Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Distinctive Qualities of the True Christian, Part 1
Scripture: Philippians 3:1-3
Code: 50-27

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 3, Philippians chapter 3. And I want to introduce you to the first three verses of this great third chapter. It is a significant chapter, a marvelous chapter. We will find ourselves greatly enriched as we work our way through in the weeks to come. But these opening three verses in many ways set the foundation and the tone for the remainder of the chapter.

Let me entitle these three verses, "The Distinctive Qualities of the True Christian...The Distinctive Qualities of the True Christian." Paul writes, "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. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilation 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."

A wonderful three verses. Thrilling in terms of their intent and content. They demand our careful attention for this Lord's day and next because of their significance.

The heart of what the Apostle Paul is saying here can be understood in this way, he is helping us to see who is the true child of God. In just these three verses there is a very distinct contrast made between two groups of people. Group number one in verse 2, dogs, evil workers, mutilation, or as it's translated in the NAS, false circumcision. Group number two, verse 3, who worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. Three characteristics of group one in verse 2, three characteristics of group two in verse 3. This then is a contrast which is introduced to us by verse 1. It is a clear and penetrating distinction between the false circumcision and the true circumcision, between those who profess to be the people of God and those who are the people of God. It is a distinction between those who are religious and those who are righteous. It is a distinction between those who have an outward mark that identifies them with God and those who have had an inward change.

And so, again we come back to this very familiar biblical theme. It is all through the New Testament, the theme of true Christianity. Who is the true child of God? In fact, I would venture to say that there are two dominant themes in the New Testament apart from the exaltation of Christ Himself who is the theme of all of the Word of God. The first theme in the New Testament is a presentation and elucidation of the gospel. The record of the gospel work of Christ is recorded in the gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The record of the spread of that message is recorded in the book of Acts. And

the character of the gospel is delineated, expanded, amplified in the epistles. And the goal of the gospel is consummated in the book of Revelation. So the dominant theme is the gospel of which Christ is the main character.

But there is a secondary theme that runs right behind that first one and it is the matter of who is a true Christian. Having delineated the gospel in great clarity, it is then of great importance that one ascertain whether or not in fact he or she is a true Christian. That theme is also abundant in Scripture. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith." Once the faith has been delineated the key is to know whether you're in it. Jesus said in Matthew 7 that in the last time many will come and say, "Lord, Lord, but He will confess to them, I have never known you, depart from Me you workers of iniquity." So there are some who will think they are Christians and children of God, who think they belong inside the covenant and the Kingdom but who are sadly mistaken. That too is a theme.

It starts with Jesus confronting the false faith of the Pharisees and the religious leaders of Israel. It moves to Peter exposing the false faith of Simon. It moves then to Paul who warns of the false faith of the Judaizers who want to demand people observe the law and be circumcised before they can be saved. It moves then to James who describes the dead faith of a fruitless life. And then it moves to Jude who squares off against the hidden phonies in the church. And finally it comes to John who records the description of a church that had a name but had no life, it thought it was alive but in fact it was dead. And everywhere in between all of those high points, the theme of true Christianity runs like a unbroken thread through the fabric of the New Testament.

Someone might say, "You certainly do speak a lot about this." And my response is, "I'm an expositor of the New Testament, the New Testament speaks a lot about it." We speak as God has spoken. And so again we find ourselves here in Philippians chapter 3 verses 1 to 3 looking at the matter of who is a true Christian. There are those who claim to be the children of God and those who are. There are those who are religious and there are those who are righteous. That is the issue.

Saturday a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses came to my door again for a conversation. I was reminded of the fact that they are religious but not righteous. They assume that they belong to Jehovah, they do not. They believe that they are in covenant relationship with God, they are not. They asked me if I knew who Babylon the great was, and I said yes I do. And they said, "Well, everybody thinks Babylon the great is the Catholic Church, do you?" I said no. I said Babylon is all false Satanic religion across the face of the earth...apart from the true church. They said, "Oh, you understand Babylon exactly the way we do." And I said, "No, you put us in Babylon, I put you in Babylon."

Every system of religion without relationship, every system of religion without righteousness whether it's Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Roman Catholic Church, or liberal

Protestantism or whatever it is, whatever human achievement religion where you assume that if you do fewer bad works and more good works, or certain good works, you'll earn favor with God is a false religious system. And the people in it are deceived about their true relationship to God. In the case of the Philippian church, they were obviously being besieged by people demanding that they be circumcised. This is not new. These kinds of people had dogged the steps of the Apostle Paul since he began to preach the gospel of grace, and so Paul is warning about these people, he calls them dogs, evil workers, and false circumcision. He sets them apart from the people of God who worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. And so again, as we come to this text, we look at the comparison between the truly righteous and the religious, the false and the true.

Now, let me give you some background. Particularly in the context of Paul's writing, he is dealing with Jews. They were the dominant religion of his environment. And it is to them that he basically makes reference in verse 2. Now let me give you a little bit of an understanding. There were many religious Jews in that world, many. They believed that they were the people of God and that they maintained a covenant relationship with God which secured their salvation and their eternal life. And that the proof of their identity and belonging was a mark, a mark. They bore a mark as the children of Abraham naturally that affirmed their right to be called the children of God supernaturally. For centuries, even millennia, Jews have continued to hold on to that mark. And by that mark they assume that they are secure with God. They belong to God and ultimately will receive their kingdom and their glory because they have that mark. That mark is called circumcision. To the Jews of the time of Jesus and the time of Paul and even before and even now, circumcision is a very important mark. It is the badge of their Jewishness. In fact, it has always been important to the degree that the Jewish Talmud says this, and I quote, "The commandment of circumcision is more important than all the other injunctions of Scripture," end quote.

Interesting. In other words, the most important thing a Jew can do to secure a relationship with God is have circumcision. Obviously it's only for men. But that is the sign of God's favor on them, they believe. They have attached their spiritual hope to this sign of Jewishness and that is what they hope in for the future.

Now let me give you a little bit of a background as to what circumcision is. The English term "circumcision" comes from a Latin word which means to "cut around...to cut around." That terms describes the original biblical reference to a surgery that was performed on little boys. It was also performed initially on adults and often on adults as the record of Scripture indicates when they had not been circumcised as children. The simple surgery removes the foreskin from the male organ. Very simple surgery. In fact, I was reading in a Hebrew medical book the practices of medical science in Old Testament times this week and there is tremendous detail in ancient Hebrew literature about the very instruments that were used for doing this very surgery. God Himself established it and I'd like to show you that. Go back in your Bible to Genesis chapter 17. We cannot understand the

false circumcision or the true circumcision unless we understand circumcision. So we must at least get introduced to it this morning.

God is speaking to Abraham and Abraham is the father of the Jewish people, the father of Israel. And so, Abraham is given this covenant, verse 10, Genesis 17, "This is My covenant which you shall keep between Me and you, and your descendants after you, every male among you shall be circumcised and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your descendants, a servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised, thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant, but an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from the people, he has broken My covenant."

God says...I want everybody living in this land, I want everybody who is in your association to be circumcised. That is the plan, and, of course, Abraham by now is a full-grown man, he had to have his circumcision as an adult. God's design was that from then on at eight days of age, a child would be circumcised, the male child.

It is interesting to note that in reading ancient Egyptian literature, this custom of circumcision began to show up in Egyptian culture. For them it had not the significance that it had for Israel, but for them it was hygienic. And God knew of its hygienic benefits as well. And medical science today tells us that it lowers significantly the risk of cancer in that area as well as fimosis(??) and certain kinds of inflammation that can be very very serious, particularly among those who have diabetes. So it has a medical hygienic purpose. God knowing that authored it in the life of His people, but that was not the major purpose for it, although it is hygienic, that was not God's primary design. God ordained it as a symbol, as a sign, a very important one. Not just for physical benefit but as a spiritual reminder. And the reminder is simply this, and I'll see if I can give you a full understanding of it. Nowhere or at no point is a man's depravity more manifest than in the procreative act. You say, "Why do you say that?" Well, we know man is a sinner by what he says, we know man is a sinner by what he does. We know man is a sinner by the attitude, the bearing that he carries. We can see on the outside sinful deeds. But how do we know man is a sinner at the base of his character? How do we know man is a sinner at the root of his existence? The answer, by what he creates. Whatever comes from the loins of man is wicked because man is wicked. So I say to you, nowhere then in the anatomy of a man or in the activity of a man is depravity more manifest than in the procreative act because it is at precisely that point which he demonstrates the depth of his sinfulness because he produces a sinner. And I would remind you that Jesus Christ had no human father because there was no human father who could produce a perfect person. The Spirit of God had to plant a perfect seed in Mary and bypass a human father.

The male organ then is the point at which human depravity is most demonstrated. You see not the deeds of sin but the nature of sin passed on to the next generation.

You say, "Well then..still what is the connection with that and circumcision?" When God demanded that they circumcise the male, He was giving them a symbol that the...the outward part of man's procreative organ was cleansed to remind them that man needed to be cleansed of sin at the deepest root of his being. That was the idea. Man needed to be cleansed of his sin through a spiritual surgery, at the very root of his nature. And that very graphic symbol was chosen because that is the procreative point at which man produces sinful man. So man in his natural condition is a sinner and he produces sinners, sinners, sinners, sinners and nothing but sinners. At the very point of his nature then he needs cleansing. And every time they circumcised a person and every time they circumcised a little eight-day-old male child, they were reminding themselves of the fact that man at his very base nature was a wicked sinner and desperately in need of a cleansing. It was an illustration of the sinfulness of man. And even the bloodshed that occurred in circumcision could symbolize the need for sacrifice to accomplish that cleansing. So there was even a picture of the pain and the sacrifice in the circumcision as well.

Now, did God intend that it just be physical? No, God intended that it be a symbol which would have far more meaning than just that. Very early it became important, in fact there aren't too many commands at all in the Bible about circumcision because the people did it. And so there wasn't any prevailing reason to command them to do it, they very carefully, very judiciously observed it. I might just note that they were always very good at doing the outward things and they did this. In Joshua chapter 5 you remember what happened in Joshua chapter 5? All of the children in the wilderness had been marching for 40 years in the wilderness. The old generation had died off and now there was a new generation. We don't know exactly how many of them but they could have numbered in the several millions of people. They've all grown up in the wilderness. In Joshua 5 the Lord says to Joshua in verse 2, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." The prior generation had been circumcised, this generation born in the wilderness and now growing up had not been circumcised, so "They made flint knives and they circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-harraloth." Now they may well have circumcised a million people which is an unimaginable scene. That is what God required. He wanted His people circumcised, He says in verse 4, "All of the ones who came out of Egypt were already circumcised, they've died, you must circumcise this generation as well."

And so, circumcision was followed. According to Exodus 12:48 and Leviticus 12:3 it was non-optional. It was required and the people, for the most part, complied with circumcision. It is a curiosity to me that they as far back as Genesis 34 were already seriously committed to the matter of circumcision. And you have in Genesis 34 a bizarre story. "Dinah the daughter of Leah who was born to Jacob went out to visit the daughters of the land and when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite,

the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her." What happened was, Shechem the son of King Hamor raped Dinah the daughter of Leah. And, of course, Shechem spoke to his father and said, "Get me this young girl for a wife, I want her." Not only did he rape her but he wanted her as a wife. "Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter but his sons were with his livestock in the field so Jacob kept silent until they came in. Then Hamor the son of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it and the men were grieved and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter for such a thing ought not to be done." Fornication and I believe a form of rape. And now the guy wants to marry her. "And Hamor says, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter, please give her to him in marriage and intermarry with us, give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves."

In other words, let's intermarry. This is a Hivite, this would pollute the line of Israel, of Abraham. "And you'll live with us and the land will be open before you, live and trade and acquire property." Here is a Satanic rape. Here is a Satanic merger. Here is a way to twist and pervert the Messianic line by infiltrating it with Hivites who are not of Abraham. "Then we'll all live together. Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, If I find favor in your sight then I will give you whatever you say to me. Ask me whatever bridal payment, whatever gift and I'll give you according as you say to me but give me the girl in marriage for my son."

So you know what they said? "We can't do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us." Already by Genesis 34 they know it's a disgrace to have anybody in their society who is not circumcised. That's how important that sign was. "So on this condition we'll consent, if you will become like us, every male among you be circumcised, the whole of the Hivite males all circumcised." So you know what they did? They all came over and they circumcised all of them. They circumcised all of them.

And it says, "After they had been circumcised," verse 25, "the third day when they were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword, came on the city unawares and killed every male." Interesting. They circumcised them and three days later they massacred them.

The intent of this of course all along was a trap and a murder. In one sense it was within the plan of God because obviously these were wicked vile people. In another sense we cannot honor the deception of these men. But God preserved His line and we learn how significant circumcision was, that if this was going to be a merger and a marriage, the whole male population had to be circumcised...amazing. So they were very serious about this matter of circumcision. It was not some trifling thing, it was very important.

In the time of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David, 1 Samuel 18:20, when they told Saul the thing was agreeable to him and Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him and at the hand of the Philistines may be against him, therefore Saul said to David, For a second time you may be my son-in-law today." And it says Saul commanded the servants, "Speak to David secretly saying, Behold the king delights in you and all his servants love you, now therefore become the king's son-in-law. So Saul's servants spoke these words to David but David says, Is it trivial in your sight to become the king's son- in-law since I am a poor man and highly esteemed. And the servants of Saul reported to him according to these words which David spoke. Saul then said, Thus you shall say to David, The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines to take vengeance on the king's enemies." I'd like to circumcise a hundred Philistines, he says. That's what he wants to give up his daughter Michal to David. "Saul planned, of course, to have David fall by the hand of the Philistines." He thought he was going to go out there and try to get a hundred Philistine foreskins by himself, no way. Ridiculous. "And when his servants told David these words," verse 26, "it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired David rose up, went, he and his men and struck down two hundred men from the Philistines and brought in their foreskins." Rather bizarre thing. "And gave them in full number to the king that he might become the king's son-in-law, so Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife. Saul saw and knew the Lord was with David and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him. And Saul was even more afraid of David and Saul was David's enemy continually."

Here again you see that there was almost...it was almost a war to circumcise Gentiles. They took the circumcision thing as a very serious issue. They used it in very bizarre ways and we don't defend these ways. But it points up how significant it had become.

Now what is interesting...keep this in mind...is that already in Genesis 34 and certainly by David's time the sign of circumcision has lost its spiritual significance. Okay? It has come to be some kind of a weapon, some kind of a way to inflict pain. You say, "Well, didn't God just give it as an outward sign, was there more to it than that?" Oh yes, much more...much more.

Leviticus 26:41 talks about the circumcised heart. Deuteronomy 10:16, the circumcised heart. Deuteronomy 30 verse 6, the circumcised heart. Jeremiah 4:4, the circumcised heart. Ezekiel 44:7, the circumcised heart. That starts all the way back in Exodus 6...Leviticus, Deuteronomy, the Pentateuch already when God said, "I want an outward sign," He was saying, "I also want an inward reality." A circumcised foreskin can only be a sign of the need for a circumcised heart, a cleansed heart. But it wasn't long after God instituted it that they had already begun to deteriorate and that's why you have those passages where God says circumcise your hearts. That's why those are there because already the thing began to deteriorate and all they were living by was the physical sign and disregarding the spiritual counterpart.

You see, the point is this, these people were religious to the T in terms of external ceremony, but they were not righteous. Their hearts were wicked. Their mouths were wicked. Their ears were wicked. Oh sure, they very dutifully circumcised their little boys on the eighth day, they very dutifully circumcised anybody that came in to their land to live with them, but they had skewed the whole thing so that all they had left was the duty of the external and there was no reality of the internal. In other words, they were religious on the outside and they were not spiritual on the inside. They could do the natural fleshly thing, they could not do the supernatural spiritual thing. They were cleaned physically, they were never cleansed spiritually.

Notice Romans 2, Paul sums up their whole problem. Verse 25, "For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the law." Did you get that? You say, "What good is circumcision?" It's of value if you practice the law. Why? It's a symbol. It's a symbol of the need for cleansing if you're obedient. And then he says, "If you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision." In other words, the symbol isolated from the reality is meaningless. What would it matter if you came here on the Lord's day and took communion if you denied the crucifixion and the resurrection? What would it matter if you came in here and were baptized in water if you didn't believe in Jesus Christ? Absolutely pointless. The symbol means nothing without the reality. And so if you are a transgressor of the law and you've never been cleansed on the inside by the grace of God and made righteous to become obedient to the law, circumcision is useless. If you have come to righteousness and if you have been cleansed on the inside and you're a new creation on the inside, then the outward sign means something to you, it demonstrates outwardly what has happened inwardly.

Verse 26, "If therefore the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the law...which he can only do because he's had a changed nature, he's been saved...will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?" Of course. The Jews were very concerned to circumcise all the Gentiles, he's saying...Look, an uncircumcised Gentile who has been transformed and cleansed to obey My law doesn't need circumcision, and a disobedient lawless unsaved Jew with circumcision will find it useless.

Verse 27 says, "And will not he who is physically uncircumcised if he keeps the law, will he not judge you who through having the letter of the law and circumcision are a transgressor of the law?" Boy, what a statement. He is saying the uncircumcised but saved and obedient Gentile will judge the circumcised lost and disobedient Jew.

Then he sums it up in verse 28 and 29. "For he is not a Jew who is one...what?...outwardly because circumcision is not that which is outward in the flesh. He is a true Jew...implied...who is one inwardly and circumcision is that which is of the heart. By the spirit, not by the letter of the law...implied...and his praise is not from men but from God."

There you have the sum of it all. The Jews were circumcised on the outside, not the inside and God was more pleased with Gentiles who were not circumcised on the outside but circumcised on the inside. And again remember, circumcision is the symbol of cutting away sin, it's the symbol of salvation.

So, circumcision is the external symbol depicting the need for a deep total cleansing from sin. But Israel had reduced it to a tribal tattoo, that's all, with nothing of spiritual significance. Now what do you have in the era of the early church? You have Christians and Jews. The Jews still claiming to be the people of God, right? We're the people of God...we're the people of God. They claimed it, that's why they killed Jesus because they didn't want to accept what He said about the fact that they weren't the people of God. So the Jews are claiming to be the people of God, the church is claiming to be the people of God. And Paul wants the Philippians to be sure they know the difference. So go back to Philippians chapter 3 and note again the contrast.

He says, "Beware," verse 2, and then he describes the Jews that are still holding on to circumcision and ceremony, religion on the outside. They are dogs, evil workers, they are the false circumcision...or better...mutilation. Then on the other hand, he says, "We...verse 3...are the true circumcision." And how are we identified? We're not dogs, evil workers and mutilation, we are identified as those who worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. That's the distinction.

Paul then is again describing the difference between the true and the false. And that is the age-old issue in New Testament concern, who is real, who is not. And, beloved, I submit to you that this goes on and on through all the ages of life on this earth until Jesus comes, the false religionists up against the true. They have their mark, we have our mark. We must know the difference.

Now what made this exceedingly relevant to the Philippian church is this, when the time Paul started his ministry really began it wasn't long before his steps began to be dogged by the Judaizers. And they were coming behind Paul who was preaching the gospel of grace, the gospel of grace, salvation by grace through faith plus or minus nothing, all of grace, all of grace, and all we have to do is believe. You can't be saved by circumcision, you can't be saved by keeping ceremonial law, you can't stay saved by circumcision, you can't stay saved by obeying tradition, ceremonial law, or in your own flesh keeping the law of God. That was grace. But along came the Judaizers and behind Paul they would come into the church and they would say...No, you must be circumcised. And they would show them Old Testament passages. You must keep the law of Moses...and they would show them Old Testament passages. Not understanding that the old covenant had been set aside in favor of the new covenant, and being somewhat confused many of the Christians would buy into the lies of these false circumcision. And it was confusing the church. In fact, it was so confusing to the church that the letter of Paul to the Galatians is basically all about this one subject. It's all about these people who preach a false gospel. Verse 7 of Galatians 1, "They are disturbing you and they want to distort

the gospel of Christ." And what was their distortion? "You must be circumcised physically and you must keep all the law of Moses...the ceremonies of Moses." You've got to have this outward sign and then you've got to do all the ceremonies, all the sacrifices, all the offerings, all the holy days, all the sabbaths, all the feasts and you have to do good, do good, earn your way. And these Judaizers were a burden of immense proportions to the Apostle Paul.

You say, "Well, how is it relevant to us? We don't have any Judaizers running around." Listen, what we have running around is the same thing. People who are saying all the time if you want to be right with God you've got to do this, do that, do this, light this candle, bow down, go through this ceremony, say this prayer, do this ritual, buy this absolving, or you've got to join this organization, be a part of this, have this special kind of baptism, you've got to work your way into the Kingdom. I've said this many times, there are only two religions in the world...the religion of divine accomplishment, salvation by grace, and the religion of human achievement and that is every other religion on the face of the earth. I saw it in India, I saw the Hindus trying to earn their way in, buying offerings, buying sacrifices, buying flowers, lighting incense, bowing down, doing whatever they had to do to appease the gods, trying to do more good than they did bad, weigh the balance of the scale in their favor. I've seen the Buddhists trying to do the same thing, sitting on the floor in a trance, genuflecting while incense rises up, hopefully by their religious activities and their duties and by their good works and their good deeds, God will be pleased with them and accept them in...that's all the same kind of stuff.

And there are people who want to come along to those of us who believe in grace and believe we're saved by grace and impose on us some kind of legalistic code by which we earn our way to heaven. Some say you have to be water baptized or you can't get into heaven. That's a necessary work. Some would say you have to pray a certain amount of time or you have to have certain prayers that you say. Some would say you have to engage in certain absolution or certain types of confessions where you release your sin and when you do that God will accept you. Some believe that if you take communion on that basis God accepts the merit of that. So there are always going to be the people around who will say that, who will want to impose works, symbols, systems on grace. And whether they come as Judaizers or Hindus or Buddhists or Shintoists or whatever they are, Anomists(?), whatever cult or occult, whatever system of religion that puts anything in there that you do convolutes the pure grace of God.

So the battle is still there. And this question still comes all the time. People ask me this very very often...frequently about Seventh Day Adventists, for example, they say, "Are Seventh Day Adventists Christians?" And my answer is a person is a Christian who trusts completely and only in Jesus Christ for his salvation. If they believe that they earn any merit with God that is a part of their salvation by going to church on Saturday, they're lost because that's a work and where there are works grace is no more grace. But you see, you still have that same thing. People say to me, "Are Catholics Christians?" I received a letter this week, amazing letter, from one of the leading Jesuit priests in New Orleans. He was writing to say that he had been listening to Grace to You for a long time and in

listening to Grace to You had committed himself to Jesus Christ and become a true Christian and was in the process, I believe, he had been just in the process of being a retreat with a large number of Jesuits and he was the teacher and had taught them through The Gospel According to Jesusbook. He has been a five-year listener to Grace To You. His life is totally transformed, he continues, I think, to get the subscription to all the study guides. And his hope is clearly in Christ. But I'll tell you what, he's a part of an organization literally filled to the brim with people who by self-abnegation and religious ritual are believing they can earn their way into heaven. That's the same lie. Paul says anybody who comes along and tells you that stuff label as dogs, evil workers, the false circumcision. The true circumcision, hey they're not marked by the external, they worship God in the spirit, that's internal. They glory in Christ Jesus, not in their own works. And they put no confidence in the flesh. See the difference? And we'll go in to that in detail in our next study.

So, Paul is calling us again to the same basic recognition that we have had all through the New Testament...who is a true believer and who is not. And I guess the question that we have to ask ourselves this morning is where do I fit? Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says, "For by grace you are saved, that not of...what?...yourselves, not of works, lest any man should boast." For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. That's the heart of that verse. It is the gift of God. If you receive salvation in Jesus Christ by His death and resurrection as a gift from God, you received it confessing your sin and turning to Christ, you're the true circumcision. If you're doing anything to earn favor with God, you're the false. The Philippians needed to know the difference, they needed to be careful. In fact he says in verse 2, "beware" three times because these will confuse people. They'll confuse people. And certainly the Judaizers would have used Bible verses from the Old Testament without understanding their significance.

So, beloved, again we say then as we look at this passage in more detail next time, here are the distinctive qualities of a true Christian. Their life is a relationship not a ritual. They possess righteousness not religion. And we'll see the outworking of that as we look at it in further detail. Let's pray together.

Lord, we who know You in a true way know You because You have redeemed us out of Your sovereign love, not by virtue of anything which we have done or could have done or would have done. And so we give You all the glory and all the credit. We have come today to worship by the Spirit of God internally not in some external ceremony. We have come to glory in Christ Jesus, not to boast about our flesh and what we've accomplished in our good works. And we have come with no confidence in the flesh, not for a moment believing that there is some good thing in us whereby we can please You, that's just not true. So we're the true circumcision, we thank You for that.

But, Lord, we know too that there are some here who are not true, who do not worship by the spirit, they worship externally through forms and rituals and the means that men have designed, who do not glory in Christ Jesus but boast, as it were, in their own accomplishments, their own religiosity, their

own good deeds, and who mistakenly have confidence that in their flesh, in their humanness they can do things to please holy God. Lord, awaken them to the lie that that is and may they cast themselves at the merciful feet of Jesus Christ who in grace will forgive them for such an affront as to think that an unworthy, ungodly sinner could do anything to please a holy God. Father, we pray that You'll save those who are only religious and make them righteous, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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