

Title: US VERSUS THEM, PHILIPPIANS 3:17 – 4:1
(Chatham, NJ; 02/21/16, AM) [Pc – Two-Sided Coin Outline]

Theme: The Bible casts a narrative of human history as one which pits good versus evil; we must choose all that is good and righteous and live to fight evil.

Purpose: To examine the characteristics of the enemies of Christ, and to exhort us to stand firm admiring and appreciating the beauty that is around us.

Introduction:

1. Last week we discussed how, as Christians, we were once alienated from God and hostile to his ways though we are now reconciled to Him.
2. In Ephesians 2:1-2 Paul says we once followed evil spiritual forces.
3. Christians have switched sides.
4. Note one communist who switched sides in 1945:
5. Evil forces in this world seek nothing that is good and right; in fact they resist God, Ps. 2.
6. We must reckon with the fact that humanity is in a struggle of good versus evil; it's us versus them.

I. Them : though we were “them” at one point and though we know all of us are mixtures of good and evil, once we set ourselves on the way of righteousness, the evil forces in the world will set themselves against us: it becomes “us versus them.” We are at war with evil.

- A. Good vs. Evil: ways of life may be a better way to think of it
 1. Genesis 11 – Babel set about establishing society without God
 2. Psalm 1 – the righteous man distinguishes himself from the “counsel of the wicked,” “the way of sinners,” and the “seat of scoffers.”
 3. The Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13:24-43, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the weeds are the sons of the evil one; they both grow together in the same field until the Day of Judgment.
- B. Paul describes the enemies of the cross of Christ, Phil. 3:17-4:1
 1. Their god is their belly
 2. They glory in their shame
 3. Their minds are set on earthly things
 4. Like Esau who sold his birthright for a mere bowl of soup, these are people driven by impulses and desires contrary to God: they give no thought to things that transcend the physical world
- C. Calling out the enemies of God
 1. Jesus calls Herod what he was, a fox, Luke 13:31-35
 2. Later on Jesus won't even dignify Herod with a response to his questions: he knows Herod has no intention of listening
 3. Like Paul he laments Jerusalem's unwillingness to hear him
 4. Ephesians 5:11 warns us about taking part in deeds of darkness, but furthermore tells us to expose them (!)
 5. Our actions can expose the enemy; it's why they persecute us: we are the resistance

II. Us – Paul's Advice and Mine, Phil. 3:20-4:1

- A. Remember who you are
 1. Our citizenship is in heaven, 3:20
 2. This world is not our home: taken seriously
 3. Col. 3:1-2, set our minds on things above where Christ is

- B. Anticipate the transformation, 21
 - 1. Such transformation means eternal life
 - 2. Christ's return means a whole new lease on life: free from corruption, free from temptation, and free from evil

- C. Stand firm, 4:1
 - 1. Don't let evil get into your head
 - 2. Either by causing you to join them; usually by subtle distortions of truth
 - 3. Or by allowing them to intimidate you: scoffing and mockery are often the evil one's chosen tactics

- D. Mine: Don't miss out on the beauty of God, his creation, and the blessings of this life
 - 1. [Ivana Kostyna, a Ukrainian teenager who helps soldiers adjust to life after war] "She explains how war sometimes can jade one to beauty. She recalls a trip to the front lines when she remarked to one soldier how beautiful the flowers looked blooming in surrounding fields. The soldier told her that he had been there for months and had never noticed the flowers." (*The Daily Signal*, a blog of the Heritage Foundation)
 - 2. That could be the result of this battle that we are engaged in.
 - 3. Paul gives relevant advice (even if this isn't what he had in mind): rejoice (4:4) and think about excellent things (4:8)
 - 4. Psalm 27:4-5 – though confronted by evil, David makes God's beauty his strongest desire

Conclusions:

- 1. Overcome evil with good, Romans 12:21.
- 2. Leave room for God's wrath (Psalm 94).
- 3. Stand firm in your faith.
- 4. This earth is not your final destination.
- 5. Practice what is excellent.
- 6. Philippians 3:17 & 4:9 (I left this piece of Paul's advice out because I wanted to emphasize it): find people who are like-minded and follow their example; keep your eyes on the good guys
- 7. Even if they are somewhat imperfect, you need to be surrounded by people who are striving to live righteously.
- 8. We'll pray for you now if you need help.