

Dear Philippians, XI

Allies of the Cross

April 20, 2003

PHILIPPIAN COINS

In 42 BC, allies Mark Antony and Octavian fought a decisive battle on the plains of Philippi against Brutus and Cassius. Brutus and Cassius desired a Republic (think America 1776). Antony and Octavian wanted an Emperor (think England 1776).

The republicans lost; Brutus and Cassius committed suicide. Octavian became Emperor, changed his name to Augustus, named a month after himself, and (in 8 AD) took a day from February so his month could be 31 days like Julius Caesar's month, July!

Philippian land was later given to retiring soldiers from the divisions (cohorts) of his special forces (Praetorian Guard) and Philippi minted a dime-size bronze coin in their honor.

- The goddess Victoria holds a victory wreath; VIC stands for victory; AVG stands for Augustus (V & U are interchangeable).
- 3 Standards represent: loyalty, courage, and strength; COHOR PRAE PHIL = *Cohort Praetorian Philippi*.

These coins were in wide circulation when Paul visited Philippi and he would've used them in this very Agora (market place).

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21

17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 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. - Philippians 3:17-21 NIV

Q: What is the pattern that Paul expects us to live by?

Q: What does it mean to "live as enemies of the cross?"

A: Paul gives 3 indicators of those whose destiny is their own destruction:

Their god is their stomach ... - Philippians 3:19 NIV

This is not simply referring to gluttony or over-indulgence; the word stomach is figurative for “passions” and “cravings”.

- Enemies of the cross serve their own appetites

Their glory is in their shame. – Philippians 3:19 NIV

They look for fulfillment in fleeting indulgences, and revel in pursuits that bring shame and dishonor when discovered.

- Enemies of the cross find delight in disobedience

Their mind is on earthly things. – Philippians 3:19

- Enemies of the cross take great pride in temporary treasure

The example Paul modeled (as an *ally* of the cross) is opposite:

- They’re focus is on themselves.
- His focus was on serving the Lord (and others)

- They’re hope is in their indulgences.
- He found fulfillment and satisfaction in obedience

- They’re trust is in the momentary gratification.
- His mind was on the eternal (which kept him humble)

Let’s go back to the ultimate example that Paul is following:

[Jesus] being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a **servant**, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled** himself and became **obedient** to death – even death on a cross! – Philippians 2:6-8 NIV

God took on the nature of a servant, he humbled himself, and he was obedient no matter how unpleasant the consequences.

Christianity is unique in that it’s the only system of faith to have as its central event, the humiliation of its own God.

I taught you a Greek obscenity (scubalon) Paul used to condemn self-righteousness; now I want to teach you a Roman obscenity: Crux. It means, cross. It was not uttered in polite society.

Jesus descended to the lowest depth possible, and as a result, God raises Him to the greatest height imaginable.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven

and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:9-11 NIV

Q: What was the new name God gave Him after He was exalted?

It wasn't "Jesus," He already had that name. In NT times the name Jesus was as common as John or Jim is today. In Greek the name Jesus was Joshua.

Q: What was this name above every name that Jesus was given?

A: LORD. Because of the cross, Jesus was bestowed the title of Lord.

In Greek the word Lord means: Master, Ruler, Sovereign King. By going to the cross, Jesus became Savior and Lord.

... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. – Romans 10:9 NIV

Q: What does it mean to confess that, "Jesus is Lord."?

1. I acknowledge that He really is God.
2. I believe that nothing escapes His care or concern.
3. I give up the reigns and commit all of my life to Him.

When a lifeguard swims out to save someone, they can't get too close if the victim is thrashing in a panic; it could be deadly for both victim *and* lifeguard. They must coax them to calm down.

- People trying to save themselves cannot be saved

We must realize our need for savior; and we must learn to trust Him more each day.

EVERY KNEE WILL BOW

One day every tongue will confess. Every heart will see it, grasp it, and acknowledge the simple truth: Jesus is Lord.

- The issue is not *will* you proclaim Jesus is Lord?
- The issue is *when* will you choose to proclaim it?

We can choose to stop thrashing about, and call on Jesus to be our Savior ... our Lord; to help us stop living to serve ourselves and taking pleasure from shame-inducing indulgences. Or, we can strive in vain to find happiness outside of His care; and on that day, proclaim it as an enemy of the cross.

THE WHITE STONE

Jesus got a new name; the Apostle John says Jesus will give us one too:

To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. - Revelation 2:17 NIV

Q: You know what the hidden manna is?

Regular manna was the stuff God fed the Israelites; Jesus talked about manna that would offer new life, but would be overlooked.

“Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.” Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry” ... - John 6:34-35 NIV

Jesus is the hidden manna; enemies of the cross will disregard the only nourishment that truly satisfies all of our appetites. And when Christ is revealed to us, we’re given a white stone with a new name written on it.

In John’s day, white stones were used three ways: Tokens of acquittal in legal cases; symbols of victory in athletic contests; and expressions of welcome given by a host to a guest.

Our white stone represents: Freedom from the guilt and shame of sin; victory of the cross that is shared with its allies; acceptance by our creator and Heavenly Father.

OUR NEW NAME

There are two images evoked by the new name: First, think of an orphan waiting to be adopted, wondering what his/her new name will be.

1. A new name is symbolic of adoption into the loving and caring arms of your creator and Father.

But it’s more than just a banner-title that every ally of the cross will be identified by: i.e. Christian; follower; disciple.

Q: How many of you had a pet name only your parents or special relatives used?

There’re only two people who still call me Brucey: My aunt Bobo, and Linda Brown (our Children’s Church director). Why Linda does, I have no idea!

2. A secret name is a special mark of intimacy

Jesus wants to know you intimately and individually. He wants for you, what Paul describes in verses 20-21: He wants your citizenship to be in heaven; He wants you to trust that He is in control; He wants to transform you into His glorious image.

- He wants with all His heart, for you to be an ally of the cross.