

"Real Christians"

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] of the Lord together. And one or two things from the bulletin sheet, it's very brief this week. The Deacon's Court will meet tomorrow evening, God willing, at 7 p.m. That's on Zoom only.

And then the prayer meetings on Wednesday and Thursday, English and Wednesday, Gaelic and Thursday. The Ladies Bible Study Zoom on Friday at 1 p.m. And the Saturday prayer meeting as well, the English prayer meeting in the seminary.

And then the English services, the next Sunday of the services, English and Gaelic, you can see them set out there for you. Well, these are all the intimations. If you're a visitor with us tonight, we're glad to have your company.

We're pleased always to have visitors with us and we give you a very warm welcome. We're singing, first of all, to God's praise in Psalm 89, Psalm number 89, and that's on page 344 in the psalm books.

We're singing verses 1 to 5. So on down to verse 5, the praises of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express, and in the congregation of saints, thy faithfulness.

[1 : 3 0] These verses of Psalm 89, we stand to sing, God's mercies I will ever sing. God's mercies I will ever sing, and with my mouth I shall, thy faithfulness make to be known, to generations all.

For mercy shall we build, set I forever to endure, thy faithfulness in the hands, thy will establish sure.

I with my chosen one have made, a covenant graciously, and to my servant, and to my love, to dim it storm, thy mind.

The tithe, thy seed, thy staff, thy faith shall forever to remain, and will to generations all, thy throne built and maintain.

The praises of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express, and in the congregation of saints, thy faithfulness.

[4 : 1 8] Let's once again call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's pray. Our gracious Lord, our Father in heaven, we give thanks once again that we are able to gather here in your name.

We pray that we may be conscious, Lord, of being led by your Spirit. We give thanks that you have assured us, even in these words that we have sung, that the destiny of your people, and the present existence of your people, the continuation of your people, the blessing of your people, is secure in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know that he is the fulfillment of the David spoken of in the psalm, the great King of Israel, who himself was conscious as a prophet of God, that there would be a greater David coming after him, a David that would be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we give thanks, Lord, that you have established him on the throne of the universe, that he is tonight our Lord and our King. And we bless you that we are able to gather to worship you, and to give you the praise and the honor that is due to you.

We pray, O Lord, that that may be by the work of your Spirit within us. We are so prone, O Lord, ourselves to fall back upon that which is merely outward, or even that which is ritualistic.

[5 : 42] But we pray, O Lord, that you would guide us into the spiritual worship that you are due, and that your Spirit will guide us as you promised to your people, and bring us to worship you in spirit and in truth.

We thank you again, Lord, for the many opportunities that you give us to declare your greatness to the world around us. And we ask that you would make us conscious that even as we gather here, some have seen us coming to gather in this church building.

We pray that they may even have questions in themselves as to what it's like to gather to worship God, and why we do so, and how it is that we do so regularly.

We thank you, O Lord, that as we come in this way regularly to worship you, we are bearing testimony to your own grace, testimony to your worthiness to be praised and worshipped, testimony even to your existence on the throne of heaven.

And we do thank you, O Lord, for every opportunity you give us outwith of this, to testify for you, to declare the great things that you have done. And we pray that that may be held before us constantly.

[6 : 55] We ask, Lord, that you would open up further avenues for us, especially since this pandemic has come upon us. We pray, Lord, that you would give us greater freedoms to be together, so as to meet in fellowship and to discuss your word.

We give thanks, Lord, for the prospect of that in days to come. We pray, too, that you would facilitate, enable us to partake of another communion, as we plan to do in the next month.

O Lord, our God, we have missed meeting together to partake of communion, to remember the Lord's death and the Lord's Supper. And we know that it is important to your people.

And we pray, O Lord, that you would grant us the condition that would enable us to do this once again, and to be in such a way of minding the Lord's death, so as to bear testimony to ourselves and to others, that we value that death above all, that it is precious to us, that we build our whole eternity upon it, upon all that is contained within the death of Jesus.

We thank you, Lord, that you rose from the dead, and in days and times when we know of so much death throughout our land, throughout the world, Lord, we give thanks that you have conquered death, that you rose through it and above it, and that you are set now permanently, forevermore above it, at the right hand of the throne of God.

[8 : 28] We thank you that you are the one who has entered into, the majesty on high, that you have taken the benefits of your death with you, to minister through the Spirit to your people.

And Lord, we pray tonight that we may come once again, as we come under the gospel, to appreciate what you have done, what you continue to do in ministering to us, what you have promised to do, as you take us into the future, as we read in your word, of your coming again, and of your being revealed in the splendor and glory of your exaltation.

Lord, help us, we pray, to look forward to that in faith and in hope, and help us whenever it may take place in our lifetime or otherwise, help us to be thankful that it is, fixed by the Lord, and it is something that you have appointed to take place and will take place, even as all other things that you have appointed that have taken place already are now in the past.

We thank you, Lord, for every way of your assistance to us through this world. We pray that you would bless us tonight as we think of our circumstances in the world.

We have so many different matters to bring before you, Lord, personally, and in terms of our lives as families. We bear these before you and pray that you would bless us in all the circumstances of life.

[9 : 55] We pray for those especially who have particular temptations and difficulties and trials to contend with. Remember them, Lord, we pray, and those who are finding these times themselves to be particularly challenging, we ask that you'd bless them, especially any with issues of mental health.

Oh, Lord, we pray for those known to us and those belonging to us as a congregation, and those we know out with that as well, and we pray that your blessing will be with them, that you will show to them, Lord, your ways and assure them of your love and your companionship as they put their trust in you.

And we ask, gracious one, that in all of the other circumstances of life that prove to be trials for us, that you would help us to look to you and to place our trust in you, to not lean to our own understanding, but to trust in the Lord with all our might.

We ask that you would be pleased, Lord, to hear us as we confess our sins to you. We come before you conscious of our sins, conscious that we need to cry out daily, that you would wash us and make us clean, that you would grant to us, Lord, that your spirit will work in us to sanctify us, to enable us to progress in the way of holiness.

Forgive us, Lord, we pray for how short we come of living holy lives. Forgive us for the many defects of our lives, those that are unnoticed as well as those that are obvious.

[11 : 25] Forgive us, we pray, for those sins that are unknown to any but ourselves and to you. And Lord, we ask that you would give us in the secret places of our heart to know the effect of your truth and your spirit, molding us and shaping us, bringing us into the likeness of Christ.

And we ask, O God, that you would help us to love that holiness that we find particularly exemplified in him, who lived a holy human life in perfection in this world, and who died on the cross and rose from the dead, that through your spirit we might find that we grow in holiness also.

We pray for those tonight who may be unsaved, either among us here or elsewhere, or listening online. We ask, O God, that any who hear the gospel tonight, wherever they may be, that they will turn to you and that they will receive those things that you offer in the gospel.

As you hold out your hand with the life that you died to secure for your people, we thank you that it is freely offered to us in the message of the gospel.

And that that good news reaches out, even through the technology that we have today, so that many throughout the world come to hear of Jesus and the good news that is in him.

[12 : 42] And Lord, we pray that many tonight will hear savingly for the first time, and that others, Lord, who know you already, will be furthered in their relationship with you.

Remember tonight as well, those, Lord, who mourn the passing of loved ones, those we know ourselves in our congregation here, those in other congregations and other communities.

Bless them, we pray as well. Grant to all those who seek to help us at these times that you would make us thankful for the provision that you make for us. In the health services, in the undertaker services, in every other way, Lord, in which we are helped during the times of crisis in life.

We thank you for your goodness, for the way you continue to minister grace toward us, even in the ordinary issues of life. But we thank you, especially for your saving grace, that brings us to be able, even by your help, to use those things that hurt us and give us much grief, so that they are used by you to further us in our knowledge of you, and even in our growth and grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

We pray that you would bless us now as we turn to your word. Help us as we read to do so, Lord, with serious mindedness and to know of your voice speaking to us.

[14 : 06] receive our thanks and help us in the singing of your praise to do so with heartiness and with thankfulness. And Lord, we ask us for the pardon of our sin, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. A reading of God's word tonight is two passages. We're firstly reading in the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 18, just verses 9 to 14.

And then we'll turn to read in Philippians, chapter 3. We're coming back again to our studies in Philippians this evening, after a short break. And we're reading in chapter 3 of Philippians.

So first of all, it's Luke, chapter 18, verses 9 to 14. This is Jesus teaching by way of parables. He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed, thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

[15 : 26] I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

And if we turn to Paul's letter to the Philippians, we can read from the beginning, the first 11 verses. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

To write the same things to you is no trouble to me, and it is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[16 : 44] Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But what gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, righteousness from God that depends on faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. That, by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Amen. And may God be pleased to bless to us, once again, the reading of his word. We'll continue to sing in Psalm 89, Psalm number 89, and verse 15, and sing verses 15 to 18.

- [18 : 09] That's on page 345. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know, in brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go. They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly, and in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high.
- Because the glory of their strength doth only stand in thee, and in thy favour shall our horn and power exalted be. For God is our defence, and he to us doth safety bring.
- The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty King. These verses from 15, O greatly blessed the people are. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know, in brightness of thy face, O Lord, O Lord new Jesus congregation, O Lord, até o [REDACTED] as a force, Then thy name shall all the day, rejoice exceedingly, And in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high.
- Because the glory of their strength doth only stand in thee, And in thy favor shall our horn and heart exalted be.
- For God is our defense, and he to us does safety bring.
- [20 : 40] The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty King.
- Now please turn with me to Philippians chapter 3. Philippians 3, I'm reading again from the beginning. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.
- Write the same things to you as no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.
- For we are the real circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God And glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.
- Well, Paul is coming to this great testimony that he is setting out in this chapter, His own testimony, as it were, as to what being a Christian means to him, And indeed, how he came to be a Christian, at least in the theological sense, How he turned from those things that he had so much trust in, And came instead to place all his trust in Jesus Christ for righteousness.
- [22 : 04] Now Paul was never in any way afraid to repeat himself or to reiterate Some of the truths that he had taught the Philippians while he was with them In the time that he spent there with them in Philippi.
- That's why he's saying here, Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord to write the same things to you, Is no trouble to me, and it is safe for you.
- And for Paul to reiterate the great foundational truths that he had set out for them, The things that are foundational to the gospel and to our salvation, That was for him a necessity.
- And it's the same for ourselves. For ourselves. Some people may think that if we as ministers preach on the same text more than once, Perhaps that's not acceptable to some folk.
- I'm not saying that it is here. Some people might say, Oh, well, I heard him on that text not so long ago. But if they are foundational truths in the Bible, We have to preach them regularly.
- [23 : 07] Paul did it. Peter did it. John did it. The things that they had taught as they were with those people that had started following Christ under their ministry, As they wrote these letters to them, They reiterated these great truths.
- And we need to come back again and again to the foundational things of the gospel and of our salvation, And not think that that's actually not legitimate for us to do.
- Very different, of course, if we're just preaching the same sermon, Exactly in the same words as we did the previous time. What we're saying is it's not at all out of order to preach the same truths and the same foundational truths to set them out repeatedly for ourselves, To gain so much from doing that.

Well, that's what he's saying here. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me, and it is safe for you. In other words, he has in mind their spiritual security.

And he's setting out these great truths for them for their spiritual security so that they have, he has their safety in mind. Indeed, you find that, as we said, being done by other apostles too.

[24 : 14] Remember, in 2 Corinthians, where Paul is dealing with reconciliation that takes place, that took place when Jesus died in chapter 5. Well, that's something he deals with many other occasions as well.

And in 1 Corinthians, you find him in chapter 15, in that great chapter on resurrection, As he writes to the Corinthians there in verse 1.

Indeed, he begins chapter 15. I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received. And then he goes on, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised from the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Peter does the same thing in 2 Peter chapter 1. He's saying he's not in the least bit embarrassed to actually call their minds again to the great truths that he had proclaimed to them previously.

And so you'll find the same thing done if we are being true to the Bible. Then in our preaching, we will be going over these great truths again and again, repeatedly.

[25 : 22] And it's for our own safety, for our further establishment in the truth and in Christ especially, to be rooted and grounded in him.

So tonight as we come, and following our studies in Philippians, we come to this great passage to begin looking at this testimony that Paul is giving of himself and his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there are two things especially I want to look at just at the beginning of the chapter here, confining it to the first three verses tonight. First of all, he's saying, rejoice in the Lord, but at the same time he's saying, look out.

So that's the first point, rejoice and look out. And the second one, you come to verse three in the chapter where he says, we are the real circumcision who worship God by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

So rejoice in the Lord and look out, first of all. And then real Christians, we're going to call it. We're taking our heading for our title for the study from that in verse three.

[26 : 30] Real Christians who are real Christians. What is it to be a real Christian following the translation there, real circumcision? First of all, rejoice in the Lord, verse one, and look out in verse two.

Well, rejoice in the Lord is a great feature of this epistle. And despite the fact that it's relatively short, four chapters, it has this emphasis, this note repeated in it.

And that's for good reason. He wants the Philippians to rejoice. The Lord is setting us, setting this truth before us as something that we need repeatedly again to remind ourselves of that we are in Christ able to rejoice.

We rejoice in the Lord. We rejoice because of the Lord. We rejoice in the relationship. We have us saved individuals with the Lord. And if you're saved tonight, this is your great privilege that you are able to rejoice, that you're able to enter into the enjoyment of God for which you were created, and that Christ facilitates that.

Through him, you're able to do that. In him, you're able to do that. And as you do that, you can see how it's repeated throughout this letter as you read through it.

[27 : 42] So, chapter 1, remember, verses 18 and 25. Chapter 2, verses 18 and 29. And chapter 4 again, verses 1 and 4 and 10. So, you can see these are the places where this is again brought up for our notice.

But you see the balance. He's not just saying to them, rejoice. He's also saying, look out, watch out. Be on your guard. He's not saying to them, rejoice as if there was no danger around them, no spiritual danger that they needed to meet and overcome.

And on the other hand, the fact that there is spiritual danger around, people who are false teachers that want to undermine the gospel or want to actually take those Philippian Christians back, as it were, towards some of the Old Testament rituals like circumcision.

The fact that they have to watch out for that should not in any way be thought by them as a danger to their rejoicing. See, they have the balance, as you always have in the Bible, between those two issues, between other issues as well.

So, here he is saying, rejoice in the Lord, but at the same time, look out. Watch out for those who bring danger to you. Look out for those false teachers.

[28 : 57] And that's really, ourselves as well, important for us to have both in equilibrium and balance, as it were. As you rejoice as a Christian, you're aware that you're not rejoicing as if there was nothing to concern you around you or meeting you from day to day.

We mustn't minimize our rejoicing. We are able to rejoice in Christ, and that's perfectly proper and it's something that we want to grow. And at the same time, we take care over our spiritual lives.

We take care not to actually let the seepage of false teaching make its way into our souls and cause damage there, as people were trying in the case of the Philippians.

So, first of all, rejoice in the Lord. Is that note of rejoicing evident in your own life? I suppose as a people in our own island tradition, we're not necessarily given to show much rejoicing, and yet here is, as Christians, something that we're very much called upon to do and called upon to show as far as possible in our lives.

You know, the only person, the only people that can really show rejoicing are Christians, those who rejoice in the Lord. The only people who can actually, in the midst of a pandemic and in the midst of personal suffering and personal grief and personal challenges in life, the only ones who can truly show are rejoicing and show that they're rejoicing inwardly are people who are in Christ.

[30 : 37] And they're able to do that because they're in Christ, because Christ lives in them. And there's the secret of a happy and contented life for you and I tonight. To be in the Lord.

To be able to rejoice in the Lord. To have Jesus as your Savior. To have received, in receiving Christ, the righteousness and the life that God offers to us in the gospel.

And so, at the very outset of our study here tonight, that note is so significant for us. Am I rejoicing tonight in the Lord? Am I meeting the reason why I was created?

As the first catechism and the shorter catechism puts it, what is man's chief end? Why are we here? What is the reason for our existence? Why were we created?

Man's chief end, chief purpose in life, is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And there is no experience like experiencing enjoying God when everything around you is moving, when everything around you seems to be giving way, when everything around you is really taken up with worldliness and with all that causes distress and gloom to people, that you're able to rejoice in the Lord.

[31 : 53] None of us, I'm sure, can say tonight that I'm rejoicing to the extent that God calls me to rejoice. That my rejoicing is as it should be. But if you know that note of rejoicing tonight, if you have that stability in your soul through being a Christ, you are really blessed.

You have a great blessing from God. And if you don't have that tonight, then this passage itself is really calling out to you to come to Christ, to accept Christ, to be in Christ, to be found in Him, as we see later in the chapter whenever we come to the verses following on.

But he says, As well as rejoicing, look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. These are the spiritual enemies that Paul is facing.

These are those who are making the situation dangerous for the Philippians. Who are they? Why is he using such language? Why would he call people dogs?

Why would he call them evildoers? Why would he call them people who mutilate the flesh? Well, they are what commentators usually call Judaizers.

[33 : 11] They were people who were saying that Jesus was not enough for righteousness, and especially that you needed to have some of the Jewish rituals or rites, such as circumcision or predominantly circumcision, and that's what's in the context here, that you needed to have that as well in order really to be a Christian, to be accepted with God.

Certainly to have acceptance with God, to have righteousness, you needed to have an element of that, of your own production, of your own works, of works of the flesh, as Paul calls it elsewhere.

And so these Judaizers, as they're called, were people who were a threat to the gospel because they were seeking to add something to the death of Christ, to Christ himself as a sufficient Savior.

That was really the danger as far as Paul saw it, and that's why his language is so strong. It's not the same as you have in chapter 1 when he called attention to those who were causing him further affliction.

They were preaching the gospel with a wrong motive, but he doesn't say there that they were actually false teachers. They were just teaching the gospel in a way that was adding affliction to Paul's situation in prison.

[34 : 29] But here, he really has his eye out for them in such a way as gives them the strongest term. Now he calls them dogs here. We mustn't actually think that dogs are really what you would call dogs nowadays.

There were dogs, but he's talking here about, he has in mind the wild scavenging dogs that would be around these areas and would actually be scavenging around from place to place and very often carrying infections or diseases with them as well.

And so he's really using that as a graphic imagery of what happens when false teaching goes around. It scavenges around, as it were, and also our false teachers carrying this dangerous, let's call it this dangerous spiritual virus and a danger of infecting others with it.

So that's the kind of thinking, the kind of image that he's got behind the use of the word dogs. Yes, it's a term that's offensive, but when you understand something more of what's behind it, you understand why Paul is using it.

And he's saying, beware of dogs, beware of these evildoers. They're workers of evil because anything that opposes the gospel ultimately is of evil. And he calls them those who mutilate the flesh.

[35 : 53] And that's an interesting term. I'll come back to it later on when we look at verse 3 there. So here is the danger that's there for the Philippians and that Paul is calling upon them to look out for.

People who insist that Christ is not enough for righteousness. In other words, you could say what they were saying was we know Jesus died on the cross.

We know that salvation from God is bound up with the death of Jesus. But you also need to be circumcised. You need to have some Jewish rituals in order to complete the package.

In other words, as far as Paul is concerned, if they were thinking of saying something to God, they would be saying, well, thank you for Jesus, but Lord, that's not enough.

We need to have the works of the law such as circumcision as well. I think, for example, of Acts chapter 15, you'll find there a reference to the kind of thing that Paul is speaking of here in Philippians.

[37 : 02] Acts 15.1, some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

You see, that's exactly what Paul is facing as he writes to the Philippians. Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. They're not people who are necessarily outwith the practice of being Christians, but they will insist on this.

That's an emphasis there. Acts 15, you'll find the same in Paul's letter to the Galatians. The Galatians is really written for this very purpose because there were people who were taking the Galatians away from their confidence in Christ.

Most Christians in Galatia were facing this heresy that you needed something in addition to Jesus to be acceptable with God. And Paul is annoyed and Paul is angry with a justifiable, holy anger as he wrote his letter to the Galatians.

You can see that coming through in various places in Galatians. And he has that same element of anger behind these words in verse 2 there.

[38 : 14] Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Because for Paul, the sufficiency of Christ is absolutely essential and foundational to the gospel.

Anything that threatens the sufficiency of Christ, Christ himself being complete and enough to be our Savior in himself, anything that threatens that, any heresy, any teaching that threatens that, is worthy of being called by such derogatory terms.

Because for Paul, that's the basis of our acceptance with God, Jesus himself, the death and resurrection of Christ.

And that's why, now you can see, why he's justifiably annoyed with those who are peddling this kind of heresy. And you know, we have to catch something of that spirit ourselves in days when there are so many alternatives to Jesus and even within the visible wider church when there are forms of teaching that nowadays would say, look, we don't really accept anymore this whole idea of propitiation, that God actually laid the sins of his people on Jesus, that Jesus was punished, that he took the penalty.

In other words, there's no penal, there's no punishment aspect to the death of Jesus on the cross. And some of these people were actually evangelical to begin with.

[39 : 42] And they changed their tack and they came round and still come round and teach very influentially, you know, that we should just extract that sort of element from the gospel and from preaching the gospel that is a form of cruelty.

Well, that's the thinking of the world. That's not the thinking of the gospel writers of the New Testament. And that's why Paul was justifiably angry.

That's why we ourselves should have some of that element of righteous indignation when we find the sufficiency of Christ questioned and when we find alternatives to Christ in his completeness as the Savior of sinners.

rejoice in the Lord but look out at the same time. So tonight, you rejoice in the Lord. In the Lord, fulfill the privilege you have of rejoicing in Christ.

But at the same time, don't be taken in by teaching that may claim to be Christian but is contrary to what the apostle is teaching, contrary to what we have in our reformed heritage, heritage, contrary to what came to us through the great movements of the Reformation and even before that, the great church leaders that followed the apostles in the early church.

[41 : 04] God has blessed us by passing on these foundational truths to us and all around us and in every generation there is the danger of alternatives to that.

Watch out for that. Be careful when you go about securing your life spiritually that you remain in the way that Christ deals with you in terms of righteousness and acceptance with God.

And that's why now he comes in verse 3 to what we can really call in a sense a definition of the saved. From verse 3 onwards he's talking there about what it is to be saved and how it was that Paul himself moved from where he was theologically or in opposition to Jesus all the way through to the other extreme where he has Jesus as the only and complete Savior for himself.

Real Christians. Now the word real here in verse 3 is not actually in the original text and it's more powerful in a sense without it. Here he is saying about these people they're claiming to have the way of salvation which includes Jewish rituals.

He says look out for that. Watch out for that. Resist that. For we are the circumcision. We are the circumcision. Come back to this word mutilate.

[42 : 35] We're not those. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Talking about circumcision you know what that was of course from the Old Testament that every male child had to have circumcision in the foreskin so that that would be a sign of belonging to the covenant.

Covenant that God had made with Abraham especially so that spiritually they were brought under the provisions of God's covenant with a promise of salvation and redemption all of that built into it.

Well now he's saying look out for those who mutilate the flesh. There were people who were circumcised as Jews but were saying that's absolutely essential for salvation.

And Paul is so annoyed that he calls them mutilators. Mutilating was something that pagans did. They were in some cases at least would actually slash themselves with knives as part of their paganistic ritual.

What Paul is effectively saying with his sense of annoyance over this what he's saying really is you know these people are no better than pagans in the sense in which they are not being true to the meaning of circumcision and the place of circumcision now as it gives way to the New Testament age.

[43 : 53] That's why he's now saying we are the circumcision and who are we? Well we are he says those who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

I'm going to begin with a third of those no confidence in the flesh and then we can work back to what he means by glorying in Christ Jesus and worshipping by the Spirit of God.

He says here no confidence in the flesh. We are those who put no confidence in the flesh. As a Christian as a person in Christ as somebody who is saved this is what is also true of you.

You put no confidence in the flesh. But what does he mean by the flesh? Well the flesh really essentially in summary is an unsaved sinner who is looking at alternatives to Jesus in order to be right with God.

and you can actually be a moral wreck or a very upright person and from this point of view it makes no difference whatsoever because if the moral wreck is not looking to Jesus for salvation and the upright person by the same token is not looking to Jesus for salvation they're in the same spiritual condition.

[45 : 15] They're the same distance from God. They're under the same condition of not being accepted and accepting with God. Let me just take you back for a moment here to Luke chapter 19 because Paul in Philippians here is dealing with those especially who are self-righteous as he says in verse 9 there not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but the passage we read in Luke where Jesus was teaching through the parable he told also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous you see how like that is to Philippians 3 verse 3 and verses 2 and 3 this was a parable Jesus told specifically and deliberately to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt let's just read through what follows on two men went up into the temple to pray one a

Pharisee the other a tax collector the Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus God I thank you that I am not like other men extortioners unjust adulterers or even like this tax collector I fast twice a week I give tithes of all that I get and that's his confession before God so called I remember Paul in chapter 3 of Philippians saying this is my background this is what I trusted and I trusted because I was a Pharisee I followed the practices of the Pharisee I followed them zealously that's what I look to as the ground of my acceptance with God here is Jesus this parable is to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and the one that's spoken of first of all is the Pharisee there is Paul right there before you in Luke chapter 18 there is Paul there in the words of Jesus in this parable that exact same character and he prayed like this with himself

Lord I thank you that I'm not like other men the Pharisee has his view of himself and of his works I fast twice a week I give tithes of all that I get I'm good Lord I'm so good that I'm bound to be acceptable to you I'm good because this is what I'm doing and this is who I am my ancestry and my activities make me a good person so Lord look at how good I am compared to this fellow and especially this guy beside me this tax collector this hated tax collector because he was working for the Romans he can't possibly have any place in the kingdom of God but I'm in it I'm in it because I've earned it that's the Pharisee that's the self-righteous that's Paul as he set out in life until he came to know Christ and you see the difference between that and the tax collector he stood and he wouldn't even look up to heaven he stood afar off wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven but he beat on his breast and he's saying God be merciful to me a sinner in other words he's saying

Lord I have nothing to commend myself to you nothing that I can produce of my works nothing like this fellow beside me who is so confident in his ancestry and in his actions Lord I have nothing like that all I have is your mercy and please be merciful to me to forgive my sins and then verse 14 notice that verse 14 I tell you said Jesus this man went down to his house justified rather than the other who is the good man who is the one that God has accepted who is acceptable with God who is the righteous man it's not the Pharisee it's not the one who is adamant that he is righteous it's the other one isn't it the one who knows he's not righteous himself and who looks to God for his acceptance who confesses that he's a sinner and who needs the mercy of God and that's what Paul is saying in Philippians 3 before he comes to elaborate on the matter this is really what he is saying we are those who put no confidence now in the flesh he then goes on though I myself have reason for confidence he then takes us into the background of his life as a

Pharisee as a Hebrew of the Hebrews and touching the law and the gain that he had and all of that he's taking us through what he was before he met with Christ he's describing himself there as the Pharisee the unsaved zealous Pharisee an enemy of God an enemy of Christ an enemy of the church but what things were gained to me I counted loss for Christ the whole thing was turned on its head when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus when Jesus showed him how mistaken he was well he's now saying to the Philippians this is in fact what it's like to be a Christian that's the flesh that Paul is speaking of there in Luke chapter 18 the flesh that is the way and the outlook of the Pharisee we he says put no confidence now in the flesh this is what I've come to be as a

[51 : 11] Christian and that's where you see he can glory in Christ Jesus who we're walking back from putting no confidence in the flesh because the only alternative the only proper alternative acceptable alternative to putting confidence in the flesh your own ability either your ancestry as Paul was saying or your activities the Pharisee the only valid alternative to that is Jesus because if we cannot as we cannot save ourselves and produce our own righteousness which we cannot the only righteousness available to us in fact the only one that we need is the righteousness of Jesus that's why he's saying we are those who glory in Christ Jesus we are the circumcision we're the real Christians who glory in Christ Jesus who put no confidence in the flesh he is fully for Paul Jesus is all that he's required fully in Jesus all that is required for acceptance with God that's why you find him there in verse 7 and the verses following on from that and verses 8 and 9 bring you to the very crux of the issue the very central part of the issue

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord so that I may be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes to the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God through faith there you see are the two alternatives my own righteousness which is of the law my own ability my own works as I say to God I'm actually quite good and I need you perhaps to polish up my life a little bit but that will be fine you can do that for me Lord and the rest of it I'll just take with me into my relationship with you that's the Pharisee that's the self-righteous that's self-talking that's confidence in the flesh but you see the opposite here in verse 9 to be found in him not having a righteousness of my own but that which comes through faith in Christ because when your faith is in Christ when you've received

Christ when you've accepted Christ what are you taking to yourself what by the grace of God are you enabled to embrace and to take and to make your own the righteousness of Christ that which you need to be acceptable to God that's again not something that's terribly fashionable today in some theological thought processes but that's the fact of the gospel the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to us it's put on our account and it's put on our account to the extent that it's as if we had never sinned at all you know when God looks upon someone who is in Christ who has come to receive Christ and the righteousness that Christ is in himself brings with him the righteousness that he died to create for us when God looks at you in

Christ you can very sincerely say with that righteousness it's as if I had never sinned because righteousness means fully acceptable with God no sin entering into that relationship as far as being righteous is concerned judicially and that's why it's so important to Paul that Christ alone is our basis for righteousness that's why he's so annoyed when something interferes with that because not only is it untrue to the gospel but it puts people's souls in jeopardy that's why it's so crucial it's dealing with the basis on which you and I are acceptable with God it's not about your feelings it's not about whether you feel saved or otherwise it's not about how often you pray it's not about how often you read the Bible it's not about how often you're in church it's not about how often you've taken communion it's not what your intentions are in the future all of these things are good of course and proper but your salvation does not rest on them so your assurance can't rest on them it's all about

Jesus it's all about Christ it's all about his sufficiency it's all about his fullness it's all about the completeness of his work on the cross and in his resurrection and Paul is saying that's the righteousness that I need to have and now have through faith in him what about yourself what about you tonight what about me what is the base for your acceptance with God it's surely not as it was with the apostle that you were brought up in a good family wonderful thing though that is this is what Paul is saying I was brought up in the tribe of Benjamin Hebrew of the Hebrews as to the law of Pharisees there he is that his ancestry he is using that as a supposed base for his acceptance with God but he says that's gone

[56 : 56] I can't rely on that for acceptance with God for righteousness so what about his activities well as to zeal I was a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law blameless that's in we'll see it in more detail later in another study but he's talking there about how he himself was so completely zealous for keeping this law of God minutely there was hardly anybody like him maybe there was no one like him to the extent of the effort to which he went to keep the law of God God but he said there was no righteousness there for me I was just self condemning myself because for God the righteousness that is through faith in Christ is the only one that counts what is the basis of your own relationship to God tonight are you here tonight still not in

Christ are you here tonight thinking that somehow things will work out all right though you're not yet united to Christ savingly are you just hoping for the best that somehow things will fall into place in your life before you die and you will come to find yourself in heaven remember heaven is a righteous place nothing will enter in of unrighteousness and so we have to come if we're thinking of as we hope we are of being in heaven with Christ at last we need the prayer of of the Isaiah of old all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquity like the wind has taken us away righteousness righteousness the righteousness of righteousness that's why we glory in

Christ Jesus and finally we worship by the spirit of God well that again is so much connected with having no confidence in the flesh having all our confidence and glorying boasting in Christ we worship by the spirit of God we do not worship by anything that's to do with confidence in ritual confidence in practices even long established practices even practices that have been found to be very good practices in the worship of God you mustn't ever rely upon these things themselves good though they are as if that was really what constituted our worship we worship by the spirit of God remember how Jesus put it in John chapter 16 when he taught the disciples before he left before he went out to the cross where he said there that he needed to leave them it was necessary for them that he go away in chapter 16 and verse 7 where he said nevertheless

I tell you the truth it is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away the helper will not come to you but if I go I will send him to you and when he comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment concerning sin because they do not believe in me concerning righteousness because I go to the father and you will see me no longer concerning judgment because the ruler of this world and judge and when he comes the spirit of truth he will guide you into all the truth for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he will take declare to you the things that are to come he will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you the Holy Spirit the Spirit by whom we worship God the Spirit that Jesus procured for us in his ministry the ministry of the

Spirit by the death of Jesus on the cross it is as Psalm 68 puts it the great gift that Jesus died to secure for his people the gift of the Holy Spirit because where there is no work of the Holy Spirit there is no life and the work of Jesus on the cross is the work that secured that great gift of the Holy Spirit by whom we worship God let's pray gracious and eternal God we thank you that your word makes it so clear to us that we need a righteousness that we don't have ourselves that what we deem to be righteousness is not acceptable to you because you are the holy God the righteous God that requires a righteousness that corresponds to your own we thank you that that is the righteousness with which your people are righteous in

[62 : 30] Christ enable us Lord we pray for ourselves each one to know that we are found in him not having that righteousness of ourselves help us to reach out daily help us to secure daily the confidence that we have in you as our Lord and bless your word to us tonight to that end for Jesus sake Amen well let's conclude worship singing in Psalm 63 Psalm number 63 that's in the Sing Psalms version on page 80 verses 1 to 6 you oh God you are my God alone I seek your face with eagerness my soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness so on to verse 6 Psalm 63 O God you are my God alone O

God you are my God alone I seek your place with eagerness my soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness I've seen you in your holy place your power glory and glory held my gaze far better is your love than mine and so my lips will sing your praise praise

I'll bless you Lord throughout my life and raise my hands to you in prayer my joyful lips will sing your praise my soul is fed with riches fair upon my bed I lie awake and in my thoughts remember you I med throughout the night and keep your constant love in you before I close with my benediction let me just say how encouraging it is to see so many out this evening we're pleased that gradually our physical attendance here at church is increasing and we trust that

God in his providence will enable that to increase and to grow and so that those even who are able to come but yet haven't the confidence to come will find that confidence and come to share with us in the worship physically here in this church building I also want to say how encouraging it is as a preacher of the gospel to find such keen listening I know the glory belongs to God I know the ability to listen spiritually and seriously is from God but you came here tonight to listen to the gospel and I appreciate that and it helps me greatly as a preacher to experience that thank you now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more Amen Thank you Thank you.