

*Ephesians: Commendation & Benediction*

Ephesians 6:21-24

Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6

Bethany Baptist Church  
January 7, 2018 (a.m.)

...pray...

Plan for finishing Ephesians: *this morning* I'll finish my exposition of the letter. *Next week* we'll pause for the special ministry meeting (re *remodel*), then on the **21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>** I'll review Ephesians, the *doctrinal* first half on the 21<sup>st</sup> & the *application* second half on the 28<sup>th</sup>. All, of course, *Deo volente* – God willing! ☺

**Now, let's read the closing words of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Vv.18-24.**

Paul has just shared a *prayer request* with his friends in Ephesus: he is *in chains* (*arrest*) in Rome and awaiting his opportunity to *make his case* before Nero...

His request is *unselfish & missions-minded*: when his *day-in-court* comes, he wants to be *clear*, he wants to be *bold*, & he wants to be *faithful* to Christ.

...

There is *more* to say, of course! The months of *house arrest* had **not** been wasted...

He has *deepened his fellowship* w/ Christians in Rome.

He has witnessed to *every guard* that the *Emperor* has *chained* to him (*night & day*)!

He has *written* other important letters to the churches.

And Paul has been *supported*, as always, by his team of *missionary coworkers*.

But those details don't really all *fit well* in this letter that is **so** focused, like a *red-dot rifle sight*, on the needs of the Ephesian church.

In fact, "*church*" is what this Ephesian letter is largely all about.

So it's time for Paul to *finish* another prison letter and *send* it on its way.

But *last of all*, the apostle wants to let his friends know **who** is the man who is *delivering* their letter & Paul wants to make his *last* words **encouraging** words!

**So the Apostle Paul wraps up his letter as he...**

1. **Introduces his beloved courier (vv.21-22).**
2. **Summarizes his powerful message (vv.23-24).**

**Paul entrusted this important letter to one of his most *faithful* friends, *Tychicus*.**

1. Perhaps as we *read* this morning's text, that *name* sounded a *little* familiar, but **not** as familiar as *Paul* or *Timothy* or *Luke* or even *Titus*...
  - a. But *Tychicus* served with Paul for about **10** years & his *name* appears **four** *other* times in your **NT** :
    - i. **Acts 20:4 (57 AD)** – *Tychicus* is listed, along with **six** other men, as a group that will accompany *Paul* from Corinth to Jerusalem. *Timothy* is also in the group. *Tychicus* is identified as being from *Asia* (Turkey). *Luke* isn't listed but he's w/them.
    - ii. **Colossians 4:7f** (penned at the same time as *Ephesians*, in **60-62 AD**, during Paul's **1<sup>st</sup>** Roman imprisonment). *Tychicus* **also** hand-delivered their letter to them & *also* gave the Colossians a *personal update* on Paul's imprisonment. *Colossians* & *Philemon* & *Ephesians* were likely delivered by *Tychicus* in the *same trip*. And a *runaway* Colossians slave *Onesemus* was probably w/ him.
    - iii. **Titus 3:12 (62-64 AD**, i.e. not long *after* Paul's **1<sup>st</sup>** Roman imprisonment) – *Paul* wrote that he was considering sending *Tychicus* to relieve *Titus* on the island of Crete, where *Titus* had been dispatched as Paul's *emissary* to the Cretan *churches*. This would free *Titus* to report back to *Paul* (in Nicopolis).
    - iv. **2 Timothy 4:12** (late **66** or early **67 AD** - *winter*) – *Paul* (**2<sup>nd</sup>** imprisonment) is *months*, perhaps only *weeks*, away from *execution*. He has sent *Tychicus* to *Timothy* in Ephesus, perhaps (again) carrying *Paul's* last known letter & to (again) relieve *Timothy* as pastor so *Timothy* could rush to Rome before *Nero* beheaded *Paul* .....
    - v. So *Tychicus* served with *Paul* throughout the amazing last **decade** of the apostle's ministry! During that period he served Paul as *courier* (*Ephesians*, *Colossians*, *Philemon*, *Titus?*, *2 Tim?*), "*reporter*," & relief *emissary* (*Tim* & *Titus?*).

- b. All of which help us understand the *foundation* from which Paul wrote in **v.21** that *Tychicus* was the apostle's **beloved** brother (in Christ) & **faithful** minister in the Lord.
- i. *Faithful minister in the Lord* probably means that *Tychicus* has served Paul long & faithfully because of his service for Jesus.
  - ii. In fact, in **Col 4**, Paul added to these **two commendations** that *Tychicus* was Paul's fellow **bonds**servant in the Lord – a slave that chose to be a slave! A slave of Christ.
- c. Paul's *point* is clear: the man carrying this letter to Ephesus was **no ordinary courier!** Paul loved this guy! ☺
2. Which brings us to Paul's **two personal concerns** as he closes his letter:
- a. **First** (21) the *imprisoned apostle* is keen to let the *Ephesians* know how he is *doing*. He can't really put all of that in a letter, so *Tychicus* will make **everything** known to you.
  - b. Which leads to Paul's **second** purpose in sending his friend. **Comfort!** *Tychicus* will **not** simply regurgitate an *apostolic infomercial* – his personal *presence & report* would **comfort & assure** the church that Paul was **standing firm & preaching** the truth & was **exactly** where God wanted him to be!
    - i. Don't lose track of the fact that **this** is a church that Paul had planted & then pastored for **3** years. They loved Paul!
    - ii. Don't overlook the reality that Paul's incarceration was precisely because of his *ministry* to Gentiles churches like *Ephesus* → **3:1,2 (read)**.

3. What can you & I learn from these **two men**: **one** of whom history *can't forget* & the **other** whom history often *overlooks*?
- a. We see a little about what it means to *serve* God & *one another*, together.
    - i. *Tychicus* was *humble* (“*servant*,” “*bondservant*” – **not** lofty titles). Content to *minister w/ Paul, to Paul*, in Paul’s *spiritual shadow*.
    - ii. He was *faithful*. → One of the apostle’s *trusted go-to guys* for a *decade*, right up to the *end*!
    - iii. And *Tychicus* was a **comforter**. He *comforted* Paul & he *comforted* the Colossians & *comforted* the Ephesians. **Not** just *anyone* has that *touch*...
  - b. And *Paul* was **more** than a *theological talking head* and he was **not** *overcome* or *absorbed* in his own *difficult* circumstances!
    - i. It’s *Paul* that sits in *chains*, but it’s his *churches* that he wants *comforted*!
    - ii. It’s an *attitude* that’s an *echo* of what he’s already written to the troubled church in *Corinth*. **Turn w/me briefly to 2 Cor 11:22-28 as Paul is forced to *defend* his ministry to another church he’d planted!**
      1. Being an *apostle* was not exactly a *cushy job*!
      2. But don’t miss Paul’s *heart* in **v.28-29**.
      3. Paul loved these *Gentile churches* – *good* churches like *Ephesus* & even *struggling* churches like *Corinth*!
    - iii. And so even *in chains* his *concern* was for *his friends*.

**Which is *why* he wrote *Ephesians* & *why* he entrusted its safe-passage & comforting report to his beloved *Tychicus*.**

## And now, we *finish* Ephesians...

1. *Ephesians* is often referred to as one of Paul's *prison letters*, along with *Colossians & Philemon & Philippians*. That's because Paul wrote them all while under *house arrest* in Rome (his **1<sup>st</sup>** Roman *incarceration*).
  - a. Most writers agree that the *big idea* in this *important letter* is "*The Church*"! ...
    - i. The "*Church Universal (Invisible)*" – *every true believer of every generation & every location since Pentecost*.
    - ii. The "*Local Church (Visible)*" – *specific gatherings of professing Christians, like the Church at Ephesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and BBC of Sedalia in the 21<sup>st</sup>*.
  - b. The **first** *half* of *Ephesians* teaches the *doctrines* of the church & the **second** *half* gives *instructions* about the *daily walk* of the church.
2. Now Paul *finishes* his letter with a *benediction & blessing*. It's *personal & it's loving*, and just as you'd expect from an apostle, it *teaches* – right up to the *very end!* ☺ In fact, it *reviews* some of the letter's most important *topics*...
3. You might say vv**23&24** close w/ **four** *blessings* that God gives the *Church* and her *people*, in Jesus Christ (**read**); do you *see them*: *peace, love, faith, & grace*.
  - a. **Peace**. ?Is it possible to have *peace* when you are *in chains* and *waiting* to explain yourself to a *power-crazed lunatic!*?! Paul says *yes!*
    - i. Christian *peace* begins with the *confidence* that your *sins* are *forgiven* & your *salvation* is *secure*. Elsewhere Paul wrote (Rm 5:1) – *Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace w/ God through our Lord Jesus Christ*.
    - ii. *Peace* is fortified by the *confidence* that God *hears & answers* your prayers. Listen to what *David* wrote when he was *imprisoned* by the *Philistines* (**Psa 56:9**): *my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; this I know, that God is for me!*

- iii. *Peace* is produced by the *Holy Spirit*, who lives in every Christian. In fact, *peace* is one of His *signature fruit* in the life of the *believer*.
- iv. All of which is the *realization* of Jesus' *promise* (**Jn 14**) - "***Peace*** I leave with you; *My peace* I give to you; **not** as the world gives, do I give to you. *Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*"

b. ***Love. Agape love.***

- i. ***Love*** has been a familiar theme in Ephesians: *sacrificial, unconditional, unselfish*. The *big example* is the cross of Christ!
- ii. Ephesians teaches that *love* is why God saves the *elect*, why Christ *died* for His *church*, how Christians live out the *truth* w/ *one another*, *love* is how *Spirit-filled men* live with their wives, & *love* is what happens as we *serve Christ together* (Paul/Tyc).

c. ***Faith.*** Paul pulls *love* & *faith* close together...

- i. *Faith* is to be **confident** in the *reality* of things you **can't** see & to **entrust** yourself to *promises* that have **yet** to be *realized*.
- ii. We tend to think that *faith* is something **we** are obligated to *come up with*, when we hear God's *precious gospel promises*.
  1. Kind of like standing in front of a *pop machine* on a *sweaty-hot* summer day & *digging* in our *pockets* for a *handful of change*...
  2. **But** Ephesians teaches that God gives the *pop* & the *quarters*! *For by grace you have been saved through faith...and that not of yourselves, it [ → grace, faith, salvation] is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
  3. And *here* (23) it is clear that the blessing of *faith* is from *God the Father* & the *Lord Jesus Christ*.

- d. **Grace (24)**. If you *glance back* at **1:2** you'll be reminded that Paul *opened & closed* Ephesians w/ *grace (& peace)*! **(Read 1:2)**
- i. *Grace* is God' **favor**, **unearned** by us, but *graciously poured out* **on** us by God.
  - ii. *Grace* – God giving us the *desire & power* to do His will, *first* in salvation & *then* every day of our lives.
  - iii. *Grace* is **not** a *magic potion*, **not** a *supernatural energy drink*. It is God working *graciously* **in** us & **through** us. And He *does*!
4. In fact, Paul's wonderful *benediction* practically sings "*Amazing Grace*" as Paul wraps-up by giving *God our Father & our Lord Jesus Christ* **all** the *glory* for **all** that we *have*, ... **all summed up** in these **four glorious words**:
- ... *peace & love w /faith & grace*.



***Peace & love & faith & grace! Amazing! Who gets to live like that!?! Who does God give these to?***

1. **V.23** answers your question: *the brethren*. That's a **NT** endearment for "Christian." → Someone who is *born again thru faith in Jesus*. Every Christian gets *peace & love & faith & grace*, day by day!
2. And then **v.24** goes on to *immediately identify* the **mark** of a *true Christian*:
  - a. A *real Christian* **loves** our *Lord Jesus Christ* w/ love that doesn't *corrupt*. As in, **love** that is *genuine & doesn't wear out or rust out or fade out!*
  - b. In a *sense*, Paul is equating *love* to *faith*. Which teaches us that *faith* is much more than simply **agreeing** w/ a *story & deciding* to let Jesus save you & **accepting** His *fire insurance policy*. ...*pause*...
  - c. A Christian *loves* the **Lord Jesus Christ**.
    - i. That *full title* simply strengthens the truth that we *love & embrace everything* He is, ...*did*, ...*taught*, ...*promised*.
3. It takes God's *grace* to love like that. And that's *exactly* how Paul finishes! God is in the *grace* business!
4. If you *love* Christ, God will empower you to *love* Him even **more**.
5. If you *don't*, don't despair! God can give you the **faith/love** to *entrust* yourself to Christ. *Turn* to Him...*believe* in Him...*love* Him!

***Grace* be w/ all those who *love* our Lord Jesus Christ w/ *love* incorruptible.**

***...pray...***