



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Friends in High Places

PHILIPPIANS 4:20-23

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Sometimes politics can be all about who you know and who you are close to in positions of power and authority. Being friends with or working for someone in a high position can bring opportunities for privileges and advancement. Knowing someone high up in government service can help get things done. Indeed, when it comes to government, it can help to have “friends in high places”. Consequently, within the halls of the capitol we often think of relationships in terms of power and influence. However, God’s kingdom works very differently. Citizens of heaven look at relationships in a whole different way. These are the relationships Paul is writing about in the closing words of his letter to the church at Philippi. Though it is a common closing for a letter at this time, we can learn a lot from Paul’s final remarks to the Philippian believers:

***20Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 21Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. 22All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household. 23The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Philippians 4:20-23***

### THE FOCUS ON THE GLORY OF GOD

Paul’s closing to his letter begins with what we may call a doxology. A doxology is a word or statement about the glory of God. It is an outburst of praise and adoration that honors and ascribes glory to God. Doxologies are statements of praise for God’s glory are always fitting responses to Bible truths. We see Paul often burst forth with such responses in his writings (see Romans 11:33-36; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:20-21; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18).

### THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS AND BRETHREN

The fellowship of the saints and brethren in Philippi is an important theme that has run throughout Paul’s letter. In 1:5 Paul writes of their “*participation* in the gospel”. In 1:7 Paul reminds them they are “*partakers* of grace with me”. In 2:1 Paul begins challenging the believers in Philippi to

express unity and humility because of their “*fellowship* of the Spirit.” In 3:10 Paul describes his desire to experience the “*fellowship* of Christ’s sufferings”. Finally, in 4:14-15 Paul thanked the church at Philippi for their willingness to “*share* with me in my affliction” and for their faithfulness to “*share* with me in the matter of giving and receiving”. Paul also writes of the unity the Philippian believers are to express because of their relationships in Christ (Phil. 2:1-12; 4:1-3).

**Greeting Fellow Believers:** There are a couple of significant things to notice in Paul’s closing. First, three times he uses the word “greet”. There is an exhortation to greet every saint in Christ Jesus. Paul does not say to greet “all the saints”. He encouraged the church leaders to greet *every individual* in the church on his behalf and assure them of his love and concern for them. He then sends greetings from the companions and church leaders who were with him in his imprisonment. Finally, he sends greetings from all the believers in Rome, *especially those of Caesar’s household*. This likely refers to those in the emperor’s service and employ rather than to members of his family. Paul’s testimony and witness had reached even into the halls of power. Paul now had “friends in high places”. His relationships with them were not based on access, privilege, or power. Their friendship and fellowship were based on the relationships they shared with each other because of their relationship with Jesus Christ.

The fact that the gospel had reached into Emperor Nero’s own administration was significant and would have made quite an impression on the residents of the Roman colony. You might recall that one of the purposes of Paul’s letter was to reassure the Philippian believers because of his imprisonment in Rome. He assured them that the message of the gospel was not being thwarted, rather his difficult circumstances turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. He informed them that the cause of Christ became well known, even throughout the whole praetorian guard (see Phil. 1:12-14). This certainly included many who served in Caesar’s household. The Roman government was severely

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERIM BIBLE STUDY TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

12:00 NOON – TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54 IN BASEMENT OF EAST WING)

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persecuting followers of Christ. Nero would viciously try to stamp out Christianity. Paul was imprisoned and would soon be put to death. Yet the message of redemption and life through the cross of Christ reached in to the very halls of Roman power. In that brief statement, “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household”, Paul acknowledges and proclaims the power of the gospel for conversion, even in the highest halls of power.

**Are There Saints in the Capitol?** Secondly, we should notice the terms Paul uses to describe the believers both in Rome and Philippi. He first uses the term “saints”. He encourages the leaders to greet *every saint* in the church in Philippi. He then refers to *all the saints* in Rome. So who are these saints Paul is talking about? Are they some special classification of believer – extra holy followers of Christ worthy of special reverence and respect?

Absolutely not! Whenever the New Testament refers to “saints”, it is speaking of each and every follower of Jesus Christ. The term is used 61 times and it always refers to any and every person who has repented and put their truth in Christ for salvation.<sup>1</sup> The word literally means “set apart ones”, “sanctified ones”, or, perhaps best, “holy ones”.

It is doubtful any of us would describe ourselves as “saints”. We have all sinned and fallen far short of God’s glory. Each of us have lied, committed adultery and murder in our hearts (Matt. 5:21-22; 27-28). Every one of us has failed to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). All it takes is one sin on our part and we are no longer perfect (holy), as our heavenly Father is perfect. Because of our sin we are under God’s wrath and judgment. Yet the Bible says that if we have trusted Christ for salvation, we are called saints, because that is how God sees us. Note that believers are saints “**in Christ Jesus**”. This is the amazing story of the gospel. It is through His perfect life and obedience and His suffering and death on the cross that Christ sets believers apart to God and makes them holy. Our sins are forgiven because Jesus took our punishment upon Himself. His goodness is given to us, so that when God looks at the believer, He sees the righteousness (goodness) of Christ. That does not mean we are sinless or perfect. The Christian life is all about growing more and more to reflect our position in Christ in our daily lives.

Paul also uses the term “brethren” to describe the close relationships we have with fellow believers in Christ. As children of God, believers are “brothers and sisters” in the Lord. We may often hear people in church settings refer to each other as “brothers” or “sisters”. While the capitol is certainly not a church, Paul’s words should make believers in the statehouse consider how they relate to each other.

### THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE

In every letter Paul closes with a reference to the grace of Christ. In Philippians, he begins with the grace of Christ (1:2) and ends with the same (4:23). Pastor James Montgomery Boice well describes Paul’s focus on the grace we find in Christ:

*“... The message of Christianity from beginning to end is grace, God’s unmerited favor to human beings. Do we deserve anything from God? Do we deserve life or health or happiness? Do we deserve the gift of God’s Holy Spirit or His keeping in our daily life? Or the fact that we are made God’s heirs in the Lord Jesus Christ and will one day share in all of the riches of God’s nature? Not at all! We deserve nothing. We have run from God, and still, even after we are saved, we run from Him. Yet, when we were far from Him, God came to us dying for our sin, rising for our justification, and now living to enter the life of those who believe in Him and to guide them to holiness. God loves us and will love us forever. That is grace. It lies at the heart of the gospel.”<sup>2</sup>*

### CONCLUSION

- **ARE YOU A SAINT IN CHRIST? THIS DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE PERFECT BUT THAT YOU HAVE HAD YOUR SINS FORGIVEN AND CHRIST’S GOODNESS GIVEN TO YOU THROUGH FAITH IN WHAT HE HAS DONE ON THE CROSS.**
- **IF YOU ARE A BELIEVER, HOW ARE YOU GREETING AND FELLOWSHIPING WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS IN THE STATEHOUSE?**
- **ARE YOU SEEKING FIRST OF ALL GOD’S GLORY TO BE LIFTED UP IN THE CAPITOL?**
- **ARE YOU TRUSTING GOD TO SEE THE GOSPEL SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE CAPITOL?**

<sup>1</sup> See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1 for just a few examples.

<sup>2</sup> Boice, James Montgomery. *Philippians: An Expository Commentary*. Baker Books. 1971. pg. 265