

**Message #26**

**Philippians 4:21-23**

Let's begin this today by playing a game of name association. I will say a name and you think of something about the person:

- 1) Plato - famous philosopher
- 2) Shakespeare - famous playwright
- 3) Abraham Lincoln - famous president
- 4) Tom Brady - famous quarterback
- 5) Patton - famous general
- 6) Michael Jordan - famous basketball player
- 7) Clint Eastwood - famous actor
- 8) Frankie Valli - famous singer
- 9) Don Smith - famous \_\_\_\_\_?

Don Smith, who is that? O he is the guy who is teaching Sunday School class today to a group of children in a Bible church in another state.

Have you ever personally met any of those people I just named? You may have seen them, but do you personally know them?

But I would be willing to bet that if any of those people walked into this church today, probably the one who should be honored the most would be honored the least.

In most churches the people would flock to see those on that list, that is all except old Don Smith. Not too many would rush to him to rally around him.

I doubt that when we had our greeting this morning during the first hymn that we fully grasped the significance of it. What happened in that greeting is that you actually shook the hand and said hello to another brother and sister in Christ. That brother or sister, in the mind of God, is the most valuable person on the face of this earth. You see that brother or sister in Christ is related to the Living God.

When the Apostle Paul was here on this earth, he believed that the most honored person was the believer in the church. That believer was to be loved, honored, esteemed and respected as a child of the Living God. That reality merits respect.

**As we come to the final verses of Philippians, we cannot help but notice that the verb “greet” is used three times in two verses.**

That word means to greet someone in the sense of embracing and honoring someone. The word means to actually welcome someone and salute them (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 64-65). This greeting is something that is respectful, clean and sacred.

- 1) This was the type of sacred honor and respect that the Scribes and Pharisees demanded and loved (Matt. 23:7; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43; 20:46).
- 2) This was the type of sacred honor and respect given to Mary by Gabriel in his birth announcement of God’s Son (Luke 1:29).
- 3) This was the type of sacred honor and respect given to Elizabeth by Mary in the pregnancies of both John and Jesus (Luke 1:40-45).
- 4) This was the type of sacred honor and respect Paul gave to the churches of God (Acts 18:22; 20:1; 21:5, 6, 7, 19).

When Paul brought this letter to the Philippians to its conclusion, he wanted every believer in the church to have sacred honor and respect. What Paul says here is this:

**EVERY BELIEVER IN THE CHURCH IS A SAINT THAT IS SET APART IN JESUS CHRIST AND HE IS TO BE ESTEEMED AND HONORED IN THE CHURCH.**

When Paul begins **verse 21**, he says “greet every saint.” That word saint refers to one who has been sacredly set apart in Jesus Christ. In other words, it refers to one whom God has saved.

Every person in God’s family who has been separated in Christ deserves to be honored. Paul is quick to qualify the noun “saint” by “every” and “all.” All believers deserve respect and honor. Every believer deserves to be esteemed and honored.

This is what is so convoluted. Sometimes the church is quick to give more honor and esteem to those outside the church rather than to those who are in the church, who are children of God.

From God’s perspective and from Paul’s perspective, the most treasured people on the face of this earth are those who have a relationship with His Son. It is not those who can shoot a basketball or hit a baseball or throw a football. It is not those who can memorize a script. The most treasured of all are those who know His Son.

When the church is thinking right, it will esteem and honor those who know the Lord. That is clearly a final point Paul is making to these Philippians.

There are four final statements Paul makes in signing off this amazing letter:

**FINAL STATEMENT #1 – Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. 4:21a**

Paul typically would end his letters to churches with some type of “greeting” exhortation. The only exceptions to this are Galatians and Ephesians. Paul would not have said, “greet Demas who forsook me” or “greet Alexander the coppersmith who did me much harm.” But to the Philippians he could say, “Greet” everyone. In this Philippian letter, he wanted “every saint” greeted. This was a good, solid church and Paul wanted everyone in that church greeted.

Every saint is to be greeted and esteemed and honored in this church. It apparently did not matter who they are; where they come from; what their past; what their economic status; what their ethnicity. It did not matter what their gender, size, age, height, weight or color. It did not matter whether they are respected in society at the highest level or viewed at the lowest level. It didn’t matter if one were educated or not educated. It did not matter if one could parse a verb or not read at all. If that believer was in the church of Philippi, Paul wanted him greeted.

If a person is a believer in Jesus Christ and comes to this church and loves the Word of God, that believer is to be esteemed and honored and treated with respect. This is true for “every saint.” God has set them apart and we need to esteem them for that.

Later this morning we will welcome in some new members and when some people ask us about membership they will say well what do I have to do. Really you don’t have to do anything. It isn’t a question of what you do; it is a question of what you believe. This is why when we meet with prospective members we ask them when you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior. You see if that person has trusted Christ, they certainly deserve our respect and support. Now it is true that we have a doctrinal position in this church and the person needs to know about that, but the fact is this all begins with faith in Christ. When one believes, that one becomes a saint.

**FINAL STATEMENT #2 – All the brethren with Paul greet you. 4:21b**

In the mind of Paul, he drew a distinction between the large circle of believers that he knew and the small circle of believers with whom he worked. To get into the inner circle of Paul’s team was very special and very rare.

That preposition “with” is not the normal choice of preposition. The normal choice is meta (μετα). The choice of preposition Paul uses here is sun, pronounced “soon” (συν). This preposition speaks of an intimate and inclusive association (*Ibid.* p. 424).

To add further weight to this, Paul uses a very emphatic pronoun “me.” So those with Paul had a very intimate and inclusive relationship with Paul himself. Just as the Lord had a close circle of ministerial brothers, so did Paul.

Two of those ministerial brothers, Paul has specifically named in this book: 1) Timothy (2:19) and 2) Epaphroditus (2:25). There were some others that show up in Paul’s writings. He wrote Colossians about the same time he wrote Philippians and he names some key men in that letter.

Men like Tychicus (Col. 4:7); Onesimus (Col. 4:9); Aristarchus (Col. 4:10); Epaphras (Col. 4:12; Philemon 23) and Luke (Col. 4:14). Whoever was with Paul greeted the Philippians. The point seems to be you need to honor and esteem each other because me and my team honor and respect you. When you get a greeting from this group, it would mean something.

One of the men that I have a picture of in my office is Dr. John Walvoord. Years ago, when I worked for Kregel, Bob Kregel received a manuscript written by a guy who attacked Dr. John Walvoord. Bob asked me to read it and see what I thought. I read it and wrote Dr. Walvoord and he wrote me back. In the letter he wrote me, he said he knew of that guy and we should stay clear of him and then he commended me for being able to spot the error in the guy's book. Man that put me on cloud nine. To think that a man of the magnitude of Dr. Walvoord would complement some peon brain like me was humbling and it was also motivating. It makes you want to keep after truth.

That is what this greeting was designed to do. Motivate these Philippians to keep at it and to keep honoring and esteeming each other.

Paul was a big name in Christianity. But he never forgot people. Paul was a man who honored and respected every believer, who was faithful. When a man of this magnitude says I want you to know that me and my team greet you, it is no light matter.

Now in Hebrews 13 there is a statement given about leadership that is called to give a testimony of each of us as to whether or not we were faithful (Heb. 13:7, 17). Just imagine if a team like this says we esteem you and we honor you.

### **FINAL STATEMENT #3 – All the saints greet you. 4:22**

Paul was in Rome in prison. Paul knew many people in Rome (Rom. 16:1-16). Since his imprisonment the Gospel was making an impact in some very high places (Phil. 1:12-13). As we have already learned, Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12). So the fact that the saints of Rome esteemed this Philippian church would mean something to them.

Now what is stated in this verse is that there were some from "Caesar's household" who greeted them. The Caesar, at the time Paul wrote, was Nero Claudius Caesar, known of course by his name Nero. There is a speculative story that says when Nero was out of town, his own wife had believed on Jesus Christ and when Nero found out about it, it prompted him to behead Paul.

Nero was born in AD 37 and he became emperor of Rome in AD 54 at the age of 17. He had serious moral issues and in AD 64, he burned down the city of Rome and blamed Christians and started executing them. He ended up committing suicide in AD 68, at the age of 31.

Now here is what I find amazing. According to history, one of the key things that prompted Nero's suicide was the fact that he saw that the Praetorian guard had deserted him.

One historian writes: “In 68 the governors of three provinces rose in open revolt. When the Praetorians also deserted him, Nero committed suicide on Jun 9, 68.”

This is the exact group that Paul names in Philippians 1:13. According to Chrysostom, who lived a couple hundred years after this event, he says that many in the Roman Kingdom despised the kingdom because it contradicted that which was being proclaimed by Paul. Many in the Roman Kingdom, including some from the Praetorian, were advising others to believe in Christ. **Paul’s imprisonment had penetrated Caesar’s house with the Gospel.**

Many who had been closely connected to Nero had believed on the Lord, including perhaps even some from Nero’s own family.

Those who at one time were opposed to the church are now sending their warmest greetings to the church. They too esteemed and honored the Philippians and they too sent their greeting.

Can you imagine us getting a letter that says everyone here in the White House greets you because you are the saints of God? That is the letter the Philippians received from Paul

**FINAL STATEMENT #4** – God’s grace is with you. **4:23**

Paul may not end every letter with a greeting, but he does end every letter with a focus on grace.

This is the Pauline theme and the whole essence of the Pauline ministry. It can be summed up in one word: “GRACE.”

Now why does Paul say grace “be with your spirit?” That is odd. Because you had two troubled women in the church who were causing problems with their mouths and instead of being so critical and judgmental, they needed to demonstrate grace.

Paul began this letter by having people focus on grace (1:2) and he ends it with the same focus. As Dr. Ironside said, he ends the letter with “grace ringing in our souls” (*Philippians*, p. 126).

Paul ends this letter by bringing the Philippians back to the grace that is found in one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We who have believed on Jesus Christ have been given a salvation we do not deserve, do not merit and cannot earn. We should esteem anyone who embraces grace.

Jesus Christ suffered for us and took our sins from us and gave us a relationship with God. If the Lord Jesus Christ loved us while we were sinners, shouldn’t we love and honor one another since we are sinners? If God can give us heaven, certainly we can give each other some respect.

With these words, “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,” he stopped writing and rolled up the scroll and handed it to Epaphroditus and said take it to them.