

PRESSING ON TO THE PRIZE
Philippians 3

Introduction:

1. Paul pleaded for unity in the church in chapter two.
2. Unity is possible if each saint has the mind of Christ.
3. In chapter three, Paul pleads for the saints to press on to the prize.

Discussion:

I. PAUL WARNED OF FALSE TEACHERS (vv. 1-3).

A. He did not mind repeating himself, if necessary.

1. We often criticize preachers who repeat themselves.
2. It was not tedious for him, but it was safe for them.
3. Peter also repeated his teaching (2 Peter 1:12-15).

B. He described the false teachers by the names he called them.

1. “Beware of dogs.”

- a. In Bible times dogs were scavengers and unclean.
- b. Jews often called Gentiles “dogs.”
- c. Paul used the term for Judaizers whose behavior was like vicious dogs.

2. “Beware of evil workers.”

- a. Like the Pharisees, they “traveled land and sea to win one proselyte and make him twice as much a son of Hell as themselves” (Matthew 23:15).
- b. They were “false brethren, secretly brought in, who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Galatians 2:4).

3. **“Beware of the mutilation.”**
 - a. **Judaizers demanded Gentiles be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved (Acts 15:1,5).**
 - b. **They missed the true purpose of circumcision so their circumcision was merely “mutilation.”**

C. The true circumcision are those who follow Christ (Gal. 3:29).

1. **They worship God in the Spirit (John 4:23,24).**
2. **They rejoice in Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:16; Acts 2:36).**
3. **They trust in the offering He has made for sin (Heb. 9:28).**

II. PAUL POINTED OUT THAT IF WAS SALVATION IS THROUGH THE LAW, HE HAD IT MADE (vv. 4-11).

A. He could boast of his Jewish background more than most.

1. **He was “circumcised the eighth day” (Genesis 17:9-14).**
 - a. **Ishmaelites were circumcised at 13 (Gen. 17:25).**
 - b. **Proselytes were circumcised when converted.**
 - c. **He was born a Jew and circumcised as a baby (Genesis 21:1-4).**
2. **He was “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin.”**
 - a. **He was not a proselyte, or of mixed race like Timothy (Acts 16:1-3).**
 - b. **He descended through Rachel (Gen. 35:16-20).**
3. **He was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews.”**
 - a. **He was born in Tarsus, but spoke Hebrew (Acts 6:1).**
 - b. **He was educated in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).**
4. **“He was a Pharisee,” of the strictest sect of the Jews (Acts 26:5).**

5. He was a zealous persecutor of the church (Acts 7:58-8:3).
 6. He kept the Law without blame.
 - a. He “advanced in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries” (Galatians 1:14).
 - b. No one can be saved by the works of the Law of Moses (Romans 3:20).
- B. Paul considered his advantages in the Jews’ religion worthless compared to the blessings in Christ.**
1. He had “suffered the loss of all things.”
 - a. His high standing among the Jews.
 - b. His family: Stephen Eckstein, Sr. was regarded as dead by his family when he became a Christian.
 2. Paul counted these things as “rubbish” when compared to the blessings in Christ.
 3. His desire was “to be found in Christ.”
 - a. “Not having his own righteousness” (Romans 10:3,4; 1:16,17).
 - b. “That he might know Him... being conformed to His death” (Galatians 2:20).
 - c. His desire was to be raised among the righteous at the resurrection on the Last Day (John 5:28,29).

III. PAUL PRESSED ON TO THE PRIZE (vv. 12-16).

- A. He had not yet attained the goal, but kept his eye on it.**
1. The Christian life is compared to a race (1 Cor. 9:24-27).
 2. Perseverance and discipline are required to win.
- B. Paul did two things to attain the prize:**

1. He forgot the things which were past.
2. He pressed on to the things that were ahead.
3. Those who are mature in Christ will do the same.

IV. PAUL POINTED TO THE PATTERN OF HIS LIFE (vv. 17-21).

A. He admonished the Corinthians: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

1. False teachers were “enemies of the cross of Christ.”
2. They worshipped their own physical appetites.
3. They “set their minds on earthly things.”

B. Christians have a much higher and greater goal!

1. “Our citizenship is in Heaven.”
2. Stephen Bilak, a Russian who was converted in France, educated in America, married to an American and was preaching in Luxembourg, was asked: “Where is your citizenship?” He replied, “In Heaven.”
3. Christians eagerly await the coming of Christ from Heaven.
4. When He comes, He will change our earthly bodies to be like His glorious resurrection body:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

Conclusion:

1. It is not enough to enter a race - we must finish it to receive the prize.
2. Belief and baptism are the beginning of the Christian race (Mk. 16:16).
3. We must persevere to the end to win the prize of everlasting life.

