Saints In Caesar’s Household

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday November 22nd, 2020

Text: Philippians 4:21-23

### Intro

1. Paul’s letter to the Philippians begins with a greeting to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi.” *(Phil. 1:1)*
   1. Saints *(Hagios, G40: Holy ones, sacred, morally blameless, pure, consecrated)*
   2. Equivalent to “holy” in OT: *Heb. Qadowsh (H6918: sacred, set apart).*
   3. “Saints” identifies people “set apart” from the world and consecrated to God.
   4. “Saint” doesn’t mean sinless beings! (I Cor. 1:2; ch. 5; ch. 11) – The world is confused as to the meaning of the word!
2. The letter to the Philippians closes with a greeting *from* saints in *Caesar’s* household!
   1. Phil. 4:21-23: A simple statement with a deep meaning: One can do right regardless of the circumstances of life.
      1. Could refer to slaves or actual members of Caesar’s family.
      2. The Caesars were not known for their spirituality, their morality, their self-control, nor for their appreciation for Christianity.
      3. Many of them (Nero, Domitian, Maximinus, etc.) were avowed enemies of Christianity and persecuted the church.
3. This simple greeting from the saints in Caesar’s household teaches us one can be “set apart” and live godly in an evil world!

#### “Saints in Caesar’s Household” in the Past

* 1. Joseph (Gen. 39)
     1. He served in the house of a pagan (polytheist) *(Gen. 39:1-2).*
     2. He was often tempted to commit adultery *(Gen. 39:10).*
     3. He suffered for doing what was right & was thrown in prison! *(Gen. 39:11-20)*
     4. He prospered even in jail because he never lost faith in God (Gen. 39:21-23).
     5. His faith was not circumstantial – Gen. 50:20 (God used his circumstances for good)
     6. He didn’t vote for the Pharaoh of Egypt but served God faithfully under him!
  2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Dan. 3)
     1. Their Jewish names were: Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan. 1:6-7)
     2. Example of not falling to peer pressure’s “Everyone else was doing it!”
     3. They stood out because they would not bow (Dan. 3:12).
     4. They could have adopted the “unusual circumstances clause;” “When in Rome do as the Romans do” (Insert: Babylonians).
     5. Their faith in God was not circumstantial – Dan. 3:16-18 (God could choose to save them but even if He didn’t, they would not bow!)
     6. Their faith caused the pagan king to make a declaration of faith *(Dan. 3:28-30).*
     7. They didn’t vote for King Nebuchadnezzar but served God faithfully under him!
  3. Daniel (Dan. 6)
     1. Daniel’s faith wasn’t left behind in Judah, it was who he was, no matter where he was! (Dan. 1:8)
     2. His faith was not circumstantial – Dan. 6:10 (Whether it was the Babylonians in 605 B.C. or the Medo-Persians in 539 B.C., and even after he knew the foolish decree was signed by the Persian king, which cannot be retracted, he still prayed 3 times a day, as was his habit)
     3. He unwaveringly faced the danger of death by lion’s den (Dan. 6:16-17).
     4. His faith caused the pagan king to make a declaration of faith (Dan. 6:26-27).
     5. He didn’t vote for any of the Babylonian kings or for any of the Persian kings but continually faithfully served God under them!
  4. Saints in Caesar’s Household (Phil. 4:22)
     1. These were saints in Caesar’s household (slaves or family members).
        1. This phrase stirs our imaginations!
        2. Who are the members of Emperor Nero's household referred to here?
        3. Were they some of the soldiers who had been assigned to watch the Apostle Paul, and who had been saved through his preaching & teaching? (Phil. 1:12-14: Paul was well known among the whole Praetorian Guard, that is the palace soldiers!)
        4. Were they slaves or freedmen who worked in the palace?
        5. Or might the expression include some officials of the Roman government?
        6. We cannot know with certainty, but here we have an awesome illustration of the truth that Christians, like spiders (KJV) & lizards (NASU), find their way into kings’ palaces (Proverbs 30:28)!
           1. **NOTE:** The *Heb. word (H8079)* used here is not the word used for spider or lizard anywhere else in the Heb. text, and has the base meaning of something that poisons.
           2. The majority of Greek and Latin texts translate it as “lizard,” most likely from the superstition of one being “noxious” (Strong’s & the NET Bible Full Notes)
           3. The point of this saying is that a weak creature like a lizard (NASU) or spider (KJV), that is so easily caught, cannot be prevented from getting into the most significant of places!
        7. The gospel knows no boundaries.
        8. It can penetrate the most forbidding walls; it can plant itself in the very midst of those who are seeking to exterminate it; Truly, the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ! (Mt. 16:18)
     2. A tough household to remain faithful in and be a godly influence.
     3. When you think you have it tough, ask yourself, “Could I have been a saint in Caesar’s household?”
     4. They didn’t vote for Caesar but were remaining faithful to God under him, even living in his house!
  5. Despite the circumstances of life, these saints lived godly lives and influenced the idolaters they lived amongst!

#### “Saints in Caesar’s Household” Today *(Col. 1:2: “Faithful”)*

* 1. In some *Homes*
     1. One can be faithful in spite of an unbelieving, perhaps even ungodly spouse.
     2. I Cor. 7:12-16: A husband or wife can be faithful under such circumstances and may even save the other!
     3. I Pet. 3:1-2: The Christian woman can be faithful and may even convert her husband by her godly behavior!
     4. It is important to be the example of Christ in such circumstances, so that their soul may be “won.”
     5. Think of the saints living in the household of Caesar! (Phil. 4:22)
  2. On certain *Jobs*
     1. Evil all about them: cursing, swearing, filthy speech/jokes.
     2. Pressure to “relieve the pressures of the day” by drinking alcohol after work.
     3. I Pet. 4:3-5: Important to remain faithful despite the pressures, because we all will give an account to God *(And be judged accordingly! II Cor. 5:10).*
     4. Peter says they won’t understand your behavior and may even mock you.
     5. Col. 3:23-24: We work for the Lord!
     6. Think of Daniel, whose work ethic was beyond reproach! (Dan. 1:8; 6:4)
  3. In some *Schools*
     1. Young people (even ones in college) suffer the pressures to engage in worldly behavior: dancing, drug abuse, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, etc…
     2. I Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:6-8: Young Christians can be faithful examples and need to be!
     3. When you think the pressure is too great, think of Daniel (a youth) and the impact he had on a kingdom! (Dan. 1:3-4, 8, 18-21)
  4. In the *Military*
     1. Exposed to many temptations (away from families & friends often in distant lands): “When in Rome” mentality.
     2. Great temptation to think, “no one will know.”
     3. Js. 1:13-15: We sin when we give in to our lusts/desires.
     4. God knows, and we will be held accountable for the example we set (Rom. 14:12; Phil. 2:9-11).
     5. Think of Cornelius, a military man, whose character was impeccable (Acts 10:1-2).
  5. Christians can live godly lives regardless of their circumstances in life!

## Conclusion

1. One can do what is right if the determination is strong enough! – Phil. 4:13
2. The world today closely resembles that of Rome, and we are under the same charge to be faithful in a dark world.
   1. Phil. 2:14-16: Christians must let their light shine despite what the world does!
3. A great lesson found in Phil. 4:22: One can do what is right in spite of unfavorable circumstances!
4. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Don’t continue to be swallowed up by the darkness of the world. Repent, be baptized, and let your light shine!
5. If a Christian in error, think about your example and the influence you have on others. Have you been a “saint in Caesar’s household?” Repent, be renewed, and let your light shine!
6. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!