

Text: Philippians 4:20-23

Title: Closing Praise and Greetings

Truth: God deserves glorious honor forever.

Date/Location: Sunday May 22, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

20 Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

We come to the end of the epistle to the Philippians.

I. Praise to God, v. 20

It is easy to read this verse and quickly move on because it is at the end of the letter and you think that the main content of the letter is basically done. But slow down and read carefully!

A. This kind of verse is called a doxology. This word means a discourse (-logy) about the glory (doxo-) of God. The root doxo- comes from the Greek word "doxa" (δόξα).

B. This is a prayer wish following on the heels of Paul's confident assertion that *my God* will supply all their needs according to His riches in glory. *Our God* is worthy of praise and glory and honor because He has arranged things so that our needs—and many wants too—are provided. And when adversity comes, we remember that God is still providing in accordance with His will. Paul's hope is that God will indeed be recognized as He should be because of this. We too should acknowledge God's care for us.

C. He is worthy of glory for a host of reasons. For example:

1. The angels proclaim God's glory at the birth of Jesus. Luke 2:14.
2. God has the power to strengthen us according to the gospel which He revealed and in which He demonstrated His infinite wisdom, He deserves honor through Christ. Romans 16:25-27.

3. Christ came into the world to save sinners. God has shown us mercy and patience in giving to us eternal life. To Him—the eternal, immortal, invisible, only-wise King and God—belongs glory for this. 1 Timothy 1:17.
 4. God is well able to keep you from falling and to bring you into His presence without blame and with great joy. Jude 24-25.
 5. Jesus, the Son of the Father, died for us and cleansed us from our sins with His own blood. He further made citizens in His coming kingdom and established us His priests already. He is worthy of glory and power forever. Revelation 1:6.
 6. The angels in Revelation 7:12 fall down and worship God and ascribe to Him the glory due to His name.
 7. Other doxologies are found in Romans 11:33-36, Ephesians 3:21, 2 Timothy 4:18, 1 Peter 4:11, 5:10-11, 2 Peter 3:18, Revelation 4:9-11, 5:13, 14:6-7. This makes 16 portions of God’s word, all in the last 27 books, that extol the glory of God. There are others that use different wording, but they carry the same idea.
- D. Almost all these passages refer to the *duration* of the glory—forever and ever. They use a somewhat lengthy phrase in Greek, literally “unto the ages of the ages.” It is commonly understood to mean simply *forever*. God will receive, and should receive, glory in every age, both in the age which now is, and the kingdom age coming, and after that the eternal state. In that final era all of creation will recognize God for Who He is.
- E. Most of the doxology passages also end with the word *Amen*. The meaning is *so let it be*. The preceding words are faithful to the truth. *Amen* is a strong affirmation (BDAG), assent, and endorsement of what was just said.
- F. Notice also to Whom the doxology is directed: our God and Father. He is to us who know Him at the same time both God and Father. He is related to us as a king to the subject, *and* as a father to the son. He is high and lifted up, *and* also close and compassionate. He is holy, *and* He is a friend. He is all powerful, *and* He is tender. He rules every star and galaxy, *and* is involved in the small details of

your life. He has created you *and* after you demonstrated an initial aversion to him, He adopted you as His own child!

- G. The Greek text has no verb in it. This is not strange for Greek, though it may seem so from our vantage point. Like this: “Now to our God and Father—glory forever and ever.” It is very pointed this way.

II. Christian Greetings, v. 21-22

- A. The apostle Paul often wrote the closing words with his own hand, “which is a sign in every epistle; so I write” (2 Thess. 3:17; see also 1 Cor. 16:21, Col. 4:18). This was an important step for verification of the letter’s author because of forgeries (2 Thess. 2:2). The kind of influence that Paul wielded was a temptation for some people, and they wanted that kind of power, so they would seek by writing or itinerant preaching to get some of it for themselves.
- B. Paul sends greetings, more than mere regards. He sends Christian greetings “in Christ Jesus.” This is not just a human-level greeting like “See you later” or “Ciao” but a warm affection in the shared life and bond of Jesus Christ. It is a greeting that cannot be broken by distance or time or even death. It reflects the reality that we are eternally united in Christ—every single saved person, which means “every saint in Christ Jesus.” As we have said, if you are saved, you are a saint—and should act like one. You don’t have to be dead to be a saint. Paul wants to touch each and every one with a greeting.
- C. Those brothers with him are Timothy and Epaphroditus. In other letters, this grouping of “close associates” included Silas (2 Cor. 1:19, 1 & 2 Thess 1:1, 1 Peter 5:12) and Luke, among others. Paul passes their greetings as well.
- D. In verse 22, Paul again expands the greetings being sent. The Christians in Rome where Paul is imprisoned want to send their greetings to far-away brothers and sisters. Included were those of Caesar’s household. This may not have been the immediate family of the Caesar, but certainly some who were fairly close to him, servants in the household, governmental staff, etc. A normal man’s household would include his wife and children, perhaps parents, servants, grandchildren, etc. A wealthy man would have many

servants and a larger household. The Caesar would have a huge household under his charge to care for all his goods, animals, properties, governmental affairs, food, money, personal security, etc.

It may be that some of the Romans had visited Philippi before or knew some of the people in the church there (a prominent businesswoman, a prison official and perhaps others).

- E. Remember to greet your fellow saints. You do not know when you will give the last such greeting before being separated by distance, years of time, or even death. But do so for more than merely sentimental reasons.

III. Wish for Grace, v. 23

- A. Consider to Homer Kent's comment on this verse: "It invokes on the Philippian church the continuing favor of Christ to be with their spirits. The realization of this benediction would increase the harmony of the congregation by causing the spirit of each believer to cherish the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and by bringing a joyous peace among them, fulfilling the apostle's opening wish (1:2)."¹
- B. The plain fact of the matter is that if you are a Christian, the grace of the Lord Jesus has already been and is upon you. But who would not wish for more such favor from Christ, not only in quantity but also in continuance as time progresses? We need the grace of Christ all the time. And God promises to give it, but that does not make it wrong to desire more of it, pray for it, and ask God to pour it out in abundance upon others! Since Christians have been justified, we have peace with God through Christ and access by faith into the grace of God (Romans 5:1-2).

Conclusion

We do not know of further interactions that Paul had with the church. These may have been his last words to them. But they were meaningful words.

MAP

¹ Homer Kent, *Philippians in The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, p. 158-9.