

THR PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

III. Philippians: Nurture In Living In Preoccupation With Christ

J. Nurture In Being Repeatedly Reminded To Counter Unbiblical, Dominating Spirituality (Philippians 3:1-3)

I. Introduction

- A. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, his readers were concerned about his imprisonment for the Christian faith, a fact that is evidenced in Paul's words in Philippians 1:12-13.
- B. One of the directives Paul gave toward spiritually nurturing his readers was to remind them repeatedly to avoid yielding to unbiblical spirituality that was pushed by dominating Judaizers in the Early Church era.
- C. Paul did this in Philippians 3:1-3, and we view that passage for similar applications today (as follows):

II. Nurture In Being Repeatedly Reminded To Counter Unbiblical, Dominating Spirituality, Phil. 3:1-3.

- A. After telling his readers to rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 3:1a), Paul wrote that he was repeating a matter he had before mentioned to his readers, but that this repetition was not troublesome for him since his readers needed it as "(a) safe (course) for" them, the "safe (course)" rendition coming from the Greek word, *asphales*, "firm, certain, safe, secure," Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 118; Phil. 3:1a,b.
- B. The matter Paul repeated dealt with the need to counter unbiblical, dominating Judaizers who promoted a false spirituality on Early Church Christians as explained in Philippians 3:2-3, *Bible Know. Com., N. T.*, p. 659:
 1. Paul warned his readers that the Judaizers were **themselves** "dogs," a term Jews used of Gentiles (Ibid.), so **they** as Judaizers were the ones estranged from God's fellowship opposite their own claims, Phil. 3:2a!
 2. Paul also warned his readers that the Judaizers were workers of evil contrary to how they promoted themselves among Christians in the Early Church, that Christians were not to be intimidated by their legalistic efforts to pressure others to yield in their false conformity to be under the Law, Philippians 3:2b!
 3. Paul then warned his readers that the Judaizers were "of the mutilation, the cutting in pieces," (*katatome*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 420), Philippians 3:2c! In their efforts to teach that Gentile believers in Christ had to be circumcised besides trusting in Christ to be saved (cf. Acts 15:1), a belief condemned by the First Church Council in Acts 15:1-29, the Judaizers were actually unrighteously directing adult Gentile believers to undergo what amounted to a major surgical procedure of circumcision in that era, a fruitless ritual, and Paul strongly opposed the unbiblical practice, calling its promoters physical mutilators!
 4. The reasons for this repeated warning to resist yielding ground to such unbiblical, dominating spirituality promoted by the Judaizers of that era were supplied by Paul in Philippians 3:3 (as follows):
 - a. Believers in Christ are already part of the true spiritual circumcision of God, Philippians 3:3a. This truth is explained in Colossians 2:11 where Paul wrote that in Christ, the believer has positionally put off the body of the sins of the sin nature in place of the removal of the foreskin of the flesh in physical circumcision, that physical circumcision for a Christian is thus a spiritually useless ritual in God's view.
 - b. Paul added that true Christians worship God in spirit versus the external realm typical of the unbiblical, dominating Judaizers, that their worship was what truly pleased God, Philippians 3:3b with John 4:19-24.
 - c. Also, believers in Christ rejoice in their fellowship in Messiah Jesus their Messiah and Savior as opposed to relying on unbiblical, dead Jewish ritualism, Philippians 3:3c.
 - d. Finally, believers in Christ do not "depend on, put one's confidence in" (*peitho*, Ibid., p. 644-645) the flesh, in external efforts in the sin nature for pleasing God or relating effectively to Him, but rather they rely on the spiritual positional provisions given to them by God's grace in Christ, Philippians 3:3d.

Lesson: Paul nurtured his readers, repeatedly calling them to **COUNTER** the unbiblical, dominating false spirituality of legalistic, external religiosity, explaining that contrary to the teachings of such parties, these parties are themselves estranged from God's fellowship, they are workers of evil and spiritually abusive opposite true believers in fellowship with God who are already fully acceptable to God (truly spiritually circumcised), who are acceptable worshippers of God in spirit, who rejoice in fellowship with Jesus Christ and who put their confidence not in externalism, but in the spiritual provisions given to them by God's grace in Christ.

Application: (1) May we who trust in Christ for salvation **COUNTER** unbiblical, dominating false spirituality of legalistic, external religiosity, for the promoters of such are those who are misaligned with God and His fellowship where those who know Christ and rely on their position in Christ relate to God in truth. (2) May we who teach Scripture not tire of continually reminding God's people of such truths as doing so works for their spiritual safety!