***A Doxology - PH95-01
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:20-23***

We now begin Philippians 4:20-23, and our subject is "Farewell to the Philippians." We are now on the homestretch of this book that we have spent so many months in while we have been studying advanced Bible doctrine. Paul's epistle to the Philippians has been an epistle on personal happiness. It's now about to be concluded.

He concludes his letter with some final greetings exchanged between Christians in Rome, from which he's writing, and Christians in Philippi, the city to which he's writing. The letter ends, as a matter of fact, with a series of courtesies which are characteristic of letters in New Testament times. Paul himself probably wrote this book from Philippians 4:20 on with his own hand. His usual style was to have a secretary which was called an amanuensis; that is a writer – somebody who actually pushed the pen on the paper as Paul dictated. It is in all likelihood that, at this point, as he often did in his letters, he identified and verified that the letter was indeed from him by writing the final salutations (the final greetings) in his own hands so that they were recognizable. People who knew his handwriting would recognize that this was indeed a letter that had come from Paul. Perhaps he authenticated this letter in that same way by picking up the stylus, and from verse 20 through the end, writing these words final himself.

Before we move into these verses, however, I want to tie up what we have in the preceding context, because the context propels Paul to a conclusion which is in effect a doxology – an expression of praise to God. The doxology (with which we begin a service – the morning service particularly) is an expression of praise to God. This is what Paul launches into here at the close of his letter. The thing that has caused him to tie up this letter with this expression of praise is, of course, the whole subject of the priesthood that we've been studying.

**The Doctrine of the Priesthood**

So let's summarize, first of all, the doctrine of the priesthood:

1. The purpose of a human priesthood is to provide a mediator to represent sinful man before a holy god (Hebrews 5:1). The reason you need a priest is because man is sinful; God is holy; and, the two cannot get together. Somebody has to come between them and represent man to God. First of all, this has to be somebody who, on the one hand, is qualified and acceptable to God to perform that role of mediator. Secondly, it must be one who will follow the basis of approach to God which God has established for the priest to make that contact in behalf of the sinner.
2. Priests are appointed by God. This was true in the Levitical order; this was true of Jesus Christ; this is true of Christians who are appointed as the result of your election; and, this is consistently true in Scripture. Priests do not make themselves priests. Priests do not decide to be priests. They have to be appointed by God (Hebrews 5:4-5). In the Old Testament, you had to be born into the Aaronic family, or you could not be a priest. In the New Testament, you had to be called by God into eternal life; thus accept Christ; and, thus enter the Melchizedek priesthood. Jesus Christ was appointed by the Father to the priesthood of the Melchizedek line. He was appointed as High Priest. So priests are appointed by God. This is not an office you assume on your own.
3. Priests offer sacrifices in behalf of the worshipers as the ground of their approach to God (Hebrews 8:3). One of the main functions of a priest is obviously to offer sacrifices. The offering of animal sacrifices was the means of symbolically reconciling the sinner to God. It didn't actually do it, but it symbolized what God himself was going to do in establishing that reconciliation. The animal sacrifices of the priest were in themselves of no value. They were but a provision which pictured the thing that would be of value. God would provide this thing of value which would be His Son as the Lamb of God. He takes away the sins of the world. So the Bible is very clear that the animal's blood could in no way establish forgiveness of sins. It took the life of a sinless person, namely Jesus Christ, to do that. But the animals did represent the blood that He would shed in behalf of sinners (Hebrews 7:19, Hebrews 10:1-4).
4. In patriarchal times, the father of each family was the priest for his household (Genesis 8:20, Genesis 12:8, Genesis 26:25, Genesis 33:20, Job 1:5). All of these verses are examples of the patriarch of the family (the head of the family – the father) who was performing sacrifices as the priest in behalf of the family. This was in the era before the Levitical priesthood had been established at Mount Sinai.
5. The Law of Moses provided a specialized priesthood in the family of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi (Hebrews 10:1-4). They performed a prescribed ministry, as the Aaronic priesthood, which ministry portrayed the person and work of Jesus Christ. The very tabernacle, in which they perform these ministries, and later the temple, all reflected something that was true about Jesus Christ. The sacrifices themselves, as we have seen in our study, portrayed various things that were true about the coming Messiah Savior. However, the priesthood established by the Law of Moses was never able to provide a final solution for the human sin problem. Hebrews 7:19 points this out. This was all portrayed in pictures. This was all portrayal of something that ultimately only God could solve.

The Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus Christ replaced the Aaronic order (Hebrews 7:11-12, Hebrew 7:18). Because the Aaronic priesthood simply could not solve the problem of sin with its animal sacrifices, God came in with another priesthood headed up by his own Son, Jesus Christ, and that priesthood did solve the problem of a sinner's approach and relationship to an eternally holy God. This priesthood of Melchizedek has certain distinctive characteristics. It was an eternal priesthood with Jesus Christ as the High Priest (Hebrews 6:20, Hebrew 6:31). Jesus Christ was Himself an adequate sacrifice for sin and a proper mediator between God and the sinner (Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:14-15).

The reason this was true about Jesus Christ was because he was born as Adam had been created, but without an old sin nature. That was the significance of His being virgin-born, which suggests to us that the old sin nature is delivered by natural birth through the father. So Christ did not have a sin nature, and that's why He was qualified to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world, because He was sinless, and therefore spiritually alive. Because he was man and God in one person, He was qualified to be a mediator between God and man. You had to be both to be able to bring them together. He was Himself an adequate sacrifice and an adequate mediator.

The Melchizedek Priesthood provided the final solution for the sin problem (Hebrew 7:11, Hebrews 10:11-14). After this priesthood, through its High Priest Jesus Christ, had fully performed its duty upon the cross, there was no further problem for sin. You don't need any more sacrifice. All the separation between God and man is once and for all eternally removed. Jesus Christ is a King Priest in the tradition of Melchizedek, who was also a King Priest. Jesus Christ heads up a royal priesthood of church age saints, which is unique. We have this in Hebrews 5:6 and 1 Peter 2:9.

During the millennium, Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of David as king and as priest, fulfilling the Melchizedek type (Zachariah 6:13). Remember that Melchizedek was an Old Testament previewing – a picture of what Jesus Christ was going to be like in His priesthood. Jesus becomes the High Priest, the King Priest, in His full glory in the millennium. That is when he sits upon the throne in that capacity.

Believers in the church age are all priests of the Melchizedek order (Revelation 1:6). We found that Christians are living stones in union with Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). We also found that Christians are royalty in this world as God's priests (Peter 2:9). Since every Christian is a priest of God, there is no division into clergy and laity during the dispensation of the church. During the dispensation of the Jews, there was such thing as clergy and laity. There were priests and non-priests. In the church age, there is no such division, for every believer is a priest of God.

The Christian priest today represents only himself before God. It's a very private relationships. The only two individuals involved in a Christian's priesthood are himself and God. Also, in the Levitical order, only males were priests. But in the church age, both men and women are their own priests representing themselves. Christian priests will be associated with the High Priest Jesus Christ in His millennial kingdom. Revelation 20:6 tells us that we who are in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ of the Melchizedek order are actually going to be exercising our priesthood with Him (with our High Priest) in the millennium.

There will be a great deal of joy and a great deal of happiness, and many wonderful things that you and I will be privileged to do in the millennium. We will be achieving things, perhaps, that have always been ambitions that we have had. We will be learning things. We'll be having experiences. We'll be going places that we may have always wanted to go, but which this side of the millennium (this side of eternity), we were never able to experience. We never got around to those things for one reason or another.

Now, while we will be doing all those things, and having a lot of dreams fulfilled, you will also be exercising a very great bit of authority. Remember that when you come into the presence of Jesus Christ, there will be a considerable improvement in everything that you and I are at this moment. Our understanding; our judgments; our personalities; and, our temperaments will all be tremendously refined. The Bible says we will be in the image of Christ. Therefore, you (no matter how capable or incapable you are as a person now) will be fantastically capable in the millennium. You will have abilities that will be absolutely marvelous to behold. They will be the sort of thing that now you could not even imagine yourself as being able to do.

For that reason, you will be fully qualified to serve as administrating priests in the millennial kingdom with Jesus Christ. That's exactly what you're going to do. You'll be associated with the High Priest in a functioning way. You're not just going to stand there by the throne singing Hallelujah to the Lamb all the time. You're actually going to be out there exercising your priesthood authority under Jesus Christ, and administering the world of the millennium. This is not going to be delivered to angels to do.

1. The basic functions of the Christian priesthood are:
	1. The first function of the Christian priesthood is maintaining temporal fellowship. Another word for that is spirituality – staying in the inner circle. You find this in Jude 21 and 1 John 1:9.
	2. The second function is learning and teaching Bible doctrine (Jude 20a).
	3. The third function is prayer (Jude 20b). This is how God works in the church age. This is how we secure all that we need. Prayer is a fantastically marvelous practice. Last Sunday night, we gathered all over this auditorium to pray. We prayed in very specific ways for some very specific things. One of the things that we prayed for was the final securing of the loan that we were seeking for the fantastically large piece of property adjoining our campus. By this Sunday, as you know, that has been secured, and the property is ours. We won't stop to go through all the other requests here, but I'm happy to report to you that on every one of those other requests, there has been progress made. On every one of those requests, I have since had contacts that are promising answers (solutions) to those specific requests.

Was that coincidental? Was that an accident? Well, you may go ahead and think that if you'd like. We've been knocking around since last summer on this loan business, getting exactly no place. And maybe you'd like to think about it like that, that it just happened to be a coincidence that when this church got together and spent part of its evening service in small groups all over this auditorium in prayer, beseeching God to give us a solution, that it's just accidental, but this week the answer came. But I don't think so. We exercise part of the function of our priesthood, and God responded as He promised He inevitably would do.

* 1. The fourth function, of course, is offering spiritual sacrifices. We have this taught in 1 Peter 2:5.
1. The spiritual sacrifices of the Christian priesthood are:
	1. First is the sacrifice of self. That is, the providing of your physical body and all of its capacities to the Lord's service (Romans 12:1).
	2. Next is the sacrifice of praise which is spoken of in Hebrews 13:15. This is a confession of credit to God for who and what He is, and what He has done in our behalf.
	3. Then there is the sacrifice of divine good works (Hebrews 13:16). This is the exercise of our specific spiritual gifts. God the Holy Spirit uses our gifts for divine good production.
	4. The fourth sacrifice is the sacrifice of our substance (of our material financial possessions) (Hebrews 13:16).

No Christian ever becomes poor for having made these spiritual sacrifices. Remember that God's grace is indebted to no one. When we offer these sacrifices faithfully as we should day-by-day, God will respond with blessing upon our lives, and it will open the door to the provision to the promises He has already made that He will never leave us and never forsake us, and we will always have the necessities of life provided by Him in one way or another. So you never become poor because you exercise the privilege of sacrifices of your priesthood.

1. The priesthood of the Christian functions on a daily basis throughout his lifetime. There does not come a time when these sacrifices are no longer to be offered. You never get too old to be able to offer these sacrifices. You may become too old and too incapacitated to be able to function as effectively in some of the expressions of these spiritual sacrifices as perhaps you can now, but some of them, obviously, are not dependent upon your age or your physical capacities. So throughout your lifetime, these sacrifices are part of your daily life.
2. The Christian's priesthood finds maximum expression and productivity at the super grace level of spiritual maturity. When you have built those five basic facets of spiritual maturity into your soul, through the study and response to doctrine, then you reach that plateau of solid spiritual maturity. At that level, every time you exercise one of the functions of the Christian priesthood, there are maximum returns. Every time you offer one of these spiritual sacrifices, there is a maximum amount of reward as there is at no other level. So it is important to your priesthood to move as quickly as possible to that fully developed man in Christ, the fully mature believer.

It is also important that you maintain that level through your continuing feeding upon the Word of God; your continuing response to it; and, your continuing subjection to spiritual authority. Don't forget that. The reason you stop growing in the Lord is because you get snotty in your spiritual authority. It's because you've become arrogant, and will not be told something by the pastor-teacher. It's because you have decided you want to go off on a tangent. One of the first signs of hardcore carnality in a believer, who is beginning to tear his priesthood up and his effectiveness up and start into reversionism, is that he does not want to discuss his views with the spiritual leadership of the local assembly. He's ready to chit-chat with other people, but he will not face off and discuss his grievances.

The spiritually oriented Christian is happy to discuss his grievances. He may be dead wrong, but because he is a spiritual believer, he wants to find out that he is dead wrong. So you have to protect yourself against reversionism. You need to become a spiritually oriented believer, and to stay there and to stay responsive. When you become mature, you're not to become so arrogant that you think you no longer need to be instructed; that you no longer need to be responsive to the spiritual leadership; or, that you no longer need to faith rest it with the Lord. It is His battle. And if you think something needs to be straightened out, He's going to see that it's done. All you have to do is to stay in there listening to the Word.

A carnal believer always destroys himself because he inevitably does the one thing he cannot afford to do to himself when he begins to slip backwards. That is that he quits attending church services. Once he stops attending church services, he has put blinders on himself. But that's what he wants to do because he says, "I know if I go there, I'm going to hear things I don't like to hear. I'm going to hear things that are going to make it hard for me to keep moving in my negative direction. It's going to make me uncomfortable and miserable to do that, so I'm going to stay away." You can go ahead and do that, but you better be aware that that's what people do. You may catch yourself saying, "That's what I want. I want to stay away from church service."

That's a sure sign the devil has got his hook in you, and you're going to go down, and there is no other place that you will go. That is because the believer who is spiritually oriented to the Word of God will have his ups and downs in what he hears preached and taught, and the ideas he hears promoted, but he knows that, in the long run, he hangs in there and he keeps his ears open and his heart positive. The Lord is going to get the right information to him, and he's going to get things straightened out the way they should be. That believer will not be cut out for maximum effectiveness. It's at the super grace level that you are the best that you'll ever be. That is the prime of the spiritual life. Those are your finest hours. Those are your finest days.

If you go backwards, you're not just going to wake up some morning and say, "OK, I played the fool, I've had enough of this. I'm getting back to church. I'm going to start listening. I'm going to start discussing. I'm going to start hearing rebuttal to all the things I've decided about myself and what I think. I'm not going to stand around keeping my mouth closed. I'm going to get myself straightened out." Do you know what that does? That begins to peel the first little layer of callous that you have built on your soul, and the way up is not just overnight. You've got to recoup every step that you lost from your super grace level of living.

How much can you afford? How much are you willing to pay in eternal reward for ups and downs in your spiritual life, and for all the wasted time while you were going back up the inclined plane, to get back there on that pinnacle with the Lord that you once were on? Every time you were down was wasted time. It's only when you were up there at the super grace level that you were really productive.

So this is a very significant final point. The Christians priesthood finds maximum expression and productivity at the super grace level of spiritual maturity. So wasting time and reversionism is a terrible squandering of your potential. You think about that now.

**A Doxology**

Now we come to Philippians 4:20 which is a doxology. It's an expression of praise. Paul says, "Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen." The word "now" is our old friend "de." This word introduces the conclusion of Paul's letter. He picks up the stylus, and the first word he writes is "Now." He's going to sum up a final statement in the form of an expression of praise to God. He says, "Now unto God." That is the word that you're well acquainted with: "theos." This refers here to the only true God of the universe, the One who is immutable, and because He is immutable, He is true.

**Trust God**

*This is why you can trust God.* The God who made the universe is immutable. He is unchanging. Therefore, every one of His promises will be kept. Everything that he has faithfully scheduled to take place will take place. Everything that He has told you He will do for you, He will do. This is why you can't trust the devil. The devil is not immutable, and the promises that the devil gives you via the world system are promises that are never going to be kept. Sooner or later, those promises will be reneged on, because the devil is not immutable. He cannot be faithful.

**God our "Father"**

So Paul says, "Now unto the immutable God." He says that this is the God who he says is our "pater." That is our Father. This refers to God the Father of the Trinity. He has the Word "our" now because it refers to both himself and the Philippians Christians to whom he is writing. Actually, a little better translation here would be, "Now unto our God and Father." He is really giving a twofold description of the One to whom the sacrifice of praise is to be ascribed that he is getting ready and he is about to pronounce. So it is: "Now unto our God and Father."

The Christian priest has the living creator God for his Father. It is God the Father who is the author of the grace plan that is so fantastically marvelous for us, and from which we are the constant beneficiaries. There is no such thing in the Bible as the fatherhood of God; that is, in the sense that God is the father of all of humanity. The liberal theologian loves to speak about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Well, the Word of God makes it very clear that not every human being is my brother. As a Christian, not everyone is my brother. Using that term in its generalized idea, "brethren," meaning male and female, not everybody is family-related to me. Only those who are in Christ are my brothers and sisters.

Also, God is not the God of every human being. He is the creator of every human being. He is the God whom every human being will face, but He is not the Father. That's a family relationship. That's why Jesus on the cross, when he was undergoing the agony of separation from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit screamed out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" This was because He was out of temporal fellowship now. He was in spiritual death. He was spiritually dead, separated from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. But then at the end, after the three hours of suffering, as 3:00 in the afternoon approached, and He was ready now to release his life, He said, "My Father, into thy hands I commit My spirit." Here He was using the word again of a fellowship of affection in a family relationship.

There's a big difference between the idea of God and the idea of Father. Paul here is combining them both. He is not only our God; the creator God; and, the living God, but He's also our Father. He's the head of the family that we belong to, and only we who are born again are in that family. So don't be trapped into that foolishness (that nonsense) of the fatherhood of God. That's good liberal talk. And it is pure human viewpoint. Only born again people have God as their Father, not the people who are in Hinduism, Mohammedanism, or all the other religions of the world: the Buddhists; the Shintoists; the Taoists; and, everything else that man has come up with through satanic counterfeit. Those people do not have God as their Father.

Now, if they don't have God as their Father, then the old idea is false that here's the mountain; here is all of humanity down here at the bottom of the mountain; and, there are various roads that go up and down this mountain to the pinnacle where God is. That fallacy claims that you start up and you go this way; I start up and I go another way; and, somebody else goes up yet another way, but we're all going up to the same mountain to where God, our Father is. That is wrong. Only those who are born again through Jesus Christ are going to move up to where God our Father is. The rest are not in the family.

So the religions of the world are hopeless illusions taking men straight into hell. For this reason, it is wrong for religious organizations of one kind or another to be putting on public rallies of Christian fellowship in which unbelievers are treated as having access to God the Father. Every now and then somebody says, "Wouldn't it be nice for us to have a day of fasting and prayer." Every time one of these hotshot, non-church (outside of church) organizations comes up with that idea, and they promote a great rally of a nationwide day of fasting and prayer, I've never heard any of them say, "Those of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who therefore have God as our Father, may spend the day in prayer before Him, and we call you to rally together to do that." That at least would make sense. But they don't do that. They give the impression that if you're just a good, honest American, that somehow God is your Father and you have access to Him, and that's a delusion.

Last summer, here in Irving, somebody decided, "Wouldn't it be great to get all the people of Irving sitting in the stadium in prayer before God across the way here?" It didn't work out. Maybe they meant for only Christians to come. Certainly those should have been the only people that were invited because nobody else has a right to pray. God doesn't listen to the prayers of the unbelievers. If He gives any attention at all to the prayers of unbelievers, it's just because He, in His sovereign wisdom, decides to pay attention. But the unbeliever has no claim upon God because He is not his Father.

But I'll tell you, when you open your mouth in prayer, God is not only your God, but He is also your Father. Therefore, He is obliged to listen to you, just as you are obliged, as a human father, to listen to your children. And that's great. God is our Father.

**Glory**

Paul says, "Now unto our God and Father, be." And immediately you can see from the English that that word is in italics. Therefore, it's not in the Greek language. "Be glory." The word "glory" is the word "doxa."

**"Doxa"**

We're going to stop for just a moment on this word and have a word study. One of the reasons is that somebody asked me about this word recently. If you learn how to use a few tools; a few lexicons; and, a few dictionaries of Greek words, you can learn a great deal about the Bible yourself, and about the words that it uses. Here is a word that is constantly repeated in the Scripture.

There are two basic meanings for this word "doxa" (glory) as it has come down to us from New Testament Greek. The first is the idea of "judgment" or "opinion." The word "doxa" means "judgment" or "opinion." It is never used in this sense in the New Testament. However, you will recognize that it is so used in the word "orthodox." The word "orthodox" comes from two Greek words. The first word it comes from is the Greek word "orthos." "Orthos" means "straight" or "right." The other part comes from our word "doxa," which means "opinion" or "judgment." So we put these together, "orthos" and "doxa," from which "orthodox" comes, and we literally have the meaning of "straight opinion" – a judgment which is in line with an accepted authority. The word "doxa" means "to hold an opinion" or "to have an opinion." It comes from the word "dokeo" – "to think" or "to hold an opinion." So "orthodox" means "straight opinion."

This is opposed to the word "heterodox." "Heterodox" means "to hold a different opinion." That comes from that Greek word that you're acquainted with: "heteros" which means "a different kind." The word "orthodox," when we use it in Christianity, means that the religious (the spiritual) ideas which are expressed are reflected by the content of Scripture. These statements of doctrine constitute the norms of biblical Christianity. Therefore, they are orthodox expressions. Liberal Protestantism rejects the biblical norms and the biblical authority. Thus, we say that liberal Protestantism is not orthodox. It's not an orthodox expression of Christianity. Liberal Protestantism calls itself Christianity, but it is not orthodox biblical Christianity. It is not straight-thinking, straight-opinion, straight-statement, biblical Christianity. It is of a different kind. It's a "heterodox" Christianity.

There's a second meaning of the word "doxa," and that is the opinion in which a person is held, or we would use the word: his "repute." In the New Testament, the opinion of a person is always good. So the word here in the New Testament took on the word "glory." Now, that's kind of an odd thing, and I think that's what instigated the question on the part of the person, because when you look up this word, if you can figure it out in the Greek lexicons or in the concordance, it's not too hard to see. The word that you get is "opinion," and "opinion of a person." And you wonder how in the world does "glory" come from that? Well, it is because here the idea is "opinion of a person," which is always good.

So in the New Testament, when we find the word "doxa" used relative to God, we find it being applied to the visible divine heavenly radiance of God – that which is an honor, or that which is good. For example, the glory of God is referred to in the form of the pillar of cloud during the Exodus generation's escape from Egypt. "Doxa" is used to connote the visible glory of God. That is, it is to connote His loftiness or His Majesty.

For example, in Luke 2:9 we read, "And lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them, and they were very much afraid." What does that mean? Well, it meant that around these shepherds, there shown the visible glory of God; that is, the essence of God being seen in a visible, majestic way. That is the word for "glory" as it is used in the New Testament. The classical Greeks did not use it in this way. They only used it in the first way, in terms of "opinion" or "judgment." But the idea of an opinion of a person or a repute which is excellent is the way the word "doxa" is used in the New Testament, and it is always used in that way.

So here is the visible glory of God being seen, which is a reflection of God's essence – His perfection. We also have this in Luke 9:31: "Who appeared in glory and spoke of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." To whom is he speaking? Here is the mount of transfiguration, and Moses and Elijah. At that moment, Jesus Christ removed the veil of His humanity, and He permitted the glory of His deity to shine through. The word for describing that is "doxa."

So here again, we have an evidence (an indication) of what this word means. It is connoting God's glory. We have the same thing in John 17:5 when Jesus is saying, "Father, I'm looking forward to having the glory restored again that I had with you before I came to earth:" "Now, O Father, glorify Me with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was." Before there was ever any creation, the visible essence of God was seen in a majestic outburst of glory. It was visible.

This glory may refer to God's majestic greatness without actually seeing the visible display. The point is that the visible display is described by this word, but the display may or may not be, because the word is simply referring to the greatness of who and what God is.

So here we have, for example, in 2 Peter 1:17: "For He received from God the Father, honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, 'This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.'" This is the baptism of Jesus. This voice came from heaven. But here, this voice was conveying the glory of God, and the glory of the God-man who is being baptized, but there was no light. There was no image. There was nothing seen. All they saw was a dove. A physical bird was descending, representing the Holy Spirit, but there was no outburst of light or anything of that nature. So the idea of God's majestic presence, while it is described by this word "doxa," does not always mean it has to be visible, and that there has to be a display of glory.

Philippians 4:20, then, uses this word in the second meaning; that is, in terms of recognizing and thereby expressing praise to God. The Philippians have benefited by God's grace plan. They've seen it in operation. They've been blessed by it through their High Priest, Jesus Christ. God's grace in no way diminishes His glory.

**Forever**

So what verse 20 is saying is, "Now unto our God and Father" (praise, glory, admiration, and honor). That is recognizing who and what God is. How long? Now Paul is really saying, "OK, Christians, let's now offer the sacrifice of praise." He takes the stylus, and starts writing the closing of this letter. He says, "To our God and Father, glory (praise)," recognizing who and what he is. He says, "We're going to do this forever." First is the Greek word "eis" which is a preposition which means "unto," and that indicates duration. The other word is "aion," and that means "an age" so that we have here "unto the age." It's plural, so it's "unto the ages" or "eras." This word connotes a space of time in the New Testament. The word "aion" is used of an indefinitely long period of time that is eternal in duration. So this expression (these two words), literally, "forever" in the Greek, is saying, "Unto the ages." It views a period of time in relationship to what takes place in that span of time.

When you use the word "aion," it's not concentrating on the fact that there is no end to the period, but it's concentrating mainly on what takes place forever, without any end. What is that? Praise. So Paul uses that "forever." What are we going to do in heaven? Well, one thing we're going to do forever is praise God. This will be one offering we will forever present.

Then he adds another word: "And ever:" "Forever and ever," and the word ever is again "aion," or "of the ages." So would translate this: "Praise to God unto the ages of the ages." Every time you see this expression "forever and ever," it is pretty regularly, in the Scripture, an expression of the idea of "Unto the ages of the ages." That's the Bible's way of saying there's no end to it. We're going to do something in a period of time – a time period of which there'll be no end.

Now, that's hard for us to grasp. It is very hard for us to grasp "no end of time." You sit and you think about it, and like someone every now then says, "Forever" – "eternity." Boy, that's a long time. Then you begin to think of what you will have in blessing or what you will like in blessing because of some carelessness in your priesthood. Then "unto the ages of the ages" becomes even a longer time to think of no retreat from a loss, as to think of no loss of a great gain that you have stored in treasures in heaven. Appreciate these words: "eis aion kai aion" – "Unto the ages and the ages." That is forever and ever – the ages of the ages.

Then he adds the final word "Amen." The Greek word is "amen." Now, this is a word that actually comes, first of all, from the Hebrew word "amen." They took the Hebrew word, and they didn't translate it. Now, the Hebrew word actually is a statement from God. It means "it is, and shall be so." In Deuteronomy 7:9, we have the translation, "The faithful God." Well, in the Hebrew, it's using this word "amen" for faithful. It is literally saying, "The 'amen' God," or "The 'it is and shall be so' God." Because God is immutable and because God is truthful, anything He says is inevitably going to be the case. You can trust Him that it's going to take place. He will do it.

Now, they took this word over into the Greek language and they didn't translate it. They simply converted it letter-for-letter: "amen." We would say that they simply transliterated it, letter-for-letter. Then they got the English, and what did they do? The same thing. They took the "a" in the Greek, and made it an "a." They took the "m" in the Greek, and made it an "m." They took the "e" in the Greek, and made it an "e." They took the "n" in the Greek, and made it an "n". We get the word "amen." And the word "amen" simply means "so be it." It is and shall be so.

In 1 Corinthians 14:16, we have Christians using the word "amen." When Christians use it, it means "so let it be." So when you hear somebody say something, and you say, "Amen," you are saying, "So let it be." You're going all the way back to the Hebrew word "amen" which means "it is so, and it shall be so." You close your prayer with the word "Amen." Why? Because you are saying, "Let it be so." It is a significant word to add.

So Paul, here at the close of his doxology, which is in verse 20, says, "Now unto our God and Father, be glory (be praise for who and what He is) unto the ages of the ages. So let it be." That's it. That is really the end of the letter.

Now, he puts a few courtesies at the end that they generally added at the end of an epistle in New Testament times when people wrote to one another. It is a closing thing, and we will look at that next time. But this 20th verse is a very dramatic declaration. It's a happy note. It's the happiest note of all that Paul could have ended on. This is a book of happiness, ending up on a happy note that we're never going to run out of occasions to praise God – never along the line. For all eternity, we will have occasion to praise Him. We'll be glad to do it, and we'll be there, ready and eager, to constantly offer this spiritual sacrifice: "Now unto our God and Father, glory unto the ages of ages. Amen."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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