

Philippians 3:1-3 Commentary

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Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, **rejoice** (2PPAM) in the Lord. To write (PAN) the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [To loipon, adelphoi mou, chairete \(2PPAM \) en kurio. ta auta graphein \(PAN\) humin emoi men ouk okneron, humin de asphales](#)

Amplified: FOR THE rest, my brethren, delight yourselves in the Lord and continue to rejoice that you are in Him. To keep writing to you [over and over] of the same things is not irksome to me, and it is [a precaution] for your safety. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Lightfoot: And now, my brethren, I must wish you farewell. Rejoice in the Lord. Forgive me, if I speak once more on an old topic. It is not irksome to me to speak, and it is safe for you to hear.

Phillips: In conclusion, my brothers, delight yourselves in the Lord! It doesn't bore me to repeat a piece of advice like this, and if you follow it you will find it a great safeguard to your souls ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Living Bible - "Whatever happens, dear friends, be glad in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you this and it is good for you to hear it again and again.

Wuest: As for the rest [of which I wish to say to you] my brethren, be constantly rejoicing in the Lord. To be writing the same things to you is not to me irksome or tedious, while for you it is safe.

Young's Literal: As to the rest, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord; the same things to write to you to me indeed is not tiresome, and for you is sure;

FINALLY MY BRETHREN, **REJOICE** IN THE LORD: To loipon adelphoi mou, **chairete** (2PPAM) en kurio:

- **Finally** - Phil 4:8; 2Cor 13:11; Ep 6:10; 1Thes 4:1; 1Pe 3:8
 - **Rejoice** - Phil 3:3; 4:4; Dt 12:18; 16:11; 1Sa 2:1; 1Ch 15:28; 16:10,31, 32, 33; 29:22; 2 Ch 30:26,27; Neh 8:10; Job 22:26; Ps 5:11; 32:11; 33:1; 37:4; 42:4; Ps 97:1; 100:1,2; 149:2; Isa 12:2,3; 41:16; 61:10; 65:14; 66:11,12; Joel 2:23; Hab 3:17,18; Zeph 3:14,17; Zech 10:7; Mt 5:12; Lk 1:47; Ro 5:2,3,11; 1Th 5:16; Jas 1:2; 1Pe 1:6, 7, 8; 4:13
 - Philippians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries
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Hannah's Bible Outlines

IV. Joy in the person of Christ (Philippians 3:1-4:3)

- A. The appeal (Philippians 3:1)
 - B. The warning against false circumcision and confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:2-6)
 - C. The testimony (Philippians 3:7-14)
 1. The evaluation of his past experience (Philippians 3:7-9)
 2. The statement of his present ambition (Philippians 3:10-11)
 3. The goal of his present strivings (Philippians 3:12-14)
 - D. The exhortations (Philippians 3:15-4:3)
 1. To proper attitudes (Philippians 3:15-16)
 2. To imitation (Philippians 3:17-21)
 - a. The commands: follow and observe (Philippians 3:17)
 - b. The reasons (Philippians 3:18-21)
 1. Godless examples (Philippians 3:18-19)
 2. Heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20-21)
 3. To steadfastness (Philippians 4:1)
 4. To unity (Philippians 4:2-3).
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REJOICING: THE MARK OF SPIRITUALITY

Ray Stedman notes in the previous passages "we met with two of Paul's friends, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Today we begin a chapter that opens a window deep into the heart of the apostle himself. This is one of the most autobiographical writings in all of scripture, and as we traverse it, it unfolds to us the glowing secret of the mighty ministry of Paul. We are going to look through Paul's eyes at four movements in these seven verses.

1. The mark of spirituality,
2. The menace of external religion
3. The measure of true devotion
4. The mistakes of Paul. ([Dangerous Confidence](#))

Lehman Strauss - Precaution...

1. Rejoice in the Lord - Php 3:1
2. Resist the Enemy - Php 3:2
3. Restrain from the Flesh - Php 3:3

Warren Wiersbe entitles Philippians 3:1-11 "**Learning How to Count**" ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

- Philippians 3:1-11 - PAUL'S PAST - "The Accountant" - "I count" - New Values
- Philippians 3:12-16 - PAUL'S PRESENT - "The Athlete" - "I press" - New Vigor
- Philippians 3:17-21 - PAUL'S FUTURE - "The Alien" - "I look" - New Vision

Here is another summary of Philippians 3 (from Wiersbe's With the Word)

- Rejoicing (1)
- Counting (2-11)
- Reaching (12-16)
- Weeping (17-19)

- Looking (20-21)

Jack Arnold entitles Php 3:1-7 as **God's Antidote for Legalism in Salvation** - Have you ever ignored a warning? What about those red lights on the dashboard of your car? When the light comes on, you say to yourself, "I'll take my car in tomorrow." Tomorrow comes and another tomorrow and one day your engine stops. Why? You neglected a warning. Warnings are to alert us to danger and Philippians 3:1-7 is to alert us to the danger of false teachings, namely that of legalism. The Book of Philippians has as its theme joy. It is mentioned sixteen times. God wants His children to experience joy and to rejoice in Christ in all circumstances. What will rob the Christian of this joy? Unbelief, discouragement, depression are all thieves of spiritual joy, but probably the number one threat to Christian joy is legalism. Legalism robs the Christian of genuine joy. Legalism can be seen in salvation. A legalist says, "Believe on Jesus Christ for salvation PLUS do something else." He holds to the fundamentals of Christianity but adds something on top of Christ for salvation to be complete. Legalism can also be seen in sanctification. A legalistic Christian wants to add some manmade rule or belief to the Christian life in order for a person to be spiritual. A Christian legalist says, "To live is Christ PLUS keeping rules, regulations, customs and traditions which I personally feel are right." Whatever form legalism takes, it always destroys the Christian's joy. ([Sermon](#))

Tony Merida - This passage is also important because it reminds believers of their need to stay focused on the true gospel of Jesus. As mentioned, salvation isn't about knowing some things about Jesus. But it's also not about doing religious things to earn acceptance before Jesus. This text really speaks against the problem of legalism, that is, the temptation to derive your justification before God, your acceptance by God, and your forgiveness from God by your own religious works. We're reminded here that you can't earn salvation. It's a gift to be received. But even dedicated Christians have a tendency to forget the gospel daily. They have a tendency to revert back to legalism, as the book of Galatians so powerfully points out (see [Gal 3:1-9](#)). Legalism is self-atonement. It's a self-salvation project that only leads to pride or despair. We must resist the gospel of human achievement. (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Philippians)

Thomas Watson - Rejoice in the Lord - It honors religion, it proclaims to the world we serve a good Master. Cheerfulness is a friend to grace: it puts the heart in tune to praise God. Un-cheerful Christians, like the spies, bring an evil report of the good land; others suspect there is something unpleasant in religion, that they who profess it hang their harps upon the willows, and walk so dejectedly. Be serious, yet cheerful. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Brian Bell - If you cannot rejoice in your circumstances, you can always rejoice in the Lord who controls your circumstances. Fix your attention on Him. He may not change your situation, but He will change you; & that is even better. (Quoted from Warren Wiersbe)

John MacArthur entitles Php 3:1-3 "The The Distinctive Qualities of the True Christian" -

- [Philippians 3:1-3 Qualities of True Christian-Pt1](#)
- [Philippians 3:1-3 Qualities of True Christian-Pt2](#)
- [Philippians 3:1-3 Qualities of True Christian-Pt3](#)
- [Philippians 3:1-3 Qualities of True Christian-Pt4](#)

How do Christians "co-mingle" the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace today? In other words how do Christians mimic the first century "Judaizers?" Ask yourself...

- Am I living under grace or under law?
- Have I accepted the grace of God for my salvation but continue to put myself under the law for daily living?
- Or asked another way have I begun to place myself under the Old Covenant of Law by basing my relationship with Christ on my performance (even "good" things like morning prayer time, memorization, regular church attendance, etc)? This is what Paul was alluding to in Galatians 3:3 when he asked "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"
- In what are you boasting (your works, your accomplishments, your ministry, etc) or the Cross? (Gal 6:14-note)

Finally ([3062](#)) (**loipon** from **loipos** = remaining) pertains to the part of a whole which remains or continues and thus constitutes the rest of the whole. Literally this phrase is **as for the rest** and in every case, the use of this Greek expression has the idea of something left over (furthermore, so then, now then would be synonyms). Clearly Paul does not mean by this that he is about to close his letter for half of the letter is still to come! MacArthur says "**finally** would better be translated 'furthermore,' or 'so then,' or 'now then.' It is a transition, not a note that distinguishes the end, as 44 remaining verses might indicate to you." ([Sermon](#))

Paul is summing up all his exhortations to the saints at Philippi.

ILLUSTRATION - Like with most preachers "finally" usually means they're just getting their second wind!

In English when we hear the preacher say "finally", we know the sermon coming to an end soon. But that is not the way Paul uses finally in his letters for he frequently uses **loipon** frequently in the concluding portion of his Epistles (cp, Ep 6:10 [note], 1Th 4:1 [note], 2Cor 13:11, 2Thes 3:1) often introducing practical exhortations but not necessarily implying that the epistle is drawing to a close. In other words, he uses **loipon** to mark a transition in the subject being discussed. In fact, there is another "finally" in Php 4:8 (note).

As **Wuest** explains "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 thus refused to accept the fact of the setting aside of Israel at the Cross, and the bringing in of the Church at Pentecost. They wished to continue under the Mosaic law. What happened in the Galatian churches, Paul was trying to forestall in the church at Philippi. ([Philippians Commentary Online-Recommended](#))

Spurgeon writes that "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." But never do it finally, never come to an end of it. Rejoice in the Lord, and yet again rejoice, and yet again rejoice; and as long as you live, rejoice in the Lord.

F B Meyer paraphrases **finally** - "My letter draws to its close. Its key-note has been the duty of joy, and it shall be so to the end." (See Meyer on [Joy in the Lord](#))

Ray Stedman discusses rejoicing as the **mark of spirituality** noting that if one were preaching a sermon, "finally" usually indicates the beginning of the end of a sermon, but that is not the meaning of **finally** in this context. "It really means as regards the rest of the matter. That is, whatever other problem you have, the answer is **rejoice in the Lord**. Then he explains he knows he has said this many times before, and he will say it two more times before he ends this letter. But it is so important, he says, that he doesn't mind saying it as many times as necessary, and it's safe for them to hear it. Rejoice in the Lord; that's the key. I suppose if you wanted to sum up Christianity in four words this would be the best possible phrase you could use: rejoice in the Lord. This is the mark of spiritual life, of a truly spiritual Christian. It is the distinctive sign of a victorious Christian. It is the one attitude that invariably brings peace and contentment to the heart. Therefore, it is the one thing Paul repeats over and over and over again: **rejoice in the Lord**. As we saw earlier in this letter, Paul pointed out the opposite as well.

The sign of unbelief in the Christian life is always grumbling and disputing

Do all things, he says, without grumbling and questioning (Php 2:14-note), because that is the sign of an unbelieving believer, who doesn't believe what God is telling him.

The mark of one who has learned to believe is rejoicing.

Remember that definition of a Christian we have given from time to time: one who is completely fearless, continually cheerful, and constantly in trouble. It is the continual rejoicing in the midst of trouble that marks the Christian life. It is a remarkable commentary, therefore, on Christian unbelief that the mark the world usually associates with a Christian is not a smile but a long face. To use the vernacular of the street, we are known as the people of the pious puss. This being the case, it reveals how little we believe in the God we love. (**ILLUSTRATION**) You remember that story of the little girl who first saw a mule in the countryside. She looked at it for quite a while, then she said, "I don't know what you are, but you must be a Christian. You look just like my grandfather." Unfortunately, the mark of a Christian has become a sober, solemn mien, casting gloom on every occasion. This isn't real Christianity. **The mark of a true Christian** is a smile of confidence, despite the circumstances. Not a screwed on smile, one that is forced, to appear something we are not, but a genuine smile, sometimes through tears, but a smile nevertheless. It comes as a result of acceptance of all events as ordered by the Lord. That's the secret. It arises from a quiet trust in his indwelling adequacy to handle whatever comes. It is living out of adequacy. Living out of inadequacy is what puts the frown on people's faces. It is trying to face the inrushing tumult of life with inadequate resource. This strain shows in the face. But if we genuinely believe what God tells us, that we have within us one who is completely competent to meet every situation through us, there is never any strain, for whatever comes we know he is adequate to meet it in and through us. We rest on that fact, and that is the quiet confidence that marks the Christian. There is nothing new about this experience. It is the experience of the believer in any age. When we learn this secret we discover there are mysterious bridges flung over every abyss to which we come. An invisible strength is imparted to meet every stress life lays on us. No matter how long you have been a Christian, if you are still grumbling and complaining, griping and grouching about what life gives you, as Paul says in First Corinthians you need to be taught again what are the first principles, the abc's, of the gospel of Christ. For the time you ought to be teaching others you need to be taught yourself the basic principles of Christian life. ([Dangerous Confidence](#))

Charles H Spurgeon agrees with **Stedman** remarking on rejoice in the Lord - Let this be the end of everything; before you get to the end of it, and when you do get to the end of it, "**rejoice in the Lord**." It is incumbent upon us, as Christians, to rise out of our despondencies. Joy should be the normal state of the Christian. What a happy religion is ours in which it is a duty to be happy! "**Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.**" It is your privilege, it is your duty, to rejoice in God; — not in your health, your wealth, your children, your prosperity, but **in the Lord**." There is the unchanging and unbounded source of joy. **It will do you no harm to rejoice in the Lord; the more you rejoice in Him, the more spiritually-minded will you become.** "Finally, my brethren." That is, even to the end, not with you the bitter end; but even to the end of life, rejoice in the Lord. Make this the *finis* of everything, the end of every day, the end of every year, the end of life. "**Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.**" Blessed is that religion in which it is a duty (**Ed**: Note **rejoice** is a command, but it is only fulfilled by grace not law) to be happy.

REJOICING IS A SAFEGUARD TO LEGALISM

Jack Arnold - The Apostle Paul wants these Christians to **rejoice in the Lord**. Joy is essential if the Christian is going to be a balanced person. **Are we a joyful people? Do we express this joy outwardly so others can see the joy of Christ in us?** It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. -- In chapters one and two, Paul has repeatedly told these Philippians to rejoice in Christ. It is as though Paul is saying, "You may think I'm tired of repeating it and you are tired of hearing it, but I'm not -- so rejoice." Rejoicing is a safeguard to legalism. The rejoicing Christian will never be a legalistic Christian. Why? A rejoicing Christian is wrapped up and occupied with Christ. He is dominated by the thought that all that he is and has is because of Christ. Because Christ is the source of his joy, he does not look to add anything to salvation or sanctification. ([Sermon](#))

MacArthur - rejoicing is connected to a relationship...."**in the Lord**." It is the sphere in which our joy exists. Only in Him is true joy found...nowhere else....Paul is not talking about **happiness** when he talks about **joy and rejoicing**. **Happiness** is from hap...hap is a circumstance, happenstance, happenings, happiness, all the same word group. That is to say happiness is an emotion or an exhilaration associated with certain events. It is not an emotion or an exhilaration associated with a relationship. It has to do with an event, a thing, a happening. So the kind of joy that Paul is talking about and calling for, and this by the way is a command, and the command implies the capability of obedience on the part of a believer which in itself is no doubt a test of true salvation. But he says...**rejoice in the Lord**...commanding us to joy. But it is not the kind of emotional outburst, good feeling, exhilaration that is associated with an event. It is the kind that is associated with a relationship. It doesn't even say, "Rejoice because of what the Lord has given you...rejoice because of what the Lord will give you...rejoice because of what the Lord is giving you." It doesn't say, "Rejoice because of what the Lord has done for the people that you care about." It says, "Rejoice in the Lord."...This kind of joy is not an emotion from a human level, it is produced by the Holy Spirit therefore it is a supernatural emotion. It is a supernatural emotion. You say, "Well what does it do? What does it feel like, this joy that we're to have?" Well it produces a deep confidence in the future, built on trust. The relationship says my life is in God's hands, my life is in Christ's control, all is well. The hymn writer said, "It is well with my soul," and it is so well with my soul that no matter what is going on around me, I have joy. It is the kind of joy that brings a silent sleep, a deep sleep, a quietness of life because it trusts, because it knows the sovereign God and the faithful Christ will accomplish all their good promise. It is a supernatural emotion that also could be described as the absence of any ultimate fear because what is there to fear when all is bound up in the relationship and the relationship is eternal. It is the kind of emotion that puts a melody in the heart that no matter how bad it is in the world, it's almost as if we ride across the top of the bumps. It's the kind of emotion that puts a song on the lips, a lightness to the step. It's the kind of emotion that produces easy thanks for little things...small pleasures....it is the joy in the relationship and the relationship with Jesus Christ that we enjoy never changes...never changes. He is always present. He is ever close. He is ever loving. He is ever securing. He is ever strengthening. He is ever providing. And we trust Him. Rejoice in the Lord. Very different than happiness....And so I submit to you that before we look at the explicit qualities of a true Christian, one of the implicit ones is that there is a surpassing joy in the relationship that is unrelated to the circumstances of life. F.B. Meyer wrote, "The joy of the Lord arises from leaving all our burdens at His feet, from believing that He has forgiven the past as absolutely as the tide obliterates children's writing in the sand, that nothing can come which He does not appoint or permit, that He is doing all things as wisely and kindly as possible, that in Him we have been lifted out of the realm of sin, sorrow and death in to a realm of divine light and love, that we have already commenced the eternal life and that before us forever there is a fellowship with Him so rapturous and exalting that human language can only describe it as unspeakable." ([Sermon](#))

Rejoice in the Lord - He could have said simply "**Rejoice**" but connects rejoicing with the Person of Christ. Christians can rejoice because of their relationship. They exist in the sphere of an intimate union with the risen Christ and are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and thus are supernaturally enabled to **rejoice** as they abide in Christ Jesus, the Vine continually partaking of His supply.

John Eadie on the Christian's **joy** and the important phrase **in the Lord** - The modifying phrase **in the Lord** does not mean, "on account of Christ," or as becomes Christians, but it defines the sphere and character of the joy. (Ro 14:17-note; 1Th 1:6-note; Gal

5:22-note; Col 1:11-note) The Christian religion is no morose system, stifling every spring of cheerfulness in the heart, or converting its waters into those of Marah (bitterness). It lifts the spirit out of the thrall (a state of being totally subject to some need, desire, appetite, etc) and misery of sin, and elevates it to the enjoyment of the divine favour, and the possession of the divine image; nay, there is a luxury in that sorrow which weeps tears of genuine contrition. Therefore, to mope and mourn, to put on sackcloth and cleave to the dust, is not the part of those who are **in the Lord**, the exalted Saviour, Who guarantees them "**pleasures for evermore.**" (Ps 16:11 - **John Trapp's note** "Here is as much said as can be, but words are too weak to utter it. For *quality* there is in heaven joy and pleasures; for *quantity*, a fulness, a torrent whereat they drink without let or loathing; for *constancy*, it is at God's right hand, who is stronger than all, neither can any take us out of his hand; it is a constant happiness without intermission: and for *perpetuity* it is for evermore. Heaven's joys are without measure, mixture, or end.") Such **joy** is not more remote from a gloomy and morbid melancholy, on the one hand, than it is, on the other hand, from the delirious ecstasies of fanaticism, or the inner trances and raptures of mystic Quietism. Chrysostom remarks that this **joy** is not "according to the world," and his idea, according to his view of the connection, is, that these tribulations or sorrows referred to, being according to Christ, bring joy. This last opinion, however, is not from the context, though certainly the first remark is correct, for the joy of the world is often as transient as the crackling of thorns under a pot; and it often resembles the cup which, as it sparkles, tempts to the final exhaustion of its bitter dregs. The express definition or limitation **in the Lord** may be meant to show, that beyond the Lord this joy is weakened, or has no place; and that, if the Lord Alone is to be rejoiced in, the Lord Alone must be trusted in. The sentiment thus warned and fortified them against the Judaizers, whose opinions, in proportion as they tended to lead away from the Lord, must have retarded all joy in Him; while, if the Philippian believers continued to **rejoice in the Lord**, that emotion, from its source and nature, guarded them against such delusions. The next clause has seemed to many to be an abrupt transition. ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

Deffinbaugh - Philippians 3:1 is a transition verse, moving us from Paul's appeal for humility to his admonition regarding arrogance and pride (3:2ff.). He moves from an exhortation to conduct ourselves in a manner that is consistent with the gospel (2:12-18) to a warning about a very dangerous heresy, which denies the gospel (3:2ff.). Verse 1 is not misplaced at all; it is a transition verse, setting the stage for what Paul has to say in 3:2ff. The main thrust of verse 1 is Paul's instruction to rejoice. Let me make several observations from this verse. *First, notice with me that Paul is commanding us to rejoice.* The form of this verb is imperative. We are not given an option as to whether or not we should rejoice; our only option is whether or not we will obey this command to rejoice. Dr. A. T. Robertson renders it, "go on rejoicing." We are to establish a pattern, a lifestyle, of rejoicing....*Second, the command to go on rejoicing is given to Christians—and can only be accomplished by Christians.* Paul instructs us to "**rejoice in the Lord.**" There is a great deal of talk these days about PMA (positive mental attitude) and positive thinking. The optimism of an unbeliever is ill-founded. Only the Christian can truly rejoice **in the Lord**. Paul can rejoice in his circumstances because he is rejoicing **in the Lord**. He rejoices on account of the salvation and growth of the Philippian saints. Even though he is in prison and some believers are seeking to cause him pain, Paul can rejoice because the gospel is being proclaimed, lost souls are being saved, saints are being encouraged, and the worst thing that could happen to Paul (his death) is really the best thing that could happen (he would be with the Lord). It is our union with Christ that enables us to rejoice **in the Lord**. *Third, Paul is repeating himself when he commands Christians to keep on rejoicing.* This is not the first time Paul has given this command to rejoice to the Philippian saints. Paul admits that he is repeating himself, and he makes no apologies for doing so. The reason repetition is justified is that rejoicing is fundamental to the believer's Christian life. Paul says that repeating himself in giving this command again is not a burden to him, and it is meant to be a blessing to the Philippians. *Fourth, rejoicing is a safeguard for those who practice it.* I am convinced that the Bible teaches us a very important principle: the *path of disobedience begins with discontent*....When we think through the Old Testament, we see discontent at the center of Israel's disobedience to the God who created them as a people. In spite of all of God's marvelous provisions for His people, they murmured and complained. ([Sermon](#))

Brethren ([80](#)) (**adelphos** from **a** = denoting unity + **delphús** = womb = born from same womb) is literally "of the same womb" and speaks of a fellowship of lives based on identity of origin.

As **Eadie** remarks "The apostle addresses the Philippian converts, "as my brethren". There was no official hauteur with him, no such assumption of superiority as would place him in a higher or more select brotherhood than that which belonged to all the churches. ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

Boice: "What is joy? Joy is a supernatural delight in God and God's goodness. And it is a very different thing from happiness... Happiness is circumstantial, but not joy. Joy is an inner quality of delight in God, or gladness, and it is meant to spring up within the Christian in a way totally unrelated to the adversities or circumstantial blessings of this life."

John Butler - "Rejoice in the Lord." Jesus Christ is that which inspires the joy. It is not "rejoice in your situation" for (Paul's) situation was really bad...This joy is not dependent upon one's situation but on the Savior. It is not dependent upon circumstances but upon Christ. This means the joy is eternal and will be present regardless of your troubles and trials. The Bible says "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). This means that Jesus Christ is not like our circumstances or situation. For they change from moment to moment. Therefore to rejoice in the Lord is to rejoice in something that is stable and reliable. It is to rejoice in that which does not change. Therefore if you can rejoice in the Lord today, you can rejoice in Him tomorrow. If you can rejoice in

Him when the sun is shining, then you can rejoice in Him when the clouds are many and dark, for He does not change. (**Ed Comment:** And remember this rejoicing is energized by the indwelling Holy Spirit Whose fruit is joy - Gal 5:22. Don't try to do this by relying on your fallen flesh, for you will fail to truly rejoice. You must be filled with the Spirit to be joy filled - Eph 5:18-[note](#)). (Sermon Starters)

The phrase **rejoice in the Lord** is used only by Paul in the NT (and 3 times in the Old Testament) - Ps. 35:9; Isa. 41:16; Zech. 10:7; Phil. 3:1; Phil. 4:4. Joy is not found in a principle or a practice but in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

James Draper - The Christian life of joy is an unfolding quest, an increasing delight. Our joy in Christ keeps growing and maturing. Many people get saved, but never mature, never enlarge their vision, never grow in their relationship with the Lord. In this passage, we are told to keep on rejoicing, never to tire of it. Our faith is a holy quest, a wonderful spiritual adventure of pursuing the joy of Christ. "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before."

Rejoice ([5463](#)) (**chairō**) to be glad or delighted, to celebrate, to be cheerful. Joy is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. Joy for the Christian is marked by celebration and expectation of God's ultimate victory over the powers of sin and darkness. We should make a clear distinction between *joy* and *happiness*, which is word related to "*happenstance*" which defines that exhilarating feeling we all have when things go well and circumstances are agreeable. The believer's joy however is not contingent upon *circumstances* but upon *relationship*. As we abide in the Vine, walk in the power of the Spirit of Christ, under His control, we find that our joy persists in adverse circumstances for it independent of those circumstances. Furthermore, the believer's rejoicing is not a *natural* emotional response as we experience when we are "happy", but a *supernatural* response because of our spiritual union with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is a response based upon truth, including especially the truth that God is **SOVEREIGN**, an assurance that He is in total control, a truth which comes from the Scriptures (which is another reason we need to daily "eat" the bread of life, that we might be spiritually nourished and strengthened in our inner man - cf Lk 4:4-note). **Joy** is the outflow of faith (especially belief in God's sovereignty) and faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ (Ro 10:17-note). Are you "hearing" the Word only on Sunday? Or are letting it dwell in you richly Monday- Saturday? (cf Col 3:16-[note](#)).

Here Paul gives a command (imperative mood) for the Philippians to continually (present tense) **rejoice**. (see present imperative). The indwelling Spirit gives us the **desire** and the **power** to obey the command (Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)) but we must still make the choice to **rejoice** (i.e., we still must choose to **work out our salvation in fear and trembling** - Php 2:12-[note](#)).. **Wuest** says they are to "go on constantly rejoicing in the Lord". It is not humanly possible to fulfill this command, which requires supernatural energizing. Paul explains that the source of this joy is "the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." (Gal 5:22- See **notes** on **Joy** in Gal 5:22)

Chairō - 74x in 68v - **NAS** = am glad(1), glad(7), gladly(1), greeted*(1), greeting(2), greetings(4), hail(4), joyfully(1), make(1), rejoice(33), rejoiced(8), rejoices(2), rejoicing(10).

Matt 2:10; 5:12; 18:13; 26:49; 27:29; 28:9; Mark 14:11; 15:18; Luke 1:14, 28; 6:23; 10:20; 13:17; 15:5, 32; 19:6, 37; 22:5; 23:8; John 3:29; 4:36; 8:56; 11:15; 14:28; 16:20, 22; 19:3; 20:20; Acts 5:41; 8:39; 11:23; 13:48; 15:23, 31; 23:26; Rom 12:12, 15; 16:19; 1 Cor 7:30; 13:6; 16:17; 2 Cor 2:3; 6:10; 7:7, 9, 13, 16; 13:9, 11; Phil 1:18; 2:17f, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 10; Col 1:24; 2:5; 1 Th 3:9; 5:16; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 4:13; 2 John 1:4, 10f; 3 John 1:3; Rev 11:10; 19:7

An anonymous psalmist illustrates this relationship between rejoicing and a knowledge of the Word of truth writing...

our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy **Name**. (Psalm 33:21) (See studies on **Names of the LORD as a Strong Tower** - because to trust this Name we must know this Name in its manifold glory and we will have a foundation for rejoicing without ceasing.)

Spurgeon writes...

We, who trust, cannot but be of a glad heart, our inmost nature must triumph in our faithful God. Because we have trusted in his holy Name. The root of faith in due time bears the flower of rejoicing. Doubts breed sorrow, confidence creates joy.

In a similar manner **David** confidently declares...

Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever. (Psalm 16:11)

Spurgeon comments on fulness of joy writing...

Christ being raised from the dead ascended into glory, to dwell in constant nearness to God, where **joy** is at its full for ever: the foresight of this urged Him onward in His glorious

but grievous toil (He 12:2-note). To bring His chosen to eternal happiness was the high ambition which inspired Him, and made Him wade through a sea of blood. O God, when a worldling's mirth (gladness or gaiety as shown by or accompanied with laughter) has all expired, for ever with Jesus may we dwell at Thy right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore; and meanwhile, may we have an earnest (down payment) by tasting thy love below. Trapp's note on the heavenly verse which closes the Psalm is a sweet morsel, which may serve for a contemplation, and yield a foretaste of our inheritance. He writes, "Here is as much said as can be, but words are too weak to utter it. For quality there is in heaven joy and pleasures; for quantity, a fulness, a torrent whereat they drink without let or loathing; for constancy, it is at God's right hand, Who is stronger than all, neither can any take us out of His hand; it is a constant happiness without intermission: and for perpetuity it is for evermore. Heaven's joys are without measure, mixture, or end."

Here are some other OT uses of rejoice. Notice who is rejoicing and what they are rejoicing over.

(Save me) That I may tell of all Thy praises, That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may **rejoice** in Thy salvation. (Psalm 9:14) ([Spurgeon's note](#))

But I have trusted in Thy lovingkindness; My heart shall **rejoice** in Thy salvation. (Psalm 13:5) ([Spurgeon's note](#))

There is joy and feasting within doors, for a glorious guest has come, and the fatted calf is killed. Sweet is the music which sounds from the strings of the heart. But this is not all; the voice joins itself in the blessed work, and the tongue keeps tune with the soul, while the writer declares,

I will sing unto the Lord.

"I will praise thee every day, Now thine anger's past away;

Comfortable thoughts arise From the bleeding sacrifice."

Be glad in the LORD and **rejoice**, you righteous ones, And **shout for joy**, all you who are upright in heart. (Psalm 32:11) ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Be glad. Happiness (joy) is not only our privilege, but our duty. Truly we serve a generous God, since He makes it a part of our obedience to be joyful. How sinful are our rebellious murmurings! How natural does it seem that a man blest with forgiveness should be glad! We read of one who died at the foot of the scaffold of overjoy at the receipt of his monarch's pardon; and shall we receive the free pardon of the King of kings, and yet pine in inexcusable sorrow?

In the Lord. Here is the directory by which gladness is preserved from levity. We are not to be glad **in** sin, or to find comfort **in** corn, and wine, and oil, but **in** our God is to be the garden of our soul's delight. That there is a God and such a God, and that He is ours, ours for ever, our Father and our reconciled Lord, is matter enough for a never ending psalm of rapturous joy.

And rejoice, ye righteous, redouble your rejoicing, peal upon peal. Since God has clothed His choristers in the white garments of holiness, let them not restrain their joyful voices, but sing aloud and shout as those who find great spoil.

And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Our happiness should be demonstrative; chill (cold) penury (extreme paucity) of love often represses the noble flame of joy, and men whisper their praises decorously where a hearty outburst of song would be far more natural. It is to be feared that the church of the present day, through a craving for excessive propriety, is growing too artificial; so that enquirers' cries and believers' shouts would be silenced if they were heard in our assemblies. This may be better than boisterous fanaticism, **but there is as much danger in the one direction as the other.** (Ed note: Amen!) For our part, we are touched to the heart by a little sacred excess, and when godly men in their joy over leap the narrow bounds of decorum, we do not, like Michal, Saul's daughter, eye them with a sneering heart. Note how the pardoned are represented as upright, righteous, and without guile; a man may have many faults and

yet be saved, but a false heart is everywhere the damning mark. A man of twisting, shiftily ways, of a crooked, crafty nature, is not saved, and in all probability never will be; for the ground which brings forth a harvest when grace is sown in it, may be weedy and waste, but our Lord tells us it is honest and good ground. Our observation has been that men of double tongues and tricky ways are the least likely of all men to be saved: certainly where grace comes it restores man's mind to its perpendicular, and delivers him from being doubled up with vice, twisted with craft, or bent with dishonesty. Reader, what a delightful Psalm! Have you, in perusing it, been able to claim a lot in the goodly land? If so, publish to others the way of salvation.

Spurgeon introduces his sermon on **joy** commenting that...

As for **joy**, if it be not the first product of the Spirit of God, it is next to the first, and we may be sure that the order in which it is placed by the inspired apostle is meant to be instructive. The **fruit of the Spirit is love** first, as comprehensive of the rest; then **joy** arising out of it. It is remarkable that **joy** should take so eminent a place; it attaineth unto the first three, and is but one place lower than the first. Look at it in its high position, and if you have missed it, or if you have depreciated it, revise your judgment, and endeavor with all your heart to attain to it, for depend upon it this **fruit of the Spirit** is of the utmost value... and it is brought forth in believers not alike in all, but to all believers there is a measure of **joy**. ([The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy - Pdf](#))

The Greek dramatist **Aeschylus** (525-456 BC) concluded, "Joy [is] a beauteous spark divine."

To ancient Greeks it was a greeting, a wish for the happiness of one's friend. It was also the object of fellowship, as seen in the festal joy of religion. Greeks spoke, as we do, of "tears of joy."

Homer saw joy as being rooted in human passions, as we may "feel" joyful. On the other hand, the Greek Stoics (who are mentioned in Acts 17:18) had no room for joy, which they regarded as a false judgment of reality. If you felt joyful, you must be ignorant of the facts! Most of us know people like that.

The famous Austrian composer **Franz Joseph Haydn** (1732-1809) declared "When I think of God, my heart is so full of **joy** that the notes leap and dance as they leave my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

Oswald Chambers the famous devotional writer concluded that "The joy that Jesus gives is the result of our disposition being at one with His own disposition."

C. S. Lewis wrote that "Joy is the serious business of heaven." (**Ed**: The corollary is that we need to begin to practice on earth for our "business" in heaven!)

Bernard Ramm, a theologian, wrote that "Jesus Christ can put joy into the joyless work of the 20th century."

Keith Miller wrote that

Joy seems to be distilled from a strange mixture of challenge, risk, and hope.

Samuel Shoemaker said that

The surest mark of a Christian is not faith, or even love', but joy.

A noted preacher in England **H. W. Webb-Peploe** once said that...

Joy is not gush; joy is not jolliness. Joy is perfect acquiescence in God's will because the soul delights itself in God Himself.

Since **joy** is a **fruit of the Spirit** it follows that those who can most readily obey Paul's command to **rejoice** are those who are continually being filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit (Ep 5:18-note). The key to the Christian's joy is not found in circumstances or people but in the Person of Christ as indicated by the association with the phrase **in the Lord**. This phrase is found 9 times in this short (joyful, joy full, joy filled) letter...

Philippians 1:14 (note) and that most of the brethren, trusting **in the Lord** because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

Philippians 2:19 (note) But I hope **in the Lord** Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

Philippians 2:24 (note) and I trust **in the Lord** that I myself also shall be coming shortly.

Philippians 2:29 (note) Therefore receive him **in the Lord** with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

Philippians 3:1 (note) Finally, my brethren, rejoice **in the Lord**. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 4:1 (note) Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm **in the Lord**, my beloved.

Philippians 4:2 (note) I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony **in the Lord**.

Philippians 4:4 (note) Rejoice **in the Lord** always; again I will say, rejoice!

Philippians 4:10 (note) But I rejoiced **in the Lord** greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

Paul speaks of **joy** before warning his readers of some of the top joy stealers, especially the false teachers who have crept in among us and claim to be members of the body of Christ ("**dogs... evil workers... false circumcision**"). Watch out for these individuals because they love to steal your joy with their clever lies and devious deceptions.

William Barclay's ILLUSTRATIONS of Christian joy - In 1756 a letter came to John Wesley from a father who had a prodigal son. When the revival swept England the son was in York jail. "It pleased God," wrote the father, "not to cut him off in his sins. He gave him time to repent; and not only so, but a heart to repent." The lad was condemned to death for his misdeeds; and the father's letter goes on: "His peace increased daily, till on Saturday, the day he was to die, he came out of the condemned-room, clothed in his shroud, and went into the cart. As he went on, the cheerfulness and composure of his countenance were amazing to all the spectators." The lad had found a joy which not even the scaffold could take away.

It often happens that men can stand the great sorrows and the great trials of life but are undone by what are almost minor inconveniences. But this Christian joy enables a man to accept even them with a smile. John Nelson was one of Wesley's most famous early preachers. He and Wesley carried out a mission in Cornwall, near Land's End, and Nelson tells about it. "All that time, Mr. Wesley and I lay on the floor: he had my greatcoat for a pillow, and I had Burkitt's notes on the New Testament for mine. After being here near three weeks, one morning about three o'clock Mr. Wesley turned over, and, finding me awake, clapped me on the side, saying: 'Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer: I have one whole side yet, for the skin is off but on one side!'" They had little enough even to eat. One morning Wesley had preached with great effect: "As we returned, Mr. Wesley stopped his horse to pick the blackberries, saying: 'Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting a stomach, but the worst I ever saw for getting food!'" Christian joy made Wesley able to accept the great blows of life, and also to greet the lesser discomforts with a jest. If the Christian really walks with Christ, he walks with joy. ([Daily Study Bible - Philippians 3](#))

TO WRITE THE SAME THINGS IS NO TROUBLE TO ME: ta auta graphein (PAN) humin emoi men ouk okneron

THE SAME THINGS ARE NOT MEANINGLESS REPETITION!

William Barclay - Here also Paul sets down what we might call **the necessity of repetition**. He says that he proposes to write things to them that he has written before. This is interesting, for it must mean (**ED**: At least it suggest the possibility) that Paul had written other letters to the Philippians which have not survived. This is nothing to be surprised at. Paul was writing letters from A.D. 48 to A.D. 64, sixteen years, but we possess only thirteen. Unless there were long periods when he never put pen to paper there must have been many more letters which are now lost. **Like any good teacher, Paul was never afraid of repetition. It may well be that one of our faults is our desire for novelty. The great saving truths of Christianity do not change; and we cannot hear them too often.** (**ILLUSTRATION**) We do not tire of the foods which are the essentials of life. We expect to eat bread and to drink water every day; and we must listen again and again to the truth which is the bread and the water of life. No teacher must find it a trouble to go over and over again the great basic truths of the Christian faith; for **that is the way to ensure the safety of his hearers**. We may enjoy the "fancy things" at meat times, but it is the basic foods on which we live. Preaching and teaching and studying the side-issues may be attractive, and these have their place, but the fundamental truths can neither be spoken nor heard too often for the safety of our souls. ([Daily Study Bible - Philippians 3](#))

James Draper - One of the errors of our day is our overemphasis on finding new ways to proclaim the gospel (Ed: And I would add making up "new words" that sound "cool" but that are not found in Scripture.). There is nothing wrong in trying to be creative in

presenting the gospel, but sometimes we get carried away and forget to preach it clearly or at all. Paul says that we cannot hear the basics too much. When we read and study the Bible, we find the same recurring themes throughout the Word of God: man's inadequacy, God's sufficiency, man's rebellion, God's grace and provision. It is good for us to hear again what we have already heard. (Philippians Commentary)

Charles Swindoll - he wants to make sure that they hear yet again the importance of being people of outrageous joy. He calls that "a safeguard." How true. Not only were the pressures of life enough to steal their joy, there were also the ever-present legalists—ancient grace killers—on the loose. And nobody can rob people of joy quicker than a few narrow-minded legalists. Paul's great concern was that his Philippian friends continue to enjoy their freedom in Christ and not allow anything or anyone to get the best of them. He never got tired of telling them that. (Laugh Again)

Strauss - Reiteration was never irksome to Paul because it is one of the basic principles for effective teaching. To repeat the message of joy was not tiring or tedious for him; and as for the rest of the saints, no harm or hardship could come to them because of it. Anything worth saying once is worth repeating. Who of us does not need to be encouraged to go on continuously rejoicing in the Lord? The world reminds us that circumstances are not always conducive to rejoicing; but then the believer is "in Christ" and, therefore, our rejoicing is in Him. Had Paul merely said "rejoice," they might have tired hearing it. **ILLUSTRATION**: A certain minister in my former home town in Pennsylvania was known to leave his sick and sorrowing parishioners with the parting words, "Keep your chin up!" Hearing this irksome, meaningless phrase in the hours of sorrow and suffering left the people with an empty void. The cleric was known in the community as "Mr. Chinnup." Circumstances may not at times be conducive to either peace or praise, yet the trusting saint can at all times rejoice in the Lord. The children of Israel were passing through much misery when Nehemiah reminded the remnant that "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). Are you in Christ? If you are, the apostle says to you, and to me: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Now remember, the simple formula for rejoicing always is "in the Lord." It is not in merely repeating the expression, but in realizing the experience. To those of us who are in Christ, Paul says, "Rejoice." Joy in the heart is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and is peculiar to those who are saved. It differs from the mirth and merriment of the world. This blessed fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart is steadfast amidst poverty or plenty, sorrow or singing. Beloved, let us cultivate the joyful heart at all times.

Same things -- a good teacher emphasizes repetition. The probability is that he is going to take up again several details he had already mentioned, such as, those who were really spiritual antagonists (Php 1:15-note; cp Php 3:2-note, Php 3:18-note); the need of standing fast (Php 1:27-note; cp Php 4:1-note); dissensions and the need of unity (Php 1:17-note; Php 2:2, 3, 4-Php 2:2; 2:3; 2:4; cp Php 4:2-note); the antidote, a glorying in Christ and allusions to His union with His people (Php 1:20-note; Php 1:22, 23-note; Php 2:5-note; cp Php 3:3-note, Php 3:15-note; Php 4:7-note).

Tony Merida on same things - Paul says that he's told the Philippian congregation the "**same things**" before. He's probably referring to what he taught them in person. Previously, he taught them the gospel. Now he's still teaching them the gospel. Paul says it's no trouble for him to repeat these things, and it's safe for the congregation. In other words, the church will be protected from legalism and false gospels by studying the true gospel regularly. Every church should be a "**same things church**." Oh, we must change some ministry methods, but the message must never change. And the "**same thing**" has numerous implications, but we must be about the same things, namely the truths of the gospel. We must constantly remind one another of the gospel, rehearse the gospel, sing the gospel, and proclaim the gospel—not only for the good of the unbeliever but also for the building up of the believer. Repeating the gospel is an expression of love for other believers. If you're a teacher, don't grow cold to the gospel. Look at Paul's example here. It doesn't trouble him to remind them of what it means to know Christ. It's an expression of his love for the Philippian congregation, as it serves to protect them. (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Philippians)

Spurgeon comments...

To go over the same old truths again and again, to proclaim the same precepts, and teach the same doctrines, is not grievous to us, and it is safe for you to hear these things again and again. If they have not made their due impression upon you already, perhaps they will do so when they are repeated in your hearing. At any rate it is safe for you to hear or read over and over again the old, old story with which you are already familiar.

Some hearers are like the Athenian academicians; they want continually to hear something new. The apostle says, "To have the same things written to you, is safe." So is it for you, dear friends; to have the same gospel, the same Jesus, the same Holy Spirit, made known to you, is safe. New doctrine is dangerous doctrine.

Saying the same thing over and over again is Safe, for your minds do not catch the truth at the first hearing, and your memories are slippery.

Trouble (3636) (okneros is from okneo = to shrink, to hesitate, to delay) means that which causes reluctance or is tedious or bothersome (upsets a person's composure or which annoys and suggests interference with one's comfort or peace of mind). It describes being afraid to act, hesitating, shrinking or lazy.

Paul is saying it is not bothersome for him to repeat truth so that they might be kept from being tripped up by false teaching. As Eadie phrases it "To repeat the same truth is to me no task of irksome monotony." Biblical truth is always the best safeguard from error!

John MacArthur on the word **trouble** - He's saying I'm not reluctant and I'm not afraid to do this, it's no bother to me at all, I am excited to do this, I am anxious to do this. Why? Because it is a safeguard for you. I want to protect you. I want to protect the church from false religionists, from false teachers.

Okneros is found 3 times in the NAS ([Matthew](#); [Romans](#); [Philippians](#)) and is translated .lagging behind, 1; lazy, 1; trouble, 1. The KJV renders it grievous, 1; slothful, 2.

TDNT writes that...

Like **oknos**, which means "hesitation" through weariness, sloth, fear, bashfulness, or reserve, **okneros** is used a. of persons in the sense of "*showing oknos*," "hesitating," "anxious," "negligent," "slothful." It thus denotes one who for various reasons or difficulties does not have the resolution to act... In the OT (Septuagint or LXX) **okneros** is often used in connection with rules of practical wisdom. Industry and work are here part of pious but prudent conduct. Thus **okneros**... depicts the slothful man who lacks the resolve to get to work (Pr 6:6, 9), who lets inconveniences stop him (Pr 20:4), or who, having no resolution, never moves on from the will to the deed (Pr 21:25). In contrast the continually active wife, who takes pleasure in work, is extolled (Pr 31:27).

Impelled by the Spirit to equip Christians adequately for salvation, Paul (here in Phil 3:1 [note](#)) overcomes the dislike or distaste which might arise through repetition of his admonition. (Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#). Eerdmans)

Vincent writes that **okneros** is found here and in "Matt. 25:26; Ro 12:11-note, in both (these latter) instances rendered **slothful**. (**Ed note**: thus conveying more the idea of lazy, idle, not active) From **okneō** to delay. Hence, in classical Greek, shrinking, backward, unready. The idea of delay underlies the secondary sense, burdensome, troublesome. It is the vexation arising from weary waiting, and which appears in the middle English irken to tire or to become tired, cognate with the Latin urgere to press, and English irk, irksome, work.

Other writers emphasize the importance of reminding about truths previously taught...

2 Peter 1:12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.

Acts 20:29-31 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

ILLUSTRATION - I heard a story about a pastor who had preached a beautiful sermon on "Loving One Another". After the service several people came up to him and told him what a fine message he had given. The following week, the pastor gave a message on "Loving One Another". It was the same, exact message. Same points. Same illustrations. Same jokes. Some of the people thought to themselves, "Well, maybe he's had a bad week and forgot that he preached this message last week." The following week, the pastor got up and preached a message on "Loving One Another". You guessed it, the exact, same message. One gal in the church got the courage to ask the pastor what was going on. "How come you've preached the same sermon three weeks in a row?" she asked. The pastor responded, "When I start seeing the church doing what the message says, I'll preach a different sermon."

AND IT IS A SAFEGUARD FOR YOU: humin de asphales

- Phil 2:17,18; 2Pe1:12, 13, 14, 15; 3:1
- Philippians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING: "SAFETY FIRST!"

Paul's passion is for the believers to stand firm, to be steady and secure which is the sense of the word **safeguard**.

Jamieson writes that "Spiritual joy is the best safety against error." ([Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown](#)) While I certainly don't disagree

with that statement, even more to the point the best way to defend our mind from the error is by continually imbibing and meditating on the truth. They used to train agents to recognize counterfeit \$20 bills by spending what seemed like an inordinate time "meditating" on genuine \$20 bills. If you know the truth, the truth will set you free from legalism, which often can come in very subtle forms.

MacArthur on safeguard - So he is saying I want to provide this for you so you won't trip, you won't fall, you won't be overthrown. This will be your protection, your dependable safeguard....He says I have no trouble in warning you again because it will protect you. ([Ibid](#))

Safeguard (804) (**aphales** from **a** = w/o + **sphallo** = throw down, trip up, totter, bring to the ground, make someone fall) literally means that which cannot be thrown down, tripped up, tottered or overthrown. It describes that which is secure and safe from stumbling or falling.

Asphales thus means firm, sure, secure, safety, unshakeable, certain, steady, immovable (as of the anchor in He 6:19-note - see below - or in Septuagint referring to the sky above in Pr 8:28) and then figuratively referring to a state of safety, stability and security which can be relied on and hence free from danger and secure from peril. **Asphales** describes something that cannot be made to totter when put to the test. In Acts 2:36 the related adverb **asphalos** means certainly, surely, speaking of that which is known beyond a doubt.

NIDNTT has the following note on the uses of this word group in classic literature...

Asphaleia occurs in classic Greek. with the following meanings: security against stumbling (Thuc., History, 3, 22), assurance from danger (Aeschylus onwards), caution (in post-Christian writings), assurance, certainty (Thuc. History, 2, 11), the certainty or convincing nature of an argument (Xenophon, Memorabilia, 4, 6, 15), and as a security, bond or pledge as a technical law term (Arrianus, Epicteti Dissertationes, 2, 13, 7; BGU 1149, 24; P. Teb. 293, 19; The Amherst Papyri, 78:16). The adjective **asphales** occurs from Homer onwards in the sense of immovable, steadfast, unshaken, unfailing both literally and in the case of friends etc., and safe both literally and figuratively. The verb **asphalizo** is used in the sense of secure, safeguard and, in 1st cent. B.C. literature, arrest. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Compare Luke's use of the noun form **asphaleia** in his introductory comments writing... "so that you might know the **exact** (**asphaleia**) truth (logos - word) about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4) thus speaking of teaching or instruction which affords certainty and reliability.

The related noun **asphaleia** is found in the Septuagint or LXX of Deut 12:10 where Moses records that...

"When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in **security** (**asphaleia**)" (Dt 12:10)

This word group was also used as a technical legal term for keeping a prisoner securely guarded security (see Acts 5:23).

The noun form **asphaleia** (803) is used by Paul in the phrase "Peace and **safety** (**asphaleia**)" in 1Th 5:3-note, where the "safety" or security from peril is false and deceptive for it is focused on this world which is passing away instead of looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:11-note).

The verb form **asphalizo** (805) is used by Matthew referring to Jesus' burial site where it was said "give orders for the grave to be made secure (**asphalizo**)" (Mt 27:64) and Pilate's orders "**make it secure** (**asphalizo**) as you know how (referring to Jesus' grave). And they went and **made** the grave **secure** (**asphalizo**), and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone." (Mt 27:65, 66). Luke uses the verb form to describe the incarceration of Paul and Silas writing that the jailer "threw them into the inner prison, and **fastened** (**asphalizo**) their feet in the stocks." (Acts 16:23).

Aphales is used in Hebrews presenting every believer with a powerful word picture of our unshakeable position safe in Christ...

(In the storms and trials of life) This hope (embodied in Christ Himself and since we are "in Christ" this reflects the truth that our glorification is as certain as if it had already happened which is truth that should keep us from drifting on the wild waves of doubt and despair) we have as an anchor (note that the anchor is not cast onto the shifting sands of this world but actually into the sanctuary in heaven = safe and secure!) of the soul, a hope both **sure** (**aphales**) and steadfast and one which enters within the veil (He 6:19-note)

Aphales is used 5 times in the NAS and is translated certain, 1; definite, 1; facts, 1; safeguard, 1; sure, 1.

Acts 21:34 But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts (literally = not being able to know the **certainty**) on account of the uproar, he ordered him to

be brought into the barracks.

Acts 22:30 But on the next day, wishing to know for **certain** why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Acts 25:26 "Yet I have nothing **definite** (no certain thing) about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you all and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

Philippians 3:1 (note) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a **safeguard** for you.

Hebrews 6:19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both **sure** and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

As noted above **aphales** is taken from a verb meaning to trip up, overthrow or cause to stumble. Here the negative prefix ('**h**') is added and thus describes that which has stability and firmness so as not to be easily tripped up or overthrown.

Dwight Edwards - What follows is as "safe" for us as it was for them. If we take heed to what now follows it will act as a "safeguard" (NASB) from Satan's subtle attacks on our faith.

A Safeguard for the Soul By Elisabeth Elliot (Taken From: A Lamp For My Feet) Souls are vulnerable things. They need safeguards. It was when Paul was in prison that this idea came to him. He had just been writing to the Philippians about the benefits that accrued because of his own sufferings and the possible death he might die. He told them of Epaphroditus' illness and anxiety, and finished with "In conclusion, my brothers, delight yourselves in the Lord!...You will find it a great safeguard to your souls" (Phil 3:1 JBP). It would be very easy to allow depression and anxiety to overcome us when we look at the dismal circumstances in which we sometimes find ourselves. Who had better reason than Paul for depression? ("Oh well, but he was Saint Paul!" we counter.) **He had learned by practice how to apply the soul's safeguard, which is not mere enjoyment. It is delight.** This is a command and therefore an act of will (enabled by the indwelling Spirit), and it is done **in the Lord**. No circumstance is so dismal as to prevent obedience to the command (because no genuine believer lacks the enabling power of the Spirit). No trouble can blast that safeguard. Do it (filled with, controlled by the Spirit). Do it by faith. Delight yourself in the Lord. Maybe you will have to get out of bed, get up from your chair, go outdoors and walk, sing a song out loud, bake a pie for somebody, or mow the lawn as an offering of praise. You can do something which will help you to obey that command. **It is amazing how strongly what we do affects how we feel.** (from Back to the Bible)

Related Resource

- [Delight Yourself in the Lord](#)
- [But his delight is in the law of the LORD](#)
- [Joy - Chara - Greek Word Study](#)
- **Hebrew word - Joy** (gladness, pleasure, delight) [\(08057\) simchah](#)
- **Hebrew word - Joyful** (glad, rejoice, rejoicing) [\(08056\) sameach](#)

Philippians 3:2 Beware (2PPAM) of the dogs, beware (2PPAM) of the evil workers, beware (2PPAM) of the false circumcision (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: **Blepete** (2PPAM) [tous kunas](#), **blepete** (2PPAM) [tous kakous ergatas](#), **blepete** (2PPAM) [ten katatomen](#)

Amplified: Look out for those dogs [Judaizers, legalists], look out for those mischief-makers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Lightfoot: Be on your guard. Shun these shameless dogs, these workers of mischief, these mutilators of the flesh. I call it mutilation,

Living Bible: Watch out for those wicked men—dangerous dogs, I call them—who say you must be circumcised to be saved.

Phillips: Be on your guard against these curs, these wicked workmen, these would-be mutilators of your bodies! ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Wuest: Keep a watchful eye ever upon the dogs. Keep a watchful eye ever upon the evil-workers. Keep a watchful eye ever upon those who are mutilated, doing this for the purpose of bewareing of and avoiding the same.

Young's Literal: look to the dogs, look to the evil-workers, look to the concision;

BEWARE OF THE DOGS: Blepete (2PPAM) tous kunas:

- Pr 26:11; Is 56:10,11; Mt 7:6,15; 24:10; Gal 5:15; 2Ti 4:14,15; 2Pe 2:22; Rev 22:15
- Philipians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

AN ABRUPT WARNING: BEWARE THE MENACE OF EXTERNAL RELIGION!

Wuest says Paul now abruptly calls for the saints to **'Keep a watchful eye ever upon'** three aspects of this first group. Why does Paul make what seems to be such an abrupt change? Here examination of the [context](#) assists our interpretation. What has he just said? He is writing that they might have a **safeguard**, to keep them from stumbling.

As expanded on below **John MacArthur** emphasizes that in Php 3:2-3 Paul makes a distinct contrast between two groups - "between those who profess ("professors") to be the people of God and those who are the people of God ("possessors"). It is a distinction between those who are **religious** and those who are **righteous**."

Ray Stedman explains "there is a very vital connection with the previous verse. What is it that destroys rejoicing in the Lord? It's dwelling on external circumstances as being the important thing. It's looking away from the indwelling Lord to the outward events or ritual with which you are concerned, and counting that the important thing. That will inevitably destroy a spirit of rejoicing. So he warns against certain false teachers who were posing as Christians, who went about trying to get peoples' faith centered on outward things. The terms he uses to describe these men are bold and blunt, because in matters of this importance the apostle never minces words. He calls them three things: dogs, evil-workers, mutilators. The reference to dogs is not to the pampered, shampooed, manicured pets we have today. These were not cultured canines. These were the snarling, half-wild curs found on the streets of every oriental city. They can still be found there today. The term "dogs" is a term of reproach used by both Jew and Gentile. Because of what the dogs fed on, they were regarded as unclean animals. They fed on the refuse of the streets, the garbage, decayed meat, rotten vegetables that had been disposed of." ([Dangerous Confidence](#))

Jack Arnold - These dogs are not the warm and cuddly Benji and Lassie types. The dogs mentioned here are the mangy, flea-bitten, vicious mongrels who were scavengers living off the garbage of the street. What strong language! These false teachers were impure, unclean and immoral dogs. Judaizers were trying to get all Gentile Christians to practice the ceremonial laws, traditions and customs of the Jews.

Paul Apple entitles Php 3:2 "Watch out for the flesh promoters = joy stealers!" Note that although there are 3 "beware's" concerning three descriptions, these are most likely 3 designations of the same troublesome group of Judaizers, rather than three different groups.

- Their Character - Dogs
- Their Conduct - Evil Workers
- Their Creed - False Circumcision

MacArthur agrees with **Apple** writing - The heart of what the Apostle Paul is saying here can be understood in this way, he is helping us to see who is the true child of God. In just these three verses there is a very distinct contrast made between two groups of people. Group number one in verse 2, dogs, evil workers, mutilation, or as it's translated in the NAS, false circumcision. Group number two, verse 3, who worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. Three characteristics of group one in Php 3:2, three characteristics of group two in Php 3:3. This then is a contrast which is introduced to us by verse 1. It is a clear and penetrating distinction between the false circumcision and the true circumcision, between those who profess to be the people of God and those who are the people of God. It is a distinction between those who are **religious** and those who are **righteous**. It is a distinction between those who have an outward mark that identifies them with God and those who have had an inward change. And so, again we come back to this very familiar biblical theme. It is all through the New Testament, the theme of true Christianity. Who is the true child of God? In fact, I would venture to say that there are two dominant themes in the New Testament apart from the exaltation of Christ Himself who is the theme of all of the Word of God. The first theme in the New

Testament is a presentation and elucidation of the gospel. The record of the gospel work of Christ is recorded in the gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The record of the spread of that message is recorded in the book of Acts. And the character of the gospel is delineated, expanded, amplified in the epistles. And the goal of the gospel is consummated in the book of Revelation. So the dominant theme is the gospel of which Christ is the main character. But there is a secondary theme that runs right behind that first one and it is the matter of who is a true Christian. Having delineated the gospel in great clarity, it is then of great importance that one ascertain whether or not in fact he or she is a true Christian. That theme is also abundant in Scripture. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says, "**Examine** ([present imperative](#) = a command to do this continually!) yourselves whether you be in the faith." (2 Cor 13:5-[note](#)) Once the faith has been delineated the key is to know whether you're in it. Jesus said in Matthew 7 that in the last time many will come and say, "Lord, Lord, but He will confess to them, I have never known you, **depart** (a command) from Me you workers of iniquity." (Mt 7:23-[note](#)) So there are some who will think they are Christians and children of God, who think they belong inside the covenant and the Kingdom but who are sadly mistaken. ([Philippians 3:1-3 Qualities of True Christian-Pt1](#) - This sermon is recommended if you want to read some excellent background on the Jewish belief in circumcision.)

William Barclay - Quite suddenly Paul's accent changes to that of warning. Wherever he taught, the Jews followed him and tried to undo his teaching. It was the teaching of Paul that we are saved by grace alone, that salvation is the free gift of God, that we can never earn it but can only humbly and adoringly accept what God has offered to us; and, further, that the offer of God is to all men of all nations and that none is excluded. It was the teaching of these Jews that, if a man wished to be saved, he must earn credit in the sight of God by countless deeds of the law; and, further that salvation belonged to the Jews and to no one else, and that, before God could have any use for him, a man must be circumcised and, as it were, become a Jew. Here Paul rounds upon these Jewish teachers who were seeking to undo his work. He calls them three things, carefully chosen to throw their claims back upon themselves. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

Lehman Strauss - Jesus said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7:6). Surely this does not mean that we should not give the gospel to the unsaved, as is sometimes interpreted. It seems that our Lord is using the word as does Isaiah, who said of the religious leaders of his day: "They are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isaiah 56:10). The use of the word by Isaiah, as in our Lord's passage, refers to mere religious professors who made professions because of gain to themselves. "They are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain" (Isaiah 56:11). Jesus was saying that it is useless to discuss the things of the Spirit to professors who will not understand. The Philippian believers were to watch out for any infiltration of legalism through Judaistic teachers who maintained the distinctive characteristics of the Jew's religion.

Steven Cole sees the major application of this Php 3:1-3 as a warning against ["True Versus Counterfeit Christianity."](#) Cole opens with some disturbing findings writing ([ILLUSTRATION](#)) "About 20 years ago a survey of 7,000 Protestant youths from many denominations asked whether they agreed with the following statements: "The way to be accepted by God is to try sincerely to live a good life." More than 60 percent agreed. "God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he can." Almost 70 percent agreed. (Reported by Paul Brand & Philip Yancey, *Fearfully & Wonderfully Made* [Zondervan], p. 108.)

I have found that many church-going people, like these young people, are confused on the most important question in life: "How can I be right with God?" Many think that sincerity is a big factor. If you're sincere, God will let you into heaven even if you're a bit fuzzy on the truth. But that's like saying that a man who swallows deadly poison, sincerely thinking that it is medicine, will get better. All the sincerity in the world is fatal if it is not in line with the truth.

Many also think that human effort plays a big role. If you try your best, even though you aren't perfect, God will say, "I'll let you into heaven because you tried so hard." If that is what the Bible teaches, then it is so. But if it is contrary to what the Bible teaches, then trying your best to get into heaven is like trying your best to broad jump across the Grand Canyon. You're not going to make it!

([ILLUSTRATION](#)) **Have you ever been stuck with a counterfeit bill?** You thought it was legal tender, but when you took it somewhere and offered it as money, the teller or clerk said, "I'm sorry, but this is counterfeit money. It's no good." The Bible teaches that Satan is a master counterfeiter, trying to pass off on unsuspecting people a version of Christianity that looks pretty good, but it is not going to be accepted by the bank of heaven. It's traumatic to get stuck with a counterfeit bill; it would be far more traumatic to stand before God someday and hear Him declare that your Christianity is counterfeit!

In Php 3:1-3, the apostle Paul contrasts true and counterfeit Christianity. To understand this section of Philippians, you must know a bit of history. Soon after the gospel began to spread among the Gentiles, some Jewish men who claimed also to believe in Christ began teaching the Gentile converts that they could not be saved unless they also were circumcised according to the law of Moses (see Acts 15:1). They did not deny that a person must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they added to faith in Christ the keeping of the Jewish law, especially circumcision, as necessary for salvation.

The issue was debated and resolved in Jerusalem at a council of the church leaders where it was decided that Gentiles do not have to become Jews or be circumcised to be saved; but that every person, Jew or Gentile, is saved by grace through faith in Christ alone (Ac 15:1-29). But that decision did not cause Satan to give up his efforts to pervert the truth of the gospel. He continued to work through a group of men known as **Judaizers** who followed Paul on his missionary journeys, infiltrating the new churches and teaching their subtle error, that **faith in Christ was not sufficient if a person did not also keep the Law, especially circumcision**. Paul wrote Galatians to refute this error. He contends there that these men were preaching a false gospel and he calls down damnation on those who so pervert the true gospel (Ga 1:6-9-note). **The Judaizers are the men Paul is warning the Philippian church about in our text. The three terms in Phil 3:2, "dogs, evil workers, and false circumcision," all refer to one group, the Judaizers, who were promoting a counterfeit Christianity.**

While the Judaizers no longer exist under that name, the core of their teaching is still quite prevalent. Thus our text is extremely important in helping us to discern what true Christianity is and to reject any counterfeit version. Paul is teaching that ...

To be true Christians we must put off all confidence in human merit and trust in Christ alone for salvation. True Christianity relies totally on the person and work of Christ; counterfeit Christianity adds to this reliance on human worth or works. Concerning counterfeit Christianity, Paul warns,

1. Beware of counterfeit Christianity which adds human merit to the person and work of Christ!

The severity of Paul's warning is underscored by his threefold repetition: **"Beware...beware...beware...!"** Counterfeit Christianity is a strong danger for all of us because we're all prone to **pride** and **self-reliance**. **We all want to take for ourselves at least some of the credit for our salvation.** (Ed: Compare Paul's question in Gal 3:3-note **"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"**) We'll be generous and grant that most of the credit goes to the Lord, but we still want to reserve a bit of the honor for ourselves. People will say, "I was saved by my own free will," which implies, "I was smart enough or good enough to make the right choice." But the Bible knocks our pride out from under us by clearly stating that our salvation does not depend on our will, but on God's sovereign mercy (Ro 9:16 "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."). Or, people will say, "Christ died for me because I was worthy." But Scripture is clear that He died for us when we were unworthy sinners (Ro 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."). ([Philippians 3:1-3 True Versus Counterfeit Christianity](#))

Literally he says "Look to the dogs" with the implication that you will be warned against them. As [Eadie](#) says "Observe them so as to understand them, the inference being that when they are understood, they will be shunned."

Beware ([991](#)) (**blepo**) means perceive with your eyes. Have your eye on so as to beware of. Paul says to pay especially close attention to these men. Paul uses **blepo** three times in this verse, each time in the **present tense** (continual action called for = make this the habit of your life) **active voice** (choice of your will = he can't force them) and **imperative mood** (command not a suggestion). **Wuest** conveys the sense of the verb tense and mood rendering it *"Keep a watchful eye ever upon"*. The idea is constantly observing with a view to avoiding, constantly be looking at in the sense of continuing to be wary. Be on constant lookout for dogs, evil workers, false circumcision.

Paul gave a similar, albeit positive command in (Philippians 3:17see notes) exhorting the saints at Philippi to look closely at other believers who were following Paul's example.

In the Sermon on the Mount, **Jesus** gives a similar imperative, warning citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven to continually **Beware** (present imperative) of the **false prophets**, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (see [note](#) Matthew 7:15) In fact it is interesting that the warning "Beware of" is used in 11 passages in the NT and all except Php 3:2 are warnings from Jesus - Matt. 6:1 (practicing your righteousness before men) ; Matt. 7:15; Matt. 10:17 (of men); Matt. 16:6 (of leaven of Pharisees); Matt. 16:11 (of leaven of Pharisees); Matt. 16:12 (of leaven of Pharisees); Mk. 8:15 (of leaven of Pharisees); Mk. 12:38 (of the Scribes); Lk. 12:1 (of leaven of Pharisees); Lk. 20:46 (of the Scribes); Phil. 3:2.

MacArthur applies Paul's description of **dogs** to today - Listen, anybody who comes along in this time and day and says you have to be baptized in water to be saved is a dangerous dog. Anybody who comes along in this day and says in order to be saved you've got to go through some certain kind of ceremony, you've got to say some certain kinds of prayers, you've got to go through some kind of a ritual is a dog, an unclean thing, a dangerous beast. Anyone who comes along to you and says it's fine if you believe in Jesus but if you don't acquiesce to a certain code of ethics and do your best to live by that code of ethics and perform those deeds which will please God you will never be saved is a dog. **Beware!** ([Ibid](#))

Beloved, salvation is by grace and grace alone. And anything else that comes down the pike is nothing but a filthy unclean beast.

Brian Bell - These: joy stealing, evil working, ankle biting, legalists were always fast at his heels! - Barking legalism wherever he

taught Grace!

Swindoll - These dogs weren't on leashes & could be very dangerous if they traveled in packs - They sniffed out new converts to devour w/their strict laws!"

Dogs (2965) (**kuon**) ([See dictionary articles](#)) in the ancient word **dogs** here were mangy, flea-bitten, vicious, starved scavengers, that tended to run in packs, dig through garbage and occasionally even attack humans.

Gilbrant - In classical Greek kuōn is the term for "dog." It is used literally, when referring to the animal, and metaphorically, when describing something or someone that is impure or unclean. Thus, since dogs were scavengers, the ancient Greeks often used kuōn as a derogatory epithet. At least 13 books in the Septuagint use the term kuōn when translating the Hebrew term for dog. In most instances the usage is intended to be taken literally; however, there are a few cases in which it is symbolic. For example, when Mephibosheth first appeared before King David, he bowed before David and asked the king why he should regard "such a dead dog as I am" (2 Samuel 9:8). Likewise, when one of David's enemies began cursing him, David's servant Abishai exclaimed, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" (2 Samuel 16:9). Foolish men who repeat the same mistakes and who participate in meddling and strife are compared to dogs in Proverbs 26:11,17. Ecclesiastes 9:4, contrasting the hope of the living with the hopelessness of the dead, states the maxim, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

Kuon - Used in 5 verses in the NT (these are discussed in more detail below) - Matt. 7:6; Lk. 16:21; Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:22; Rev. 22:15

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.

Paul uses **kuon** as an ironic term of reproach which was also commonly used by the Judaizers to express their contempt for Gentiles in general. In context this phrase most probably refers to Jews who professed to believe in Christ but depended upon keeping the rituals of Judaism for their salvation. Their salvation was **faith** plus **works** which is not real salvation. They insisted that unless one kept the Law of Moses, he would not be saved. Paul regards this teaching as dangerous and subversive to the true gospel of Christ.

Some commentators explain "**dogs**" here in Philippians 3:2 as homosexuals on the basis of (Dt 23:17,18) but I think this would not fit the context in view of Paul's derogatory term ("false circumcision") that appears to describe Judaizers.

Spurgeon wrote that "They are like to dogs. If they fawn upon you, they will bemire you, if they do not bite you."

Racer: Scoundrels; keep nipping at your heels; chased Paul from town to town

MacArthur: What is startling here is that Paul, a Jew, calls Jews dogs. That's turning the table. That is a serious statement. You wonder sometimes why Paul was not popular. That statement would not make him popular...not popular. He is saying, in effect, beware of those people who self-righteously call other dogs but they're the dogs. They accuse others of shamelessly attacking the truth and they are shamelessly attacking the truth. Are dogs unclean and filthy? So are they. Are dogs snarling and howling and vicious? So are they. Are dogs dangerous and able to wound and even kill? So are they. Stay away from them. Stay away from those dangerous filthy snarling howling wild attacking false teachers who parade themselves as if they are the virtuous ones, but they are deadly, they are dangerous, they are dirty. And he's talking about people who are religious. He's talking about people who say we must obey the law of God.

Eadie - This hard expression, **dogs** (**kuon**), must be judged of by Eastern usage and associations. In very early times the name was applied as an epithet of reproach. In Homer the term is not of so deep a stain, especially as given to women; yet it resembled, in fact, the coarse appellative employed among the outcasts of society. Iris calls Athena, and Hera calls Artemis, by the term **kuon**; nay, Helen names herself one. Il. 8.423, 21.481. In the Odyssey, too, the female servants of Ulysses receive the same epithet. Odys. 18.338, 19:91, 154. In countries to the east of Greece, the term was one of extreme contempt, and that seemingly from the earliest times. The **dogs** there were wild and masterless animals, prowling in the evening, feeding on garbage, and devouring unburied corpses, as savage generally as they were greedy. Isaiah 56:11. The fidelity of the dog is recognized in the Odyssey, 17.291, and by Aeschylus, Agam. 607. But rapacity and filth (2Pe 2:22) are the scriptural associations. Ps. 59:6, 14; 1Ki 14:11, 16:4, 21:19-compared with 1Sa 17:43; 2Ki 8:13. In Hebrew (this concept) was the epithet of the vilest and foulest sinners. Deut. 23:18; Rev. 22:15. The term was therefore a strong expression of contempt, and was given by the Jews to the heathen, Mt. 15:26, as it is by Mohammedans to a Christian at the present day, when, without often meaning a serious insult, they are in the habit of calling him Giaour (A giaour [Turkish: Gavur] is the Turkish word for infidel or nonbeliever and is similar to the Arabic word [kafir](#)). We must suppose the apostle to use the word in its general acceptance, and as indicative of impurity and profanity. To indicate more minute points of comparison, such as those of shamelessness, selfishness, savageness, or malevolence, is merely fanciful. ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

Later in this same chapter Paul describes those who might qualify as **dogs** or **evil workers** writing that...

many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (see **note** Philippians 3:18-19)

There are 32 uses of **kuon** in the **Septuagint (LXX)** (Exod 11:7; 22:31; Deut 23:18; Judg 7:5; 1 Sam 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sam 3:8; 9:8; 16:9; 1 Kgs 12:24; 16:4; 21:19, 23f; 22:38; 2 Kgs 8:13; 9:10, 36; Job 30:1; Ps 22:16, 20; 59:6, 14; 68:23; Prov 7:22; 26:11, 17; Eccl 9:4; Isa 56:10f; 66:3; Jer 15:3) Below are some figurative uses in the OT

Deuteronomy 23:18 "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of **adog** into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Comment: The parallel use of "hire of a harlot" and "wages of a dog" suggests that "dog" is a Hebrew "epithet" for a male cult prostitute which was a common practice in Canaanite so called "worship". This may help explain the somewhat enigmatic term used by our resurrected Lord Jesus to define those who will not be allowed to inhabit the New Jerusalem. see Rev 22:15 below.

1 Samuel 17:43 And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a **dog**, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

1 Samuel 24:14 "After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead**dog**, a single flea?

2 Samuel 9:8 Again he prostrated himself and said, "What is your servant, that you should regard a dead**dog** like me?"

Below are the other 4 uses of **kuon** in the NT.

Peter instructs us to remember that **false teachers** are true to their nature no matter how "spiritual" they may appear for a time...

It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "**ADOG** RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire." (see **notes 2** Peter 2:22)

In the Sermon on the Mount, **Jesus** instructed believers...

"Do not give what is holy to **dogs** (see discussion of **kuon**), (see this turning away put into practice in Mt 10:14-15, Acts 18:1-6, etc) and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." (Mt 7:6-note)

Luke uses **kuon** in his description of Lazarus and the rich man writing that the poor man Lazarus was

longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the **dogs** were coming and licking his sores. (Luke 16:21)

The last occurrence of **kuon** is in a figurative description in Revelation, **John** writing...

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (Rev 22:15-[note](#))

Comment: Robert Thomas explains that here in Revelation 22:15 "**The dogs**"... is a metaphor for the **morally impure** as it is throughout Scripture. They represent male prostitutes (Dt 23:18), Gentiles (Mt. 15:26), and Judaizers (Php. 3:2, 3), among other things (cf. 2Ki 8:13; Ps. 22:16, 20; Isa. 56:10; Mt. 7:6; Mk 7:27). In the Orient dogs are scavengers and are objects of great contempt. (Robert L. Thomas, [Revelation 8-22](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995) (Bolding added)

Vine writes that "the epithet 'the dogs' is metaphorical here of the Judaizing teachers and their ways, who had found their way into the churches (cp Phil 1:15). It is used to suggest defilement and savagery, and homeless, ownerless wildness, as with the prowling dogs of the east. It is likewise a term of contempt or apprehension (1Sa 24:14; 2Ki 8:13; Ps 22:16, 20; Mt 7:6; 15:26; Rev 22:15)"

Wiersbe writes that "Like those **dogs**, these Judaizers snapped at Paul's heels and followed him from place to place "barking" their false doctrines. They were troublemakers and carriers of dangerous infection." ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

Barclay has a helpful note on **dogs** - With us the dog is a well-loved animal, but it was not so in the East in the time of Jesus. The dogs were the pariah dogs, roaming the streets, sometimes in packs, hunting amidst the garbage dumps and snapping and snarling

at all whom they met. J. B. Lightfoot speaks of “the dogs which prowl about eastern cities, without a home and without an owner, feeding on the refuse and filth of the streets, quarrelling among themselves, and attacking the passer-by.” In the Bible the dog always stands for that than which nothing can be lower. When Saul is seeking to take his life, David’s demand is: “After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! after a flea!” (1Sa 24:14, cf. 2Ki 8:13; Ps 22:16, 20). In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, part of the torture of Lazarus is that the street dogs annoy him by licking his sores (Luke 16:21). In Deuteronomy the Law brings together the price of a dog and the hire of a whore, and declares that neither must be offered to God (Dt 23:18). In Revelation the word dog stands for those who are so impure that they are debarred from the Holy City (Rev 22:15). That which is holy must never be given to dogs (Mt 7:6). It is the same in Greek thought; the dog stands for everything that is shamelessly unclean. It was by this name that the Jews called the Gentiles. There is a Rabbinic saying, “The nations of the world are like dogs.” So this is Paul’s answer to the Jewish teachers. He says to them, “In your proud self-righteousness, you call other men dogs; but it is you who are dogs, because you shamelessly pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ.” He takes the very name the Jewish teachers would have applied to the impure and to the Gentiles and flings it back at themselves. A man must always have a care that he is not himself guilty of the sins of which he accuses others. ([Philippians 3 Commentary](#))

Marvin Vincent has a lengthy note on “**dogs**” writing...

Dogs. Rev., correctly, the **dogs**, referring to a well-known party — the **Judaizers**. These were nominally Christians who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but as the Saviour of Israel only. They insisted that Christ’s kingdom could be entered only through the gate of Judaism. Only circumcised converts were fully accepted by God. They appeared quite early in the history of the Church, and are those referred to in Acts 15:1. Paul was the object of their special hatred and abuse. They challenged his birth, his authority, and his motives. “ ‘Paul must be destroyed,’ was as truly their watchword as the cry for the destruction of Carthage had been of old to the Roman senator” (Stanley, “Sermons and Lectures on the Apostolic Age”). These are referred to in Phil. 1:16; and the whole passage in the present chapter, from Phil 3:3 -11, is worthy of study, being full of incidental hints lurking in single words, and not always apparent in our versions; hints which, while they illustrate the main point of the discussion, are also aimed at the assertions of the Judaizers. **Dogs** was a term of reproach among both Greeks and Jews. Homer uses it of both women and men, implying shamelessness in the one, and recklessness in the other. Thus Helen: “Brother-in-law of me, a mischief-devising **dog**” (“Iliad,” vi., 344). Teucer of Hector: “I cannot hit this raging **dog**” (“Iliad,” viii., 298).

Dr. Thomson says of the **dogs** in oriental towns:

“They lie about the streets in such numbers as to render it difficult and often dangerous to pick one’s way over and amongst them — a lean, hungry, and sinister brood. They have no owners, but upon some principle known only to themselves, they combine into gangs, each of which assumes jurisdiction over a particular street; and they attack with the utmost ferocity all canine intruders into their territory. In those contests, and especially during the night, they keep up an incessant barking and howling, such as is rarely heard in any European city. The imprecations of David upon his enemies derive their significance, therefore, from this reference to one of the most odious of oriental annoyances” (“Land and Book,” Central Palestine and Phoenicia, 593). See Ps 59:6; 22:16.

Being unclean animals, **dogs** were used to denote what was unholy or profane. So Mt 7:6; Rev 22:15. The Israelites are forbidden in Deuteronomy to bring the price of a **dog** into the house of God for any vow: Deut 23:18. The Gentiles of the Christian era were denominated “**dogs**” by the Jews, see Mt 15:26. Paul here retorts upon them their own epithet. ([Philippians 3 Greek Word Studies](#))

Matthew Henry comments that **Paul** “calls the false prophets dumb **dogs** (Isa 56:10), to which the apostle here seems to refer. **Dogs**, for their malice against the faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, **barking** at them and **biting** them. They cried up good works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil workers: they boasted themselves to be of the circumcision; but he calls them the concision: they rent and tore the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces; or contended for an abolished rite, a mere insignificant cutting of the flesh.

BEWARE OF THE EVIL WORKERS: blepete (2PPAM) tous kakous ergatas:

- Phil 3:19; Ps 119:115; Mt 7:22,23; 2Cor 11:13; Gal 5:13; 1Ti1:19; 2Ti 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 2Ti 4:3,4; Titus 1:16; 2Pe 2:18-20; Jude 1:4,10, 11, 12, 13; Rev 21:8

THEIR CONDUCT: WICKED WORKMEN

What is the difference between evil workers and good workers? The evil workers **"worked for"** their salvation , versus genuine believers who **"work out"** their salvation!

Pritchard writes that "The passage begins with a stern word of warning. Evidently some false teachers had infiltrated the church at Philippi and Paul wanted to make sure the congregation knew how to handle them. In verse 2 he uses three exceedingly harsh terms to describe these false teachers. He calls them **"dogs"** (not house pets but wild dogs that roamed the streets) and **"men who do evil"** and **"mutilators of the flesh."** These men were immoral, influential and injurious. They were zealous but wrong, active in the church but evil in their influence." ([From Rubbish to Jesus - sermon by Dr. Ray Pritchard - November 1998](#))

Brian Bill - Paul is picking up on the declaration of Jesus in Matthew 23:15: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." They may come across as sincere but they are really sinister.

Jack Arnold on **evil workers** - These false teachers probably did not deliberately go about doing evil. In their own eyes, their intention was to do good. They had sincere religious convictions but they were sincerely wrong. The outcome of their wrong doctrine was not good but evil. NOTE. False teachers are very sincere. They are often educated and quite handsome. They are usually dynamic individuals who are appealing to listen to. Yet, they are heretics of the first degree. Also the dedication of a false teacher is amazing. IT is hard to find a true teacher who has the dedication of a false teacher. For instance, the time commitment of Jehovah Witnesses is astounding. In Mormonism, every young man takes two years after college or high school to do missionary work. Yet, the product of all their labor is evil. ([Sermon](#))

Racer: "They undermine grace; they undermine the experience of the gospel after salvation for others... Grace is meant to bring freedom to every area of our life in a way that does not lead to licentiousness on the other end of the spectrum... Diminishing the work of Christ in other people's lives... taking something that is good and distorting it."

Gromacki: "This warning describes **their conduct**. They were 'workers' in that they aggressively promoted their beliefs. They were working for their own salvation, and they attempted to influence others to accept legalism as an additional requirement with faith as the grounds for divine acceptance. They were like the hypocritical Pharisees who travelled anywhere just to make one proselyte (Matt. 23:15).

Charles Swindoll on **evil workers** - Such folks live on to this day, spreading their heresy. Their message is full of exhortations to do more, to work harder, to witness longer, to pray with greater intensity, because enough is never enough. Such folks are "evil workers" who will take away what little bit of joy you may be able to muster. I would also add that when you never know how much is enough to satisfy God, you are left in a continual state of shame and obligation. Your mind never rests. The message of the legalists always finds you lacking. It never brings relief. We need to beware of such messengers. They are, according to Scripture, evil workers. (Laugh Again)

John MacArthur says **evil workers** "pride themselves on being workers of righteousness. That's how he turns the table on them this time. Typically those who are involved in those kinds of external religions of works see themselves as the workers of what is good, that they please God, they're earning His favor, they're earning salvation. They're the noble upholders of the ceremonies and the rituals of their religion. They deserve God's please, they have lit their candles and bowed their knee and genuflected to the east. And they've gone through the water and they've gone through the ritual and they've run down the beads and they've done the good deeds and they've filled up all their agenda with those required things. And they've done all that good. And the fact of the matter is they are not good workers, they are...what?...they're evil workers. Well, you say, "Why so?" Because it is the wickedness of all wickedness to think that you can earn anything with God. Why is that wicked? Because it is pride at its apex and pride is a...what?...sin. Unregenerate people, even religious people can't do really what is good. Let me put it to you simply. Wicked people can do bad bad. Remember our discussion of that? **Bad bad**. You say, "What's that?" They do bad things for bad reasons. You say, "What's a bad thing?" Any kind of sin. They can do wicked things. And they do them with bad reasons, bad motives. They're motivated by their wicked selfish self-centered nature. Now listen to this, unregenerate people can also do bad good. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well it's good in the sense that they can help the poor, they can relieve the widows, they can visit the prisoners, they can adopt orphans, they can do good. But it's bad good because it's motivated by pride rather than the glory of God. The best that the unregenerate can do is **bad good**. They can do **bad bad** or **bad good**. But only the redeemed can do **good good**...a good deed (Ed: Enabled by the Spirit and) motivated to the glory of God." So what is it when these religionists do all of their ceremonies and all of their activities and by their own works try to attain the favor of God? It is bad good. It may appear good

on the outside, it is bad on the inside because it is nothing but the expression of pride which believes that you can please God on your own. They are *merit-mongers*. The Judaizers were among them. Evil workers trying to earn God's favor. It doesn't mean that they were doing evil deeds, they were working to please God but they were evil because it was all motivated by the false belief that they could be pleasing to God. What a deception of pride. So Paul flips the table and says you're evil workers, everything you do is wicked, everything you do is bad. Why? Because they did it out of the illusion of pride and pride is the driving sin of unregenerate man. ([Sermon](#))

A. R. Laurin says that there was no difference in character between "dogs" and "evil workers," the only difference being in method. The "dog" exemplifies devouring error with animal-like rapacity. The "evil worker" exemplifies deceitful tactics.

F B Meyer writes: "They are not set upon doing all the harm they can in the world, but are fanatical, unbalanced, and unable to distinguish between a part and the whole, magnifying some microscopical point in Christianity until it blinds the eye to the symmetry, proportion, and beauty of Heaven's glorious scheme. These people are the 'cranks' of our churches; they introduce fads and hobbies; they exaggerate the importance of trifles; they catch up every new theory and vagary, and follow it to the detriment of truth and love. It is impossible to exaggerate the harm that these people do." (**Ed**: Beware of the "latest fad" that comes into your church! I have seen this occur time and again in evangelicalism over the past 30 years. It usually is some influential, charismatic individual who introduces new teachings, especially some "new method" of living the Christian life, of praying, etc. And I have seen the effects of this false teaching producing church splits and major exodus of the more solid believers! Our watchword should be BEWARE.)

Eadie - The verb (**Beware**) is repeated for the sake of emphasis, and not because a second class of persons is pointed out to their wary inspection. ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

Spurgeon...

However prettily they may talk, if they are workers of evil, beware of them." By their fruits ye shall know them." Their speech may be clever, but if their lips be unclean, beware of them.

Paul meant those Jews who made a great point of circumcision; he calls them here "the cutters", for they mangled and cut the Church of God in pieces: "Beware of the concision."

Beware (991) (**blepo**) ([see above](#)) means perceive with your eyes. Have your eye on so as to beware of. Paul says to pay especially close attention to these men who while deceptively pretending to be workers of righteousness (self-righteousness), were in fact workers of evil things, workers of unrighteousness not true righteousness!

Barclay adds "It was their view that to keep the Law's countless rules and regulations was to work righteousness. But Paul was certain that the only kind of righteousness there is comes from casting oneself freely upon the grace of God. The effect of their teaching was to take men further away from God instead of to bring them nearer to him. They thought they were working good, but in fact they were working evil. Every teacher must be more anxious to listen to God than to propagate his own opinions or he, too, will run the risk of being a worker of evil, even when he thinks that he is a worker of righteousness."

Evil (2556) (**kakos**) morally descriptive of those characterized by godlessness with the implication of harmful and damaging bad. **Kakos** describes their character as base and malicious.

Workers (2040) (**ergates** from **ergazomai** = engage in an activity involving considerable expenditure of effort) describes one who labors or toils. They did not just do evil in the general sense, but in this context they actually actively worked against the Gospel of grace.

As **Eadie** says these men were "but they were set on **evil**; theirs was no inoperative speculation; they were not mere opinionists, but restless agitators; they were not dreamy theorists, but busy **workers**—earnest and indefatigable (unable to be tired out; unflagging, persisting tirelessly) in the support and propagation of their errors. ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus illustrates with the story of a house where the head gets up and shuts the door. When some come to the door and seek to enter he replies...

'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU **EVILDOERS**.' (literally workers [**ergates**] of iniquity" or unrighteousness) (Luke 13:27)

Comment: These **workers** are not specifically immoral men, but workers of the law, who because of a legalistic approach to salvation are producing only "unrighteousness." They are typical of the group seen here in Philippians.

Paul appears to describe Judaizers who taught circumcision was necessary for salvation and thus were evil workers for the kingdom of God. In his second letter to the Corinthians **Paul** addresses another group of "**workers**"...

For such men (those were attacking the credibility of Paul) are false apostles, **deceitful** (dolios - describes Satan's servants who deliberately attempt to mislead other people by telling lies & desire to gain advantage by deceiving using deceitful cunning or duplicity) **workers** (ergates), disguising (transfiguring, changing their outward appearance - Satan's worker's most destructive efforts are accomplished when they transform themselves, changing their outward appearance) themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (2Cor 11:13,14)

Wiersbe tells the following story

A lady was arguing with her pastor about this matter of faith and works.

"I think that getting to heaven is like rowing a boat," she said. "One oar is faith, and the other is works. If you use both, you get there. If you use only one, you go around in circles."

"There is only one thing wrong with your illustration," replied the pastor. "Nobody is going to heaven in a rowboat!"

There is only one "good work" that takes the sinner to heaven: the finished work of Christ on the cross (John 17:1-4; 19:30; Heb. 10:11-14). ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

BEWARE OF THE FALSE CIRCUMCISION: blepete (2PPAM) ten katatomen:

- Phil 3:3; Ro 2:28; Gal 2:3,4; 5:1, 2, 3,6; Rev 2:9; 3:9
- Philippians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

THEIR CREED: FALSE "FLESH CUTTERS"

More literally Paul says "Beware of the mutilation"!

The **KJV** says "beware of the **concision**" where concision is an archaic term which means to mutilate. Concision describes the mark on the flesh of the Israelite who had submitted to the outward rite, but had never been circumcised in heart.

Spurgeon - Beware of the cutters off, those who excommunicate and cut off others because they do not happen quite to agree with them in certain rites and ceremonies.

The Judaizers in essence were "**mutilating**" the message of the Gospel of grace by adding law ([See Table Contrasting Grace and Law](#)). The danger of these deceivers (and remember deceivers are usually also deceived which makes them especially dangerous because they really believe the false dogma they are teaching! 2Ti 3:13-note) was that this false teaching affected not only their own spiritual lives but also those of their converts. Thus Paul used strong language to warn those who would dare tamper with the Gospel writing...

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (anathema - given up to the curse and to destruction). (Galatians 1:9-note)

In **Galatians 5:12 Paul** again does not spare words writing "Would that those who are troubling you would even **mutilate** (emasculate) themselves (or cut themselves off as when one was made a eunuch)!"

Racer on false circumcision - "Provided physical evidence that you have submitted to the gospel ... figuratively speaking: mutilating the freedom of the gospel, not meant to be about externalism anymore but about the heart and spiritual circumcision ... the heart should not remain hard and calloused but be repentant and broken

Gromacki: "The term 'concision' (katatomen) refers to severe mutilation, a thorough cutting. This descriptive title must be seen in contrast to genuine circumcision (peritome) which is based upon the same verb stem. The Judaizers were literally **cutting down** (prefix - *kata*- = down), whereas circumcision involved a **cutting around** (prefix *peri*- = around). Physical mutilations, practiced in pagan idolatry, were prohibited by God through Moses (Lev. 21:5; 1 Kings 18:28)."

Charles Swindoll - By calling them "false circumcision" people, Paul meant they believed in mutilation, not merely circumcision, for salvation. They taught, if circumcision was good, castration was even better! One must (there's that word again) work exceptionally hard to be acceptable to God—give up, take on, put away, add to, try harder, contribute more—before there could be assurance of divine acceptance. The result of all that? Confidence in the flesh! You worked hard . . . you sacrificed . . . you labored intensely . . .

you received it. And in the process you had every reason to be proud of it. I say again . . . heresy! (Laugh Again)

Robert Lightner - "The mutilation meant...they mutilated the gospel by insisting on the need to mutilate the flesh in order to be rightly related to God."

Beware (991) (**blepo**) in its simple definition denotes voluntary observation. Blepo has the idea of constantly observing with a view to avoiding. In this context of course Paul commands (present imperative = calls for continued vigilance - don't let down your guard because the enemy deceivers are relentless - in this case they are Jewish legalists, but practically speaking legalists are in most if not every evangelical church) the saints at Philippi to continually be on the "look out" for these characters.

It appears likely that all three terms refer to the same group of men, all of whom were false teachers who sought to put believers under the Law, teaching that righteousness was attained by works (keeping laws and rituals such as circumcision).

Eadie comments on the **false circumcision** observing that this "term occurs only here, and the apostle, in his indignation, characterizes the class of Judaizers by it. Not that he could speak so satirically of circumcision as a divine institute, but of it only when, as a mere manual mutilation, apart from its spiritual significance, it was insisted on as the only means of admission to the church—as a rite never to be discontinued, but one that was obligatory as well on the Gentile races as on the descendants of Abraham. The term justly designates the men whose creed was, "Except ye be circumcised and keep the whole law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Viewed in this light, and as enforced for this end, it was only a cutting, and so the apostle calls those who made so much of it "the slashers." Chrysostom well says of them, that so far from performing a religious rite,—“they merely cut their flesh.” ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

WARNING SIGNS (ILLUSTRATION) - Some things are worth watching out for. My first car was a 1955 Chevrolet. From it I learned to watch out for certain signs. One snowy winter night we were driving home through Chicago, when a yellow light appeared on the dashboard. Thinking it to be defective, I drove on. As we were slipping through the south side of the city, a horrible rumble erupted. It soon settled down into a knock and the car just stopped. The oil pressure had fallen below the acceptable norm and the engine—all six cylinders—just seized up. I learned to look out for warning signs.

ILLUSTRATION OF ADDING ANYTHING TO CHRIST - The principle of mixing grace and works can be compared to adding an extra and uncalled for ingredient to medicine. Sometimes such additions will result in curative medicine being changed into a poisonous mixture. For instance, when F.D. Roosevelt, Jr. was sick with strep throat, he was given a new drug, sulfanilamide. His recovery was amazing. Due to the publicity, there was an immediate demand for the drug. A pharmaceutical company in Tennessee decided they could more easily meet the demand by making a solution of sulfanilamide powder. They added just one element. As a result, sixty-one people died before they could stop the product from being sold. The addition of just one little element changed what had been a tremendous curative power into a deadly poison. So it is with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By taking from or adding to it just one little thing, it becomes deadly poison and loses its curative qualities. According to the Bible, 99% grace and 1% works equals works. And works are death to true spirituality!

Stedman on **katatome** - What he means is they are mere flesh-cutters, making marks in the flesh that have no meaning at all.

MacArthur observes that these "flesh cutters," these "mutilators" were men who "prided themselves on circumcision. The word for circumcision in the Greek is **peritome**, it means to cut around. Paul says you're not the circumcision, you're the **katatome**, you're the mutilation, you're the castration, that's what you are. Boy! You think you're circumcised? You think you fit God's design in the symbolism of circumcision? Forget it, there's nothing spiritual about it. All it was was physical mutilation. In Galatians 5:12 he says, "You say you're circumcised? I would that you were castrated." Very strong. You see, we can't just say to these people who add works to salvation, "Well, they're close. Boy, they're certainly lovely people. They certainly are nice. And they're religious. And, you know, they're trying their best to get to God." They are dogs. Beware of them. They're filthy. They're unclean. They're vicious. They are not workers of good. They are doing at best bad good, motivated by their own pride. And they go through their religious ceremonies and they are useless, they have nothing to do with their heart and their life and their relation to God. They're simply external. It is merely a process of mutilation with no spiritual value, no inner cleansing, no spiritual change. Why? Because that's all of grace and nothing more, right? Nothing more. And as soon as you stick anything else in there, all is lost. (Sermon)

Edwards on dogs, evil workers, false circumcision - No doubt his primary reference here is to legalizers--Jews mixing the law and grace. ([see chart below](#) - "oil and water do not mix!")

False circumcision (2699) (**katatome** from **kata** = intensifies + **temno** = to cut) literally means a cutting down or (ironically) a mutilation. In the Septuagint or LXX the related verb **katatemno** is used to describe the mutilation that pagans performed as part of their religious ceremonies. Thus Moses records that the holy people, Israel,

"shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor **make any cuts** (Lxx = **katatemno**) in their flesh." (Lev 21:5)

In first Kings we read that the idolatrous pagan priests "cried with a loud voice and **cut** (Greek Septuagint = **katatemno** verb related to **katatome**) themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. (1Kings 18:28)

Paul labeled these men "**katatome**" probably a play on words for they attempted to "mutilate" the gospel or cut away it's power by preaching **Christ plus** _____ (works, Jewish ritual, law, tradition). is closely related to "**circumcision**" or **peritome** (**peri** = around + **temno** = to cut) meaning literally to cut around. The false teachers had so distorted the meaning of circumcision that it had become nothing more than a useless cutting of the body.

Peritome had been ordained in the Law of Moses and did convey a spiritual significance, distinguishing God's people Israel in the OT from the pagans. When this spiritual meaning is forgotten, then **peritome**, circumcision, becomes **katatome**, a mutilation, a butchering up, a mere cutting away flesh conveys no merit or value in itself. Paul says keep watching out for these "butchers". The almost certainly taught that outward circumcision of the flesh was necessary to salvation. Tragically these deceivers were themselves deceived as Paul made clear in Romans "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is **circumcision** that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision** is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." (Ro 2:28, 29-note)

Barclay explains that "There are two Greek verbs which are very like each other. Peritemnein means to circumcise; katatemnein means to mutilate, as in Leviticus 21:5, which describes forbidden self-mutilation, such as castration. Paul says, "You Jews think that you are circumcised; in point of fact, you are only **mutilated**. ([Philippians 3 Commentary](#))

Jack Arnold on **katatome** - Paul sees these Judaizers as **mutilators** who destroy Christians. This is a term of disrespect. It would be like a skilled surgeon calling a quack doctor a "**butcher!**" Circumcision was a Jewish ritual to show a male child was under the covenant of God given to the nation of Israel. It was an outward symbol but had nothing to do with salvation. The Jew without faith in the Messiah to come could not be saved. Abraham is the perfect example of a Jew who had to be saved by faith (Genesis 15:6-see commentary: Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.). Abraham believed God long before he and his family were circumcised in Genesis 17 at age 90 (cf Ge 17:10-12).

This **false circumcision** was the counterfeit of the genuine spiritual **circumcision** which Paul described in Colossians. Here we see that circumcision as a religious rite was rendered null and void by the Cross of Christ, so that as a result, the true circumcision which pleases God is "made without hands," without human effort, but by the work of the Spirit (Ro 2:29).

and in Him (speak of the believer's inseparable union with Christ - union created by the Spirit and effected by faith) you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (see **note** Colossians 2:11)

Eadie comments that "the blessing described in the verse had been already enjoyed, for they were and had been believers in Him in whom they are complete. Through their living union with Christ, they had enjoyed the privilege, and were enjoying the results of a spiritual circumcision. Why then should they suffer the incision of a sharp flint or a glittering knife—in itself, at best, but a sign—when they had already experienced the blessing of a circumcision that drew no blood, and gave no pain—a circumcision "not made with hands"?" ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

ILLUSTRATION: The best way I can think of to illustrate the contrast between the terms "circumcise" and "mutilate" is to describe the way one can buy chicken here in the United States and how one would buy a chicken in India. If I were to go to the grocery store nearby, I could purchase boneless chicken breasts. The meat cutter would skillfully use a very sharp knife and almost surgically remove the bones from the meat of a chicken breast. If I went to a market in India to buy chicken, I would come away with a mutilated chicken. They don't cut a chicken into recognizable pieces—breast, thigh, neck, drumsticks, and wings. They take a meat cleaver and hack away at the whole chicken until it is reduced to small pieces of meat, with all kinds of bone pieces remaining. And so when you eat chicken in India, you are constantly spitting out little bone fragments. The boneless chicken breasts would represent circumcision. The mangled chicken with all the bones remaining would approximate mutilation. Thus, when the Judaizers would read Paul's description of them as "mutilators," the mere thought would horrify them. ([Deffinbaugh](#))

Mattoon - Churches need to beware of adding baptism, the Lord's Supper, church membership, tongues, and now, the King James translation, to salvation. Believe it or not, there are some preachers saying that you cannot be saved unless it is with the KJV. There are some missionaries that believe they cannot win people to Christ on the mission field unless they read the KJV in English first to people who do not understand English and then read the Bible to them in their language. Making the KJV translation a necessary requirement for salvation is a false and heretical doctrine. There is no scriptural basis for that teaching at all and if you will think about it, it is absolutely idiotic and makes no sense at all. It is another gospel and a destructive, damaging doctrine that is creating havoc on the mission field as well as in the United States. It is a lie and those promoting this teaching are either deceptive or ignorant and are going to be held accountable for the confusion they are creating in the body of Christ. Have I made myself clear

about this heresy? Beloved, we had the Gospel long before the 1611 KJV. God's favorite language is not English and His favorite translation is not the KJV. He is not a respecter of persons. He loves His Word in all languages and translations throughout the world and throughout history.

Related Discussion of Circumcision:

- [Scriptures on Circumcision](#)
- **Circumcision** ([4061](#)) [peritome](#)
- Excursus on [Circumcision](#) - some overlap with "Scriptures on Circumcision"

Application Do you see how would this warning might apply to the church? Dr. Barnhouse re-phrases Paul's warning in Romans giving in a more modern "spin" --

For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that "church membership" which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and "church membership" is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Run, John, Run! The Law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Far grander news the Gospel brings
It bids me fly and gives me wings!

Eadie sums up verse 2 concluding that...

The repetition of the verb (Beware) proves the anxiety and stern ardour of the apostle. "For you it is safe," and their safety lay to some extent in being formally and emphatically warned. Like three peals of a trumpet giving a certain blast, do the three clauses sound with the thrice-repeated verb—beware! That the same classes of persons are referred to, we have no doubt.

The same men are described in each clause—as impure and profane, as working spiritual mischief, and as taken up with a puerile faith in flesh-cutting. In the first clause you have their character, in the second their conduct, and in the third their destructive creed. The absurd stress they placed on a mere mutilation warranted the satirical epithet of the concision; but their convictions on this point drove them into a course of mischievous agitations, and they became the evil-workers; then from their belief, character, and actings, they stood out as impure and shameless—as dogs. Men who insisted on circumcision as essential to salvation made the rite ridiculous—Judaized ere they Christianized. To circumcise a Gentile was not only to subject him to a rite which God never intended for him, but it was to invest him with a false character. Circumcision to him was a forgery, and he carried a lie in his person. Not a Jew, and yet marked as one—having the token without the lineage—the seal of descent and not a drop of Abraham's blood in his veins. To hinge salvation, especially in the case of a Gentile, on circumcision, was such a spurious proselytism—such a total misappreciation of the Jewish covenant—such a miserable subversion of the liberty of the gospel—such a perverse and superstitious reliance on a manual rite, that its advocates might be well caricatured and branded as the concision. The rite, so misplaced, was both a fiction and an anachronism; for the benefits of circumcision were to be enjoyed in Palestine, and not in Europe, and enjoyed up to the period "of the abolition of the law of commandments contained in ordinances." What these persons were may be seen in the Introduction. They might not have done damage as yet in Philippi, but there was a danger of their doing so. Such a warning, repeated, would put the Philippians on their guard and contribute to their safety. ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

CONTRAST OF GRACE AND LAW

LAW	GRACE
The law prohibits	Grace invites and gives
The law condemns the sinner	Grace redeems the sinner.
The law says DO	Grace says IT IS DONE.
The law says, Continue to be holy	Grace says, It is finished.

The law curses	Grace blesses
The law slays the sinner	Grace makes the sinner alive.
The law shuts every mouth before God	Grace opens the mouth to praise God.
The law condemns the best man	Grace saves the worst man.
The law says, pay what you owe	Grace says, I freely forgive you all.
The law says "the wages of sin is death"	Grace says, "the gift of God is eternal life."
The law says, "the soul that sins shall die"	Grace says, Believe and live.
The law reveals sin	Grace atones for sin.
By the law is the knowledge of sin	By grace is redemption from sin.
The law was given by Moses	Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
The law demands obedience	Grace bestows and gives power to obey.
The law was written on stone	Grace is written on the tables of the heart.
The law was done away in Christ	Grace abides forever.
The law puts us under bondage	Grace sets us in the liberty of the sons of God.

- Adapted and modified from work by Dr M R De Haan - Studies in Galatians. Kregel Publications

Philippians 3:3 for we are (1PPAI) the true circumcision, who worship (PAPMPN) in the Spirit of God and glory (PMPMPN) in Christ Jesus and put no confidence (RAPMPN) in the flesh ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [hemeis gar esmen](#) (1PPAI) [e peritome, oi pneumati theou latreuontes](#) (PAPMPN) [kai kauchomenoi](#) (PMPMPN) [en Christo Iesou kai ouk en sarki pepoithotes.](#) (RAPMPN)

Amplified: For we [Christians] are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit and by the Spirit of God and exult and glory and pride ourselves in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence or dependence [on what we are] in the flesh and on outward privileges and physical advantages and external appearances— ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Lightfoot: for we are the true circumcision, we offer the genuine service; we—you and I—Gentile and Jew alike—who serve by the Spirit of God, who place our boast in Christ Jesus and put no trust in the flesh.

iving Bible: For it isn't the cutting of our bodies that makes us children of God; it is worshipping him with our spirits. That is the only true 'circumcision.' We Christians glory in what Christ Jesus has done for us and realize that we are helpless to save ourselves.

Phillips: We are, remember, truly circumcised when we worship God by the Spirit, when we find our joy in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in what we are in the flesh ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Wuest: For, as for us, we are the circumcision, those who by the Spirit of God are rendering sacred service and obedience, and who are exulting in Christ Jesus, and who have not come to a settled persuasion, trusting in the flesh [human worthiness and attainment]

Young's Literal: for we are the circumcision, who by the Spirit are serving God, and glorying in Christ Jesus, and in flesh having no trust,

FOR WE ARE THE CIRCUMCISION: hemeis gar esmen (1PPAI) e peritome:

- Ge 17:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:26; Ro 2:25, 26, 27, 28, 29; 4:11,12; Col 2:11
- Philippians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

**REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST:
THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION**

For (gar) is a [term of explanation](#) which introduces Paul's explanation of why the false teachers (probably Judaizers) just described have no right to claim they are the true circumcision. In that sense it in effect creates a striking contrast between the false and the true circumcision.

Observe that Paul's claim that he and the believing readers were the **true circumcision** is based on the three differences: (1) "who worship in the Spirit of God" (2) "and glory in Christ Jesus" (3) "and put no confidence in the flesh" These 3 characteristics distinguish a true believer (true circumcision) from a false believer (false circumcision - trusting in anything by Christ Alone!).

Spurgeon notes "These are three marks...have you all of them: worshipping God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh?"

John MacArthur on Php 3:3 - A number of years ago I decided that that verse might be my favorite description of a Christian. What is a Christian? We could say he's a believer. What is a Christian? We could say he's a child of God. What is a Christian? We could say he's a disciple. We could say he's a follower. He is one who loves God. But how could we say it better than to say a Christian is one who worships in the Spirit of God, glories in Christ Jesus and puts no confidence in the flesh? What a surpassing definition of the true Christian. ([Sermon](#))

F F Bruce: "External ceremonies are henceforth irrelevant. Physical circumcision has been replaced by the circumcision of the heart which 'is the work of God's Spirit, not of the written Law' (Ro 2:29-note). The word rendered **external ceremonies** is literally translated 'flesh' (Gk. [sarx](#)); Paul uses this word not only in its ordinary sense but also to denote unregenerate human nature and sometimes to include practically everything, apart from God, in which people mistakenly put their trust."

We - This pronoun is first in the Greek sentence adding **emphasis**. Paul is including himself with the saints at Philippi, many of whom were undoubtedly Gentile (see Acts 16-note for his first European converts - Lydia, the Philippian jailer, both Gentiles as far as we can discern)

A T Robertson agrees writing that **we** refers to...

We believers in Christ, the children of Abraham by faith, whether Jew or Gentile, the spiritual circumcision in contrast to the merely physical (Ro 2:25, 26, 27, 28, 29; Col 3:11-note Ep 2:11-note).

Romans 2:25-29-notes Ro 2:25; 26; 27; 28; 29

25 For indeed **circumcision** is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your **circumcision** has become **uncircumcision**.

26 So if the **uncircumcised** man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his **uncircumcision** be regarded as **circumcision**?

27 And he who is **physically uncircumcised**, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law 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 which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter**; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

As **Paul** wrote to the saints at **Colossae**, when one is in Christ by grace through faith...

there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. (Col 3:11-note)

Similarly writing to the **Galatian** churches he explained that...

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one **in Christ Jesus**. (Galatians 3:28-note)

The true circumcision - The NAS translators added the word "**true**" which is not in the Greek but it fits well with the context (as an aside this is why I recommend using a Bible translation which is literal and which uses **italics** so that you know what they have added to the original Greek text - NAS, KJV, NKJV, Darby, et al, use italics. The ESV and NET are both excellent translations but neither use **italics**) What Paul is saying here is that the circumcision God has always desired is not an external physical circumcision but an internal spiritual circumcision of the heart (notice this command for a "spiritual circumcision" given even in the OT - Dt 10:16 = ""Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more.")

Spurgeon - This is the real circumcision, which is of the spirit, and not of the flesh. The men who have abandoned all confidence in themselves, the men who have come to rely upon Christ alone, the men who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," those who care not for outward rites and ceremonies, but who worship God in the spirit, — these are the true circumcision.

Addressing primarily the Jewish readers in his letter to the Romans (but applicable to all unsaved readers) Paul explains that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter (~ the Law); and his praise is not from men, but from God." (Ro 2:28, 29-notes) Stated another way every genuine believer has undergone an INTERNAL circumcision of their heart by the Spirit and so they are part of the "true circumcision."

Circumcision (4061) (**peritome** from **perí** = around + **témno** = cut off) refers literally to cutting and removal of the foreskin. Both the Old and New Testament also use the concept of circumcision in a figurative or metaphorical sense (Click for in depth word study of peritome) (See also discussion of **Scriptures on Circumcision**)

The **circumcision** here is spiritual (figurative not literal) as elaborated elsewhere where Paul explains that now because of our union with and position "in Him (Christ) (we, the moment we believed in Him) were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh ("you were made free from the power of your sinful self" [ICB], "of the corrupt nature" [GWT], "... of your sinful nature" [NLT]) by the circumcision of Christ". (Col 2:11-NOTE) which parallels perfectly with God's charge in the OT to "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart" (Dt 10:16KJV), for God has always been more concerned with our INTERNAL heart condition than the dead EXTERNAL works, whether physical circumcision the Jews believed in or human works of (so-called) righteousness performed in a vain attempt to merit favor with God or to be pleasing to Him. (Click for analysis of circumcision). (Click for another discussion on **circumcision** in context of the study of covenant)

and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, (Col 2:11-13-note)

Ray Pritchard - Evidently they were professing Jewish Christians who taught that you had to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. They claimed that circumcision was necessary in order to be accepted by God. To the Apostle Paul this was nothing less than heresy. It's one thing for a man to decide he wants to keep the Law of Moses for himself, it's something else to demand that everyone else do as he does. It's even worse to say that if you don't do as I do, you can't be saved. To say that you must keep the law in order to be saved is to deny the gospel of grace. These men were mutilating the souls of the people they claimed to be helping. Notice Paul's answer in Phil 3:3. When he says "we ... are the circumcision," he means that true believers have been circumcised in their hearts through faith in Jesus Christ. We don't need a physical operation because we've had a spiritual heart transplant. As a result, we worship in the Spirit, we give glory to Jesus Christ, and we put no confidence in the flesh.

Let me be clear about this. Religion without Christ is dangerous. Millions of people today are trusting in their religion to get them to heaven. They believe because they were baptized as an infant (or as a child or as a teenager or as an adult) that they are going to heaven. Or they think that because they were raised as a Baptist (or Methodist or Lutheran or Church of Christ) they must be born again. It's not so. Religion without Christ will send you to hell. You can say your prayers five times a day, you can be baptized, you can listen to Billy Graham, you can take the Lord's Supper, you can light the Advent candle, you can even drop a million bucks in the offering plate, and if you don't know Jesus, it's won't do you a bit of good. Many religious people have "Christ-plus" faith. They are trusting in Christ plus baptism or Christ plus church membership or Christ plus going to Mass or Christ plus good works or Christ plus giving money. They love to sing that old gospel song: "Jesus paid almost all of it" because they think they've got to add their part to what Jesus did.

- Don't trust in your religion! It can't save you.
- Don't trust in your parents' religion! It can't save you.
- Don't trust in your baptism! It can't save you.
- Don't trust in your church attendance! It can't save you.

Religion is good and so is baptism and church membership and many of the other outward trappings of Christianity. But if your heart has never been circumcised by faith in Christ, you are not saved and you are not going to heaven. That's the warning Paul wants you to understand. ([Philippians 3:1-11: From Rubbish to Jesus](#))

WHO WORSHIP IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD: oi pneumatí theou latreuontes (PAPMPN):

- Mal 1:11; Jn 4:23,24; Ro 1:9; 7:6; 8:15,26,27; Eph 6:18; Jude 1:20

- Philippians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

those who by the Spirit of God are rendering sacred service and obedience, and who are exulting in Christ Jesus, and who have not come to a settled persuasion, trusting in the flesh [human worthiness and attainment] ([Wuest](#))

John MacArthur writes that "**True worship** goes beyond praising God, singing hymns, or participating in a worship service. The essence of **worship** is living a life of obedient service to God. "Do not neglect doing good and sharing," exhorts the writer of Hebrews, "for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Heb 13:16-[note](#)). True worship involves every aspect of life. ([Philippians 3:1-3 Qualities of True Christian](#))

Strauss - In contrast to the worship of the Old Dispensation, which was chiefly ritualistic in character, the true believer, having been born of the Spirit, from above, worships God inwardly. True worship is a matter of the spirit and not of the flesh. It does not take on certain outward forms nor prescribe to a specified ritual. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The body of the Christian becomes a temple in which God is worshiped in every thought and meditation and in the performing of every duty. So Paul writes: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Ro 12:1-[note](#)).

James Draper - This passage is not a slam at ritual at all. But the point is to not allow ritual in any form to become mere ritual, meaningless and without purpose for our lives. We come mechanically to church without any real hunger for God. We go through the motions of listening and singing and go home untouched by the message of an eternal God. We have allowed the ritual to lose its meaning. Beware of those who would emphasize the legal observance of certain rituals to the exclusion of a commitment of heart to Jesus Christ....Any ritual, any form of worship that honors God, is directed by the Spirit of God.

Edwards - A good cross reference here is Gal. 3:3-note where flesh and spirit are well contrasted.

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

In another sermon **MacArthur** explains **worship in the Spirit of God** - That is to say his worship is supernatural, not natural. His worship is generated by the Spirit of God not by his own will, his own desires or by some ceremonies or some ritual or some liturgy or some structure or some code. He is a worshiper of God but his worship is that which is produced from the inside by the indwelling Holy Spirit. And thus it is transcendent worship, it reaches a plain beyond the external....But the only true worship is that which is prompted by the Spirit of God indwelling. And the only people the Spirit of God indwells are Christians. Therefore they are the only ones who worship by the Spirit of God. The first then quality that marks a true Christian is worship. There is deep within the true believer a longing to glorify God, a longing to worship God, to serve God. ([Sermon](#))

Steven Cole - **True Christianity is marked by "worship in the Spirit of God."** - Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24). True worship is the inner sense of awe, gratitude, and love for God that stems from an understanding of who God is and who we are in His presence. The false teachers were making worship a matter of outward ritual. Paul is saying that true Christians are marked by inner worship prompted by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit works submission in our hearts so that we bow before God, caught up in love and praise, giving all glory to Him for His great salvation! ([Philippians 3:1-3 True Versus Counterfeit Christianity](#))

Mattoon - We must be careful what we worship, for what we are worshiping, we are becoming. When we go to church, the worship is not for us, it is for Christ. The purpose of the church service is not to get something out of it, but to put something in to it: our worship, praise, and adoration for Jesus Christ. People who do not get anything out of the church service usually don't put anything into it. It's not the Pastor's fault, it's their fault. We exist to give Christ the glory due to Him. Jerry Bridges, in his book, *The Joy of Fearing God*, describes the healthy tension between loving and fearing God: In the physical realm there are two opposing forces called "centrifugal" and "centripetal." Centrifugal force tends to pull away from a center of rotation, while centripetal force pulls toward the center. A stone whirled about on the end of a string exerts centrifugal force on the string, while the string exerts centripetal force on the stone. Take away one and the other immediately disappears. These two opposing forces can help us understand something of the fear of God. The centrifugal force represents the attributes of God such as His holiness and sovereignty that cause us to bow in awe and self-abasement before Him. They hold us reverently distant from the One who, by the simple power of His Word, created the universe out of nothing. The centripetal force represents the love of God. It surrounds us with grace and mercy and draws us with cords of love into the Father's warm embrace. To exercise a proper fear and reverence of God we must understand and respond to both these forces.....Gordon Dahl once observed, "Our problem is that we worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship." Many think they are worshiping the Lord when in reality they are fooling themselves. Like kids that play "house" or play "school," they are playing "church." Beloved, God wants our obedience. Obedience to God is the essence of worshiping Him. Without obedience to the Lord, there is no worship of Him. How can we show our love and adoration for the Lord if we are unwilling to do what He asks us to do? (Commentary on Philippians)

Worship (3000) (**latreuo [word study]**) originally meant to render service of any sort (Acts 7:42; 24:14) or service for hire (usually of a service rendered willingly) and then came to mean the rendering of respectful spiritual service or the service of worship. While **worship** is not specially defined in Scripture, it broadly signifies direct acknowledgment of God, His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by word, in praise or thanksgiving, or by deed done in such acknowledgment.

Wuest (quoting Vincent) makes an interesting point observing that "The word **worship** is the translation of the Greek word referring to the service of Jehovah by His peculiar people, the Jews (see Acts 26:7 where "serve" = latreuo). A Jew would be scandalized by the application of this word to a Gentile. Paul uses it to designate the religious service and obedience of the believer in the Church. ([Philippians Commentary Online- Recommended](#))

Worship in the Spirit of God - This describes the result of true **circumcision**. **Why?** Because all true worship to God is initiated by God Himself. Let's be honest. We think we are spiritual and would pursue God, but if left to our natural powers, we would pursue everything but the true God. And so we default back to the passage Paul had just unpacked in Chapter 2. There we see that we truly worship ("work out our salvation in fear and trembling" - Php 2:12-[note](#)) because it is God "Who is working in (us), giving (us) the DESIRE to obey Him and the POWER to do what pleases Him." (Phil 2:13NLT-[note](#))

Eadie adds that **"The Spirit of God** is He Who dwells in the hearts of believers, sent by God for this purpose. It follows, indeed, as a natural inference, that if the Spirit prompt and guide the worship, it will be spiritual in its nature. There is thus a quiet but telling allusion to the external formalities of the Jewish service, to which the dogmatists were so inordinately attached. The Mosaic worship, properly so called, could be celebrated only on one spot, and according to a certain ritual. Though of divine institution, and adapted to express in a powerful form the religious emotions of the people, it often degenerated into mere parade. It became a pantomime. **Jehovah** represents Himself as being satiated with sacrifices, and wearied out by the heartless routine. Only on one altar could the victim be laid, and only one family was privileged to present it. But the Christian worship may be presented anywhere and at any time, in the hut and in the cathedral. The Being we worship is not confined to temples made with hands, nor yet is He restricted to any periods for the celebration of His worship. Whenever and wherever the Spirit of God moves the heart to grateful sensation, there is praise; or touches it with a profound sense of its spiritual wants, there is prayer and service. How superior this self-expansive power of Christianity to the rigid and cumbrous ceremonial of Israel after the flesh, and especially to the stiff and narrow bigotry of the concision! ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

In **Isaiah** God described the counterfeit of Spirit initiated and empowered worship declaring...

"Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote" (Isaiah 29:13)

Jesus taught that worship was not a matter of a physical place but an issue of the heart addressing the Samaritan woman's statement that...

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship **in spirit and truth.**" (John 4:20, 21, 22, 23, 24)

Jesus explained that worship which pleases God "must (be) worship in spirit and truth." This God initiated and God centered worship contrasts with the rituals and ceremonies that ensnared the Jews of old and which today entangle and deceive many who practice external acts thinking they are truly worshipping **"in the spirit of God."**

ILLUSTRATION OF WORSHIP TO THE VERY END OF LIFE - John Harper was born into a Christian family May 29, 1872. He became a Christian 13 years later and had already started preaching by age 17. He received training at the Baptist Pioneer Mission in London, and in 1896, he founded a church, now known as Harper Memorial Church, which began with 25 worshipers, but had grown to 500 members by the time he left 13 years later. In 1912, Harper, the newly called pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, was traveling on the Titanic with his 6-year-old daughter. After the ship struck an iceberg and began to sink, he got Nana into a lifeboat but apparently made no effort to follow her. Instead, he ran through the ship yelling, "Women, children, and unsaved into the lifeboats!" Survivors report that he then began witnessing to anyone who would listen. He continued preaching even after he had jumped into the water and was clinging to a piece of wreckage (he'd already given his life-jacket to another man).

Harper's final moments were recounted four years later at a meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, by a man who said: I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a spar that awful night, the tide brought Mr. Harper of Glasgow, also on a piece of wreck, near me. "Man," he said, "are you saved?" "No," I said, "I am not." He replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The waves bore him away, but, strange to say, brought him back a little later, and he said, "Are you saved now?" "No," I said, "I

cannot honestly say that I am." He said again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," and shortly after he went down; and there, alone in the night, and with two miles of water under me, I believed. I am John Harper's last convert. This convert was also one of only six people picked out the water by the lifeboats; the other 1,522, including Harper, were left to die. In spite of facing his imminent death, John Harper continued to worship God by telling others about Him. (from Rod Mattoon)

ILLUSTRATION OF WORSHIP - Wellington Boone gained a new perspective on worship after traveling to Africa. He learned about the unique prelude that takes place before a group of Ugandans begin their worship. These people walk long distances to hear the Word of God and often do so with great personal discomfort. As they sit in anticipation of worship, these believers chant, "Boga, boga" which is translated, "Serious, serious." They believe worship and the study of God's Word is serious business. Does "boga, boga" describe your approach to worship? Are you serious or flippant when it comes to worshipping Jesus Christ and learning His Word? Are you prepared to receive what God has for you personally? (from Rod Mattoon)

STRIKING THE NOTE TO TUNE OUR HEART - A sheep rancher in the remote mountains of Idaho found that his violin was out of tune, and, try as he would, he was unable to make the instrument sound the way it should. A frequent listener to a radio station in California, he wrote the station concerning his problem, asking these good people at a certain hour and minute on a certain day to strike the right note for him. This they did: stopping everything else, silencing all other sounds for a moment, they struck that note. In his shepherd's hut in the distant mountains, the shepherd heard that sound, and from that single note he put his instrument into tune again. Thus are the moments of worship, special times of being in touch with God. We listen for the signal-tone He strikes for our lives, for the pitch He gives by which our hearts may be put in tune. Do you keep yourself in tune with the Lord? Are you prepared for His guidance, leading, or still small voice? (from Rod Mattoon)

WORSHIP DEFINED - When Robert Kennedy visited the Amazon, he conversed with a Brazilian Indian through a translator. The Indian had recently come to Christ. Kennedy asked, "What do you like to do the most?" He expected an answer like "hunting with bows and arrows or canoeing." The Indian answered, "Being occupied with God." Kennedy said, "Ask him again. Something may be lost in the translation." The Indian, however, gave the same answer. His reply was an excellent definition of "worship." Are you occupied with God?

WORSHIP WITH AN UN-SURRENDERED HEART - The late Dr. Peter Marshall once selected for use in a church service the familiar hymn of consecration, "Take My Life and Let It Be." He requested the congregation to give particular thought to the words: "Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold." Exacting the practical sense of the words "not a mite would I withhold," he asked that all who could not sing this line with literal sincerity, refrain from singing it at all. The effect was a dramatic commentary on the glib, thoughtless manner in which, all too often, we sing our hymns. Hundreds of voices, with organ accompaniment, sang vigorously up to the designated point. Then, suddenly, there was only the sound of the organ music. Not a single voice ventured to so challenging a height! Have you surrendered everything to the Lord? Slow down for a moment and think about this question. Take a spiritual inventory of yourself and see where you are with God and with your possessions.

Apathy, discouragement, fatigue, or distractions can hinder our walk and worship of God. A park ranger was leading a group of hikers to a lookout tower in Yellowstone National Park. Along the way he pointed out some of the famous sites in the park. He was so intent on the stories he was telling, that he paid no attention when his two-way radio received a message. He turned it down. Later they stopped to look at some flowers and view some of the birds in nearby trees. Once again his radio distracted the ranger, so this time he turned it off. As the group neared the lookout tower they were met by a nearly breathless ranger who asked why the guide hadn't responded to the messages on his radio. From their viewpoint, high in the tower, some other rangers had observed a large grizzly bear stalking the group. They had been trying desperately to warn the hikers.

Many times we are so involved in personal activities and pursuits in this life, that we don't pay attention to the voice of God trying to get through to us. Sometimes we turn down the volume. Sometimes we don't pay attention. Sometimes we even turn Him off. When He speaks to us, we don't get the message. Is this happening to you?

WORSE - WORSHIP - WORST - When you fail to worship the Lord in your life, you will know it. Don't be surprised when things start falling apart and your life becomes very stressful. There is a great lesson to be learned from the dictionary. When things start going bad, we often fear they will only get worse. It seems the "worse" will take us to the "worst." To prevent the "worse" from turning into the "worst," look at the unique setup God has provided in the English language. Any standard dictionary will separate the words "worse" (and its derivatives) and "worst" with one special word: "worship." When circumstances seem to be slipping in the wrong direction, remember that worship is the buffer between "worse" and "worst." (Mattoon)

GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS: kai kauchomenoi (PMPMPN) en Christo Iesou:

- Phil 3:7, 8, 9; Ps 105:3; Isa 45:25; Jer 9:23,24; 1Cor 1:29, 30, 31; Gal 6:13,14
- Philipians 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS

Strauss on glorying in Christ Jesus - We ourselves have nothing to commend us for approval before God or man. We are saved by grace, disciplined by grace, and kept by grace. Left to ourselves we would fail utterly. When the twenty-four elders fell down before Christ's throne, they said: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory" (Rev. 4:11). Following this tribute the elders were joined by angels and living creatures numbering "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:11-12). True Christians join Heaven's hosts in giving glory to Christ.

Glory (2744) (**kauchaomai** [word study] akin to **aucheo** = boast + **euchomai** = pray to God <> **auchen** = neck which vain persons are apt to carry in proud manner) means to boast over a privilege or possession. The idea is boasting with exultant joy about what a person is most proud of. **Kauchaomai** is a favorite verb of the apostle Paul who accounts for 34 of the 36 NT occurrences. It's frequent use shows the high spiritual level of the apostle's life. The present tense indicates glorying in Christ Jesus was their continual response.

Kauchaomai expresses an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy. As used in the positive sense self-confidence is radically excluded and all self-boasting is abandoned. Faith implies the surrender of all self-glorying.

John MacArthur on the word **glory** - It can be used in a negative sense to describe proud, inappropriate boasting (e.g., Rom. 2:17, 23; Gal. 6:13). **Kauchaomai** is also used, however, to describe believers' joyful exulting in Christ (e.g., Ro 5:2, 11; 1 Cor 1:31; Gal. 6:14), as it is here. True Christians give the credit for all that they are and have to the Lord Jesus Christ. With Paul they declare, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10; cf. Phil. 3:8-9) and "Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God" (Rom. 15:17). They obey the biblical injunction "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17; cf. Ps 20:7; 34:2; Jer. 9:23-24; Gal. 6:14). In contrast, false believers "boast according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 11:18), believing that their good works and religious activities earn them favor with God. But salvation is "by grace... through faith;... it is the gift of God"; it is "not... a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9; cf. Ro 3:27). It was the biblical truth that sinful men can do nothing to merit salvation that led the Reformers to teach that salvation is *sola fide* (by faith alone) and *sola gratia* (by grace alone). Those who think they can earn God's grace by their own works give evidence that they lack saving faith. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Philippians)

Steven Cole - The King James Version inaccurately translates, "rejoice in Christ Jesus." The word is "boast" or "glory." Paul is basing this on Je 9:23-24: "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the Lord." Have you ever been around a boaster? He goes around telling everyone how wonderful he is, how smart he is, how much he knows. Christians should go around telling people how wonderful Christ is, how great He is, how merciful, how kind, how powerful, how awesome, how righteous, etc. Boasting in ourselves is sinful pride; boasting in the Lord deflates our pride and gives all the glory to Him. True Christians confess, "The only thing I'm great at is being a great sinner; but Christ Jesus is a great Savior!"

Edwards - They glory not in the law (Ro 2:23-note), nor outward appearance (2 Cor. 5:12-note), nor especially in men (1 Cor. 3:21); but they glory in Christ Jesus, the One Who created all and is the source of all. This last contrast is especially important as it was one of the great problems in I Corinthians. Men have a natural tendency to glory in other men and to look for a king like the other nations around them. And yet one of the marks of spiritual maturity is that we glory in Christ Jesus, rather than those who are simply instruments of Christ Jesus. We need to watch who we display our first allegiance towards. Is it Christ and His word, or one of His servants and their interpretation?

Related:

- [Why is sola fide important?](#)
- [What are the five solas?](#)
- [Why is sola gratia important?](#)
- [How can salvation be not of works when faith is required? Isn't believing a work?](#)
- [What does it mean for salvation to be a gift from God?](#)
- [Why is salvation by works the predominantly held viewpoint?](#)

Eadie - They gloried not in themselves, or in anything about themselves—not in circumcision or Abrahamic descent, but **in Christ**

Jesus, and in Him alone—not in Him and Moses—not in Son and servant alike; gloried in Him; in His great condescension; His birth and its wonders; His life and its blessings; His death and its benefits; His ascension and its pledges; His return, and its stupendous and permanent results. The spiritual circumcision boasted themselves in Christ Jesus; the implication being, that the concision boasted themselves in Moses and external privilege ([Philippians 3 Commentary - Online](#))

To the believer his exultation is in Christ Jesus, Who is the personal embodiment of all his privileges, and in whom he glories, on the ground of His Cross. In Galatians Paul contrasts two objects of boasting...

For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may **boast (kauchaomai)** in your flesh (they want to boast that they are disciples of these false teachers). But may it never be that I should **boast (kauchaomai)**, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:13,14)

Centuries earlier God declared through His prophet Jeremiah...

Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man **boast** of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts **boast** of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. (Jer 9:23,24) (quoted by Paul in part in 1Cor 1:29, 30, 31)

ILLUSTRATION OF GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS - Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was present at the Vienna Music Hall, where his oratorio [The Creation](#) was being performed. Weakened by age, the great composer was confined to a wheelchair. As the majestic work moved along, the audience was caught up with tremendous emotion. When the passage "And there was light!" was reached, the chorus and orchestra burst forth in such power that the crowd could no longer restrain its enthusiasm. The vast assembly rose in spontaneous applause. Haydn struggled to stand and motioned for silence. With his hand pointed toward heaven, he said, "No, no, not from me, but from thence comes all!" Having given the glory and praise to the Lord, he fell back into his chair exhausted. Worship gives God the glory.

Mattoon adds - Even the animals of God's creation praise Him, from the birds that sing their melodious songs to the whales in the sea. According to research conducted by the National Geographic Society, the 40-ton creation of God—the humpback whale—has a fascinating singing ability. Recordings have been made of the humpback whale singing in various pitches in solos, duets, trios, and choruses of dozens of interweaving voices lasting from six to thirty minutes. What an experience it is to hear, over one's own stereo system, songs from the ocean depths—sung by 40-ton whales! The passage of Psalm 148:7 "Praise the LORD from the earth, Sea monsters and all deeps; "

AND PUT NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH: kai ouk en sarki pepoithotes (RAPMPN);

NEVER TRUST YOUR FALLEN FLESH!

Never rely on your flesh! Don't trust it! Flesh will always steer you wrong! It will be with us the rest of our life on earth. No Christian arrives...till he arrives in glory!

This is the third mark of those who are redeemed - they do not put confidence in the fallen, unredeemed humanness that still indwells the body of every believer.

Lehman Strauss - Finally, we "have no confidence in the flesh." The flesh is the old nature, the old self, and it can never be trusted. Paul testifies: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). The old nature in the believer is as corrupt and vile as the old nature in the worst sinner. The flesh never changes. Jesus said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). God makes no attempt to improve it. The flesh is violently opposed to the Person and operations of the Spirit. "For the flesh (present tense = continually) sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that ([term of purpose](#)) you may not do the things that you please." (Gal. 5:17-[note](#)). Beware, Christians, lest you become deceived by what appears to be a fair show of the flesh. None of us dare trust ourselves for one single moment. There is only one place for the [old man](#), and that is on the cross. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24-[note](#)).

Charles Swindoll - Those last six words—"put no confidence in the flesh"—what a helpful relief! God's grace has again come to our rescue. And in the process He gets the glory. All the credit goes to Him, as certainly it should. When it comes to our vertical and eternal relationship with God, unlike the humanist's message, we put no confidence in the flesh. Salvation through human works? No

way. Human pride? No reason. The gift that brings back the laughter—God's gift of eternal life with Him—is based on what He has done for us and not what we have done for Him. Maybe you need to read that sentence again. It explains why we put no confidence in the flesh. Those who do have missed the whole point of grace. (Laugh Again)

Related Resources:

- [Chart contrasting in the flesh vs in the Spirit](#)
- [What is the flesh?](#)
- [What are the works of the flesh?](#)
- [What is human nature? What does the Bible say about human nature?](#)
- [What does Paul mean when he writes of the natural man?](#)
- [What is the sin nature?](#)
- [What is mortification of sin / the flesh?](#)
- [What does it mean that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak?](#)

Steven Cole - True Christianity is marked by "**no confidence in the flesh**." - Counterfeit Christianity builds a person's self-esteem: "You're great, you're worthy, you're somebody!" True Christianity humbles all pride and confidence in self. As Je 17:5, Je 17:7, Jer 17:8 puts it, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord.... Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is in the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit."

Edwards - What exactly is the "confidence" here referring to? From the content it appears to be referring to trusting in good works of the flesh to get into heaven (verse 4 and following). We know that Paul also put no confidence in the flesh for sanctification either, and so this is probably implied also. Serving Christ and becoming like Him could not be done in the power of the flesh, for supernatural work requires supernatural energy and power. And so Paul's (and also our) confidence or trust was not in his ability but in God's great power. (**Ed**: The supernatural power provided by relying on the indwelling Spirit of Christ!) The common denominator of this verse seems to be internal vs. external. The Judaizers' worship was primarily external, centering around the flesh in its various expressions. We are to worship internally, centering upon the Spirit and His various expressions.

James Draper - The third characteristic of the true circumcision is the realization that we are helpless to save ourselves. We "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3, KJV). "Flesh" means "that which the flesh produces." The person who really knows the Lord does not put his faith in what he can do. This does not mean that we become passive and do nothing except trust God. It does not mean that we stop using the abilities God gives us. But it means that we do not trust in this alone. A good **illustration** is the preparation that we make before a Sunday morning service. We do everything we know to make it a meaningful service. We turn on lights, plug in the organ, print bulletins, etc. But though we do everything we can, we know that unless God touches that service in a special way it will not come alive. We don't sit idly by and wait for God to put an order of service together on the spur of the moment. When someone is saved or when someone is blessed, it is not because of what we did, but because of what God did in working through us. Everything may be in order and everything necessary may be there, but it is all dead without his special touch. Where does our energy stop and his energy start? Where does our trying and our ability cease and his Spirit take over? God works in us, directing us in our physical and mental effort. When it is all done, we simply must wait for him to put life into what would otherwise be a corpse

Lehman Strauss - Of all such externalities Paul warns to beware. Similarly, in our own day, we must beware of other forms of legalism, such as the demand for baptism, the Lord's Supper, fasting, the confessing of sins to men, as conditions of salvation.

No (3756) (ouk) means absolute in contrast to relative negation. Paul is using the strongest negative to deny that the natural man can do anything of worth or value in the supernatural realm.

Put... confidence (3982) (peitho) is in the **perfect tense** which conveys the idea of coming to a settled persuasion regarding something. Paul had come to a settled conviction (recall he says "**we**" in Php 3:3) as a result of a past completed process of turning this matter over in his mind until he was persuaded and thus confident that the flesh was of no value in the spiritual realm. When did this happen for Paul? Undoubtedly the moment the Spirit caused him to be born again. Prior to that Paul was in fact quite confident in his flesh.

He had come to understand the truth of **Jesus'** great declaration that...

It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

In **Romans 7** Paul wrote...

I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, **in my flesh**; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. (see note Romans 7:18)

In **Romans 8** Paul explained the adversarial relationship of the flesh and Spirit writing that believers...

do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (see notes Romans 8:4, 8:5, 8:6-8, 8:9)

Flesh (4561) (**sarx**) (Click discussion of **flesh**) in this context represents man in his unregenerate state and unredeemed humanness, in short picturing **human ability apart from God**, whether in the religious or moral realm.

As Paul here shows he was (Phil 3:4-6), man apart from God and out of agreement with God, man without the possession of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that there was nothing good within his flesh (Ro 7:18-note)

For physical meaning of flesh (our physical fleshly bodies) see (note Philippians 1:22)

Steven Cole sums up this section asking the pertinent question - Why do people ignore strong warnings? I guess they think that somehow it doesn't apply to them or that it isn't to be taken seriously. On our vacation, we went to the Columbian icefields in Jasper National Park in Canada. You can walk to the edge of one of the glaciers, but there are signs in several languages warning of the extreme danger of walking onto the glaciers. The signs even explain why it is dangerous: there are hidden crevasses, covered by recent snowfalls, where you can easily fall to your death. A ranger told us that a year to the day before we were there, a man had gone about 60 feet out onto the glacier and had fallen through the snow into a crevasse where he died before rescuers could free him. Yet in spite of the clear warnings, dozens of people were wandering hundreds of yards out onto the glacier! Paul warns us, "Beware of counterfeit Christianity!" You could fall into it if you disregard his warning! Just as you would examine a suspect bill to see whether it is true or counterfeit, so you should examine your heart: True Christians put off all confidence in human merit and trust completely in Christ Jesus for salvation. They rejoice in Him and all that He is to them. Beware of any false substitutes! ([Philippians 3:1-3 True Versus Counterfeit Christianity](#))

ILLUSTRATION - A lady was arguing with her pastor about this matter of faith and works. "I think that getting to heaven is like rowing a boat," she said. "One oar is faith, and the other is works. If you use both, you get there. If you use only one, you go around in circles." "There is only one thing wrong with your illustration," replied the pastor. "Nobody is going to heaven *in a row boat*!" There is only one "good work" that takes the sinner to heaven: the finished work of Christ on the cross (John 17:1-4; 19:30; Heb. 10:11-14). (Warren Wiersbe - [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

John MacArthur alludes to an older book written by Gardner Spring many centuries ago entitled [Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character \(free online\)](#) which says this in the foreword

It is our prayer that God may use this book in the following ways: one, to confirm the faith of such as are the true children of God but who lack assurance based upon biblical principles; two, to strip away the false hopes of such as are diluted and whose delusion has been confirmed by the erroneous teaching on the subject of assurance which is so prevalent in our day; three, to clarify these issues to those who stand in that awesome place of being expositors and teachers of God's holy Word so that they may find fuel for the fires of their own hearts and for their public ministry of the Scriptures.

Here is more from the INTRODUCTION OF [Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character \(free online\)](#)

What must I do to be saved? How may I know that I am saved? It is obvious that these are two different questions, and it is just as clear that the Bible gives a specific answer to each of them.

In answer to the first question, the Biblical directive is unmistakable. One must repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ the Lord if he is to be saved (Acts 20:21). All Spirit-wounded, convicted sinners must be urged to look away from themselves, and in a penitent faith to fix the gaze of their souls upon Christ alone for mercy as He is offered to them in the Gospel.

But the second question demands a different answer. How one may know that he has truly repented and believed is not a question touching the ground or means of one's acceptance before God, but rather the proof

and evidence of one's saving relationship to Him in Christ. The Bible's answer to this question is that we must "examine ourselves and prove ourselves whether we be in the faith." Accompanying that command the same Scriptures lay out objective evidence of the fruits of true repentance and faith.

Great confusion and subsequent delusion has flooded the professing church in our generation through a failure to distinguish the difference in the Bible's answer to these two questions.

In most Evangelical circles today anyone who asks the question "How may I know that I am saved and that I have truly repented and believed?" is encouraged to simply rest on a text which declares that all believers are saved. But this is circuitous reasoning and fails to come to grips with the real issue.

The answer given to this vital question by the author of this little volume proceeds along a different line of evidence, one which has far more of the sanction of the Bible and of Historic Christianity. His thesis is that there are what he terms "distinguishing traits" evidenced in the true sons of God, which traits are the accumulative indication that God has begun a good work in the soul. Thus he begins his essays by stating some of those things which are not an evidence that we have been savingly joined to Christ, and he concludes his treatise by setting forth those traits of life and character which form conclusive evidence of the work of God in the heart of a man.

That this particular approach to the burning question "Am I or am I not saved?" is a far more Biblical one than that approach generally given in our day is clearly evidenced by the following factors: (1) the whole drift of Biblical teaching enjoins us to consider the objective evidence of God's work in our hearts, and on that basis to conclude whether or not we are the true children of God. See Matthew 7:21; John 10:27; I Corinthians 6:9; II Timothy 2:19; Galatians 5:19 thru 21; and Hebrews 5:9. (2) The specific teaching of the First Book of John. In I John 5:13 John states that his reason for writing his letter was that men might be assured of the possession of eternal life. How did he accomplish this objective? Not by giving them a string of texts upon which to base their confidence, but by displaying a set of tests whereby they might evaluate the reality of their professed faith. For example, he said "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (2:3). Again, we know that we have passed from death unto life, if we love the brethren (3:14). See also I John 1:6; 2:3-4,9-11, 15-17; 3:3-10, 13-15, etc. It is only as we are willing to lay our lives alongside the objective standard of God's description of a true Christian that we can obey the command of God's Word to "examine ourselves and prove ourselves whether we be in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Here is the Table of Contents of this little jewel of a book [Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character...](#)

1. [INTRODUCTION](#)
2. [VISIBLE MORALITY](#)
3. [SPECULATIVE KNOWLEDGE](#)
4. [FORM OF RELIGION](#)
5. [EMINENT GIFTS](#)
6. [CONVICTION FOR SIN](#)
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8. [THE TIME OF YOUR SUPPOSED CONVERSION](#)
9. [LOVE TO GOD](#)
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11. [FAITH IN CHRIST](#)
12. [EVANGELICAL HUMILITY](#)
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15. [THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER](#)
16. [BROTHERLY LOVE](#)
17. [SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD](#)
18. [GROWTH IN GRACE](#)
19. [PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE](#)
20. [CONCLUSION](#)

Here is another book of similar ilk to the one above. It was written in 1661 by Matthew Mead. The title is [Almost Christian Discovered; or, the False Professor Tried and Cast](#) (free online). Here is brief review...

As a Congregationalist minister in 17th century England, Mead could not teach or preach without censure or persecution. Eventually, the harsh religious climate of his homeland drove Mead to Holland, although he

returned to England to minister to a congregation in Stepney in secret. *The Almost Christian Discovered*, a theological essay, tackles one of the most interesting in controversial problems in Christian teaching: the "almost" Christian, a person who is on the brink of receiving God's grace, but falls short. Two issues present themselves: "The one is," Mead writes, "how often a believer may miscarry, how low he may fall, and yet have true grace. The other is, how far a hypocrite may go in the way to heaven, how high, he may attain, and yet have no grace." Mead seeks to answer these questions with this essay, continuing an ancient debate that has lasted into the present day. - Kathleen O'Bannon CCEL Staff

John MacArthur writes - He wrote the book because he wanted to address a very significant problem. The problem he wanted to address was the fact that there were many people who thought they were saved and weren't. There were many people who claimed to be saved, and weren't.

F B Meyer...

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

Phil. 3:1-3

Finally, 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.

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

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

THERE is a difference of opinion amongst scholars as to the precise meaning of the Apostle when he wrote this word "Finally." Bishop Lightfoot, for instance, supposes that he had already said all that he intended to say, and was bringing his letter to a dose. In that case we should accept the alternative rendering, Farewell/ which is suggested in the margin for Rejoice. This would justify the paraphrase: "And now, my brethren, I must wish you farewell. Rejoice in the Lord."

It is better, however, to hold that though Finally indicates that the Apostle is approaching the end of the Epistle, it is not necessarily a very near approach. (See 1 Thes. 4:1; 2 Thes. 3:1.) In this case we might adopt the following paraphrase: "My letter draws to its dose. Its key-note has been the duty of joy, and it shall be so to the end."

Three Christian duties are enjoined in this brief paragraph: We are to rejoice in the Lord; we are to beware; and we are to examine ourselves that we be of the true circumcision.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN JOY.

Christian Joy. --The **Joy**, which is the **fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart**, coming next to love, and before Peace, in the enumeration given by the Apostle in Gal. 5:22, is unlike anything which is produced from the **natural soil of the heart**. It is altogether peculiar to the **regenerate soul**. It differs from the overflowing good spirits of perfect health, for it persists amid weakness and pain; it differs from mirthful merriment, with its "quips and cranks," for it persists in dark hours as well as bright; **it differs from mere happiness**, for it persists amid the loss of all things. Those who have seen it reflected on the face of God's children will bear witness to the unearthly beauty of expression which it generates. Of this there is a beautiful story told by Dr. Trumbull, who describes "What a boy saw in the face of Adoniram Judson ([see biography](#))." One evening, he saw a stranger arrive by train in his native town, whose appearance greatly attracted him. He had never seen such a light on a human face before, and at last it dawned upon him that the man was the great missionary, with whose picture he was familiar. He hurried to summon his own minister, and the little lad was soon forgotten as the two fell into deep conversation; but the boy circled about them, steadfastly looking on that face. Until the day he died, he was accustomed to speak of its beautiful light that shone like the sun. That surely was the reflection of this inner joy.

The "Solar Look." In the American version of Psalm 34:5, we read, "They looked unto Him and were radiant." The "solar look" is a well-known expression for the smile that shone on the face of Rowlands of Llangetho; and Margaret Fuller in her diary says, "Emerson came into our house this morning with a sunbeam in his face." Nothing more certainly indicates that we have fellowship with God than the radiance of that joy in our step, bearing, and look. The joy of the Lord arises from leaving all our burdens at His feet; from believing that He has forgiven the past as absolutely as the tide obliterates children's writing in the sand; that nothing can come which He does not appoint or permit; that He is doing all things as wisely and kindly as possible; that in Him we have been lifted out of the realm of sin, sorrow, and death into a region of Divine light and love; that we have already commenced the eternal life, and that before us for ever, there is a fellowship with Him so rapturous and exalting that human language can only describe it as unspeakable.

A Thing to be Cultivated. It is a duty for us to cultivate this joy. We must steadfastly arrest any tendency to murmur and complain; to find fault with God's dealings; or to seek to elicit sympathy. We must as much resist the temptation to depression and melancholy as we would to any form of sin. We must insist on watching the one patch of blue in the dark sky, sure that presently it will overspread the Heavens. We must rest upon the promises of God in certain faith that He will triumph gloriously, and that the future will absolutely vindicate the long story of human pain. We must cultivate a cheery optimism, and an undaunted hope. We must resolve to imitate Him (this imitation even being enabled by His indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus!), of whom the poet sings, that he:

Never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

Rejoicing in the Lord. Moreover, we are to rejoice **"in the Lord."** "In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps 16:11) We need not relegate the fulfilment of these sweet words to the far future, but now and here, as we live in fellowship with Him, we shall discover that Christ's presence made real to us by the Holy Spirit, is the "deep, sweet well of joy." We may not be able to rejoice in our circumstances, friends, or prospects, but **we can always rejoice in Jesus Christ**, whose Nature is the key to the understanding and unlocking of all mysteries, the Well-spring of hope, the Day-star in our hearts, till "the morning breaks and the shadows flee away."

It is not difficult to be bright and gay amongst comparative strangers and friends, but often those who are at their best in the social circle, are depressed and taciturn with the immediate inmates of their homes. Does not the wife sometimes shyly confess to herself the wish that her husband might shed the same genial warmth on the breakfast-table, when they are together, as he did on the social circle of the previous evening? But surely, if there is one company in all the world where one should overabound with joy, it is among those to whom our face is as the sun. If it is clouded, shadows fall on all things, if it shines with unobscured beauty, all things partake of a new radiancy.

Do not be Afraid of Joy. "Thou shalt rejoice in all the good which the Lord thy God giveth thee"; "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." God is always putting into our lives bright and blessed things to be used for Him. Do not think it necessary to introduce thorns to your roses, and clouds for the unflecked blue sky. God loves to see His children glad, and so long as you are able to look up from the joy that fills your heart to Him who gave it, connecting the gift with the Giver, there is no reason why you should not drink to the full every cup of blessing which He places in your hand.

We shall hear the Apostle returning to this injunction in Phil. 4:4. To quote his own words, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe." Apparently, he was constantly exhorting them to Christian joy, he was repeating the advice he had often given, laying stress where he had often laid it, with him it was "precept upon precept, line upon line," and the teacher who reaffirms and repeats is sure to win in the end.

THE DUTY OF TAKING HEED.

The Duty of Taking Heed. Beware of Dogs. --He adds, "Beware of dogs." Amongst the Ancients, dogs stood as representatives of certain human qualities. For the Greek they stood for ferocity, impudence, greediness; for the Jew, for degradation and uncleanness. In the Apocalypse the term is applied to those who are destitute of moral qualifications for entering the New Jerusalem--"Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the idolaters, and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie." Every traveller in the East knows how herds of dogs prowl through the streets, each pack holding its own street against all comers; they have neither homes nor owners, feeding on the refuse of the streets, quarrelling amongst themselves, and attacking the passers-by.

We are bidden, therefore, to beware of men of a quarrelsome and contentious spirit, who under the guise of religion hide impure and unclean things; and who are not only defiled, but defiling in their influence. If, in our circle of friends, there is one whose influence lowers the tone of our own life, who suggests and arouses thoughts and desires that tend to the gratification of the flesh, the tendency of whose conversation is towards the kitchen of our lower nature, rather than to the observatory of our spirit life, it is our duty to be carefully on our guard, and, if possible, to break off from familiarity and even acquaintance.

And of Evil Workers. "Beware of evil workers." These are not quite the same as evil doers. They are not set upon doing all the harm they can in the world, but are fanatical, unbalanced, and unable to distinguish between a part and the whole, magnifying some microscopical point in Christianity until it blinds the eye to the symmetry, proportion, and beauty of Heaven's glorious scheme. These people are the "cranks" of our Churches; they introduce fads and hobbies; they exaggerate the importance of trifles; they catch up every new theory and vagary, and follow it to the detriment of truth and love.

It is impossible to exaggerate the harm that these people do, or the desirability of keeping clear of them, they are the pests of every Christian community they enter; and their influence over young and unwary spirits is in a high degree pernicious. The Apostle tells us that when we speak, we must observe the "proportion of faith." No exhortation could be more necessary, and whenever any person makes a hobby of one special aspect of the Gospel, always agitating that one point, exaggerating it, and concentrating upon it an amount of attention that should be evenly diffused over the entire system of truth, let us beware, for such an one, intentionally or not, is an evil worker.

The Concision. Beware of the Concision. These years of the Apostle's life were greatly embittered by the antagonism of the Judaizing teachers who dogged his steps. They did not deny that Jesus was the Messiah, or that His Gospel was the power of God unto salvation, but they insisted that the Gentile converts could only come to the fulness of Gospel privilege through the Law of Moses; they urged that Gentiles must become Jews before they could be Christians; they asserted that if the new converts were not circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved (Acts 15:1). Throughout his whole career, the Apostle offered the most strenuous opposition to these men and their teaching. He went so far as to say that they were traitors to the highest traditions of the past, and that the rite they insisted on, under such circumstances, and when viewed as a condition of salvation by the Blood of Christ, was only a mutilation and cutting of the flesh. It was not circumcision in the true, deep sense of the term. The distinction lies between the words concision and circumcision, the one "a cutting," the other a sacred rite.

Unauthorized Demands. Similarly, in our own time, we must beware of those who say that men must pass through certain outward rites before they can be saved. Still amongst us are to be found teachers and writers, the purport of whose words certainly is that, in addition to faith in our Lord, there must be certain acts of obedience to the institutions of the Church. They demand baptism, attendance at the confessional, and strict obedience to fasts, mortifications, and acts of self-denial, as conditions of salvation. Against all these we must be steadfastly on our guard, because they obscure and belittle the Gospel, and divert men's thoughts from Him who is the only way to the Father.

It is specially difficult to be on our guard against these false teachers, because they approach us under the guise of earnestness, sympathy, and religious sentiment. It is not so difficult to watch against the outwardly profane and rebellious, but the most wary may be snared by the specious appeals of those who seem more religious than themselves. It was therefore that the Apostle feared, in his time, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve with his subtlety, so the minds of his converts should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ (2Cor. 11:3). It is when Satan comes to us as an angel of light that he is most to be dreaded.

THE DUTY OR SELF-EXAMINATION.

Examine Yourselves.--The analogue of circumcision in the Christian dispensation is clearly not Baptism, but a "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." We must be circumcised in the "circumcision of Christ," i.e. in the cutting away of all the energy of our self-life, the placing the grave of Jesus between ourselves and the past, and the rising with Him into a realm of liberty and victory, to which He passed by the door of Resurrection (Col. 2:11, 12).

Specifically, the Apostle gives us the three notes of the true circumcision, by possessing which, we show ourselves to be the true descendants of Abraham, and in the true line of spiritual heredity and blessing; "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; the circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God" (Ro 2:28, 29).

Is our Worship Right? Do we belong to this holy category? Are the three credentials on which the Apostle insists evident in us? Do we worship God in the spirit? The word translated worship means first to do servant's work, then to do religious service, and sometimes priestly duty. Do we understand what it is to live in the temple of worship, performing every duty as to the Lord? Is our worship, whether in public or private, mechanical in outward posture and routine, or do we know what it is to worship the Father "in spirit and in truth," and "to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day?" Do we glory (exult) in Christ Jesus? Is He our boast and pride? Is following Him our highest ideal? Is the pursuit of His "Well-done" our loftiest endeavour?

Is our Confidence Right? Are we amongst those who put no confidence in the flesh? All through the Epistles the flesh stands for self--the self that seeks to justify itself, that endeavours to sanctify itself, that is always fussily endeavouring to win men for God, but has never learned to be submerged beneath the mighty tide and current of God's Spirit. If your religious life is one of self-effort and self-complacency, you must stand back; it is not for you to handle the priceless pearl; your eyes cannot detect its superlative beauty, excellence, and worth. But let all humble souls, who have nothing in which to glory, save the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who put no confidence in themselves, but wholly rest upon the unmerited grace of God, lift up their faces with exceeding great joy. These are the true children of Abraham.

Jake Parsons. Do we rejoice in Christ Jesus? Dr. James H. Taylor wrote some years ago of the curious old New England character named Jake Parsons. "The change in his life was notorious, so significant and revolutionary had it been. He lay down to sleep one night an absolutely drunken, worthless wretch, having well-nigh lost his power of speech through his dissipation, loved only by the

fragment of the family that was left to him. He woke up the next morning an absolutely changed man. For nearly forty years after that, he lived a life without blemish or spot. Eight years after the change, someone asked him what had produced it. This is the explanation he gave: "That night, Jesus Christ appeared in my sleep. His face, as I saw it, seemed so pure, so lovely, so friendly to me that when I awoke I forgot my old vices, and so loved my Saviour that I could not displease Him. He did not speak to me, He only looked at me; but His look told me that there was hope for me, that I could be forgiven, that I could be purified. I looked at Him, and cried like a child; I felt that I was a vile, miserable, wicked wretch, filthier than a dunghill. I cannot tell how I felt. When I looked at Him I was too happy to be afraid; but when I looked at myself I was too afraid to be happy. I forgot all about rum and tobacco, I was thinking so much about Christ, so pure, so lovely, so beautiful, so friendly."

One who knew him well, so Dr. Taylor said, wrote: "For thirty-five years he lived a blameless life, beloved by everybody. On a fine summer morning, my friend writes, the glorious old new creature would crawl out of doors, and seating himself on the grassy bank in front of his humble home, turning his sightless face to the sun to feel its warmth, would say: 'The door opened into heaven just a little crack. I shall know Him. He will look just so.' So he lived until he fell asleep in Jesus." God give us grace that till the eternal joy overtakes us as a flood we may live in the joy of a similar vision. (F. B. Meyer. The Epistle to the Philippians - A Devotional Commentary)