

No. 18, Gospel Worship

The word for *worship* in this text has to do with public worship. It is a word that means *to serve*, being translated in that fashion seventeen times in the N.T. A study of those references will indicate that the service rendered is of a public nature. In fact, the majority of the verses where the word is translated "*to serve*" speak of serving God in an open, public manner and in various capacities. Therefore, it is a word that pertains to the public worship of God. See Acts 24: 11 -- Paul recounts before Felix that he went up to Jerusalem to the temple to worship. Here the word for 'worship' is the one that denotes the inward act of devotion given to God from the heart. Then note v.14 -- in this verse the word "worship" is the one that means 'public worship', and you will note that the context is very fitting. Paul speaks of a certain "way" which he followed in worshipping God, one that was according to the Word of God, although his enemies charged him with being a heretic because he trusted in, followed and preached Christ. Nevertheless, this text shows the word used in the context of public worship. See also Hebrews 10: 2 -- word is used here as a noun: "*the worshippers.*" The reference is to the Jews who assembled for their ceremonial observances at the temple, thus they were gathering for public worship according to the Levitical institution.

These verses are sufficient to show that the worship Paul speaks of in Phil 3: 3 is indeed public worship. However, how interesting to notice that as he speaks of such, he states very clearly that the true, public worship of the Christian church is spiritual in essence. He declares, "*We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit.*" The word for 'spirit' is *pneuma*; note that it is accompanied by the definite article "the" -- worshipping "in the spirit." This is clearly speaking of the Holy Spirit of God, and Paul is laying stress on the fact that the public worship of the Christian church must be controlled, directed, and empowered by the Spirit of God.

Now this is in keeping with what Christ laid down in John 4, which we have been considering over recent weeks. The Lord declared to the woman of Samaria that they who worship God "*must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" The word for 'spirit' in John 4 is *pneuma* also, a word that is often used of the spirit of the believer, 1 Thess 5: 23. But the human spirit is by nature in a state of spiritual deadness, thus before it is possible for man to worship God from his spirit, he must be quickened by the Holy Spirit of God. When he is quickened or born again, he is then indwelt by the Spirit of God, so that when he worships God in spirit, it is the activity of the Holy Spirit within him -- leading him, drawing him, and causing him to worship his God and Saviour. Consequently, when Christ speaks of worshipping God in spirit, He is actually referring to the action of the Spirit of God Who indwells us, and Who causes our spirits to go out after the Lord in worship -- "*we... worship God in the Spirit.*"

In our text today, we are shown two of the evidences of worshipping God in the Spirit in the arena of public worship. Those who worship God in the Spirit "*rejoice in Christ Jesus,*" and they "*have no confidence in the flesh.*" It is very plain from these expressions that Paul is describing what we may well call *Gospel Worship*. He is indicating that when we gather in God's house to worship Him, it is to be a Gospel Worship that is offered: rejoicing in Christ Jesus with no confidence in the flesh. Let us examine this subject of Gospel Worship.

I. GOSPEL WORSHIP IS CHARACTERIZED BY A RELIANCE ON CHRIST

Paul states that true believers who "*worship God in the Spirit,*" manifest that by "*rejoicing in Christ.*" To rejoice in Christ is the action of one who has come to rest on and rely on Him alone for salvation, Acts 8: 37, 39, 1 Pet 1: 8. In each reference, the rejoicing is inseparably linked to faith in Christ. These believers rejoice in Him for they trust in Him for the salvation of their souls. In turn, this rejoicing in Christ, as our text shows, is an evidence of true Gospel worship.

(a) **Note from this that the Holy Spirit promotes Christ in worship.** They who worship in the Spirit are taken up with the Lord Jesus Christ signalled by their joy in Him. The Spirit of God always causes this to happen. Where there is gospel worship, spiritual worship, the Spirit will not fail to promote, magnify and lift up the Lord Jesus Christ. A people who are resting in Christ will rejoice in Him, for the Holy Spirit will lead them to do so. See John 16: 13 -- this literally reads: "*the Spirit of the truth.*" Could very well be read 'the Spirit of Christ' **for Christ is the Truth, John 14: 6.** He is the Truth in that He is the Word of God, the very personification of truth. He is the Incarnate Word through Whom the inspired word is revealed. Thus John 16: 13 proceeds to say, "*He will guide you into all truth...*" i.e., all the truth about Christ. Hence, "*He will not speak of Himself.*" Rather, He always speaks of Christ, v.14. So much teaching today has nothing of Christ in it, thus we know immediately that it is not of God.

(b) **This promotion of Christ by the Spirit focuses especially on the great doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness.** Worship that is in the Spirit will bring men to the only basis or ground of being just with God - the righteousness of Christ. Here in Phil 3, Paul proceeds to point his readers to this very truth as he speaks of Gospel worship. This is the evidence that he was a Spirit-filled man. V.v 8-10 -- he speaks of "*the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" He says that his desire is that he "*may win Christ.*" He wishes that he may "*be found in Christ*" that he "*may know Him.*" However, the chief statement of all in these verses is in v.9 -- "*not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God*

by faith." Here is the emphasis of the apostle who worshipped God in the Spirit: justification by Christ's righteousness.

## II. GOSPEL WORSHIP IS CHARACTERIZED BY A RENUNCIATION FOR CHRIST

Paul says that he has "*no confidence in the flesh.*" In Gospel worship, there is a renouncing of every bit of trust in the flesh. What is the flesh? It is the old, sinful nature. It is corrupt; it is contrary to the Spirit; its works are iniquitous and defiled. It will never be anything else but the flesh -- it may be baptized, it may be confirmed, it may perform all kinds of ceremonies and rituals, but it remains the same. Note v. 4 -- Paul had many reasons to trust in the flesh, but he renounced them all for Christ, v.v. 7, 8. What did he renounce? See v.v 5, 6 -- they were all religious in nature.

(a) **He renounced his religious pedigree.** See v.5, "*circumcised the eighth day...*" -- there was no doubt over Paul's ancestry otherwise he could not have been circumcised. He was "*of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews.*" However, he learned that a religious pedigree could not save him.

(b) **He renounced his religious position.** He declares -- "*as touching the law a Pharisee.*" He had occupied that position at a young age, but he renounced it for Christ. Religious positions, without Christ, take men to hell.

(c) **He renounced his religious pride.** V. 6 -- "*concerning zeal, persecuting the church.*" He would not tolerate the followers of Christ, judging them to be wrong -- but there came a day when he discovered that he was wrong.

(d) **He renounced his religious performances.** V. 6b, "*touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.*" He had an impeccable record of performing duties but how vile in God's sight. Thus, he fled to Christ for salvation.

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