

# Communion Service - Saturday 9th March

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Date: 09 March 2019

Preacher: Rev Malcolm Maclean

[ 0 : 00 ] We can turn back to Philippians chapter 4. And we can read the last four verses from verse 20.

Philippians chapter 4 and verse 20. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. When we choose to write something, we don't usually have any concern about the amount of paper we shall use.

We know if we come to the end of one sheet that there are usually plenty other sheets to use. But Paul couldn't do that.

[ 1 : 24 ] All he had at any given time was a scroll. And he had to fit his words into that scroll.

Therefore he had to, at times, be quite short in what he said. Otherwise he would not be able to say everything he wanted to.

And we can imagine him either writing or composing this, or dictating this letter to the Philippians. And he knows there's only a short space in which he can put his closing words. And he must have thought, what will I put in here that will be of help to the Philippians.

So, we see what he put in, in verses 20 to 23.

[ 2 : 36 ] I mean, unlike some of his other letters, which would have had longer scrolls, he doesn't mention any names.

But just highlights what he believed was very important for them to know.

What would he say to a church that had no problems, no obvious problems? Out of all the letters that he wrote in the New Testament, the church in Philippi seems to be the one that was the most healthy.

He doesn't have to highlight any major issues apart from the one we read about in verse 2, where two ladies are not getting on.

But if that was the only problem in a congregation, we wouldn't be too perturbed about it. As we can see from verse 3, he did want the situation sorted out.

[ 3 : 54 ] But apart from that, there are no obvious problems in the church in Philippi. So, he's basically giving final advice to a healthy church.

A church in which there really isn't anything to be too perturbed about. He mentions three things.

And I think the three things that he does mention as he closes are very important for all of us to remember. He includes a doxology, a doxology in verse 20, and a benediction in verse 23.

And I suppose the mere fact that he uses both these ways of speaking highlights what our attitude should be.

A doxology is basically what we want for God. What do we want God to get? I mean, that's a doxology.

[ 5 : 12 ] Whereas a benediction, in verse 23, is what we want from God. And both of these things go together, don't they?

In a doxology, we praise God, and we just say what we want for Him. Not because we've got any power to give it to Him. But it's just an expression of our desire that we'd like God to have.

And as I just mentioned, in verse 23, there's this. What do we want from God? And we want that because we know He can give it.

And in between, there's what we could call expressions of rarely love. Where Paul encourages the Philippians to greet each other.

So these are the three things I just want us to think about. What do we want God to have? How do we react to one another?

[ 6 : 25 ] And what do we want from God? And hopefully these three things will help us as we come to the Lord's Supper.

First of all, this doxology. What do we want our great God to have? And we can see from what Paul says that we want Him to have glory forever and ever.

As I said earlier, we can't give Him this glory forever and ever. It's beyond our ability to do that. But that's what we want Him to have.

We want Him to be honoured and celebrated. And basically, first forever. That's what we want Him to be.

As we think of God the Father here, receiving glory. What ideas would come into our minds?

[ 7 : 39 ] Or what ideas might come into the Philippians' minds? Especially as they gathered on the first Lord's Day of this letter.

We've read everything. I mean, they've been looking forward to Epaphroditus coming back. As we probably know, Epaphroditus had been sent by the church in Philippi to Paul and Rome with some kind of gift to help them in his confined circumstances.

And it was a long journey. It would have taken them a while. It probably took them longer than they thought. Because we're told elsewhere in the letter that as a result of his travels, Epaphroditus got sick.

And he almost died. So he probably was late in coming back to the church in Philippi. And we can imagine them every Lord's Day as they met, asking any news about Epaphroditus.

He's been away a while. And then one day he reappeared. And he had this letter with them. But we call the letter to the Philippians.

[ 9 : 02 ] And the church would have met there and listened to this amazing letter and been astounded by some of the things that Paul wrote in it.

And as we're thinking about giving God the glory, is there anything in the letter that talks about God receiving glory? And of course there is.

There's a well-known passage in chapter 2 where the apostle describes what happened to Jesus and how Jesus, there in verses 6 to 9, how Jesus voluntarily humbled himself and went to the cross.

And we think of that as a marvelous expression of divine love. And of course it is a marvelous expression of divine love. And we can see how much the father thought of that self-sacrifice of Jesus because in verse 9 of Philippians chapter 2 we're told that the father highly exalted him and gave him the name of the Bab-ebi name and so on.

And that one day the whole universe is going to bow at the name of Jesus and confess he's Lord. But why are they going to do it?

[ 10 : 46 ] Why is every single person going to confess that Jesus is Lord? We're told that at the end of verse 11.

They're going to do it to the glory of God the Father. That's going to be an amazing sight to see all these millions of people, billions probably, of people confessing the superiority of Jesus.

But the reason they're doing it, the primary reason they're doing it is to the glory of God the Father.

They're all going to say to the Father, basically, this plan you had, it just shows how great you are.

And of course it will. But it's not just us, as it were, the humans who actually understand that moment that God the Father planned it all for his own glory.

But we are going to appreciate in a way perhaps that we don't do already. and that is the reason why Jesus did it all.

[ 12 : 16 ] Why did Jesus come to earth? And why did he go to the cross? And as I mentioned earlier, obviously he went there to save us.

And we are very glad he did that. And we would love to tell him that. And hopefully we do say that to him.

That we're very glad he went to the cross. But the reason he went to the cross was to honour the Father. In the Gospel of John he says that he went to the cross so that all men would honour the Father.

And that gives us a real insight into what Christ's likeness is, isn't it? What does it mean to be like Jesus?

And often we can highlight isolated activities. And we say, well that's been like Jesus.

[ 13 : 29 ] But what's it to be like Jesus in our outlook? And it must be like Jesus. And it must be like Jesus. And it must be like Jesus. And it must be like Jesus. And that's what Jesus wants.

A Christ-like person is someone who wants God the Father to be highly honoured. And that's just the way it is.

Here we have an insight into why God does things.

If I was to do something for my own glory, that would be a terrible thing. If you were to do something for your glory, that would be a terrible thing.

It would be an expression of pride. But if God does something that's not for his glory, that's saying something very negative about it.

[ 14 : 41 ] Because God must always do his best. And what he did in sending Jesus, it was the best thing he could have done.

If he had done anything else, we could not say about it that he did it to the height of his glory. But he did send Jesus.

And he has exalted Jesus. You know, when we get to heaven, and we see all the wonders of the new heavens and new earth, and thus we're kind of enjoying it to a degree and a capability that we could never enjoy it now, our main thought will not be God has done all this for us.

Instead, our main thought will be God has made this new world for his glory. And because he's made it for his glory, it will be of great benefit to us.

God must do everything for his own honor and his own pleasure.

[ 16 : 14 ] And here, Paul says to these Philippians, to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. He's saying to this church which behaves the way a church should behave, live for God.

And in what areas should we live for God? Well, Paul doesn't specify them here, but for example, in 2 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians, sorry, in chapter 10 and verse 31, we're told how we should live for God's glory.

and it gets right down to the mundane. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.

How many cups of coffee did we have this morning? Or tea? Did we do it to the glory of God? whatever you do. Whether we made the coffee ourselves or somebody else made it to us, bought us sorry, are we actually conscious of God?

[ 17 : 42 ] That's a very mundane thing, isn't it? We might think that all God is concerned about is that we do the big things well.

But God is actually, or Paul is telling us there in that verse in Corinthians, that we have to do little things the best they can. And the best way to do them is to do it for God's glory.

Because that's been like God. I mean out there there's a place of grass growing. Little things.

But God does it for his glory. He overlooks nothing. He just ensures that everything is for his glory. And Paul says, that's our purpose in life. We know that from the proper taxing, don't we? Man's chief end is to glorify God.

[ 18 : 53 ] And we have to glorify him with our minds. It's not a good thing to go to God with a blank mind.

Because that's not why God gave us our minds. We're meant to think. And we're meant to think about what he did. And the same with our emotions.

We cannot be passionless when we're doing the things of God. Our affections have to be engaged and they have to be engaged fully.

Our love has to be what it should be. It's to be attracted to what we're focused on.

And our choices of course they've all got to be in line with what God wants. And all the gifts that he's given to us. And all of us have got gifts.

[ 20 : 01 ] There's not a person without some kind of gift. we've got to use them for God's glory. And as we come to the Lord's table tomorrow it's an event to glorify God.

And we have to come at it and come to it conscious of who he is. And our minds have to be thinking about him.

And our affections have to be focused on him. And tomorrow is not just an occasion for memory. It's to be a fresh experience.

A fresh encounter with our great God. Because we're going to meet him. The saviour is going to be at his own table.

And it's going to be a fresh encounter for him. something that he has not had before on this particular date.

[ 21 : 14 ] Of course he's been to numerous Lord's suppers down the centuries. But he's never been to the one tomorrow yet. There's going to be a fresh experience for him.

And it's going to be a fresh one for us. a fresh life. And we have to come to it in the best we can possibly be. And we have to be responding and expecting and dedicating and all the things that go along with that.

But this wonderful opportunity for us to say exactly to God how much we admire him.

And how much we're grateful to him for his amazing grace. And it's our pleasure to give him pleasure tomorrow.

So that's the first point I just want us to think about. Now whatever we do and especially at this communion weekend that we may give to God our God and Father glory knowing that he deserves it forever and ever.

[ 22 : 53 ] That's the first thing. Giving God his life. What we want for him.

And then secondly there's this way of expressing Brawley love that Paul highlights in verses 21 and 22.

He says greet every saint in Christ Jesus. He doesn't say greet all the saints.

Because there is a difference. You could greet all the saints by one big congregational hello.

But that's not what Paul suggests. When he says greet every saint he means speak to each one of them individually.

[ 24 : 03 ] he's telling these Philippians maybe Lodia and Syntyche in verse 2 the last thing they intended to do when they got to wherever they met in Philippi not going to greet each other.

I mean it would be easy for either of them to say hello to the group and then their hearts miss out each other.

But Paul tells them here to greet every saint. And that I think tells us that we have to take time. It's easy to say a ten second greeting that covers everybody.

But that could just be a way of avoiding what Paul tells them to do here. Instead he says to all the Philippians greet every saint that's there in your presence.

And if there happens to be anyone there that you don't know greet him or her as well. What do we say when we greet each other in a Christian manner?

[ 25 : 47 ] Perhaps we should say things like what can I pray for you about? Or maybe we could say to one another what do you have to share about Jesus?

Or maybe in one way or another to say how is God blessing your presence? God will say and also be willing to say how he's doing it for us.

We're meant to share to communicate the spiritual blessings that are coming our way and I suspect that's all part of greeting.

It's not just saying hello. It's nice to see you which is a very nice thing to say but there must be a bit more.

I think Paul was careful in the way he describes believers and here in these verses he gives them two names and we're very familiar with the names that he uses here.

[ 27 : 25 ] He calls them saints and brothers and right away he's reminded them of what it means to be a Christian.

We thought a bit last night of what it means to be a saint set apart to God brought near to him becoming like him in holiness and so on we're located near where he is to be a saint means to have the same interest as God because God is holy and we're set apart to have a similarity in that way and he also calls them brothers what a beautiful word God adopted sinners into his family you know God didn't have to adopt anyone God could have saved us and just left us there and that would be marvelous and we could go and say yes we're saved but

God's salvation is more than just a rescue I mean God's salvation brings us into a wonderful relationship and we become his children and that's got the added feature that because we're his children we're joint heirs with Jesus I mean when we think of that I mean Jesus we could say is the heir of everything that God is going to do for his glory and Jesus is going to share it with us so when we come together as brothers and the family of sisters and the family of God there's a lot to speak

about and in a real sense

I suspect we're meant to say to one another truths about our spiritual destiny that we're expressing to one another the features of salvation and Paul here says to them your saints and brothers speak like that and he points out something incredible perhaps if we've been writing the letter we'd want to put the last clause the last phrase of verse 22 at the start do you know what's happened in Rome you just think I'm a prisoner here well the reality is there are converts in

Caesar's household and Paul just almost throws this in at the end this extraordinary reality that there's no bounds to where the gospel can go and right into the heart of the of Nero's empire the gospel was penetrated and there's converts right there we could almost say below Nero's nose and he's not aware that another kingdom is making advances all he thinks about this Christian church is that he's got one of them as an imperial prisoner and according to Paul in chapter one the emperor still hasn't made up his mind yet about

[ 32 : 06 ] Paul's fate but Paul just points out while Nero comes to his decision there are decisions happening in his household that are extending the saviour's kingdom and we could imagine that people in Philippi saying to Epaphroditus what do these saints in Caesar's household want you to pass on to us because that's what Paul says all the saints greet you especially those of Caesar's household so Epaphroditus saints what do these believers want to say and we're not told but I suppose they could have said grace can go anywhere so that's

Briarley Laugh we have different conversation and that's Paul's second point and then lastly and briefly there's the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit few years before this Jesus had said to Paul when Paul was concerned about his thorn in the flesh Jesus had just said to him my grace is sufficient for and this line here in Philippians a few years later it's almost Paul's testimony to say yes it is sufficient and I'm just saying to you as I close says Paul that the grace that has helped me it will help you as well

Paul had experienced lots of God's of Jesus grace grace but the extraordinary thing about the grace of Jesus is it has not decreased it's still full it's a fountain and it's flowing and it's flowing fully all the time there's more than sufficient grace in Jesus for all of them and as we come in all our need there's no reason for the extent of our need to be a barrier to anything whatever our spiritual needs are the grace of Jesus meets it there's plenty grace there and as

I mentioned earlier that verse from 2nd Corinthians my grace is sufficient for you my strength is made complete in your weakness so this grace of Jesus it empowers we don't know what future these Philippians were facing but the one thing we do know is that the grace of Jesus was sufficient for it and since it's Jesus that's providing it it's going to be effective the way Paul phrases it it's the grace of the Lord what's the point of somebody having the title Lord if what he does is not effective it would be a contradiction so when he says the grace of the Lord

Jesus be with your spirit that means that whatever Jesus provides in his kindness it's going to work it can't do anything else it must work because he's the Lord and because he's wise and it's him that decides what aspect of his grace he gives but because he's wise it will always be the exact thing that we need whatever your concerns are say for about tomorrow we're not to look to one another to meet that need because we might give the wrong thing but we look to Jesus the wonderful counselor and he gives exactly what we need and he always gives it in love it just comes this is

[ 37 : 50 ] Paul's last words to the Philippians we don't know if they ever met again this is him describing their future what is their future well we could say that steps into their future were but steps into the grace of Christ and whatever providence would take them it's never going to take them beyond the grace of Jesus and therefore when Paul says the grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit it's a promise of a divine companion who's going to be with them internally and not just externally because he can be with them internally in a sense it doesn't matter where they are his grace would be there that was

Paul's testimony it was his encouragement to the Philippians and it's what God inspired him to write for the blessing of all his people so we could even say to one another the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit as we go to the Lord Supper tomorrow so may God bless these thoughts to us we shall pray Lord we give you thanks for the reality that we can live for your glory that we can encourage one another and we can experience the grace of Christ what an amazing thing it is to belong to you we thank you

Lord that you provide circumstances and events whereby we can discover aspects of your grace in special ways and as we come to the Lord's Supper tomorrow we do pray it will be an occasion

where we discover some of the supplies that you have for your people as they make their way through life so Lord remember us and bless us and be with us for your own names day Amen