase so there is no way to rule this out from the original even if we had it in our hands.
- b) The second mystery is Clement.
 - i) This is the only mention of Clement in the New Testament.
 - ii) There was a Clement who was a bishop and considered by the Catholic church to be the 4th Pope at Rome.
 - iii) He was also known as Clement of Rome.
 - (1) Considered to be the first of the Apostolic Fathers of the Church.
 - (2) He died in 99 CE so it is possible that this might indeed be the Clement Paul is referring to.
 - (3) In fact, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and Epiphanius identified him as such.
 - (4) He wrote one epistle to Corinth which we have in its entirety.
 - (a) Also wrote a homily which some consider a second letter to Corinth which we also have in its entirety.
 - (5) I should add however that there is some debate among scholars as to whether this was the Clement Paul mentions here – interesting, nonetheless.
 - c) You may have also heard of a Clement of Alexandria – not really considered as a possible person in this letter since his dates are 150 to 215CE.
- 5) One way or the other, we can rest assured that the folks in Philippi knew exactly who both of these folks were and that is the important thing here.
- 6) Paul has already addressed the issue between these two ladies back in chapter 2 when he said:
¹⁴Do all things without complaining or arguments; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,
- 7) As we discussed before, the way we act, the way we live our lives has a direct effect on not only those who are not Christians but also on those who are part of our church family.
- 8) Our goal must always be to appear as “lights in the world” – our whole world.