

Who Are the Lord's People?

Sunday, March 22nd, 1987

Philippians 3: 3

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

I will be speaking today from the Book of Philippians. I would like very much for you to take your Bible and open it to Philippians Chapter 3. Here is the subject for today: “WHO ARE THE LORD’S PEOPLE?” That is my question, in other words, who is a Christian?

I’m not asking what a Christian is; I am asking, who is a Christian? Who are the people in this world today of whom it can be said, “These are the people of God?” Who are the people in this world right now, of whom it can be said, “This is true Israel?”

You know and I know that nearly everyone in America claims to be a Christian. Someone recently said that 55 % of Americans claim to be “born again.” I find that the words like church, Christian, and God are found attached to so many different situations; some of them are completely opposite.

You will find the name “Christian,” “church” and the name “God” attached to something over here and then to something over there. These two situations are entirely opposite; they believe exactly opposite one from the other. Yet, they all call themselves “Christians” or “children of God.”

We know that the Jewish people claim to be God’s chosen people. They say that they are the people of God. The Jewish people boast of their fathers, their forefathers, such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They boast of David and they wear the Star of David.

The Jews look back to their heritage; they look back to their ancestry; they look back to their traditions and all of their rituals and ceremonies. They say, “We are the people of God.”

The Catholics claim to be God’s people. They boast of their antiquity; they say, “We’ve been around the longest.” They boast of their giant empire and say, “We have the most churches and the most people, the most power and the most money.”

They boast of their rituals, their special mysteries, secrets and all of these things. They keep people in bondage to these mysterious rituals and ceremonies. They say, “We are the people of God.”

The Protestants insist that they are God's people. They say, "We are the people of God; we have the reformers. They say that they have Calvin, Luther, Knox, Whitfield and all of these great reformers, these champions of individual liberty.

People also say that they have fundamentalism and believe in the virgin birth; "we believe in the blood, the Book, the blessed hope." They use all of these religious clichés. The Protestants say, "We are the people of God."

You have the modern religionists of America, the stream-lined religionist, the new Reformers. They would have you believe that they are the people of God. They have made faith in God synonymous with three things; democracy, decency, and decision. This is their plan and platform.

They are saying, "This is salvation and this is what it is to be one of God's children." This is what it is to be a Christian and to lay hold on democracy, capitalism, decency and decision. They say, "Make your profession and you are in the Kingdom of God and nothing can ever take you out of the Kingdom of God." This is like one fundamentalist preacher that held up his Bible and said, "This is the United States." Is this true? Are they the people of God?

The apostle Paul, in Philippians Chapter 3, has some things to say about the true people of God, the true Israel, the children of God and Christians. The first thing that he says in Philippians 3:1 is, "*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*"

What he is saying is that this Gospel that I preach, this Gospel of substitution, this Gospel of Jesus Christ, this Gospel of God's grace and God's glory, to keep preaching it to you and writing it to you does not get tiresome.

Rehearsing it in your hearing, over and over again does not get tiresome to me. Paul did not mind at all. He rather delighted and was elated to keep telling them the same thing, because "*for you it is safe.*" It will deliver you from error of doctrine and error of spirit for me to tell you those necessary and vital things again, again and again.

He says in verse 2, "*I warn you.*" I warn you in the church; I warn you who are interested in God and in His Word and in the Gospel of Christ, "*beware of dogs, evil workers and the concision (flesh merchants).*"

Where did Paul get that kind of talk? Here he is in warning people against false preachers and false religionists. He calls them three things: He calls them “*dogs*”; he calls them *evil workers* and he calls them *circumcisers* or flesh merchants” who take delight in the flesh, statistics and reports.

Do you know where he got that? He got that from Isaiah. Isaiah said the same thing about the preachers of his day. You go back to the Old Testament and you will find Isaiah talking about the false preachers and religionists in this same way.

You come to the New Testament and Paul repeats it. You come here today and I repeat the same thing because it is true of most preachers in this day. Listen to Isaiah in Isaiah 56:10, “*The preachers are blind; they are ignorant; all of them are ignorant.*” Take your Bible and look at it; “*they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs.*” That may be where they got the honorary degree D. D. (dumb dogs), who knows? Whitfield said that is where they got it.

He says, “*They cannot even bark; they sleep; they are always lying down; they love to slumber.* He says, “*They are greedy dogs; they are not only dumb dogs but they are greedy; they never have enough.*”

Did you ever have a dog that has had enough? Every time I turn my TV on these false preachers don’t have enough; they have to have more and are begging for more; they never have enough. In religion, there are shepherds that don’t understand; they all look to their own program, their own way and their own doings. Everyone is out for his own gain.

You know; if you didn’t know that I was reading from the Old Testament you would think that I was reading from today’s commentary. Here is Isaiah describing the false prophets and Paul picks it up and says the same thing, “*They are blind to the Word of God and they are ignorant.*”

He said, “*They are dumb dogs; they cannot bark; they are always sleeping, lying down and loving to slumber.*” They are greedy dogs who never have enough, who never can milk the people enough. They never have enough.

“*They are shepherds that cannot understand truth. They look to their own way.*” They look to their way, not God’s glory or God’s way, but their way. Everyone is out after his own gain and is coming from his own position.

Here is what we are saying when Isaiah said it, Paul said it, and I will dare say it again. These organizers and circumcisers, baptizers and promoters and soul winners are making converts and proselytes only to religion, not to God.

They are not making men and women children of God. They look to their own way, their own gain, their own success and their own program. These people never have enough. Oh for a discerning ear, oh for a discerning spirit, oh for a discerning heart to recognize God's true preachers.

John said, *"Try the spirits whether they be of God."* Paul said, "I come to you with the same message; it is not tiresome to me; I will continue to preach it to you because it is *safe for you*. I warn you to be aware of these *greedy dogs* who never have enough. Beware of these *evil workers*."

In Matthew 7, they said to Christ in the Judgment; *"Haven't we preached in your name and cast out devils in your name and done many wonderful works in your name?"* He said, *"I will say unto them; depart from Me ye workers of iniquity.* Beware of evil workers! Beware of the flesh merchants and the circumcisers.

Here it is in verse 3: He says, *"We are the circumcision."* Do you see those three words, *"For we are the circumcision,"* (we are true Israel; we are the people of God). He gives three things here, he says; *"We worship God in the Spirit,"* secondly; *"We rejoice in Jesus Christ"* and thirdly; *"We have no confidence in the flesh."*

You can't improve on this. These are the marks of a regenerated soul. These are the evidences of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. These are the undeniable signs of a new heart and a new nature. Look at them one at a time, carefully:

First of all, Paul said; *"We are the true circumcision;"* (we are true Israel, the Israel of God). We are the people of God, *"Who worship God in the Spirit."*

My friends; the object of worship is not a place; the object of worship is not a form, a ceremony or an organization. The object of worship and praise and awe is the living God in the Trinity of His sacred Person.

Whether you are in church or outside, whether you are with people or without people, whether you are in public or private, whether you are at home or abroad; we worship, adore, love, hold in reverence and fear, the eternal living God. He is the object of worship.

Worship is not a game or a program. Worship is heart communion with the living God. In John 4, our Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at the well; *“True worshipers worship God in Spirit and truth for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”* God is Spirit.

Paul said, in Acts 17; *“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth; He dwelleth not in temples made with human hands. Neither is He worshipped with men’s hands as though He needed anything.”* God doesn’t need anything.

I hear preachers say, “God has no hands but your hands.” What? “God has no feet but your feet.” We have a disabled God! God has no eyes but your eyes? God said, *“My arm is not short that I cannot save. My ear is not heavy that I cannot hear.”* He said, *“If I needed anything I wouldn’t ask of you, seeing that He giveth to all life and breath and all things.”*

What kind of God do you have, a disabled God? We worship God and that is the first mark of true Israel, the true circumcision, the true people of God. They worship God; they don’t worship preachers and organizations. They don’t worship places and travel to Bible lands to sit before shrines and idols and pictures and crucifixes; they worship God.

They don’t need visual aids to worship God because their worship is heart worship and Spirit worship. They worship God in the Holy Spirit and by the power of the Holy Spirit. They worship God by the influence and revelations of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the one who convinces us of sin. The Holy Spirit reveals to us the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit teaches us the Word of God. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. We don’t know the things for which we should pray unless the Holy Spirit should teach us and pray for us. We worship God and we worship God in the power and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

We worship God in our spirit, souls and hearts. It is not lip service that we render to God; that’s no good; it is heart praise. Worship is not the outward form. You don’t need a uniform or a robe, candle or a stained glass window to worship God. You don’t need a soft padded pew or a soft padded altar. You need a broken heart.

This thing of worship is not outward form and ceremony; it comes from a new heart, a regenerated heart, and a broken heart. Worship comes from a heart of faith and heart that knows the living God. This heart cares and seeks Him.

This worship from the Spirit is in a spirit of reverence. *“Holy and reverend is His name.”* Come before the Lord with praise and thanksgiving. Come before the Lord in fear and trembling. Come before the Lord in humility and submission. Come before the Lord in love and grace. Come before the Lord in faith and devotion.

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”

Do you know anybody who worships God? That person is a child of God. *“We are true Israel who worship God in Spirit and truth.”*

Second: Do you see the next line there? The Scripture says, *“We are the circumcision; (we are the true Israel, we are the people of God) who rejoice in Christ Jesus.”* I will tell you this, these are so weighty and these are so heavy. These are so meaningful. We worship God in Spirit.

“We rejoice in Christ Jesus.” Who is Christ Jesus? A lot of people think they know but I will tell you what I believe the Word of God teaches about Christ Jesus. First of all, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. When you read in the Bible, *“Father, Son and Holy Spirit;”* He is the Son.

When you read in the Word of God about the blessed, beloved Son of God, *“the only begotten Son of God,”* that is Jesus Christ; He is the Son of God, very God of very God, *“who thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”*

He is the Son of His glory. He prayed in John 17, *“Glorify Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”* He is the Son of His glory.

Jesus Christ is the creator of all things. *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.”*

Colossians 1 tells us not only was everything made by Him but for Him. *“By Him all things exist, (are held together) by Jesus Christ.”*

He is not only the Creator of all things He is the Surety. He is the Guarantor of an everlasting Covenant. That is what Hebrews says, *“He is the surety of the better Covenant. His blood is the blood of the everlasting Covenant. He is the Lamb slain*

before the foundation of the world.” Jesus Christ is God incarnate (in person) in human flesh. The Word was made flesh.

Yes, God dwelt in a human body. God came to earth. *“Call His name Emmanuel, (God with us). He is God in human flesh, no less God because He was robed in human flesh but yet a man. He was “bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh.”*

Who is Jesus Christ? He is our Righteousness, our Sanctification and our Wisdom, our Redemption, our Holiness and our Representative. He is our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He is all things. *“Christ is all and in all.”*

In the program of God and in the purpose of God, in the divine providence of God, in the will of God, in the mercies of God, in the grace of God, in the love of God and in all that God has for any son of Adam, *“Christ is all.”*

He is our sin offering and He is our sacrifice. He is our Substitute and He is our Satisfaction. Who is Jesus Christ? He is that Prophet like unto Moses. He is that Priest *“after the order of Melchisedek. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”* He is greater than all.

As Moses was a servant in the house, so is Christ the Son of the house. He is greater than the angels. *“For to which of the angels said He at any time, “Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee.” To the Son He saith, “Thy throne O God is forever.”* He is that Great High Priest.

He is the altar and the sacrifice and the one to whom it is made. He is the entrance within the veil. He is the Interceder; He is the Forerunner; He is the Mediator and the only one. He is the Just God and Saviour.”

He is the object of faith. He is the theme of our song. Jesus Christ is *“All and in all.”* That is who He is. It is in Christ that we rejoice. We don't rejoice in no one else, and nothing else.

The hymn writer says:

“Come all harmonious tongues;
Your noblest tributes bring,
Tis Christ our everlasting God,
And Christ the man we've seen.

Bound to the shades of death,
He bowed His Holy head,
Yet He arose to live and reign
Where death itself is dead

There the dear Redeemer sits,
On the Father's throne,
The Father lays His vengeance by,
And smiles with pleasure on His Son."

We are the people of God who worship God in the Spirit and who rejoice and delight and glory only in Jesus Christ. Do you know any people of God? Do you know anyone who can call himself Christian?

Here is the third thing: The apostle Paul is a man who summarizes things. He is always concluding something. *"Therefore, we conclude."* He comes at us with a warning; He says, *"I warn you, beware of the deceivers, beware of the flesh merchants, beware of the greedy dogs, beware of the evil workers, spiritual wickedness in high places."*

Just like Satan, they are deceptive, subtle, and crafty. They never say what they want or what they are. They are able to camouflage and counterfeit and deceive. Paul speaks plainly, *"We are the circumcision; (we are the true Israel) who worship God in the Spirit, (in the heart), and who rejoice, (glory, and delight only, not in ourselves), in Christ Jesus."*

He says third, *"We have no confidence in the flesh."* There is no confidence in your flesh, our flesh, our forefathers, our future generations or any son of Adam. *"We have no confidence in the flesh."*

Let me ask you something, how does a person arrive at this place where you have no confidence in the flesh? Well, when a man truly knows and sees and worships the living God, the almighty, eternal, holy, living God, the awesome eternal God, He will worship Him in heart and spirit, not in form and creed.

When a man truly sees and knows the Lord Jesus Christ our great, grand and glorious Substitute, the lover of our souls, who gave Himself for our sins, and the agony He suffered and the price that He paid, that will bring that man to know himself. It will reveal to that man the sinfulness and inability of his flesh. He will see that when he sees God.

Isaiah did! The Scripture says, *“When King Uzziah died I saw the Lord,”* maybe for the first time. He had heard of Him and read about him. His ancestors had told him about him. *“He saw the Lord high and lifted up in His Holiness. His train filled the temple.”*

What was his reaction and what was his response? Isaiah said, *“Woe is me; I’m undone; I’m cut off; I’m a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”*

Job saw this, Job the righteous man, Job the moral man, Job who felt that he knew God. Yet, he said; *“I’ve heard of you.”* When God appeared to him in chapters 40 through 42, he said; *“I’ve heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; now mine eye seeth Thee: Wherefore, I hate myself (I abhor myself; I hate my flesh), I repent in sackcloth and ashes.”*

The apostle Paul saw this on the road to Damascus, when he saw the Lord. He said, *“In my flesh dwelleth no good thing.”* He also said, *“I’m not worthy to be an apostle; I am less than the least of all the saints; I’m the chief of sinners.”*

He said, *“In the flesh no man can please God.”* How do you come to the place of *“no confidence in the flesh?”* You will only come to that place when you see how weak and wicked the flesh is. You will only come to that place when you see the grand and glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we will have no confidence in the flesh and have assurance of faith only in Christ.

I have no confidence in this material world. *“The fashion of this world fadeth away; it is all vanity of vanities; all is vanity,”* the wise man said.

Jeremiah said, *“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.”* We are so prone to do that. *“Don’t let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches. Let him that glorieth, glory in this that He knoweth me; I am the Lord.”* There is the object of glory. If you ever see Him you will never glory in the flesh again.

We have no confidence in the religious world. They can make all of the smoke that they want to and the noise that they want to and the whoopee that they want to. I’ve got no confidence in them, or you, or me or any other son of Adam. I’m talking about a professor or non professor. The outward form, the ceremony, the works, traditions and customs are just flesh. *“I have no confidence in the flesh.”*

All that they have done and all that they are going to do is just *“spinning of the wheels.”* We have no confidence in the material world, the religious world or in our own flesh or feelings. Our trust and confidence is in Christ.

Isaiah said, *“We all do fade as the leaf and our iniquities have driven us away. Our righteousnesses are filthy rags in God’s sight.”* I have no confidence in the flesh.

I’ve come to these conclusions, who are the people of God, who is true Israel, who is a true Christian, not what is one? I have heard a thousand sermons on “What is a Christian?” They haven’t answered the question yet.

Who is a Christian? He is one who worships God in the soul, in the Spirit and in the heart. He worships in the Holy Spirit in a regenerated and renewed heart. God is worshipped in reverence, praise, thanksgiving and love. He worships God. God is the object of his love and worship and he rejoices only in Jesus Christ. He doesn’t rejoice in anything that he is or in anything that he has done. *“He has no confidence in his flesh.”*