Jeremiah 26:8–15

**8And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die! 9Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant’?” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.**

**10When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the Lord and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the Lord. 11Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”**

**12Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. 13Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 14But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. 15Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”**

Philippians 3:17–4:1

**Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.**

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

Luke 13:31–35

**At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32And he said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. 33Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’ 34O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”**

The Lenten Mind-Set

Many religious gurus, pop psychologists, motivational speakers, and those theology of glory televangelists talk about having the right mind-set for success. They’ll tell you that your way of thinking, your set of assumptions, how you make decisions is everything. Actually, there’s a lot of truth to that. To be sure, the wrong mind-set, such as holding on to former failures or pain from the past, can hinder you from much in this life. I won’t argue with that. But while positive thinking and steps to recovery can help one move forward in life, it’s not at all what the apostle Paul offers in today’s Epistle.

What St. Paul is offering us as we continue our journey to Calvary this Lenten season, is what we might call the Lenten mind-set.

As St. Paul nears the conclusion of his Epistle to the Philippians, a congregation he dearly loved, the apostle Paul invites his hearers to imitate him: **“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”**  Often when today’s prominent leaders give their sermons or pep talks, they come off as incredibly arrogant as they hold themselves up as examples to imitate on the road to success. Paul is far more than some religious expert offering practical advice based on his own experiences. He’s not an arrogant example. He’s an apostle, a servant of Christ Jesus. And what he has to share with the saints at Philippi, and with us, is much more than seven steps to transform your mind-set for success. To imitate Paul has little to do with him at all and everything to do with Jesus.

While the “successful” leaders and preachers of today may tout their accomplishments, Paul counts his as loss, even literally the manure pile, as he indicates in the verses preceding our text. Anything that could give him confidence in the flesh he sets aside, clinging only to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Lenten mind-set imitates Paul by clinging to the righteousness of Christ, which comes through faith.

The Lenten mind-set also then bemoans the rejection of the cross of Christ for self-glory. Paul is presenting a contrast for us here in chapter 3. While he himself set aside things that bring confidence in the flesh, there were many in the Church and now who don’t. This isn’t the first time the apostle had written about such enemies of the cross of Christ. He warns about them again, this time with weeping, bemoaning their ambitions toward self-glory and their rejection of Christ in so doing. **“For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”**

The Epistle to the Philippians is, for the most part, upbeat and encouraging, even though Paul himself is in chains in prison for the Gospel. But there’s a threat more dangerous than imprisonment or even death. It’s a rejection of Christ and His righteousness won on the cross for a righteousness that comes from the Law and ends in destruction. The issue here is a false confidence in one’s own flesh, insisting on things like circumcision.

It’s so easy to fall back on the Law and cling to a confidence in one’s works or accomplishments. Even in Lent that’s a temptation for us. What did you give up for Lent this year? I gave up chocolate. Did you give up soda? Or the social media? It’s fine to practice self-discipline. It can be a great spiritual exercise, but sometimes it’s easy to go too far, like when our self-discipline becomes something we proudly proclaim to our neighbor or even to God. The pride of the old Adam wants a bit of credit. We want God to be impressed and our neighbor too. It may seem harmless on the surface, but ultimately it rejects the cross and all that Jesus accomplished for you there.

This is the mind-set of the old Adam, not a true Lenten mind-set. The Lenten mind-set laments such a rejection of the cross for self-glory.

This was our Lord’s lament over Jerusalem in the Gospel, that God’s people had such a mind-set. They had rejected the prophets, stoned and killed them, just as they threatened Jeremiah in today’s Old Testament reading. And so they reject God’s promised Son as well. The voice of the prophets was ignored, the call to repentance unheeded. Just before He wept over Jerusalem, Jesus talked about the narrow door. Why will many who seek to enter not be able? Because of confidence in the flesh, clinging to a righteousness of the Law and thereby rejecting Christ and His cross. We need to repent! Recognize Christ’s sadness over such rejection and Paul’s too. Set aside our earthly ambitions, and strive for what is greater in Christ, what is given us in Christ.

The Lenten mind-set is a gift given you in the waters of Holy Baptism, a washing and renewal. Receive this change of mind the Holy Spirit is working in you still. Christ is the narrow door, and He’s given you Himself. He struggled not for self-glory but for God’s glory. His mind-set was to glorify God by giving up everything for you and me, even His life. Paul so beautifully proclaimed that in Philippians chapter 2; that Christ became a servant, obedient even to death for you. He emptied himself of everything, to be filled with all our sin, our flawed ambitions, our filthy self-righteousness. And now, He covers you with his own perfect righteousness, forgiving us for our rejection of the cross for our self-glory.

It began at the font, where not only your mind but your whole self is renewed. And now that new mind-set looks ahead. It looks for the return of Christ and your own resurrection: **“We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore . . . stand firm . . . in the Lord, my beloved.”**  That’s the goal, not self-glory but God’s, His glory bestowed on you fully when Jesus comes again. That’s where the transformation that began in your Baptism is made complete, your lowly body transformed to be like his glorious body. And Jesus has the power to do it, my brothers and sister in Christ, because all of which He emptied Himself and more was given back to Him in his glorious resurrection.

So press on. You have a new mind-set that looks beyond the successes of this world, greater than confidence in your own flesh and accomplishments. The Lenten mind-set is really the Christian mind-set. It’s much more than positive thinking or steps to a better you. It’s a mind-set that glories in Christ and revels in daily repentance and faith. That’s the mind-set Paul invites you to imitate, returning each day to your Baptism. It’s also why you can stand firm in the Lord. He’s done everything for you and for your salvation. Your citizenship is in heaven, even now as you walk the way of the cross here on earth. Amen