

So far our corrected translation of Phi 3:17 says ***“Brethren [members of the royal family], be co-imitators of me,”*** From this we saw that there was a danger of entering into pseudo-spirituality as it relates to becoming co-imitators. We are not to take away our individuality, but are to imitate by way of the doctrine which is being taught.

The next phrase in verse 17 says ***“and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”*** This phrase introduces the principle that we must select our Pastor on the content of his message, his spiritual progress and ***not*** on the basis of his personality, attractiveness or his personal friendship with us.

A Pastor who happens to be in our vicinity may not necessarily be our right-pastor. In this phrase we have the Greek verb “skopeite” which means to regard in the sense of looking for, to mark, select, observe and have respect for, to concentrate on. It means to select very carefully and respect whoever is our right-pastor in the Church-age.

It has the connotation of choosing your right pastor-teacher and then respecting him and willingly being under his authority. This is the same principle that we have studied in 1Ti 5:17, which in the corrected translation says ***“Those pastor-teachers who have ruled well with the result that they keep ruling honorably, they must be considered worthy of double honor, most of all those who work hard to the point of exhaustion in the study of the word and the teaching of doctrine.”***

Then it goes on to say 1Ti 5:18-20 ***“For the Scripture says [Deu 25:4], “You shall not muzzle the bull while he is threshing,” also [Deu 24:15] The laborer is worthy of his wages. Against a pastor-teacher do not receive an accusation against a pastor-teaches except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue***

in the sin of receiving or making accusations, reprimand in the presence of all, in order that the rest of the congregation also may have respect, not fear but respect.”

We are to concentrate, not on the person who teaches, but on their content of what they teach. This falls under the principle it's not the man, it's the message that we are to observe. This can also apply to any mature believer who also becomes an example to the younger believers as we see in Tit 2:3-5 ***“Older women [that is mature women] likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.”***

Many individuals ask how to choose a church or a local assembly? The answer is to observe the message from the pastor. In fact, one of the most important decisions in the Christian way of life is the selection of the right pastor. This is because when God gave the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, there was no fixed personality that He looked for. When you select a pastor, you do not look for someone with whom you are compatible with or someone with whom you are friendly with, or who is sweet, lovable, etc. You look for someone who can teach the word of God and who has followed the apostles mystery doctrine. You look for their dedication and devotion to doctrine, one who teaches as the early church did on a continual basis. As we have noted The Lord Jesus Christ taught doctrine every day, Luk 19:47 ***“And He was teaching daily in the temple; and the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,”*** The early church met daily and they were becoming strong in doctrine and increasing

in number, Act 16:5. The apostle Paul said in Acts 20:31 ***“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”*** It's very sad in our day an age that there is such an attack upon the daily teaching, perception, metabolization and application of doctrine.

It may be difficult to accept a pastor because it may be someone whose personality is entirely different from yours, but it is his doctrinal content that matters not his personality. Too many believers are under the influence of wrong pastors and wrong friends mainly because of sentimentality and that great enemy called emotion.

So Paul says Phi 3:17.....***”and observe or honor or respect those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”***

This is not just a warning, but a command to Church-age believers to select a pastor on the basis of the number one priority, Bible doctrine or the teaching of the Word of God. You never advance because you have rapport for a pastor, or, because he says nice things to you and about you. If you are ever going to grow up spiritually, you have to find as your right pastor, someone who takes his orders from the Word. Whoever is our right pastor, we must find him, get under their authority as quickly as possible. Never forget the principle behind Eph 4:11-12 ***“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastor-teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service or the work of the ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ;”***

So Paul says in Phi 3:17 and observe or honor or respect those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

The verb to walk is “peripateo” which means to walk, to live, to progress, to conduct oneself. It is not like the word “stoicheo” which means to march in ranks, or to advance in ranks.

It's one thing to walk, it's another thing to march. We are privileged when we are able to march with others who think the same things, maintain the same virtue-love, are united in soul, and our concentrating on the same objective, Phi 2:2.

There are times that we must walk and not march because we must bare our own burdens, Gal 6:5 For each one shall bear his own load. There are times when we face sorrows and hardships, grief and burdens, but we learn from the Bible that life must go on, we have to continue walking. God has a purpose for us being alive which includes growing in grace, spiritual momentum, utilizing the ten problem solving devices, executing the PPOG, In short....glorifying God. Inevitably, our comfort in time of sorrow must come from the Lord, from the inventory of Bible doctrine in our soul and the application of the word of God, we cannot be people dependent. Ecc 3:4 is a very important verse in relationship to this problem, "There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh. There is a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

Our problem often times is that our timing is off. When our heart is broken and we are around others who are laughing and enjoying life, there are three things we must remember.

1. Do not resent them.
2. Do not hate them.
3. Do not impose the heavy burden of your sorrow and grief on them.\

Our sorrow is a private matter between us and the Lord.

There are times that we just have to peripateo, walk alone with the Lord, and bear our own burdens.

As we continue in Phi 3:17 Brethren [members of the royal family], be co-imitators of me, and be having respect for the same ones, who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

At some point the believer becomes aware that there is such a thing as his right pastor and a pattern to follow. He becomes aware of what his right pastor should have in essence, a constant, self disciplined, dedicated student of the word of God.

The pastor will make mistakes like everyone else, but he will consistently grow. In his consistent growth, he will lead the congregation to his stage of growth as he moves along. Paul is the pattern of advance to supergrace by breaking the maturity barrier, and Paul is the example of going from supergrace to ultra-supergrace.

Paul and Timothy had their times of extreme failure but they followed the same pattern. Paul and Timothy recovered, broke the maturity barrier and went into supergrace, and went from supergrace to ultra supergrace. That's what is meant by "us".

The word pattern is the noun "tupon" it means an example, a pattern a model. Just as you have us, (Paul and Timothy) for a pattern or a model. The entire verse says Phi 3:17 ***"Brethren [members of the royal family], be co-imitators of me, and be having respect for the same ones, who constantly walk according to the pattern you have in us.(Paul and Timothy)."***

The Psalmist said on one occasion Psa 119:67 ***"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Thy word."***

Even as amazing as it may seem, even the Son of God learned obedience through the things He suffered, Heb 5:8. There are certain lessons that are learned in obedience, and they are taught severely. Not all lessons that lead us to obedience are easy to come by. In the Christian life, there are certain things that are learned through the hardship and the disappointment and the disablements of life that no other ordeal can teach us. We find ourselves constantly running from them, rather than saying, "Thank the Lord for them", I'm ready to

walk it alone with you Father! Psa 23:4 ***“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.”***

The Psalmist says, "It is good for me that I was afflicted."

We must admit, the best lessons and the most permanent lessons learned in life are learned when it is the end of the road, no place to turn, crushing and brutal. Then we learn.

It is at that point that we can really enter into the sufferings of Christ and learn to walk with Him. The epistles of the New Testament are a copybook which teach us how to execute God's purpose, will and plan for our lives. As a right Pastor he studies and teaches and should as 2Ti 4:2 says ***“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”***

1Ti 4:10-12 ***“For this reason, we [pastors] work hard to the point of exhaustion, and we hang in there tough [keep on contending], because we have confidence in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”***