

# WHO ARE THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD?

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PHILIPPIANS 3: 3 • TV090B

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### 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.”*

Here’s an interesting subject for us today, a question: **“WHO ARE THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD?”** Now, there have been a lot of arguments and debates on that issue, on that subject: **“WHO ARE THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD, WHO MAKES UP THE TRUE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?”**

Over here in the book of **Philippians chapter 3:3**; Paul the apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *“for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (all Scripture is God breathed)”* and Paul writes in **Philippians 3:3**: *“We are the true circumcision; (we are the true people of God),”* and he gives us three marks of those people, three marks of the true circumcision. He said:

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

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

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

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

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

Now, as I say this, this subject; this question has been argued and debated and fought over and blood has been shed over this subject and families have been divided: **“Who are the true people of God, who makes up the true church of God?”**

The Jews of old, Israel of old; they believed that they were the true people of God because they had the right heritage. Well, they even said to the Master; they said to the Lord Jesus Himself:

“We have Abraham as our father; we don’t need you and we don’t need your preaching, and we don’t need your commandments; we have Abraham and that’s sufficient. Abraham is our father. We have Abraham, Jacob, David, and Joseph, and we don’t need anyone else.” That was their argument for being the true people of God, it was their heritage.

And then the ceremonialist, the religious ceremonialist; they had their circumcision and they had their Sabbath and Holy Days. And they had their sacrifices and they didn’t need Christ. They rejected Him and turned thumbs-down on Him because they trusted that they were the true church of God and the true people of God because they had the ceremonies.

They had what Moses taught. They had all of these things that Moses laid down for the Jewish people to practice, all the Holy Days, Feast Days, and ceremonies. Like people observe today, you know ceremonies like Lent, Good Friday and all of these different ceremonies that people observe today.

They had their ceremonies and they felt that they were all right and they were the people of God because they took part in these ceremonies. And they rested in this.

And then there was the legalist. He boasted in his morality. He boasted in his good works. Like the Pharisee in the temple: *“God I thank you; (and he was sincere in this matter) I’m not like other men.”* He didn’t think he was.

And to some degree he wasn’t. In many ways he wasn’t. Why, he fasted and prayed and tithed and gave alms. And he was not an adulterer. He was not an extortioner. He wasn’t this, that, and the other and that was his hope.

He was one of the people of God because he did not do certain things and did do other things that made him a member of God’s family. That’s what he thought, but Christ said he wasn’t.

And then there was the fundamentalist who boasted in his doctrine. He studied the Scriptures. He searched the Scriptures. He was a theologian. He was orthodox in every jot and tittle. He knew the law.

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

---

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Christ said of these people; *“You search the scriptures, (you do search the Scriptures, I know that you do) for in them you think that you have eternal life.”* You think the Scriptures and your knowledge of the Scriptures make you a part of the family of God, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and make you one of the people of God.

But He says they were missing it, *“The scriptures testify of me and you will not come to me that you really might have life.”* Life is not in the Bible it’s in Christ. The Bible is given to point us to Christ.

And then there’s the modern religionist and he thinks that because he made a religious profession that he’s a member of God’s church and he’s a member of the family of God and he is considered among the people of God because he has made a religious profession.

And after all, he’s affiliated with the church, he’s either a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic, or he’s something but he’s not a heathen. He’s a church member and he’s made his decision.

He doesn’t give much concern to it and much thought to it, and doesn’t walk with God and doesn’t have a spirit within him that loves God. But, he has made his commitment and consequently he’s a member of the family of God.

But Paul’s description of the true church, true circumcision or that for which circumcision was intended; Paul’s description of it is quite different from these things that I’ve just said, I’ve just stated.

Paul said, *“We are the people of God. We are the true circumcision that indeed for which circumcision was intended that of the spirit and not of the flesh.”* You see; the circumcision of the Old Testament was in the form. True circumcision is of the heart, of the spirit.

The Old Testament circumcision was in the flesh. This is in the heart. And one was done by men and this true circumcision is done by God. It’s a heart work; it’s a rending of the heart. It’s a breaking of the heart. It’s a regeneration of the heart.

And Paul says we are the true people of God and here are three evidences, *“We worship God in the spirit. We rejoice in Jesus Christ and we have no confidence in the flesh.”* Now, that’s God’s Word.

Nothing is said there of heritage. Nothing is said there of Sabbath Days, Holy Days, Feast Days, and ceremonies. Nothing is said there of our morality and good works. Nothing is said there of our orthodoxy or theology.

Nothing is said there of religious experiences, feelings, decisions, professions, commitments, and all of these other things. *“We worship God in the spirit and we rejoice in Jesus Christ and we have no confidence in the flesh.”*

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

Now, let's take these one at a time, these evidences, these marks of the true circumcision, the true people of God. Let's take them one at a time and let's examine them.

And the text now if you want to go back to it, if I've got your attention at last and you want to go back to the text, turn to **Philippians 3:3**. That's where you'll find the Scripture.

The first mark of the true believer; He is known by his worship. He worships God, not in form, not in fashion, not in flesh, but in spirit. He worships God in the spirit.

Our Lord was talking to a woman, a Samaritan woman at the well. Do you remember the story? And she said, "Our fathers worship in this mountain. Now, you Jews say we are supposed to worship down there in Jerusalem."

And our Lord looked at her and said: "*Woman; you worship* (you go through the form of worship) *you don't know what you worship. The hour is coming and now is;* this is **John 4:22-24**:

*"The hour is coming and now is when true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth; for such the Father seeketh such (desires) to worship him. God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."*

How do you build God a house? Now, I want you to think about that; how do you build God a house? You keep talking about God's house and I know the Scripture refers to that but it doesn't mean what we think.

The Lord said to Solomon, "The heaven of heavens won't contain me. The earth is my footstool. How are you going to build me a house? How is the living God going to dwell in a house?"

Let me ask you something else; what material substance can we bring to God who made all things?

You know, some of you may have wealthy friends, very wealthy friends. Did you ever try to buy a birthday present for one of them with an unlimited income? You say, "What in the world can I get him, he's got everything?"

Now, what do I bring God materially, who has everything, who made everything? What are words to Him who made the tongue? What are candles? We stand around burning candles and acting like we are worshipping. What are candles to Him who made the sun and the moon and the stars?

We form a little procession of a thousand people and we march down the street. What are processions to Him before whom the whole world, "*all nations before Him are but a drop in the bucket?*"

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

Now, if you want to worship God; I'll tell you this, *"God is Spirit and they that worship God worship him in spirit and truth,"* not with outward form and bodily exercise and going through the motions because you can do all that and be 9 million miles away from worshipping God.

Paul wrote this in **Romans 1:9**: *"God is my witness whom I worship and serve in my spirit."* How do you worship God in the spirit?

Well; let's think about it a moment. Here are about six or seven things that you might consider:

First of all: Worshipping God in the spirit is worshipping God with a spirit of reverence and fear, holy reverence and fear. *"Holy and reverend is his name."* How awesome and holy is the name of God: *"Hallowed be thy name."*

You know, David wrote in **Psalms 89:7**: *"God is greatly to be feared and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."* The God of creation, the God of sovereignty, the God of the universe, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly to be feared.

And then the true believer worships God with the spirit of praise. When David closed the book of Psalms, **Psalms 150**, the last Psalm, he says, *"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."* We worship God with the spirit of praise.

Then with the spirit of thanksgiving; I like the **100th Psalm**: *"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands serve the Lord with gladness."* But then **verses 5 and 6** go like this, *"Enter into his presence with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him for the Lord is good. His mercy and truth endureth to all generations."*

Be thankful: *"Enter into his presence with thanksgiving."* Did you start this day murmuring, complaining, and finding fault? Most people do. *"This is the day the Lord hath made. I'll rejoice and be glad therein."* Enter His presence with thanksgiving.

I wonder what is your spiritual attitude even as you drive to that place you call a church on Sunday morning. How do you enter the presence of the Lord? When you come into the church building in a service of worship, what's your spirit and attitude?

Are you entering His presence with reverence, fear, the spirit of praise, spirit of worship, and a spirit of thanksgiving? Are you thinking about yourself and thinking about your conflicts with other people?

The people of God are those who worship God in spirit, in the spirit of humility. *"When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands; what is man that thou art mindful of him?"* David said, *"O God, who am I and what is my house that you should show mercy to me?"*

We need to follow this, *"Let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus who thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation. He took upon himself the form of a servant and was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

The spirit of humility; oh how pride rules and reigns in these sinful hearts. God hates pride. Do you know what God hates more than anything else, pride? Where do I find that?

In the book of **Proverbs** it says *“Six things that God hates, yea seven are an abomination to him.”* The first one he names, *“a proud look.”* God hates pride more than anything else. And I guess we’ve got more of that than we’ve got anything else. I guess it’s the granddaddy of all sin. *“Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall.”*

We need to come before God with the spirit of submission. Samuel came to Eli and the old prophet of God said: *“Samuel; what did God say to you?”* And Samuel said *“I’d rather not say if you don’t mind.”*

And Eli said, *“Oh I do mind. You tell me what God said to you.”* And finally Samuel said; *“Well Eli, God said that your sons have violated his word and law and he’s going to kill them. And because you didn’t discipline your sons, you didn’t deal with them; God’s going to deal with them.”*

Do you know what he said? I want you to listen to this submission. Well, he said: *“It’s the Lord; let him do what he will.”* That’s worship.

And then Job, after everything had been swept away, he was rich and now he is poor. He was a family man and now he has no one. He was a famous man and now he is despised and laughed at, even by the children, sitting there on the ash-heap, scraping the boils. He was a healthy man and now he is a dying man. He rent his clothes and wept and worshipped God. And do you know what he said? *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”* That’s worship.

You see, that’s more than walking an aisle. That’s more than shaking a hand. That’s more than deciding to go to heaven. That’s more than claiming to believe some doctrine. That’s a God-given spirit of worship. *“That’s a contrite spirit and a broken heart.”*

That’s a work of grace. That’s not produced by the flesh. God produced that. He said, *“Job my servant, is a righteous man. You won’t find another one like him.”*

And then this thing of worship is a spirit of faith. Do you know what the Bible says in **Hebrews 11:6?** *“Without faith it’s impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is.”*

There is no coming to God without faith, no coming to God. It doesn’t say, it is hard coming to God or difficult to come to God; it’s impossible to come to God without faith. He won’t receive you. Let not that man think he will receive anything of God. Let him ask in faith, believing. Now, this thing of worship is a spirit of faith.

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

And then last of all it's a spirit of love. Listen to this verse in **1 Corinthians 16:22**: *"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema, Maranatha, (that is accursed when Jesus comes)." That's how serious it is!*

The two great commandments, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

*"We are the true people of God who worship God in spirit."* That's the first thing, *"worship God in spirit, (not play church), who worship God in spirit and in truth."*

I'm not left to my imagination and my carnal thoughts about God. He's revealed; God is revealed in His Word. God is revealed in His Son. God is revealed by His Spirit. I'm not left to my imagination.

God said, *"You thoughtest I was altogether such as one as thyself."* I'm not left to my carnal thoughts about God; I'm taught the truth of God by His Word. *"Sanctify them through thy word; thy word is truth."*

And by His Son who said, *"I'm the way, the truth, and the life. You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* By His Spirit who is called by our Master, *"the spirit of truth."* *"And when he the spirit of truth is come he will guide you unto all truth for he shall take the things of mine and show them to you. He'll not speak of himself. He shall not glorify himself but he shall glorify me."*

So, we worship God, the God of creation, the God of sovereignty, the God of power, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of redemption, the God of justice and righteousness, we worship Him in spirit.

**Secondly:** We are the people of God who rejoice in Christ Jesus!

Now, what is this rejoicing in Christ Jesus? Well, it's such a degree of joy that it amounts to glorification. It amounts to exultation. It amounts to an exuberance, an adoration, and a worship. And all this we give to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We glory not in ourselves or in our works or in our flesh; we glory in Jesus Christ our Lord. *"Wherefore, God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name and at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father, things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth."* Christ is Lord!

*"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* We rejoice in Christ Jesus. There are three things here; (now listen to me) we rejoice in the person of Christ, who He is. He's the Surety of the eternal covenant. He is the God-Man. He is God incarnate in human flesh; *"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."*

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

The angel said, *“That holy thing which is in Mary’s womb is conceived of the Holy Spirit and is the Son of God.”* Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 7:14**, *“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and thou shall call his name Immanuel (God with 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. Without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Who is Jesus Christ? He’s God in human flesh. He said, *“I and my Father are one.”* God the Father said to the Son, *“Thy throne O God is forever.”* Thomas fell down at His feet and said, *“My Lord and my God.”*

**“Jesus, oh how sweet the name  
Jesus, every day the same,  
Jesus, let all saint’s proclaim  
His worthy name forever.”**

We rejoice in the person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly: We rejoice in the offices, that’s right, the offices of Christ, the anointed, appointed offices of Jesus Christ!

He’s the eternal Surety of an everlasting covenant. Do you know what a surety is? It’s a guarantor. If you sign a note or borrow money at the bank and someone goes down and signs it as your surety; that means they have taken upon themselves the obligation of this note, whether you pay it or don’t pay it. And Jesus Christ became our Surety of an eternal covenant and we were given Him by the Father in eternity past.

He’s not only our Surety but He’s our Saviour, the angel said, *“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”*

He’s not only our Saviour but He’s our Mediator. Do you know what a mediator is? It’s a go-between, an advocate, one who pleads the cause of another. And He’s our Mediator with the Father and He pleads not our righteousness and works and merit; He pleads His blood.

He died for our sins. *“He was wounded for our transgressions. By his stripes we are healed.”* He died that God might be just and justify folks like you and me and He pleads for us. He prays for us. He intercedes for us at the right hand of God.

He’s not only our Mediator; He’s our high priest. He enables us to come into the presence of God. Every believer is a priest in Christ. Every believer’s a saint. *“We are sanctified in Christ Jesus.”*



## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

Every believer is a priest, ordained a priest, and made a priest by God almighty. He ought to offer sacrifices of love and praise to God. You don't need anybody between you and God but Christ:

*“And seeing we have such a high priest; let us come boldly before the throne of grace, (come boldly, me and you). God says: “You come yourself to the very throne of grace and find mercy to help and grace to help in time of need.”*

Our Lord taught us to pray: *“Our Father which art in heaven,”* (not our Father, confessor, not our Father, teacher) *our Father which art in heaven.*” Every believer comes boldly.

You see, when Christ died on the cross He rent the veil into. He destroyed the Holy of Holies on earth made with hands. He entered into the presence of God Himself with His own blood, not with a human sacrifice, not with a human ceremony, with His blood and made atonement for our souls.

We rejoice in Christ and we rejoice also in the work of Christ. *“Of him are you in Christ Jesus who has made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”*

**“It was his love for me  
That nailed him to the tree  
To die in agony for all my sins,**

**For my own guilt and blame  
The blessed Saviour came  
Willing to bear the shame  
Of all my sins,**

**Oh what a Saviour is mine  
In Him God's mercies combine  
His love can never decline  
And He loves me.”**

And do you know what? He loves me. We rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in anyone but Christ Jesus, in His person, in His offices, and in His work, we are the true people of God.

**Thirdly:** *“And we have no confidence in the flesh!”*

Now, to understand what this means you have to consider three things: When the word *“flesh”* is used in the Word of God it takes one of three directions:

First of all: The word *“flesh”* in the Scriptures means this, the material and physical privileges and external luxuries which belong to this world.

## WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

PHILIPPIANS 3:3 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

For example: Wealth, honor, strength, fame, power, and all of these things that the earth up hoards and the earth gives; that's the flesh.

In **Jeremiah 9:23** it says: *“Thus saith the Lord; let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understands and knoweth me that I am the Lord. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?”*

Secondly: “Flesh” in the Scripture refers to the outward duties of religion: *“We have no confidence in the flesh”* and we have no confidence in the duties of religion.

Paul said: *“If any man may have confidence in the flesh I more. I'm a Pharisee and all of these other things but I count this but dung (rubbish) that I may win Christ and be found in him.”*

Thirdly: The other “flesh” is this flesh right here: I have no confidence in myself.

**“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and his righteousness.”**

I don't trust myself to hold out; I trust Him to hold me. I don't trust myself to keep myself; I trust Him to keep me.

**“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and his righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But holy lean on Jesus' name.”**

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