

# AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

## PHILIPPIANS 3:17-19

Text:

Introduction:

When we think of role models, we think of those who we look up to, admire, and respect. We think of those that set an example for us to follow. We think of those that portray values and virtues that should be imitated. We live in a culture and society where there is a desperate need for good role models. The Madonna's and Dennis Rodman's of this world are not the kind of role models that are needed.

The search of an outstanding role model is often long and the candidates scarce. From the Whitehouse to the schoolhouse, the workplace to the home-place and from the Church to the community, there is a need for good role models.

On one occasion Henry Ford and a friend were eating lunch together when the friend surprised Ford with the question, "Who is your best friend?" Taking a pencil, Ford wrote on the table-cloth, "Your best friend is he who brings out the best that is within you."

Paul spoke of role models. In our text he spoke of those that serve as good role models and those that are poor role models. He gives us two examples of a positive and a negative role model.

Notice:

## **1. THERE ARE THOSE AFTER WHOM WE SHOULD WALK**

### *Philippians 3:17*

*<sup>17</sup> Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

Paul was not an entertainer but an evangelist. He was not a film star but a faithful servant. He was not a rock singer but a redeemed saint. He was saying that the role models one should have are those who know the Lord, love the Lord, serve the Lord, obey the Lord, and honor the Lord in their lives.

Notice what he said about Christian being role models.

### A. We Should Mark Their Lives

Paul says in verse 17, "*mark them.*" The word "mark" means to fix the attention upon with a desire or interest in, to observe intently, take special note of, keep the eyes on." Paul was saying that we should pay

close and careful attention to those who live a faithful Christian life.

## B. We Should Mimic Their Lives

Paul said in verse 17, "*Brethren, be ye followers together of me.*" The word "followers" literally means "imitator." Our word "mimic" is derived from this word. Paul was saying that he wanted the believers at Philippi to mimic and imitate his life.

When we meet an outstanding Christian, we should say, "I want to be as close to the Lord as they are. I want to love the Lord the way they do. I want to walk with God as they walk with God. I want to please the Lord the way they please the Lord."

Paul spoke of the believers at Thessalonica as being role models:

### ***1 Thessalonians 1:6-7***

*<sup>6</sup>And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: <sup>7</sup>So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

Notice what he said in declared in Titus 2:7-8:

### ***Titus 2:7-8***

*<sup>7</sup>In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity,*

*sincerity, <sup>8</sup> Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*

## **2. THERE ARE THOSE FOR WHOM WE SHOULD WEEP**

### ***Philippians 3:18-19***

*<sup>18</sup> (For 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: <sup>19</sup> Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

First, Paul speaks of good role models. Now he speaks of bad role models. He speaks of those who there is nothing about their lives that should make us want to be like them. People often look at the lives of movie stars, sports heroes, and famous people and wish they could be like them. They think that if they had their money, fame, career, they would really be happy.

Paul describes in verse 17-18 those who lived a lifestyle that is often the envy of the world. Yet, he tells us that there is nothing about their life we should envy.

Instead of walking after them, we should weep for them.

Notice:

### A. The Depravity of Their Lives

Paul probably had in mind the Epicureans.

*Epicureans:*

*These were the followers of Epicurus, who acknowledged no gods except in name, and absolutely denied that they exercised any government over the world or its inhabitants; and that the chief good consisted in the gratification of the appetites of sense. These points the Epicureans certainly held; but it is not clear that Epicurus himself maintained such doctrines. – Clarke Commentary*

*They acknowledged no gods except in name, and absolutely denied that these gods exercised any government over the world or its inhabitants; and that the chief good consisted in the gratification of the appetites of sense.*

*There were two groups; the one were called the strict or rigid "Epicureans", who placed all happiness in the pleasure of the mind, arising from the practice of moral virtue, and which is thought by some to be the true principle of "Epicureans"; the other were called the loose, or the remiss Epicureans, who understood their master in the gross sense, and placed all their*

*happiness in the pleasure of the body, in brutal and sensual pleasure, in living a voluptuous life, in eating and drinking.*

Paul describes their sensual way of life. He spoke of their "*god is their belly.*" Paul is not just speaking of gluttony, but the sensual appetites of the flesh. Their aim was to satisfy any fleshly, physical desire they may have had.

Paul also described their shameful way of life. He spoke of them as "*whose glory is their shame.*" They prided themselves in that which brought them shame.

Paul spoke of their secular way of life. He spoke of them as those "*who mind earthly things.*" They lived only for the earthly. They lived a horizontal live, rather than vertical. They lived strictly for that around them with no thought for that above them.

When a person lives only for the sensual, shameful, and secular, the thing they seek to find in it all, is the very thing that alludes them.

Illustration:

Millionaire Jay Gould said when dying, "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Lord Chesterton said, "I have run the silly rounds of

pleasure, and by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose."

## B. The Destiny of Their Life

Notice the first part of verse 19, "*Whose end is destruction.*" Paul tells us that these are headed for doom and destruction.

Paul said those with a lifestyle of depravity and destruction are to be wept over. It broke his heart to think of how blinded they were by the god of this world. It ripped his heart in two to think of the darkness and deadness of their life.

We should look at all these so called role models and weep over them. They have so much, yet have so little. Their life is not a role model to follow, but one to flee.