

## 2 Philipians 3:19 "Their God is The Belly

Post by "Don" of October 7, 2023 at 10:02 PM

2 Philipians 3:19

When once we have become thoroughly alerted to the implications of Paul's words and phrases the references to the Epicureans will prove to be numerous. For example, when he speaks in 3:18 of "the enemies of the cross of Christ," this denotation of the rival sect will be found elaborated in First Corinthians, where the logic of the Epicureans is opposed to "the word of the cross," that is, spirituality. Again, when he writes in 3:19, "Their end is destruction," this doom is specifically predicted for the Epicureans in First Thessalonians 5:3, where they are identified by their catchwords Peace and Safety. Again, when in 3:19 he writes, "with minds set on earthly things," the antithesis between "things that are on earth" and "things that are above," with demonstrable reference to Epicureanism, may be found elaborated in Colossians 3.

### Their God Is the Belly

All of these allusions are damning enough but the more serious are two (3:19): "their god is the belly" and "they glory in their shame." Both reproaches are as old as Epicureanism itself. The former has been the longer lived; it may be found in any English dictionary today by looking up the word *epicure*, which will be found to denote a sensualist and especially one who is given over to the pleasures of the stomach. In the Middle Ages the idea was expressed in pictures. In one of these

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At first glance, this one at least seems to have promise. See:

Quote from Usener fr.409

Athenaeus, Deipnosophists, XII p. 546F: And Epicurus says, "The principle and the root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach; even wisdom and culture must be referred to this."

Metrodorus, Letter to his Brother Timocrates, fr. 13 [p. 51 Duen.], by way of Plutarch, That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, 16, p. 1098D: {We are not called to save the nation or get crowned by it for wisdom; what is called for, my dear Timocrates, is to eat and to drink wine, gratifying the belly without harming it.} ... It made me both happy and confident to have learned from Epicurus how to gratify the belly properly. ... {The belly, Timocrates, my man of wisdom, is the region that contains the highest end.}

So the "belly" is associated with the Epicureans. Paul uses a different word, κοιλῖα koilia, than it is in the 409 fragment, γαστήρ gastēr (where we get gastro-).

The second part "ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχυνῇ." Dewitt translates δόξα as "shame" but that's the same word as κυρία δόξα "Principle Doctrines."

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δόξα^](#)

In the Septuagint and NT letters, it means glory, splendor, as in the trust or belief someone has in you.

More commentary:

[Philippians 3:19 Commentaries: whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.](#)

Quote from Selections from above commentary link

Whose God is their belly.—A stronger reiteration of Romans 16:18, "They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." Note the emphasis laid on "feasting and rioting" in 2Peter 2:13; Jude 1:12.

Whose glory is in their shame.—As the preceding clause refers chiefly to self-indulgence, so this to impurity. Comp. Ephesians 5:12, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." "To glory in their shame"—to boast, as a mark of spirituality, the unbridled license which is to all pure spirits a shame—is the hopeless condition of the reprobate, who "not only do these things, but have pleasure in those who do them" (Romans 1:32).

Who mind earthly things.—This last phrase, which in itself might seem hardly strong enough for a climax to a passage so terribly emphatic, may perhaps be designed to bring out by contrast the glorious passage which follows. But it clearly marks the

opposition between the high pretension to enlightened spirituality and the gross carnal temper which it covers, grovelling (so to speak) on earth, incapable of rising to heaven.

...

Whose God is their belly - Who worship their own appetites; or who live not to adore and honor God, but for self-indulgence and sensual gratifications; see Romans 16:18.

And whose glory is in their shame - That is, they glory in things of which they ought to be ashamed. They indulge in modes of living which ought to cover them with confusion.

Who mind earthly things - That is, whose hearts are set on earthly things, or who live to obtain them. Their attention is directed to honor, gain, or pleasure, and their chief anxiety is that they may secure these objects. This is mentioned as one of the characteristics of enmity to the cross of Christ; and if this be so, how many are there in the church now who are the real enemies of the cross! How many professing Christians are there who regard little else than worldly things! How many who live only to acquire wealth, to gain honor, or to enjoy the pleasures of the world! How many are there who have no interest in a prayer meeting, in a Sunday school, in religious conversation, and in the advancement of true religion on the earth! These are the real enemies of the cross. It is not so much those who deny the doctrines of the cross, as it is those who oppose its influence on their hearts; not so much those who live to scoff and deride religion, as it is those who "mind earthly things," that injure this holy cause in the world.

Display More

Romans 16:18 again uses κοιλιά for belly:

New King James Version

*For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

New Revised Standard Version

*For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded.*

Commentary on Romans 16:18 included:

On τῇ κοιλίᾳ δουλεύειν, τῇ γαστρὶ δουλεύειν, abdomini servire (Seneca, de benef. vii. 26), as a designation of selfishness, bent only on good cheer in eating and drinking, comp. on Php 3:19; Jacobs, ad Anthol. IX. p. 416. For this object the sectaries sought to make use of the influence and following which they obtained. Comp. Lucian, de morte Peregr. 11 ff. Behind their teaching, although this was not itself of an Epicurean nature (Hofmann), there lurked, hypocritically concealed, the tendency to epicurean practice.

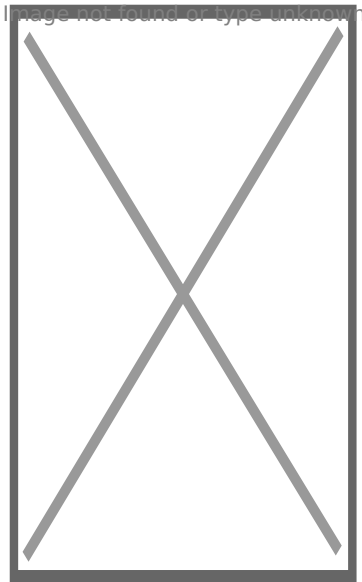
[Romans 16:18 Commentaries: For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.](#)

[Note the small e and capital E e/Epicurean in that commentary]

See <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/e.../romans-16.html>

In verse 18

Okay, now it's getting good. Check out *Belly and body in the Pauline Epistles* by Karl Olav Sandnes:



[Belly and body in the Pauline Epistles : Sandnes, Karl Olav, 1954- : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

xiv, 318 pages ; 22 cm  
archive.org

(Check out with free account one hour at a time)

This one to check out! It specifically mentions and critiques Dewitt's book and throws a couple positive remarks in. For example:

Quote

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© Norman Wentworth de Witt, *St Paul and Epicurus*, pp. 21-37; he includes a presentation of other Pauline texts as well. His book has received very little attention, which is not surprising. The book is strong on suggestions but short on argument and evidence. A cautious reading of the book is therefore recommended. Paul is himself considered to be a former Epicurean, which is indeed difficult to imagine, taking into

account his indebtedness to Jewish Pharisaism. But also de Witt has some precedents in suggesting an Epicurean background for Phil. 3:19. This is so particularly in some older commentaries; see Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Philippians*, pp. 182-3; J. B. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 155. This insight has been neglected in more recent exegesis of the Pauline passages in question in this study. Paul Ewald, *Philipper*, pp. 205—7 dismisses the ancient material on the belly, by saying that in the majority of the texts, *yaotfp* is used rather than *ko1Aia*; so also Wolfgang Schenk, *Philipperbriefe*, p. 287. Although this observation is formally correct, the material is by no means consistent enough to justify its dismissal.