**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 11**

**Philippians 3:17-21**

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

*Questions for Personal Reflection:*

1. How do I feel about following the example of other people? Is this something I intentionally do? If so, who do I follow? If not, why not?
2. Who are my role models? Who do I admire and want to be like? Why them?
3. Would people become more like Christ if they followed my example? How can I be a better role model to the people around me?
4. Why do I need to be reminded that “many live as enemies of the cross of Christ?”
5. What should I be doing or not doing as a citizen of heaven?

*Insight:*

Paul asked them to follow his example and focus on the example of others who live as he did. Who are our role models today? We have a tendency to imitate. Sometimes we even go as far as idolizing certain people. We become fans of athletes, singers, actors and actresses, celebrities and even politicians. Who we admire can reveal a lot about who we are. Strangely, some admire individuals who obviously do not reflect good moral values. We need to be careful about who we admire, as we have a tendency to be like them. Let us focus on good role models like Paul and those around us who strive to follow the Bible and live a good moral life. It’s really quite simple. Would God approve of the person you admire? Would following the example of that person make you more Christ-like?

Like Paul, we should also strive to be good role models. Not all of us can preach or teach, but our lives preach and teach a message more convincing than any message heard in church. People will be more impacted by the good that we do more than the good that we say. This is particularly true for the people who see us the most. What message have we been preaching to the people around us since this lockdown began? For those of us who do preach or teach, our lives can either confirm our message or sabotage it. Our lives can be a powerful testimony to the power of the cross. As a practical matter, aside from sharing scriptures or inspiring messages and videos, let’s share with one another the good things we are doing during this time. If you feel limited by the lockdown, remember that Paul asked them to follow his example as he was in prison. We can be a good example in whatever situation we may be in.

For many of us, the cross of Jesus is the most important and wonderful thing we have ever encountered. The cross symbolizes the power, wisdom and love of God. But sadly, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. We sometimes forget this because we are sheltered by the church. But as Paul warned them, there are people whose destiny is destruction because they live as enemies of God. There is evil and wickedness in the world. We see it in the news and learn about it in all forms of media every day. Who are these enemies? They include those whose “god is their stomach.” They do not deny themselves. They cannot say no to their desires. They are impulsive, without self-control. The enemies of Christ include those whose “glory is in their shame.” Some people even take pride in their shameful acts. They cannot see the shamefulness of what they do. They are the entitled who refuse to admit that what they do is wrong. The enemies of Christ include the person whose “mind is set on earthly things.” They are focused only on this world and do not think about the next. They have no time for spiritual things because they are so focused on making money, advancing their careers and enjoying the pleasures that this world has to offer.

It is easy to imagine other people as fitting these descriptions. But we should be careful and examine ourselves to see if we exhibit any of these characteristics. Have we been denying ourselves? Are we quick to recognize our sins and feel godly sorrow? What do we think about most of the time and what do we spend most of our time on?

When we became Christians, we became citizens of heaven. While we need to submit to the governing authorities of the country we are in (like any foreigner temporarily residing in another country), our ultimate loyalty must be to our King, Jesus Christ. As we live on this earth, we must never forget our heavenly citizenship. Because of our heavenly citizenship, we act differently from the citizens of this world. This means that while we strive to follow the laws of the country we are currently in, we also keep in mind the laws of heaven. This is important because sometimes the laws of this world allow you do certain things which the God’s law does not. As Christians we follow a higher standard (see Sermon on the Mount) so we need to remember our heavenly citizenship. Furthermore, the governing authorities of this world may disappoint us. But that should not discourage us because our heavenly King never will. The rulers of this world may fail their citizens. When this happens, we should not give in to rage like they do, because our King will never fail us. When the citizens of this world see our example, perhaps they might inquire why we act and believe as we do. This then becomes our opportunity to encourage them to become as we are – citizens of heaven.

Despite the lockdown, let us remember our heavenly citizenship, focus on good examples and be good role models ourselves.