

THE SAINTS OF GOD

Philippians 4:20-23

A *key word* found in this concluding passage of the **book of Philippians** is the *familiar*...yet often *misunderstood*...word **saint**. The word has drifted far from its New Testament *meaning*...and has been loaded down with all sorts of *cultural* and *religious baggage*. To many, it has a “*holier than thou*” *connotation*. That’s why many people wouldn’t ever consider themselves **saints** for fear of sounding *egotistical* or *proud*.

Much of the *confusion* about **saints** stems from the *teachings* of the **Roman Catholic Church**. A **saint** in **Roman Catholic theology** is someone who, because of his or her *exemplary virtue, merit, devotion, and religious achievement* (must have a *documented miracle* occur) is already *exalted* in *heaven*... so they should also be on *earth*. Such a person is *elevated* to *sainthood* by an *official decree* of the *pope* known as **canonization**, and is considered a *model* whose life is to be *emulated*.

But *canonization* by the **Catholic Church** means far more than just setting forth the **saint** as an *example* to be *followed* ...the **Church** also encourages its members to *appeal* to the **saints** to *intercede* with God *on their behalf*. According to **Roman Catholic theology**, **saints** can *intercede* not only for the *living*, but also for those who are in *purgatory*...a place **Catholics** believe is *punishment* for those not yet fit for *heaven*...an *intermediary place* between *heaven* and *hell*. So, those **Catholics** who are still alive can therefore *appeal* to the **saints** to *intercede* with God *on behalf* of their *loved ones suffering* in *purgatory*.

But according to the New Testament, a **saint** isn’t someone *memorialized* in a *stained-glass window*...or a *statue*...or *canonized by Rome*. A **saint** is *anyone* who has come to *saving faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact...**saint** is **Paul’s**

favorite term for **Christians**...having used it *over 40 times* in his writings. He addressed *all the believers* in **Philippi** as **saints** in the *opening verses* of this *epistle*. He even addressed the *members* of the **Corinthian church**...the *most troubled* and *sin-plagued church* in the New Testament as...

“...*Those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord...*”

~I Corinthians 1:2

A **saint** isn’t a *super hero of the faith*. A **saint** is anyone who has *repented* and has *eternal life* in Christ.

“*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

~Romans 6:23

Saints...Gk. *hagios*, means *set apart ones*...*separated ones*...*sanctified ones*...or perhaps the best...*holy ones*. A **saint** is someone who has been *separated from sin* and *reconciled to God* for *holy purposes*...one who has *imputed righteousness*.

A **saint** isn’t someone who *has done something to earn sainthood*. It’s someone to whom *something has been done for them*...*freely given* as a *gift*.

“*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them*”

~II Corinthians 5:17-19a

Through His *sacrificial death* on the cross, Jesus Christ *set believers apart* to God and makes them *holy*...to make them **saints**.

I. THE WORSHIP OF SAINTS: (vs. 20)

Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen (vs. 20)...

Saints aren't people *to be worshiped*...they are people *who worship*. *Worship* defines the *believer*...and Paul began the concluding portion of **Philippians** with a *doxology*.

The word *doxology* comes from *two Greek words*...*doxa* which means *glory*, and *logos* which means *word*. A *doxology* is a *word* that *proclaims glory*...it's an *expression* of *praise* and *adoration* that *honors* and *ascribes glory* to God...it's an *expression* of *worship*.

This verse (vs. 20), flowed from Paul's *exuberant joy* over the *glorious truths* he had been *inspired by God* to *expound on* in this letter. *True worship* always *flows* from *divine truth* (**John 4:23**).

In another moment of *spontaneous worship*, Paul wrote a similar *doxology* in **Romans 11:33-36**, when he *rejoiced* and *praised* God for the *monumental truths* revealed in **Romans 1-11**. In one of the *most magnificent doctrinal discourses* in all of Scripture, he wrote...

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

~Romans 11:33-36

Worship is the *appropriate response* to all that God *has done* for believers...*in gratitude for our salvation*...*for our hope of eternal life and heaven*...*in the refuge of eternal security*.

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

~Ephesians 3:20-21

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

~Jude 24-25

Worship is the *natural response* by a *true believer*. *Worship* of the *one true God* is *personal, intimate, and habitual*. It's *impossible* to *worship* Him unless you *know who He is*. But when you *know* Him...it's *impossible* to *not worship* Him.

II. THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS: (vs. 21-22)

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you (vs. 21-22a)...

The *three-fold repetition* of the word *greet* implies a *strong bond of fellowship*. As he closed his letter to the **Philippians**, Paul expressed his *love* for the members of the church and his *concern* for their spiritual well-being. He *charged them* to *greet* every saint *on his behalf*...and to *assure them* of his *love* and *concern* for them and their *spiritual well-being*.

Notice that **Paul** used both the *individualistic* term **every**, as well as, the *collective* term **all** in this verse. This emphasizes that every **saint** was part of his *concern, affection, and care...individually and corporately*.

In Christ Jesus...this is the *spiritual realm* in which *sainthood* is the reality...**saints** are those who are **in Jesus Christ**. This is what makes *Christianity unique*. Other *world religions* don't see themselves as *being united* with their *founder*...they merely *follow his teachings*. But for *Christians* it's *more than just believing* that Christ *lived, died, rose from the dead, and is coming again*...we are **in union with Him now**. That's what it means to be **in Christ**.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

~Galatians 2:20

Especially those of **Caesar's household** (**vs. 22b**)...

The *greatest joy* that we have as **saints** is to see *sinner* *repent* and *come to faith* in Christ. In **Luke 15**, Jesus told *two parables* that illustrated *salvation*. The *first* told of a man who *rejoiced* at finding his *lost sheep* (**Luke 15:5-6**) ...the *second* told of a *woman* who *rejoiced* at finding her *lost coin* (**Luke 15:9**). Both expressed the *joy* that believers have at the *salvation* of *lost sinners*.

The reference to **those of Caesar's household** was *especially meaningful* to the *Philippians* since **Philippi** was a *Roman colony* (**Acts 16:12**) and its *citizens* were *Roman citizens* (**Acts 16:21**). Because of their *close ties* with **Rome**, it's possible that the *Philippians knew* some of the members of **Caesar's household personally**.

Caesar's household included more than just the *members of his family*...it included all those in his *direct employment*...both *lowly slaves*, as well as, those in *high-ranking positions*. In today's terms, they would have been *government employees*.

Remember back in **Philippians 1:13-14**...when **Paul** wrote that some of the members of the **praetorian guard** and **others** were **trusting in the Lord** because of his **imprisonment**...and had **courage to speak the word of God without fear**.

The sharing of a *common bond of love* and a *mutual desire for each other's spiritual well-being* is *an essential characteristic* of *true fellowship* among **saints**.

III. THE FAVOR TO SAINTS: (**vs. 23**)

Paul has now come *full circle*. He *began* his letter by wishing the *Philippians* **grace** (**Philippians 1:2**)...and he now *concludes* it in the *same way*.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit (**vs. 23**)...

Paul ended *all* of his *writing* by wishing God's **grace** on the *recipients*...**Romans 16:24; I Corinthians 16:23; II Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24;** here in **Philippians; Colossians 4:18; I Thessalonians 5:28; II Thessalonians 3:18; I Timothy 6:21; II Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25**.

The *resource all believers need* most is **grace**...the **grace** that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. **Grace** is the *unmerited favor* or *undeserved benevolent love* of God in Christ. God's work of **grace** in *believers' lives* *began* with their *redemption* (*salvation*) and will *continue* until their *glorification*.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”

~Romans 5:1-2

As a *believer* we are *constantly dependent* on the *forgiveness, comfort, peace, joy, boldness*, and *instruction* that comes through God’s *manifold grace*.

God’s *sustaining grace* comes to believers *through* the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the *focus* and *theme* of this *epistle*. He’s *mentioned* almost *40 times* in *4 chapters*.

The *worship, fellowship*, and *favor* that we have as *saints* are only found in Jesus Christ.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- Every believer is a saint. Therefore, the victorious Christian life is a life lived in UNION with Christ...a life that is surrendered to the LORDHIP of Christ. Paul summed up the Christian life when he wrote in **Philippians 1:21**...

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

~Philippians 1:21

- As a saint, we must live as those separated from SIN to RIGHTEOUSNESS.
- Saints aren’t only SAVED by grace, but also are SUSTAINED by grace. We are *governed* by grace... *guided* by grace...*kept* by grace...*strengthened* by grace... *sanctified* by grace...and *enabled* by grace.