

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • TV194A

A television broadcast sermon delivered
SUNDAY, MAY 15TH, 1983
By
HENRY T. MAHAN

Transcribed, edited and published
AUGUST 30TH, 2012

HENRY T. MAHAN TAPE LIBRARY
Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

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’m speaking today from the **Book of Philippians**. I would like for you to get your Bible and turn with me to the **3rd Chapter**.

I am speaking on the subject: **“THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.”**

Now, you may not understand what I am talking about right now, but I believe in a few moments you will. If you will take your Bible and turn to **Philippians 3:3**; let me read this verse written by the apostle Paul, you will understand my subject: **“THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.”**

Let’s read the text in **Philippians 3:3**: *“For we are the (true) circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Jesus Christ and have no confidence in the flesh.”*

Now, to be perfectly frank with you, this is what Paul is saying;
We are the true ministers of God,
We are the true children of God,

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

We are the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and
We are the true worshippers of God.

Is this an idle boast? Most all religionists claim to be God's true servants, God's true ministers. Most all religionists claim to be the true church or the true worshippers of God or the true Israel. But, Paul is saying here; "we are the true church; we are the true circumcision or the true Israel of God."

Why should we give credit to what this man Paul says? Why should we listen to him? The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, all of the traditionalists, the religionists of that day, said that they were the true church, they were the true people of God, that they were the true spokesmen for God Almighty.

Paul says, "We are the true Israel; we are the true church." Why should we listen to Paul? Why should we give credit to what Paul is saying?

First of all: Paul is writing under divine inspiration.

The **Book of Philippians** is a part of the Word of God. All Scripture is God breathed, God inspired: "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*"

Paul was one of these writers and he wrote most of the New Testament. Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness.*" Now, that is the first reason why we should listen to Paul.

Secondly: The writer of the **Book of Acts** is Luke, he said this; "*Paul is chosen of God to bear the gospel to the Gentiles*" now that is you and me.

He is God's servant to us. The apostle Paul was chosen of God to bear the Gospel to the Gentiles and we are the Gentiles.

Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, was a companion of the apostle Paul. On one occasion, Paul when he was in Rome being tried because of preaching the Gospel, said; "*at my first trial no man stood with me.*" Later he said, "*Only Luke is with me.*" Now that is the second reason why we should listen to Paul.

First of all: Paul was writing under the divine inspiration, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly: The Luke who wrote the Book of Acts says that "*Paul is chosen of God to bear the message, the Gospel, to the Gentiles.*"

Thirdly: Paul himself was in religion.

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

He was wrapped in religious tradition; before he came to know the Lord in saving faith, he was wrapped in religious tradition and religious ceremony. He was wrapped in religious heresy. *“He knows whereof he speaks.”*

If you will read the rest of the **3rd chapter of Philippians**, you will find Paul talking about being a true descendent of Abraham. He was not a half-breed or a proselyte. He said, *“I am a Hebrew of Hebrews. I was born of the tribe of Benjamin.”*

He was a high official in the synagogue, in the Sanhedrin, which was made up of seventy men, half Pharisees and half Sadducees. Paul was one of the members of the Sanhedrin, the high, political, religious, court of Israel. He knows what he is talking about.

Then, he was a zealous religionist. He persecuted everybody that didn't agree with him and he followed the traditions, customs, and ceremonies of his fathers to the letter.

He fasted, he prayed, and he studied the Scriptures. He tithed and did all of these things. He was a separated moralist.

Then, God was pleased to bring him to true faith. God was pleased to bring him to a true knowledge of His grace and His mercy in Christ Jesus and to bring him to life everlasting.

So, there are three reasons why we should listen to Paul. If he says, “We are the true ministers of God, we are the true circumcision, we are the true worshippers of God, and we are the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ;” it would be well for you and me to listen to the apostle Paul.

Now, let's go back to **verse 1**: This is something that you will always want to remember. When you are reading a verse of Scripture, don't take it out of its context, please don't do that; you are susceptible to all manner of error.

You see, the Bible originally was not written in chapters and verses. When it was translated into English, into our language, they divided it into chapters and verses to help us find Scriptures.

When the apostles wrote the book of Philippians or wrote the book of Galatians or the gospel of Luke or John, they didn't write it in chapters and verses; they wrote it as a book in paragraphs.

What you always want to remember in studying the Scriptures is to find out who is writing. Find out to whom he is writing. Find out the subject about which he is speaking.

Now, that is the reason that when you take a verse of Scripture, you have to go back and read the context. So, I am asking you to go back with me to **verse 1**. Here the apostle begins this way; *“Brethren, rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord.”*

He exhorts us to give God all the glory; whatever we have, whatever we are, whatever we know, to give God the glory. *“Rejoice in the Lord.”*

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Rejoice in the Father for His eternal mercies. Rejoice in the Son because of His redeeming work. Rejoice in the Holy Spirit for His divine revelation. But, *“rejoice in the Lord.”*

Don't rejoice in yourself and your accomplishments. Don't rejoice in your morality. Don't rejoice in your denomination. Don't rejoice in your intelligence; rejoice in the Lord. *“I am what I am by the grace of God.”*

David wrote over in **Psalm 103**; *“bless the Lord.”* This is what Paul is talking about, *“rejoice in the Lord.”* David wrote, *“Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”*

“Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities. Who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things. Rejoice in the Lord.”

Look at the rest of that verse in **verse 1**: Paul said; *“To write the same things to you, (this Gospel of redemption, this Gospel of God's grace, this Gospel of substitution, to keep repeating it over, and over, and over to you), that is not tiresome to me at all; that is not grievous to me at all; I am glad to declare the Gospel over and over again.”*

When he spoke to the great city of Corinth, that city of learning, philosophy, and so-forth, he said; *“I am determined to know nothing among you, (even you Corinthians), save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”*

“So, to write the same things to you, (over and over again), to me it is not tiresome and for you it is safe” because it will keep you from error, both error of doctrine and error of spirit. If you keep hearing the Gospel over and over again, it will deliver you from error.

Not only that; it will strengthen your faith. Not only that; it will comfort you in time of trial. *“So my brethren; Paul begins this chapter, rejoice in the Lord.”* I am glad to declare unto you the same message, tell me the old, old, story. It never really gets old it is always new.

Then he goes on in **verse 2**; listen very carefully to this. Paul always spoke quite frankly. He didn't pull his punches at all; he didn't try to please men. He said, *“If I please men I am not the servant of Christ.”*

But, he said, *“Beware of dogs.”* Now whom is he speaking? He is talking about false teachers and false preachers. He is talking about those men who were hucksters and merchandisers of men's souls who profited through religion.

It can be done and it is being done. He tells us to *“beware of dogs.”* Our Lord called them, *“wolves in sheep's clothing.”* Not only beware of dogs but be aware of *“evil workers; they are workers of iniquity.”*

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

You know, in **Matthew 7**, our Lord talked about “*many shall to say unto me in the Day of Judgment, Lord; we preached in your name and we did many wonderful works and we cast out devils.*” Christ will say, “*Depart from me; I never knew you, ye that work iniquity.*”

This is what Paul is talking about, evil workers, dogs, evil workers and concision, mutilators of the flesh, false teachers who glory in the flesh, who glory in appearance and not in the heart, those who glory in ceremonies, who glory in numbers, and who glory in their success.

You want to be aware of people who are always talking about how many and how much. It doesn't matter how many. There is one important question, is the Lord among us? Is the Lord with us? Do we have His presence?

It's not how much either; “*God will supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.*” We don't have to beg; our Lord is not a beggar, He is a King. He will meet the need of every one of His people.

He will meet the need of His church. David said, “*I've been young and now I am old but I have never seen the righteous forsaken. I have never seen his seed begging bread.*”

I don't know why we have stooped today and taken our Lord's name and drag it through the mud of begging. Our Lord is a King. Beware of these false workers, these evil workers, these hucksters, these “*merchandisers of souls*” who glory in appearance, who glory in numbers, who glory in the flesh and do not glory in heart.

That is when he says in **verse 3**; “*we are the true ministers of God.*” That is when he said that, when He told the people to rejoice in the Lord, give God all the credit, all the praise and all the glory.

Then he tells them to “*beware of these evil workers* (false teachers, these merchandisers of souls; beware of these people), for he says, “*We are the (true) circumcision.*” We are the true ministers of Christ. We are the true Christians, the true children of God. We are the true Israel, the church of Jesus Christ.

Then, in **verse 3**, Paul gives three marks of this true church, three marks of true ministers and true Israel and true children of God and the true church. It is very simple; you see it right there before you:

First of all: He says, “*We are the true ministers who worship God in the spirit.*”

Secondly: “*Who rejoice in Christ Jesus.*”

Thirdly: “*Who have no confidence in the flesh.*”

You want to examine yourself and examine this preacher and examine all so-called preachers and churches; examine them by this rule right here. Paul said, “*We are the true church of God who*

worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who hath no confidence in the flesh.”

Now, let’s look at them one at a time; it will be worth our while:

First of all: *“We worship God in the spirit.”*

In **John Chapter 4**, when our Lord talked to the woman at the well; you remember the story, how He came to the well and conversed with this Samaritan woman. He told her *“that if she knew the gift of God and who it was speaking to her, she would ask of him and he would give her the water of life, the gift of God.”*

He told her *“that she had been married 5 times and the man with whom she was living was not her husband.”* She said, *“Sir; I perceive you are a prophet.”* Then she said to Him; *“I am religious; my people are religious.”*

She said, *“We worship in this mountain; (the Samaritan people worship in this mountain).”* This is the mountain where God spoke to Abraham. *“We worship in the place of our heritage. We worship according to our tradition. We worship according to our custom.”*

She said, *“This mountain has a special meaning for us. This is the place where we meet God, in this mountain. This mountain follows our custom, our tradition, and our heritage.”*

She said, *“You Jews; you say, not the mountain, but Jerusalem is the place to worship. You say that you need God in Jerusalem, there where you have the ceremonies, the feasts, and the holy days and all the rituals of religion. You Jews say Jerusalem is the place to worship.”*

Then our Lord stopped her and He said, *“Woman; you are busy worshipping and you don’t know what you worship. You are going through the form and the ceremony. You are going through the motion. You are going through all of these things that agree with your heritage, your traditions, and your customs that have been handed down by your fathers.”*

“You are worshipping in ignorance.” Listen to me; He said, *“God is a spirit;”* God doesn’t dwell in houses, temples, and cathedrals. God doesn’t dwell in mountains or even in ceremonies and rituals. God is a spirit and *“they that worship God must worship God in spirit and in truth.”*

That is as clear as words can make it; *“you worship.”* He said, *“You are going through the motions. You are playing church and playing religion but you are just going through the motion, that’s all. It is motions of ignorance. “God is a spirit and they that truly worship God must worship Him in spirit.”*

My friends, worship is a heart work, not hand work or a foot work; it is a heart work. Praise is heart work. Faith is heart work. This thing of worship, praise, and prayer, is not participation and parades. It is not participation in form, ceremonies, and rituals.

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Listen to the Lord God; *“My son; give me your heart.”* Our Lord said, *“You call me Lord with your lips (you say all of these forms, printed prayers, and rituals of religion and you call me Lord, Lord), but your hearts are far from me.”*

“My son; give me your heart. Out of the heart proceed the issues of life. Keep thy heart out of it for the issues of life. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart. God is nigh unto them of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”

I'm not talking about this organ that pumps blood; that is not the heart that I am referring to. The heart is the inner-man, the soul of man, the mind of man. That is where a man does business with God.

In **Luke 16:15**, the Lord said; *“You are they which justify yourselves before men.”* We go through all of these prayers on the street corners, in restaurants, and in public places, to impress people. We are impressing no one; we are doing no one any good.

We go through all of these ceremonies to impress people. We wear our robes of religion. We make our signs of crosses. We wear all of these doo-dads and paraphernalia. We do all of these things to impress men.

“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men.” But listen to Him; *“God knows your hearts. (God looks upon the heart) and that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.”*

When Samuel went down to anoint David, the king of Israel, they sent David out in the field. They brought all of these young men before Samuel to be anointed king, one of the sons of Jesse was to be anointed king.

When the first one stood before him tall, handsome, mature, intelligent, and all of these things, Samuel said; *“surely the Lord's anointed is before Him.”* The Lord said, *“Samuel; don't look on his outward countenance; I the Lord look on the heart.”* God looks on the heart.

Men today seem intent on associating the worship of God with special days. Every day is God's day. *“This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”*

We are to pray without ceasing. We are not just to pray on special days. Men today, seem intent on associating the worship of God with special uniforms. Why should I wear a special uniform up here in front of this television camera and appear to be religious to you? A filthy heart can be clothed in a black suit as well as a green suit or a red suit.

Men seem intent on burning candles, having parades, and showing crosses. Somebody sent me a cross to carry around in my pocket so that when I felt blue I could reach down and rub that cross and feel religious. That is ridiculous, totally ridiculous!

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Symbols of religion and all types of paraphernalia; we are trying to substitute it for heart worship. God dwells in the heart. God looks upon the heart. God cares not for parades, show, steeples, gaudy dress, or anything else.

Those who truly worship God worship Him in heart and spirit and they do it privately also. They enter into their closets and pray, not to be seen of men. We are not heard for our much speaking or enticing words or our oratory. We are heard for the sincerity and faith of our prayers.

Men, who worship God, do it privately with thanksgiving, praise, and prayer. They worship God publically with other believers in simplicity. The more complicated the service, the less worship is involved. The more entertainment and fun in a service, the less worship is involved.

You might say, "What are the parts of worship, preacher?" Let me tell you if it can be defined: Worship is the singing of hymns, the singing in our hearts, and the praise unto our Lord.

It is the reading of God's Word. The reading of God's Word ought to have a prominent place in the worship of the Lord. God speaks through His Word.

Prayer, confession of sin, preaching of the Word; this is the first mark of a true church, of a true preacher, of a true child of God. He worships God, not in form, ceremony, and ritual, parade, and processions. He worships God in the spirit, in the spirit.

Secondly: We rejoice in Jesus Christ; *"to you that believe He is precious."*

To a lot of people their denomination is precious, their doctrine is precious, their laws are precious, and their heritage is precious. *"To you who believe, He, Jesus Christ, capital H-E, is precious."* Those who truly rejoice in Jesus Christ are in tune with heaven. Heaven rejoices in Jesus Christ. The Father said, *"This is my Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."*

"Let all the angels of God worship Him." That is what Hebrews says. The Holy Spirit, Christ said, *"when He is come, the Spirit of truth, he is not going to speak of himself he will glorify me,"* Christ said. *"He will take the things of mine and show them to you."*

You hear people talk about the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost. You can be sure of one thing; they don't know the Holy Ghost because the Holy Spirit does not magnify Himself or glorify Himself or speak of Himself; He speaks of Christ. He magnifies Christ; He exalts Christ and He reveals Christ. He makes Christ known.

The redeemed in glory; this is their song:

**"Unto Him (Jesus Christ) who loved us
And washed us from our sins
In His own precious blood
To Him be the glory, both now and forever."**

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Yes, if you rejoice in Jesus Christ, you are in tune with heaven. You are in tune with the prophets of old. *“To Him give all the prophets witness.”* You who truly rejoice in Jesus Christ know that He is the fountain of all life. He is the source of all grace for *“He is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”*

You who truly rejoice in Christ Jesus have genuine cause to rejoice in Him. What is there about Christ that causes us to rejoice?

First of all: There is His deity, who He is.

He is worthy of all praise. He is worthy of all worship. He prayed in the Garden; *“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that thy Son may glorify thee. Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”*

“Jesus Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God. In the beginning was Christ and he was with God and he was God.”

We rejoice not only in His deity but in His incarnation. *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, His only begotten Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who are under the law that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”*

We rejoice in His obedience; *“by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”*

We rejoice in His death; *“He was wounded for our transgressions and by His stripes we are healed.”*

We rejoice in His resurrection; *“if Christ be not risen we are yet in our sins.”*

We rejoice in His intercession; *“He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”*

We rejoice in His return; He said, *“I will come again. If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself.”*

The angels stood by the apostles after the Lord had ascended to heaven and they said; *“ye men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go.”*

We rejoice in His return and this is the crowning mark of a true church and of a true Christian; he worships God in the spirit and he rejoices in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ the Son of God.”*

Thirdly: *“We have no confidence in the flesh.”*

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Now, I would say that there are several references here; I will give you several and they are all true: *“We have no confidence in the flesh.”*

First of all: We have no confidence in fleshly rituals and fleshly ceremonies either of the Levitical law or any other religious law.

There is no confidence in the law: *“By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.”* By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, whether circumcision, fasting, mortification of the flesh, Sabbath Days, Holy Days, or any kind of special functions.

Christ has fulfilled all of the Levitical Law, all of the ceremonies, all of the prophets and all of the types. We have no confidence in those things.

The sacraments will not sanctify you. Baptism will not wash away your sins. We have no confidence in any fleshly, ritual, or ceremony.

Secondly: We have no confidence in our efforts to keep certain rules and regulations of religion, even the moral law.

Did not the rich, young, ruler, say to Christ, when our Lord mentioned the Ten Commandments? He said, *“I have kept those things from my youth up.”* Christ said, *“One thing thou lackest; go sell what you have and give it to the poor.”*

He revealed that he hadn't kept them at all, that he coveted, that he could hold on to that which he had and watch his neighbor suffer, that he didn't love his neighbors as himself. He didn't love God with all of his heart.

“Man at his best state is altogether vanity. Our righteousnesses are filthy rags.” We have no confidence in our flesh, your flesh, or anybody else's.

Then, we have no confidence in bishops or preachers. We have no confidence in popes or evangelists. We have no confidence in any mortal man. *“There is none that doeth good, no not one. “There is none that understandeth.”* Leaders come and leaders go; Christ abides.

We have no confidence in the apostles; they were but men. We have no confidence in Mary; she was but a woman, *“highly favored among women,”* not above women.

We have no confidence in our own flesh; *“we are kept by the power of God through faith.”* We are kept in Christ.

So, there you have it; we are the true ministers; *“we are the true church of God, (Paul said), who worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord and who have no confidence in our flesh”* or anybody else's!