



Paul's letter to the church of Jesus Christ at Oklahoma City  
The Greeting Continued

Last week we saw how Paul identified himself in the greeting of his letters. In 9 of his 13 letters Paul identified himself as an apostle in his greeting. We learned five reasons why he identified himself as an apostle. I believe that if Paul wrote a letter to the church in OKC, he would identify as an apostle and I shared with you my reasons why.

Oklahoma City 1:1

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God...

This week I want us to consider what Paul might say next in his greeting to the church in OKC.

In his greetings Paul would continue the greeting by identifying the recipients. In many of these greetings he would set the tone of the letter by expressing his personal affection, his personal admiration, and his personal affirmation for those who were receiving his letter.

Here are four examples.

Rom 1:1-7

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NKJV

Colossians 1:1-2

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Philemon :1-3

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Timothy 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, a true son in the faith: grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In his greetings...

- To express His affection...

Paul used words like beloved son, brethren, and friend.

- To express His admiration...

Paul used words like faithful and true, fellow soldier, and fellow laborer.

- To express His affirmation...

Paul used words like called, saints, and sanctified.

Why did Paul greet these disciples with words of affection, admiration, and affirmation?

1. Paul considered himself to be like a father to these disciples.

1 Cor 4:14-16

14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. 15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

NKJV

Affection, admiration, and affirmation are words a loving father speaks to his children.

2. Paul considered these disciples to be his family

In his 13 letters, Paul called the disciples his brethren over 100 times.

Affection, admiration, and affirmation are words a loving brother speaks to his siblings.

3. Paul considered his family of disciples to be fellow soldiers on a significant mission together.

Philippians 1:27

27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...

NKJV

Affection, admiration, and affirmation are words a soldier of rank speaks to his fellow soldiers as they pursue the fulfillment of a difficult mission.

4. Paul considered that His family of disciples needed words that address the deepest needs of the human soul.

The apostle Paul received great revelations from God. (2 Cor. 12) Paul understood the deepest needs of a human soul. He knew what caused the souls of disciples to prosper.

Just like our physical bodies need water, bread, and oxygen to prosper, Paul understood that our soul needs affection, admiration, and affirmation to prosper.

We need to know we are loved, know we are appreciated, and know we are significant for our souls to prosper and be in good health.

To meet this need, Paul shared words of affection, admiration, and affirmation with the disciples.

- His affection would minister to their need to feel loved
- His admiration would minister to their need to feel appreciated
- His affirmation would minister to their need to feel significant

Although Paul was certainly sharing his own heart because he loved these disciples and he was a great leader, he was also sharing the heart of God for these disciples. Paul was writing for God and speaking for God. Paul's letters are the Word of God to you.

I am very grateful for the people in my life that are like Paul and they share with me words of affection, admiration, and affirmation.

As a disciple of Jesus, you may not have one Paul in your life that ever shares with you words of affection, admiration, or affirmation. If that is the case, I am very sorry. We are trying to change that in the culture of the church at Western Hills.

If you are a disciple of Jesus, there is one person that has spoken words of affection, admiration, and affirmation to you and is always speaking these words to you. That person is Jesus. And there is no one who can satisfy the needs of your soul like God.

Listen to what Paul said about how he depended upon Jesus met His needs.

**Philippians 4:11-13**

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. NKJV

There were times in Paul's life when he was abandoned by those who were close to him. He mentions them by name. (Demas, John Mark, Phygellus, and Hermogenes)

Even then Paul was content in Christ.

Therefore, Paul prayed this prayer for the disciples.

Ephesians 3:14-19

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

NKJV

David understood the needs of his soul and that he could always depend upon God to satisfy his needs. Therefore, David prayed...

Psalms 42:1-2

42 As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So pants my soul for You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

NKJV

If these needs within our soul are neglected, our capacity to love Him and others is very limited.

Like a man that is dying from thirst, we remain self-centered rather than God centered and other centered. It is impossible to be empathetic and compassionate toward others when your soul is not prospering.

If these needs within our soul are neglected, we will invariably turn to various idols to meet the needs of our soul. This only damages our souls and we damage others.

For our souls to prosper, the needs in our soul for affection, admiration, and affirmation  
must be met through Jesus Christ!

For your soul to prosper....

- You must be born again by the Spirit of God
- You must learn the Word of God to know who you are to God and who you are in Christ
- You must develop new habits that nurture your soul.  
You must preach the gospel to your soul.

So many disciples in the church in OKC are not prospering in their souls.

- Some are not prospering because they do not know who they are to God and who they are in Christ.  
(They do not have a Paul in their life. They are either going it alone or their church does not provide these kinds of relationships.)
- Some are not prospering because they will not believe what God says in His Word.

- Some are not prospering because they will not develop new habits that nurture their soul.

I can fight the devil for you and with you but you will never prosper in your soul unless you believe God's Word and you develop new habits that nurture your soul.

I want you to consider how it grieves Jesus that you would allow the devil to dictate what you believe about yourself and how you feel about yourself.

I want you to consider how you are discounting the price Jesus paid and what he accomplished when He died for your sins.

I want you to consider how you are injuring the body of Jesus Christ.

I want you to consider that because of your unbelief or your unwillingness to fight for the truth, how little you have to offer a lost and unbelieving world that is perishing in their sin.

These words in the greetings of Paul should be central in the language of the church if we are preaching the full gospel of Jesus Christ. We should all be like Paul.

And they will be if our soul is prospering.