



“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 2929

Philippians 4:21 "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you."

A common mistake that is too often made when reading our Bibles is to skip over the final verses of an epistle or letter. Most times it's a list of names and final greetings that just doesn't register as being all that important to us. Doubt you'll hear many sermons built around the final verses of most of Paul's letters.

But we must be careful about that. We remember that every word spoken by God is important. Jesus said that man shall not live on bread alone, but upon every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. The final couple of sentences are much more than "Sincerely, Paul." They are more than filler. They are there for a reason and like all Bible passages are layered with lessons if we only looked at them.

And, with that, we come to our verse today. One of the final sentences in the letter to the Philippians. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus, it says. And, right there we find a great lesson for us.

First, every saint is important to God and needs to be important to us. Every saint is one who has put on Christ in baptism and has been redeemed, sanctified and justified. Sometimes we can believe that some are more important than others. Whose name is on the sign out front? The name of the preacher. And, whose name is on the church's stationary, the elders and the preachers. Whose names are posted every week on the bulletin, the elders and the preachers. I believe there are reasons for that, but one can sure walk away from that feeling pretty low. Your name may not be on the sign. Your name may not be on the stationary or the bulletin. But from our verse today, you are one of the saints. Greet every saint. Greet the ones that are known and the ones that few know. Greet the big ones and the little ones. Greet the ones who have been there for decades and those who have only been there a few weeks. Every saint is important to God.

Second, it's easy to greet only those that we like. This can create some uneasiness within the congregation and even bend the unity that is there. The apostles words were to greet every saint. Not just your friends. Not just those you like. But all and everyone. Even the one that bothers you.

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Even the one that you think is weird. Even the one that talks too much, sings too loud, and sits where you want to sit. Even that one, greet. We say the church is a family, but there are days when that family seems to have favorites and is a bit dysfunctional. Some are the life of the congregation. Everyone knows when they are there. Bigger than life. Others are very, very shy and quiet. They may never raise their hand in a class or be outspoken in any way. Yet to these, both, greet.

Third, "greeting," is much more than just saying, "Hi." Or, "Paul says hi to you." There is a depth and a warmth to greeting. It carries the idea of encouragement and comfort. I envision a cup of warm chicken noodle soup and a fuzzy blanket on a cold, crisp evening. One feels good on the inside and the outside. That's greeting. That's letting someone know that you recognize them and are glad they are there. Put a smile on your face. Give a handshake if you can, or a fist bump if that makes you more comfortable. Every person has a place and every person is needed. Sometimes that just needs to be expressed more than we do. Greet them. Greet all of them. Greet all the saints. This is what puts muscle and flesh upon the backbone of fellowship. It's worshipping with friends. It's being connected. It's belonging. It's knowing that you are welcomed and wanted.

Some are so optimistic and driven that they could survive without a greeting. Greet them anyway. But there are others who can feel like no one likes them. They can feel like they are unloved. They may be holding on by a thin thread. Their doubts, fears and guilt make them wonder if even the Lord likes them. Boy, greet these folks. They certainly need it. Encouragement and strength is what is necessary.

Fourth, greeting every saint is going to take some time. It's more than just saying, "Hi" and walking on. It is having conversations. It's listening. It's getting to know others better. It's encouraging. It's knowing their story and it's sharing your story. It's helping out. It's offering advice. It's learning. It's growing. Greet the saints is such a simple term, but it's packed with lots and lots of ways to do that.

Every person in the congregation is special. Every person is needed. Every person adds value and helps the church be what it is. And, one of the glues that holds us all together is our love and appreciation for each other. Together we make the church what it is. Together we make a difference for the Lord. Together...that's us. Satan would have us pull apart and be upset with each other. But instead, we are greeting all the saints.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

***This is the beginning of a new year, maybe you need to change things up a bit this year. If you haven't been greeting all the saints, why not start something new this year, and do just that. Don't just come into the assembly and go directly to your seat. Look around, who haven't you spoken to lately? Who is sitting there all alone? Go over and greet them. Get to know them better. Let them KNOW that they are special and are loved. Let us make this year better for all of us. Joe.
