

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS **The Book of Philippians #27**

The last time we were in the book of Philippians we spoke of following the pattern of Christian living that Paul and his fellow workers demonstrated even in the midst of persecution. He made mention of this pattern because he wanted his readers to be aware that others have also established a pattern for living but their pattern was in opposition to the gospel.

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-19

“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”

Because Paul says that he is weeping over these enemies of the cross strongly suggests they were either former or current followers of Christ who were not living up to the pattern that Christ Himself set and that Paul is also imitating. There are a few acquaintances of Paul whom he mentions as deserting him and following their own desires that he could possibly be referring to. The first one is Demas.

Demas was a fellow worker with Paul and was mentioned as such in the books of Colossians and Philemon. These two books as well as the book of Philippians were all written during the two years Paul was under house arrest in Rome. So it seems likely that Demas would have been ministering to Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. But something happened during this time to pull Demas away from the gospel and back into the world. Perhaps it was the hardship of Paul’s imprisonment or the stigma of being associated with Paul that became a burden to Demas. But this is just speculation. We don’t really know. But whatever it was it caused Demas to desert Paul and stop being part of his team. This is the explanation Paul gives for Demas deserting him.

2 TIMOTHY 4:10

“Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”

Demas, it seems, focused his love on the Lord for a period of time but then turned his focus back to the world. Demas stands as a warning to us to persevere in the faith and not be caught up again in the affairs of this world.

Paul mentions three others who have strayed from the truth: Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus. What is interesting is that Hymenaeus is mentioned twice, once in association with Alexander and once again with Philetus. This could mean that the influence of Hymenaeus’ teaching was gaining influence and spreading to others. Here is what Paul says about these three:

1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20

“This command I entrust you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:16-18

But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like

gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.”

2 THESSALONIANS 2:2-3a

“Don’t be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don’t believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. Don’t be fooled by what they say.”

It appears that these three as well as others had gone astray from the truth, teaching things that were not true and contradictory to Paul’s own teaching. These teachings were upsetting the faith of others. Paul also seems to indicate that they have done things which were morally wrong because he says they have rejected a good conscience and as a result their faith has been shipwrecked.

If you lose your moral compass it quickly becomes easy to lose your faith for faith is based on morality - what is acceptable and pleasing to God. If you reject God’s standard of morality you truly are rejecting Him as well. Those who do so stumble in the dark and are no longer guided by the Light of God’s truth. And once you are off the path of truth there is no end to the error you can propagate.

In his letter to Titus Paul calls these people rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. He also says, *“They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed”* (Titus 1:10, 11, 16). To Paul these people are enemies of the cross and he tells us not to be fooled by what they say, even if they claim to have had some sort of spiritual vision revelation.

The term “enemies of the cross” seems like a pretty harsh statement but I believe it is an accurate description and here’s why. Scripture tells us that there is only one name under heaven by which men can be saved and that is the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). It also says that there is no remission or forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). So the shedding of blood is an integral part of forgiveness and cleansing of sin. We are also told that Jesus shed His blood on the cross for us and nailed everything hostile to us on the cross with Him.

COLOSSIANS 2:13-14

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

The cross is God’s means of salvation. Take away the cross and you take away the only provision for sin which God has deemed acceptable. Even if you simply add or take something away from this one act of righteousness you diminish and negate the effectiveness of it. There is perfection in the cross as the means of salvation. If you deny its power or its authority then you deny its ability to forgive and you stand in the way of God’s perfect and only redemptive plan.

To some the cross is foolishness, to others a stumbling block. But for those who are being saved it is the power and wisdom of God manifested through Christ’s willing sacrifice for us (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). Some deny the power or the necessity of the cross but they do so at their own peril; And by doing so they become stumbling blocks to others, blocking their way to salvation. Therefore, anyone opposed to God’s plan of salvation through the cross is automatically considered an enemy.

Jesus was quite aware of this during His time on earth. He did not mince words with the religious leaders of the day and he did not mince words with his own disciples when He recognized they were opposing the plan of God. When Jesus revealed to his disciples His plan to go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed, and rise on the third day, Peter began to rebuke him, saying, *“God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”* Here is how Jesus responded to that statement:

MATTHEW 16:23

“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

And that’s the bottom line for all who reject or deny the cross. They are setting their minds on their own interests and not on the interests of God. They place their standards or their desires above the standard and desire of God. They profess to be wise but they have become fools, spouting foolish wisdom. And they accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, turning away their ears from the truth, and turning aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

To be fair, people who listen to foolish teaching are not seeking to be fooled. They are genuinely seeking after truth. Initially, with no other reference to guide them, foolishness can at first appear to be wisdom. It is only after if they become willing to hear the truth that they can compare and discern right from wrong.

When I was first seeking after truth and power I sought for it in many places. I sought after spirits, read books on dreams and visions, and listened to self-proclaimed prophets give warnings and advice for the future. In all my searches I learned many things that were foolish but I was not aware of it at the time. I knew I had not yet found what I was looking for, but I did not know that what I had seen and read lacked all pretense of truth. I was continually dissatisfied in my search and I took this dissatisfaction with me into my college years. That’s when God began to put me on the path to salvation, starting with a crazy but, in hindsight, necessary detour.

In the Fall of 1966 I started attending Diablo Valley College and declared my major as music. I had a wonderful teacher of music theory who was also the director of a small madrigal group and I was in both of these classes. Unbeknownst to me, he was a Mormon.

Well my family just happened to have been given the Book of Mormon and I was carrying it to school with me one day hoping to read it between classes. I knew nothing of Mormonism but I was interested in the story of the angel Moroni speaking to a man named Joseph Smith. My teacher noticed the book of Mormon and asked if I wanted to know more about the book I was carrying. When I answered in the affirmative he asked if he could send some people over to talk to me about it. I agreed and a few days later two Mormon missionaries came to my door.

I was shy, knew nothing about any religion, and was glad they came to my door so we could discuss these things in the privacy of my own home. Their kindness and their understanding of the Book of Mormon impressed me so after their visit I began to attend the Mormon church. A few months later I was baptized in the Mormon church. I was still feeling uneasy and dissatisfied but thought I just needed to know more before I could truly understand what I was getting myself into. Even though I felt that Mormonism held more promise than the other areas I had looked into, I was still uneasy.

My uneasiness turned into suspicion when the elders laid hands on me one afternoon in Sunday

school. Up to this point I had considered the elders of the church to be spiritually discerning men of God. But when they laid hands on me for service I knew they did not have spiritual discernment. I knew my true spiritual state and I was not ready to serve. I was still in much need of forgiveness and cleansing. And I felt anyone truly in tune with God should know this. So I began to suspect they were not as close to God as I had hoped. There was a rush to get me working in the church. But there was a sad lack of helping me deal with my sin. I had been baptized in the waters of the Mormon church but I had not yet been washed free of my sin.

Even in my ignorance I knew they had missed a vital step. I was full of sin with no hope to change and they had made no provision for me to experience release and relief from my shame. I may have been worthy in their eyes to serve in their church but I knew I was not worthy in the eyes of God to serve Him. Yet they were willing to embrace me and allow me to serve with them. So I came to the only conclusion I could. There had to be something more than what was being offered in this place. I made the decision that I needed to continue my search because the true God did not dwell in this place.

Luckily I only had to wait about a year before God placed before me genuine believers in Christ who lived out their faith in humility and gentleness. We were all at Hayward State College together for two years and I ate with them and went to church with them. I bought my first Bible at the college bookstore and read it for the very first time. Before I was done I knew the true God from the false and I knew the true prophet from the false prophet.

The Mormon missionaries and the Book of Mormon tickled my ears for a while because I was hearing things I wanted to hear. They presented a supernatural God who sent His angels to convey the message of salvation. They had a new revelation that was specific to the America's proving that God was still speaking today. And they claimed to be the latest incarnation of truth for mankind. But it was all false and deceiving. None of it was true. Thankfully the Holy Spirit led me away from the false and toward the truth so that I could discover for myself the difference between true righteousness and false repentance.

As nice and as caring as these people were they were enemies of the cross because they denied the power of the cross and the importance of shedding blood for the remission of sin. They lowered Christ to the position of being a brother with Satan and only one of many children born to the God of this earth and his wife. (Yes, they believe God has a wife in heaven and they have spiritual children in order to populate their world.) And there were many other children born to the other gods of the other planets. The biggest lie? We can be gods of our own planets if we are "good enough". The very same lie the serpent told to Eve (Genesis 3:5). I felt the emptiness of their religion but did not understand its terrible implications until after I left in search of something more than they were able to offer me.

I don't know whether or not Joseph Smith was actually visited by a spirit claiming to be an angel or if he just decided to make it up on his own. But I know of one person who did make up a religion for the sake of money. His name was L. Ron Hubbard. He was a writer of science fiction but best known for his creation of "Scientology" and the church which grew out of it. Movie stars such as John Travolta and Tom Cruise follow his beliefs. Here's a short story of how L. Ron Hubbard and his religion came to be.

According to Wikipedia, L. Ron Hubbard served briefly in the United States Marine Corps Reserve and was an officer in the United States Navy during World War II, briefly commanding two ships, the USS *YP-422* and USS *PC-815*. He was removed both times when his superiors found him incapable of command. The last few months of his active service were spent in a hospital, being treated

for an ulcer. After the war Ron struggled with his health and also struggled financially.

In 1945 Jack Parsons, in whose home of L. Ron Hubbard was living at the time said of him, *“From some of his experiences I deduced he is in direct touch with some higher intelligence, possibly his Guardian Angel. He describes his Angel as a beautiful winged woman with red hair whom he calls the Empress and who has guided him through his life and saved him many times.”* Together they attempted to contact many spirits to give them direction. Many of these attempts were sexual in nature.

Ron was an adulteress and a bigamist, frequently changing one partner for another. One of his fellow science-fiction writers said that someone thought Ron went to pieces morally as a result of the war. But he believed that to be nonsense; that Ron was always that way, *“but when he wanted to conciliate or get something from somebody he could put on a good charm act. What the war did was to wear him down to where he no longer bothers with the act.”*

Hubbard seemed to move from scheme to scheme in order to make money. Another of his fellow writers said to a friend, *“Hubbard is now in Fla. living on his yacht with a man-eating tigress named Betty—alias—Sarah, another of the same kind ... He will probably soon thereafter arrive in these parts with Betty—Sarah, broke, working the poor-wounded-veteran racket for all its worth, and looking for another easy mark. Don't say you haven't been warned.”*

Ever searching for a way to make more money, Hubbard was quoted as telling a science fiction convention in 1948: *“Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man really wants to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion.”* Soon after he began in earnest to create something that would provide a steady stream of income, taking his own advice to heart.

In 1949 he published “Dianetics” a book about mental and emotional healing techniques which he claimed worked extremely well. When the results were proven to be less than exemplary he “reworked” his thoughts into what became “Scientology” or “the science of certainty” in 1952.

According to Wikipedia, Scientology became a highly profitable enterprise for Hubbard. He implemented a scheme under which he was paid a percentage of the Church of Scientology's gross income and by 1957 he was being paid about \$250,000 annually—equivalent to \$1.9 million at 2010 prices. In the spring of 1959, he used his new-found wealth to purchase Saint Hill Manor, an 18th-century country house in Sussex, formerly owned by the Maharaja of Jaipur. This house became Hubbard's permanent residence and an international training center for Scientologists.

On January 17, 1986 Hubbard suffered a stroke and died a week later. His body was cremated following an autopsy and the ashes were scattered at sea. Scientology leaders announced that his body had become an impediment to his work and that he had decided to “drop his body” to continue his research on another planet, having “learned how to do it without a body.”

In 2004, eighteen years after Hubbard's death, the Church claimed eight million followers worldwide. But according to religious scholar J. Gordon Melton, this was an overestimate, counting as Scientologists people who had merely bought a book. The City University of New York's American Religious Identification Survey found that by 2009 only 25,000 Americans identified as Scientologists. Still that is a large number of people who have been deceived by Hubbard and his followers. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Ron_Hubbard)

L. Ron Hubbard ventured into the occult and listened to demonic spirits. His moral life was a mess and his financial life consisted of one scheme after another, continually deceiving people in order to make money. Paul warned us about these types of people when he wrote to Timothy, his fellow worker and son in the faith. Here is what he said:

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-2

“The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.”

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

L. Ron Hubbard was a lover of self and money, without self-control and a lover of pleasure. He paid attention to demons and deceiving spirits and as a result he created a religion based on lies for personal profit. His religion holds a form of godliness but denies its power. Unfortunately many people believe him and follow his teachings.

James tells us that “... *friendship with the world is hostility toward God...Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*”(James 4:4). Hubbard made himself an enemy of God because he sought to be a friend of the world and use its resources to enrich himself. He was an enemy of the cross because he sought to justify himself and his actions by his own intellect and desires. He taught that through self-help you could elevate yourself above the plane of humanity; that healing was self-induced and a higher plane was possible through the ultimate use of your own mind. He had no use for the cross.

And what is the end of all their efforts? What awaits these enemies of the cross? Paul tells us in verse 19 of Philippians chapter 3.

PHILIPPIANS 3:18-19

“For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”

Both L. Ron Hubbard and Joseph Smith chose not to subject themselves to the Father’s plan of salvation. They ignored the value and the principle of the cross as the only means by which all can be saved. Rather they sought to satisfy their own desires, setting their minds on earthly things and not on the things above. And as a result they were deceived by demonic spirits posing as spiritual guides.

The unfortunate result is that their religions continue to lead others astray even today. There is no better explanation of an enemy of the cross than this – to doom yourself and others to an eternity of separation from God because you refuse to recognize that the cross is the only means available to remove

the separation and to make fellowship with God possible.

Mormonism and Scientology are not the only deceptions that Satan has planted on this earth. There are many other religions which reject the cross. Even the Israelites who were given a direct revelation of God with proof of His power and love have rejected the cross. Those of us who have come to the cross for redemption understand the power of temptation and the need to be ever diligent in our faith lest we too forsake the way of the cross.

Peter tells us that Satan roars around like a lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). And Paul understood that Satan uses those he has deceived as tools to deceive us as well. That is why Paul cautions us against them (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3). Like Jesus, Paul is saying, "Look at their fruit. Look at the pattern of their lives. If it does not match what you have seen in me then do not follow them" (Matthew 7:15-20). They do not reflect the same Father that we reflect. We reflect the image of God in Jesus Christ while they reflect the image of their father the devil.

Jesus was well aware of the image He and others portrayed to the world. When the religious leaders of his day did not believe what Jesus said He said to them,

JOHN 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

They did not believe because the one whom they followed deceived them into not believing. He blinded their eyes so they could not see the truth.

While it is true than men deceive and are deceived because there is no truth in them, it is Satan who first deceives. Eve was his first victim and there have been many more since. So it's essential for us to remember that even though men are the tools, Satan is the General Contractor. And though we struggle against the human perpetrators of deception our struggle is ultimately not against the flesh and blood we see in front of us but rather *"against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12).

Those in the world are under the power of the evil one. But God has given each of us the task to set free those who are being held captive by him to do his will. We are told to go about this task by not being quarrelsome or obstinate but rather with gentleness, correcting those who are in error.

2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26

"The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

We must stand firm against these schemes of the devil but at the same time we must do as Jude instructs:

JUDE 1:21-23

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal

life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”

Those who are enemies of the cross are no different than any of us, for we too were once enemies of the cross, yet God in His mercy redeemed us.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

“For God in all His fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through Him God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now He has reconciled you to Himself through the death of Christ in His physical body. As a result, He has brought you into His own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault.”(NLT)

If it was not too late for us then it is not too late for those who are currently enemies of the cross. We are ambassadors of Christ calling out to the world to be reconciled to God. God is making His appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:20) so that we might declare:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

This is the message of the cross and why it should never be watered down or dismissed. Anyone who declares something else is being held captive by Satan to do His will. They are deceived and in the process are deceiving others. But God’s truth can illuminate any falsehood and reveal the deception. The cross is important and that’s why we continue to preach about it.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:23-24

“We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

It is beneath that cross that we as believers take our stand. It’s the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land. In its shadow we are content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss, our sinful selves—our only shame, and our glory all the cross. (“Beneath The Cross of Jesus” Words by Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1872, Public Domain)

MIGHTY IS THE POWER OF THE CROSS.

What can take a dying man and raise him up to life again?
What can heal the wounded soul? What can make us white as snow?
What can fill the emptiness? What can mend our brokenness, brokenness?

*Mighty awesome wonderful is the holy cross
Where the Lamb laid down His life to lift us from the fall
Mighty is the power of the cross*

What restores our faith in God? What reveals the Father's love?
What can lead the wayward home? What can melt a heart of stone?

What can free the guilty ones? What can save and overcome, overcome?

*Mighty awesome wonderful is the holy cross
Where the Lamb laid down His life to lift us from the fall
Mighty is the power of the cross*

It's a miracle to me, It's a miracle to me
And it's still a mystery, and it's still a mystery
It's a miracle to me the power of God for those who believe

*Mighty awesome wonderful is the holy cross
Where the Lamb laid down His life to lift us from the fall
Mighty is the power of the cross*

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