

The Gospel Penetrated Nero's Household by James Jennings

by James Malachi Jennings

The Gospel can penetrate even the hardest of hearts and save anyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

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Description

This sermon delves into Philippians 4, highlighting the presence of believers in Nero's household, showcasing the power of the Gospel to penetrate even the darkest places. It emphasizes the need for boldness, trust in God's providence, and universal Christian love. The message encourages believers to stand firm in their faith, knowing that God's strength is available in every circumstance.

Transcript

If you turn to Philippians 4, nearing the end of my series on Philippians, just a little context and history reminder. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul and his needs most likely during his two-year imprisonment in Rome during 60-62 A.D. And this letter that we've been going through was written when Paul was waiting for his appeal to come before Caesar and for Caesar to decide his case. And Paul wrote this letter.

It was taken back to the Philippians by Epaphroditus, their messenger, minister to his need, Paul's fellow worker, fellow soldier. And in the closing of the letter, Paul says something that we don't want to pass over. Philippians 4, we're going to look at v. 22.

We'll start in v. 21. His final greetings. Paul says, Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.

The brothers who are with me greet you. Then v. 22, All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. All of the saints greet you, but most of all, those of Caesar's household send you Philippians' greetings.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, I just ask for Your help. I feel I've been running around worrying about audiovisual stuff.

A little anxious about getting that right so the saints can hear. Lord, I don't want to lose the perfect peace that surpasses all understanding. Lord, we want You, the God of peace, to be with us this morning.

Lord, I want You, the God of peace, to be with me. For Your peace to put a garrison around my heart that I would not be anxious about anything. And so, Lord, here we are in everything asking for Your divine help.

We're asking for Your divine power. We're asking for You to fulfill Your promise in v. 19 to supply all of our needs. Lord, we look to You in faith today.

You're our only refuge. You're our only source. Lord, help us.

Help the brethren, I believe, Jeff down in Corpus this morning. Lord, we just ask that You would provide strength through Christ who always strengthens us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So all the saints, I send you greetings, especially those of Caesar's household. I want to start out by defining three things. Who are the saints? What's Caesar's household? And then the third, who is, who was Caesar? So first, the term saints.

Tim looked at this extensively in Ephesians. His message, God's people are saints. And he saw, and we saw, even in Philippians 1.1, Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi.

A saint is not a special class of believer, but every true Christian is a saint. Believers are set apart. They're holy.

Sadly, this glorious term has been hijacked by the Catholic Church and abused. So for Paul here, all this means is the believers in Caesar's household send greetings. Alright, if you're new and you hear saints, that does not mean a special class of Christian.

Now, this implies that there are believers who are saved in Caesar's household. For saints there to send greetings means there are Christians there. They belong, secondly, to Caesar's household.

What does that mean? The phrase Caesar's household, it refers to all of the people who work and live in the Emperor's palace. Located in Rome. Some of those in Caesar's household may be spread throughout the land, but the center hub is there in Rome in the Emperor's palace.

So what does this mean? This means among these believers, there's an assortment of people from all sorts of classes. These believers may be servants. Free men.

They may be higher up in office. We don't know. Paul doesn't specifically say what class these believers are.

He just says they're saints in Caesar's household. And he says, if you look, he says especially those. Meaning, there's a plurality.

There's not one Christian in Caesar's household. There's more than one. There's multiple there.

Multiple believers. To belong to Caesar's household in the Roman era, it would mean you had substantial privileges. This wasn't a light thing.

You had immunities. You had social importance. It was a valued position.

It was a big deal. To be a member of Caesar's household was not a small thing. Thirdly, our text says the saints.

We looked at that of Caesar's household and that begs the question, who was Caesar? After Emperor Julius Caesar ruled, Caesar became a common title adopted by the Roman Emperor. So when he says Caesar's household, he's referring to the Roman Emperor. Paul's imprisonment in Rome was probably during 60-62 A.D. I say probably because there's different debates on that.

I don't want to get into all the specifics. But the Caesar who reigned from 54 A.D. until he died at 30 years of age in 68 A.D. was none other than Nero. And every single commentator I read said Nero was Caesar at this time.

Nero is the one whom the Lord told Paul on the boat before they were shipwrecked. He told Paul, you must stand before Caesar. Paul and Nero met face to face.

So this leads me to my title. The title of this message is this, The Gospel That Penetrated Nero's Household. The Gospel That Penetrated Nero's Household.

I say that because there's Christians in Nero's household. Caesar's household. The Caesar was Nero.

So they're in Nero's household. This is a big deal. So first, let's think of this.

Who was Nero? In order to be amazed that there's Christians in his household, let's think about who Nero was. Some historians record him being called a diabolical monster. A lot of the Christians back then, do you know what they called Nero? The Antichrist.

He started reigning at 16 years of age, and he only got more evil as time progressed. His depravity was being shown more and more and more. History records that he had his own mother killed.

There's a power struggle there. He got her a new boat, and she was out on this ship, and the plan was it would fall apart, and it did. But, she swam to the shore and survived.

So, well, now you've got to kill her a less disguised way, and they sent the men there and they killed her. So he killed his own mother who nursed him when he was young. Secondly, you want to get an idea of who Nero was? He kicked his pregnant wife to death.

You know, some men, they have anger, they might verbally abuse their wife. They might physically punch their wife. You know what Nero did? He kicked her while she was pregnant and she died.

He killed his wife and his child. Things just got worse. Nero, he got remarried to a man.

He had a same-sex marriage. The emperor, it says, took the role of the bride. This did not just happen once, but years later, he married another man.

A young boy. And this time, Nero took the role of the groom. So he marries two men.

One sees the bride. One sees the groom. Look guys, this is in 60 A.D. You look at our culture now and you say things are falling apart.

Things have fallen apart a lot throughout human history. One said this of Nero, his perverse and degenerate madness, which led him to destroy innumerable lives, and finally to such indiscriminate

murder that he did not spare even his nearest and dearest. The people nearest and dearest to him.

He had them killed. Early writer Tertullian says, consult your own records. There you will find that Nero was the first to let his imperial sword rage against this sect of Christianity when it was rising in Rome.

Nero was a man engulfed in his sin. So here Paul is in prison. 60 to 62 A.D. Around then probably in Rome.

Just a few years later in 64 A.D., the great fire broke out in Rome. Many historians record that the people were blaming Nero for the fire. He wanted to burn the city down to rebuild it even better.

It was one of the accusations. So you know what Nero did? They're blaming me. I need someone I can blame.

Who do you think he blamed? The Christians. He ordered a massacre against the believers. It started right there.

And it is after this fire when Paul is in prison again and writes 2 Timothy where Paul says in chapter 4, the time of my departure has come. And that was the point, maybe around 67 A.D. when Paul was killed. And history says he was beheaded at the command of Nero.

During this time, Tacitus, a Roman historian, he recorded that Christians by Nero's hands were this, listen, 1. They were clothed in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs. Meaning, you're their prisoner. They take the hide of a beast.

They wrap it around you and sew it on you. Like a costume. And so now, the dogs think it's a beast.

And then they send the dogs at you. And those dogs kill you thinking you're a beast. Christians under Nero's hands were crucified.

Some say that Peter was crucified upside down by Nero's command. What else happened to Christians? Others, as is well known, were set on fire to illuminate the night when daylight failed. So you had Christians being strapped to a stake.

And as men say, they were lit to light the streets of Rome. That's Nero. Did he progressively get worse? At this point we're at in 60-62, did he only get worse? Yes.

Wasn't as bad then as he was, say, in 65 A.D. Yet here, Paul says, there are saints, believers, sending greetings to the Philippians. And these saints, whether they're high up, whether they're servants, freemen, we don't know. But the fact is, there's saints in Nero's household.

The Gospel got in there. It penetrated it. There are Christians in the den of the monster.

Now, I was trying to imagine Epaphroditus getting back to Philippi and the letter is read. We don't know, what if this is the first time the Philippians heard there were saints in Caesar's household? Maybe they already knew there were. I don't know.

Maybe this is the first time. At the end, he says, the saints in Caesar's household greet you. How do you think they responded? What do you think they said? Maybe one of them said this.

Wait, wait. Epaphroditus. Did Paul really write this? Did he have a slip of the pen? Did Paul actually mean to put all the Romans curse and hate you, especially those of Caesar's household? That would be more consistent, right? Paul says all the saints in Caesar's household greet you.

Isn't it all the Romans in Caesar's household curse you and hate you, Christian? Isn't that more consistent? That's not what Paul wrote. Paul wrote, there are Christians living in Caesar's household, in Nero's household. It's incredible.

Paul himself was a former persecutor of the church. He approved the killings of Christians. And he had seen the same change from his own life.

He obviously saw that within some in Nero's household, where he includes their greeting to the church at Philippi in this letter. And if you remember, remember when Paul was first converted, what happened? When he came to Jerusalem in Acts 9, it records he attempted to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. For they didn't believe he was a disciple.

Paul couldn't really be converted. He's got to be sneaking in here like Judas. And he's going to betray us.

He's got to be a spy. But Barnabas, the son of encouragement, he convinced them that Paul was truly saved. Paul was not being deceitful.

And sure enough, Paul went out preaching and teaching that Jesus is the Christ. And they saw this man really was converted. Now, I don't know what the Philippians' response is.

We don't know. It does not say here. But if this is the first time they heard of it, you can imagine they would have heard, wait, wait, what did you say? The saints greet you? Especially those of Nero's household.

There's Christians in Nero's household? That's right. That's the penetrating power of the Gospel. Think about what penetrate means.

It means to succeed in forcing a way into or through something. The U.S. military has a series of custom-made bombs to penetrate hardened or deeply buried structures. They'll put these missiles on structures that are supposedly unbreakable and they'll penetrate through.

And believer, we've got something that can penetrate the heart of the hardened sinner. And it's the Gospel of Jesus Christ empowered by the Spirit of God. God takes that message in that hard heart and it penetrates it and all of a sudden, not just do you have Paul who's a Christian now, you've got people in Nero's household who are believers.

God has given us a message about Christ being Lord, about Christ dying as our substitute. And He can take that message and that seed and empower it and save people. So let me give ten truths quickly that this verse testifies to being true.

Ten truths. First, this verse testifies to the fact that anyone can become a Christian. Anyone can become a Christian.

We say, I know that already. Sometimes we have to step back and think about it. Anyone can become a Christian.

Back in Rome, people in Nero's household became Christians. The Nero we heard about. That could be the least expected place.

Or the Paul who's persecuting Christians. So do you know that? That God's divine mercy can save the greatest of wretches. You could compare v. 22.

You could reword it and maybe say this. Maybe we get a letter from a missionary who's in prison in the ISIS stronghold when they had their caliphate in Raqqa a couple years ago when it was at its strongest. And imagine getting a letter.

And someone says this. They say the saints in Raqqa, Syria, in al-Baghdadi's household, send you greetings. What? Wait, saints? Set-apart holy ones? In the most set-apart, abominable, wicked place you could ever imagine? No way.

Yes. Yes way. Because the Gospel can save anyone.

Anyone can become a Christian. If men and women will turn from their sins and embrace, the Savior is their only hope. They'll find forgiveness of their sins.

Secondly, this verse testifies to the fact that the Word of God is not bound. As our late brother Mike Morrow, he preached to us and he brought up 2 Timothy 2.9. Paul was bound with chains as a criminal, just as he is in Rome. But the Word of God is not bound.

Paul has chains. He's bound. But he has the Word.

It's not bound. And here in Philippians 4.22, we have evidence of that very truth that God's Word is not bound. Paul was bound with chains, but the Word of God was not bound.

It had free course throughout the Praetorian guard in Nero's household, and now there are saints. Look at Philippians 1.12. Paul says, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel. So it's become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for the sake of Christ.

And that imperial guard there is the Praetorian guard. Nero's elite troops. They know why Paul's in prison.

They heard truth. I thought about another example of the Word not being bound. In the 1800's, Charles Spurgeon learned of a condemned murderer who about to be executed in South Africa wrote to say to Spurgeon that a copy of one of his sermons had been given to him some months earlier.

He had read it repeatedly. He now had believed on Christ and was facing his approaching death and peace. I mean, imagine Spurgeon.

You're like, wait, what? Somehow something I wrote got to a guy on death row and he got converted? The Word of God is not bound. And anyone can become a Christian. The Word of God spreads among the lands through the ages.

You can't stop it. You can kill all the Christians. A third thing, verse 22 testifies to.

It testifies to the fact that a messenger has to be sent in order for them to hear. And as we just looked at in verse 12, how did it become known throughout the whole imperial guard that Paul's imprisonment was for

Christ? Paul had to be there. Now, he got sent there because the Lord had compelled him to appeal to Caesar and the Lord made him get all the way to this point to be in Rome.

In Acts 28, which I believe refers to these two years, that is when Epaphroditus came and Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. It says in Acts 28, Paul says, I lived in Rome two whole years at his own expense. He welcomed all who came to him.

And listen to what Paul was doing. Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. Paul was not silent.

He knew, how will they hear unless someone is sent and someone preaches? Paul was not silent. He opened his mouth. Fourth thing this text testifies to.

This text testifies to the fact that Paul had a burden for the lost. This is the Paul who said in Romans 9 that I have an unceasing anguish in my heart for my kinsmen in the flesh, according to the flesh. He says, I wish I could be cut off for their sake.

Paul who says in Romans 10, my heart's desire for them is that they might be saved. Was Paul's heart's desire to get out of trying circumstances? No. He wanted to depart and be with Christ, so that was far better.

But he saw to remain in the flesh it was more necessary. He was here seeking to advance the Gospel. Paul had a burden for the lost.

If your burden is all of your own burdens, you're going to forget about the lost. But if you're casting your burdens on the Lord, you're able to look at the burdens of others and see these lost men and women perishing, and you want to give them the truth. You don't just want to get your own comfort.

Fifthly, this verse testifies of God's providence in our circumstances opening a door for us to advance the Gospel. Providence got Paul to this point. And God controls providence.

Paul said in verse 12, he says, what did his imprisonment really serve to do? What was the real purpose behind his trying circumstances? It has really served to advance the Gospel. He had to get there. He had to get in prison in order to advance the Gospel.

Paul's situation gave him a unique pulpit to reach a unique set of people. Being in prison. How is this relevant for us? Maybe some of you are saints like Paul in prison at some point.

Some of you may be saints like those in Nero's household. You're in some type of government place where they really hate Christ. They're wanting you to say Caesar is Lord, but you're saying Christ is Lord.

God has you there. Providentially. With a purpose.

Think about Esther. She was in Caesar's household. Did God have a purpose? Yes.

Think about Daniel. Was Daniel in Caesar's household you could say? Yes. God had a purpose.

What about Joseph? Was Joseph put in a unique place? And yet, God had a purpose. God meant it for good that it might be brought about that many lives would be kept alive as they saw had happened. So, remember, your circumstances, God has crafted them as a platform by which you can get the Gospel out

to a unique set of people.

So don't despise providence. Even in the small things. You're kept from getting to a place at a certain time or an appointment gets changed, but because it gets changed, you're around a certain person on the next day, and you're able to evangelize them that you would not have seen if your appointment had been on the time when you had expected it.

Sixthly, this verse testifies to the fact that Paul was not living in fear. He was not a coward. But he was striving to be bold to honor Christ.

What did Paul say in verse 20? He said, as it is, verse 20, chapter 1, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed, but with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death, for me to live as Christ and to die as gain. That was Paul's expectation. He wasn't living in fear.

He was living in the hope that the Lord would empower him to not be frightened in anything by his opponents. Paul could have crumbled. He could have denied the Lord like Peter.

Rather, he was consistent and his boldness all the more validated the truth of Christ. There's two verses that Paul has called the Philippians to in this letter that he's already living out in Rome in a harder set of circumstances. You could look.

Philippians 1.28 Look what he's calling the Philippians to. He's already living this out. Don't be frightened in anything by your opponents.

Why? This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. So Paul says don't be frightened. He can only say that because by the grace of God, he's not being frightened and he's in far worse circumstances.

In chapter 2, he calls them in v. 14, do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. And boy, Nero was twisted and crooked. And what does Paul say? You should be shining as lights in the world, holding fast to the Word of life, so in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain, even if I am to be poured out.

Even if he's martyred. Poured out as a drink offering. He's fine with that.

So Paul's saying, Philippians, don't be scared of your opponents. If you're not scared of them, they'll see their destruction and your salvation. And Paul says, you should shine as lights.

Not be grumbling, but be rejoicing in the circumstances and you're going to shine as a light as you hold fast to the Word. So Paul was not living in fear. Because they didn't just need a preacher there in Rome.

You could have sent many a preacher and they'd just deny the Lord and go run off. You need a preacher there who by faith in the Lord had boldness. And Paul was that man.

As many others were. The seventh thing this verse testifies to. It testifies to the fact that Paul was a partaker of grace.

Because brethren, he didn't do this in his own strength and his own power. The only reason he was not living in fear was he was a partaker of grace. And you even see this in chapter 1. Just after him saying in v. 6 that he's sure that God will finish the work He has started in the Philippians, he says in v. 7, he's reasoning why he has confidence that they're going to make it to the end, and he says it's right to feel this way because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel.

They were fellowshiping and sufferings, progressing, defending, confirming the Gospel, and they're doing it by the power of God. Again, this is the same Paul who in 2 Corinthians 1 said he felt like he received a sentence of death, but it was to make him no longer rely on himself, but on God who raises the dead. So, Paul was a partaker of grace.

That's the only way. He had the undeserved power of God at work in his life. He had the grace and mercy of God he did not deserve empowering him in these circumstances.

What did he say? It is the Lord who works in us to will and to work for His good pleasure. There Paul is, supernaturally seeing God work in his own heart, in his own life. We cannot endure such circumstances in our own strength.

Paul said, I always have strength through Christ who strengthens me. Isn't that what he looked at a month ago? The only reason Paul had strength to not be fearless, but to preach Christ, which leads to the Praetorian guard hearing and knowing why he's there. And maybe one of the Praetorian guards got converted.

And maybe they're the one who brought it to someone in Nero's household and evangelized someone in Nero's household, and that person got converted. And now multiple people in Nero's household are greeting the Philippian church. Far away, another Roman colony hearing there's converts in the very den of the monster Nero himself.

It's incredible. Number eight, this verse testifies to the fact that as saints, we actually do live up to our name being set apart and holy even in the worst of circumstances. Paul does not say the saints who were past tense in Nero's household send you greetings.

He says the saints, all the saints greet you, especially those of Nero's household. They're of that household presently and they're greeting, meaning they're converted and they're still maintaining their position in the very den of the monster Nero himself. You can only imagine.

Some of the future trials, those of Nero's household, we're going to face for believing in Christ. No doubt in a few years from now, when more radical persecution broke out, some in Nero's house were going to be cast to the lions for saying that Jesus is Lord. In Acts 17, it said of believers that they were all acting against the decrees of Caesar saying there's another King Jesus.

And those believers then who said there's another King who's Jesus, guess what? Those Christians of Nero's household, they would say something very similar. Nero, you're not King. Christ is King.

Christ is Lord. One day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess in heaven, on earth, and under the earth that Jesus Christ is Lord. Imagine doing that.

Imagine going against Nero's decree, the Caesar at the time, and saying I will not do that. Christ is Lord. He'd put you with the lions? Maybe some of these saints right here in v. 22 in Caesar's household, maybe they went from serving in his household inside to being strapped to a post and now serving Caesar by being an illumatory light outside in his garden.

Imagine that. That's the cost. If you shine as a light for Christ in the world, some wicked ruler like Nero, he might take you and make you another type of light where you're burning, illuminating his garden.

That is the depravity, the wickedness of mankind. They hate the truth. They don't come to the light because they don't want their deeds to be exposed.

You could say, well, that's a horrible fate. Well, that's not the Christian's ultimate fate. Our ultimate fate is actually pretty good to be with Christ in chapter 1 and then in chapter 3, v. 20, it's okay to get burnt on the stake.

V. 20, why? Our citizenship is in heaven. And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. All things are subjected to the Lord anyways.

The Christian's ultimate end is a radical transformation is glorification. That is a good ending, isn't it? So, did those in Nero's household leave and run and hide? No. Not at this point.

They're presently greeting the Philippians. They're living unspotted and blameless in the world. You can do that too, Christian.

You can live as a light even in Caesar's household. This is practical. Because there are some, they get saved, and it's like, I can't work anywhere.

I can't stay here. I can't do that. No, no, God has everything subjected to Himself.

My God will supply all of your needs for you according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. That doesn't mean there is a place to leave a job because of the defilement, but you want to be able to believe that the power of God is sufficient. Holiness is possible even in Nero's household.

Even there. I love to think about Lot. How does it describe Lot when he was in Sodom and Gomorrah? Righteous Lot.

He was righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah. Then when he gets out of Sodom and Gomorrah, he falls into all sorts of sin with his daughters. You're thinking, what? In some way, he was more holy apparently in the very den of Sodom and Gomorrah.

So holiness is possible. That's one thing this text testifies to. You don't have to escape out of your trying circumstances in order to be holy, in order to honor the Lord.

God has put you where you're at in His providence. Is it difficult? Let me ask you this. Are your present circumstances worse than it was for the believers who were in Nero's household? In the next two years, do you imagine that you're going to be put to a bunch of lions? Real lions? Do you imagine maybe in the next two years at your job, you might be a light on the company property burning alive to illuminate the garden? I don't think any of us are facing that necessarily.

God help us to rejoice in our circumstances. John Calvin, he said, it's a rare thing for holiness to reign in the courts of the sovereigns. And yet here we see that.

Holiness is reigning in the courts of the diabolical Caesar Nero. It's incredible. Now, one day it may cost you your job or your head for saying Christ is Lord.

My ninth thing that this verse testifies to, it testifies to the fact of universal Christian love for the brethren. No matter of skin color or cultural background. Look at Paul's final greeting.

Verse 21, "...Greet every saint in Christ Jesus, the brothers who are with Me..." I mean, that's an assortment. Verse 22, "...All the saints greet You, especially those of Caesar's house." We've got Jews and Greeks and Gentiles, all sorts of people greeting one another. Why? They're one in Christ.

They're one in Jesus Christ. That's what the Gospel does. The Gospel so radically changes your heart.

Well, you know what? You know what you're doing? You're just seeking to strive side-by-side together for the faith of the Gospel because that's the big deal. I just want to get Christ to be made known. I'm not going to get sidetracked on all these other things.

Let's get side-to-side together, Jew, Gentile, whatever skin color you have, whatever pigments, and I'm going to go and follow Christ and advance the Gospel. That was their focus back then. Look, if you're getting persecuted and Christians are getting burned alive and you're getting strapped in the skins of beasts, you kind of don't have time to worry about all these other things.

Because there's a lot bigger things at stake. Our problem is there's so little persecution, it's so easy to get sidetracked by 50,000 other things, and we forget the one thing that we need to be doing. I'm not saying we do that corporately, but some could.

But you know what? Persecution, it could be coming. And this is a time by which we're able to live somewhat peaceful lives and advance the Gospel. We need to take advantage of it.

One day, they're going to block us on the Internet, delete our YouTube channels. They're going to halt an ability to advance the Gospel. And if we get sidetracked now and forget advancing the Gospel, we're going to regret it.

We're going to waste our time. So this verse testifies universal Christian love. It doesn't matter what background they're from.

I mean, imagine the woman who had demons casted out and hearing that people in Nero's household send you greetings. Why would they even want to relate to me? Because you're a Christian. We're all saints together.

Tenth observation. This verse testifies and shows us that some believers at certain times and circumstances have more affection for other believers than the rest do. Now what am I getting at? Paul does not just say here the believers in Nero's household greet you.

What does he say? Especially those of Caesar's, who is Nero, of his household, send you greetings. Why do they most of all, above and beyond the rest of the believers in Rome, send greetings? Why are they more excited, grateful to send greetings? Now I don't see the answer in the letter, but I'm going to give a couple possibilities. One, it could possibly be that those in Nero's house wanted to especially greet the

Philippian believers in order to encourage the Philippians in their afflictions, because the Philippians, like those in Rome and in Nero's house, are in a Roman colony, facing persecution.

And maybe it would be an encouragement. Here, you're in a Roman colony of Philippi facing persecution, and you find out there's Christians in Nero's household standing fast for Christ and they greet you. And they especially greet you.

That could kind of encourage you like, well, man, we shouldn't be giving up here. They're in the den of the monster and they're being sustained by the power of Christ. So it could be.

How much more would those in the capital be suffering? What an encouragement even just to hear that there's Christians in Nero's household. You know what happens? We often forget about believers who are suffering elsewhere. We tend to think that we have it worse than the rest.

But we don't. Second possibility of why the saints in Nero's household, especially, most of all, beyond the rest, wanted to greet the Philippians. This is where I lean the most as a possible reason.

It could be that they especially wanted to greet them because the Philippian church is the church that entered in beyond the rest in supporting Paul in his mission's endeavors. And his mission endeavors, guess where they eventually brought him to? To Rome. And guess what the Philippians did? While he's there, they send Epaphroditus and he risked his life to minister to Paul.

And imagine some of the Christians there seeing the love of this Philippian church and hearing Paul say, no church entered into partnership with me in beginning of the Gospel except the Philippians only. And here, you're in Nero's household. You've been saved because Paul's imprisonment led to the advancement of the Gospel.

And you're starting to realize, how did Paul even get here for me to hear the message in order to be saved? And one of the root causes leads all the way back to the Philippian church. And it kind of makes you most of all think, wow, I want to greet them, Paul, because of their partnership in the Gospel from the very beginning. Thank you for holding the rope for him.

Brethren, there are people out there, I hope, that through the efforts the Lord has helped us to make as a church, that they especially want to greet us because of their gratefulness for us being a means of their conversion through the support of a laborer who reached them with the Gospel. Where they especially, there's something there, special in the heart, unique love that's not a sinful partiality, but it's just an over and abounding gratefulness. So, this verse, that there are Christian believers in the very den of the monster Nero, Caesar of that day who is wicked.

This verse should encourage us to believe that the Lord in the midst of your own trials, He will sustain you. Even if you are in Caesar's household. A type of situation.

You can stand firm in the Lord. They did that 2,000 years ago by the grace of God mightily working in them. By the God who supplies all of our needs.

By the God who always provides us strength through Christ who strengthens us. Remember, Christ's strength is available in every circumstance. And remember, Christ controls every circumstance and puts you there.

So you better believe He's going to give you the strength for it. You could be facing a divorce. You could be facing getting fired at work.

You could be facing hatred from the family. You could be facing a child who is diving headfirst into sin. There's strength there.

If they did it in Caesar's household, God will give us the grace in our circumstances that are so much smaller than what they faced. We should also be encouraged to believe that the Lord in regards to those who are lost, He's able to save them. We've got to keep praying.

God's Word is not bound, and it penetrates the darkest places to save a people for His own possession. Think about it. Paul said all the saints in Nero's household greet you.

Fill that Nero's in with something different. All the saints in the North Korean regime send you greetings. What? There's Christians? In North Korea? Not just there in a slave camp.

They're actually up in an office? Somewhere still? They've not been killed yet? They've not been ousted yet? How did that happen? The Word of God is not bound. Anyone can become a Christian. A messenger has to go.

All the saints in whose house greet you. It could be an actual literal house of a family. There's some lost family out there.

Your family members. Maybe one day you'll say all the saints in the Jennings household send you greetings. Something like that.

Or my ten things I believe this verse testifies to. There's more, but these were the ten I had. Number one, the Lord can save anyone.

Number two, the Word of God is not bound. Number three, missionaries must be sent. Number four, the missionary must have a burden for the lost.

Paul did. Number five, God uses providence to give us unique pulpits to reach certain people, so we better not despise those circumstances. Number six, we must not live in fear, but be bold for Christ in order to shine as a light, in order to not be frightened in anything by our opponents that they might see their destruction.

And our salvation in that from God. Number seven, we will only do this if by faith we partake of the grace and the power and the strength from God. We can't do this in ourselves, in our own strength.

Number eight, this verse testifies to the fact that God will give you the grace to be holy even if you are an officer, a slave, a servant in Nero's household. Number nine, by this grace, we have a universal Christian love for all believers. We can all greet all the saints.

It's not even like you think. You know, skin color and all that. It's like that's not even on the radar.

It's just like, they're Christians. Number 10, this text testifies that the love of Christ, when it's shed abroad in your heart, it will make you want to especially greet certain believers who maybe partook in some way of you hearing the good news of Jesus Christ. And no other church supported Paul in the beginning and the gospel except the Philippians only.

Paul said in Philippians 2, one day every knee is going to bow. Every ton is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We're going to win, Christian.

Nero's empire miserably fell. One year after he killed Paul, Nero committed suicide. He died.

Some say he was a coward and he couldn't even kill himself, so he had his assistant kill him. And I was thinking about T.R. Glover. He said this statement that many have quoted.

He said, the day was to come when men would call their dogs Nero and their sons Paul. And the point is, back then, what did people call their sons? You called Nero, Paulos. After all those people, you know what my son's name is? It's not Nero.

It's Paul. Because Paul the Apostle, the Christian, the heavenly citizen, they're the only person who's living a life worth living for. Everyone else in the end, not only did they lose their soul, but whatever they did in this earth, it does not profit.

You cannot exchange all of it in the end to save your soul. So let's pray. Father, we thank You that Your power and might, Your arm that is not short, that it cannot save, that You sovereignly, providentially brought Paul to appeal before Nero.

And in doing that, he had two years right there in Rome through which boldness he proclaimed You. The whole elite guards knew about it. And here's some in Nero's very own household.

Lord, we don't know who. They were converted. Lord, we pray that You'd even do that in our day.

Lord, there are different rulers in the world. It feels impossible that they might be saved. Lord, there's different family members.

And Lord, we just pray that You would save people in such positions. I pray, Lord, You'd help believers here who may work in a Caesar household type of situation. Lord, that they would shine as a light there.

Holding fast to the Word. Lord, we hold fast to You this morning. We pray You'd continue to be with us in our meeting.

Lord, bless our fellowship right now. In Christ's name, Amen.

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