

Philippians 3:2-11 (part 1)

- 1) Paul warns the congregation for their own spiritual safety—3:2 (NB the repetition and alliteration)
  - a) Harmful character—<sup>2</sup> *Beware of the dogs* [*kuon*],
    - i) Dogs were considered the most despised and miserable of all creatures. Packs of dogs prowled around the cities, preying on the weak and defenseless.
  - b) Harmful conduct—*beware of the evil* [*kakos*] *workers*,
    - i) Actively causing harm to those around them
  - c) Harmful creed—*beware of the Mutilation* [*katatome*]! (cf. Gal. 5:12)
    - i) Believing that Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be right with God
  
- 2) Paul reminds the congregation why they should be on guard?—3:3-4a <sup>3</sup> *For we* (emphatic) *are the circumcision* [*peritome*], (NB the play on words with 3:2)
  - Three characteristics of spiritual circumcision (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Rom. 2:25-29; Col. 2:11)
  - a) Serving the Father by the Spirit—*who minister* [*latreuo*] *by the Spirit of God*,
    - i) Cf. 2 Tim. 1:2
  - b) Focusing on the Son—*and are boasting in* (the sphere of) *Christ Jesus*,
    - i) Look what He has done! All the credit goes to Him!
  - c) Rejecting self-confidence—*and who have no confidence in* (the sphere of) *the flesh*,
    - i) <sup>4</sup> *although I myself* (emphatic) *might have confidence even in* (the sphere of) *the flesh*.
    - ii) Any time a person depends on who they are or what they do as the grounds for being right with God, they are putting confidence in the flesh. (Harmon)
  
- 3) Paul details his credentials that might make him self-confident—3:4b-6 *If* (1<sup>st</sup> class condition) *anyone thinks he may have confidence in* (the sphere of) *the flesh, I have more:*
  - a) Involuntary advantages by birth—3:5a
    - i) Circumcision—<sup>5</sup> *circumcision* [*peritome*] *on the eighth day*, (i.e. not a proselyte)
      - (1) Cf. Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3; Luke 2:21
    - ii) Genealogy—*of* [*ek*] *the people* [*genos*] *of Israel, the tribe* [*phule*] *of Benjamin*,
      - (1) From the same Jewish tribe as King Saul (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 9:21)
      - (2) Benjamin was one of the tribes that returned from the Captivity (Neh. 11:7-9, 31-36)
    - iii) Parentage—*a Hebrew of* [*ek*] *Hebrews*; (cf. Acts 22:3)
      - (1) Both parents were Jewish, and he learned Hebrew language and customs from both his parents. He was not Hellenized, and was second to none.
  - b) Voluntary advantages by choice—5:b-6 (NB the alliteration)
    - i) Strict—*in relation to* [*kata*] *law, a Pharisee*; (cf. Acts 26:5)
      - (1) They were considered the elite of the most strict and zealous Jews.
    - ii) Passionate—<sup>6</sup> *in relation to* [*kata*] *zeal, pursuing the congregation*;
      - (1) He was not a passive spectator in his religion (cf. John 16:2; Acts 8:1-9:9; Gal. 1:13)
    - iii) Consistent—*in relation to* [*kata*] *righteousness that is in* (the sphere of) *the Law, I was blameless*.
      - (1) No one could find fault with Paul's external righteousness, except God.