

#7 Philippians 3:2

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Verse 3:2: 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

Paul suddenly switches gear, here, and introduces an entirely different subject and he says, 'Beware!' three times. That Greek word, 'blepo' means, 'See, pay attention, look intently!' He commands his readers to beware three times because Satan is so crafty in spreading lies and deceit.

We are warned, time and again, that in the last days, there would be many false prophets, false teachers and false pastors and we do recognize their proliferation but if we are not always paying close attention, we, too, can be deceived into listening and even believing their lies, heresy and apostasy.

God used the word, 'dogs,' in Isaiah, referring to false shepherds, false teachers and pastors: 'His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, **they are greedy dogs** which never have enough. And they *are* shepherds who cannot understand; **they all look to their own way**, every one for his own gain, from his *own* territory.' Isa 56:10

This is the second time Paul has alluded to this very passage. Remember, just a few verses before, when he was commending Timothy, he said that all the rest only looked to their own way.

'Dogs' was the disrespectful, derogatory term Jews used of Gentiles. Here, Paul turns it around, using the term while writing to Gentiles, describing the false teachers, prophets and pastors who were mostly Jewish. Remember the Judaizers from his letter to the Galatians: they were being taught that the Gentiles, in order to be saved, must be circumcised and follow Jewish Law which, of course, is not at all the truth. We know Paul is referring to the Judaizers because the very next words are:

Verse 3: 'For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,'

'We,' Paul says, of these Gentile believers in Philippi, 'We are the true circumcision,' even though none of you have been physically circumcised: 'For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code* and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.' Rom 2:25

We, Paul says, are those whose circumcision is of the heart and we do not put our confidence in the flesh; we do not trust in our own righteousness through keeping the Law; we trust only in the sacrifice and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 4: 'though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.'

Paul is saying, 'If anyone could have confidence in his own righteousness by keeping the law, it would be me! I've done everything the right way! Those Judiazers, those false pastors and teachers, have nothing on me and yet, even I recognize that none of that was in any way profitable to me as far as acceptance with God. In fact, even as I persecuted the Church, the new Christians, I was doing the right thing if following the Law had been the right thing to do; I had burning zeal toward keeping the Law... I was a Hebrew of Hebrews... and yet...'

Verse 7: 'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.'

Paul is saying, 'All of it! All that I did, all my training and teaching, all my faithfulness to the Law was worthless, I count it as loss. Only Christ, knowing Him and having His Righteousness through faith, is of value to me.'

Verse 8: 'Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ'

The Greek word Paul uses for rubbish is: Skybalon: it actually means: dung, excrement, worthless, detestable things. Everything of this world is worthless dung if one does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Everything of Bill Gates' world or Elon Musk's or any other multi billionaire or millionaire or thousandaire or hundredaire or

tenaire... everything that any person has or longs for, whether rich or poor, is worthless dung compared to the priceless, invaluable treasured excellence of knowing Jesus Christ and being found in Him for salvation.

We are multi-thousandaires but everything we own, of this world, is absolutely worthless; we would throw all of it away, in a heartbeat, if it encumbered our salvation in Jesus Christ; we would gladly live on the street if that's what it meant. We are, however, glad that He has never told us to get rid of everything... yet...

Verse 9: 'and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;'

Paul is telling them and hoping to convince them, too, that the only thing in this life of any real value is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which He imputes to us when we come to Him in faith which then means eternal life and all that God has for us in eternity. Nothing else, of this world, has any value at all and even that is a completely individual, personal possession. We can't share in another person's faith and we can't endow anyone with a measure of our own faith. We won't stand before the Lord Jesus Christ as a couple or as a family or as a group of friends... only as individuals... just me, alone, before the Holy and Righteous Creator God before Whom, no one can stand without having been recreated in His Image with His endued Righteousness. No one can stand before Him in their own imagined righteousness whether through having kept the Law or by having been a good person.

Paul's focus was always on 'things above.' Even while writing to various churches, his attention was on the absolute, imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which was his as he was seated in Heavenly places with Christ Jesus.

Verse 10: 'that I may know Him and the **power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, **being conformed to His death**,'

Paul's goal was **to know Him**. Just like us, Paul could only know Him by spending time with Him in prayer, praise, conversation and meditation on His Word. We can only know Him by '*finding*' Him. His choice and election of us, before the foundation of the World, His calling, drawing us to Himself, His revealing Himself to us and saving us, giving us eternal life... none of that equates to us *knowing Him*. The thief on the Cross was saved and taken to Heaven with Jesus Christ but he did not *know* Him. We are known intimately by God from before the foundation of the world but we never *know* Him until we are born again and, even then, we never come to really *know* Him until we are **willing** to *know* Him, to seek Him and to allow Him to really reveal Himself to us.

'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD,' Jer 29:11

That promise was given to Israel, going into captivity in Babylon but the principle is the same for us; we can only know Him with any of the intimacy with which He knows us as we are willing to seek Him, to seek His face.

'Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. *When You said*, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek.'" Psa 27:8

Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD! Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore! Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,' Psa 105:1

God called David 'a man after My Own Heart,' because David was different than most men throughout the ages; he longed to know God with the same intimacy with which God knew him. Perhaps God calls some of us men or women after His Own Heart. That will only be true if our deepest desire is to know Him, to seek Him, to glorify Him in all our ways; then we will be children of God after His Own Heart.

In Jeremiah He said, that He would only be found by the one who sought Him **with all their heart**.

What does that even mean, to seek God with your whole heart? Most obviously, it means that we are not covering over sin in our heart, holding on to some sin that so easily entangles us:

'Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear.' Isa 59:1

But it means something even deeper: anything that we cherish and hold in our hearts that is more precious to us than having intimacy with God... something that pulls our attention away from God: *some favorite idolatry...* perhaps a secret attraction to some cherished sin or other... a thing that draws our thoughts and intentions away from God and 'things above.' Maybe it's a certain kind of book or movie or TV or medication or wicked websites or things we did before we were saved: lying, gambling, cursing, cheating... but every sin, eventually, has a way of bubbling up to the surface and displaying itself for what it is, and we, really are:

'...you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.' Num 32:23

'... You have set our iniquities before You, our secret *sins* in the light of Your countenance.' Psa 90:8

Inside our hearts are many little rooms and cubby holes into which we insert the many different things we hold dear. When we come to God in prayer, we can only seek Him and find Him when we come with all the many doors of those rooms and cubby holes wide open to the light of His inspection. If we keep any door, at all, closed and reserved only for our engagement, He will hide His face from us, He will not fellowship with sin, deception or darkness. 'But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear.'

And when we hold back those secret places in our hearts, they act as a black light search light shining out rays of darkness which every demon anywhere near us can clearly see and it acts as an invitation to them to come to us, to come to our homes, to come to those we love... they act as '*demon bait*,' smelly, sticky demon bait.

Only when we rid ourselves of those things can we know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death... only when we crucify our own flesh and die to those things... being conformed to His death.

Verse 11: 'if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.'

This word, 'resurrection,' in the Greek is: *exanistemi*: it means, to make to rise up, to rise up, to produce, to beget. It is God Who makes us to rise up from the dead and it is He Who produces us, begets us as His Own children, especially at the Rapture when He causes our mortal bodies to become begotten as eternal, glorious bodies like Jesus Christ's Own Body.

Paul is not, in any way, suggesting an uncertainty as to his future or his eternal destiny; he is saying something like, 'ever since I met the Lord Jesus Christ, personally, at my conversion and in Heaven as He taught me all the great doctrines of the Faith, I have considered nothing else worth living for than to know Him more and more intimately every day. No trial, tribulation or even death can deter me from my goal

The literal translation of *exanistemi* is, 'out-resurrection.' Paul's greatest desire was to be resurrected out of his mortal body and to be clothed, finally, into his eternal body and to be ever with His Lord. He was talking about his own anticipation of the coming Rapture. One thing that the Lord Jesus Christ did not tell Paul was that the Rapture would be postponed for almost 2000 years after his own death; Paul believed and taught that it was always, 'at hand.' He wrote, 'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.'¹ Thes 4:16

Verse 12: 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.'

Paul is speaking of his outer man; that has not yet been perfected; that is unendingly being sanctified while his spirit, his inner man, was perfected, once and for all, at the Cross: 'For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:14

See this picture: every unsaved person, as he is trudging along on his race from birth to physical death, is a shadow of darkness living within a heavy layer of skin that is so cumbersome, even his skin weighs him down. His feet are covered with weighty boots of his favorite sin, pornography. His trousers, which feel like 50 pounds are the result of another favored sin, alcohol. His belt, which is far too tight, causes him to feel as if he is being cut in two, the result of sorcery, drugs. He wears a shirt which feels like it was woven from lead thread by another beloved sin, anger. His tunic and vest are both so heavy that he never removes them so that he will never have to re-lift them, also from more cherished sins, enmity and strife. He wears a great coat that is so heavy, rebelliousness, he can barely move and yet he trudges on toward his death. On his head he wears a hat that is so heavy, it droops to

below his shoulders: another sin he believes is hidden, hatred and unforgiveness. On his hands, his heavy gloves completely impair any dexterity in his hands, some of his most difficult sins, jealousy and envy.

This is the man who wanders through darkness, believing he is headed toward some goal when, in fact, he is simply plodding along from one opportunity to sin to the next, always planning his next recreation in sin; that is his entire life story.

One day, God reveals Himself to the man and calls him to Himself. The man falls to his knees in repentance and faith and is suddenly born again. Now, instead of a darkened shadow, he has become a child of light; his inner man glows with the Glory of God. Now he recognizes a goal that has been set before him; now, his deepest desire is to know The One Who so graciously transformed him from darkness to light but he still wears all the heavy, heavy outer wear of his life of sin. God never promised to remove those things from him but, rather, commanded him to remove them, himself: 'Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called; Walk worthy of the Lord; Set your mind on things above, not on things of the Earth!'

As he begins his new journey he begins to understand, instinctively, that the only real satisfaction in this life that he could ever know is to, in fact, learn to know God intimately but to do so, he must seek Him Who promised to be found by him if he would seek Him with all his heart if he would bring his whole heart to God.

He begins his journey, weighed down with all his sin but now, at least, he has God's Holy Spirit living within him to strengthen and enable him to extricate himself from those sins, one by one. He begins to recognize the weight of his various garments how they are all making it impossible to know God, to come to God with his whole heart because it is his heart that is weighed down with all these dark, ugly things.

He sees that the first things he must discard are his jealousy and envy; they have kept him ensnared for all his life. Only when he removes them will his hands be free to begin removing so many other sins. As he just begins to be able to move more freely, he sees that he can remove his heavy hat of hatred and unforgiveness that so fills his mind. Now, as he begins to think more clearly, he understands that the next, most difficult, sin to abandon will be his overcoat of rebelliousness which is now, to him, so obviously the fruit of his envy, jealousy and hatred. As he picks up speed, he's never known such freedom and yet, he recognizes that there are still great weights encumbering him. 'Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...' Heb 12:1.

With his rebelliousness confessed and forsaken, he can now remove his tunic and vest of enmity and strife; as he runs faster, with the wind in his hair, he is able to begin to throw off all his heavy shirt of anger. Compared to what his life used to feel like, he feels lighter than air but now, God is able to dig deeply into his soul and encourage him to leave the things which really have bound him from his youth: his belt and his trousers of alcohol and sorcery, which is drugs, and finally God is able to dig to the deepest reaches of his heart and reveal the stain of his heavy, heavy boots of pornography. All of those different sins had been kept in the different little closed compartments of his heart.

Now he is able to come to God with his whole heart, opened and laid bare, for which God has waited so long and, as promised, God is revealing Himself to the man; now, instead of sinful things, the man's deepest longing is to know God more deeply and intimately as he daily watches and waits for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Rapture, when the man will finally know as he has been known, to finally be forever in the presence of His Savior Who died and gave Himself for him, Who had always loved him, even while he was a sinner in darkness.

'...that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me:' the thing Paul longs to lay hold of, that for which Jesus Christ laid hold of him, is the Rapture, or death, the moment when Paul's physical body would finally be transformed into a glorious, eternal body, to finally be forever with his Lord.

Do you want to know God? The only way to know God is to come to Him with your whole heart, keeping nothing back from Him.

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. 2 Chr 16:9