

The Saints In Caesar's House

Philippians 4:22 KJV All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

- INTRODUCTION—LOOKING AT THE PAST

-There is an old saying that time heals all wounds. That is a good thing to take to heart. Whatever you are struggling with presently, there will come a time when it will all be healed if not forgotten.

-However, when you look back at the situation, as the wounds heal, there is a tendency to think that it was not as difficult as it was.

-We look at the history of the Early Church in much the same way. We tend to romanticize the Early Church. There is a tendency to think that it was all miracles, signs, and wonders, in fact, we think it was one continuous victory march.

-Time has a way of softening the difficulties that the Church contended with. Those Early Church saints had massive setbacks and dilemmas of life they had to overcome.

-Difficulties, trials, pain, prisons, devils, and hypocrites all found their way into the Early Church.

Bishop Huntington—Faith has won its greatest conquests on straitened (difficult) and sorrowful fields.

Herman Melville—Under every possible disadvantage there may a striving with evil and a following of good. The excuse assumes that God has put it out of some men's power to provide for their soul's safety, and to assume this is to contradict the divine Word and to throw scorn on the divine attributes.

- PHILIPPIANS 4:22

-This very short, single verse is a great witness of those who served the Lord in very unfavorable conditions and surroundings.

- Paul's Mindset

-It is amazing to read the book of Philippians and understand that it was written while Paul was in a Roman prison. It is a testimony to the fact that a man can turn any desperate place into a pulpit that exalts the Lord.

Philippians 1:12-14 KJV But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; [13] So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; [14] And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

-I have preached on this thought in Philippians 1:12-14 more than once about how that Paul conquered his environment despite the fact that it was hostile to him. But the evidence from Philippians 4:22 helps us to understand that there were others besides Paul who did this exact same thing.

- Paul was locked up in prison but the saints were locked down in Caesar's house.
- Prison bars shut Paul in but the saints were shut in by lavish surroundings.

- Paul had to endure the cold from the poor conditions but the saints had to endure cold from royal conditions.
- Paul was faithful in his prison and the saints were faithful when they were confronted by power, fashion, and money.

-The tendency might be to think that these folks who were in Caesar's house had everything at their request and that things were easy for them. But when you look at who Caesar was and what he was doing, we realize that these saints had a challenging place to serve God.

- Nero's Lifestyle Not Helpful to the Church

-Seneca and Burrus, Roman historians/philosophers, both record that Nero's first years were marked by a mild use of authority and that he was given to very kind and gracious acts. One of the first things that he had to do was sign a death warrant for a criminal. As he signed it, Seneca wrote that Nero said, "Oh that I had never learned to write!"

-But as time passed, this docile king turned into a raging tiger. Once he tasted blood, he became like a shark and it literally maddened him and the only thing that would satisfy him was more blood.

-You have heard it said before that because Nero sank so low and Paul raised so high that we name our dogs, Nero and our sons, Paul.

-Consider some of his actions:

- He poisoned his stepbrother, Britannicus.
- He divorced his wife, Octavia, and banished her before he finally killed her.
- His slave lover, Poppaea, and later his empress he kicked to death.
- He would take baths in exotic oils.
- He was a slave to his base lusts.
- There was no pollution of body or mind that Nero did not get involved in.

-Rome was accustomed to hearing of immorality and crimes but the excesses and vices of Nero shocked them. The Roman church called Nero “The Beast.”

-Tacitus, the Roman historian, has preserved a painting of Nero driving his chariot through the Vatican Gardens. In the painting, Nero is weaving his chariot in and out of the burning pillars that have the saints tied to them. They have been soaked in tar and then set on fire.

-The problem is that most historians never seem to focus in of the debauchery of Nero but they lament that he was lonely and had no companions. He finally committed suicide at 31 and the world was expunged of one of the most depraved monsters who ever lived.

-This was the man that was challenging these good saints in Rome.

- A Place Where Saints Can Grow

-What a strange place for saints to be growing! You would expect fools, flatterers, flim-flams, philanderers, adulterers, murderers, seducers, and others of their ilk to be growing in this hothouse of debauchery but not saints!

-Yet here is the great apostle writing that there are saints in this strange place. It does not matter where it is, if God determines to rise up a church, it will happen.

-I have a feeling that more often than once, Paul felt like he was an absolute failure in Rome. He wondered if anything effective was being accomplished with his calling and his anointing. But his writings were making a difference and they

had managed to leak out among those who had a hungry heart for God.

-His prayers, his tears, his songs, and his sermons found their way into the palace of Caesar. What a difference that one man can make! He was a prisoner who was taking on the wealth and the corruption of Rome.

-One of the historians recorded it like this: Over against the altars of Nero and Poppaea, the voice of the prisoner is daily heard, and daily awoke in body and soul is the consciousness of their divine destiny.

-There were saints of the Most High everywhere:

- Marching in the armies.
- Trading in the open-air markets.
- Slaves and convicts were included despite their chains and the whips.
- The centurions were included.
- Their duties were menial and had no attraction at all.
- These subordinates did the work of the palace in every nook and cranny.
- These saints had their blood licked up by the lions and tigers in the arenas of

entertainment.

- These saints' tender bodies served as fodder for the swords of the gladiators.
- The symbol of the fish was everywhere!

-The saints of Jesus lived in the house of Caesar. They averted their eyes to the horrid evil that took place around them and holiness rose to the top. They ignored the fashions of their day and prayed always in their hearts. They were surrounded by heathen slaves from other lands who were full of superstition and that made their worship even more pure to God.

-One who was named in Caesar's house was Onesimus, the runaway slave. He had robbed his master in Colossae and had fled to Rome and when Paul wrote back to Philemon, he told him the wonderful news that he had been converted.

-Others we find listed in Romans 16 when Paul finishes out that great letter and lifts both hand and heart in a gracious salute!

- Phebe our sister, which is a servant.
- Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus
- My well-beloved Epaphroditus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ
- Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.

- Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles.
- Amplias my beloved in the Lord.
- Urbane, our helper in Christ.
- Stachys my beloved.
- Apelles approved in Christ.
- Aristobulus' household.
- Herodion my kinsman.
- The household of Narcissus.
- Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord.
- Persis, which labored much in the Lord.
- Rufus chosen in the Lord.
- Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren, which are with them.
- Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints, which are with them.
- Timotheus my workfellow.
- Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen.
- Tertius, who wrote this epistle.
- Gaius mine host.
- Erastus the chamberlain of the city.
- Quartus a brother.

-In Romans 16:23, Paul talks about a man by the name of Quartus. He says Quartus, a brother. But who was Quartus? Paul I know and Timothy I know, but who is Quartus? He is a brother, just

one of the obscure members of that Roman church.

-The epistle begins with Paul and it ends with Quartus. The loftiest and the lowliest but brought very close to each other by love. He was one of the saints in Caesar's house.

-This man had his name in the book of life but he passed among men unnoticed. If he had been in the military, we would say he is in the same uniform as others, the regular blue jacket, but without bands. There is no gold braid on his clothes. There is no rank. Others ride yet he walks. But he is the man the world needs and needs supremely.

-Quartus may be weak by himself, but when he unites with many of his clan he is the mightiest force in the world. What he chooses shall be, and it shall come to pass, and what he vetoes, no power on earth can make successful. But unhappily he himself often fails to recognize his power.

-He and his people too often say because they are not leaders, "I have no talent; I can do little, my efforts count for nothing." And so the work of a kingdom is left undone, for the leaders alone cannot do it. When, if each would only use the

talent they have; if each would do their little bit, nothing would remain undone.

- He is the drop of water, which with its countless neighbors forms the might ocean.
- He is the grain of sand with which with its fellow's spreads out the great beaches of the world.
- He is the kernel of corn producing the fields of tasseled grain.
- He is the leaf on the tree, which in their hosts makes the forest green, the blade of grass forming with its kin, the beautiful carpets of the earth.

-Quartus! One of the saints in Caesar's house who is important and valuable to God!

-You need to do you duty in your world.

- Be a scrub in the valley but be the best little scrub by the side of the rail.
- Be a bush if you can't be a tree.
- And if you can't be a bush be a bit of grass and some highway the happier make.
- If you can't be sailfish then just be a bass, but the liveliest bass in the lake.
- We can't all be captains we've got to be

crew. There is something for all of us here.

- If you can't be a highway then just be a trail.
- If you can't be the sun be a star.
- It isn't by size that you win or you fail, be the best of whatever you are.

-Difficult circumstances, difficult days, nor a difficult life ought to discourage you from being a saint in Caesar's house.

- PRESENT DAY SAINTS

-No matter if you lived in the 1st Century or the 21st Century, if you are a saint, there are contentions of the world that you will have to deal with and overcome!

-For every saint who has ever thought that their surroundings, their jobs, their home-life, their past, or even their family was choking them down . . . we have hope in this single little verse.

-We are told that our environment, our surroundings, and our upbringing has an effect of us. That may be true in most all cases, but it is never true for a child of God. There is something that can rise up within them that will literally challenge the surroundings they find themselves in!

-That has been the quest of Christianity from the beginning, to gain control over the environment of the soul so that it affects the world that we live in. If the Lord ever captures our heart, He will help us to overcome the places that we are immersed in.

- Jeremiah had such a fire raging in his soul that it could not shut his mouth!
- Joseph guarded his soul in the house of Potiphar.
- Obadiah kept his conscience in Ahab's house.
- Daniel kept his in the court of Babylon.
- Nehemiah kept his heart in the Persian courts.
- Courage

-Courage is found in these saints who served in Caesar's house.

- Courage that would bear wrong but not commit wrong.
- Courage that would save a life rather than destroy it.
- Courage that came from a clean conscience.
- Courage that could go in and out of soiled

company and not compromise.

- Courage that ignored the threats, absorbed the sneers, and turned away from the golden bait of temptation.
- Courage that lifted an innocent face to the executioner's eyes.
- Courage that stood on God's side and bravely held on to the breastplate of righteousness.
- Modesty

-Modesty was found in the saints in Caesar's house. They never identified themselves as saints; it was Paul who did this for them.

- It was modesty that did not boast of their religion, they just sincerely offered it to God.
- It was modesty that did not hang around the false places of idol worship in Rome.
- It was modesty that did not mock the soothsayers and sorcerers that surrounded them.
- It was modesty that was focused on their communion, their prayer, and their fellowship with the Lord.

- Consistency

-Consistency was found in the saints in Caesar's house.

- Consistency to live it out every day.
- Consistency to resist the urges to slip off now and then with the heathen and live it up.
- Consistency to live for the Lord even when their teachers, pastors, and fellows were killed.
- Consistency to meet again and break the bread of fellowship even though the hands that broke the bread yesterday were now cold in the grave of catacombs.
- Consistency that overcame their fear of Nero and his wicked bands of murdering henchmen.

-What we ought to give to gain this kind of life! We ought to love much the things of the Kingdom of God so that we could serve with a noble distinction as these saints in Caesar's house did.

- CONCLUSION—CHANGING THE WAY WE THINK

-But if you are going to be a saint in Caesar's

house, a saint in 2010 and beyond, you have to begin to change your thoughts about whom you are, what you are doing and why you are doing it if you are going to make it in the long haul.

In Leadership Journal several years ago, Lynn Anderson described what happened to the Pilgrims five years after they came to America. They landed on the shores of America with great vision and determination and it showed in their actions at the start. The first year, they built and established a town. The second year, they elected a town council. In their third year the town council proposed to build a road five miles into the wilderness for westward expansion. In the fourth year, the people criticized the proposal as a waste of public funds. They could not see the big picture. Lynn Anderson pointed out that they had once been able to see across oceans but now they could not look five miles into the wilderness. (Adapted from Thinking for a Change, John Maxwell, and pp. 65-66.)

-One of the best ways to change your thinking is to saturate it with Scripture and with prayer . . .

Romans 8:37-39 KJV Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved

us. [38] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 2:14 KJV Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

1 John 4:4 KJV Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

1 John 5:4 KJV For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.