

## Opening Words

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## 199 Eph Final Words for Faithful People

Today is our last message on the book of Ephesians. What a journey it has been and I want to thank you for your kind notes and your faithful giving through this series that enables us to preach and teach God's Word to the nation. I'd like to read a few of the notes that some of you have sent to us.

A listener from Boise, ID writes: "I am so blessed by your lifting up the Gospel! It is always about Jesus and the Father's love." – Thank you for that note and that blesses our heart. We do want our messages to be about God's love for us and all that he has done for us through Jesus Christ. We certainly do not want to lift ourselves up but only His name.

Here is a brief note from a listener in Des Moines, IA: "Your broadcasts are so informative and explanatory. They are more than just preaching." – Yes, that is true, and I am so happy when our listeners recognize that. Preaching is great and important because it is motivational, but our motivational preaching must have substance to it and so we teach God's word so that people may base their lives on the strong foundation of God's Word. People will forget our words, but they will not forget God's Word. Our words can encourage for a moment but God's word will give power for a lifetime.

Here is what a listener in Milwaukee wrote: "Thank you for your continued broadcasts. The sermons are wonderful as we hear the apostle Paul's pleasant voice speaking to us." Finally, I must include this word from a listener in the city of What Cheer, IA. Don't you love the name of that town – What Cheer! It sounds like the most pleasant place in the world to live. Maybe I'll get to visit it someday. Our listener wrote, "I am so proud of you Pastor Jonathan and your good-looking staff of dedicated, loyal people. We're on a roll! Keep going and God bless!" Well, I include this one because I agree with our listener's evaluation of our staff and I want to take a moment and thank them for their hard work behind the scenes to make these messages possible for you.

Thanks again for your notes. We read every one of them and they brighten our day.

Today we complete the book of Ephesians. This is our 99<sup>th</sup> message in the series. As you know, we have broken down the series into bite sized chunks, smaller series, on different CDs and we hope you will take advantage of these smaller mini-series and listen to them again by receiving a CD or listening online.

What a journey it has been through this book. In my first message, I quoted William Barclay, the great Church of Scotland minister who called Ephesians "the queen of the epistles." John Calvin said it was his favorite letter of Paul's, and Samuel Coleridge, the great English poet said it was the most divine composition of man. I must agree with these words, and I hope you have come to see them

too. This letter is majestic in its beauty and breathtaking in the scope of the topics it has covered. We began by looking at the truth that you and I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The letter concluded with the sober reality that all is still not right in the universe. There is war in the universe. The powers that have enslaved mankind are still active. But Christ has overcome them. He has been enthroned over them and he has given us the orders to go forward into battle, the weapons with which to fight, and the communication system – prayer – to win great victories and advance the kingdom of God.

Between those two majestic sections – the blessings of the spiritual world in chapter 1 and the warfare of the spiritual world in chapter 6, we saw what Christ did for us in reconciling us to himself and to one another. We studied two of Paul’s greatest prayers in chapter 1 and chapter 3 and learned that the way to be filled up with God is to comprehend how much he loves us.

Then, in the final chapters we saw Paul’s exhortations to walk in unity, to walk in purity, to be filled with the Spirit and live our faith in our household relationships, all of it leading to the great exhortation to take up the full armor of God and to energize that armor through prayer.

Let’s look now at Paul’s closing words in Ephesians 6:21-24.

<sup>21</sup> So that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. <sup>23</sup> Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

Paul closes his letter with personal words, as always, and this is a reminder that Paul was not a library theologian. He was not a man who spent his years only reading books. But he was a man who was involved in the heat of the battle, and he takes his readers from the lofty heights of heavenly places back to the grim realities of life on this earth where we fight.

Paul is still in prison. He wants the believers to know how he is doing so he says he is going to send Tychicus to them who will inform them about his precarious situation while he is under house arrest in Rome. We know only a few facts about this man, Tychicus. He was a native of the province of Asia in which the city of Ephesus lay. This would be the western part of modern day Turkey. Late in Paul’s life, when he is in prison again, and when he believes that his death is at hand, he sends Tychicus to Ephesus, presumably to help the church. And he is listed with several other men, probably Paul’s key disciples who helped him in ministry.

Paul refers to Tychicus as the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord. What descriptions these are, and it shows him to be a man of at least two qualities – he was a man of tender love and a man of faithful ministry. We know this from these descriptions and from what Paul said would happen when he arrived. Paul said that Tychicus would comfort their hearts, and it makes us wonder if something had happened in Ephesus that brought great distress upon the people. Perhaps many people were martyred and perhaps this is part of the reason why Paul has so much to say in this book about “heavenly places” – both bad and good, the heavenly places where there is warfare with demonic powers and the heavenly places where God’s people in Christ rest and await

the great day of the resurrection. Well, we don't know for sure what was going on, but Paul was confident that Tychicus would be able to comfort them because he was a beloved brother. And Paul also sent him to inform them of all that was going on with his circumstances. Tychicus was competent as a faithful minister.

These are two outstanding qualities we should strive for – to be men and women of such tender love that others would consider us to be beloved people as we comfort them, and to be people who faithfully minister, according to the gifts God gives us. Sometimes, some people have one without the other. They are very tender loving people or they are very busy and involved in ministry. But if we combine both, we will have a fruitful life building up God's people. With a man such as this, Paul had no trouble sending him to different places to encourage the churches and help them to maintain their focus in the spiritual warfare they were fighting.

Last, we come to Paul's benediction upon the church. He blesses the church with four blessings of the Spirit of God.

First is peace to the brethren. Again, we do not know what was going on in Ephesus. We know the church began in a spiritual storm that we read about in Acts 19. It is likely that this storm lasted for many years and that there was great danger for God's people in this city. They needed the peace of God, and Paul blessed them with that. He did not ask God to take them out of their distressing situation, but that they might have peace within it.

Second, he blessed them with love from the Father. This brought them back to his great prayer in chapter 3 where he prayed that they would be filled up with all the fullness of God. And how are God's people filled up with Him? – by realizing how much he loves them. And so, Paul blesses them with love from the Father.

Third, Paul prayed that God would give faith with the love. I believe the reason Paul did this is that in their distressing circumstances, the people would need faith in the promises of God to stand firm in the spiritual warfare in which they were engaged. Paul coupled faith and love in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 where he was giving a short lesson in spiritual warfare, and there he called the breastplate, the breastplate of faith and love. To be victorious in our challenges in the world, we need the love of God and we need faith in his promises. And so, Paul blesses them with both.

Finally, as he does in all his letters, Paul gets to the big blessing and the most common one. He blesses them with grace. "Grace be with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love." To be sure, some in the church were hypocritical. They had a show of love for Jesus but did not genuinely love him. Later, when Jesus speaks to the church in Ephesus, he speaks of false apostles who had infiltrated the church. Paul recognizes this. There is always tares among the wheat. Paul asks for grace upon those who genuinely love Jesus.

And now my friends as we end this great letter to the church at Ephesus, may God bless you with peace, wherever you are and whatever you are going through, and may you experience his faith and love. And if your love is an incorruptible love for Jesus may his grace be richly upon you.