

## Philippians 3:1-3

### The “Christ mind” or the “earthly mind”?

#### Verse 1

*Finally, my brethren* – Not the conclusion but literally, “*For the rest*”. It is an introduction for what remains to be said.

*Rejoice in the Lord* – Paul is getting ready to deal with false teachers. He knows that false teaching will rob believers of their joy.

*A safeguard* – Against the evil influence of false teachers.

#### Verse 2

*Beware of:*

-*The dogs* – The orthodox Jew would call the Gentile a “dog”. Paul turns it around and calls the Judaizers “dogs”. “Paul is not just using names; he is comparing these false teachers to the dirty scavengers so contemptible to decent people. 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.”<sup>1</sup> Note Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:6.

-*The evil workers* – This term stresses the evil character of their labors. They taught that salvation (justification) was by faith plus good works, especially the works of the Law. Paul states that their “*good works*” are really “*evil works*” because they deny the “*finished work*” of Christ. Note Acts 15:1-11.

-*The false circumcision* – This is not the normal word for “circumcision”. This word is only used here in the N.T. and literally means “to cut up” or “to be mutilated”. Note Galatians 5:11-12.

#### Verse 3

*The true circumcision* – This is the normal word that speaks of the ceremonial rite of circumcision. However, Paul applies it in a spiritual sense with three statements.

-*Who worship in the Spirit of God* - Only those who have the Spirit of God can truly worship God. The Spirit motivates us to love and serve. Those who rely on rites and ceremonies to be accepted by God are either misguided believers or unbelievers who have never understood the grace of God.

-*Who glory in Christ Jesus* – We look to Him as *the One* who makes us acceptable to God. Those who trust religion boast about what they have done. Believers boast about what Christ has done (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:27-28).

-*Who put no confidence in the flesh* –  
*Flesh (sarx)* is used three ways in Scripture:  
-Our physical body (Luke 24:39)  
-The old man in Adam (Rom. 7:5)  
-Our human nature (Galatians 2:20)

Paul is referring to our human nature in the sense of those things we can do naturally without divine enablement. Nothing we do by our own efforts can make us acceptable to God. There is only one “work” that takes the sinner to heaven: the finished work of Christ on the cross (John 17:4, 19:30).

Salvation (justification) can never occur until a person realizes that it is Jesus Christ alone who saves. If we are relying on anything other than *the Person and work of Christ* we are relying on a false gospel.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Php 3:1–3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.