

Philippians 3:2-11

1. **Christ**-centered self-identity (1:8, 18, 19-21; 2:1-11)
2. **Suffering** due to Christ-centered life (1:12-14; 24-26; 27-30; 2:14-18)
3. **Eschatology** results in rewards (1:6, 10, 28; 2:9-11; 2:16)

Outline

- Christ
 - 3:2-7 - The contrast: self-centered self-identity
 - 3:7-11 - The correct perspective: Christ-centered self-identity
- Suffering
 - 3:12-17 - The correct perspective: Pressing on, straining toward, mature for Christ's purpose for us
 - 3:17-19 - The contrast: Mind on earthly things, enemies of a self-identity with Christ (cross = suffering)
- Eschatology
 - 3:19 - The contrast: Destiny is destruction
 - 3:20-4:1 - The correct perspective: **Await a Savior** with power to bring everything under his control and glorify our earthly bodies

Philippians 3:2 - “Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the

991 [e]	3588 [e]	2965 [e]	991 [e]	3588 [e]	2556 [e]	2040 [e]	991 [e]	3588 [e]	2699 [e]				
Blepete	tous	kynas	blepete	tous	kakous	ergatas	blepete	tēn	katatomēn				
2	ΒΛΕΠΕΤΕ	τοὺς	κύνας	;	βλέπετε	τοὺς	κακοὺς	ἐργάτας	;	βλέπετε	τὴν	κατατομήν	.
	beware of	the	dogs		beware of	the	evil	workers		beware of	the	false circumcision	
	V-PMA-2P	Art-AMP	N-AMP		V-PMA-2P	Art-AMP	Adj-AMP	N-AMP		V-PMA-2P	Art-AFS	N-AFS	

flesh.

- Paul is speaking a second time for the Philippians “safety” (3:1)
- Paul provides a three-pronged warning using the same imperative “beware of” (βλεπετε, *blepete*) three times in a row.
- Look out for the dogs!
Look out for the evil workers!
Look out for the mutilation!
- This seems odd coming in the verse right after being told, “Rejoice in the Lord!”, but when provided as a contrast it makes sense.
- Jewish legalism wanted people of God to rejoice in the rituals of the Mosaic covenant, but Paul is saying the people of God rejoice in the Lord.
- Paul came against the Judaizers in:
 - Galatians 5:12
 - 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
- (Two possible others opposition groups are hardly worth mentioning:
 - Gentile converts to Christianity who had been pulled in to join the Judaizers
 - Jewish gnostics who had special spiritual insight and powers)
- The aggressiveness and emotional content in this verse is hard to reproduce in English.
- This is said to be the most contemptuous line ever written by Paul. He intends to leave a damaging blow by striking the Judaizers with these words.
- Paul is aggressively taking Jewish terms and using these points of Jewish pride against the Judaizers.
 - Dogs - “Look out for the dogs” - dogs were the low life of animals and survived as scavengers. They were detested by Greeks and Romans. Jews referred to Gentiles as “dogs” in a

derogatory sense. Dogs were unclean. But, here Paul warns the believing Gentiles to beware of the unclean “dogs” of Judaism.

- Evil doers - “Look out for the evil doers” - **kakos** means “evil, bad, wrong; injury”.

kakos: bad, evil

- **Original Word:** ΚΑΚΌΣ, ἦ, ὄν
- **Part of Speech:** Adjective
- **Transliteration:** kakos
- **Phonetic Spelling:** (kak-os')
- **Short Definition:** bad, evil
- **Definition:** bad, evil, in the widest sense.
- **2556** *kakós* (an adjective, and the root of [2549](#) /*kakía*, "inner malice") – properly, inwardly *foul, rotten (poisoned)*; (figuratively) inner *malice* flowing out of a *morally-rotten* character (= the "rot is already in the wood").
- [[2556](#) /*kakós* is often a pronominal adjective (i.e. used as a substantive) meaning, "wickedness, inner evil."]
- In Psalms 5:5; 6:8; 13:4; 35:12; 52:4; 58:2, 5; and more, the workers of iniquity are those who oppose or disregard God’s Law. Here the workers of evil or iniquity are those who oppose God’s righteousness through Christ and instead hold to the Old Covenant of pursuing God through works.
- Mutilation - Look out for the mutilation -
 - The Greek word for circumcision is **peritome** which means “to cut around
 - The Greek word used here is **katatome** which means “cutting to pieces” or, mutilation.
 - Paul says “we are the circumcision”, but they are the mutilation. We by the Spirit of God; they by the flesh.
 - Galatians 5:12 used the term castrate
 - Cutting the flesh like the pagan priests did (1 Kings 18:28) was forbidden in Leviticus 21:5. And, those who did could not serve as a priest.

Philippians 3:3 - “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—”

1473 [e]	1063 [e]	1510 [e]	3588 [e]	4061 [e]	3588 [e]	4151 [e]	2316 [e]	3000 [e]	2532 [e]	2744 [e]	1722 [e]	5547 [e]	2424 [e]
hēmeis	gar	esmen	hē	peritomē	hoi	Pneumati	Theou	latreuontes	kai	kauchōmenoi	en	Christō	Iēsou
3	ἡμεῖς	γάρ	ἐσμεν	ἡ	περιτομή	, οἱ	Πνεύματι	Θεοῦ	λατρεύοντες	καὶ	καυχώμενοι	ἐν	Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ,
	we	indeed	are	the	circumcision	those	in [the] Spirit	of God	worshiping	and	glorying	in	Christ Jesus
	PPro-N1P	Conj	V-PIA-1P	Art-NFS	N-NFS	Art-NMP	N-DNS	N-GMS	V-PPA-NMP	Conj	V-PPM/P-NMP	Prep	N-DMS

2532 [e]	3756 [e]	1722 [e]	4561 [e]	3982 [e]
kai	ouk	en	sarki	pepoithotes
καὶ	οὐκ	ἐν	σαρκὶ	πεποιθότες ,
and	not	in	[the] flesh	trusting
Conj	Adv	Prep	N-DFS	V-RPA-NMP

- “We” is used by Paul to include the people of God (Jews and Gentiles) who have believed in Christ. Paul uses “we” when talking about salvation. Often switching from “I” or “you” in the discussion. See: 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15
- There are not Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s theology, but the people of God. The church is NOT the second Israel in Paul’s mind.
 - Paul is NOT contrasting Israel with the church
 - Paul IS contrasting the Judaizers with the church
- Circumcision of the heart is found in the LXX (Greek text used by Paul) in Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 44:7
- This new age began with the Spirit and has set aside the legal, the Law and the flesh.

- “Minister” is the word **latpeuontes** (which can be translated “worship”) that comes from **latreuo** (λατρεύω)
 - It is directly connected to temple service. For example **latpeia** means “the temple cultus” as in Romans 9:4 and 12:1
 - **Λατρεύω** or **latreuo** always refers to divine service to God (Exodus 23:25; Deuteronomy 6:13; Luke 2:37, 4:8) or Pagan deities (Exod. 20:5; Romans 1:25), but never refers to service in a human relationship or in a secular sense.
 - **Latreuontes** refers to the whole Christian life in Christ
 - The temple service or the cultic rituals have become spiritual manifestations in the daily life of the believer. Consider:
 - Hebrews 13:15 - “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.”
 - Romans 12:1 - “Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”
 - Hebrews 12:28 - “Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”
 - 1 Peter 2:5 - “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
 - NOTE the specific act of evangelism that is connected with **latreuo** in Romans 1:9 - “God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you.” (“I serve” is **λατρεύω**)
 - Remember in Romans 9:4 this word was used as one of Israel’s privileges: “Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the **temple worship** (λατρεία) and the promises.”

Philippians 3:4 - “though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:”

2539 [e]	1473 [e]	2192 [e]	4006 [e]	2532 [e]	1722 [e]	4561 [e]	1487 [e]	5100 [e]	1380 [e]	243 [e]	3982 [e]	1722 [e]	4561 [e]	1473 [e]		
kaiper	egō	echōn	pepoithēsīn	kai	en	sarki	Ei	tis	dokei	allos	pepoithenai	en	sarki	egō		
4	καίπερ	ἐγὼ	ἔχων	πεποιθήσιν	καὶ	ἐν	σαρκί	·	Εἴ	τις	δοκεῖ	ἄλλος	πεποιθέναι	ἐν	σαρκί	, ἐγὼ
	Though	I	have	confidence	even	in	[the] flesh	if	any	thinks	other	to trust	in	[the] flesh	I	
	Conj	PPro-N1S	V-PPA-NMS	N-AFS	Conj	Prep	N-DFS	Conj	IPro-NMS	V-PIA-3S	Adj-NMS	V-RNA	Prep	N-DFS	PPro-N1S	

3123 [e]
mallon
μᾶλλον :
[have] more
Adv

- “If anyone” is a reference to the Judaizers and their Gentile converts.
- “I have more” is from mallon which means “to a greater or higher degree.”
 - Paul is saying his personal claim is better
 - Paul is going to show his genuine credentials that cannot be matched by most Judaizers and definitely cannot be equaled by a recently converted and circumcised Gentile!

Philippians 3:5 - “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;”

4061 [e]	3637 [e]	1537 [e]	1085 [e]	2474 [e]	5443 [e]	958 [e]	1445 [e]	1537 [e]
peritomē	oktaēmeros	ek	genous	Israēl	phylēs	Beniamin	Hebraios	ex
5 περιτομῆ ,	ὀκταήμερος ,	ἐκ	γένους	Ἰσραήλ ,	φυλῆς	Βενιαμίν* ;	Ἑβραῖος	ἐξ
[as to] circumcision	on [the] eighth day	of	[the] nation	of Israel	of [the] tribe	of Benjamin	a Hebrew	of
N-DFS	Adj-NMS	Prep	N-GNS	N-GMS	N-GFS	N-GMS	N-NMS	Prep

1445 [e]	2596 [e]	3551 [e]	5330 [e]
Hebraiōn	kata	nomon	Pharisaios
Ἑβραίων ;	κατὰ	νόμον ,	Φαρισαῖος ;
Hebrews	according to	[the] law	a Pharisee
N-GMP	Prep	N-AMS	N-NMS

- Paul creates a list of Jewish social standings and privileges in a format well known by the Philippians (and, other Romans, Greeks) known as a Roman “honors race” (*cursus honorum*).
 - A *cursus honorum* would be a honor listing or a honors inscription used to organize social standing among the men. The Philippian men and their families would naturally have been accustomed to using a format such as this to identify their proper place in society concerning both privilege and responsibility.
 - A *cursus honorum* would be similar to a list of short words and abbreviations describing the quality of a tool or a commodity in the market place.
 - Instead of using Roman/Greek qualities Paul inserts Jewish social qualities into this Roman style list of social honors.
 - The list comes in two parts:
 - First, inherited honors (or, ascribed honors)
 - Second, achieved honors (or, adult accomplishments)
 - In 3:8 Paul will reveal that these have all been loss (or, taken from him) and he considers these qualities as rubbish. So, in verse 3:8 Paul not only undermines the standards of the Judaizers with the content of his list, but Paul also totally devalues the Philippians social honors list. A blow to both the Jews and the Gentiles.
- “An eight-day-er” is a reference to those properly circumcised on the 8th day. Any other day was illegitimate. There is no good way to translate this, so translators say something like “circumcised on the eighth day.” This is close, but misses the “title” value. Paul was an “eighth-day-er”.
 - According to the book of Jubilees in 15:11-14 God says that a male child not circumcised on the eighth day “has broken my covenant.” Ninth-day-ers are covenant breakers!
 - Now consider how second-rate and low on the *cursus honorum* list a Gentile would be who was circumcised as an adult by the Judaizers! Not worth comparing to Paul, an eighth-day-er!!
- “Nation” or “People” or “Race” are all close, but the point is pure Israeli bloodline. Paul’s bloodline was both pure and protected by the family. How can this compare to a Gentile convert?
- “Israel” was the honored name used to identify the people of Abraham. “Jew” was most often a derogatory title and used by the Gentiles to identify the Israelites.
- “Tribe” is a marked and historical subgroup of a nation characterized by a distinctive bloodline.
 - The tribe of Benjamin was not necessarily more honored than the other tribes, nor was the tribe of Benjamin stigmatized by their scandalous history (Benjaminites in Judges, Saul in First Samuel, etc.). The tribe of Benjamin was a historical and legitimate bloodline of the original 12 sons and 12 tribes.

- This is similar to the Philippians who pursued their Roman ancestors and laid claim to it in their names and inscriptions.
 - Over ½ of the uncovered inscriptions from Philippi today contain the abbreviation VOL which refers to the Roman tribe *Voltinia*.
 - Residence of Philippi who could lay claim and document themselves as a descent of the *Voltinia* tribe were unquestionably Roman citizens of the original Philippians. The *Voltinia* tribe was not superior, but they were very legitimate.
 - Now consider the claims of the Judaizers and their Gentile converts? Were they even close to having the bloodline of one of the original 12 tribes? Or, to one of the original 12 sons?
- “Hebrew”
 - The issue here is there were Israelites scattered throughout the Roman empire. These Israelites maintained the synagogue worship, but in foreign lands. They read the Torah, but in Greek.
 - Paul was a Hebrew who was raised in Jerusalem and read the Torah in Hebrew and spoke Hebrew. Paul was NOT a Hellenistic Hebrew, but a Hebrew of Hebrews.
 - Paul was born in Tarsus, but we know he was sent to Jerusalem for training/schooling.
 - Acts 22:3 - raised in Jerusalem at least during his teenage years.
 - Acts 23:16 - Paul had a sister and a nephew who lived in Jerusalem. It is possible that Paul lived with his sister or other family members from a young age in Jerusalem.
 - Paul's youth and heart were in Jerusalem.

These were Paul's inherited *cursus honorum*.

Now Paul begins to add to his list of honors his personal achievements as an adult in order to clearly establish his social standing among his male peers.

- “Law”
 - Jewish sects took different theological views and lifestyle applications of the Law of Moses. Paul had chosen to follow the Pharisaic view and lifestyle.
 - “Pharisee” is the Greek word **pharisaios** (φαρισαίος) which means “separated one”
 - This title “separated ones” (φαρισαίος) comes from God speaking in Leviticus 19:2 - “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”
 - The rabbis comment on this passage of Scripture in Leviticus 19:2 says, “As I am holy, so you also must be holy; as I am separate (**parus** in the Hebrew), so you must also be separate (**perusim** in the Hebrew).”
 - The Pharisees were the most conservative and powerful Jewish sect between 150 BC-70 AD.
 - The Pharisees vowed obedience not just to the Law of Moses, but to 1,000's of rabbinic interpretations and observances.
 - Paul was not just a former Pharisee, but even in Acts 23:6 Paul could say in front of the Sanhedrin, “He cried out in the council, ‘Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.’ ”

Philippians 3:6 - “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”

2596 [e]	2205 [e]	1377 [e]	3588 [e]	1577 [e]	2596 [e]	1343 [e]	3588 [e]	1722 [e]	3551 [e]
kata	zēlos	diōkōn	tēn	ekklēsian	kata	dikaiosynēn	tēn	en	nomō
6 κατὰ	ζήλος	, διώκων	τὴν	ἐκκλησίαν ;	κατὰ	δικαιοσύνην	τὴν	ἐν	νόμῳ ,
according to	zeal	persecuting	the	church	according to	righteousness	which [is]	under	[the] law
Prep	N-ANS	V-PPA-NMS	Art-AFS	N-AFS	Prep	N-AFS	Art-AFS	Prep	N-DMS

1096 [e]	273 [e]
genomenos	amemptos
γενόμενος	ἄμεμπτος .
having become	faultless
V-APM-NMS	Adj-NMS

- “Zeal”
 - Yahweh had zeal for his people in Ex. 20:5; Deut 4:24; Isaiah 9:7
 - Phinehas was honored for having zeal in Numbers 25:1-18 when he killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman to stop the plague and save God’s people. Because of Phinehas’ zeal the Jews would later consider him third in glory after Moses and Aaron.
 - The Maccabees honored Phinehas and followed his example. Mattathias, the elderly father and priest, slew the apostate Jew and the Syrian soldiers who were leading the people in a pagan sacrifice. 1 Maccabees 2:26 describes Mattathias and his actions with these words, Mattathias “burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did.”
 - With this pattern set “zeal for the Lord” could manifest itself by destroying the apostates and those who threatened the people of God with compromise and false gods.
 - Paul’s zeal was on the highest level right next to Phinehas and Mattathias, because Paul was fighting a zealot’s war against heresy, apostates and a false god. Thus, Paul could sum up his zeal in this abbreviated honor listing simply as “persecuting the church.”
- “Persecuting the church” is an interesting statement because it not only identifies Paul’s zeal, the statement also allows Paul to steal another term from the Judaizers and reassign it to the new age of the risen Messiah: ἐκκλησία
 - **Ekklesia** (ἐκκλησία) means “assembly” or “called out ones”.
 - **Ekklesia** (ἐκκλησία) is used 100x in the LXX to refer to the people of God, which in the OT was the congregation of Israel.
 - But, in his “zeal” he was not defending Israel, the people of God (**Ekklesia**), instead he was persecuting the **Ekklesia** (the church of Jesus Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles).

“Righteousness”

- This righteousness refers to upright behavior according to the standard of the Law and the Pharisee’s interpretation.
- This is not a matter of faith or imputed righteousness, but a statement of a fact of an objective reality that could be measured, evaluated and documented as authentic like everything else of this list of honors.
- Within the Law there was the Levitical opportunity/requirement to sacrifice for sin or to be made clean in the case of being defiled. Paul had met all these requirements and could document them. Also, many, many people would have been able to recall and testify to the impeccable life of Paul the Pharisee.