

Beware of Dogs!

It's not unusual to see a sign posted at someone's front door that reads, "*Beware of Dog.*" Such a warning is meant for protection as it alerts us to potential danger and urges caution before proceeding.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he writes, "*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.*" (Philippians 3:1). As God's children, we have every reason to rejoice. Joy in the Lord should be the steady condition of the Christian life. Yet, that joy does not eliminate the need for warnings. In fact, Paul emphasizes that repeating warnings is *for our safety*.

Immediately following this encouragement, Paul gives a strong admonition: "*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!*" (Philippians 3:2). In this context, Paul is not speaking of literal animals, but of dangerous spiritual influences, specifically those often referred to as Judaizers. These were individuals who taught that Christianity must be practiced through adherence to the Law of Moses, including circumcision. In doing so, they corrupted the gospel of Christ.

The term "dogs" is used with derision. Historically, Jews used this term in a derogatory way toward Gentiles, but Paul turns the expression back on those who were distorting the truth. This is not an image of a gentle household pet, but a warning about something aggressive and spiritually dangerous. The seriousness of the term is seen elsewhere:

"But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie." (Revelation 22:15).

Paul also calls them "*evil workers*," exposing the true nature of their efforts. Though they may have appeared religious, their work opposed the will of God. Additionally, he refers to their insistence on circumcision as "*the mutilation*," a deliberate play on words that strips their teaching of spiritual legitimacy. What we see is a complete condemnation of false teaching.

There is an important balance here. In verse 1, Paul says, "*rejoice in the Lord*," and in verse 2, he says, "*Beware of dogs*." New Testament Christianity includes both encouragement and warning, both joy and vigilance.

We must learn the same lesson today. There are still those who distort God's word, who substitute human doctrine for divine truth, and who lead others astray. Love for the truth requires that we recognize and avoid error. Just as a sign warns us to beware of physical danger, God's word warns us to beware of spiritual danger. Those warnings are not negative for negativity's sake but are given *for our safety*!

- by Josh McCord

Premarital Advice

A girl once came to a gospel preacher for advice in her contemplated marriage to a boy who was not a Christian. The preacher asked the girl to step up on a chair .. then onto a desk. He said, "Now pull me up to where you are." She tried with all her strength, and failed. The preacher then gave a light pull, pulling her easily to the floor. He then said, "It is more probable that this boy will pull you down to his level than it is that you will pull him up to yours." The illustration was effective. The girl did not marry the boy until he became a true Christian.

- by Harry Lewis

"Almost" Is Not Enough

It is sometimes said of an individual who has not yet obeyed the gospel, "I believe he is almost ready to be baptized," or that "she is close to becoming a Christian."

Friend, are you one of those people? Can we not somehow impress upon you (1) that "almost" is not sufficient to make one a Christian; (2) that being "close" is not the same thing as being "in Christ"; (3) that you are still in a LOST condition; and (4) that Christ is coming in judgment one day? It is essential for you to note the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 Where he states that those "who obey not the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction . . ." We URGE you to take a serious look at your life, your need of salvation, and the hope that

can be found only in Christ. Obey the gospel TODAY.

- by **Barney Keith**

What's in a (Church) Name?

Have you ever noticed how local congregations choose their names? Often, those names simply reflect geography. A church may be identified by the street or road where the building is located, or by the small community or neighborhood in which the members meet. There's nothing unusual about that - it's practical and easy to recognize.

But there's another common practice. Many congregations choose names found in the New Testament. In our own area, we see churches identified as Antioch, Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Berea. These are familiar and respected names drawn from the early history of Christianity.

Interestingly, however, you don't find any congregations calling themselves Laodicea. Why is that? The answer is obvious. People naturally choose names associated with churches that had a good reputation in the first century - not those that were known for serious spiritual problems. No one wants to be identified with failure, compromise, or unfaithfulness.

That raises an important question - one that deserves careful thought. If this congregation were to be identified and named after a New Testament church, what would it be?

Would we merit a name like Philippi or Thessalonica - churches known for their deep devotion, generosity, and steadfast faith? Could we be compared to Berea, where the brethren were praised for diligently searching the Scriptures to make sure they were following the truth?

Or would the comparison be less favorable? Would we resemble Corinth, a church plagued with internal division, moral failures, and spiritual immaturity? Worse yet, would we be like Laodicea - lukewarm, indifferent, and unacceptable to the Lord?

This is not just an exercise in imagination. It suggests a serious consideration of who we really are. Names matter - but character matters more. If we truly belong to the Lord, then our conduct, our attitudes, and our commitment to His truth must reflect that reality. We must strive to be the kind of church that would be honored to bear the name of the faithful congregations of the New Testament. Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**