

Paul's Appeal to Have the Knowledge of Christ (3:1-21)***Warnings Against Confidence In The Flesh***

Philippians 3:1-3: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; 3 for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh NASU

Paul opens chapter 3 with “*Finally*,” as though he was going to present some final thoughts, instructions, and encouragements to the Philippians. Paul opens chapter 3 instructing believers to rejoice in the Lord. Paul’s letter to the Philippians was a letter of thanksgiving to the Philippians and was not a burden to him, as the epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians had been. ***Galatians 1:6-9***

Galatians 1:6-9: I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Paul recognized the value in repeating his instructions regarding Christian doctrine and living to those under his charge and care (*To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you*). This thought may be the catalyst for Paul’s abrupt shift in verse 2. Some contend Paul’s shift may indicate Paul may have been interrupted with some disturbing news of the work of the enemy while dictating his letter. There is a possibility, that in considering the value of repeating his instructions in Christian conduct, the Holy Spirit interrupted Paul’s train of thought and led him to warn believers against the false teachers and placing any confidence in their flesh (in themselves) for living their Christian life. ***2 Timothy 4:1-5***

2 Timothy 4:1-5: I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Paul warns the Philippians to be on guard (*beware*) against those that distort, oppose or abuse Christ and the teachings of Christ (*dogs, evil workers, false circumcision*). As there are no conjunctions in verse 2 between the character traits listed, Paul is speaking of one kind of person; a person who is a *dog*, an *evil worker*, and part of the concision (*false circumcision*).

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False prophets, false shepherds, and the Gentiles (ungodly/pagan) were commonly referred to as *dogs* in the Old Testament; *evil workers* are those opposed to the revealed will of God, who are against God's instructions; the Jews considered circumcision a badge of honor, here Paul uses the word *concision*, a term of malice to show fleshly, external circumcision was no longer honorable, but dishonorable, hence a *false circumcision*. Those of this persuasion were people who did not warn or feed the people; they abused, consumed, and destroyed the people. The Judaizers are evil workers to be avoided, who are self-seeking heathen teachers, who can be recognized by their character (*dogs*), conduct (*evil workers*), and creed (*false circumcision concision/separatist*). *Isaiah 56:10-11; Matthew 7:15-20; 1 Peter 5:1-3*

Isaiah 56:10-12: His watchmen are blind, all of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; 11 and the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each one to his unjust gain, to the last one. 12 "Come," they say, "let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink; and tomorrow will be like today, only more so."

Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

1 Peter 5:1-3: Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Having warned the believers against the false, Paul encourages and instructs them in the truth. Noting, those who trust the true Gospel, *worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh*; they rely on Christ and their position in Christ to make them acceptable before God. *Ephesians 1:5-6; Romans 12:1-2, 14:16-18*

Ephesians 1:5-6: He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Romans 12:1-2: Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

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Romans 14:16-18: Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Those who are Christ's, whom Paul refers to as being of the true circumcision, or true Israel, are those those who:

- worship by the Spirit of God – ***John 4:23-24; 6:28-29; Acts 16:29-31; Romans 7:6***

John 4:23-24: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 6:28-29: Therefore, they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

Acts 16:29-31: And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Romans 7:5-6: For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

- boast in Christ Jesus – ***Jeremiah 9:23-25; 1 Corinthians 1:27-31; Galatians 6:13-15***

Jeremiah 9:23-25: Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. 25 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised"

1 Corinthians 1:27-31: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

Galatians 6:13-15: For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

- have no confidence in the flesh (external privileges) – *1 Peter 1:22-25*

1 Peter 1:22-25: Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Philippians 3:4-8: although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ NASU

Paul knows that as he points out the false teachers, they attack him in an attempt to validate their teachings. Paul, therefore, proceeds to layout his background to show that even according to their own standards, he had superior ground for confidence. *2 Corinthians 11:23-29*

2 Corinthians 11:23-30: Are they servants of Christ? -- I speak as if insane -- I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

Paul had inherited privileges:

- being born a Jew, he was not a postulate
- circumcised on the eighth day (a true Israelite from birth) – *John 7:21-24*

John 7:21-23: Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. 22 "For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. 23 "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?"

- his family had retained the Hebrew language and customs.

Paul also had the privileges of his choices:

- in relationship to the Law, he was a Pharisee – *Acts 23:6; 26:4-5*

Acts 23:6: But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

Acts 26:4-5: "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; 5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

- as to zeal, he was a fanatic – *Acts 8:3; 22:3-4*

Acts 7:59-8:3: They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. 8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 22:3-4: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. 4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

- according to the righteous in the Law he was blameless; he offered the sacrifice for sin

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Whatever gains (note plural) Paul may have obtained from his lineage and actions, he counted as loss (singular). In fact, many of the “gains” were worse than useless; the gains were actually a hindrance, as Paul had to unlearn the teachings, attitudes and actions. The loss of his gains is a singular event or experience, in coming to Christ, he gained life but in that one event he gave up (lost) all of his previous gains. *Matthew 13:44-46, 16:26-27, 19:27-29; Romans 8:18*

Matthew 13:44-46: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46 and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 16:26-27: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.

Matthew 19:27-29: Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" 28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

Romans 8:18: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.