

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Beware of Those Who Corrupt the Gospel Philippians 3:1-3 Part 2

This last week a man called who used to attend our church. He wanted to take me out to lunch. To appreciate the significance of this you need to understand that over 10 years ago that this same man stood up in the middle of a Sunday Service and accused the elders of Valley Bible Church of being unloving.

To help you to understand what prompted him to stand up you need to know that on that particular Sunday, the elders of Valley Bible was called in our church fellowship to separate from a man who we believed to be factious.

Now going back to the story we did go out to lunch. I still did not know why he wanted to meet with me. As soon as we sat down he told me that he and his wife wanted to express their affection for me and to assure me that the only memories that they were now left with after all these years were fond memories.

My response to him was to tell him that the action we as elders took at that very difficult time in the history of the church was motivated out of care and he said that he knew that. This was a very touching moment. But I was deeply curious about how he viewed the events of the past and therefore I asked him. “He responded that he would have preferred that the elders and the man that we asked the church to separate from could have simply agreed to disagree.

This sounds good but we need to understand that there are times when that is not possible. For us as elders to agree to disagree with someone who we believed had divided our fellowship. And it is also not possible for us to agree to disagree with those who would preach a false gospel.

Adherents of the true gospel must be vigilant against those who would seek to corrupt the gospel. The vigilance required by those who have embraced the one true gospel is highlighted in **Philippians 3:1-3**. Let us read this passage, “**Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.**” The safeguard is not referring to the command to rejoice in the Lord but rather to the subsequent warning given them about the first of two groups introduced to us in this passage. This first group is described in **verse 2..... (2) “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;”.....** Theologians call this group that Paul is describing Judaizers. The Judaizers were professing Christians who taught that in addition to believing in Jesus a person must be circumcised and adhere to Jewish law. Though the apostles and elders unanimously condemned the teaching of the Judaizers in **Acts 15** they continued to be a problem for the early church which we can see clearly portrayed for us here in this threefold warning that Paul gives in **Philippians 3:2 “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.”**

After warning the Philippians about this particular group. He goes on and introduces a second group. Let us read **verse 3 (3) for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”**

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Who is the second group? The second group that Paul describes is the true church.

The Judaizers were a threat to the true church because they were preaching a false gospel. If someone were to ask a Judaizer how they could be saved the Judaizer would respond, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, be circumcised and adhere to Jewish law.” This message is a false gospel and is totally unable to save anyone. The only way for a person who desires to be set free from their sins to be saved is by them placing their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.

Paul felt so strongly about those who would change the gospel message that in **Galatians 1:6-8** he said the following to the Galatian churches, **“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; (7) which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (8) But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preach to you, let him be accursed. (9) As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.”** There can be no question that Paul had a great disdain for anyone who would preach a false gospel. There can be no question that Paul had a great disdain for anyone who changed the gospel message. Certainly Paul was in no mood to agree to disagree..... How does Paul describe those who were preaching a false gospel of works?

Again my hope as we continue to study this passage is that we will have a much greater appreciation of the true gospel and that we would be motivated to exercise even greater diligence to identify and confront those who would seek to corrupt it.

The first descriptive phrase he uses to warn the church about those who were preaching a false gospel is “beware of the dogs.”

How does **Philippians 3:2** begin? **“Beware of the dogs”** Dogs today are regarded as pets, as objects of affection, but in Bible times they were scavengers, normally living on garbage and without human masters. Metaphorically the term “dog” (KUON) was a term of contempt. Calling someone a dog today would not nearly have the same sense of contempt as it did in Bible times.

The Jews used the term “dog” to describe the gentiles because they saw them as unclean and as the enemies of God (1 Samuel 17). In **1 Samuel 17** when David met Goliath on the field of battle with a stick, a sling and five smooth stones, how did Goliath respond to him? **Verse 43** tells us that Goliath said, **“Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.”** How would David have answered that question if it were in fact timely. I believe that David could very well have said, Yes I believe you are a dog, not in a literal sense but in a metaphorical sense. David truly believed that Goliath was a scavenger picking on the dead bones of false gods, feeding on the garbage of human reasoning and no having no relationship with the one true God.

Jews in biblical times saw the Gentiles as unclean, unrighteous and unsaved and for the most part they were absolutely right. But in **Philippians 3:2** Paul uses the term “dogs” to describe so-called Jewish believers who were preaching a different gospel.

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When Paul uses the term “dog” to describe the Judaizers he is identifying them as unclean, unrighteous and unsaved. He sees them as the enemies of God. This is a shocking twist. All through the centuries the gentiles were the ones who were designated by the Jews as “dogs” and now Paul, a Jew, is calling these Judaizers, who were not Gentiles but Jews, by that same contemptible term.

The Judaizers were not being declared unclean because of their support of the Old Covenant which was rooted in obedience to the Jewish Law but most likely because of their opposition to the New Covenant. The Judaizers were seen as unclean and as the enemies God primarily because of their opposition to the New Covenant. How did they oppose the New Covenant?

The New Covenant was announced by the Prophet Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**. Let me read this passage to you, **“Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “(33) But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

Jeremiah ministered during a time when the nation’s future seemed completely destroyed. It was at this time God gave this wonderful promise which not only implied physical restoration but also much more importantly a spiritual restoration of the nation of Israel. The restoration is totally God’s work and would be accomplished in spite of the sins of the Jewish people. How could this be? What about circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic Law which is at the heart of the Old Covenant..... In the time period that Jeremiah is speaking about in Jeremiah 31 the Old Covenant is not longer operative.

Rather what he is speaking about is rooted in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It is rooted not in human achievement but rather divine effort.

Before our Lord went to Calvary, He celebrated the Passover with His disciples in the Upper Room. At the supper, He instituted what we call “the Lord’s supper.” He said taking the cup, **“This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:20).....** When Jesus referred to the New Covenant what passage of Scripture do you believe that the disciples would have thought He was referring too? Jeremiah 31 Would they have been wrong in thinking this? And the answer would be absolutely not. They were correct in thinking this. Their thinking may not have been complete but their thinking was not wrong. Jesus is not trying to correct their thinking but he is simply trying to enlarge their thinking so that they now realize that the New Covenant that they had been familiar with was rooted in His death, burial and resurrection.

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But the New Covenant did not only have implications for the nation of Israel. The Apostle Paul applies the promises associated with the New Covenant given to Israel also to the church in 1 Cor. 11:23-27. Let us read this passage of scripture **“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; (24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, “this is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (25) In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, “this cup is the new covenant in My blood, do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. (27) Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord is an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.”** There is no way that we can say that the New Covenant found in **Jeremiah 31** only applies to the nation of Israel and their future restoration

In addition to Paul’s statement in **1 Corinthians 11** the writer of Hebrews states clearly that Jesus **“is the Mediator of the New Covenant”** in **Hebrews 9:15** and repeats it in **Hebrews 12:24**. He does not say that Jesus will be the mediator of the New Covenant. Obviously I am sharing with you that the New Covenant applies to both to the future restoration of the nation of Israel and to the present day church.

But this causes concern for some people and they ask. How can God promise these blessings to the Jews and then turn around and give them to the church?

Some Bible students solve the problem by concluding that they were never intended for the literal nation of Israel but for a “Spiritual Israel” which they believe to be the church. It is true that believers today are the “spiritual seed” of Abraham this is clear from **Galatians 3:13-29**; but this is not the same as saying that the church is “spiritual Israel.” These are two totally different things. And to fail to see this distinction is very dangerous.

In **Hebrews 8:8** the Author quoting from **Jeremiah 31** clearly applies the stated blessings of the new covenant to a specific group of people. Who is that group of people? The **“house of Israel”** and the **“house of Judah.”** It would be a tragic mistake to think that the house of Israel and the house of Judah should be identified as the church. Once we are permitted to make such plain words as **“Israel”** and **“Judah”** mean something else than the plain literal sense of the words then there is no end to how we might interpret the Bible!

Other students conclude that the blessings of the New Covenant revealed in Jeremiah 31 was does not involve the church at all but that it will be fulfilled only when the Jews are regathered and the kingdom is established at our Lord’s return to earth in glory. But then we have the problem of explaining not only **1 Corinthians 11** but also **Hebrews 9:15** and **Hebrews 12:24**, verses that state that Jesus Christ is today the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Then there are others who say that there are “two New Covenants.” For someone to say that there are two “new covenants” one for Israel and one for the church, is to create even more questions.

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If these are not adequate answers to the question of how can God promise certain blessings to the Jews in Jeremiah 31 and turn around and give them to the church then what is a possible solution.

Perhaps the solution to how a promise to Israel can also be applied to the church is simply to understand “to the Jew first” principle which we see Romans 1:16. What does **Romans 1:16** say? **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”** The Jews as God’s chosen people have always gotten inside scoop on God and His dealings with man. We saw this in the Abrahamic Covenant, in the Mosaic Covenant. We saw this in the announcement to the Jewish of the birth of the Messiah. We saw it in the message of the kingdom being at hand. The Jews as God’s chosen people have always been the first to know. Who was the first to know about the “New Covenant” and its implication on their lives? It was the Jews. It was the nation of Israel. But what did they do with this information. Not much!!

The Jews rejected their king. The Jews had rejected their Messiah. But just because they may have been the first to get the news about the Messiah this does not mean that they were exclusively the only ones to get that news. What does **Romans 1:16** say? **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”** The blessings of the New Covenant have not only been announced to the Jews but to the Gentiles. And the blessings of the New Covenant are not rooted obedience to Jewish law but rather to simply to faith in Jesus Christ alone plus nothing.

Does this mean that God’s promised blessing to the nation of Israel in the New Covenant will not be realized? No!!

God’s response to Israel’s rejection of the mediator of the New Covenant was a temporary hardening of the nation of Israel (Romans 11:25-29). Listen to the words **Romans 11:25-29** **“For I do not want you, brethren to be uninformed of this mystery (This means he is going to tell us something that is not difficult to understand but that was hidden from view.....) , lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; (26) and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” (27) And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” (27) And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.” (28) From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; (29) For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.”**

What does this mean practically. This means that after the church is raptured and caught up to be with Christ and God will turn his attention once more to Israel. And after He is done with them the nation will come to repentance and exercise faith in Christ. And recognize that the one who was crucified for the sins of the world was in fact their Messiah. When they recognize this then Israel as a nation will enter into the blessings of the New Covenant.

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The nation of Israel rejected the message of the new covenant rooted in the shed blood of Christ. While it is true that thousands of Jews trusted in Christ and His finished work on Calvary to save them from their sins, it is also true that most of the nation rejected Christ which included the Judaizers. The judaizers opposed the message of salvation by grace through faith alone and that opposition rendered them contemptible.

Today the blessings of the New Covenant are applied to individuals. When Jesus comes in glory to redeem Israel, then the blessings of the New Covenant will be applied to that beleaguered nation.

CONCLUSION

THIS MORNING WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST'S BLOOD. AND HOPEFULLY IN OUR CELEBRATION WE WILL NOT ONLY EXAMINE OUR OWN LIVES IN LIGHT OF CHRIST'S DEATH. BUT THAT WE WILL COMMIT OURSELVES TO CARRY THIS MESSAGE INTO THE WORLD AS GOD GIVES US STRENGTH WILLING TO OPPOSE ALL THOSE WHO WOULD OPPOSE THIS GLORIOUS MESSAGE AND WE WILL NOT ACCEPT A MINDSET OF TOLERANCE WHEN ETERNAL ISSUES ARE AT STAKE...