

Memory Verse

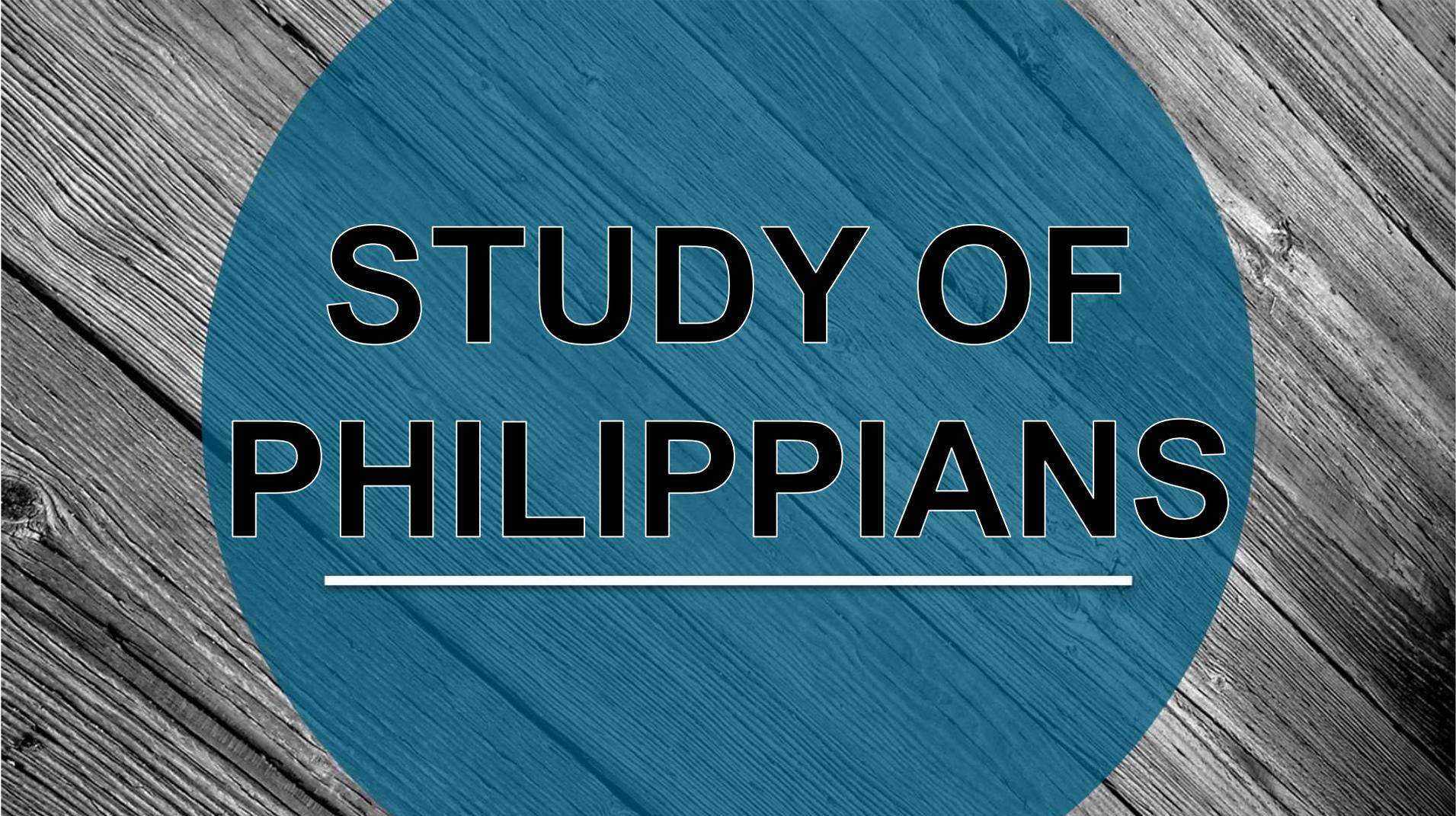
Philippians 3:2

**Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers,
look out for those who mutilate the flesh.**

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**STUDY OF
PHILIPPIANS**

PHILIPPIANS

Part 12

Paul's Warning and Exhortation

Philippians 3:1-4a

We have learned...

- Paul wrote this about 62AD while in house arrest in Rome
- Epaphroditus brought money to Paul from Philippi
- Paul sent this letter back with him to them to thank them for their gift and update them
- He spoke about: the gospel, persecution, humility, serving others and gave Jesus, Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples

Philippians 3:1-4a

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh – though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.

A. 3:1 – Be Joyful

What we have translated as "*finally*," can refer to coming close to an end, but the word here is a connective showing a *move to a different topic*.

He says to *rejoice*... He *rejoiced* the gospel was proclaimed: 1:18. He *rejoiced* in his ministry: 2:17. He called them to *rejoice* with him: 2:18. See also: 1:4, 25, 2:2, 28-29, 3:1, and now he adds another element. *Rejoice in the Lord!*

A. 3:1 – Be Joyful

IVP Commentary: "Not only does he focus them again on *the Lord*, but he does so in the language of both the laments and the praise psalms, so as to set their focus above themselves and their sufferings by active participation in singing and praise to Christ."

For Paul, "*rejoice*" or "*joy*" was a verb, something **to do**, rather than something that was felt!

A. 3:1 – Be Joyful

Then he talks about writing the *same things*, which was *no trouble for him but safe or a safeguard for them*. "Safe" refers to something *secure, on a solid footing or foundation, something that does not fall or slip, something trustworthy and reliable*.

Truth is a *safeguard against error*, which brings us to *verse 2*.

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

We see a 2-word phrase used 3 times here: *Look out, or be watchful.*

Another way to translate this is "**beware!**" Use your mind; *think* about what is being said, *think* about and look at something carefully; consider what is truly being said and done. *Don't just look at the surface, but what lies underneath.*

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

First, Paul says "*look out, beware [be watchful] of the dogs*"... In the first century, dogs were **not** pets. They were wild animals, and we would consider them mongrels. Jews used "*dogs*" to refer to *Gentiles* at times, because to them, both were *unclean*, not following Torah. Paul uses this as a *spiritual picture for a group*, and most say it refers to a group called: **Judaizers**.

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

These were *Jewish individuals*, and at least some followed Jesus as Messiah, but taught Gentiles **MUST** follow the Mosaic Law to be accepted by God. While Jews were free to continue to follow the Law and Messiah, to force Gentiles to do so, was and is heresy! Nowhere does the Bible say Gentiles must become Jewish to be accepted by God.

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

Second, *be watchful, beware or look out for the evildoers...* This word "evil" has a wide definition, of something inwardly foul or rotten, or having a morally rotten character. This is what *Paul thinks of this group*. The word for "doer" or "worker" is a generic term for a worker or laborer. Together these words refer to *individuals who work at doing something evil or rotten, because it is in their heart.*

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

Third, *look out for those who mutilate the flesh... or false circumcision...* The *NET Bible* notes: "There is a significant wordplay here in the Greek text. In v. 2 a rare, strong word is used to describe those who were pro-circumcision (κατατομή, *katatomē*, "mutilation"; see BDAG 528 s.v.), while in v. 3 the normal word for circumcision is used (περιτομή, *peritomē*; see BDAG 807 s.v.).

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

Both have τομή [tome] (the feminine form of the adjective τομός [tomos], meaning “cutting, sharp”) as their root; the direction of the action of the former is down or off (from κατά, kata), hence the implication of mutilation or emasculation, while the direction of the action of the latter is around (from περί, peri). The similarity in sound yet wide divergence of meaning between the two words highlights in no uncertain terms the differences between Paul and his opponents.”

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

This group was *rejoicing in their works, rather than rejoicing in the Lord!* They pointed to their *observance of the Law*, in **contrast** to the *grace of God*. This is why it was **so dangerous**.

First, the early *Jewish followers of Jesus* in *Acts* followed the Law. Even Paul followed the Law while *preaching grace to the Gentiles*. That is **NOT** a contradiction, but a *different audience*.

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

Second, part of the *New Covenant promise* is God will put **His Law in their hearts**. *Jeremiah 31:33-34* says, “For this is the [New] Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: **I will put my Law within them, and I will write it on their hearts**. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

- This is reiterated in *Hebrews 8:6-13, 10:16*. The Law is often misunderstood, because many **wrongly believe** *the church has replaced Israel*.

B. 3:2 – Be Watchful

Third, those who say Gentile Christians **must** follow the Law, *often pick and choose which parts to follow!* In Acts 15 set part of the foundation that God does **NOT** require Gentiles to become Jewish to be accepted by Him. The Law is good, and useful for **every Christian**. It's from God and points out our sin and need for salvation by grace in Jesus. *We can learn from it* and it is helpful in *principle*.

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

IVP Commentary: "What these people are about is made clear by the sharp contrast with *we* in verse 3. The true circumcision "serves" (in the new temple, is implied) by means of the Spirit of God, thus "boasting" in Christ and putting no confidence in the flesh. These final contrasts, between "serving" by the Spirit and trusting in "the flesh," serve as the springboard for Paul's personal testimony... supporting the validity of verses 2-3.

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

Given the frequency with which Paul speaks to this issue in his letters, one must assume that the arguments of the Judaizing faction had a surface attractiveness to many, despite the (literally) painful consequences if Gentiles were to submit [*physical circumcision*]. But Paul appeals not to the physical pain but to historical and theological realities...

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

His main thrust is altogether positive, setting life in Christ in stark contrast to what he had formerly known as a Torah-observant Jew [*in order to have a righteous standing before God*]. This suggests that the emotive language is more a reflection of Paul's own distaste for such people, after many years of struggle against them, than a direct attack against anyone currently in Philippi."

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

The *warning* is against **those who boast in outward circumcision they had done, rather than "boasting" on the inward circumcision God had done.** **Question:** Who is "we?" It is connected to *physical circumcision*;

- Paul and other Jewish followers of Christ
- *followers of Christ in Philippi*, with himself
- *Jews and Gentiles together*

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

The word for "worship" means, "serve." He is talking about *serving or worshipping of God led by the Spirit of God*. It is a contrast to those who were **not led by the Spirit**, but *by rituals* and looking to **those things** for *right standing with God*, pictured by circumcision.

Glory or boast in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the *focus and foundation* of our **new life**.

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

And put no confidence in the flesh. The *IVP Commentary*: "It reflects the similar argument in Galatians 3:2-3, where "flesh" refers first to the actual flesh cut away in circumcision but at the same time is the primary descriptive word for life before and outside of Christ. As in that passage, *Spirit* and *flesh* are overlapping realities that describe existence in the "already/not yet."

C. 3:3-4a – Be Biblical

Verse 3 mentions the *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. This is one verse, among others, that declares the all-important doctrine of the *Tri-Unity of God or Trinity* that must **never** be compromised!

4a is about Paul's life. He says, if anyone had reason to boast in the flesh, or *boast in one's own religious accomplishments*, it would be **him!**

Prayer

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6

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