***Beware the Legalists - PH64-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 3:1-2***

We now look at a new portion of the book of Philippians as we move into the third chapter. We have noted before that Paul was obviously very fond of the Christians in Philippi, and of the work that the various churches in the city of Philippi were engaged in. Paul himself was aware that in this church there was a stability which had come from a positive response to doctrine. Consequently, he also observed that there was a happiness which characterized the Philippian Christians, which was not exactly the case with congregations, for example, in Corinth, and certainly not those in Galatia, which were deeply enmeshed in legalism.

Because of this evident happiness on the part of the Philippians, Paul wrote this letter in order to help preserve that happiness–that inner happiness, that quality of spiritual well-being which they possessed. In the first two chapters of this book of Philippians, Paul has called upon the Christians for a unity in their service and a unity in their suffering together in the midst of the angelic conflict. He has reminded them that he, too, is experiencing the suffering that comes to a Christian who is positive toward the Word of God–the suffering which is the normal course of the Christian life because we are involved in (surrounded by) the angelic conflict–the angels of Satan against the angels of God.

Paul commands a spirit of Christian humility in these first two chapters for these believers as they hold forth what he calls the word of light to illuminate a morally darkened world. To that end, he has given us, as we have looked in recent weeks, at three illustrations–three men: Paul; Timothy; and, Epaphroditus, as examples for Christians in their service. They are examples or patterns which we are to follow–the particular qualities which each exemplified.

Having covered that ground, of recognizing that they were a happy congregation; that they were serving the Lord; that they were doing a commendable job; and, that they were a stable group of believers, he now comes to chapter three, and he takes up a subject which is a major threat to personal happiness. It was a major threat then, and it is a major threat today: namely the subject of legalism. The subject of falling from grace.

Some critics of the Bible have suggested that somebody else began writing at chapter 3, and that this was not Paul's writing. This is because suddenly, at chapter 3, everything changes. Paul, who has been very cordial and very nice, suddenly becomes very harsh. He doesn't get past the very first few verses before he uses some of the most fantastically strong language. Before we're through with verse eight, he's going to use language such that it's going to be hard for me to explain to you what he's saying. This is just because I'm going to have to tell it to you in a nice way so that you will have to fill in, and I won't offend you too much. But suddenly, the apostle Paul has become a tiger.

**Legalism**

The reason for this is that Paul is very sensitive to this damnable heresy of legalism which plagued the early church, and which necessitated the writing of the whole book of Galatians to try to straighten people out who had fallen from grace and were chasing down the old legal concepts of serving God through something they could do through their rituals and through their lists of rules. The apostle Paul knew that this is the surest way to destroy a person's happiness.

This plagues churches today. The average Christian is so bound up in legalism, he doesn't even know it. He doesn't know up from down as to the meaning of the grace of God. All he knows is every Baptist a tither, and everybody laying off the cigarettes and the booze and the women, and all these other things which are not right and which are not the things that Christians should do, but which are not the road to personal sanctification. This is the approach that if you don't give an offering, God is going to cause you to have a wreck with your car, and he'll take it out on your fenders. There are Christians who sit there with their eyes open, and they worry as they drive home because they didn't give a good offering, like a turkey walking around Thanksgiving. Have you ever noticed how turkeys do? They keep looking all around. Turkeys are paranoiac at Thanksgiving. Their heads are always shaking around and looking. So these Christians drive home, looking around, watching for the cars because God's going to take it out on their fenders. How dumb can you be? Just as dumb as you are ignorant of doctrine–that's how dumb.

So the apostle Paul does take off the gloves in chapter 3, and you better be prepared for some pretty strong stuff, because he says, in effect, "You are a congregation that is kind of a favorite with me in Philippi, and one of the things that I delight to see in you is that you're a happy group of people. I know that you are going to be plagued, like so many of my other converts have been plagued, by the Judaizers who are going to come along and try to teach you a different way of life than the grace way that I have taught you."

In the military service, one of the things you have to learn is close order drill. In order to help a recruit learn close order drill, the movement is broken down into steps. So that's called learning by the numbers. So you are told, for example, here's how you salute. First of all, you get your hand out and put it up here on the eyebrow. So the command is, "Hand salute." You hold it there until either after a certain amount of time has passed, or until the commander says to bring it down. So they say "by the numbers." Or, "Right face:" on the ball of one foot and the heel or the other. This too is "by the numbers." So you turn and hold your foot out there. Then, on his order, you snap the heels together. That's in order to break down the movements so that you can learn to do them in proper order.

This is the kind of Christianity that millions of Christians are living here. They're living Christianity by the numbers. They are told by their religious leadership that they are to follow certain steps; certain procedures; and, certain rituals. So it's by the numbers. For example, we are coming to one of the favorite "by the numbers" right at this season of the year. So we are going to get to Christmas Eve, and everybody is going to flock to church on Christmas Eve because it's a holy eve. The next morning is Christmas Day, and everybody's going to flock to church on Christmas Day because it's a holy day. A week later, come New Year's Eve, everybody is going to flock to church because it's a holy day. Come New Year's Day, they're going to flock to church, a holy day. You're not going to see them rest of the year until Easter, but we have "by the numbers" on the holy days.

That is assumed to be the way God is pleased with us. That is assumed to be the way that we are to approach God and to find his blessings: religion by the numbers. That's legalism. That's the thing that the apostle Paul begins taking up here in the third chapter. Christianity in New Testament times has been plagued with false teachers who want to make Christianity a ritual "by the numbers" system, just like Judaism was. We had it then, and we have it today.

So, we begin reading in Philippians 3:1. Paul says, "Finally, my brethren rejoice in the Lord, to write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not irksome, but for you it is safe." The word "finally" is the Greek word "loipos." "Loipos" is just an adverb. Actually, it is a Greek idiom, and what it means is literally "for the rest". Or we would say, "In conclusion." Paul has come halfway in the letter; he has made the basic doctrinal statements that he wants to make; and, now he is going to take up a new subject. That's what "loipos" indicates. It means, "Now, let's talk about something else for a while as we close this letter.

Paul has a way of using this. If you were to look in your Greek Bible, you would notice that he does this several times in his other letters. For example, we find the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 4:1. He uses the word "loipos," meaning again, "Let's talk about something else, in conclusion." We find it in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2 Corinthians 13:11, and Ephesians 6:10. It is a term indicating a transition to a new topic–used to introduce a new section. In this case, the thing that he is introducing is how to maintain your personal happiness when faced with the threat of legalism.

He speaks to a specific group of people whom he calls "brethren." This in the Greek is "adelphos." That is, he is writing to the believers at Philippi. It is important that you notice that he is writing to fellow Christians. Paul is not trying to tell unsaved people how to be happy. Paul is not trying to tell unbelievers how to preserve happiness. What he is speaking of here pertains only to regenerated people. The Philippian Christians have been positive to Paul's teaching, so he deals with them on the ground of their positive response to doctrine, and the happiness that has resulted. This was not true of the Corinthian Christians who were very negative to Paul. This was not true of the Galatian Christians who were very responsive to the Judaizers and very much involved in legalism. Those cities were filled with unhappy Christians. So Paul is speaking to people who are his brethren–people who are born again.

So, "In conclusion, let's go to a new subject, my brethren in Christ," and that is the subject of "rejoice." The Greek word is "chairo." This refers to that quality of inner happiness which is part of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. Every Christian is born into the Christian life as a baby. He is an absolute spiritual zero. All he has done is come in and been born again. He may stay for the next 30 years a baby in the Christian life. If he does not attend church where a preacher is teaching the Word of God by the HICEE technique, then he will stay a baby for the rest of his life on this earth. What you build up in the spiritual maturity structure on earth, that's the one thing you do take with you when you die. Part of that spiritual maturity structure is inner happiness. Without inner happiness in your soul, you are not going to have happiness in your experience.

This is the problem for the unbeliever. This is why I am stressing the fact that he is talking to "adelphos." He's talking to brethren. These people can have inner happiness. The world can never have happiness. Absolutely, there is no happiness for an unbeliever. There are only temporary kicks. There are only temporary emotional highs. When he can't get his emotional kicks in the things that he's done in the past, then he tries to find new ways, and that's one of the reasons that the drug bit becomes an attractive thing. It is an attempt to find inner happiness. The unbeliever can't find happiness in marriage. Therefore, he thinks that the way to do it is to have rotating marital partners through a series of divorces and remarriages. That doesn't work. If he doesn't have inner happiness, which he can only have as a believer as part of the spiritual maturity structure of his soul, as the result of having been under HICEE instruction in doctrine, he can never have inner happiness. He can never be happy in his experience.

So the spiritual maturity structure is built by taking in the instruction of a pastor-teacher. You cannot build this by yourself. You cannot go home and study the Bible on your own. You can go home and take your Bible and take some tapes that have HICEE instruction on them, and you can build a spiritual maturity structure, the same way as you do in church. The only way God says you're going to build this is with the ministry of a pastor-teacher. Otherwise, you will go exactly nowhere.

**Be Happy**

So the inner happiness is potential for every believer. Every believer has a soul which is capable of having in it a spiritual maturity structure. This is because every believer has not only a soul, remember, but he also has a living human spirit. The living human spirit is where doctrine is stored. Out of this stored doctrine is built the spiritual maturity structure. So the believer is the only person who can really be happy on this earth. When Paul says, "Be happy," this word "chairo" is in the present tense. It is to be the continual condition of Christians. Christians are not to be unhappy people. So those of you who think that your godliness is shown by the fact that you never smile are contradicted by the Word of God. Those of you that think your godliness is shown by the fact that you never have fun are contradicted by the Word of God. It is to be the continual condition of a Christian. It is active, which means it is your personal happiness that is to be experienced and in view. Interestingly enough, it is imperative. It's a command. God is telling you, "Be happy."

You might say, "You can't tell me to be happy. You can't tell me to be happy any more than you can tell me to love that snaggletoothed girl over there. You can't command me to have an emotion like that." God says, "Yes, I can." I'm telling you to be happy and you better be. If you're not happy, you're sinning. I'm sorry, but it says, "Rejoice." That's what it says, and it's a command. Any command of God is to be obeyed. It says, "Be happy." But obviously, that would be foolish for God to command us to do something that He did not make possible for us to put into effect, because we are dealing with an attitude of mind. And of course, the secret is that he has given us a method to secure an inner happiness which is not dependent on people around us; on the circumstances of our life; or, the things we possess or don't possess.

Therefore, when we have secured the facet of inner happiness in our spiritual maturity, we have something that cannot be taken away from us. We have a millennium in our soul while the world may be falling and collapsing all around our ears. God can therefore indeed command us to have this kind of inner happiness because He has given us the means, through the pastor-teacher gift and through the Word of God to be able to develop that. Inner happiness is just a matter of taking doctrine into your soul and getting this human spirit filled with doctrine. If you get that filled with doctrine, you will be happy.

People express this in different ways. Sometimes people say, "I get home from work, and I listen to a tape, and it's relaxing to me." They mean, "It made me happy." Or they say, "I have to be around people all day long. They make me just feel filthy in the conversation and the things they do. I get home and I listen to the Word of God, and I just feel cleansed." That's another way of saying, "It makes me happy." The intake of the Word of God is what gives you genuine happiness. That's all that will give you real happiness. When you have this kind of inner happiness, then you can be a millionaire and enjoy it. If you don't have this inner happiness, which only believers can have, you can be a millionaire, but you never really do enjoy it.

Don't give me that stuff, "Well, let me suffer anyhow. I'll take the million dollars." You may suffer more than you counted on suffering. But this is the way to have happiness because you can control and master the details of your life.

So he said, "Now in conclusion, my fellow Christians, rejoice constantly. Always I command you." What we're saying about this, on the authority of the Word of God is that it's abnormal for a Christian to be unhappy. It is a command–a duty. One thing that should characterize Christians is happiness. But the truth of the matter is that the one thing that makes a lot of Christians unhappy is to see other Christians who are happy. If you haven't noticed that, just look around you, and you will notice it. The one thing that makes a lot of Christians really miserable is to see some other Christians who are really happy. Yet, it is God's plan that everybody share this happiness. When we say inner happiness, what you're sharing here is something that is characteristic of God. God has always been happy. God has never been unhappy. It is part of what He has brought into our lives, through our regeneration, to share with us. That is His happiness that He has brought to us.

This is pointed out to us by the next phrase, where he says, "In the Lord." You are to rejoice and you are to be happy in the Lord." This is two Greek words. The first one is "en," which means "in" or "in the sphere of." The second word is the word for "Lord," which is the Greek word "kurios." Inner happiness stems from the Christian's relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ–not to people; not to circumstances; and, not to things. "En" means "within." Therefore, this indicates the position that the Bible describes as being "in Christ." This is what happens at the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which every believer experiences at the point of salvation. Everybody is baptized by the Spirit into the sphere of Christ. He is placed in Christ. All of the joy in your Christian life flows from your relationship to Jesus Christ. Happiness in the Lord is, in effect, a command to learn and to obey Bible doctrine. Or, as we say, "To be occupied with Christ". When he says your happiness is in Christ, it means that it flows from your relationship to Him through salvation, and your mind being focused upon Him.

**Occupation with Jesus Christ**

What do we mean by occupation with Christ?

1. First of all, occupation with Christ means that you focus your thinking upon Him. Happiness requires focusing your mind on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is top priority in your life.
2. Occupation with Christ means the regular intake of Bible doctrine into your mind by means of the grace system of perception–that system that provides a local church; a pastor-teacher; the completed canon of Scripture; and, the ability to exercise the exposition of the Word of God and the right to teach that Word with authority as God's spokesman, which is given to the pastor-teacher. Under the grace system of learning spiritual things, everybody is equal. It's not a matter of IQ. It's a matter of willingness to be taught and to obey what you learn. So occupation with Christ means focusing regularly on the intake of the Word of God into your mind.
3. Occupation with Christ protects the Christian from legalisms in his dealings with God, and thus preserves happiness. If your mind is centered on the Lord, you will be protected from legalism. People whose minds are not centered on the Lord fall into legalism. It's the habit of churches to pick up some legalism that some important leader comes up with. It would be interesting to be able to look back in history and to be able to find the first preacher that got the bright idea of saying, "Those of you who want to be saved, will you come down the aisle? Or "Those of you who want to be saved, please raise your hand." Wouldn't it be interesting to know who was the preacher who first popped that idea into his head? And the other preachers sat there and said, "Ooh, that's good. And they went and did it. Then the poor, dumb seminary students came along, and they just do what preachers do, and they passed it along.

So we got a legalism here: "I'm going to be saved by raising my hand or by walking down the aisle. Who was the preacher that first thought of putting the screws on Christians and saying, "God wants you to tithe?" And other preachers said, "Ooh, that's a good idea. Every Christian a tither."

Well, someplace along the line, this human viewpoint was interjected in somebody's service. It worked so good that other preachers began imitating it. Then it has come down as a practice such that most people are shocked if you suggest that these are not from the Word of God, and that these are human inventions. We could go on and on with them. But when your mind is centered on Jesus Christ, then you don't get hung up with these gimmicks. That's the point. If your mind is centered on Christ, you're free of the gimmicks.

1. Occupation with Christ results in love for Jesus Christ and loyalty to Him. There is a popular question going around today to the effect of, "How's your love life?" And you hear it all the time. It has become a very cute question. Friends meet each other and they say, "Hi, Sam, how's your love life?" And the question can only be truly answered in terms of love for Jesus Christ. But the world doesn't understand this. The love for your wife or husband, and the love for your friends flows from your love for God. Your love for God is established only on the basis of filling your human spirit with doctrine. If you are not filling your human spirit with doctrine, you are not able to develop love for God. For doctrine says, "If you love me, keep My commandments." If you know not His commandments, you cannot love Him. If you will not love God, then you cannot love your friends, and you cannot love your husband or wife.

So somebody can come up to you and say, "How's your love life?" He is in effect asking you, "How is your occupation with Christ?" And if you, as a Christian, are going to really answer that question (which I hope you won't do to others, but at least to yourself), you have to answer the question, "Where does my occupation with Christ stand?" Then I will know whether I love my husband or wife. Then I will know whether I love my friends. But until your occupation with Christ is maximum, you have no maximum love for your mate, nor for your friends. So the unbeliever may be asked, on this basis, "How is your love life?" He always rates zero, and he doesn't know it, because he could truthfully say, "I have no love for Jesus Christ, because I'm not occupied with Him. Therefore, I have no capacity for love."

1. Occupation with Christ requires a total dependence on God's grace provisions. It is the grace of God that enables us to be what we are. It is the grace of God that enables us to rise above our old sin nature. And that grace starts with our centering our focus of attention upon Jesus Christ.
2. Occupation with Christ not only produces inner happiness, but also personal stability. In Psalm 16:8:9, we read, "I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices. My flesh also shall rest in hope." You'll notice that the psalmist ties together happiness and stability. Occupation with Christ produces inner happiness, and it makes you, therefore, a stable person.
3. Finally, occupation with Christ means loving the things of eternity above temporal things. Colossians 3:1-2 say, "If we then, being risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." All the things that make a person happy as an unbeliever will not make him happy as a believer. A total change comes in. What made you happy in your unsaved days will not make you happy once you are a Christian. Happiness is in the Lord. Happiness is centering upon eternal values, not on temporal values. So there is a totally new basis from the unsaved days.

So that's what's behind Paul's remark. Finally tying it up: "My fellow Christians, be happy always (continually), but in Lord (through occupation with Jesus Christ)."

Then he goes on and says, "To write the same things to you." The word "to write" is the Greek word "grapho." "Grapho" refers to the recording here of a part of Scripture. The book of Philippians that Paul was writing from his prison cell in Rome is part of the Word of God. The way Paul did this was that he inhaled Bible doctrine from revelation of the Holy Spirit to him. God the Holy Spirit revealed doctrinal principles to him. Paul learned these principles. He inhaled doctrine. Then, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he sat down and took pen in hand and parchment, and began writing this doctrine, which he had inhale, in the particular application that it made to the Philippian Christians. So, Paul exhaled the same doctrine in written form under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The result of that inspiration or guidance was an absolutely inerrant book of Philippians.

This is present tense–every time Paul wrote. This is active. He was the author of the letter. This verb is infinitive because it's expressing Paul's purpose, and Paul's purpose is to repeat certain things. He says, "The same things." The Greek word is "autos." This refers to the fact that Paul is now (in the third chapter) going to take up a subject about which he says, "Now I've mentioned this to you Philippians before. I've given you, as a matter of fact, some pretty extensive instruction about this." As we're going to see, it's namely the subject of legalism. But he says, "I'm going to pick the subject up again."

**Judaizers**

Paul has warned the Philippians when he was with him about the Judaizers who had a way of following him in his travels. As Paul would come into a place, he would win converts; he would give them the basic doctrine course; he would introduce them into the grace way of life; and, then he'd leave town to go to the next place, and the Judaizers would come after him. These Judaizers were not necessarily unbelievers. They themselves were also Christians. However, they were hung up on the Mosaic Law system. They believed that you had to worship on Saturday. They believed that you had to observe the rites and the rituals of the Mosaic Law. You had to observe the holy days. Of course, one of their favorite rituals was the observing of the rite of circumcision, the identifying mark of the covenant. When Sunday came along, you had to treat it like the Sabbath day. You had to rest upon it. You could not do anything. All of this was imposing on Christianity the whole Mosaic system.

So these Judaizers would come into town; they would find the Christians; and, they would say, "Well, it's wonderful. You're a Christian. I'm a Christian, too. It's wonderful to meet you. You've listened to Paul. Paul's a fine man. He really knows the Word of God. Has he taught you about how Christians apply God's marvelous law?" They would reply, "Well, no." The Judaizers would say, "Oh, he didn't. Well, he didn't have time. Permit us to explain to you." Then they were into it. They would bring all the Mosaic Law. Some Christian would say, "Well, this seems to contradict grace." They would say, "Oh, no. You see, Paul didn't have enough time to explain it. You misunderstood him. Yes, you must circumcise your male children. Sunday is a day of rest. It's the Christian Sabbath. We must observe the holy days. We must observe all of these rituals. We must observe all the regulations, the traditions of Moses. They are sacred before God." So pretty soon they had these Christians all tied up because they wanted to please God. So they were performing their little legalisms–gaining points by what a human being could do.

So they taught these Christians to live under law–keeping these regulations, and keeping these rituals. They confused, for these people, the principle of salvation. Before they were through, a person had the idea that if he didn't keep the Law of Moses, he'd never see heaven. They taught that being born again meant to be faithful in observing the regulations of the law, and that sanctification (growing spiritually) was a matter of keeping the rules of the law. So the Judaizers led people into religion by the number–into rituals. The result was they lost their happiness. Everywhere that Paul went, the Judaizers followed him, and destroyed the happiness of the individual believer.

**Christians Should be Happy**

So Paul, in the Philippian letter, has tried to make clear to these Christians that the norm for the believers in the church age is happiness. So in Philippians 2:18, he said, "For the same cause also, do you joy, and rejoice with me." The point of the Christian life is not unhappiness, but is happiness. In Philippians 4:4, he's going to do it again. He says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, 'Rejoice.'" The constant point that he's trying to make is that Christians should be happy.

So in Philippians 3:1, he says, "To write (to put down in written form) the same things that I discussed with you before, concerning legalism, to me indeed is not irksome." Here's a contrast. In the Greek, we have this contrast set up that we have learned before between "men" and "de" (on the other hand). In the Greek Bible, he introduces, "To me indeed is not irksome" with the word "men." This word is not really translatable. It is represented here in English by the word "indeed." We might say, "On the one hand." It makes the first part of a contrast. In the first part of the contrast, it deals with Paul. The second part of the contrast is going to deal with the Philippians Christians.

So Paul says that about himself something is not a problem. He uses the Greek word for "not," which is "ou" (the strongest word for "not"). He says, "For me, it is absolutely not a grievous thing." The word "grievous" is the Greek word "okneros." "Okneros" comes from a verb "okneo" which means "to shrink" or "to hesitate." It connotes "drawing back" or "delaying." So it came to mean "irksome." So the apostle Paul connects himself on the one hand to the spirit of being irked. He said, "For me, something is not irksome." And that something is repeating some instruction that he gave them before. In other words, Paul does not hesitate to explain to people a doctrine that he has explained before. He does not find it an irksome, tiresome chore. He does not hesitate to repeat doctrine for fear that he's going to bore people. The Philippians, as a matter of fact, are going to recognize that they've heard this from him before. But the result is that they're going to learn it more firmly, and they're going to learn it in greater detail.

The Bible tells us that it is the job of the pastor-teacher to repeat and to review areas of instruction. The Bible says, "Constantly, pastors, say it again." That's what Paul is doing here. For example, in 2 Timothy 2:14, we read, "Of these things, put them in remembrance (Say it again.), charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words," and so on. Paul is telling Timothy, in this very last letter that Paul writes, "Be sure that you tell people something more than once. Repeat the truth so that they learn it well. 2 Peter 3:1-3 tell us the same thing. Peter says, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." Peter said, "I'm going to repeat something to you in order that I may recall to you something that you must not forget–that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior." So Peter says, "The only way I'm going to prepare you to meet these negative people is to keep reminding you by repeating again and again the things that you need to know."

So it is a very legitimate thing for a pastor-teacher to repeat himself. He is not just practicing a hobby. Of course, that's what some people who were opponents of Paul would readily say. They would say, "Oh, here he goes again. He's off on that subject of legalism again. Judaizers–that's a hobby topic with him. When he runs out of something else to say, he talks to us about that." That is not so. Paul knew that this was a critical subject–that much was gained or lost according to how the Christians reacted toward legalism.

So Paul's untiring repetitions enabled him to say what every pastor-teacher hopes, at the end of his ministry, to be able to say. In Acts 20:26, Paul, therefore, because he was a teacher who repeated himself, was able to say, "Wherefore I testify to you this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And he did it more than once.

The other side is represented in this contrast by the word "de." The idea here is "on the other hand." He said, "For you (referring now to the Philippian Christians) and for them," he says, "this habit (this practice of his repeating the Word of God–a doctrinal principle) is "asphales." It comes from a Greek verb which means "to trip up." It has the negative (this word "a"), so it means "not to trip up." The Philippian Christians, in other words, are going to enjoy their inner happiness if they are not tripped up on human viewpoint–the human viewpoint here of legalism. Happiness in the Lord is functioning on divine viewpoint that is secured through the pastor-teacher. Reviewing doctrine prevents falling into reversionism (into backsliding).

So Paul reviews now the dangers of following the Judaizers' teachers and following their false doctrine, and the results to them. So here it is. On the one side, Paul says, "I don't get tired of repeating it. It's not irksome to me. On the other hand," he says, "I know that for you, it is safe. For you to hear the Word of God reiterated will bring blessing and will bring protection for you.

So he takes up verse 2, and he takes the gloves off now. He says, "Now, here's what I mean–why I'm repeating myself. First of all, this verse has the word "beware" three times. We're going to look just at the first one in closing this session. That's "Beware of the dogs." However, the word "beware," interestingly enough, is the Greek word "blepo," which means "to see." It means to see in the particular way of focusing on a particular point. The idea here is "to discern." Everyone who preaches does not bring a true message. We would say, "Look out for." And here he says, "Look out for the dogs." "Dogs" is the Greek work "kuon." "Look out for the dogs." The Greek has *the* dogs, so it is referring to some special group. "Dogs" was a term that the Jews used to refer to gentiles. It stressed the ceremonial uncleanness of the gentiles. The gentiles use the term "dog" in the New Testament world as an epithet of impudence and of contempt.

So it's a term of contempt and loathing used by both Jews and gentiles. It is the epitome of calling someone a bad name. It is the epitome of expressing your contempt and disgust and loathing for someone to call him "a dog." Paul uses the term here in keeping with the New Testament use of reproach. Obviously, you can see that he's not viewing here your cuddly little pet that you have at home. Rather, he is viewing dogs as they existed in the New Testament world, which was a bunch of flea-bitten, mangy, vicious scavengers. They were unclean animals under the Mosaic Law, and a dog would just as soon eat a dead human being as a dead rat. The Bible uses the term "dog" to describe false shepherds. In Isaiah 56:10-11, for example, it says, "His watchmen are blind. They are all ignorant. They are all dumb dogs. They cannot bark–sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." He is describing their spiritual religious leaders here. "Yea, they are greedy dogs that can never have enough. They are shepherds that cannot understand. They all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own quarter." He's talking about a pastor-teacher here, and he describes him in terms of being a dog.

So in the New Testament world, this was a term of reproach which was used as a way to discredit the person to whom the title was applied. The context shows that Paul is using the term "dog" to apply to the Judaizers who followed him in his travels to undermine the Christians. The Judaizers were opposed to Paul's teaching of grace, so they told the Christians that they must follow the Law of Moses. Paul says they were dogs for doing that. The Judaism succeeded in leading the Corinthian Christians and the Galatian Christians into legalism, and the result for them was unhappiness. Paul says that were "dogs" for doing it.

Judaizers prided themselves on their ceremonial purity, but of all things, the apostle Paul comes along and says, "You're a bunch of dirty dogs." Paul uses a strong word to alert the Philippians to the danger of falling into the trap of following these Judaizers. The Judaizers will lead a person from his occupation with Christ to being occupied with ritual garbage, because that's what the dogs of the New Testament world did. They were scavengers and unclean animals who cleaned up the garbage. The Judaizers had themselves deviated from doctrinal purity. They were proud of their ceremonial purity. "But because they are doctrinally false," Paul says, "they're dangerous–like a scavenger vicious dog. Avoid him."

In the New Testament world, the dogs were practically like wolves, and you didn't see a dog going down the street and say, "Here, puppy doggy," to pet him, without endangering your very life. The city of Rome had dog packs which roamed it, and the dog packs had their territory, and they knew one another. If some poor hound happened to cross over into some other pack's territory, he would be lucky to get out with his life. They were that vicious. Everybody in the New Testament world had a very clear idea of what a dog was within the context of their day.

So Paul has thrown the Judaizers their own derisive term "dog," just as they have used it against others. "The Judaizers are just as filthy," Paul says, "in their conduct as dogs are, and you know how filthy dogs are." The Bible says that there's nothing a dog enjoys more than throwing up and then returning to eat his vomit a second time. He finds it goes down better the second time than the first time. Everybody in New Testament world knew that. And Paul says, "Do you know what you Judaizers are like? You remind me of a dog who throws up and has a banquet. Now we're getting closer, aren't we? These dogs were so vicious, they snarled at people. Therefore, it is an appropriate term for the Judaizer who snarls at the grace of God.

Furthermore, they were greedy. These were scavenger animals who were desperate to live, and they were greedy for anything they could get. This was a very apt term for these Judaizers who wanted to snag every Christian they could into their cause and their movement. The dogs fought for their territory as the Judaizers fought for their pre-eminence.

The Bible presents for us the doctrine of dogs, and we will take that up next time–the Bible doctrine of dogs. The code number for that doctrine, for your notes, is K-9. So we will close with that high note. Next time we will take up the doctrine of dogs in greater detail.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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