

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-ONE)

“A FINAL WORD”

EPHESIANS 6:21-24

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

In our previous study, we stated that as we approach the conclusion of our examination of Paul's letter to the **Ephesians**, we must resist the temptation to hurry through to the end, because the Holy Spirit still has a few more truths that He desires to reveal to us.

We said that one of these truths is that we who are engaged in spiritual warfare are not fighting alone. There are other believers who are engaged in the same conflict and are fighting with us and for us.

In verse **21** Paul introduces us to Tychicus, one of his companions in arms. He writes, *“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do,*

Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things.”

In verse **22**, Paul informs the believers in Ephesus of his reason for sending Tychicus to them. He writes, *“I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts”* (**New English Translation**).

Tychicus had been an encouragement to Paul, and now Paul was sending him to Ephesus to be an encouragement to the believers there. It is likely that Paul desired Tychicus to convey to the Ephesian believers the same report concerning his circumstances that he conveyed to the believers in Philippi. In summary the message was, *“I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel”* (**Philippians 1:12 New English Translation**).

Paul was aware that Tychicus’ report of his circumstances, together with his own gift of exhortation, would serve to *“encourage”* or *“comfort”* the hearts of the believers. The Greek word translated *“encourage”* or *“comfort”* is **parakaleó**: (**par-ak-al-eh’-o**), which conveys the basic idea of “calling or summoning one alongside to help.” Because a person can be called alongside to help in different ways, the word **parakaleó** has a wide range of meanings including, “to address, speak to; admonish, exhort; beg, entreat, beseech; console, encourage and strengthen by consolation, comfort.”

In classic Greek **parakaleó** was used of exhorting troops about to go into battle. Sometimes, as in the present context, **parakaleo** conveys the idea of encouraging but always with the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and bravery. Paul’s purpose in sending Tychicus is that his readers might be filled with courage enabling them to cope with any situation.

In our last Lesson, we stated that Tychicus evidently had the gift of exhortation, and we noted that exhortation in this context is the gift of

coming alongside someone to comfort them or to help them with instruction.

In **Romans 12:6-8**, Paul writes,

6 And we have different gifts according to the grace given to us. If the gift is prophecy, that individual must use it in proportion to his faith.

7 If it is service, he must serve; if it is teaching, he must teach;

8 if it is exhortation, he must exhort; if it is contributing, he must do so with sincerity; if it is leadership, he must do so with diligence; if it is showing mercy, he must do so with cheerfulness.

(New English Translation).

In these verses the Apostle gives us a list of “**Grace Gifts**” that every believer is to use “*in proportion to his faith.*” In this context “*faith*” does not refer to **saving** faith, but rather to the faith to humbly discern the limitation of one’s gift. Every believer receives the exact gift and resources he or she needs to fulfill his or her role in the Body of Christ.

In verse **8**, he deals with the gift of “**Exhortation.**” The Greek word translated “*exhortation*” is **parakaleó**, the same word translated “*encourage*” or “*comfort*” in **Ephesians 6:22**.

John MacArthur explains that, “The gift of exhortation encompasses the ideas of advising, pleading, encouraging, warning, strengthening, counseling and comforting. At one time the gift may be used to **persuade** a believer to turn from a sin or bad habit and at a later time to **encourage** that same person to maintain his corrected behavior. The gift may be used to **admonish** the church as a whole to obedience to the Word. Like the gift of showing mercy, exhortation may be exercised in **comforting** a brother or sister in the Lord who is facing trouble or is suffering physically or emotionally. One who exhorts may also be used of God to encourage and undergird a weak believer who is facing a difficult trial or persistent temptation. Sometimes he may use

his gift simply to walk beside a friend who is grieving, discouraged, frustrated, or depressed, to give help in whatever way is needed. This gift may be exercised in helping someone carry a burden that is too heavy to bear alone...In summary, it might be said that, just as prophecy **proclaims** the truth and teaching **systematizes and explains** the truth, exhortation calls believers to **obey and follow** the truth, to live as Christians are supposed to live—consistent with God's revealed will."

We may say that while **teaching** has in mind the **instructing** of persons, **exhortation** encourages persons to **put into practice** what they have been taught. In other words, **teaching** provides **guidance** for what people ought to do, while **exhortation** provides the **encouragement** that they need to do it. The gift of exhortation stimulates the faith of believers to live out what they have been taught, even in the most adverse circumstances.

God often appears to give the gift of **teaching** and the gift of **exhortation** to the same individual, but this is not always the case, for teaching and exhortation are two different gift entirely.

R. Kent Hughes gives the following illustration of the root idea of the word **parakaleó** (exhortation): "I see this exemplified every time my church has a roller skating party, and the parents put their little ones on skates for the first time. Mom and Dad skate with their child, holding on to his or her hands, sometimes with the child's feet on the ground and sometimes in the air. But all the time the parents are alongside encouraging."

In verses **23-24**, Paul concludes his letter with a grand doxology:

23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

(New English Translation).

He begins with “*peace.*” The word “*peace*” is a translation of the Greek word **eiréné: (i-ray’-nay)**, which literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided.

According to **Colossians 1:20**, the Lord Jesus Christ made peace “*through the blood of the Cross.*” He did so, in the sense that through His atonement, He binds or joins together again those who had been separated from God by reason of their standing in the First Adam, and who now, through faith in Him, are bound again to God in their new standing in Him the Last Adam. This is **justification**.

In **Romans 5:1** Paul writes, “*Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” **(New English Translation)**. Every person who has been declared righteous, or justified by faith, has peace “*with God.*” He or she stands in the Holy presence of God, guiltless and un-condemned, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the only righteousness which God accepts.

In **Romans 5:1**, Paul is speaking about “**peace with God,**” **not** about “**the peace of God.**” He is speaking of that peace which exists between God and every believer. We who have been justified by faith, have peace with God right now! Paul’s statement here, has to do with our standing before God **in point of law**, not on the basis **of how we feel**. It is not a change in our feelings which is indicated, but a change in God’s relation to us. Paul is saying that every person who is justified is at peace with God. He is telling us that peace with God is an accomplished fact when we are justified by faith.

Brothers and sisters, it is very important for us to understand that there is a big difference between having “**peace with God**” and enjoying “**the peace of God.**” Having “**peace with God**” is the result of **justification**,

which is the result of a forensic, legal declaration by God, giving the believing sinner an impeccable legal standing before Him which can never be altered. “Peace **with** God” is something that every Christian has. It is ours whether we know it or not, whether we enjoy it or not!

Enjoying “the peace **of** God” in our hearts, is not the result of **justification** but of **sanctification**, which is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The Holy Spirit works in us to gradually conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. He does so by putting sin **out** of our lives, and producing the fruit of the Spirit **in** our lives, as we learn to yield consistently to Him. “The peace **of** God” is something that every Christian **may** enjoy, but unfortunately many of us do not enjoy it.

Even though we are saved, and as a result have “peace **with** God,” we may not enjoy “the peace **of** God” in our hearts for at least two reasons. Firstly, our theology may be incorrect as it relates to **justification**, thus preventing us from being aware of the full benefits of our salvation. Many genuine believers who have been saved by grace, believe that now that they have been saved, the security of their position in Christ is dependent on their own faithfulness and performance of good works. Consequently, they have no assurance of salvation whatsoever, for they can never be sure if their own faithfulness and performance will be good enough to keep them saved.

Secondly, we may not enjoy “the peace **of** God” in our hearts because we may be struggling with besetting sins and consequently, our hearts are constantly condemning us. Sin erects a barrier which impedes our experiencing “the peace **of** God.” In this case the remedy is not a greater reliance on works, but a greater reliance on the grace of God! We must confess our sins and repent of them and believe the promise of God: “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9 New English Translation).

Confession and repentance removes the barrier that sin erects and allows us to **feel** at peace with God. We must therefore “keep short accounts”

with sin. In **1 John 1:7**, John writes, “*But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin*” (**New English Translation**).

In **Ephesians 6:23** Paul is speaking to his readers about enjoying “the peace of God.” He earnestly desires for them not only to know that they have “peace with God,” but to enjoy “the peace of God” in their hearts.

After expressing his desire for the saints to enjoy “the peace of God,” Paul speaks of, “*love with faith.*” I believe that Paul is expressing here his desire for the believers in Ephesus to understand, appreciate and consequently enjoy, the love of God for them. He had spoken of this earlier in chapter **3** and verses **16-19**:

16 I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he will grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person,

17 that Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love,

18 you will be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19 and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you will be filled up to all the fullness of God.

(New English Translation)

D. A. Carson has observed that the remarkable thing about this prayer is that Paul assumes that even though he is writing to persons who are already saved, they do not have an adequate appreciation of the love of Christ.

The Apostle John was aware that some believers have an inadequate appreciation of the love of Christ, for in **1 John 4:18-19** he writes,

18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears punishment has not been perfected in love.

19 We love because he loved us first.

(New English Translation)

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that, “Our chief defect as Christians is that we fail to realize Christ’s love to us.”

Paul does not pray that the believers in Ephesus might love Christ more. Rather, Paul is praying that they might better grasp Christ’s immense love for them. Paul is praying that those who have already experienced the love of Christ, might come to experience it at ever-deepening levels.

Brothers and sisters, the more we understand, in an experiential way, the love of Christ, the more we will love both Him and our fellow believers.

God’s love for us is the example for our love for one another. In **Ephesians 5:1-2**, Paul writes,

1 Therefore, be imitators of God as dearly loved children

2 and live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.

(New English Translation)

Paul speaks of, “love *with* faith.” The word “with” expresses the simple idea of accompanying. The picture is that of a **love** which is accompanied by **faith**. Paul prays for “love with faith,” because the two qualities are closely connected. In **Galatians 5:6** for example, Paul writes, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is **faith working through love**” **(New English Translation)**.

In this verse, Paul is explaining to his readers that the outward keeping of religious rituals is not the main thing, but rather, faith that works itself out in deeds of love. In the closing verses of his letter to the Ephesian believers, Paul expresses his desire for them to experience an increase of “*love with faith.*” As believers, we need to have a faith in Jesus Christ that will move us to love one another in a self-sacrificing manner.

Brothers and sisters, the source of “*peace...and love with faith,*” is “*God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Paul connects the Lord Jesus Christ with God the Father, thus demonstrating Christ’s deity and His equality with the Father. It is our responsibility to earnestly pray, both for ourselves and for each other, that God would increase the manifestation of peace, love, and faith among us, through our growing understanding and enjoyment of His peace, love and faith that is ours in Christ!

Paul ends his letter in the same way that he had begun it; with grace! In **Ephesians 1:2** he began with, “*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!*” (**New English Translation**). And in **Ephesians 6:24** he concludes with, “*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love*” (**New English Translation**). It is grace all the way, from beginning to end!

Paul describes believers as “*those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.*” The Greek word translated “*undying*” is **aphtharsia**: (**af-thar-see’-ah**), which means, “incorruption, perpetuity; purity, sincerity.” **Aphtharsia** defines the state of not being subject to decay or death. It speaks of an unending existence and of that which is not capable of corruption. Paul is identifying the ones who will receive grace as genuine believers whose love for God is not temporary and thus untrue, but permanent and thus genuine!

Brothers and sisters, we are genuine believers if we know that God has given us eternal life in His Son, and as a result, we love the Lord Jesus Christ with a love that is sincere, pure and unending.