

Beware of Evil  
By Trey Sullins

In nearly every book of the Bible there are warnings given to Christians. The book of Philippians is no exception to this. However, Philippians has a very clear warning which was given to the church at Philippi. In Philippians 3:2 the Bible says, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” This article will discuss the meaning of this verse so that Christians might have a better understanding of the warning given.

**Beware**

Knowing what beware means will help determine the meaning of this verse. The word “beware” in the text comes from the Greek word “blepō.” It can also be translated “to look”, “to take heed”, and “to perceive” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary). Here in this text beware means “to look out for.” Paul was telling the Christians in Philippi that they need to be ready and watch for the dangers he is about to mention.

**Beware of Dogs**

The first warning in Philippians 3:2 is “beware of dogs.” This warning has reference to the Judaizing teachers of the day (Max Patterson). Judaizers were those who continued to follow the Law of Moses even after Christ had done away with it. They also tried to convert others to following the Law of Moses. Calling Judaizers “dog” is a type of criticism. “Dogs, which in that day ran loose, and snapped at people, are symbolic of that which is detestable and ugly” (Max Patterson). It was certainly no compliment to be called a dog.

Paul’s intentions with this warning were to keep the Philippians on guard and looking out for the Jews who were trying to bind the old law on them. They needed to understand that the old law was done away with and should not be followed anymore. Paul also did not want the church at Philippi damaged since he was the planter of the church there. Judaizers were like dogs in that they returned to their sins even after knowing what was right (2 Peter 2:22). This warning was meant to keep the church at Philippi from joining them in their wrongdoing.

**Beware of evil workers**

The second warning given by Paul in Philippians 3:2 is “beware of evil workers.” The original word for “evil” in this text means “worthless”, “wicked”, and “bad”. “Workers” means “teacher”, “laborer”, and toiler (Strong’s Greek Dictionary). Another way to translate this warning could be “beware of laborers of wickedness”.

The purpose here is the Philippian brethren need to watch out for those who work evil. These wicked men are similar to those described in 1 Timothy 4:3. They “will not endure sound doctrine” and “they will heap up for themselves teachers.” They’re not willing to listen to accept the doctrine of God but they create their own doctrine and teach it to others. The church needed to avoid these people and keep them from influencing their own understanding.

**Beware of Mutilation**

The final warning given in Philippians 3:2 is “beware of mutilation.” The original word translated “mutilation” could also be translated “cutting down”, “amputate”, and “cutting off”

(Strong's Greek Dictionary). The word in the King James Version is "concision." "Concision is an old term for circumcision – the Jews" (Max Patterson). It is a play on words used here to reference the Jews again. Not all Jews though. Paul was referring to those who were incorrect in their beliefs.

The objective behind this warning is to show the people that the Jews were not of the true circumcision. Since Jesus came, the Jews were not to hold on to the old law anymore, but they still did. If the Jews would have believed in Christ they would realize that circumcision was not necessary anymore (Galatians 5:6). The Jews could not let go of the Mosaic Law and Paul wanted to protect the church at Philippi from them.

Christians everywhere need to understand that these same warnings still apply to us today. Though Judaizers are not the main attackers today, Christians are still swayed by various other doctrines. Today, just like in the days of Paul, Christians must beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, and beware of mutilation.