



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 27th November 2016

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Philippians 4:19 - 23

Subject: Chapter 4, Part 7 – The Saints

Do you remember the TV series entitled “Who do you think you are?” It was a program that explored family tree’s and family roots. Some who thought they were from well-respected families soon found out that there were marks and blemishes all over the sliver. Others were surprised at their backgrounds. It was fun to watch and sometimes very emotional. Well the Bible is like another program “This is your life” and it starts with who your Father is and then what the family got up to and brought us down to such depts. It is one of the most exciting and thrilling adventures stories every to be told. Just when we were about to be lost forever our Kinsman Redeemer shows up. He is the only one, who has, not just the power and ability to save us, but more important he has the desire and love and grace to do so.

Have you ever stopped in verse 10 of Romans 5 and parked there for a while contemplating the ramifications of the glorious truth there? let me quote it to you,

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Go down to verse 15 of the same chapter,

“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”

The story of Ruth is very much our story. We became what we never could or would become apart from His redemption - Saints unto God.

Last time we looked the ‘Character of Saints’ and the ‘Worship of Saints’. So this morning we are going to conclude this study with three simple points, the fellowship of saints, the joy of the saints, and the resources of the saints, which will conclude our study of the book of Philippians.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS

“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you” (Philippians 4:21-22a)

Paul's threefold repetition of the word **“greet”** implies a strong bond of fellowship. As he closed his letter to them, Paul expressed his love for the members of the Philippian congregation and his concern for their spiritual well-being. His injunction was specifically for the leaders of the Philippian congregation (Philippians 1:1), who would receive the letter from Epaphroditus. The apostle charged them to greet the individual members of the congregation on his behalf, and assure them of his love and concern for their spiritual well-being.

The apostle's use of the individualistic term **“every”** instead of the collective term **“all”** reveals that every saint was worthy of his care and affection. Paul reinforced the point he made in Philippians 2:2, where he urged the Philippians to

“make [his] joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose,”

There must be no favoritism in the church, because

“there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11; Cross reference with Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Job 34:19; Acts 10:34; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9).



All believers are saints, and any stratification in the body of Christ is contrary to the intention of the Spirit of God. All those accepted in God's Beloved Son (Ephesians 1:6) must be accepted by God's beloved children in the church. All believers are what they are in God's sight solely by His grace (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Paul's concern for individuals reflected that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even when surrounded by large crowds, Jesus was aware of individuals and their needs, as the following story reveals:

"A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse—after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see the woman who had done this." (Mark 5:25-32)

Paul further illustrated the point of equal affection for all believers by noting that **"the brethren who are with me greet you"**. Those **'brethren'**, Paul's close co-workers whom he distinguished from the rest of the believers at Rome (v. 22), included some of the most illustrious names in the early church. Timothy, Paul's protégé and beloved son in the faith, was one of them (Philippians 1:1; 2:19); Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25; 4:18) was also with the apostle at the time he wrote this letter. Tychicus, bearer of the letters of Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21), Colossians (Colossians 4:7), and Philemon (*verses 4-9*), may also have been with Paul at that time.

Aristarchus, another long-time companion of the apostle (Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4; Acts 27:2), could have been among the **'brethren'**. As prominent as they were Paul describes them as brethren. The fellowship of the saints is a common bond of love without strata. None of those prominent saints wore backward collars or were given ecclesiastical titles for themselves. Even though they were uniquely gifted and used by God did not make them spiritually superior, nor did they themselves believe so. Paul, remember identified himself as the "least



of the apostles” 1 Corinthians 15:9, and as the foremost of sinners 1 Timothy 1:15-16. They understood well the teaching of Jesus on the equality of believers. See Matthew 23:8-12.

“Do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” (Matthew 23:8-12)

The wider circle of believers at Rome's church also sent their greetings, as Paul noted in the phrase **“All the saints greet you”**. Though differently gifted, and at different levels of faithfulness and spiritual maturity, they were spiritually equal to their more prominent brethren. Using the metaphor of the human body Paul stressed that point to the Corinthians:

“But now there are many members, but one body And the eye cannot say to the hand, “have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:20-27)

The sharing of a common, non-discriminating love bond and a mutual desire for each other's spiritual well-being is an essential characteristic of saints. Do you think that Paul was over reacting when he was speaking about ‘spiritual care’? and the rest about been equal? Don't you think and believe that many have missed the Biblical mark on those two points? Or is it just me.

THE JOY OF SAINTS

“especially those of Caesar's household.” (Philippians 4:22b)

The greatest joy of saints is to see sinners 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 express the joy believers have at the salvation of lost sinners. Similarly when Paul and Barnabas described

"in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, they brought great joy to all the brethren" (Acts 15:3).

Paul's reference to *those of Caesar's household* was especially meaningful to the Philippians. 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 is possible that the Philippians knew some of the members of **Caesar's household**. **Caesar's household** included more than just the members of his family; it included all those in his direct employ, both lowly slaves and high-ranking freemen. In today's terminology, they were government workers. During his imprisonment at Rome, Paul would have come into contact with many of them.

Some of the members of the imperial household, such as those of the praetorian guard the apostle refers to in Philippians 1:13, were led to faith in Christ by Paul. Others, however, were already Christians before Paul came to Rome. The nineteenth-century New Testament scholar, J. B. Lightfoot, found some striking parallels between the names Paul lists in Romans 16:8-15 and the names of members of Caesar's household on lists dating from Paul's time which he wrote about in his book *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Lightfoot J.B., 1953, pp:171-78). He concluded,

"As a result of his investigation, we seem to have established a fair presumption, that among the salutations in the Epistle to the Romans some members at least of the imperial household are included".

Paul includes both groups, those saved through his ministry and those already believers, in his greetings from **Caesar's household**. Both he and the Philippians were no doubt thrilled that the **household** of the Pagan emperor had yielded up many souls to the kingdom of Christ. The joy of saints is to see others rescued from the dark depths of sin and brought to salvation in Christ.

We know it's the work of the Holy Spirit to save but whose responsibility is it to tell others? Since I was saved and right up to date, I still find it a joy just to tell others the Gospel and when they come to Christ well that's the icing on the cake. Have you lost "that joy"? Are you

eager to tell others the Gospel? If you had a method would you use it? Remember we don't save but we ought to share.

THE RESOURCE OF SAINTS

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (Philippians 4:23)

Paul has now come full circle. He began this letter by wishing the Philippians grace (Philippians 1:2), and he concludes it the same way. The apostle ended all his letters by wishing God's grace for their recipients (Cross reference with Romans 16:24; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25).

The resource all believers need most is **the grace** that comes from **the Lord Jesus Christ**. Grace is the unmerited favor or undeserved, beneficent love of God in Christ that brought about believers' redemption (Ephesians 2:5, 8; Romans 3:24; 2 Timothy 1:9). God's work of grace in believers' lives will continue until their glorification. Paul expressed that truth in Romans 5:2:

"Through [Christ] 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."

Believers are not only saved by grace, but also sustained by grace. They are governed by grace, guided by grace, kept by grace, strengthened by grace, sanctified by grace, and enabled by grace. They are constantly dependent on the forgiveness, comfort, peace, joy, boldness, and instruction that come through God's grace.

God's sustaining grace comes to believers through **the Lord Jesus Christ**. He is the theme of this epistle, being mentioned almost forty times in its four chapters. Paul described himself as a servant of Christ (Philippians 1:1); he addressed the Philippians as saints in Christ (Philippians 1:1); his imprisonment was for the cause of Christ (Philippians 1:13); for him to live was Christ (Philippians 1:21) and death ushered him into Christ's presence (Philippians 1:23); he exhorted the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of Christ (Philippians 1:26) by having the attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:5); he called for them to glory in Christ (Philippians 3:3); he counted everything in his past as

garbage in view of the riches he found in Christ (Philippians 3:8); he was saved by faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9); he eagerly awaited Christ's return (Philippians 3:20); and his sufficiency was in Christ (Philippians 4:19).

The character, worship, fellowship, joy, and resources of saints are all bound up in Jesus Christ. Paul aptly summed up the Christian life when he wrote,

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

So just to reflect over our time spend in this amazing letter of Paul to the Philippians, I trust that you have been able to take the time not to just listen, but to reflect on the word, even meditate on it and made the effort to implement the truths that we have been able to uncover throughout this time. But how would you sum up this epistle? What outstanding things have you found that have really impacted upon your heart and mind as well as your soul?

For me at least, it was the centrality of Christ likeness that Paul sought for these saints to emulate. That well known verse in chapter 1 verse 21,

"For me to live is Christ... that is His life in me, and to die is gain...the gain of glory of eternity."

This incredible divine relationship that Paul has urged the saint to foster and grow in, would be the means of shinning the light of the glorious Gospel to the world. He went to great pains to point out that they had not come into another religion but a relationship this we find in chapter 2 and the opening verses. The challenge then, as now, is to grow and not stay static.

For many their knowledge of the Holy, as in the tri-unity of the God-Head, the scriptures and how they should live their their life, is no more than when they first believed. Their attitude and behaviour, as well as own, should change when we to know the Lord as Saviour. The baggage from their old life is dragged across the church continual behind them and they are worn out and weigh down. When we fail to committee whole heartily to the Lord, as Paul encouraged them to do, and separate our lives from the world, from religion and even ourselves, we continually have problems in our walk with the Lord and discovering His will for our will for our lives. How often do we forget that God does not just heal our hearts, but he gives us a new heart completely? Verse three of chapter2 warns us to walk in the newness of life. The challenge continues to confront us with the question, "How will I respond?"



Then comes the answer to us from chapter 3, “Delight yourselves in the Lord”. If Paul loved these saints, and he did, how much more does the Lord love you and me? We answer in the affirmative so readily and correctly, but if we do really believe it than why do we often behave in the negative so many times?

Have you ever read through Jeremiah? If so, then you would know how the children of Israel behaved. Jesus said it so well,

“They do honour me with their lips but I am far from their heart”.

We need to turn that completely around and not just with our lips but we should honour God with all our heart. Why? Because by grace you are a different person in Christ. Christ in me the hope of glory. You are God’s child.

Will you run the race? Endure the course? Help the participants? Finish to the end? Obtain the prize? Experience the Joy of the Lord regardless of the challenges you face? Win the crown. That’s what this epistle is all about.

Reference:

Lightfoot J.B (1953) *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, Reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pp: 171-78

Amén.