

## THREE WARNINGS FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL

### **TEXT: PHIL. 3:1-9**

#### **Introduction;**

1. Many people believe the apostle Paul was a Baptist preacher. You might ask – why do we think that?
2. Because in Phil. 3:1 he says, “Finally, my brethren...” but he is not even close to finishing – he still has two more chapters (cf. 4:8).
3. Actually, what Paul means is, “As for the rest of the epistle...” In other words, Paul is changing the subject.
4. Last week I spoke on the theme of joy (cf. 2:17, 18, 28). Indeed, this is the great theme of this epistle – Scofield refers to it a “paean of joy” (p. 1257).
5. The Christian can always find real joy in the Lord, no matter what his circumstances may be.
6. No matter what happens to you, you still have eternal life, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Word of God to read and study, and a home in heaven. This should be sufficient to make us happy.
7. As we move into chapter 3, Paul again refers to joy (3:1, 3), but he also gives out a strong warning – in fact there are three warnings (3:2).
8. Paul often warned his listeners about false teachers. Probably some people did not like it (some people still don’t like it). But it was for their safety that he did so (cf. 3:1b).
9. Tonight, we will look at these three warnings.

#### **I. BEWARE OF DOGS (3:2).**

1. Paul is not talking about Doberman pinschers, German shepherds, pit bulls, and so forth. He is speaking here of the two-legged variety.
2. Isaiah 56:10, 11 says, “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough.”
3. Like Isaiah, Paul is warning about false teachers (cf. II Peter 2:22).
4. In the Bible, dogs are unclean animals. In that part of the world, dogs ran wild in the streets and scrounged for food.
5. The Jews, including our Lord Himself, referred to Gentiles as dogs (cf. Mark 7:24-30).
6. Interestingly, Paul turns things around and now it is the Jews who are the dogs! Specifically he is referring to Jewish teachers who tried to mix law and grace.
7. These false teachers are usually called Judaizers or legalists (cf. Acts 15:1, 2; Gal. 1:6-9; 2:4, 21).

8. As Paul traveled from town to town, he felt these “dogs” snapping at his heels.

## **II. BEWARE OF EVIL WORKERS (3:2).**

1. They claimed to be Christian workers. If they didn’t profess faith in Christ they wouldn’t get anywhere with Christians. Like the false cults today, they claimed to be Christian workers.
2. In reality they were “evil workers” (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).
3. As we go out house to house we meet many people who think they can be saved by their good works. A lady told a preacher that getting to heaven is like rowing a boat – one oar is faith and the other is works. She said, “If you use both, you will get there. If you use only one, you go around in circles.” The preacher said, “Lady, nobody is going to heaven in a rowboat.”

## **III. BEWARE OF THE CONCISION (3:2).**

1. Some might question who exactly the “dogs” and “evil workers” were, but it is easy to identify “the concision” (referring to circumcision).
2. Paul is literally calling them “mutilators” (cf. Gal. 5:11, 12).
3. The chief mark of the Judaizers was their claim that circumcision was necessary for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1; Gal. 5:1-4; 6:15).
4. The unsaved Judaizers, just like all false religionists whether they be JW’s, RC’s, Mormons, Muslims, et al, fail to see things from a spiritual perspective.
5. “One of the most destructive errors of the Judaizers was their dependence in the flesh. Paul attacks this evil by saying, ‘Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more’ (Phil. 3:4)” (J Allen Blair, *Living Victoriously*).
8. If anyone had confidence in the flesh, it was Paul before he was saved (Phil. 3:4-9).
9. Paul had impeccable credentials as a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” and a Pharisee (3:5, 6). “Blameless” does not mean “sinless,” but careful and diligent in observing the rules and regulations of Pharisaical Judaism (like many of the Orthodox Jews today).
10. None of his religious achievements could save him, and once he was saved he realized they were useless. He counted them “loss for Christ” (3:7). I believe many religious people (e.g. RC’s) never come to Christ because they do not want to give up their religious achievements.

11. Religion brings a certain level of self-satisfaction, and even has true benefits, such as morality and strong family ties. But as long as sinners trust in their religion, and cling to their religion, they can never get saved. They must realize that in the eyes of God their religion is “dung” (3:8).
12. Circumcision was a symbolic acknowledgment of the total inability of the flesh to produce fruit for God. Circumcision speaks of death to the flesh, but these unsaved Judaizers were walking in the flesh (cf. Rom. 2:28, 29; Col. 2:11).
13. Today there are millions of lost souls who are trusting in some ritual to get them to heaven. For example, there are many people who glory in their baptism but fail to distinguish between the ordinance and its underlying meaning.
14. There are people who are very careful to never miss the Lord’s Supper but have never been born again.
15. On the other hand, Paul states, “we (i.e. Jews that had accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour) are the circumcision...” (3:3).
16. Notice the marks of a genuine believer:
  - a. They “worship God in the spirit” (3:3). Theirs is a true spiritual worship, not just ritual and traditions. The worldly and unregenerate worshippers need their fancy temples and candles and incense and elaborate costumes and ceremonies, but this is foreign to the N.T.
  - b. Those that are genuinely saved “rejoice in Christ Jesus,” not in their church or in their own righteousness, etc. I will never forget an incident that took place down in Virginia. I was talking to a JW and he said, “How come you Christians are always talking about Jesus?” (Cf. 2:9-11).
  - c. True believers have “no confidence in the flesh” (3:3). We cannot be saved through fleshly efforts. We cannot get others saved through fleshly efforts. We cannot please God in the flesh (cf. Rom. 8:8; Gal. 5:16-26).
  - d. Do not expect any thing but trouble from your flesh (cf. Rom. 7:18, 25; 8:5).
17. The majority of mankind wants to work their way into heaven. They need to understand that their righteousness is as filthy rags (cf. Isa. 64:6). It is only “through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (3:9; cf. II Cor. 5:21).

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. The apostle Paul said: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (3:7). The late missionary to Ecuador, Jim Elliot, said: “He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Are you holding back on God?
2. To unsaved: One preacher said, “Paul had enough religion to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven.” What about you?

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