

Philippians 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Analysis

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision (Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν, Blepete tous kynas, blepete tous kakous ergatas, blepete tēn katatomēn)—Triple blepete ("beware, watch out for") emphasizes urgency. Kynas ("dogs") was Jewish epithet for Gentiles; Paul ironically applies it to Judaizers. Kakous ergatas ("evil workers") contrasts true gospel workers (1:22; 2:30). Katatomēn ("concision, mutilation") is wordplay on peritomē ("circumcision")—Paul reduces their ritual to mere flesh-cutting, not covenant sign.

Paul's harsh language reflects the gospel's stakes: Judaizers preached 'another gospel' (Gal 1:6-9), adding works to grace. Their teaching damned souls by obscuring Christ's sufficiency. The vehemence defends sheep from wolves (Acts 20:29). Katatomēn ridicules circumcision when divorced from faith—it becomes pagan mutilation (Lev 21:5; 1 Kgs 18:28).

Historical Context

Judaizers followed Paul's missionary work, teaching that faith in Christ was insufficient—Gentile believers must also observe Mosaic law, especially circumcision (Acts 15:1). The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) rejected this, but Judaizers persisted. Galatians and Philippians address this heresy. For Paul, adding law-requirements to gospel nullified grace (Gal 2:21, 5:2-4). The controversy split early Christianity.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul use such shocking language ('dogs,' 'mutilation') for Judaizing teachers?
2. What modern errors parallel ancient Judaizing—adding requirements to faith in Christ alone?
3. How do you distinguish legitimate spiritual discipline from legalistic 'concision' (katatomēn)?

Interlinear Text

βλέπετε	τοὺς	κύνας	βλέπετε	τοὺς	κακοὺς	ἐργάτας
Beware	G3588	of dogs	Beware	G3588	of evil	workers
G991		G2965	G991		G2556	G2040

βλέπετε	τὴν	κατατομήν
Beware	G3588	of the concision
G991		G2699

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:13 (Parallel theme): For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

Titus 1:16 (Parallel theme): They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Revelation 22:15 (Parallel theme): For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Galatians 5:15 (Parallel theme): But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Psalms 22:16 (Evil): For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Galatians 5:6 (Parallel theme): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Philippians 3:19 (Parallel theme): Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Psalms 22:20 (Parallel theme): Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

Matthew 7:15 (Parallel theme): Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Revelation 21:8 (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.