Almost eight months ago, we began our study of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. And if you’ve just started coming to this church any time in the past eight months, you may have wondered if I ever preach out of anything other than Philippians. The answer is yes. We were in 2 Corinthians last week. But today we’re back in Philippians for our last Sunday. After 30 sermons and 104 verses, we’ve reached the final verses of this great letter. So turn in your Bibles to Philippians 4:20-23, and let’s read the last four verses that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Philippi. Philippians 4:20-23. Paul writes, *“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”*

All the way back on the very first Sunday in February, as we began our study in Philippians, I told you that as much as any letter in the New Testament, this letter is filled with excitement and energy and gratitude and love and joy. Paul is filled with so much joy as he writes this letter that it literally bubbles over and pours out of almost every single verse. And after eight months of me constantly repeating it, I hope that most of you are familiar enough with Paul’s situation to recognize how remarkable it is that he would be full of joy as he writes this letter. Paul is a prisoner in Rome, awaiting trial before Caesar. He’s been held as a prisoner for nearly four years without a trial. He doesn’t know when or if they will ever give him a trial. And if they do, he doesn’t know what will happen. They might release him. They might throw him back in jail. Or they might execute him. When Paul writes this letter, he literally does not know whether he will live or die. And that’s what makes his joy all the more amazing and all the more remarkable. How can he possibly have such abundant, overflowing joy in such difficult, uncertain circumstances? Listen to how Eugene Peterson answers that question in his introduction to Philippians. He writes, “This is Paul’s happiest letter. And the happiness is infectious. Before we’ve read a dozen lines, we begin to feel the joy ourselves—the dance of words and the exclamations of delight have a way of getting inside us. The irony of his epistle of joy is that Paul was a prisoner in Rome awaiting news of his impending release or execution… None of his circumstances contribute to his joy: He wrote from a jail cell, his work was under attack by competitors, and after twenty years… of hard traveling in the service of Jesus, he was tired and would have welcomed some relief.

“But circumstances are incidental compared to the life of Jesus, the Messiah, (the life) Paul experiences from the inside. For it is a life that not only happened at a certain point in history, but continues to happen, spilling out into the lives of those who receive him, and then continues to spill out all over the place. Christ is, among much else, the revelation that God cannot be contained or hoarded. It is this ‘spilling out’ quality of Christ’s life that accounts for the happiness of Christians, for joy is life in excess, the overflow of what cannot be contained within any one person.”

The reason Paul can have such abundant, overflowing joy in such difficult, uncertain circumstances is because his joy is found in Christ and not in his circumstances. Paul has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He knows Jesus, and he loves Jesus, and he follows Jesus, and he lives for Jesus. He can say, *“For to me, to live is Christ.”* His whole life is about Jesus, so his joy is found in Jesus… which means his circumstances can’t steal his joy. So from start to finish, Philippians isn’t just filled with joy. It’s filled with joy in Jesus… joy from Jesus… joy because of Jesus. And since Paul has spent four entire chapters declaring the joy that comes from knowing Jesus, it’s very appropriate that he ends this letter the way he does. He ends with a doxology. And doxology is one of those churchy words that we use sometimes, but you may not know exactly what it means. The English word doxology comes from two Greek words: *doxa*, which means glory, and *logos*, which means word. So a doxology is literally a “word of glory.” In other words, it’s a statement of praise and honor and glory to God. And that’s exactly how Paul ends his letter to the Philippians. Look at Philippians 4:20, *“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

This is the goal and purpose of everything Paul has written. This is the goal and purpose of everything Paul tells the Philippians to do. This is the goal and purpose of everything in Paul’s life… That God will receive glory… that God will be glorified and exalted and His Name will be made great in all the world. *“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

And that’s not just the purpose of Paul’s life. And it’s not just the purpose of the Philippians’ lives. It’s the purpose of your life. It’s the purpose of my life. You were created for the glory of God. You exist for God’s glory. We try to remind ourselves of this truth with our purpose statement as a church. The first three words of that statement are, “We glorify God.” We want to always remember that everything we do is for God’s glory. That is our only purpose.

Now, if our only purpose is for God’s glory, then it’s really important for us to make sure we know what that means. What is God’s glory? And just like doxology, glory is another one of those churchy words that we use a lot, but when you actually try to explain it, it can be pretty hard to do. And about a year ago, when we started our *DNA* series, we spent some time talking about what God’s glory actually is. But I know that if you’re anything like me, you have a hard time remembering what you had for lunch yesterday, let alone what we talked about almost 14 months ago. So I want to take just a minute to remind us of how the Bible describes God’s glory. And we’re going to look at two passages. The first passage is in Exodus 33-34. Moses is leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and God has just promised Moses that He will go with them and they will be His people. And in Exodus 33:18 Moses makes a huge request of God. He says, *“Now show me your glory.”*  And listen to how God responds in verse 19. God says, *“I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD (Yahweh), in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”* And then in Exodus 34:5-7, God does just that. The Bible says, *“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with (Moses) and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’”* So Moses asks to see God’s glory, and God says, “I will show you all my goodness. I will proclaim my name to you. I will tell you who I am.” And when God comes down to show His glory to Moses, God starts describing who He is. He says, “I am the LORD. I am compassionate. I am gracious. I am slow to anger. I am rich in love and faithfulness. I am forgiving. And I am holy and just. I forgive sin, but I do not overlook sin or leave it unpunished.” And all of that is God’s glory.

So God’s glory is when God’s love and grace and compassion and patience and faithfulness and holiness and justice are displayed for people to see. God is always all those things. But when God’s creation sees who God is, that’s to God’s glory. God’s glory is when people see the worth and value of God. It’s when people see God for who He really is. God’s glory is the manifestation or the revelation of who God is. God’s glory is the public display of His nature and character.

And let me show you one other place in the Bible where we get a similar insight into God’s glory. In Isaiah 6, when Isaiah is called to be a prophet, God appears to him in the temple. And Isaiah tells us that there were two angels flying around God’s throne, and they were praising God. Do you remember what the angels are saying? *“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his…”* what? *“His glory.”* Think about the connection between those two sentences. First, *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.”* That’s a description of God’s nature and character. He is the Holy God. He is the Separated One. He is different from everything else that exists. He is God and nothing else is. He is the Creator and everything else is created. He is Almighty, all-powerful, Lord and God, and there is none like Him. He is holy. So the first sentence describes who God is, *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.”* Then the second sentence, *“The whole earth is full of his…”* and if we weren’t so familiar with it, we’d probably expect the angels to say, “holiness.” Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his holiness. It fits. It’s a great parallel. But that’s not what the angels say. They say, *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”* And based on what we just saw in Exodus, I think we can see at least part of the reason why they say glory. God is holy. That’s His character. That’s who He is. And when that holiness fills the earth and is on public display for everyone to see, that’s to God’s glory. When God’s holiness and character is seen on earth and fills the earth, that is God’s glory. The public display of God’s holiness… the revelation… the manifestation of who God is… is God’s glory. So when we talk about God’s glory, what we’re talking about is for God’s character… God’s nature… who God is… all of God’s worth and value as God… to be on public display… to be revealed… to be seen by His creation. When God’s worth and value are seen, God is glorified.

So in our text today, when Paul says, *“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen,”* he’s saying that he wants God’s worth and value and greatness to be seen in his life and the Philippians’ lives… and your life and my life.And in the last three verses of Philippians, I want us to see three huge ways that God receives glory… three huge ways that God’s greatness can be on display in your life. The first way God’s glory is seen is when God saves sinners and turns them into saints. Look at verse 21, *“Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings.”* In order to understand this first truth, we have to understand the word saint. The biblical definition of a saint is very different from what we usually think of when we think of a saint. According to the Bible, a saint is not an NFL football player from New Orleans, a saint is not the mascot of our Christian Academy, and a saint is not some super-hero Christian who has been immortalized in a stained-glass window by the Roman Catholic Church. No, according to the Bible, everyone who trusts Jesus is a saint. The Bible calls every Christian a saint. And when the Bible teaches that every Christian is a saint, that teaching is very closely connected to God’s glory. Let me explain why. The word saint literally means “one who is holy.” And here’s what we know about being holy: none of us are. You’re not. And I’m not. None of us are holy. None of us are saints. But there’s something else we know about being holy. Hebrews 10:14 tells us that by Jesus’ sacrifice, He makes us holy. The work of Jesus in your life is that He makes you holy. Jesus makes you a saint.

And this truth is at the very heart of Christianity. When you trust Jesus, God takes your sin and He puts it on Jesus. And Jesus pays the price for your sin with His death. God forgives you and cleanses you in Jesus. Then, on top of that, when you trust Jesus, God takes Jesus’ righteousness, and He credits it to your account. God justifies you and makes you righteous in Jesus. Then, on top of that, when you trust Jesus, God sends the Spirit of Christ to live in you and to cause you to grow in holiness. God makes you holy in Jesus. So if you’re trusting Jesus, God forgives you in Jesus and cleanses you in Jesus and purifies you in Jesus and declares you righteous in Jesus and makes you holy in Jesus. In other words, your status as a saint has nothing to do with you and everything to do with God’s grace in Jesus. When you repent of your sin and you’re in Jesus by faith, God graciously looks at you the way He looks at Jesus, and He recategorizes you from sinner to saint. You’re a saint because God declares you a saint, God accepts you as a saint, and God makes you a saint in Jesus. It is all because of God’s gracious work in Jesus and not at all because of you.

And here’s the thing you need to see today. If God has done all the work to make you a saint, then God gets all the glory for you being a saint. The one who does the work gets the glory. And God’s the one who’s done the work, so God’s the one who gets the glory. Ephesians 1 tells us that God has saved us *“to the praise of his glory.”* Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, *“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”* You can never boast about your salvation, because you didn’t earn your salvation. God saved you by His grace, so God gets the praise and the glory for you being saved. You were a sinner, and God makes you a saint in Jesus. So God’s glory is seen when God saves sinners and turns them into saints.

The second way God’s glory is seen is in His sovereignty over all situations. Look at verse 22, *“All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.”* We looked ahead at this verse almost six months ago when we were in chapter 1. Now we need to look back at chapter 1 to make sure we remember exactly what’s going on in this verse and just how great it really is. So look back at chapter 1, verses 12-13 with me. In verse 12 Paul says, *“Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.”* Now, remember what Paul’s talking about when he says, *“what has happened to me.”* He’s talking about being held as a prisoner for four years and facing possible execution. That’s what has happened to him. And he says that has served to advance the gospel. And that word “advance” paints a vivid picture in Greek. It’s a word that was used to describe a group of tree cutters who would march in front of an advancing army. They cut away all the trees and underbrush that would have slowed down the army, so the army could march full steam ahead without any hindrance. And Paul’s saying that’s what’s happened with his imprisonment. It hasn’t slowed down the gospel. It’s cleared the way for the gospel, and the gospel is marching full steam ahead without any hindrance. And then in verse 13, Paul explains exactly how that is happening. Look at verse 13, *“As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.”*

This is an awesome verse when you realize what’s going on here. The palace guard was the elite of the elite in the Roman army. The palace guard was made up of 9,000 of the absolute best Roman soldiers, who served directly to the emperor himself. It was sort of like the secret service of the Roman Empire. Well, when Paul was placed under house arrest in Rome, soldiers from the palace guard were chained to him for six hours at a time on a rotational basis. The plan was that they would keep Paul from spreading the gospel. But that’s not exactly what happened. They didn’t stop the gospel. Instead, God did one of those things that only God would ever think to do. God brought the strongest, most intelligent, most well-respected, handpicked young men in the entire Roman Empire straight into Paul’s own house. And for six hours at a time, Paul had a captive audience… literally. The soldiers couldn’t go anywhere. They were chained to him. And so Paul began to explain to them that he was in chains for Christ, and he shared the gospel with them. And one by one, these young, intelligent, influential Roman soldiers started becoming followers of Jesus. How do we know that? Because that’s what Paul tells us in our text today. Philippians 4:22. He says, *“All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.”* Paul’s telling the Philippians, “I’ve got some followers of Jesus with me here in Rome who want to say hi to you, including a bunch of people who live and work in Caesar’s own house.” The very people who were supposed to be keeping Paul from preaching the gospel are believing the gospel. They were supposed to keep Paul from leading people to faith in Jesus, and they’re coming to faith in Jesus.

And make sure you realize what a brilliant plan this is for spreading the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. You’ve got these intelligent, hand-picked young men serving in the palace guard, and they’re coming to faith in Jesus. And then any time they’re redeployed anywhere in the Roman Empire, what happens? They take the gospel with them. And now, instead of having this one missionary named Paul trying to take the gospel to the whole Empire, you’ve got a literal army of Christ-followers who are taking the gospel all over the known world. How brilliant is that? Isn’t it just like God to do things that way? We look at the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul, and we think, “Oh no! What’s going to happen to the gospel?” God looks at Paul’s imprisonment, and He says, “That’s exactly what I had in mind. Now watch what I do with the gospel! I’m going to plant my gospel smack dab in the heart of the Roman Empire, right in Caesar’s very own household.” In one sense, you could almost say God is showing off. He’s showing His greatness. He’s showing that nothing can stop His plans. He is the sovereign God who is in control of all things. God is so strong that nothing – not even the army of the Roman Empire – can stop Him. God is so wise that He’s working out His plan, and He’s able to take into account every single detail… even the imprisonment of His missionaries. God is so sovereign that the imprisonment of His missionaries is actually part of His plan. God says, “You want to throw Paul in jail? Fine. I’m going to use that to advance the gospel. You want to chain up my missionary? Fine. I’m going to use that to create a whole army of missionaries.” God is sovereign over all situations. And you better believe His glory is seen in that!

And Church, I pray that you will be encouraged by this truth about God’s sovereignty… Because here’s what it means: It means there’s nothing that will ever happen in your life that can thwart God’s plans. God is in control, and He will ultimately use all situations for His glory. You can trust Him in that, and you can find hope and peace and joy in His sovereignty.

And then Church, I also pray that this truth about God’s sovereignty will revolutionize your life. Here’s what I mean. If all situations are for God’s glory, then every moment of your life should be lived for God’s glory. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* Everything you do in your life… everything you face in your life… you should be consumed with showing God’s glory. And this truth revolutionizes the way you approach everything. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a mundane, every-day event. It doesn’t matter whether it’s the greatest moment of your life. It doesn’t matter whether it’s the hardest moment if your life. You should live it to show the glory of God. So when you mow the yard and change diapers and wash dishes, live for God’s glory. When you pass tests and win ball games and get accepted to college and get a good job and get promoted, live for God’s glory. When you face cancer and lose your job and lose loved ones, live for God’s glory. You can trust God, and you can rest in His sovereignty. And you can rejoice that God’s glory is seen in His sovereignty over all situations.

The third way God’s glory is seen is in the sufficiency of Christ in all things. Look at verse 23, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”* This is the perfect bookend to Paul’s letter. The very first thing he said to the Philippians in chapter 1, verse 2 was, *“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* And now the very last thing he says to the Philippians in chapter 4, verse 23 is, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”* Paul started with the grace of Jesus. And he finishes with the grace of Jesus. This reminds us that we are completely dependent on the grace of Jesus for everything in our lives. And Jesus’ grace is completely sufficient for us in all things. We are saved by His grace. We are forgiven by His grace. We are redeemed by His grace. We are sustained by His grace. We are strengthened by His grace. We are kept by His grace. We are justified by His grace. We are being sanctified by His grace. We will be glorified by His grace. The grace of Jesus Christ is sufficient for us in all things.

And Paul has reminded us of the sufficiency of Christ over and over throughout his entire letter to the Philippians. Everything in this letter is about Jesus. It’s amazing when you realize just how Christ-centered this letter is. In the 4 chapters of Philippians, Paul mentions Jesus 40 times. He calls himself a servant of Christ Jesus. He calls the Philippians saints in Christ Jesus. He says grace and peace come from the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells the Philippians to have the attitude of Christ Jesus. He says that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He says the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. He says that God meets all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. He says true believers glory in Christ Jesus. He says everything is a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus. He says he wants to gain Christ. He wants to be found in Christ. He wants to have the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. He wants to know Christ. He says that being with Christ is better than life itself. He wants Christ to be exalted in both his life and his death. And he summarizes it all in the great statement, *“To live is Christ.”* All of life is about Jesus, and Jesus is completely sufficient for everything in your life.

And you better believe that God’s glory is seen in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the full revelation of God. Jesus is the exact representation of God. When you see Jesus, you’re seeing God. And that means Jesus’ grace to us is God’s grace to us. When Jesus is exalted as being fully sufficient for all things, God is exalted as being fully sufficient for all things. When Jesus is glorified for His grace, God is glorified for His grace. The grace of Jesus is to the glory of God. God’s grace is for God’s glory.

And what an appropriate place to end our study of Philippians. Grace and glory. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ for the glory of God our Father. I pray that our time in Philippians has flooded your heart and your mind with the grace of Jesus and the glory of God. I pray that you know Jesus more deeply… that you love Jesus more intimately… that you follow Jesus more passionately… that you live for Jesus wholeheartedly… that you have an unshakable joy and hope in Jesus… that you can say, *“For to me, to live is Christ.”* I pray that you’re relying on Jesus’ grace as He sustains you. And I pray that your whole life will be for God’s glory. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit… To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*