

## **“Beware Of The Dogs”**

*“Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me is not irksome, but for you it is safe. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision: for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh”* (Phil. 3:1-3).

*“Finally, my brethren.”* One would, from these words, suppose the apostle is preparing to conclude his letter but is poised to give one more exhortation. In this case, however, such would be a wrong anticipation for *“Finally”* appears again in 4:8.

*“Rejoice in the Lord.”* Some have described this epistle as an epistle of joy because of the repeated occurrences of the word *“joy”* (found seven times) and *“rejoice”* (appearing nine times). It is revealing that Paul could have such feelings in the midst of such doubt about his own future life on the earth, coupled with the discomforts and trials which prison brought to him. Without doubt, Paul’s *“joy”* and *“rejoicing”* came because he looked *“not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen”* (2 Cor. 4:18). Paul’s doubts were confined to the final outcome of his appeal to Caesar; his certainty about future things came because he *“walked by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). The Philippians (and Christians today) have many reasons to *“rejoice in the Lord.”* We have a Savior in Christ; a mediator and one whose watchful eyes are never blind to our needs.

*“To me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe.”* It was not irksome to Paul to repeat again and again (as he does in this letter) a call to Philippians to *“rejoice in the Lord.”* And, for the Philippians, it was safe for them to be mindful of the blessings they had in Christ. There were many reasons why they should not falter but press on toward the high calling of God as he later appeals to them to do (3:15). *“Beware of dogs, of evil workers, of the concision.”* Many commentators see in these three warnings a single reference to unbelieving and Judazing Jews. Doubtlessly such were included, and while admittedly *“Beware of the concision”* is reference to Jews, there is no need to account that the other two warnings are exclusively reference to them, for *“dogs”* and *“evil workers”* were to be found among Gentiles as well as Jews.

*“Dogs”* was a word of contempt and scorn among Jews for Gentiles; as well as among Gentiles for Jews. The words of Jesus to the Syrophenician woman, *“It is not meet to take the children’s bread and give it to dogs,”* were designed to test the woman’s faith, but would have had a stinging

effect on a "thin-skinned" person (Mk. 7:27). "Dogs" were regarded as unclean creatures and were dangers to the Philippians from the Gentiles, as well as Jews, of those who practiced all sorts of uncleanness. Philippians would do well to "steer clear" of such.

In addition, there were "*evil workers*" among both races of people. While some view these as "false teachers" the observation still holds. One only has to remember the conniving of Demetrius, who in Ephesus provoked a riot under the guise that the goddess Diana of the Ephesians was endangered by the preaching of Paul and his co-laborers there. They cared mostly about money, but they, by their evil works, brought to conclusion an open door Paul had found in that city (Acts 19).

The warning to "*beware of the concision*" is a warning against the pernicious influence of unbelieving Jews. The word "*concision*" (mutilation) is reference to the act of circumcision practiced among the Jews. Paul distinguished between a literal circumcision of the Jews and the spiritual circumcision of the Christians stating emphatically that the physical circumcision of the Jews was nothing more than a "mutilation" -- not true circumcision as they supposed. God had given circumcision as a sign of a covenant between himself and Abraham and the Jews, by their rejection of God's Christ, showed they were not in true covenant relationship with God.

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