

# Friends Made Enemies and Enemies Made Friend

---

Lent 2

Pastor Josh Frazee

Php 3:17-4:1

---

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do you remember being a freshman in high school? Or are you a freshman in high school? Were there those who you got the impression would never be your friend in a million years? And by the end of high school, were those first impressions always correct?

What about best friends? Did you have friends going into high school who for one reason or another were no longer on speaking terms with you by the end? Or perhaps they were by the end of high school, but in moving into college with you, and into the same dorm, you learned you each had ways of living that wouldn't work well together? Maybe one of you was a slob and the other was a neat freak?

One of the best things in this life is friendships, as even the Scriptures show us in the friendship of David and Jonathan in the Old Testament. You might recall how Jonathan helped David to avoid his father King Saul, who had turned from the Lord and was angry with David who was to inherit his throne.

What can make a friendship even better is knowing that your friend is a believer. Then the concept of friends forever actually applies. It is literal.

One of the worst things in this life is not knowing if a friend believes or, even worse, if you know that your friend doesn't believe. This knowledge can sometimes drive you to tears. It is the very topic Paul breaches in his letter to the Philippians in our Epistle text this morning.

1

Verse

Paul wrote to those living in Philippi, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ."

Now you might be wondering: Pastor, last week you preached on how we are not focus on our own works or anywhere other than the cross, and this morning you're preaching from a passage that seems to be saying to look to our works—what's the deal? Well, the deal is that our English translation has a hard time making the same thought that Paul does in the Greek. Where he wrote to "join in imitating me" sounds odd in English because in Greek, it is more as "you are joint imitators with me, continue to be so." Paul was not directing the brothers at Philippi to act like him, but to continue joining with him in imitating the way of faith. Today, we might be exhorted and encouraged to do the same thing.

We already know who we are, or, rather, Whose we are. We belong to our Lord Jesus Christ and His way. His way is believing in Him for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. You have been called into this way by the Gospel and through your baptism into Christ Jesus, just as those in Philippi had been.

So Paul wrote to them, and to us, "walk according to the example you have in us." Paul does not say to walk in the example of those who follow him, but to walk as he and those others walk—in our Lord Christ. Such a walk entails believing what our Lord Jesus says about us.

And Jesus says that we are all sinners. He says that the world is full of sinners and needed God to give His Son that whoever believed in Him would not perish but have eternal life. But to receive this eternal life, we must recognize that we are sinners in need of healing. After all, it is only those who know that they need a doctor who seek one out. Others do not seek because they do not realize that they are sick. These others include the Jews and everyone who refuses Jesus Christ's death for their sake.

2  
Verse

“Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”

Today the Jews continue to wait for a Messiah. They refuse to believe that Jesus is the Messiah because He died. They don't realize that the Messiah had to die to pay for their sin. Instead they look for a Messiah to come and be a King here on earth—one who they could follow according to their own righteousness. Other Christian denominations say that they trust in Jesus, but then believe it is up to them to live perfect lives now so that they might be deemed acceptable to God. They don't realize that they are sick with sin. They don't know that every good work done apart from faith in justification in Christ Jesus' death is a condemning work—one worth nothing but the fire of hell. After all, Jesus said, “It is finished”—what more needs to be done? In terms of being justified, nothing. Not one more thing needs to be done.

While they “glory in their shame,” “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” We await the Savior who has come once before and who went to the cross for our salvation. We walk in His way, the way which looks toward the cross as He makes His way to it in this Lenten season. “(O)ur citizenship is in heaven,” but this side of heaven, we keep our eyes focused on the cross, just as Jesus Himself did. Yet we keep this focus knowing with certainty that our citizenship is firmly established, and not by our own works, lest we should worry. That is, so that we would not worry, at least not in terms of our salvation.

Psychology tells us that there are things over which it is natural to stress, and over which Scripture would agree. For example, providing for your family. In the simple act of going to work and doing the things you need to do for your family, there is stress. Some stress is proper, but not overwhelming stress leading to worry. Another stress which may be proper is concern for your friends, as we've heard about already, but in our Gospel text, we have an interesting example. Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod—Pharisees! While their motivation is not one hundred percent clear, it is clear that they wanted to keep Jesus from being killed. This sounds a lot like Peter's “this shall never happen to you,” yet Jesus does not tell these Pharisees “get behind Me,” but that they should tell Herod what Jesus had been up to in casting out demons and healing the sick. But then Jesus says, “I must go my way today and tomorrow and the following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.” Jesus is pointing them to His crucifixion! He is pointing out that He knows where He is going. Whether enemies made friends or not, Jesus stands firm in His going to the cross, both for these Pharisees and for us.

3  
Verse

“Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”

With his citizenship in heaven firmly established, Paul set his eyes on jewels for his crown. Each of these were those whom he won for heaven. By standing firm in the faith, Paul brought many to the true faith in Christ Jesus.

While Paul began with tears over friends made enemies, he concludes with a reference to those enemies being made friends through the Gospel. The ESV Study Bible puts it this way: the crown to which Paul refers is “Honor for what one has accomplished. Paul did not gather jewels for a crown that perishes. He gathered souls for eternal life.”

As the same Spirit who was active in Paul is now active in you, dear friends in Christ, more will become friends from enemies. For those who are currently enemies driving us to tears, there is always hope this side of heaven. That hope is and will always be found in the salvation accomplished by our Lord Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary. He has gone to the cross for all of us, both you, and those for whom your tears flow.

In the book of Revelation, John records seeing one like a lamb which had been slaughtered. Jesus still bears the marks of the cross, even now in heaven. So long as He bears those marks, there will always be hope for those for whom we currently cry. God does not desire the death of a sinner, but that all might turn and believe. As ones He is making God-ly through His Spirit, so do we. So while you pray for your friends now enemies and try to reach out to them, remember that anything is possible with God. You have come to believe your salvation is assured through His Spirit. You never know when God’s Spirit might do the same for them. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.