

BEWARE OF THE DOGS
The Book of Philippians #19

The last time we looked at Philippians we spoke of rejoicing in the Lord and why Paul spoke of this rejoicing frequently in his letters to the churches.

PHILIPPIANS 3:1

“Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write these same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard to you.”

While Paul was writing to the Philippians he was in prison because of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. His fellow believers were also experiencing this same persecution. Some of this persecution came from the Gentiles who felt their businesses and livelihood were being threatened by the proclamation of this new gospel. But most came from the Jews who were angry and jealous of Paul’s following and of his insistence that the Messiah had come and their leaders had Him crucified. This was not exactly a popular message to most Jews. In fact the Jewish leaders said to the citizens of Thessalonica, *“These men who have upset the world have come here also.”* So they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who had heard these things because they were afraid their influence among them was fading (Acts 17:6-8).

Because of the many incidences where the Jews had incited crowds against him Paul issues this warning to the Philippians.

PHILIPPIANS 3:2a

“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers..”

As it will become clear in a moment, Paul is speaking of the Jews who oppose him and calls them “dogs” and “evil workers”; Not exactly endearing terms but perhaps accurate ones. Driven by their own evil intents, the Jews certainly were working against believers. They were like dogs taking every opportunity to bark and chase after them, nipping at their heels at every opportunity.

Now, I generally like dogs, but am not overly fond of those who growl and chase after me or are a constant annoyance. But I have had a few dogs over the course of my life. My first dog was a puppy which I named “Inky” because he was an all-black cocker spaniel. An obvious choice of name but I was only 4 years old and had a limited imagination. I did not have that dog very long but I was too young to know why. I only remember that when we moved to another house and I was 6 years old we no longer had Inky.

The next time I had a dog was when our family moved in 1962 to a suburb of San Rafael called Marinwood. We obtained this dog from a previous owner. He was a brown and black dog, sort of like a terrier, with white spots on his feet so we called him “Boots.” Again, another obvious choice of name even though I was 13 at the time.

When this dog somehow escaped our fenced-in yard, my father did not wish to find him. I think this was because he did most of the “poop” duty. So we were not allowed to go looking for Boots. To this day I have no idea what happened to that dog.

It was during our time in Marinwood that barking, nipping dogs that chased after us became a problem for my brother and me. We loved to ride our bikes and would ride from Marinwood to Nicasio on Lucas

Valley Road, A distance of about 20 miles roundtrip. In those days it was a two lane shaded country road with rarely any traffic on it, at least on weekends when we would travel it.

We only had one speed bikes in those days but were happy to have them. Anyway, along this road were several dogs, most of which were contained behind a fence. But some could escape their fences and chase after us. The more we traveled this road the more acquainted we became with these dangerous escapees. We got so we could anticipate the danger and would accelerate several feet before the home in order to out distance the chasing dog. This was repeated on the return trip as well. Sometimes it was close. These dogs would bark at us, then run after us and nip at our feet, following us for several hundred yards before they would give up.

So with heart pounding and legs pumping we would speed as fast as our one-speed bikes could go past these dangerous places with youthful legs driving the wheels ever forward. It was scary at times because some of these dogs were larger than others and we did not know the temperament of any of the dogs. But as long as we could out distance them we felt safe enough. It was an effort and even as young teenagers we had to rest after each encounter. But to us the destination was worth it and the adrenaline rush soon subsided.

Two Christmases later our parents bought us three-speed bikes. Yes, they were only three-speed, not ten-speed bikes. But to us they were like riding a motorcycle. Suddenly we were able to out distance the nipping-at-our-heels dogs without having to rest for a few minutes after we passed out of range. This did not eliminate the danger. We still had to beware of the dogs. But we were better equipped to handle the danger with our new bikes. Along with recognizing who the bad dogs were and where they came from, we now had a better set of tools to avoid them.

Armed with the knowledge of his experience, Paul is attempting to do for the Philippians what my brother and I did for each other through our experience biking down Lucas valley Road. He is telling God's children how to avoid the nipping dogs which constantly threaten us as we travel the road of faith. He is doing this because he knows these "dogs" not only nip at our heels to threaten our lives, they do so to threaten our faith as well. And Paul is about to tell us why.

PHILIPPIANS 3:2-3

"Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."

Paul now identifies the "dogs" and "evil workers" as those of the "false circumcision". By using the term circumcision, Paul is referring to the Jews. So in this chapter Paul is differentiating between what he calls the "false" and the "true" circumcision. Paul is obviously using a play on words here but he is also aligning himself with God's own view of circumcision, which I will expand on in a minute. The Jews were given circumcision as part of the covenant God made with Abraham to bless him and his descendants.

In Genesis 17 it says when Abraham was ninety-nine years old God appeared to him and said that if he would walk before him and be blameless, God would establish His covenant between Himself and Abraham and make him the father of a multitude of nations. God went on to say that He would make Abraham exceedingly fruitful and that kings would come forth from him.

Now this covenant would be not only between God and Abraham, but between Abraham's descendants as well. It was to be an everlasting covenant throughout their generations. As part of this covenant God promised to give all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his descendants. God then explained what the sign of His covenant would be. We read about this in Genesis 17:10-14.

GENESIS 17:10-14

“This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you; every male among you shall be circumcised...and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations...An uncircumcised male...shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

So the ritual of circumcision was a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham to bless him and grant to him and his descendants the land of Canaan.

The Jews were very proud of their heritage and through the years used the fact that they were descendants of Abraham as a sign of being part of God's covenant. This became a point of contention when Jesus confronted them about who their true father was.

During His earthly ministry Jesus said to the Jews around him that if they continued in His word they would know the truth and the truth would make them free (John 8:32). They objected to that based on the fact that they were Abraham's descendants. So they responded by saying, *“We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You shall be free’?”* Their claim was that as Jews they had been the children of Abraham for centuries and had never been enslaved by anyone.

Now it's a matter of history that the descendants of Abraham had been slaves first in Egypt, then in Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Syria, and at that particular time they were under Roman rule. But this was political slavery, the Jewish nation being ruled by Gentile nations. But this was not what the religious leaders were referring to when they responded to Jesus. What they meant by never being enslaved was that as children of Abraham they had a favored and privileged position. They were the chosen people of God. Because of this they could never be held as slaves of anything or anyone. And as God's special possession they believed they possessed the truth, specifically religious truth, though the covenant of Abraham and the Law of Moses. As a result they had no need of being set free from anything by anyone.

But Jesus was not referring to the Law of Moses but rather to the law of sin and death. So He responded by explaining how committing sin makes one a slave to sin, reiterating if the Son makes you free, then you will be free indeed – directly challenging the ability of the Law to bring freedom from sin.

Jesus then acknowledged their response by saying, *“I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with my Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.”* Once again they replied that Abraham was their father completely missing the point. So Jesus, getting to the heart of the matter replied, *“Then do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do”* (John 8:37-40).

In essence Jesus was saying if you truly are Abraham's descendants then you would act like Abraham. Since you are not doing the things he did then you cannot possibly be one of his descendants. This is the

same thing that people say today of those who claim to be children of God through Jesus. They accuse us of saying one thing and doing the exact opposite, of not living up to our heavenly Father. But being born of the race of the Jews and even being circumcised as a male does not make you a child of Abraham, any more than simply attending church makes you a Christian or standing in a garage makes you a car. If you are born of Abraham's seed then you must display the characteristics and actions of Abraham. Just like someone who has been born again through faith in Christ should display the characteristics and actions of Jesus. We'll have more to say on this in a moment but for now let's stick to the point of being a descendant of Abraham as justification for being free from sin.

Jesus said it was not enough to be children of Abraham by blood or by practicing the covenant of circumcision. Indeed, Jesus said these things by themselves actually held you captive as slaves to sin. Only by faith in the Son of God could you be released from sin and set free. This was unheard of by the Pharisees of the day. And Paul, being a Pharisee himself, learned this the hard way. But once this insight was revealed to Him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) he began to preach it and wrote of it to the Galatians, using Genesis 15:6 as the basis for his argument.

GALATIANS 3:6-7

“Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.”

Paul is merely stating what Jesus was saying to the Jews of his day. Those who believe in Jesus are the true sons of Abraham. Those who do not believe His words are not the sons of Abraham. And here is the heart of the issue. It does not matter whether you have or have not been circumcised. The covenant God made with Abraham was one based on faith, not on the flesh.

Yes, the sign of the covenant was circumcision, but the sign came after Abraham expressed faith by his belief in God's promises. So God regarded Abraham as righteous based not on his circumcision but on his faith. This was something the Jewish leaders had a difficult time comprehending, even though they were experts in the law. Like many of us who have been steeped in the traditions of the church, when someone comes along and challenges that tradition or our foundational knowledge of the truth, it is hard for us to comprehend it at first. But if our hearts are open, further study may reveal the truth about something which we initially rejected as impossible or incorrect. (Probably most of us here have changed our position on some spiritual matters after further study.)

The traditions which the Jewish nation had been steeped in for years came from the Law. This Law was handed down from God through Moses at Mt. Sinai in the wilderness after their escape from Egyptian bondage. As part of the Law, sacrifice and its attendant rituals was a key and necessary part for cleansing one's self from sin. But God had a priority in mind when He asked for sacrifice. We see this when Saul was king and God had given him a task to complete.

In 1 Samuel 15 God tells King Saul, through the prophet Samuel, to strike a city named Amalek because of what their previous king did to Israel when they were coming out of Egypt. He was told to utterly destroy all that was there and not to spare anyone; *“but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”* This seems extremely harsh to us today but it was not unusual in those days. Many nations practiced this same harshness in regards to their enemies.

In any event Saul went down in obedience and defeated the Amalekites. But he and the people spared Agag, the current king of the Amalekites, as well as the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the

lambs, and all that was good because they *“were not willing to destroy them utterly. But everything that was despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.”* Perhaps this gives us an insight as to why God told them to utterly destroy everything. He knew they coveted the good things of the Amalekites, so He tested them. Unfortunately they failed the test.

As a result, Saul suffered personally and eventually the nation suffered corporately. For when Samuel showed up and heard the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen he asked why Saul did not obey the Lord. Saul replied that he had obeyed the Lord and destroyed everyone except Agag, and that the sheep and oxen which Samuel was hearing were actually being kept aside as a sacrifice to the Lord. But Samuel regarded what Saul had done as evil and disobedient. Here is his reply.

1 SAMUEL 15:22-23

“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.”

Saul went on to explain that he had indeed transgressed the command of the Lord but he did so because he feared the people and listened to their voice. Not a very strong leader if he can be persuaded to be disobedient to the Lord’s command out of fear of the very people he was supposed to rule over. Ultimately this fear caused Saul to place the people’s will over the Lord’s will, and to place the ritual of sacrifice over a heart of obedience. *“To obey is better than sacrifice”*, said Samuel. And God is still looking for a man’s heart to be in line with His heart placing obedience as the highest priority over anything done with a disobedient heart even if done in service to Him.

And God echoes this same priority to the descendants of Abraham regarding circumcision. It’s a matter of the heart and not the flesh. God’s true attitude is reflected in Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH 4:3-4

“This says the Lord to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, ‘Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart...or else My wrath will go forth like fire and burn with no one to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.’”

God is saying that even though you are Jews and have been circumcised according to the covenant I made with Abraham, your evil deeds betray you. You are not doing the deeds of Abraham. And because of this He tells Jeremiah that judgment has been pronounced against them and explains why.

JEREMIAH 4:18

“Your ways and your deeds have brought these things to you. This is your evil. How bitter! How it has touched your heart!”

Their hearts had been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). So as a cry for repentance God tells them to circumcise their heart, to remove the covering of sin from it and expose it to the light of truth. God wants heartfelt worship, not ritualistic worship. It’s always been a matter of the heart and not the flesh. As Jesus said in John 6:36,

JOHN 6:36

“The flesh profits nothing. It is the Spirit who gives life”.

So those who have their flesh circumcised may have done so in obedience to God's covenant with Abraham. But that does not make them children of Abraham. Parents have their children baptized as a sign of their promise to raise their children in the ways of the Lord. But this does not guarantee their children will follow the Lord. Baptism does not make one a Christian any more than circumcision makes one a follower of God. Man may look at the outside as a sign of righteousness, but God looks at the heart (1Samuel 16:7).

And this is why Paul calls those who claim to be Abraham's descendants those of the "false circumcision". They have followed the Law with their flesh but have not followed the Lord with their heart. They claim to be righteous because they are descendants of Abraham and have followed the Law, as well as obeying the covenant of circumcision. But God says it is better to obey than to offer sacrifices. Obedience trumps sacrifice. And even though the Lord instituted the sacrificial system through Moses to the descendants of Abraham, He grows weary of those who allow the rituals to take the place of obedience.

ISAIAH 1:13-14

"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. 'I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them.

So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; I will not listen. Your hands are covered in blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil deeds from your sight, cease to do evil, learn to do good; Seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.'"

God grows weary of endless rituals without obedience. What good is it to continually seek cleansing from evil if you continue to do the very evil you are seeking to be cleansed from? Cleansing is needed but a ceasing from sin has to occur before cleansing can begin. Repentance is an integral part of the process and cannot be skipped or overlooked. But there is hope. For God says that our sin, though as scarlet now, can become as white as snow. He will do this for us. But it will not come through rituals. It will come through faith.

This is not to say the Law did not have its place. Nothing God does is without its purpose. But through Christ we have been released from the Law (Hebrews 7:6). The Law was not sin. Sin does not reside in the Law but rather in our hearts. But we would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for as Paul says, "I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet'".

So the Law has a purpose and that purpose is to expose our sin (Hebrews 7:12). The problem is not the Law, but rather what we attempt to do with our sin once the Law exposes it. For the Jewish leaders it was enough to be a descendant of Abraham, to follow the sign of the covenant God made with them through circumcision, and to obey the Law. They did not consider themselves sinners like the Gentiles who were not descended from Abraham, who had not been given the covenant of circumcision and had not been promised a land of their own.

Though they were the chosen children of God and recipients of the Law, they completely missed the faith that Abraham exhibited. They failed to realize that Abraham came before the Law. It was the faith that Abraham expressed in believing God's promises to him and his descendants that preceded the covenant and the giving of the Law. They believed, but their belief was in their fleshly obedience and their shared history, their rituals and their outward piety, rather than their inward obedience. They completely missed the point of the Law. No wonder Jesus said they were like *"whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness"* (Matthew 23:27). This may have seemed like a harsh assessment but it was a true reflection of their heart.

Jesus said the Jewish leaders loved to manifest their perceived righteousness to others. He said,

MATTHEW 23:5-7

"The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you to do, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the marketplaces, and being called rabbi by men."

This description accurately describes the "false" circumcision, for their flesh may be circumcised, and their lips may proclaim His word, but their hearts are far from God.

ISAIAH 29:13

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me."

ROMANS 9:29

"But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

In contrast to the "false" circumcision who put their faith in the Law, Paul says those who are of the "true" circumcision put their faith in Christ. They do not manifest their righteousness by the garments they wear or by their lengthy prayers, but rather by worshipping in the Spirit of God, glorifying in Jesus Christ and putting no confidence in the flesh for proof of their salvation. They worship in the Spirit of God because the Holy Spirit resides within them. They glorify in Jesus Christ because their salvation comes from faith in Him and not from the Law. And they put no confidence in their flesh, either in the fact that they were circumcised Jewish males or in their performance-based righteousness through obedience to the Law. Faith in Jesus is the final and only proof needed for their imparted righteousness.

COLOSSIANS 2:9-14

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the

certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

This is why Paul calls believers in Christ the “true” circumcision. Our circumcision was the kind of circumcision that God was looking for all along - the removal of the body of our flesh through being buried with Christ in baptism and raised up with Him through faith.

According to Paul this circumcision is manifested in three ways - worshipping in the Spirit of God, glorifying in Christ Jesus, and putting no confidence in the flesh. Today we are going to look at the first of these - worshipping in the Spirit of God.

Worshipping in the Spirit of God

When God gave His covenant to the Jews He commanded them to worship at the Tabernacle which was a portable structure and later at the Temple which was a permanent structure. God promised He would dwell in the Holy of Holies portion of these man-made structures (Exodus 40:34; 2 Chronicles 5:11-14). There were two temples built. The first temple was built by Solomon during his reign as King of Israel around 832 BC. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The second temple was built during the time of Ezra the priest after the Babylon exile was over, around 516 BC. This temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. It was to this second temple that Jesus went during his earthly ministry.

Upon the death of Christ the veil separating the Holy of holies from the common area in the temple was rent in two. As a result of this Paul says that God no longer dwells in temples made with hands but rather in His people. God’s desire has not changed. He still desires to dwell in a temple. But the temple that God has now chosen to live in is His church. The Spirit of God now dwells in those who believe and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

ACTS 17:24

“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.”

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

Before we would have gone to the temple to worship God for that is where He dwelt. We went where God was. Since God no longer dwells there, what does it now mean to “worship in the Spirit of God”?

There are two aspects of worshipping in the Spirit of God. Both are related to where the Spirit dwells.

(1) According to Romans 8:9 those who do not have the Spirit of God do not belong to Him. They worship in the flesh for it is impossible for them to worship in the Spirit without His indwelling presence. We, however, do have the presence of God within us so we are able to worship in the Spirit of God and not in the flesh. This is what separates believers from non-believers, the “true” circumcision from the “false”.

(2) Because worship is no longer restricted to buildings made by man it is also no longer restricted to a time or place. Since true believers have the Spirit dwelling within them, God is accessible at all times. This means that everything we do we do in the presence of God. We are the temple in which He dwells. We do not come and go from His presence. Everything we do we do in His presence. As a result,

worship is now a 24-7 experience.

While it has always been true that nothing in all creation is hidden from His sight (Hebrews 4:13), and that the moral aspect of the Law will never fade (Matthew 5:17), it is now more important than ever to worship God with our bodies, for He dwells within them.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

We find this same principle echoed in Romans 12:1 where we are told to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. It goes on to say that this is our spiritual service of worship. To present our bodies to Him is our worship. The good news is that according to Philippians 1:13, God is at work within us through His Spirit to desire and to do His will. And in Romans 12:26-27 we are told the Spirit helps us in our weakness, interceding for us according to the will of God. So even though sin has not been completely eradicated in us, the desire to eliminate its presence is strong within us. And as we cooperate with His Spirit even in our weakness we are made strong (1 Corinthians 12:10).

True worship is not possible without the Spirit of God. It is also not possible without glorifying God in our bodies, for worship is no longer a place, it is a Person. It is no longer a destination, it is a Presence. And it is no longer done out of weakness, it is done out of Power. Let me repeat that. Worship is no longer a place, it is a Person. It is no longer a destination, it is a Presence. And it is no longer done out of weakness, it is done out of Power.

Speaking to the woman at the well Jesus said,

JOHN 4:21-24

“Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

To worship in the Spirit of Christ is to be free from the flesh - its immorality and uncontrollable urges. It is following the urges of the Spirit - going in the direction and speaking the words given to us by the Spirit, and relying on the power of the Spirit to overcome the evil one. The manifestation of this worship is Spiritual fruit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Those who manifest this fruit live the rest of their time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

There are two other attributes which are manifested by the “true” circumcision – they glory in Christ Jesus and they put no confidence in the flesh. But we will save these for next time as they are closely related to the experiences of Paul which he lists later in this chapter.

So let me close by summing up what I have said so far.

First: False circumcision is based on the Law and deeds of the flesh. It prides itself in deeds done and

obedience to commandments. It does not take into consideration the attitude of the heart, but rather the obedience to commands. Those who hold this position seek to impose it on others, claiming it is not by faith but by works that salvation is obtained. And, like dogs, they keep nipping at the heels of those who disagree with them.

The words spoken and deeds done by those who are of the false circumcision may seem to honor God, but their hearts are far from Him. So when Christ appears in the flesh they do not recognize Him. And, though they will one day look upon Him whom they have pierced (Revelation 1:7), they will not be recognized by Christ when He returns (Matthew 7:23). That is why Paul warns us against them.

Second: True circumcision is based on the attitude of the heart and humility of mind. It begins with grace, continues in faith and manifests itself in reliance upon the indwelling Spirit of God. Those of the “true” circumcision are partakers in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. They have been made alive together with Him and have been forgiven of all their transgressions. The certificate of debt which consisted of a list of decrees against them has been canceled out - not by works of their own but solely by the work of Christ on the cross. Those of the “true” circumcision take no pride in fleshly deeds yet seek to please their Father by the deeds they do, dying to self that they might live for God (1 Peter 2:24). These are the true sons of Abraham.

Third: Worshipping in the Spirit of God is worshiping by the power of the Spirit which resides within us. Since true believers have the Spirit dwelling within them, God is accessible at all times. We are the temple in which He dwells. We do not come and go from His presence. This means that everything we do we do in the presence of God. Worship for us has become a 24 hour, 7 day-a-week experience.

But of all the things that we who are of the “true” circumcision have come to understand, the greatest is this:

Worship is no longer a place, it is a Person. It is no longer a destination, it is a Presence. And it is no longer done out of weakness, it is done out of Power - Holy Spirit Power.

Abraham understood this and believed it. That is why his faith was credited to him as righteousness. We too believe and have been counted as righteous because of our faith. This makes us true sons of Abraham. This makes us partakers of the true circumcision. This makes us children of the living God (John 3:1).

So beware of the dogs who nip at your heels. Pay attention to your doctrine and do not be led astray. Resist the evil workers who seek to silence your faith. They lash out against you because they fear you, and rightly so. We are the true sons of Abraham and the inheritors of the promise. We will enter into the joy of the Lord but they will not gain entrance. They will be shut outside the gates of heaven. Beware, but do not fear them, for your reward in heaven awaits you.

REVELATION 21:1-2; 22:1-5, 15,14

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband...”

“And (the angel) showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve

kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bondservants will serve Him, they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever with Him...

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying... (But) blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they might have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city."