



Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

Philippians 3:1-3 "Beware of Men of the Flesh"

- *Philippians 3:1-3 - Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit of God, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,*
- *Philippians 3:1 - Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*
 - Why do you think Paul begins this chapter with *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord*?
 - This is not his last *Finally*.
 - » *Phil 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatever things are true,*
 - Wuest – “The word "finally" is literally "as for the rest." In every case, the



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use of this Greek expression has the idea of something left over. Paul has been concerned so far in the letter with the internal dissensions, mild though they were, that endangered the well-being of the Philippian church. **Now he turns his attention to a danger that would assail it from without, namely, the Judaizers.'**

•*McCalley* – 'The exhortation to **rejoice in the Lord is the antidote to legalism.** Legalism rejoices in the accomplishments of man; true joy flows from a focus on the Lord.'

•*Constable* – 'We have noticed the consistent emphasis on joy and rejoicing that has marked this letter so far (1:3, 4, 18, 25; 2:1, 2, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29; cf. 4:1, 4, 10, 18). Joy is the prevailing mood of Philippians, but I do not think that it is its major theme. Paul gave the importance of rejoicing special emphasis here. **Regardless of circumstances the Christian can and should always rejoice in the person and work of Jesus Christ.** He is the basis of true joy and the sphere in which it thrives.'

– *For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*



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- *For me to write – present active infinitive– keep going on writing.*
- Does Paul really mean *tedious*; perhaps a better translation is *grievous* or *irksome*?
- And *safe* is best interpreted as *confirmatory*.
- Why do you think he needs to make this statement?
- ***Philippians 3:2 - Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!***
 - *Beware* (here used 3 times) – *present active imperative* – do it and continuously!
 - *dogs* – here used as a metaphor for a man of impure mind, an impudent man.
 - » *Matt 7:6 - "Do not give what is holy to the dogs (Gentiles); nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces."*
 - » *2 Peter 2:22 - But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."*
 - » *Rev 22:15 - Outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*



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- Wuest – ‘The dogs here were the mangy, flea-bitten, vicious, starved scavengers of the oriental streets,’
- *evil workers* – what does this term imply?
 - They are not only *evil* but actively *working* at it.
 - Those who wrought against the gospel of grace, or Judaizers.
 - » *2 Cor 11:13 - For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.*
 - » *Rom 16:18 - For those who are such do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*
- *mutilation* – can be translated as *concision* or *circumcision*
 - McCalley – ‘When Paul uses the word *circumcision* in verse 2, he does not use the usual word, *peritomē* which means *to cut around* and is used in verse 3. The word used in verse 2 is *katatoma* meaning *mutilation*. When circumcision was trusted for salvation, it was viewed as nothing more than a useless mutilation. Heathen priests mutilated themselves, believing the gods would be satisfied by such action. **Those in view in this verse taught salvation by religious rite and are therefore false teachers.**’



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» *Lev 21:5 - They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.*

– This verse reflects the atmosphere that prevailed in the Galatian church, and where Paul goes on to state the following, and perhaps sarcastically:

» *Gal 5:12 – I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!*

• ***Philippians 3:3 – For we are the circumcision (peritomē), who worship God in the Spirit of God, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,***

– So, what is circumcision for the believer?

» *Col 2:11,12 - In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

• Wuest – ‘The word "rejoice" in the Greek text has the idea of "glorying" or "exulting." It shows the high spiritual level of the apostle's life.’

– Where is our citizenship, anyway?



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- *who worship God in the Spirit of God*
 - » *John 4: 23,24 - "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*
- *confidence in the flesh – how many ways can this confidence (persuaded trust, perfect tense) be manifested?*
 - Constable – ‘The New Testament writers used the term "flesh" (Gr. *sarx*) in one literal and in two metaphorical senses. Literally it refers to our bodies (*Luke 24:39*; et al.). Figuratively it refers to **all that we were in Adam** (before our salvation; *Rom. 7:5; 8:9*; et al.) and to our human nature (cf. *Gal. 2:20; 5:17*; et al.). Here Paul probably meant our human nature, what we can do without divine enablement, naturally.’
 - Darby – ‘To the apostle, who knew Christ in heaven, **all this was but a bait to draw the Christian away from Christ and throw him back again into the ruin out of which Christ had drawn him**. And this would be so much the worse, because it would be to abandon a known



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and glorified Christ, and to return to that which had been proved to be of no value through the flesh. The apostle therefore spares neither the doctrine nor those who taught it.'

- *Gal 6:13 - For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.*
- *1 Cor 1:31 - that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."*

