***The True Circumcision of God - PH67-01  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 3:3-6***

Turn with me in your Bibles as we continue studying Philippians 3:3-6. We're studying the true circumcision of God. This is the second increment in that series.

**The Significance of Circumcision under the Mosaic Law**

Circumcision was an important religious ritual under the Mosaic Law. Briefly, to review this, we found that here was the meaning and significance of circumcision under the Mosaic Order:

1. It refers to the rite given to Abraham as a sign of the covenant with God.
2. Circumcision became a point of pride with the Jews who viewed with contempt those not practicing it.
3. Circumcision was strictly a sign of faith in God under salvation, and was not the means of salvation.
4. At Gilgal, in Joshua 5, circumcision symbolized restoration to temporal fellowship after 40 years of wilderness wandering.
5. Circumcision was treated by some Jews as the means to salvation. That is legalism.
6. The rite of physical circumcision is not required of males in the church age under grace.
7. Jewish Christians are referred to in the New Testament as "the circumcision," in contrast to all others as the uncircumcision.
8. Some Jewish Christians wanted to force gentile Christians to observe the Law of Moses as a way of life.

So there's no doubt about the fact that circumcision, under the Old Testament order, was a very significant ritual. The reason for this was that it signified a man's right to the promises given in the Abrahamic covenant. To refuse circumcision was to symbolize the rejection of these promises. But circumcision accepted was a symbol of the rejection of the power of the sin nature through faith in the coming Savior.

Circumcision in the Old Testament was both a ritual, and it was also real. It was something of the body, but its real meaning was that it was the circumcision of the mind. So circumcision as a ritual could not bring salvation or sanctification. If you can work to be saved, and if you can work to become spiritually mature, that's legalism, and that is out. So ritual circumcision has no place in God's plan for the church age. It is not required today.

There is a true circumcision for the Christian today, however, and that's what we're studying. That is described as the circumcision of Christ. That was His dying on the cross for the sins of the world. We secure this true circumcision today by faith in Christ the Savior. The removal of the slavery of the old sin nature (that is, the flesh) is what is signified by the circumcision of Christ when we receive Him as Savior. This circumcision, therefore, made without hands today, is just as important as was the circumcision made with hands under the system of Judaism in the Old Testament.

In verse 3, we have the characteristics given to us of spiritual circumcision. We're going to begin with those. Philippians 3:3 gives us the characteristic of spiritual circumcision. There are three characteristics. These three characteristics are expressed via three participles. These three participles are tied together with a single "the." It says, "The," followed by three participles in the Greek language. That indicates to us that these are tied together as a total expression of what spiritual circumcision is like today.

**The Spiritual Circumcision of Christianity**

1. **Worship**

It is characterized by being a worship in the Spirit. Paul says, "For we are the circumcision (meaning the true circumcision) who worship God in the Spirit. The word "worship" is the Greek word "latreuo." "Latreuo" is a word which means "to render religious service or homage." The Mosaic Law, as you know, had a system, a very definite system of worship. It had rituals; ceremonies; holy days; and, it had a complete setup of priests and so on–a total setup for worship. So the worship of the Old Testament was of one kind. The point that Paul is making is that in the New Testament, worship is different. We do not have priests; nor ceremonies; nor rituals; nor, even have a holy place. In the Old Testament, they had a holy building, which was the temple, which was the center of worship, and it was indeed a holy place. We have nothing of that nature today.

Instead, our worship or our religious service or homage is of a different kind. It is of, "God in the Spirit," the Scripture says, and that should be translated, "We worship *by* the Spirit of God." The idea is by means of the Spirit of God. The word God ("theos") refers to God the Holy Spirit. So it is by means of the Spirit of God that we worship in the age of grace, and we would translate it, "Who worship by the Spirit of God." Under the grace of the Holy Spirit, who indwells each believer, we are able to worship God and to worship him in a genuine and a true way. The reason for this is that the Holy Spirit guides the believer through Bible doctrine in his praise and honor and worship of God.

**Doctrine**

Therefore, when we speak about worshiping God, the first step we have to understand to worshiping God is learning doctrine. If you do not know doctrine, you cannot worship God, no matter how sincere you are; no matter how many moving, inspirational, emotionally moving services you may attend; and, no matter what the spiritual leadership may bring into the service that is attractive like good singing; a sense of relaxation; or, even attractive surroundings. No matter what is added, none of that contributes to worship. You cannot worship God unless you know doctrine. That's why God the Holy Spirit is there, because He is the key to learning doctrine. Thus Paul says, "We are the circumcision (the true circumcision) who, instead of worshiping God via rituals and ceremonies and externals as they did in the Old Testament, do a genuine job of worship because we have God the Holy Spirit indwelling us." So that by means of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us doctrine, we are able to enter into a sense of awe; of respect; and, of homage toward the living God. Without this knowledge of doctrine, you cannot praise and honor God. This is something you better learn.

There is a lot being cranked out today in the form of worship, which is simply human showmanship. Whoever the preacher is, the more of an actor the preacher is, and the more dramatic he is able to be, the greater illusion he may create that people have come and worshipped. You can do this with surroundings; with words; with ceremony; or, with music, but whatever contribution it may have leading toward worship, none of it will enable you to worship God. Only what God the Holy Spirit is able to lead you into in relationship to God your Father is going to be worship, and that He can only do through doctrine.

So the worship of the genuine circumcision today is not a ritual, but real worship begins with what we're doing right now–learning doctrine. You have reached at this point your moment of your highest relationship to God, your Father. When you sit, and are being instructed in His viewpoint, that is the highest and the finest expression of worship that you will ever experience this side of standing in His presence in heaven itself. God the Holy Spirit uses the doctrine which we have learned and stored in our human spirit to lead us in this worship.

So a person may meticulously observe outside outward rituals of a religious nature, but be lost completely himself. Or he might even be a Christian who is completely in reversionism; completely backsliding; and, completely in spiritual deterioration, and yet be very meticulous in his outward ceremonies, performances, and functions. He is not worshiping God. He cannot worship God in that condition.

This is the principle, in short, which we have stated in John 4:24, which says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." So if you have genuine spiritual circumcision today, which each of us is supposed to have, the first thing you will be by characterized is the fact that you worship God by means of the Spirit. You are not so foolish as to think that you can worship God by means of some externals, or under the emotional manipulation of some clever spiritual leader.

1. **Rejoicing in Christ Jesus**

Spiritual circumcision is characterized by the fact that it rejoices in Christ Jesus. The word "rejoice" in the Greek Bible is "kauchaomai." "Kauchaomai" means "to boast" or "to glory." It means to exalt. It is in the present tense, and therefore it means a constant boasting. It is in the middle voice which indicates that such boasting is for your personal benefit, and it is a participle stating a principle. You notice that it says that this glorying; this boasting; this rejoicing; and, this exalting is in Christ Jesus. The word "in" in the Greek is "en," indicating the location. The word "Christ" is "christos." The word Jesus is "iesous" in the Greek.

"Christos" means "Messiah." That was the word in His relationship to the Jewish people in His mission as the one who has been sent by God: the Anointed One. The name "Jesus" was his human name, indicating that he was Savior. This indicates the thing that he had come to do–to be the Savior of the world.

**The Meaning of "Christ Jesus" vs. "Jesus Christ"**

There is a difference when the Bible uses "Christ Jesus" and when it uses "Jesus Christ." These two are interchanged sometimes. "Christ Jesus" is used by the apostle Paul to stress the exalted Son of God sent to empty Himself. This is what is described for us in Philippians 2:5 when it says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Then it goes on to describe the kenosis of Jesus Christ, where he emptied Himself of the demonstration of the prerogatives of His deity. When you use the word "Jesus Christ," this is speaking about the exalted Son of God emptying Himself, and it stresses His preexistence. It testifies to His resurrection. It stresses the fact that He was pre-existent. That is why He was sent. It is speaking about Christ, about the Savior in his grace. "Christ Jesus" is the term that stresses the grace of the Lord.

But when the term "Jesus Christ" is used, this is used by Paul to stress the Lord in His role as the despised and rejected One who was later glorified. This is what we have in Philippians 2:11, where we read, "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ (now it's in the other way) is Lord to the glory of God the Father. This testifies to His resurrection. "Christ Jesus" testifies to His pre-existence. "Jesus Christ" stresses His resurrection. He was the despised one. He was rejected. He was murdered. Then He was raised and glorified.

So "Christ Jesus," when Paul uses it, speaks about the grace of God. When he wants to stress the grace of God, he refers to the Lord as "Christ Jesus." When he wants to stress the glory of God, relative to the Son of God, then he speaks of Him as Jesus Christ. It is very significant–the order in which God the Holy Spirit leads the writer to address the Lord. "Christ Jesus," of His grace; and "Jesus Christ" of His glory.

So Paul's confidence is in the work, he says, "Of Christ Jesus, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus," as the exalted God, the One whose grace is going to solve the problem of sin, which he could not solve for himself. His confidence is in the work of this Savior on the cross. So genuine circumcision today looks to the divine good, which Christ Jesus, in His grace, provided for us. It does not look to the human good–the legalisms which the old sin nature may provide. Therefore, if today, you have genuine spiritual circumcision, you will first of all find that you worship God in the Spirit. You will be a person who is learning doctrine. Secondly, you will discover that you will rejoice in Christ Jesus. The thing that will captivate your confidence will be the grace of God, which is able to do for you and to give you that eternal life, and that progress in the spiritual life that you can never earn through your literalism and through your efforts of the old sin nature's capacities.

1. **No Confidence in the Flesh**

The third thing Paul says that will characterize spiritual circumcision is no confidence in the flesh: "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. The word "have confidence" is "peitho." "Peitho" is in the perfect tense. That means it is a continuing attitude of mind from the past. It is active. It is the Christian's own choice. It is participle, a statement of faith. And it uses the strongest Greek negative, the "ou" with it, so that he is saying that he has absolutely had, at no time, from the past and on to the future–ever, any confidence in something which he calls "the flesh." The word in is "en," the location, and "flesh" is the word "sarx." This is a word that we frequently find in the New Testament. So let's stop and see what the flesh is.

**The Flesh**

Christians often use the word "flesh" in the wrong way. The word "flesh" is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. First of all, this Greek word "sarx" is what we're looking at. "Sarx" is used of several specific meanings:

* 1. The word "flesh" is used in the Bible simply to refer to the living material that covers the bones of a human or an animal body. What you have covering your bones is referred to in Scripture as flesh. There's nothing bad about it. There's nothing good about it. It's simply a technical term for the skin and the muscle (the tissue). This you find in 1 Corinthians 15:39, 2 Corinthians 12:7, Galatians 6:13, and Romans 2:28. All of those are places where the Greek word "sarx" is used in the Greek Bible, and it is used in reference to living tissue.
  2. Secondly, this is used of the human body as a whole. The whole body of a person is simply referred to as "the flesh." You have this in a number of passages: 2 Corinthians 10:3, Acts 2:31, Colossians 2:1, 1 Timothy 3:16, Galatians 4:13, Mark 10:6-8, Ephesians 6:12, and Philippians 1:22. All of these passages use the word "sarx" (the word "flesh") in terms of simply a human body looked on as a whole.
  3. Then third, it is used of a human being of flesh and blood in contrast to supernatural beings such as God and angels–spirit beings. We have this, for example, in John 1:14, John 17:2, and Matthew 16:17. This is a specific kind of application to the human body. In a way, it is related here to number two, where it is being used of the human body as such. But it is sometimes used specifically to contrast the human body to a spirit being, or a spirit body.
  4. It is used of mankind as a whole. Matthew 24:22 and Romans 3:20 use it in this way. That is, all of humanity is simply referred to as "flesh."
  5. It is used for the complete person as a whole, indicating spirit, soul, and body (2 Corinthians 7:5, James 5:3). Here the flesh is used in a term that's a little broader. It's not just referring to a person in terms of his physical body, but it is referring to a person in terms of him as a total human being. The word "flesh" is used to apply to his body, soul, and spirit.
  6. The word flesh is also used of the human nature, or of physical descent (Romans 1:3, Romans 4:1, Romans 9:3-8). We're getting closer to the way that Christians will usually use the word "flesh." It is true that it is used of human nature, or it is used in reference to your physical line of descent. That's referred to as "the flesh."
  7. It is used of life on earth with its physical limitations. We speak about living "a life of flesh." Well, we mean here on Earth within certain physical limitations. This is used in this way in Hebrews 5:7, 1 Corinthians 7:28, Philippians 1:24, and 1 Peter 4:2.
  8. Then it is used of the external or outward side of life in heredity, religion, and moral areas. This is a very major and significant use of the word "flesh" in Scripture. It is the one that we are dealing with here, in part, in Philippians 3 where Paul is using the word "flesh." Now he is thinking in terms of these externals. We have this used this way in 1 Corinthians 1:26, 2 Corinthians 10:2, 2 Corinthians 11:18, 2 Corinthians 5:16, Ephesians 6:5, John 8:15, Philippians 3:4, and Philemon 16.
  9. Then a major use, of course, is that the word "flesh" is used to refer to the old sin nature–to that which in man is evil by nature: the old sin nature and all of the capacities, all of the energies, that the old sin nature has, and of all that production of which it is capable. That is called "the flesh." We have it used in this way in Romans 7:18, Romans 7:25, Romans 8:4, 2 Peter 2:18, 1 John 2:16, Colossians 2:11, Galatians 3:3, and Galatians 6:8.
  10. Then finally, the word "flesh" is simply used of the unregenerate state. A person who is on his way to the lake of fire; a person who is not a believer; and, a person who is lost is spoken of in Scripture as being in "the flesh." We have this in Romans 7:5, Romans 8:5, and Romans 8:8.

So there are a variety of ways in which the word "flesh" is used here in the Word of God. In Philippians 3, Paul is using the word "flesh" in terms of number eight and number nine. He's thinking of them in terms of the external side of life; heredity; religious practice; devotion; zeal; and, so on. He ties that in his thinking also to the old sin nature that is the production of these things. All of this, is the finest that a person can produce, a person approaching God with human good poured out of the old sin nature–all that a person is apart from God the Holy Spirit working in him.

The basis of the operation of the legalists, against whom Paul is writing here, is all of their rituals; their taboos; and, their human good works–all the externals. That's what he's referring to. This is what the legalists were counting on in making their way with God. So the flesh here in Philippians 3, in other words, includes all the finest that a person is capable of on his own: his birth; his education; his culture; his wealth; his social graces; his noble ideals; and, his humanitarianism. All of that is external pouring from the internal old sin nature.

Remember that the old sin nature is just as untrustworthy in a Christian as it is in an unbeliever. These were not unbelievers that Paul was speaking against here in Philippians 3. These were actually Christians. These were actually believers. Some of them were Jews who were promoting Judaism. Some of them were gentiles who had been proselytes, who had come over as converts into Judaism, and they were promoting the Judaism way of life upon the believers. But both of them, whatever their backgrounds were, they were all working on externals; religious rituals; ceremonies; and, all the fine things that the old sin nature can produce. This is the thing that Paul called "the flesh."

So Paul says, "We are the true circumcision. We are marked by three things: We worship God by means of the Spirit of God. We rejoice in Christ Jesus, the One whose grace has made it possible for us to escape all the bondage of legalism. And therefore, we have no confidence in the externals that the human being is capable of out of his old sin nature."

Then, in verse 4, the apostle Paul proceeds to demonstrate that if anybody had any claims of superiority under Judaism, he had them. He was infinitely superior to anybody else under Judaism. The very people who were opposing him could not hold a candle up to the Judaism which characterized himself.

So the apostle Paul is going to do a thing that he doesn't really like to do. In other places, he calls himself a fool for talking like this because he had to do it to the Corinthians. He has to, in other words, list his claims to fame. Here he is going to prove that when it came to Judaism, there was nobody that was a star like Paul. Paul was a celebrity in Judaism, second to none. He has seven superiorities that he's going to present. You may find, as you go through these that these may be reflected in your own experience as areas in which you have confidence–as some area, as it applies to our day, that you take some personal satisfaction in.

I want you to remember that after we have established these seven areas of superiority on the part of the apostle Paul, that he is going to tell us what he thinks of these things. You may be almost to believe what Paul thought about this. The very things he is going to list here as his superiorities are the things that all of the snobs, religious and otherwise in our day, view themselves as superior–for which they think they have a claim of favor with God in–for which at least they think they have a claim of favor among people.

So the apostle Paul says, "Though, I might also have confidence in the flesh." You have to tie that sentence back to the last part of verse 3. He says, "And, we of the true circumcision have no confidence in the flesh. Although," he says, "I myself, in my case, might have confidence in the flesh. The word "though" is the Greek word "kaiper," and it simply means "although." In verse 3, he expresses the attitude of no confidence in the flesh, meaning heritage; religion; externals; and, old sin nature works. This word now introduces Paul's personal superiority in the flesh, following the expression that he has no confidence in the flesh. In other words, Paul says, "I don't lay any stock in the superiorities of the flesh at all, but I will take the trouble to list my superiorities for you people–you Judaizers who are running around so proud of your superiorities in Judaism. Well, I want to just show you what a celebrity I am. I want to show you just what a star I am in Judaism. And that's what he's leading up to.

The whole Mosaic Law functioned through the flesh to produce a ceremonial or a legal righteousness. If a man performed all of the rules, the 613 laws of the Mosaic Law, he would be ceremonially or legally righteous. This ritual righteousness merely was a symbol for the imputed righteousness which a person needed for salvation, and which he could only secure the way Abraham received imputed righteousness. He believed God. He trusted that God was going to handle his sin. He trusted that God was going to fulfill Genesis 3:15 and send a Savior that would meet the problem of his sins.

So Scripture tells us that Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Abraham did not become righteous because he observed the ritual of circumcision that these people were making so much about. Nor were the Jews later made righteous by keeping all these regulations in the Mosaic Law. They were simply symbols, reflecting the righteousness that God says, "I'm ready to give you. You cannot come to my heaven without My righteousness. You cannot produce this righteousness from within yourself. You have to get this righteousness externally given to you from outside of yourself. I'm ready to do that."

So the Mosaic Law reflected (symbolized) this imputed righteousness. But these people made the mistake of equating ceremonial righteousness with imputed righteousness. They had a legal righteousness, as we shall see in a moment. The apostle Paul had a fantastic legal righteousness. He could actually say, "I'm perfectly blameless." Now, that's tough to say. How many of us could read and learn the 613 Mosaic laws, and then stand up and say, "Relative to the Mosaic order, there is nobody who can point a finger at me and blame me on one point–not on one point. Yet, Paul knew that, though he had secured legal ceremonial righteousness (right acting), he was not the possessor of imputed righteousness until the day that he met Jesus Christ in that vision on the Damascus Road.

So the Judaizers in the New Testament we're promoting a legal righteousness among these gentile Christians, and telling them that this legal righteousness was necessary for salvation. Paul's own heritage and his practice had secured for him a legal righteousness second to none. He was a true celebrity under Judaism. Yet, in spite of this, Paul was going to the lake of fire. That's his point. In spite of his perfect legal righteousness (his perfect ceremonial righteousness), he was lost and going to the lake of fire.

The gentile converts and their Judaizer teachers could never equal the ceremonial righteousness that Paul achieved. If Paul, with his perfect legal righteousness, was going to hell, where did these gentile Christians and these Judaizers think they were going with their legal righteousness? So Paul is going to show that human religious heritage and ceremonial righteousness is worthless with God, including his own eminent possession of these things.

So if today you were counting in some way upon the fact that you are a really fine person; if you have made the mistake of building a sense of righteousness for yourself on the fact of the unrighteousness of other people who are around you and who are much worse than you are; or, if you have made the mistake of thinking that you have some standing with God on that kind of a comparison, you're in deep trouble. You're in the same place that the apostle Paul was, and he was absolutely, perfectly, ceremonially, religiously righteous, and he was going to the lake of fire. If you have built your righteousness because you see that you are indeed better than someone else in some degree, you two are headed for the lake of fire. Don't make that mistake. It will cost you your soul. So legalism (this kind of thinking) is apostasy, in whatever form, today or back then.

So the apostle Paul says, "Although I might also have confidence in the flesh." The word "I" is the Greek word "ego," and it's emphatic. He puts this word in to stress that he is talking about he himself, in contrast to all these other Judaizers. "Might have" is the Greek word "echo," and it really means "having," and that's how it should be translated–that Paul himself is actually having something. It is present tense. It is continually true of Paul. It is active. It's his personal possession. It's participle–a statement of fact.

"Also;" that is, in addition to the Judaizers who are attacking him, is the Greek word "kai." He has a "confidence." In the Greek, it is "pepoithesis." "Pepoithesis" means specifically (and get this–it's important) "a ground or a reason for confidence." The word is used here to mean "a ground of confidence." It's in an objective sense. It is not a subjective thing that he produces, but that he possesses outside of himself a ground for confidence. He has the basis of this confidence. He doesn't feel confident. He knows better than that. But he says, "I'm going to show you on the basis of legal righteousness, what a fantastic ground I personally have for confidence as compared to all the rest of you false teachers who are chasing me around and undermining my converts of grace."

Confidence in what? In the flesh. The word "in" is "en," and that's indicating location in the Greek. "Flesh" is our word "sarx" again. He is using it in terms of the externals as an expression of the internal old sin nature. We will translate it in this way: "Although I myself also am having ground for confidence in the flesh." In verse 3, he says, "I have no confidence in the flesh." Then in the next verse, he adds this sentence: "Although I myself also (in addition to you Judaizers) am having a considerable ground for confidence, and do have a ground for confidence in the flesh." He says that there is no confidence specifically, in legal or ceremonial righteousness, that the flesh produces. But he does have, if you wanted a confidence, a very good ground for it. Paul has a preeminent claim to such confidence.

Then he says, "If any other man thinks." The word "if is "ei," and it is a first class condition. So it is in effect saying, "Since"–they actually do. These Judaizers actually do think that they have a considerable fantastic ground for confidence. Paul says, "If any other of these Judaizers." The word any is the word "tis," and it means "anyone." Other" is "allos." This is an important kind of "other." This is a numerical difference of the same kind. In other words, he is saying, "I'm a Jew. You're a Jew. I have been under Judaism. You are working under Judaism. If you have an amount of confidence as a Jew under Judaism, I'm going to show you what amount of confidence numerically I have as a Jew under Judaism." That's the idea.

We would translate that: "If any one of the same kind." Then these words "thinks that he has reasons" is actually one word in the Greek. It's the Greek word "dokeo." It means "to suppose." It is present–at any time. It is active–the opinion of the Judaism themselves. It is indicative–a statement of fact. The idea here is "to suppose that he has." These Judaizers had a very definite opinion concerning how they stood relative to righteousness with God.

"For which he might trust" is also one word in the Greek. Although it is several English words, it is one word in the Greek. The Greek word is "peitho." "Peitho" means to have confidence. Again, specifically here, it is as a ground for confidence. The word is perfect. This means a settled position of confidence that originated in the past, and it just continues right on. It is active–Paul's personal attitude. It is infinitive–his purpose. Confidence was his purpose. The reason Paul, before he was a Christian, was so careful to observe the Mosaic Law was because he wanted to establish a confidence in his own soul that he was right with God, and that he had a true claim upon God that he was going to heaven. So this infinitive indicates that it was his purpose to have a ground of confidence established.

So we may translate this way: "If (and they do) any one of the same kind supposes that he has a ground for confidence in the flesh." Again, it's "in" ("en") for location. The word "flesh" is "sarx." Then he says, "I more." These others, the Judaizers, who, like himself, are engaged in Judaism as he has been, and think that they have a ground for confidence in their flesh; in their heritage; in their parents that they were born from; in the way they were reared religiously; in the way they practiced the rules of Judaism; in their faithfulness to the Mosaic Law; or, in the way they acted as missionaries in behalf of the Mosaic Law. You know what Paul did. Paul went around killing every Christian he could lay his hands on. That's a zealous missionary. He was for the Mosaic system.

So if these people think they have confidence in the flesh (all the heritage and all the merit that that connotes), he says, "I the more." Again the Greek uses the word "ego." "I" means "I myself." "More" is "mallon" which means "to a higher degree." The word declares that Paul is more of a celebrity in Judaism than all of his Judaizer opponents when it comes to qualifications via the flesh. His superiorities in the externals of the flesh are to a higher degree than that of the Judaizers. So we would translate verse 4 in this way: "Although I myself also am having ground for confidence in the flesh." He has just said in verse 3 that he has no confidence in the flesh.

Then he goes on and says, "If any one of the same kind (followers of Judaism as Jews, as he was a follower of Judaism as a Jew) supposes that he has ground for confidence in the flesh (and they do suppose that), I myself, the more so." He says, "Whatever confidence others may claim for the flesh, I infinitely more."

The apostle Paul was determined to have eternal life. He was reared in a very godly and serious home. He was reared in the finest tradition of the Jewish people. He is now going to proceed to list seven things that any Jew would have given anything to be able to say about himself. Paul's credentials in Judaism are the best you could ask for. He is absolutely at the top of the ladder. Yet, he didn't make himself a spiritual snob because of all of this that made him so superior to all of his contemporaries.

Remember, the Bible tells us that he was head and shoulders above his peers. It wasn't only that Paul was very faithful in Judaism among the Jews as a whole. The Bible specifically says that the estimation that we place upon a young person's progress spiritually must be made not in reference to people who are older than he is, but in reference to his peers–those who are his same age level, his contemporaries. The Bible makes it very clear that among Paul's own age group, he was outstanding as a Jew. His faithfulness to Judaism knew no limit.

Paul says that all of this out of the flesh was the thing that he was approaching God with. Every one of these seven things that he is going to mention to us are things that he counted on to take him into eternal life. Then suddenly he woke up to the fact that none of it was worth anything. He simply found that being a celebrity in the flesh meant absolutely nothing with God. In fact, he discovered that because he was such a celebrity in Judaism, he was going to spend eternity paying for it in hell. That's where his celebrity status had led him to. That's where his superiorities had taken him to.

In the next session, we're going to take up these superiorities one-by-one. We're going to seek to establish for you the great respect that the Judaizers had for Paul as he listed these particular features that made him stand out above all the others, and they hated him even more because of these things. Paul was a great man when it came to the externals of the flesh, and he was a fine man. None can deny that. He acted according to his convictions. He acted logically. The reason he killed Christians is because that law had told him that was the proper thing to do–when you find a blasphemer, he is to be executed. Christians made Jesus Christ God, and he considered Jesus Christ a mere man. Therefore, as a faithful Jew, he went about killing every Christian he could find. This man was consistent. This man was indeed a very important person in his day. Yet he was condemned because he lacked imputed righteousness. He had legal righteousness, but he didn't have the thing that takes a person to heaven.

I trust today that you have the imputed righteousness, and are not counting upon something that you have worked up from within yourself. Nobody goes to heaven unless the ground for it has been received from outside of himself. Christ can give it to you. He is ready to hand it to you upon your acceptance of Him as your Savior.

How shall you do that? Walk down an aisle? Never. Raise a hand to ask for prayer? Never. Join a church? Never. Give money? Never. Make a whole new set of promises to God that you're going to behave yourself. Never. You will go right into hell making new promises. Please remember that the most moral people that ever lived are now in the torments of Hades. Please remember that hell is going to be filled with moral people of unquestioned legal ceremonial righteousness. The best people that the world ever knew are going to be in hell. The rottenest ones are going to be in heaven. Isn't that a switch? Why? Because the rottenest ones knew what they were, and like Paul, they abandoned their legal ceremonial righteousness, or any claims that they thought they had, and they cast themselves upon the grace of Christ Jesus. That has taken the worst people into heaven, while the best people who refuse that grace have taken themselves into hell.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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