

Subject: *By God's Grace and for His Glory*

Scripture: *Philippians 4:20-23*

Three things are prominent in Paul's final words to the Philippians: glory, greeting, and grace. In verse 20, we see glory given to God from the saints. In verses 21-22, we see a greeting to and from the saints. In verse 23, we see grace for the saints.

At different times LBC has adopted mottoes to focus our minds and hearts together on God's purpose for the church: The Best is Yet to Come; Reaching People for Christ and Training Them to Serve Him; and our current one, By His Grace and For His glory. That seems to express Paul's closing words...it is all by His grace and all for His glory. His final words are to the saints and from the saints.

1. IDENTITY OF THE SAINTS

Who are they? Who is Paul talking about? When we hear or see the word "saints" we may not have the same thing in mind. Some are confused because of Roman Catholic teaching that the saints are a group of Christians that have been elevated to a special status because of their virtue, merit, devotion, or religious achievement. These so called saints have already been exalted to heaven and they have been publicly canonized or recognized as a special group. Churches are dedicated in their memory, sacred days are observed in their honor, and even prayers are offered to them.

To some the word "saints" has to do with the images of people etched in stained glass windows. A family was sightseeing in a lovely cathedral and a young son asked his mother who the people were in the stained glass windows. She said, "They are the saints." The little boy thought about it and a few seconds later said, "I know, the saints are people who let the light shine through." That's an excellent description of the saints.

According to the New Testament the saints are those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. In other words, all saints are believers and all believers are saints. This was Paul's favorite word for Christians, found 40 times in his NT letters. Paul sent this letter (1:1) "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth which had many troubles and immature members, he addressed them as saints. The saints are not elite, super-Christians...just Christians

2. HOLINESS OF THE SAINTS

What does the Bible say about the saints and why is it important? The word "saint" is related to the words holy and sanctified. A saint is a person who is separated or set apart from sin and separated for God and His purpose. Every Christian is a saint by his position "in Christ," and every Christian is to be a saint in practice. A saint is a holy person set apart to live a holy life unto a holy God.

A. Saints are now set apart in position (positional sanctification)

Hebrews 10:10 *we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

B. Saints are being set apart in practice (progressive sanctification)

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 ³ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: ⁴ That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.

1 Thessalonians 5:22-23 ²² Abstain from all appearance of evil. ²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Saints will be set apart forever in heaven (perfect sanctification)

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3. PRAISE OF THE SAINTS

Saints are not people to be worshiped; they are people who worship God. In verse 20 we have a doxology, a word of glory. It is an expression of praise to ascribe glory to God. God has an intrinsic or essential glory (a glory that belongs to Him). Glory is also ascribed or given to Him by His creatures, especially those He has redeemed and saved.

A doxology or word of glory expressed to God is always based on knowledge of the truth. In the context of verse 20, Paul wrote about his confidence that God would supply all their need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (vs. 19). He just had to express glory to God. Whenever doctrine occupies Paul's mind, it also fills his heart with praise. Understanding biblical truth is the fuel for worship.

Romans 11:33-36 ³³ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! ³⁴ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? ³⁵ Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? ³⁶ For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21 ²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹ Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:16-17 ¹⁶ Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. ¹⁷ Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21 ²⁰ Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The purpose of redemption is to make people worshipers.

John 4:23 *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

4. UNITY OF THE SAINTS

Paul sends his personal greeting (KJV, “salute”) to every saint and shares greetings from all the brethren and saints. The repetition of the word “salute” (greet) 3x indicates a strong bond of fellowship. The word “salute, greet” can mean welcome or receive warmly. It is the same word translated “embraced” in Heb. 11:13, of the OT saints who embraced the promises of God. The fellow believers would include Timothy and Epaphroditus, who Paul has already mentioned in this letter, and some of Caesar’s household, which would include not only Caesar’s family, but his servants, soldiers, cooks, musicians, and other members of his staff. They had been saved and now they are saints in the family of God. The church is a tight-knit group, but it is not a closed group. God’s family is always growing and expanding to include those who are being saved.

Acts 2:42, 46-47 ⁴² *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...* ⁴⁶ *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,* ⁴⁷ *Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

5. BLESSING OF THE SAINTS

Picture this epistle being read for the first time to the church at Philippi. They gather together and hear everything Paul wrote and then these final words of blessing and grace.

When Barnabas went to Antioch to encourage the new believers there, Acts 11:23 says, “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them...” We never outgrow our need of grace. Believers are saved by grace and sustained by grace. We are strengthened by grace and kept by grace. We are set apart by grace and we serve by grace. His grace is all-sufficient. Like Paul, every believer can say, “I am what I am by the grace of God” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come.

‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

As we close our study of this wonderful letter, let’s remember the theme is of the letter is Christ. His name is mentioned almost 40 times in these 4 chapters. The key verse is...

Philippians 1:21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*