

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW
Phil. 3:17-4:9

Intro: You will remember that it seemed like Paul was getting ready to close his epistle when he got a fresh start!

The fresh start began with the words, "Rejoice in the Lord" (3:1). We get back to this in 4:4, and we have our final "Finally" in 4:8.

We have also noted that Paul speaks in chapter 3 about himself in vv. 4-14.

Then he speaks of "we" and "us" in vv. 15, 16.

Tonight I want you to notice in the passage that we have before us that Paul is primarily telling the believers at Philippi what they should do.

The passage begins with Paul setting himself as an example for them to follow, and it ends the same way. Cf. 3:17 and 4:9. This is not conceit. It is the outgrowth of his own joy in the Lord and his conviction that he was walking in the will of God.

Remember what he said to King Agrippa?

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

"And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou but also all that hear me this day were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:28, 29).

I. PAUL'S APPEAL (Phil. 3:17).

We need to study the life and writings of the Apostle Paul. He is a man worth following -- and the Spirit of God is indicating also that he is.

How wonderful it is to have the example of godly men! If you know one, get as close to him as you can. Let him teach you, and then you follow the example of his teaching and life.

II. THE TWO REASONS FOR HIS APPEAL (Phil. 3:18-21).

A. Because of where we live (Phil. 3:18, 19).

It is easy to be pressured into following the world. Our only safeguard is a godly life. And this is the only way that we will be able to reach the world.

B. Because of where we are going (Phil. 3:20, 21).

We belong in heaven and someday we will be in heaven and

then we will appear to be what we are. This must affect our lives now.

III. SOME OF THE DETAILS OF THE EXAMPLE (Phil. 4:1-8).

A. Concerning our relationship with others (Phil. 4:1-5).

Note how Paul brings the Lord into it all. "In the Lord" is **stated** three times: vv. 1, 2, 4.

Also we have the presence and sovereignty of the Lord in v. 5: "The Lord is at hand."

We must be as firm as a rock (v. 1), but be able to give way like the air (v. 5).

B. Concerning our own personal problems (Phil. 4:6, 7).

V. 6 states our part -- first negatively, then positively.

V. 7 states God's part.

And then the last is rather amazing:

C. Concerning the way we use our minds (Phil. 4:8).

This also means the way we value things and focus our attention and interest on them.

IV. A RESTATEMENT OF THE ORIGINAL APPEAL (Phil. 4:9).

Concl.: The question now is: Will we do it?

Two expressions in this passage have attracted the attention of the people of God in every generation:

- 1) "The peace of God." See v. 7.
- 2) "The God of peace." See v. 9.

If we had nothing more than these and the promises connected with them, this passage would be more than we would ever need just for these expressions and all that goes with them.

Cf. 1 Cor. 11:1,

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."