

## Philippians 8 - Beware

Up to this point in our examination of Philippians, God has dealt with attitudes from *inside* the church that will affect the church. Paul wrote about the humility and selflessness that Christ had and that *we* can have which enables the church to work in unity.

When we move on to chapter 3, God turns our attention to an *external* pressure that can affect the church. It is not going to be an *attitude* that the world has toward us. The world stands *against* the church, but we can shut the world out. That is not being uncharitable because anyone from the world can easily get saved and come *in* to the church. What is identified in chapter 3 is *doctrinal*. Paul wrote about the problem of salvation by the works of the Law which was the first theological problem that churches faced in that day. We will examine that problem more completely from the whole chapter in a sermon to come. Today, we are going to look at just the first three verses and the attitude we should have to be prepared to face the challenge of the world.

We commonly refer to the way Satan blasphemed the Word of God in the temptation of Eve. As we breakdown the scene in Eden, we should note that the way he did this was by altering the teaching, or doctrine, that God had given regarding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. There are those complain that doctrine *divides*. Doctrine doesn't *divide*, doctrine *defines*. We can easily stand up to bad attitudes, but doctrine defines who and what we are. Doctrine is the framework of our faith, our mission, our purpose, and our ability to relate to God and His will. When Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses use the words *God*, *Jesus*, *Scripture*, or *salvation* they aren't talking about the same thing. We all might use the same words, but we each have different definitions for them.

### 1. Safety in doctrine -

Phil 3:1 Finally, [**that is, 'finally,**

**to complete my argument from the first two chapters']** my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.

In verse 1 we can see Paul's concern for their safety. The things that he wrote about were not just that they would have humility, but humility for a purpose. That purpose was defined at the beginning of the book as the defense of the body of Christian doctrine.

Phil 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Let your conversation, or lifestyle, be becoming, or be worthy, of the Gospel. They will need unity to be able to stand fast in one spirit as they hold the line, striving together, for the faith of the Gospel. He doesn't just say Gospel, but *the faith* of the Gospel. *The* faith often means the body of Christian doctrine.

1Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:  
21Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace *be* with thee. Amen.

Rom 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Paul said that he had written the first two chapters about the doctrine of the Gospel for their *safety*. In Ephesians Paul expressed the need for Christian maturity because of the cunning craftiness of the

deceivers.

Eph 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

In 1 Timothy Paul pointed out that doctrine, *specifically*, will be the way to overcome the deceivers.

1Tim 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

## 2. Beware -

Next comes Paul's warning.

Phil 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

The key word to see here is the word *beware*. There are going to be some variations of understanding of the Scriptures as we try to apply them. If we express disagreement it doesn't always mean that we consider someone to be a heretic. It is many times done to give food for thought. However, this is not what Paul is dealing with here. He is using very strong language here. He calls them dogs, evil workers, and, the clearest doctrinal designation, the concision. This is how Paul introduces the whole problem of legalism, the teaching that you have to get saved by how well you behave rather than by the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

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. These were Jews who were nominal Christians, who accepted the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of Israel only, and who taught that a Gentile had to come through the gate of Judaism in order to be saved...They wished to continue under the Mosaic law. What happened in the Galatian churches, Paul was trying to forestall in the church at Philippi.

The word “dogs” was a term of reproach among both Greeks and Jews. The poet Homer uses it of men and women, implying recklessness in the former, and shamelessness in the latter. Gentiles of the Christian era were called dogs by the Jews. Our Lord in Matthew 15:26 does not use the word which Paul uses, but instead, a diminutive form of the word. The dogs here were the mangy, flea-bitten, vicious, starved scavengers of the oriental streets, while the dogs our Lord referred to were the well-cared for little house pets of an oriental household. The dogs were the Judaizers. Paul calls them evil workers. The term implies, not merely evil doers, but those who actually wrought against the gospel of grace. He speaks of them as the concision. The Greek word [concision] occurs only here in the New Testament. A kindred [word] is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, speaking of mutilations forbidden by the Mosaic law such as the pagans were wont to inflict upon themselves in their religious rites (Zech. 13:4–6). The Greek word which Paul uses is a play upon the Greek word “circumcision.” Paul characterizes those who were not of the true circumcision as merely mutilated. Heathen priests mutilated their own bodies. The Judaizers mutilated the message of the gospel by

adding law to grace, and thus their own spiritual lives and those of their converts. ...The implication is that the Judaizers had come to a settled confidence in the flesh, while Paul disclaims such a thing in relation to himself. Paul has used this word before in this letter (1:25). It shows that the apostle did not arrive at his decisions or convictions hastily, but only after mature consideration.

— Wuest Word Studies

In Galatians, Paul is even less charitable to the Judaizers suggesting that it would be more fitting if they were entirely made eunuchs. The Judaizer's preached circumcision of the flesh according to the Mosaic Law. Paul contrasted this with the spirit of the Law as Abraham received circumcision before the Law was given.

Rom 4:1-5 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

3For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Rom 4:10-12 How was it then reckoned? when he was in *c i r c u m c i s i o n*, or in *u n c i r c u m c i s i o n*? Not in *c i r c u m c i s i o n*, but in *u n c i r c u m c i s i o n*.

11And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised:

that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being yet uncircumcised.

Gal 3:11-18 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

12And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

14That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

15Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

Abraham received salvation by faith. Paul's argument is that if God gave salvation by faith to Abraham, the which

came 430 years later can't take that salvation away. The conclusion is that the Law and circumcision was not meant to be a means of salvation. The spirit of the Law is a spiritual circumcision.

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Rom 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Being wary then, becomes very important. It is the difference between eternal life and eternal death. Those who teach that we should be trusting in mere outward observance of a Law miss not only the whole point of the Law. They also miss eternal salvation.

### 3. Building a safety net -

Unfortunately, to many people, the work of plodding through the research and study to arrive at sound doctrine is tiring. It takes work to sort things out to get past the moment of confusion. This is probably why people end up in courts where the judges and the lawyers *will* painstakingly plod through the legal process to let you know why you are there. Also, you *want* them do this and not just say, "Eh, he looks guilty. Give him a \$10,000 fine."

The business of the Lord is more than getting together and singing a few hymns and choruses. When you actually try to get something done is when you discover how thoughtful and careful you have to be. Psalm 119 is all about the Word of

God. It takes a while to read, but it is so worth the time it takes to read because every verse makes reference to the Word of God in one way or another. Here is a smattering of verses just from the Psalm that teach us how to approach God's Word to build a safety net against the attacks of the deceivers.

Ps 119:1-176 ALEPH. Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. **[We have to *walk* in the law of the Lord]**

2Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart. **[We have to have a wholehearted interest in God's Word]**

4Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently. **[We have to be *diligent*]**

6Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. **[We can't just pick and choose what we want to pay attention to]**

11Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. **[We have to memorize God's Word]**

13With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. **[We learn God's Word by sharing it with others. If you can't explain it then you don't *really* know it]**

14I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches. **[There are many things we will learn to get our paycheck. Is God's Word less valuable?]**

15I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. **[We have to meditate on God's Word, not just read it and not think of how It applies to us.]**

18Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. **[We have to pray for enlightenment]**

24Thy testimonies also *are* my delight *and* my counsellors.



**[Delighting in the Word of God is an *acquired* taste. We need to learn it till we delight in It.]**

29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. **[We can't just *add* on the Word to our lives, but *r e p l a c e* o u r o l d communications]**

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. **[We have to be *anxious* and *run* to God's Word]**

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; *and* quicken thou me in thy way. **[We have to avoid the empty philosophies of the world and depend on the Word of God to quicken us (give us life).]**

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. **[We have to hold ourselves accountable to God for what we learn]**

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. **[We have to *boldly* share God's Word]**

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. **[We have to be faithful to trust in God's Word even in the times of affliction when everything is "no fair."]**

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: *yet* have I not declined from thy law. **[We have to be faithful to God's Word even when people mock and are against us.]**

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. **[Our music needs to be not in contradiction to God's Word]**

59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. **[We have to apply God's Word to all of our decisions]**

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy

righteous judgments. **[God's Word should be our concern day and night]**

63I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. **[We need to keep company with those who love God's Word]**

64The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes. **[We need to attend to the teaching of God's Word.]**

71It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. **[We need to seek what God is teaching us through the problems we face.]**

113SAMECH. I hate *vain* thoughts: but thy law do I love. **[We need to avoid the vain philosophies of the world that are pressed upon us and realize that the Bible answers really are the right answers.]**

2Tim 3:16-17 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Life is complicated. People wish it were simple, but it's not. We complain, "Why can't I just..." The answer is that life will not allow you to. Because God will let people choose which way they will go, they think they can afford to ignore God. They think they are making out okay, but do not realize that there are consequences to our choices and that they can't live a life free of consequence.

Prov 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

There are churches that are more concerned about the forms of religion than they are the functions of religion. Their service is based on the

performance of rituals and maintaining the appearance of religion. Our concern should be on how faith *functions*. This is why we place such an emphasis on the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Without it, people make themselves god with the implication that God has to accept what *they* think is best and right. That was the mistake that Cain, the first murderer, made and nothing has changed since then. Salvation is not according to the way *we* imagine it to be, but according to what *God* planned and offered to us. We don't live by the way *we* think God should have to accept from us, but what we should accept from *Him*. We pray not *my* will be done, but *Thy* will be done. The first way to know what God is thinking is to know His Word. Choose to know God by turning to Him and ask Him to save you from your sin, death, and Hell. Then choose to know God by pursuing His Word.

1. Safety in doctrine - Phil 3:1,1:27, Eph 4:14, 1Tim 4:16
2. Beware - Phil 3:2, Rom 4:1-5,10-12, Gal 3:11-18, Phil 3:3, Rom 2:28-29
3. Building a safety net - Ps 119:1-176, 2Tim 3:16-17