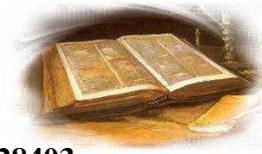


# The Examiner



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## Enemies of the Cross of Christ - By Joe R. Price

Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (**Phil. 3:17-19**).

Are there still enemies of the cross of Christ among us, or did that danger end with the completion of the New Testament? How will we be able to identify and avoid them? Should we even try to make such identifications? Or, should we leave everyone to do "that which (is) right in his own eyes" (**Judg. 21:25**)?

The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul instructed the saints at Philippi to imitate those who live according to the pattern of truth (**Phil. 3:15-17; 4:9**). He "often" warned the brethren of the enemies of the cross of Christ (**Phil. 3:18**). Paul's often discussion of these men protected the brethren against

them and their errors (**cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15**). The apostles of Christ often told the brethren of those who would lead souls away from Christ into pits of destruction (**Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Cor. 10-13; Gal. 2:4-5; 5:1-12; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 3 John 9-10**). The apostles not only exposed the error of false doctrine, they also identified those who did the teaching. We cannot afford to do less today.

Paul took no pleasure in identifying the enemies of the cross. He described these enemies with tears of concern for all those involved. There was no impulse of vengefulness, no delight over the exposure of evil, no joy in another man's sin (**Rom. 12:18-21; 2 Cor. 2:4; 1 Cor. 13:6**). When we identify and expose enemies of the cross of Christ we must share Paul's earnest concern for these deluded souls. The Lord's servant must not wrangle, but he must try to snatch the lost out of the fire of destruction (**2 Tim. 2:24-26; Jude 22-23**). Some will charge any

attempt to identify and warn against the enemies of the cross as self-righteous, creedalistic and self-promoting. After all, "we are not Christ and we cannot judge others." More and more are accepting the rationalization of these men which, by design, shields them against exposure (**John 7:24; Luke 12:54-57; John 3:19-21; Eph. 5:13**). Have we not forgotten those being deceived by error when we defend the deceiver by preaching a doctrine of tolerance (compromise)? Of course we have.

### Describing the Enemies of the Cross

The characteristics of enemies of the cross of Christ are identified by the apostle in **Philippians 3:18-19**. These de-fining marks continue to describe those who abandon the narrow path of righteousness (**Matt. 7:13-27**). Briefly consider their traits and the result of their actions:

1. Their god is their belly. That is, they are driven by selfishness and self-satisfaction. Self has become that which they worship and serve. While claiming to preach the cross, they crucify Christ for the sake of their own desires (**Gal. 2:20; 2 Tim. 3:1-5**). Idolatry is alive and well among Christians today. "My little children, guard yourselves from idols" (**1 John 5:21**).

2. They glory in their shame.

They hold as virtuous the very things which are abominable in God's sight (**Eph. 5:3-14; Isa. 5:20**). Those who teach shameful doctrines which promote immorality are held in high esteem (for instance, doctrines of divorce and remarriage which promote the re-marriage of put-away fornicators in violation of **Matt. 19:9**), while those who with bold honesty forewarn of destructive heresies are dismissed as fanatics. The watchman is held in contempt by these enemies of the cross (**Jer 6:17**). They convince brethren to believe the watchman of God is really a self-seeking alarmist filled with his own self worth. Such peer pressure tends to silence godly watchmen and opens the door for the tolerance of shameful things (**Jude 3-4**).

3. They mind earthly things. Although proposing to walk by God's rule of conduct, they attend to earthly things (**Phil. 3:16-17; 1:15-17**). In their way of thinking, spiritual things are a way to gain an advantage (**1 Tim. 6:3-5**). Like Jannes and Jambres, they "withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith" (**2 Tim. 3:8**). This world is their home.

4. Their end is perdition. Enemies of Christ and his cross face certain ruin and eternal destruction (**2 Thess. 1:7-9**). One day they too

shall bow their knees to the Lord of all (**Phil. 2:9-11**).

### Identifying the Enemies of the Cross

Who are enemies of the cross today? Here are a few examples so that, instead of following them, we may warn them and urge them to repent of their sins against Christ.

1. Preachers who will not preach the whole counsel of God. Preaching the gospel has become a "career" to some. Every move is calculated in terms of how it will enhance one's "professional life" and standing in the brotherhood. Positioning, posturing, and sophistry have taken the place of "crying in the wilderness" the wonderful gospel of Christ! This enemy of the cross rarely confronts sin (whether privately or publicly), unless it promotes himself. Envy and strife motivates this preacher, not goodwill toward his fellow-workers in the Lord's vineyard (**Phil. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 3:6-9**). My preaching brethren, let us always preach the whole counsel of God, "in season, out of season" (**2 Tim. 4:2**). Preaching the gospel is a God-given work that calls for diligence without seeking glory from men (**1 Cor. 9:16**). Necessity is laid upon us to proclaim God's message of truth and we will answer to him for our conduct as stewards of his word (cf. **1 Cor. 4:1-5; Jas. 3:1**).

2. Elders who feed themselves but do not feed the sheep. Ezekiel prophesied against the shepherds of Israel who fattened themselves while God's sheep (Israel) fell prey to spiritual disease and danger (read **Ezek. 34:1-24**). God was against these shepherds and brought his judgment upon them (**Ezek. 34:10**). While there are fine elders today, there are also those who rule over their flock with "force and rigor" rather than searching for and saving the lost sheep (**Ezek. 34:4; 1 Pet. 5:3**). Elders should protect the sheep, not invite the enemy into the flock for a meal! When elders refuse to stop the mouths of the unruly, the deceivers and the false teachers they are not loving nor leading the people of God (**Tit. 1:9-11; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17**). Elders are a church's first line of defense against Satan and his servants. Elders who are more concerned with church politics than with saving the lost and protecting the saved are truly enemies of the cross of Christ (**1 Tim. 5:19-20**).

3. Christians who love and choose the world rather than Jesus. A favorite song of many is "O, How I Love Jesus." Are we so deceived as to think that we really love Jesus when we choose and approve of the dress, language, and conduct of the world (**1 John 2:15-17**)? We cannot sow to the flesh and reap

eternal life (**Gal. 6:7-8**). We do not honor Christ and his death on the cross by clinging to the very things which crucified our Lord! We must have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (**Eph. 5:11**). We must come out and be separate from the world (**2 Cor. 6:14-18**). If we will not do so we are not the people of the cross, we are the enemies of the cross. Let us "cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" lest our salt lose its savor and our light goes out (**2 Cor. 7:1; Matt. 5:13-16**).

The apostle Paul spoke often of the enemies of the cross of Christ because he truly cared for the souls of the saints. He wanted them to walk in the right path and follow the right examples. Paul was not being paranoid when he talked about these adversaries of Christ. The enemies of the cross were (and are) real. They are still actively deceiving the hearts of the innocent and their treachery must be withstood (**Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 1:10-11**). Will you holdup their hands or rebuke their destructive doctrines and practices?

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers. . . . (**Phil. 3:1-2**). — Via Guardian of Truth XLI: 19 p. 16-18 October 2, 1997

