



## "Saints" (Philippians 4:20-23)

Danny Hodges – NT3473

Intro: Can you believe it? We will come the end of our study of Philippians today. We were traveling at a pretty good clip until we got to chapter 4...I was reading John MacArthur's message on the last part of this chapter, and in his introduction he said that they had begun the study of Philippians a year and a half before. So in comparison, we have sprinted through this wonderful letter. Colossians is our next stop, so begin reading ahead.

II Thessalonians 3: 17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

People could be sending all kinds of letters and saying they were from Paul, so it was vital that he do this to authenticate the letter. In II Thess.2:2 he mentions at least one letter supposed to have come from him that was actually written by false teachers. So he picks up the stylus from his secretary and pens this final word. And by doing so he introduces to us a final and fascinating theme. Read the text. What is this theme that Paul ends with? "The saints." The saints are mentioned in two of our final verses, and they are implied in the other two.

### SAINTS & THE GLORY OF GOD

v.20 This doxology is no doubt what led Paul to his final words of vv.21-23. Doxology comes from a Greek word which means glory. A doxology is simply a word about glory. It is ascribing glory to God, something quite natural for a true saint to do. See Romans 11:33-36. After bursting into this doxology, Paul settles down to write the last part of the book of Romans. But he can't close the epistle without another doxology. See Romans 16:27. See Gal.1:3-5; Eph.3:16-21; II Tim.4:16-18; Heb.13:20-21; II Peter 3:17-18; Jude 1:25; Rev.1:4-6.

"Be the glory forever and ever." That marvelous Greek phrase translated forever and forever basically means cycles...cycles and cycles and cycles and cycles, it's ad infinitum, it's unending. God is to be worshipped unendingly. And He will be. We His saints will worship Him forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. That is the very definition of our existence.

When all earthly glory fades, the glory of God shines on. And those who have followed the Lord (His saints) will forever reflect His glory...

Daniel 12: 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

The doxologies of Scripture are outbursts of praise in response to great truths about God, truth which settles the issues of the heart. John 4 - "spirit and truth"

Say with me: "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."

## THE IDENTITY OF THE SAINTS

\* Paul's favorite word for Christians is the word "saint." He uses it over sixty times in his epistles (Examples: II Cor.1:1; 13:13; Eph.1:1; Phil.1:1; Col.1:4; Philemon 1:5).

\* Catholic theology says, and I quote, "A saint is one who has exhibited unsurpassable devotion to Christ." And if you take that definition that a saint is someone who has demonstrated unsurpassable devotion to Christ, you might well be reluctant to call yourself a saint. Catholic saints have statues and stained-glass windows made of them. They are to be venerated, they are to be prayed to, appealed to, praised, exalted and honored. You might see, for example, people kissing those saints. You might see many people bowing their knees before those saints. You will see some people bringing flowers and gifts to the saints. Some burn incense. Others will be burning candles. In fact, you will frequently see in a Roman Catholic Church candles at the feet of the saints. The belief is that the prayer to this saint lasts as long as the candle burns. All this is done because the Roman Catholic Church teaches that because of the unsurpassable devotion to Christ these people exhibited in their earthly life, they have been exalted in their heavenly life to a position of special clout with God. As a result, it is believed that we can pray to these saints, and because of their sainthood, they can pray to God for us, and others that we bring before them. They become intermediaries, intercessors for us. Another thing Roman Catholic theology teaches is that they have special work of interceding with God for the souls of people in what they call purgatory. This is not Paul's theology regarding saints.

\* The word hagios, or hagioi in plural, simply means "set apart ones, separated ones, sanctified ones or perhaps best, holy ones." Now, what is it that makes a saint holy?

\* Hebrews 2: 11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. (Heb.3:1 we are called "holy brothers").

\* Hebrews 10: 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made **holy** through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

\* See Ephesians 1:3-8; Col.1:10-14; I Peter 2:9-10

\* Sons of God (Eph.1:5)

\* Heirs of God (Eph.1:18)

\* Those who will one day rule and reign with Christ

- I Cor.6: 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

\* Those who are "in Christ." The bottom line that makes me a saint is that I am "in Christ." That's not true of other world religions. People aren't in Buddha, they just believe in the teachings of Buddha. They aren't in Mohammed, they just believe the teachings of Mohammed. They aren't in Mary Baker Eddy, they aren't in their religious leader. They aren't in the swamis and the yogi leaders and occult leaders. That kind of union of life is distinctively Christian.

\* When Paul speaks of saints, the majority of times his reference is to very ordinary Christians. In verse 21 he says, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus." In verse 22 he says, "All the saints greet you." And you can see by both of those references that the term is very commonly used. It is very broad. It is very encompassing. In fact, he identifies all of the people in the Philippian church as saints back in chapter 1 verse 1. He says, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons." It isn't just deacons who become saints, it isn't just elders, overseers who become saints, or pastors, it is everybody in the congregation who is a saint.

\* Just to make it as clear as possible who the saints are, if you were to identify the most troublesome sinful church to which a New Testament letter is written, what church would it be? Corinth, right? Listen to these encouraging words, I Corinthians 1:1 and 2, "Paul, called an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling." Even the Corinthians were saints. With all of their problems, despite the carnality prevalent in the church.

\* I am holy, a child of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ, will one day rule and reign with Christ, but none as a result of any of my own merits. I am in Christ. I am a saint, solely on the basis of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 23 said to the Jewish leaders and to the Apostles, "Don't call any man father?" Don't let any man pass himself off as superior to the brotherhood. You're all brothers. You're all saints.

\* Say with me: "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."

## THE "SPECIAL" SAINTS THAT SEND GREETINGS

\* Nero was the Caesar referred to in v.22, and everybody knows what Nero thought about Christ and Christians. Nero demanded that the people in the Roman Empire worship him. Now the household of Caesar would not just have been his own family, the household of Caesar is a word to indicate all who were in his direct employ. And if you study history you find it's a very interesting group. It included courtiers, princes and higher ups in his personal court, judges. It included cooks, food preparers, tasters who tasted the food to make sure he didn't get poisoned. Musicians, custodians, builders, people who attended to his stables, it included soldiers and those who led them, it included people who managed his financial affairs. And because Caesar and his whole enterprise was the direct counterpart to Christ, that there was some special exhilaration in the heart of Paul when somebody in Caesar's household became a Christian...when they turned their backs on emperor worship and embraced Christ.

\* Many of these saints in Caesar's household would have been saved directly through Paul's ministry (See Phil.1:12-14). You can be sure that the Roman soldiers who had been chained to Paul heard the gospel. It's one thing to be chained to Paul, to guard him; it's something else to have Paul chained to you.

\* J.B. Lightfoot, that great New Testament scholar, has a marvelous treatment of this whole idea of the Christians in Caesar's household. And studying all kinds of lists that have been discovered archaeologically that give us names of Caesar's household (they've found them in archaeological digs), he has taken all the names on all those lists that have been discovered, gone over those names to see if he can recognize any of them, and amazingly he found many parallels on the list of government workers with the list of names in Romans chapter 16... it's pretty clear that people like Ampliatus, Apelles, Stachys, Rufus, Hermes, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, at least, and maybe others, were very, very much a part of Caesar's household.

\* Saints come from all walks of life. Remember the birth of the church of Philippi? Lydia the business woman, a fortune teller, the Philippian jailor and his family.

\* See Luke 8:1-3

\* They are doctors, lawyers, government officials (Romans 16: Erastus, who is the city's director of public works), servants, slaves, rich, poor, those in jails and prisons (Onesimus). They are eunuchs (Ethiopian of Acts 8), lepers, outcasts, publicans and sinners, I Cor.6: 9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God...religious zealots who finally discovered the truth...they are red, yellow, black, and white. They speak English, Russian, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Albanian, Arabic, French, Spanish. As a matter of fact, God's saints ultimately come from all languages of the world!

\* Rev.5: 9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

\* What an amazing truth - **anyone** can become a saint!

\* Rev.22: 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

\* Say with me: "To our god and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."

## THE GRACE OF GOD UPON ALL THE SAINTS

\* You want to hear something, you didn't deserve to be saved and you don't deserve to be kept saved. Do you understand that? You are no more worthy of your salvation now

than you were then. And so you are sustained by grace just as you were saved by grace. It is grace by which our whole life exists. That's why Paul says in Romans 5:2, "This grace in which we stand." We live in it. Our life is governed by grace, guided by grace, kept by grace, strengthened by grace, sanctified by grace, enabled by grace. Listen, if God only gave us now that we're Christians what we deserve, we'd still be damned to hell. It is the constant grace of forgiveness, the grace of enabling strength, the grace of comfort, the grace of peace, the grace of joy, the grace of boldness, the grace of revelation and instruction. We are dependent on all of it all the time. Every single epistle Paul wrote ends the same way...every one of them. First Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, every single one ends with a wish for the grace of Christ to be theirs. Why? Because when the letter is over the life goes on and the life is dependent on grace...undeserved beneficent love from God to an unworthy sinner. And we never cease to be what we are by the grace of God. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ...He is the reason we live, love, are heaven bound, etc. etc.

\* Say with me: "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."

## CONCLUSION

\* What amazing truth, that God calls me a saint. Not as a result of my unsurpassed devotion to Him, but because I am in Christ Jesus. I have been made holy by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And because I am in Christ, I am God's child. I have been adopted into His family. He has become my Father...

\* Rom.8: 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

\* Galatians 4: 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

\* What an amazing truth, that I share in the inheritance of the saints. I am a joint heir with Jesus Christ!

\* I Cor.3: All things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours...

\* Ephesians 1: 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...

\* What an amazing truth, that the same grace that saved me and qualified me to share in the inheritance of the saints is the same grace that continues to sustain me, allowing me to come before the throne of my Heavenly Father not out of fear, but in anticipation of receiving what I did not and still do not deserve - grace and mercy to help me in my time of need...

\* Say with me: "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."