

ARE YOU AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW?

Phil. 3:14-21

The challenge in our text is to “as many as be perfect” (v.15). That simply means “of full age.” It includes both young and old men and women. Paul admonishes us, “be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” We are to follow the good example set before us. Many who claim to be Christians do not, and they do damage to the cause of Christ (v.17-19).

Having a good example to follow can be very helpful in any area. Having a good Christian example to follow is very helpful in our Christian walk. We need to be this kind of example. Paul instructed Timothy, a young man, to be a good example. **1 Timothy 4:12**, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

We do not want to be like the cartoon I saw once. It pictured a derelict man who was obviously drunk. He was lying on the ground leaning against a wall. There was a liquor bottle lying beside him. The caption read, “No one is completely worthless. You can always serve as a bad example.” Certainly, we do not want to serve as bad examples to those we are influencing.

In my Christian life I have had several good examples to follow. Dr. Lee Roberson stands out at the top of my list.

We all have Biblical examples to follow. Two men in the Old Testament stand out particularly. They are Joseph and Daniel. None of their sins are recorded. Others are good examples as long as we do not copy their sins. Abraham, Moses, David and others. For the ladies there are Ruth and Esther.

In the New Testament a lady that stands out is Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. There are also some men.

The two men who stand out the most are our perfect example, the Lord Jesus and the excellent example of the Apostle Paul.

I. THE LORD JESUS IS OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE.

1 Peter 2:21-23, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:”

A. He humbled Himself.

1. The night before His crucifixion by washing the disciples feet

John 13:14-15, “If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” **Philippians 2:7**, “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:”

2. The next day by going to the cross

Philippians 2:8, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

We certainly need to humble ourselves. **Proverbs 29:23**, “A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.”

Matthew 23:12, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” **James 4:6, 10**, “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” **1 Peter 5:5-6**, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”

B. He did no sin.

Hebrews 4:15, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

1. *We can set this as our goal.*

2. *We can choose not to sin each time we are tempted.*

1 Corinthians 10:13, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

C. He had no guile in his mouth.

Guile is subtilty, deceit or craftiness. This is one of the tactics of Satan. **2 Corinthians 11:3**, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

We must avoid this. **Psalm 32:2**, “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile (laxness, slackness, deceit, treachery).” **Psalm 34:13-14**, “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” **1 Peter 3:10-12**, “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”

D. He did not revile those who reviled him.

“And they that were crucified with him reviled him.” This is to speak reproachfully, rail at or blaspheme. **2 Peter 2:9-11**, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.”

E. He did not threaten to retaliate or seek revenge.

As He was being nailed to the cross, He prayed, “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.” He demonstrated His meekness. Meekness is power under control. **Romans 12:19**, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” At all costs we must avoid seeking revenge.

Matthew 5:43-45, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” **John 1:12**, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”

F. He committed himself totally to God.

1 Peter 4:19, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

II. THE APOSTLE PAUL IS AN EXCELENT EXAMPLE.

He had proven himself and was able to instruct believers to follow him. **1 Corinthians 4:15-16**, “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.” **1 Corinthians 11:1**, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

Philippians 3:17, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

A. **He immediately yielded to Jesus Christ when he met Him** (Acts 9:1-8).

B. **He followed the Lord in baptism** (v.17-18).

C. **He immediately began to preach Christ** (v.20).

D. **He made necessary changes to his life when called upon to do so.**

1. *He gave up his profitable religious position (Gal. 1:13-17).*
2. *He left his home and traveled extensively to carry the Gospel.*
3. *He accepted the extreme persecution that came (2 Cor. 11:23-33).*

E. **He didn't quit when others refused to serve** (Phil. 2:19-21).

Paul could find no one like-minded to send to Philippi. They were all too busy seeking their own interests (looking out for their own rights) and not interested in the things of Christ.

F. **He kept the primary objective in focus.**

1 Corinthians 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Paul's priority was getting people saved. He knew that it would cost him something to serve Jesus Christ. He willingly paid the price. How are we doing? Are we examples that other can follow?