

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

The Saint's In Caesar's Household Phil.4:22-23

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Note carefully the closing remarks of the apostle to the brethren in Philippi, whom he loved so much. He knew that they would be interested in knowing about the saints in Rome, and that such knowledge would no doubt increase their desire to firmly plant the truth in that wicked city.

Saint---Literally means separated. Separated from sin, and consecrated to God. (The word is not used of persons of exceptional holiness or those dead characterized by acts of holiness) "Holy" comes from the same Greek word. Saint is merely another designation for a Christian.

The Catholic church teaches that no one living can be a saint. People are canonized long after they are dead, long after anyone who knew their faults are dead also. Paul, however, speaks of people who are alive. These saints were not dead. The process by which one is recognized "a saint" in Catholicism is extensive. Once one is elevated to sainthood, then others pray to that saint for guidance and protection. Essentially one prays "Lord, I am bad, sinful etc., and have no virtue or goodness, but my saint has enough to spare, transfer some of his/her goodness to me." Such a practice is unscriptural, unknown to the word of God, and unfortunate in the light of this writing by Paul.

The Apostle introduces us to the "saints in Caesar's household. The Caesar was Nero, a man whose excesses and brutalities were so inhuman that he was finally assassinated by the sword of one of his attendants. "In the end he became one of the most tyrannical and licentious wretches that ever breathed. He murdered his mother and almost all his friends and principal subjects. He was the great patron of all fooleries and debaucheries....Nero, the most cruel and savage of all men, and also the most wicked and depraved, began his persecution against the Christian church in A.D.64 on the pretense of the burning of Rome, of which some have thought himself to be the author. He endeavored to throw all the odium on the Christians; those were seized first that were known publicly as such, and by their means many others were discovered. They were condemned to death, and were even insulted in their sufferings. Some were sewed up in the skins of beasts, and then exposed to dogs to be torn in pieces. Some were nailed to crosses; others perished by fire. The latter were sewed up in pitched coverings, which, being set on fire, served as torches to the people, and were lighted up in the night. Nero gave leave to use his own gardens as the scene of all these cruelties." (Fallows Ency.)

I. OTHERS BEFORE HAD BEEN SAINTS IN CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD

A. Joseph was such a saint. Gen.39.

Upon his arrival in Egypt, Joseph was purchased from the Ishmaelites by Potiphar. He was approached repeatedly by this man's wife, who tried to get him to lie with her. He refused. In a strange land, he remained true to God.

One day she pulled his garment, and he left in haste. She used this to show her husband and accuse this just man of a crime he did not commit. He was cast into prison, but even here God blessed and cared for him.

B. Daniel and the three Hebrew Children. Dan. 3-6

Babylon was a land of sin and excess. A foreign land, with strange religions. Daniel was carried captive to this land when Israel was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar. He was sixteen at the time, and upon his arrival was hand-picked for government service. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..." Dan. 1:8

This statement is characteristic of his behavior while in "the king's house."

In Chapter 6 we find some governors and rulers who were jealous of Daniel and they sought to destroy him yet: they said "we shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Hence they suggested to the king that anyone who prays to any god or man for thirty days, except the king, should be cast into a den of lions.

The threat of a lion's den did not move Daniel. He continued to pray to God as always. When cast into the den of lions, he did not waver. Even the king confided in Daniel "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."

The three Hebrew children, in a land of idols, refused to bow down and worship the image of the King. No power other than that from above could move them. A furnace of fire did not turn them from their resolve. They were indeed saints in Caesar's household.

II. WHO WERE THESE SAINTS MENTIONED BY PAUL

A. They Were Unnamed Saints

Given the evils of the emperor and the day, it is incredible that there were saints in Rome, especially in the household of Caesar. Adam Clarke wrote "Nero was at this time emperor of Rome, a more worthless, cruel and diabolic wretch never disgraced the name or form of man; yet in his family there were Christians; but whether this relates to the members of the imperial family, or to guards, or to courtiers, or to servants, we cannot tell. If even some of his slaves were converted to Christianity would be sufficiently marvelous."

Probably slaves. Authorities agree that Rome was full of Jewish slaves at this time. While their names were not in the headlines, they were enrolled in Heaven. Phil.4:3 "And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." This is evidence that holiness is possible in all conditions of life. One can live for Jesus in the deepest poverty, or amid all the temptations of wealth and evil example. No excuse

for anyone alibiing for his wickedness because of the evil world or temptations about us. Can be honest, morally pure, and upright even if others about us are not.

B. They were saints of faith.

The circumstances of their obedience are not revealed to us. But their faith was solid. They meant business. They maintained a colony of heaven, in a hard Roman hell. There in the midst of all the sin and evil existed "saints" a church, a group of believers. Was it easy? Of course not. We should never be misled by those who tell us that the Christian life is one of ease, wealth, and riches. Our religion is not predicated on these transient virtues. It is based on faith within, not that which is without. It is based on reality, not fantasy. They thought victory. They did not allow themselves to live on the dark side of life. They did not sing the blues. They like David of old, learned to live in praise. "I will enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: and be thankful unto him, and bless his name." Psa.100:4 "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more" Psa.71:14

C. They were saints of courage.

They no doubt had been driven underground. They held services in the catacombs. When they were captured, they were tortured for their faith. Their dying moments were filled with stench of burning flesh, the foul odor of lions' breath, the screaming of the bloodthirsty fans in the bleachers, NO, IT WASN'T EASY TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN ANCIENT ROME. They were Christians at the risk of their lives. They had overcome the world and were not going to sell out for a cheap price. But Nero could no more have stopped this divine flow of Christianity than a fence could stop an avalanche. Paul's preaching had penetrated right into that abyss of infamy, the palace of Caesar, a sinkhole of impurity, the most corrupt household in the world. They had the spirit of the four lepers we read of in 2Kings 7:3-4 "They said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die" Even if they were discovered by Caesar, and were put to death, it would make no difference. Their faith was secure and the outcome assured.

D. They were saints of loyalty.

Their allegiance was to Christ, even though they lived in the shadow of the Roman emperor himself. They were loyal to a greater King--Christ
Their confession of faith was truly a profession. Heb.4:14 "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the son of God let us hold fast our profession." If they had to pay for their faith with their blood, so be it. Nothing could separate them from the love of God. Nero couldn't faze these people. He needn't have worried what they thought of him, for they didn't think of him. Their minds were on Jesus. The entire Roman empire was only a temporary and minor inconvenience to them that

could easily be borne when one understood the eternity that lay ahead. They knew that man can fail you. That man can pass you by. You may wait for assistance for a long, long time. Hence, their faith was in Christ.

III. WHERE DO WE FIND SAINTS TODAY?

A. We find them in Christian homes.

The home is the foundation of society. There are still Christian homes across this land where godly men and women live for God, and rear their children in the fear of God. Motherhood is woman's highest calling. Nothing else is comparable to it. She produces a better product than factory, farm or plant. In Washington D.C. there is a twelve-foot statue of Lincoln, the work of a masters hand. Yet can the artist who chiseled his features out of cold marble compare with that mother who made the man the artist copied?

She sees after the needs of her household. This is her dominion. She is queen here, she has no equal.

"The bravest battle that ever was fought

I'll tell you where and when.

On the maps of the world you will find it not.

It was fought by the mothers of men."

The Father in the home, is the head of the house. God have him this responsibility. Eph. 5:23. He insures stability, peace and order. He is a leader and example. He must first of all be the right kind of man. He has a special obligation to be godly, to be true and honorable and clean, an example to his children. He loves his children and trains them in the way of righteousness. He provides for their physical and spiritual welfare. Today we have saints in homes like these.

So long as we have homes to which men turn
at close of day

So long as we have homes where children are

And women stay

If love and loyalty and faith be found

Across those sills

A stricken nation can recover from

Its greatest ills.

B. We find saints in business.

Today there are men and women who are fair, honest, righteous, and sincere in the business world. Saints who will not cheat or lie in order to make another dollar.

Rom. 12:17 "provide things honest in the sight of all men." In the midst of drinking, gambling, cursing, crime etc. it is refreshing to find saints exerting a Godly influence in the community.

C. We find saints among our young people.

Many young people today do not measure up to the divine standard. They drink, curse, do drugs, run around with the wrong people, in the wrong places, often doing the wrong things. Yet, there are many young people today in the church who are just the opposite. They:

honor their father and mother

honor the rules and regulations set by the home and bible

they are interested in the church

they love to sing the songs of Zion and hear the old old story preached

they travel far and wide to support the gospel

they study long and hard to learn more of God and His will

they talk to their friends about the church and the bible

THEY ARE SAINTS. Eph.6:1 Obey and honor.

May God give us more saints today, in a world that has gone so wrong and is rushing headlong toward a devil's hell.