



Season 8 Podcasts

The 'Enemies' of the Gospel

By

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So far in my 8th Season Podcast series I've shared thoughts with you about:

- 8 Rules for Bible Study
- 40 Rules for Ministry
- The Heart of the Gospel
- Defending and Confirming the Gospel
- Your Fellowship in the Gospel
- The Completion of the Gospel
- The Affection of the Gospel
- The Discernment of the Gospel
- The Excellence of the Gospel
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- The Preaching of the Gospel
- Living for the Gospel
- Conduct Worthy of the Gospel

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- The Gospel's Name Above Every Name
- The Glory and Honor of the Gospel
- The Power of the Gospel
- The Obedience of the Gospel
- The Gift of the Gospel
- The Light of the Gospel
- The Servants of the Gospel

The next aspect I'd like to share with you is the 'Enemies' of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation” Philippians 3:1-2

Paul used the Greek adjective λοιπόν (finally) to begin the next sentence. It doesn't mean quite the same thing as in the English language. It means 'something that remains.' Paul was not bringing his letter to an end. In fact, this verse is in the middle of his letter. With all that he had already written to the Philippians, there were still some things that remained to be said.

Four words to point out are:

- brethren – ἀδελφός, 'brother'
- rejoice – χαίρω, 'be glad, be cheerful, to delight in' (context is to delight 'in the Lord')
- not tedious – οὐκ ὀκνηρός, 'not, never, troublesome, lazy, slothful, tardy, delayed'
- safe – ἀσφαλής, 'certain, sure, safe, secure, on safe footing'

Why would Paul write those words at this point in the letter?

Look at the next verse:

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation.”

Paul loved his 'brethren' in the Philippian church. It was not a tedious thing for him to be concerned about their safety: spiritual, emotional, and physical. Paul was quite familiar with what Christians in Philippi would deal with in the coming days.

The Apostle Paul faced opposition everywhere he traveled – both from legalistic Jews and pagan gentiles. They opposed Paul because they opposed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You will find warnings like this in many of Paul's letters, but let's spend a little time to see what we can learn about any specific reason he may have mentioned it to the Philippians.

Philippi was predominately pagan, but it did have a small Jewish community as well. Many of the people of Philippi were retired military and ardent supporters of the Emperor. The message of the Gospel is that the Name of Jesus is above every name, and every name will bow before Him and confess that He is Lord to the glory of God. That message did not go well with the retired military, the pagans, the mystery cultists, or the Jews. It is an understatement to say that the Gospel of Christ was 'unpopular' in Philippi. That

meant Christians, who believed the Gospel, were also unpopular.

In addition to the opposition that already existed in Philippi against Christianity, there was a group of Jews known as 'Judaizers.' They were a faction of Jewish believers who insisted that any Gentile who converted to Christianity had to be Torah observant (obey Mosaic Law) and be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul wrote an entire letter to churches in Galatia dispelling this false teaching (Galatians). The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15 and Galatians 2) should have ended that controversy, but it didn't. The Judaizers followed Paul from city to city telling new Gentile converts that they had to do more than just 'believe' in Christ to be saved. Paul condemned them in his teaching and in his church letters, as we see here in Philippians.

Paul used the word 'beware' three times in Philippians 3:2 – a clue that this was something the Philippians should think about seriously. The Greek word for beware is βλέπω (*blepó*) and means 'take heed, look at closely, perceive, be on alert.' What did Paul want the Philippians to 'beware?'

- dogs – κύων – canine, spiritual predator who feeds off others – Greeks viewed a loose dog as a 'scavenger'
- evil workers – κακός ἐργάτης – bad, wicked, worthless, harmful, worker, teacher (figuratively)
- the mutilation – τό κατατομή – the false circumcision, mutilators

The way Paul wrote this verse would have stood in stark contrast to the previous verses where he commended people like Timothy and Epaphroditus as people the Philippians could trust to tell them the truth. Paul used the term 'beware' as a way of contrasting the wicked Judaizers and other opponents of the Gospel to those who supported the teachings of Paul.

The true Church has had many enemies through the centuries. Even though the Judaizers lost most of their influence after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, there were a few heretical groups that continued to oppose Christians until sometime in the 5th century AD. That, however, did not end opposition to the Gospel of Christ. Enemies of Christ and His Church have been opposing the Gospel every century since the 1st. Paul's warning to 'beware' is as true and important today as it was then.

If you're wondering what types of false teachers we have today, I invite you to read through the [free eBooks at this link](#). Christians must 'be aware' and 'beware' at all time because the enemy is on the prowl.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up

the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:10-13

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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