

3 Core Commitments—Philippians 4:20-23—5/7/2023
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Open your Bibles to Philippians 4 as we finish our trek through this joyful, gracious, Gospel-saturated, Christ-exalting letter.

Let's read the closing verses, Philippians 4:20-23. [READ]

For Paul, every thought & word was theological & applicable—every term had meaning that showed some mindset.

So reading Paul's closing doxology & greetings & benediction is not reading mere stock phrases or rote ritual repetitions.

We are reading personally impactful revelation of the Spirit's work in Paul & the beloved church to which he was writing.

Paul did not end this letter by saying "Farewell", although there was a Greek word to express that far simpler good-bye.

Instead, he packed in precious nuggets of Christian experience.

His closing words remind us of 3 core commitments he has hammered home throughout this letter.

As we examine those 3 core commitments, we can glean 3 big picture themes & 3 quick ways to evaluate our lives each day.

Whether you are planning your week or your summer or what you want to accomplish over the next year or next 5 years or 10 years, these 3 areas can help you think clearly & biblically.

These are not the only core commitments of the Christian life, but they are colossal in significance & simple to recall.

They can be a tool ready by your side, like a Swiss-army-knife or catch-all gadget that can be useful in multiple ways.

For specific issues, we have studied other passages you can turn to.

For example, if you want to address anxiety over giving or motivation for generosity, return to Philippians 4:10-19.

Or if you want to battle anxiety in general or be renewed in prayer & rejoicing & thanks & your thought life, return to Philippians 4:4-9.

Or to recall the importance of unity in the church & standing firm in the truth, you can return to Philippians 4:1-3 & also to Philippians 2:1-11 with its exaltation of Christ's example.

Mark Philippians 2 in your mind for marveling at the manhood of Christ Jesus & His mindset of humility while also being fully God.

And Philippians 3 is where to turn for a glorious explanation of the Gospel exchange from Paul's own testimony.

Chapter 3 recounts all that Paul could have trusted in & yet he repented of all self-righteousness to gain Christ & Christ alone.

The Gospel is extolled in the free mercy of Christ paying for sin & granting His own righteous life as ours by faith.

That leads to a heavenly focus consistent with chapter 1 where Paul expressed his readiness to die to be with Christ as a greater gain.

I could preach this letter again to highlight specific areas that I pray are marked in your mind for future reference.

But when you need a big picture review, a broad pause for basics, I pray you will remember these final words of Paul to the Philippians.

That overarching help starts with the doxology of verse 20, the word of glory to God.

That's what we live for: we exist to glorify God & enjoy Him forever.

That's what we find in verse 20 as the orientation of Paul's heart throughout this & other letters.

In response to God's promise to supply all their needs, Paul directed himself & his readers to ascribe glory to this all-sufficient God.

That response is fitting not only in thankfulness for God's promise to provide, but also in response to all God's promises.

This is what our driving motive should be in all things that you might note it as a 1st point, a 1st of 3 core commitments to guide our lives.

Point #1—be directed to God's glory.

You may know that & run toward that goal, but let's recall it & not lose sight of it—point #1—be directed to God's glory.

When evaluating a purchase or commitment, a reset for your priorities or schedule or budget, ask how it will glorify God.

When considering why you want to serve in a certain ministry or get that raise or promotion or recognition or have that friendship or relationship, ask where the glory goes.

Is it directed toward God's glory or is it about you receiving praise to pad your pride or to flatter others for your own gain?

Our hearts can subtly deceive us & direct us away from God's glory.

So we must constantly assess & vigilantly seek a life directed to God's glory as we read in Philippians 4:20—read. [READ]

The verse starts with a transitional word that culminates what has come before with a direction.

There is no verb in the verse & so the verb '*be*' is supplied in what could be a prayer or praise or pointed exhortation or it could be all of that directed toward the glory of God.

The word '*glory*' is a word for weight or value or honor or splendor—it is the credit & recognition & appreciation of God's supremacy.

God is the source of all good & so it is always fitting to direct our gratitude to give Him the glory.

It is the glory, the all-surpassing greatness, the incomparable majesty, the all-sufficiency graciousness, & the unparalleled perfection.

He is God & there is no other & the glory belongs to Him.

This glory goes to our God as Paul expanded from his testimony about his God in verse 19 to the God who had saved the Philippians as well.

There is no other God but this One true God has condescended to be claimed personally in a relationship that is so close that He is called our God & Father.

He is not a distant deity or impersonal force—He brings us to Himself with adoptive love to make us children in His spiritual family.

He is the Ruler over all that shows the goodness of all His attributes to give us the joy of reflected His glory back to Him.

That is the directional purpose we are blessed to embrace in all we do.

And that will never end—verse 20 says it will go forever & ever, literally into the ages of the ages.

Endless season after season eternally we will direct glory to God.

And the verse ends with the affirmation, 'amen'—meaning so be it, truly, indeed it is so.

This is the core commitment that makes sense of the universe with God as the Creator & Sustainer of all.

It is illogical to leap by faith into the untestable, unprovable, unscientific myth that everything evolved from nothing.

The existence of logic itself only makes logical sense with the God of order who made visible creation & invisible reason according to rules & patterns that He continually upholds.

So He deserves recognition for all He has made.

And far more, God deserves recognition for His plan of salvation where He has provided everything needed to give eternal life.

In His love, as John 3:16 says, God the Father sent His Son into the world to offer the free gift of eternal life at the cost of His Son Jesus dying to pay sin's penalty for us.

We did not invent or initiate that saving plan or work & we do not deserve it being granted freely as a gift.

But that's how God does it so that it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy as Romans 9:16 puts it.

Salvation comes not by our works, but by God's work so He deserves the glory, not that any man should be boast, as Ephesians 2 says.

As Romans 11:36 says, from Him & through Him & to Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever, amen.

Repeatedly throughout Scripture we find these expressions of praise.

So throughout history & into eternity, it is repeatedly & endlessly right to worship God for all He is & has done.

As Psalm 29:2 & 96:8 says, we ascribe to God the glory due His name, meaning we do not add glory to Him but recognize the glory due Him.

That's a vital core commitment that Paul reiterated here.

So if you want to examine your motives or words or actions or reactions in any situation, ask if you are seeking God's glory.

As you make the smallest decisions & the biggest plans & everything in between, be sure you are directed to God's glory.

That's a 1st vital core commitment that you know but that we all easily drift from & need rekindled—point #1, be directed to God's glory.

Then 2ndly today, be devoted to God's people.

Know your life matters in Christ in relationship with every believer.

As you ponder what to protect & invest in & not neglect, keep in view the core commitment to be devoted to God's people.

Just as Christians together share God as our heavenly Father, so we must be committed to one another in relationships as brothers & sisters

Paul demonstrated individual appreciation & affection by the way he sent greetings to his fellow believers in Philippi.

Read verses 21-22 again to see that. [READ]

First note that he called them saints, meaning they were set apart to God like holy vessels in the OT Tabernacle or Temple used only for the sacred purposes of worship of God.

All believers are saints in that sense—called by God to be vessels indwelt by His Spirit to be used as sacred tools in His ministry in the church as His spiritual temple.

Roman Catholic errors have misapplied the term saints to include only elevated or exalted special believers & that is wrong.

Instead, the NT teaches that all believers are saints as seen in the verses that open & close this letter to the Philippian church.

Saints are literally holy ones & that can only be true in Christ Jesus—but stop & think of how it IS true of you if you are in Christ Jesus.

In Christ Jesus our sins are fully forgiven by His atoning sacrificial death that washes us completely clean.

And in Christ Jesus we are credited with Christ's holy life so that we can be viewed as righteous as if we lived His holy perfection.

So in Christ Jesus we are set apart to God as saints by God's saving work applied to us by His grace through faith.

And Paul gave every believer in Philippi that title as he called upon them all together to greet every saint in Christ Jesus.

This would've first applied to the overseers & deacons as they received the letter & then read it publicly to the church.

But this was not to be a broad generic greeting to everyone—it was a specific, individual greeting to every single saint.

Paul said to greet every member of the body because each one is significant as Paul had written about in 1st Corinthians 12.

Paul likely knew every saint there from his time with them, but he did not mention specific names in closing lest he leave anyone out

Instead, he made a personal plea to greet each individual saint.

He did so because he loved these dear brothers & sisters, he valued & appreciated each one as he prayed for them & longed to see them.

He modeled & commanded devotion to God's people as he singled out each saint & sent a plural command to greet them.

Do you own that sense of responsibility as you gather with God's people in the local church & correspond with missionaries or others?

Could someone look at your life & know you are devoted to God's people—devoted to relationships in the church?

I'm so grateful that many of you are devoted to God's people & are eager to gather & glad to cherish conversations that continue after we pray in small groups or share meals or at other times.

I'm thankful for the affection & smiles as faces light up to see one another or to see missionaries & other Christians.

Obviously, all of us are finite & cannot greet every person each week, but can you pray for them & seek to reach out with genuine care?

Can you look on your fellow believers as brothers & sisters in the closest relational family you have—your spiritual family?

As Paul sent greetings also from others with him, he called them brethren emphasizing that spiritual family especially with those in his presence as he wrote like Epaphroditus & Timothy would've been.

And those brothers were not the only ones devoted to God's people who sent greetings because Paul went on in verse 22 to include all the saints, likely all believers in Rome.

All those saved & set apart to God would've known of the Philippians through Epaphroditus coming with the gift to support & care for Paul.

Anyone who cared for Paul while in prison in Rome likely had an appreciation & affection for the Philippians because of their sacrificial concern shown to Paul.

Those saints may have some who traveled to Philippi & it certainly included some who had newly come to Christ.

The Gospel had even reached into the household of Caesar himself, the ruling head of all the Empire & likely an evil ruler.

The Gospel had not been stopped by Paul's imprisonment as we learned in chapter 1 of this letter.

As he wrote in Philippians 1:12-14, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."

The whole praetorian guard was the military group with closest access to Caesar & his palace dwellings & travels.

So some of these believers who sent greetings from Caesar's household were undoubtedly from the praetorian guard.

And Caesar's household could've included other servants & slaves & workers that were a part of the complex of roles & duties there.

It did not matter the level or status of society of these saints, they were spiritual brothers & sisters who sent greetings.

Their faith in Christ had changed all their relationships toward a priority prizing of fellow believers.

Paul described them as emboldened by his imprisonment.

It may be hard to be bold in some secular setting like Caesar's household but even people there can be saved.

These believers wanted to be known & to make their greetings known as life in Christ had removed all previous boundaries of culture or background or country to knit them together in love.

They had grasped the transcendence of Christian fellowship & expressed with Paul that appropriate devotion to God's people.

That's what we want like, isn't it?

We want to be bold for Christ & devoted to His people.

We want to know & be known by God's people, to share our lives & invest in others' lives.

Can I suggest that this takes purposefulness to stay after church to talk & it takes a commitment to gather as priority over other things?

It takes faith to believe that overcoming selfishness or awkwardness or other excuses or obstacles is worth it.

And it takes active faith to trust that if we only gather to pray together, that is precious fellowship to be treasured.

It takes trust in God's design to plan your weekly schedule to seize every opportunity to spend time with believers.

Such a life is convictionally grounded in a core commitment to follow Christ's commands for one another ministry that is not disconnected.

It is personal & practical & persistent & persevering.

It takes sacrifice & patience as we seek God to use us for His glory in His time despite how weak or ill-prepared we feel.

And that's why the final verse of Philippians is so fitting—because we cannot do this in our own strength.

We must be dependent on God's grace & that's our 3rd core commitment to note today from this passage—to pursue & sustain the focus of verses 20-22, we must 3rdly be dependent on God's grace.

#1, be directed to God's glory, #2, be devoted to God's people & finally, #3, be dependent on God's grace.

Read Philippians 4:23 to see that final prayer & benediction. [READ]

What we need is grace, which is undeserved favor, blessing that we cannot merit, supply that we cannot earn.

We need it from God as provided & promised in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace will only ever be enough if it is from the Lord Jesus Christ because He is the Lord God who did not keep equality with God for Himself but shared His glory by becoming a man.

As Philippians 2 details, He veiled His deity in His humanity as the man Jesus who lived a perfect life of obedience to God the Father.

His obedience included going to the cross to die as a substitute to atone for the sins of every person who ever trusts Him.

And He rose in victory over sin & death & ascended to the Father & will be honored as Lord & God forever.

So He is Lord & His name is Jesus & He is the Promised Christ or Messiah, the Anointed King who will rule forever.

Therefore, He is the infinite repository of grace to be poured out on His people to provide for whatever we need to honor Him.

He gives it freely & we can always trust Him to do so.

And He gives it thoroughly to the whole of our being, as the mention of your spirit emphasizes your essence of life & all that moves you.

This grace is what was needed by the Philippians & the Galatians & by Philemon as those letters ended similarly.

And grace is our ongoing need today—we depend on God's grace.

That is a vital core commitment that frees us from self-will & self-trust & keeps us walking in the Spirit & in Christ's love.

Being dependent on God's grace is what enables us to be directed to God's glory & devoted to God's people.

These 3 core commitments we recall today may be basic, but they are practical reminders in everything large & small.

So let Philippians 4:20-23 settle in a quick-access pocket of your mind for regular usage in an endless array of applications.

Remember to be (1) directed to God's glory, (2) devoted to God's people & (3) dependent on God's grace.

We need such reminders because we are prone to wander & forget.

Since the Lord Jesus knew our tendencies, He commanded us to return to the basics regularly & remember Him in the ceremony of communion until He comes again.

And that's how we close this morning with that focus on Christ's body as the sacrifice that paid it all to freely welcome us to God.

So let's remember Him in a fitting way as He has said to do so.

He said in 1st Corinthians 11 that that means examining His body in the local church rightly to be devoted to one another in love & so I remind you to evaluate your relationships as we celebrate communion.

And if you have turned from sin to faith in Christ & are rightly related to Him & His body, I welcome you to join us in remembering Him at the Lord's Table this morning.

If you are not right with God through Christ, I urge you to watch this ceremony & pray for God to meet you with His saving grace as you give up every other hope & trust only & all in the Lord Christ Jesus.

Let's all bow in prayer as we seek to respond to Him rightly.

Pray silently in your seat & then I'll lead us in prayer.