

WILL THE REAL CHRISTIANS STAND UP – Part 2 Philippians 3:3

INTRODUCTION

In his 1992 presidential campaign, Ross Perot, referred to an ethnic demographic of people as, “You people, ...” He was lambasted and chastised for this language. The concern on the part of people was rooted in good and right concern – the unity of all Americans. There should be no “us” and “them” in America.

In the same, and much greater, infinitely and eternally greater truth, relevant and applicable
→ There is no “us” and “them” in Christ.

But ... there is a polarization in the Bible, a separation, a schism. And this is captured powerfully in **Philippians 3:2-3**

READ Phil 3:1-3

Proposition:

- I. A Definitive Division
- II. A Discriminating Description

Stated simply, Paul tells us who we are. And he tells us what we are like.

And he does this in a very specific context of contrast
... as a **warning** ... and as an **encouragement**.

So That: 1 John 5:13 – “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Remember:

v. 1 → Command to “**Rejoice!**”

v. 2 → Command (three times) to “**Beware!**”

- Watch out!

- Be on your guard!
 - Standing guard duty to keep your eyes open!
- Warning against trying to earn salvation.

Specifically, the Judaizers that plagued and dogged after the apostle Paul, they affirmed much of the gospel. But they added that gentiles must be circumcised to be saved.

Paul uses direct, discriminating language to address these men (v.2).

He says these dangerous men are: **Mongrels, Evildoers, and Mutilators** of the soul.

We could add to the list: **Liars, Deceivers, and Scoundrels.**

The WORST kind of evil deeds and lies are the ones that: promise hope and offer salvation, but really destroy the soul.

I. A Definitive Division

Point → There is a biblical “We” vs. “They”

An absolute polarization, a **Definitive Division**.

This is NOT a **division** of denominations. NOT a **division** of those who attend church services and those who do not.

But, rather ... This is a **division defined by God!**

Proof – “^{3a}for we are the *true* circumcision,”

“the *true* circumcision” – περιτομή → “cut around”

v. 2 → “**false circumcision**” – κατατομή → “cut to pieces”

“**circumcision**” is mentioned 87 times in Bible.

The first occurrence is in Gen 17, occurring 10 times in single chapter. Two verses in particular that jump out:

Gen 17:10-11 – “between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.”

This is the fourth time in Genesis that we see “sign”

Sign → reminds and directs us to something, points to something

17:13 – “thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” – can’t be undone; it is irreversible.

There are other aspects that we see in the Old Testament that would distinguish the people of God

- Diet – Peculiar/Unique (nope) - all it takes is one bite of a bacon and lobster sandwich :)
- Nazarite - vow of not cutting hair – reversible
- Abstaining from wine – Reversible

circumcision becomes a synecdoche - (figure of speech where a part is represents the whole) - for the covenant and for the people of the covenant starting here through the Bible. It is irreversible.

1 Sam 17:26 – “who is this **uncircumcised** Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?”

It is personal (private). And it is irreversible.

→ Authenticates and Demonstrates

NT → “of the **circumcision**” – Rom 4:12; Gal 2:12; Col 4:11; Tit 1:10

“**true circumcision**” – περιτομή → “cut around”

Spiritual over the material ... not in place of.

→ Jews and Gentiles (Eph – together in one body! ☺)

1 Body. 1 People. 2 Backgrounds.

This is – circumcision of the heart

Sign of the new covenant (vis-à-vis Abrahamic Covenant) –

Deut 30:6

Christians, both Jewish and Gentile – Rom 2:25-29

Circumcision of the heart is God's brand; the mark of God's ownership.

Application – We want to always be gracious. We want to always be humble. And we want to always be firm and biblical. We need to remember that there is:

- true and false
- truth and error
- light and darkness
- purity and perversion
- mere profession of faith and true possession of faith
- true circumcision and false circumcision

A 17th century Puritan named **Matthew Mead** wrote a book entitled, *The Almost Christian Discovered*:

“A man may have much knowledge about Christ and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may have a great and eminent gift (talents), yet be but almost a Christian.”

“A man may have a high profession of religion. He may be much in external duties of goodness and yet be but almost a Christian.”

“A man may go far in opposing his own sin and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may hate sin and yet be but almost a Christian.”

“A man may make great vows and promises, strong purposes and resolutions against his sin and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may maintain a strife and a combat against sin and yet be but almost a Christian.”

“A man may be a member of the church and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may have great hopes of heaven and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may have visible changes and an altered life and yet be but almost a Christian.”

“A man may be very zealous in matters of religion and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may be much in prayers and yet be but almost a Christian.”

“A man may outwardly obey the commandments and yet be but almost a Christian. A man may perform external worship yet be but almost a Christian. A man may even suffer for Christ’s sake and yet be but almost a Christian.”

So what does it take? What are the **marks** of a true Christian? What are the **evidences**? We go from the outside to the inside, from the external to the internal when we come to v. 3.

II. A Discriminating Description

Point – 3 descriptions of “**false circumcision**” group in v. 2, 3 descriptions of the “**true circumcision**” group here in v. 3.

3 Distinguishing Evidences of a True Christian:

A. Spirit-Driven Worship

B. Christ-Directed Praise

C. Self-Renounced Confidence

Proof – “^{3b}**who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,**”

These three verbs are participles – points to characteristics rather than conduct.

You will notice these are not three specific activities. Paul does not say, “don’t dance, drink, or chew, or run with those who do.”

→ These are **3 heart attitudes**.

These are **3 marks** that no one sees ... but eventually everyone sees because they work their way out.

These **3 distinguishing evidences** are good and comprehensive. And ... now watch this ... they are stated in the specific context of the error threatening the church in Philippi!

Illustration – Friday night, we had the latest installment of our Newcomer’s Gathering. During the Q&A, there was a question about how we present the gospel. First part of my answer was, you target the emphasis on the particular error. For example, emphasize salvation by faith alone if you are evangelizing a Roman Catholic. Or if I am evangelizing someone who is trusting in a past prayer that was repeated or a past outward act like walking the alter but is not living at all for Christ, I might emphasize repentance.

Remember! Here, Paul is NOT warning against a group of unconverted Jews outside the church. He is warning against a group of unconverted Judaizers inside the church.

So That: What True Salvation Looks Like

1st Distinguishing Evidence of a True Christian ...

A. Spirit-Driven Worship 3:3a

Point – The “**false circumcision**” crowd’s “worship” was external and superficial. In powerful contrast, the worship of those who are the “true circumcision” is internal and supernatural.

The world, you see, is filled with people who worship. But their worship is not prompted by the Spirit of God dwelling in them.

John Calvin – *“Man’s mind is like a store of idolatry and superstition. So much so that ... he will forsake God and forge an idol in his own brain.”*

Much of the worship that takes place, even in Christian churches, is prompted by culture, by tradition, by guilt, by fear. It is prompted by a desire to be popular, to solve problems, to gain blessings. It is prompted by a desire to be accepted.

In short → It is prompted by self-righteousness.

Proof – “^{3b}**who worship in the Spirit of God**”

“**worship**” – from the Greek word *latreuo* – a verb which means obedient service – everything done in obedience and harmony with the Bible is worship.

Noun form → **Rom 9:4** – “Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,”

The very same word translated in its verb form in Phil as ‘worship’ is translated in its noun form in Romans as ‘temple service’.

Heb 9:13-14 – “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Related to word we saw back in 2:25, remember **Epaphroditus** – “**minister**” – λειτουργός.

Turn to: John 4:23-24

This woman is a Samaritan. These Samaritans were half-breeds, half Jew, half Gentile, hated and despised by the Jews. They were not given access to the temple at Jerusalem or the worship was conducted there. So they developed their own system of worship in Samaria on Mount Gerizim.

Application – A lot of people worship in ignorance. They think they “worship” because they are in a certain place, doing certain rituals and deeds, but this is not true worship.

Application – Beloved, the “**true circumcision**,” true Christians, are those who worship God from the heart in obedience to His Word.

2nd Distinguishing Evidence of a True Christian ...

B. Christ-Directed Praise

Point – The “**false circumcision**” crowd’s “worship” was external and superficial → and self-promoting.

The “**true circumcision**” worship is – “**glory in Christ Jesus**” - internal and supernatural → and Savior-promoting.

Proof – “**glory**” – the word translated as “glory” literally means “boast” - used 32 times in the New Testament — 30 times by Paul, twice by James.

1 Cor 1:31 – “just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’

Jer 9:23-24 – “Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, & righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the LORD.”

In the Septuagint - same Greek word.

Hebrew word is *hallel* – source of our English word “Hallelujah”.

Illustration – One of the earliest hymns we still have in entirety, perhaps the oldest hymn, is *Te Deum* (also known as *Ambrosian Hymn* or *A Song of the Church*). The title is taken from its opening Latin words, *Te Deum laudamus*, “Thee, O God, we praise.”

Application– Gal 6:14 – “But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

3rd Distinguishing Evidence of a True Christian ...

C. Self-Renounced Confidence

Point – Trust, esteem, confidence, hope, praise, worship, glorify → to God or me! Which is it?

The characteristics of the false profession is external, superficial, self-promoting and self-trusting. The characteristics of the true profession and possession is internal, supernatural, Savior-promoting and Savior-trusting. It is all pointed toward Christ.

→ You can't save yourself!!

Proof – “^{3c}and put no confidence in the flesh,”

F.B. Meyer – “*All through the epistles **the flesh** stands for self, the self that seeks to justify itself, that endeavors to sanctify itself, that is always fussily endeavoring to win men for God but has never learned to be submerged beneath the mighty tide and current of God's Spirit.*”

The Judaizers placed all their **confidence in the flesh**. They were descended from Abraham physically. They had the physical circumcision. They physically performed the

ceremonies and they outwardly did the duties of their traditions. It was all the flesh. And it got them nothing.

Rom 3:19-20 – “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.”

F.B. Meyer continues – *“If your religious life is one of self-effort and self-complacency, you must stand back. It is not for you to handle the priceless pearl, your eyes cannot detect its superlative beauty, excellence and worth, but let all humble souls who have nothing in which to glory save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who put no confidence in themselves but wholly rest upon the unmerited grace of God, lift up their faces with exceeding great joy. These are the true children of Abraham,”*

Point – You cannot have confidence in Christ and confidence in the flesh at the same time. You have to make a choice.

To understand, look at **vv. 4-6**

His point → NOT by: Birth, Culture, Training, Efforts

Illustration – If you jump out of an airplane, is your confidence in your ability to fly? Or is your confidence in the parachute?

Application – In the same way, as you jump from this life to eternity, is your confidence in Christ? Or is your confidence in the Flesh?

CONCLUSION

There are a lot of people, you see, who want Christ’s grace, but not His government.

There are a lot of people who want Christ to be the Priest who pays the penalty for their sin, but not the Prophet who tells them what to do.

A lot of people want the benefits of His cross ... but they don't want to bow to His crown.

A lot of people want to enter through the narrow gate, but don't want to walk on the narrow path. A lot of people want the pearl, but aren't willing to pay the price.

Will the real Christians stand up...and be counted.