



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 10th April 2016

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Philippians 3:1-4

Subject: Chapter 3, Part 3 – Marks of a true believer.

Last week we looked at these verses in which Paul teaches us here about the marks of a true believer. I don't believe he wanted us going about with a measuring tape to see if all measure up exactly. We are all at different stages but not, may I stress, parked at these stages. We are supposed to be growing and developing in our faith. *'From one degree of glory to another'* as the Bible teaches, in other words we are in a continuing state of growth. Now there is much to stunt our growth. Firstly within ourselves and of course the world that has its effect on us. We may like to think that it doesn't, that we are of a higher calibre type of Christian, but it does and strange as it may seem we control how much it does.

We have examined two of the five qualities that should be evident both in our own lives and in that of other who profess saving faith in Christ last week. These were

1. They rejoice in the Lord. I'm sure you would expect that? But do we?

2. Exercise Discernment. That is you will remember with the word of God as the standard and source of authority. Not your feelings, your opinions or thoughts, and please, not your standards only the Lords. But who today reads the Bible for themselves? Many are so influenced by others wrong or heretical teachings that in truth they are nowhere with God

either the teachers or themselves. Please take time to read for yourself, use good aids to help you in difficult passages, but never substitute them for your own personal time with the Lord as hard as it might be to hold on to that time.

So picking up from where we were last week, this morning I want us to look at the last three qualities on the list that I mentioned last week.

The third point is "True Believers Worship in Spirit". Is this true of all who claim that they do? Is it true of all who claim to be Christian? How would you answer that? Well let's look at this very important quality. That ought to be ours as well as those who say they are believers.

3. TRUE BELIEVERS WORSHIP IN THE SPIRIT

'who worship in the Spirit of God' (3:3a)

This quality of a genuine believer is a heart that overflows with worship. The origin of that **worship** is supernatural, since **the Spirit of God** generates it. It involves adoration and praise to God. It transcends outward rituals or ceremonies. Humans are ingrained worshippers. Worship prompted by culture, tradition, guilt, fear, desire for acceptance and popularity, or to gain blessings is unacceptable to God. By that I mean the kind that says 'I will only worship if You bless me'. But worship stirred by the indwelling Holy Spirit prompts true and acceptable worship out of love for the Lord. Since He only indwells Christians (Romans 8:9), only they can truly worship their Saviour.

Speaking to a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26), Jesus clearly defined true and acceptable worship. Shocked by His omniscient exposure of her depraved life (vv. 16-18), she tried to change the subject:

"Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (vv. 19-20).

In response Jesus declared,

"Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father" (v. 21).

True worship takes place in the heart, not at a sacred location.

The Lord then revealed a second truth about true worship:

"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (v. 22).

Acceptable worship is based on the truths of salvation revealed in the Scriptures, which were given to the Jewish people (Romans 3:2). It is not to be performed according to the whims of the worshipers. In this passage of Scripture, Jesus gave the clearest definition of worship in all of Scripture:

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (vv. 23-24).

The twice-repeated phrase *"in spirit and truth"* defines the essence of true worship.

God saved believers to worship Him. It is those

"true worshipers [who] worship the Father in spirit and truth" that "the Father seeks to be His worshipers".

True Christians are those who worship God from the heart in obedience to His Word. In Psalm 29:2 David exhorts,

"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in holy array."

Psalm 95:6 adds,

"Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

Worship is mankind's highest duty. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, *"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."*

The Greek word for **worship**, *Latreuo*, might best be translated *'to render respectful spiritual service'*. True worship goes beyond praising God, singing hymns, or participating in a worship service. The essence of worship is living a life of obedient service to God. Not just a part of your life but all of your life every area of it.

"Do not neglect doing good and sharing," exhorts the writer of Hebrews, "for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

True worship involves every aspect of life. How we behave as well as our speech, even how we treat others. It includes our respect towards God, which is most important. Like faith,

which is what I believe, that governs what I should do. I believe that worship is like that, I declare my love, my loyalty, my life to Him, and does that make sense to you?

You might think of me as old fashion or somewhat a legalist but I do believe that you should not only give your best but also be your best for the Lord. You know we expect the best from the Lord and He gives it all the time, but does that work back? May we not be like those of whom we read in Matthew 15:8. Look also at John 5:12 and 12:26.

Several characteristics mark true worshipers.

First, they love God. That is in stark contrast to unbelievers, who don't know Him but may know a great deal about Him, to those who even hate Him. Unbelief is not always manifested in open rebellion with a clenched fist, but it can be in quite yet defiant disobedience to God, towards His Word and towards His people. Jesus declared in John 7:7,

"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds (its actions its conduct, its performance) are evil."

In Romans 1:30 Paul describes unbelievers as "*haters of God*" (For cross reference see Numbers 10:35; Deuteronomy 7:10; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Psalms 81:15; John 15:23-24), These verses make a very clear statement indeed and are worth looking at again, there are no fences in the Bible to sit on, while in Romans 8:7 the apostle points out that

"the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God"

Christians' love for God will never be perfect in this world, but it will always be there.

Because true worshipers love God, they find in Him their source of joy and delight. They acknowledge that

"the joy of the Lord is [their] strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

They

"sing for joy in the Lord" (Psalms 33:1; cross reference Psalms. 84:2; 92:4; 95:1; 98:4), There are hymns that will steer your heart, lift your mind, strengthen your faith. It is like good medicine it has great effect.

because they are filled

"with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1:6; cross reference with Romans 14:17).

Like the psalmist, they find in

"God their exceeding joy" (Psalms 43:4). "All that thrills my heart is Jesus, He is more than life to me, He is the fairest of ten thousand, in my blessed Lord I see".

True worshipers

"delight to revere His name" (Nehemiah 1:11),

Friends there is power in the name of Jesus, there is all power in the name of Jesus more power that we can't begin to imagine.

Heed David's exhortation,

"Delight yourself in the Lord" (Psalms 37:4).

The contemplation of God's glory and majesty, and what He has done in their lives, is their supreme joy and delight. Let me just quote to you C.H. Spurgeon in relation to this point.

On January 7th, 1855, the minister of New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, opened his morning sermon as follows:

"It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man'. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, 'Behold I am wise'. But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation, 'I am but of yesterday, and know nothing'. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God.

But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe ... The most

excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning ...

These words, spoken over a century ago by C. H. Spurgeon (at that time, incredibly, only twenty years old) were true then, and they are true now."

True worshipers also have a confident trust in God that produces peace. That peace is based not on their circumstances, but on their relationship with God. The believer should have a magnifying view of God not a microscopic view. They can exclaim with the psalmists,

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God" (Psalms 42:1)

and

"Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth" (Psalms 73:25). It is one thing to say it but quite another to mean it.

This

"peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension" (Philippians 4:7)

comes only to those who

"seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

The priority is set it is but to be practices

True worship is in the power of **the Spirit of God**, because only He can produce the love, joy, and peace that characterize true worshipers (see for reference Galatians 5:22). Those who worship in the flesh

"draw near with their words and honour [God] with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from [Him], and their reverence for [Him] consists of tradition learned by rote" (Isaiah 29:13).

True worshipers are devoted to God. He has no rival for their affection. They

"worship the Lord [their] God, and serve Him only" (Matthew 4:10),

knowing that He

"will not give [His] glory to another" (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11).

They affirm Jesus' declaration that

"he who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

If you make the Lord your number one then he will look after the rest.

Holding nothing back, they

"present their bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is their spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

True Christians are not simply marked by attending church or performing religious duties, but by a worshiping heart. It is about a life lived for the Lord and a purpose that is God given for our lives. We are complete in Him.

4. TRUE WORSHIPERS GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS

"and glory in Christ Jesus" (3:3b)

Again the Greek word for **glory**, *Kauchaomai*, describes boasting with jubilant joy about what a person is most proud of. It is a favourite term of Paul's. Thirty-five of its thirty-seven appearances in the New Testament are in his epistles. It can be used in a negative sense to describe proud, inappropriate boasting (for example, Romans 2:17&23; Galatians 6:13). *Kauchaomai* is also used, however, to describe believers' joyful exulting in Christ (for example

Romans 5:2, 11; 1 Corinthians 1:31; Galatians 6:14), as it is here. True Christians give the credit for all that they are and have to the Lord Jesus Christ. They can declare just like Paul did,

"By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10; cross reference Philippians 3:8-9)

and

"Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God" (Romans 15:17).

They obey the biblical injunction

"Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10: 17; cross reference with Psalms. 20:7; 34:2; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Galatians 6:14).

In contrast, false believers

"boast according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 11:18),

believing that their good works and religious activities earn them favour with God. But salvation is by grace, through faith, it is the gift of God. It is

"not.. a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9; cross reference Romans 3:27).

It was the biblical truth that sinful men can do nothing to merit salvation that led the Reformers to teach that salvation is *sola fide* (by faith alone) and *sola gratia* (by grace alone). Those who think they can earn God's grace by their own works give evidence that they lack saving faith.

5. TRUE WORSHIPERS PUT NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

"and put no confidence in the flesh", (3:3c)

The **flesh** represents man's fallen, unredeemed humanness. It pictures human ability apart from God. Unlike the

"many who boast according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 11:18),

true Christians **put no confidence in** it. They understand that

"it is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63),

and agree with Paul's declaration,

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:18).

Because it is fallen and unredeemed, the flesh cannot do anything to please God. It serves only the law of sin. Therefore, it is a distinguishing characteristic of the redeemed that they

"do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4),

because

"the mind set on the flesh is death" (Romans 8 v. 6 & 13)

and

"those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8v. 8).

Due to the pervasive influence of the sinful flesh (what theologians call total depravity), no one can in any way merit salvation. It is only those who turn from sinful self-efforts and embrace the truth of salvation by grace alone through faith alone can be saved. That marks the genuine repentance that is a necessary element of saving faith (Cross reference - Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; Luke 13:3 & 5; Luke 15:7 & 10; Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9). True repentance involves sorrow over the evil of sinful deeds; false repentance involves only sorrow over their harmful consequences. False repentance concerns itself with conduct; true repentance with man's inner condition.

False repentance deals with the symptoms; true repentance with the disease, the root cause of the problem. Only true repentance, which puts **no confidence in the flesh**, leads to salvation.

Amén.