

The Conclusion of The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Ephesians 6:21-24

Ephesians 6:21-24 (ESV) So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. [22] I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. [23] Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Introduction

- A. This sermon is **The Conclusion of The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians**. In our all-too-brief study we will have invested 23 sermons in these 6 chapters and 155 verses.
1. Though we conclude our study of Ephesians today we will each be applying this letter to our lives until our dying breath.

You will not go wrong if you plunge into Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Master it. Be mastered by it. Work Ephesians into your thinking, your living, your prayers, your conversation, your practice. The Bible is vast and deep, and human life is diverse and perplexing. But in a pinch you *could* do all counseling from Ephesians. David Powlison in *JBC, Vol 17, #2*, p 11-12

2. We are all counselors because there will be times where we advise and seek to influence other believers. We certainly counsel ourselves (talk, not listen). Ephesians is gold.

B. In this sermon from Ephesians 6:21-24 we will look at:

1. The function of extra-local leaders.
2. Four primary characteristics of the Christian.
3. The big picture.

I. The function of extra-local leaders.

A. The author, human speaking, of Ephesians is Paul.

1. In many ways Paul was a remarkable man. In his own words he had accomplished much.

Philip. 3:4b-8 (ESV) If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: [5] circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; [6] as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless.

2. Christ laid hold of Paul (Saul of Tarsus) on the road to Damascus. Paul (like some folks today) was determined to stamp out Christianity. God had other ideas.

Philip. 3:7-8 (ESV) But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

- B. We know Paul was able to make three missionary trips over about a 10 year period. Paul made a final trip to Rome where he was likely beheaded as a martyr.
1. The remarkable thing about Paul was that in his contending for the gospel and for faith he built churches relationally. They were family. One example:

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 (ESV) I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. [15] For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. [16] I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

2. Because they were family there was a mutual care and concern for one another.
- C. Paul sends Tychicus (tic-eh-cus) to the Ephesians so they can know how Paul is doing and what he is doing. Paul also desires to see the Ephesian church encouraged (always aims to strengthen).
1. This is apostolic ministry. Paul plants churches and helps them mature. Paul and his team of men serve the churches.
 - Tychicus has made this trip with Paul (going to Jerusalem again).
 - Tychicus is being sent by Paul to Ephesus, Colossae, and possibly Crete.
 - Tychicus is called by Paul a brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord.
 - Paul, therefore, has confidence in Tychicus to go in his place.
 2. I mention this because it is the way we seek to build churches in Sovereign Grace. We refer to apostles and apostolic ministry (Apostles - THE 12; and other apostles).
 3. I am grateful for the connection we have with men like C.J. Mahaney, Dave Harvey and Mark Prater. We are part of a larger family.
- D. These men, as they seek to care for us, aim for spiritual health and vitality. That is what Paul and Tychicus were doing with the Ephesian and Colossian churches.

II. In building healthy churches there are four primary characteristics that mark the mature Christian and by logical extension the church. This is spiritual health and vitality.

- A. The last two verses of Ephesians are a benediction. The benediction is part prayer, part blessing, and part desire. Paul uses his final words to remind his family of what is most important.
- B. One, "**Peace** be to the brothers."
 1. We saw earlier in Ephesians that we were once alienated from God but now we have peace with God. Because we have peace with God we have unity with one another.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV) I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

2. Unity is something we possess because we have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. We don't create unity, we maintain it (part of the battle we are in).

Psalms 133:1 (ESV) Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

3. The devil, when he tempts us and resists us, will seek to undermine unity. I pray we value unity, not only individual freedoms as we follow Christ.

Ex: In Philippians 4 Eudodia and Syntyche aren't getting along. Paul entreats them to agree in the Lord. Maintain unity (hint: it frequently means we take up our cross).

- C. Two, **love** (5 times mentioned of God, 7 times us before this verse).

1. Love is the supreme Christian virtue because the two greatest commands are love. Love God and love your neighbor (others).

Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV) Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. [2] And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ex: In moments of trial and difficulty that come my way seek to ask myself two key questions. One, love and two, humility.

2. Without love we are nothing. In the fight we are in we may at times be tempted to avoid walking in love. This is always a loss.

D. Three is **faith** (seven other times in Ephesians). Without faith we cannot please God.

Ephesians 6:16 (ESV) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

1. Where does the battle for faith take place? To believe God and His promises.
 - Unity
 - Purity (sin will give me happiness)
 - Dreams and desires (vision tested)
2. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. We are an auditory people. Our hearts respond to the Word of God we hear.

E. Four, and last, Paul mentions **grace**. Peace, love and faith are from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. What do we have that we did not receive? It is all grace.

1. Grace was mentioned frequently in Ephesians (11 other times).
2. Everything we have is grace (God's riches at Christ's expense). Normally Paul simply says something like grace be with you.
3. Here it is grace to all who love Christ with an unending, undying love. Paul's eyes are fixed in eternity because he longs to be with Christ.

F. But we are not yet face to face with Jesus Christ. Therefore, we remind ourselves of the big picture.

III. Ephesians is a detailed definition of a Christian. How would you define a Christian?

A. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said he gave his ministry to answering this question. I suppose we could give many varied definitions but there is an essential core.

1. God is active in the Christian's life (Ephesians 1-3).
2. The Christian pursues unity and purity so they are part of the church (Ephesians 4-6)

B. Ephesians unfolds the primacy of the church in the sight of God.

Ephesians 3:8-10 (ESV) To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, [10] so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

C. The church puts the gospel of Jesus Christ on glorious display when she walks in unity and purity for

the glory of God.

1. It will require peace, love and faith which are from God and are therefore grace for us to be part of the corporate expression of the body of Christ.

For by temperament and tradition we tend to be rugged individualists, and are thought to care little about the church... The true evangelical, who derives his theology from the Bible, will be bound to have the very 'high' view of the church which the Bible has. Today more than ever we need to catch the biblical vision of the church... Ephesians will supply us with answers. For here is Christ's own specifications of his church ... his body. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians Commentary*, p 27

- B. To be found faithful by God to God is to value the things God values. Because God values the body of Christ we bring God glory when we also value the church. How?
 1. We spend our lives pursuing unity and purity.
 2. We spend our lives pursuing peace, love, faith and grace.

Close

- A. Thank you for your attention in listening to this series of sermons on Ephesians. More importantly, you don't only hear the Word of God, you do it. Thanks!
- B. Our past does not insure our future. Don't leave Ephesians behind. It is my hope that this short letter exerts ongoing influence in your life and my life.

Whether it is because of its magnificent sweep of God's saving purposes from election before the foundation of the world to his summing up of all things in Christ, the place of the exalted Christ within those purposes and believers' relationship to him, God's victory in Christ over the powers, the grand presentation of the church, its language of worship and prayer, or the scope and depth of its ethical teaching, Ephesians has had a profound influence on the lives of many. Peter O'Brien in *Pillar Ephesians NTC*, p 2

1. Therefore, as David Powlison said: Master it. Be mastered by it. Work Ephesians into your thinking, your living, your prayers, your conversation, your practice.