

Philippians 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Analysis

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews (περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἐβραῖος ἐξ Ἐβραίων, peritomē oktaēmeros, ek genous Israēl, phylēs Beniamin, Hebraios ex Hebraiōn)—Seven privileges begin unfolding.

1. Peritomē oktaēmeros ("circumcised eighth day")—perfect law-observance from infancy (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3), not adult convert.
2. Ek genous Israēl ("of the race of Israel")—ethnic descent, not Gentile.
3. Phylēs Beniamin ("tribe of Benjamin")—royal tribe, fiercely loyal (1 Sam 9:21; Rom 11:1).
4. Hebraios ex Hebraiōn ("Hebrew of Hebrews")—Aramaic-speaking, culturally pure, not Hellenized Jew.

Paul's pedigree was unimpeachable: right ritual, right ethnicity, right tribe, right language/culture.

Historical Context

Benjamin was Israel's smallest tribe but produced Israel's first king (Saul—Paul's namesake, 1 Sam 9). 'Hebrew of Hebrews' distinguished Palestinian Jews from Diaspora Jews who'd adopted Greek language/customs. Paul spoke Aramaic (Acts 21:40, 22:2), studied in Jerusalem, maintained cultural purity. His Judaism was

orthodox, not compromised. This made his rejection of law-righteousness all the more striking.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul list ethnic and ceremonial credentials before religious achievements (vv. 5-6)?
2. How do pedigree and credentials become idols even in Christian contexts?
3. What privileges by birth or upbringing might you wrongly trust for standing before God?

Interlinear Text

περιτομῆ ὀκταήμερος ἐξ γένους Ἰσραήλ φυλῆς
Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe
G4061 G3637 G1537 G1085 G2474 G5443

Βενιαμίν Ἐβραίων ἐξ Ἐβραίων κατὰ νόμον
of Benjamin an Hebrew day of an Hebrew as touching the law
G958 G1445 G1537 G1445 G2596 G3551

Φαρισαῖος

a Pharisee

G5330

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:22 (References Israel): Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

Romans 11:1 (References Israel): I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Acts 23:6 (Resurrection): But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Acts 22:3 (Word): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Genesis 17:12 (Parallel theme): And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

Luke 1:59 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.