

Ephesians 6:21–24

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[0 : 00] Again, the scripture text is Ephesians 6, 21 through 24. Please remain standing for the reading of God's word. 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.

I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, welcome to those who find themselves here, maybe just for the weekend or visiting loved ones.

Thank you for choosing to spend your morning with us. Let me just pause and pray as we turn to the Bible together. Father, we're reminded that when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who are under the law, so that we might receive adoptions as sons and daughters.

And because we are sons and daughters, we have the spirit of your son in our hearts that enable us to cry to you, Father. And so on this day in our nation, as we celebrate fathers, we turn to you, our good, good father, our heavenly father, in whom all good gifts come.

[2 : 07] And we thank you for your word. And would you unfold it by your spirit to us this morning. We ask for your help. We pray these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, during my time in college, perhaps some of you will have the opportunity to go off to college one day.

I was tremendously appreciative of the end of the quarter review sessions. They came right before final exam week.

And it was in those times of the quarter, the time 10 weeks, was reiterated. And I was reminded of everything I was supposed to know going into final exam week.

To be honest, sometimes it felt like I was learning things for the first time. Those review sessions were crucial because you would, or I was able to cram a lot of information and ultimately led to the passing of some of my classes.

[3 : 20] And I opened up this way because my aim this morning is twofold. One, to shut down the letter of Ephesians or to close it. And two, to review the letter, to provide a review session.

Is there an exam? No. Should there be? Possibly. But this review session of sorts is not for an exam, so to say.

But it's to take inventory of what is arguably one of the most magnificent books in our New Testament. To know that you have a sense of the contours of this letter.

Its movement and its message. And this morning we come to the 20th sermon in our journey through the letter of Ephesians. You might think 20 sermons is a lot.

The late Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones preached 262 sermons on Ephesians. And perhaps one of the downsides of these long series, or what appear to be long series of exposition, is that we can choose segments of texts, or blocks of texts, and examine them and dissect them.

[4 : 33] But the vast terrain of the letter would actually be lost. This morning we may be tempted to look at trees, but this morning we need to see a forest.

We need to not just look at leaves, but the landscape of the letter. And for this reason, as it is with each week, I encourage you to keep your Bibles open or your screens unlocked.

Because it would be beneficial. So that you would be rightly oriented. And you would be able to follow along to ensure that I'm not misleading you. Therefore, there are many who would convey what would sound like the Word of God, only to spit words that are not found on these pages.

And so to begin, I just want to look at the final four verses, and you'll begin to see how this book closes and how I launch into this review.

These final four verses. The letter concludes with a commendation. A commendation and a benediction. A commendation and a benediction. Commendation in 21 and 22.

[5 : 40] A commendation is simply Paul's attempt to say, Tychicus is my beloved brother and he's my faithful minister.

He wants to confirm his legitimacy. Tychicus was tasked to deliver this letter along with the letter of Colossians, a city further east and inland.

Paul wants them to know he is a reliable messenger. One who will not only deliver its contents, but according to Paul, he will be able to tell you everything. Everything.

As one commentator put it, Tychicus represents Paul's personal presence. It's the closest thing that Paul can do to be there in person.

He would be apt to explain the unclear parts of this letter and fill in the gaps. More importantly, he was to update the congregation on Paul's status.

[6 : 40] Paul who had been imprisoned. There's certainly angst in the Ephesian community, and we read of that earlier in chapter 3, that they were discouraged or they were losing hearts because of Paul's condition.

And so this is why Tychicus is sent, for their encouragement and for their strengthening. It's quite striking to think, given the opportunity to share about his own condition in this letter, his possible lack, even his experience of suffering, that Paul almost puts none of it in the correspondence. He is silent about his needs in prison, minus his prayer request for boldness, as we saw last week. Here we find the servant of God rightfully fading to the background.

And in the foreground, to the forefront, is not the servant, but the Savior. And if you're not convinced, I task you to count how many times Christ, by name, is mentioned in this letter.

In fact, if you're a child, and I'm looking at mine, I task you, how many times do you see Christ mentioned in this letter?

[8 : 01] He is the main subject of the letter. It is not Paul the servant. But unsaid here, and noted elsewhere, Tychicus' origins are from Asia, according to Acts 20, verse 4.

This made me smile. He had accompanied Paul on a prior missionary journey. And here what you have is an Asian believer partnering with a Jewish, former Jewish Pharisee, and they are cooperating in the mission of God to the world.

Paul, a Jew, Tychicus, an Asian Gentile, here, co-laboring on behalf of the church. It's illustrative of what God's purposes are in the world.

His purposes, as we have seen in the letter, are to break down walls of racial hostility, creating in the place of two, one new man making peace.

And you can imagine, at one time, divided and having very little in common, here, Paul and Tychicus have united to serve Christ and the gospel. What would bring an ethnic Jew and an ethnic Asian together?

[9 : 20] It's not a nationalistic endeavor. It's not political. It's not economic. It's not some joint enterprise or some self-serving endeavor.

No. Here you have the depiction of how the gospel would go forth to people, different backgrounds, different geographies, together.

broadcasting the gospel. This is what happens when the Lord Jesus grabs hold of people.

That which was at one time divisive is now united into one. They are members of the household of God. And the close of this letter lays for us our congregational endeavor and vision.

what do we aspire to be at Christ Church Chicago? We aspire to be an ethnically diverse congregation unified by Christ and the shared ministry of the gospel.

[10 : 32] May this be us in an ever-increasing manner, university student, neighborhood resident, single, married, young, old, clever, dumb, Asian, African, Australian, American, united under the reconciliation of the Lord Jesus Christ in service to him.

You see it. Paul implicitly drops that there. This is how the gospel would go forward. And as the letter closes, Paul is commending both Tychicus, the individual, and commending the model of ministry he's using and the model of ministry the gospel requires, Christianity would thrive and can only thrive on being a multi-ethnic led faith.

It would not be a regional thing. This is not a western thing. No, it would be east, west, north, south, as if what the prophet Isaiah is saying.

From the north, from the south, from the east and the west, he's going to bring them all into one family. Why? He's going to summon from the whole world because this gospel is for the whole world.

A commendation followed by a benediction. And as with all of Paul's letters, there's this benedictory conclusion. It's a prayer, a prayer of blessing over those who hear and read it.

[12:07] Interestingly, this benediction mirrors the letter's introduction. Here, in verses 23 and 24, I'll just take the leading words. It's peace be or grace be.

If you flip a few pages over in your Bible, in chapter 1, verse 3, it's grace and peace. It's literally a mirror flipped around. As if grace and peace are called at the beginning and the finale to be these twin themes that accompany the believer from start to finish.

And the benediction is more thorough than any other appalling letters. At first, I thought, oh, this is just a sincerely Paul or love Paul or best Paul.

But it's unusual in the sense of his length. It brings out a handful of major things in the letter together. It's not just a mere formality, but the terms are loaded in how they've been expanded in the letter.

And I illustrate it this way. Perhaps you give a rose to a loved one. That's a kind gesture. If you bring two flowers together, that might be a romantic gesture.

[13:26] Three may be very special, but here what Paul is doing is not one, not two, not three, but he's bringing together a bouquet of flowers.

Why? Because he needs to convey the fullness of what has been laid out in these first six chapters. Unlike most of Paul's other letters, they end with a single benedictory comment, like Colossians, grace be with you, or grace to you.

But here, in Ephesians, the benediction is loaded. Why? Because the letter is loaded. Ephesians tells of heaven's riches for all of earth's needs.

It is the bank of heaven, emptying, or not even emptying its treasures on a bankrupt and broken earth. It is God's blueprint to remake and reclaim and repair the earth that is unraveled by sin and suffering.

And you see these four things. I'm going to summon peace. I'm going to ask for God's love. I'm going to request faith.

[14:48] I'm going to call upon grace. All things that he's unpacked before. He calls on peace. Why? Because Christ himself is our peace.

Peace with God and the means of having peace with one another. The hostility that we had with God and God's holy wrath towards sin are repaired in Christ.

The division that happens between you and I, husband and wife, father and child, employer and employee, is repaired and reconciled by Christ.

And he will summon that peace. And then he asks for love. Why love? Because love is the attribute evoked in God on our behalf.

Your sin is great. His mercy is greater. Your darkness is immense. His love is vast. And for it is in his love that he predestined you and he selected you and he picked you.

[15:51] When you were all buttoned up and dressed nice, no. when you were buried in your fallenness and rebellion out of love, he was so moved by his love to look upon you in favor.

Peace, love, with faith. And faith is that which allows us to grasp grace. For by grace you have been saved.

It is faith that gives us access to life with God according to 3:12. It is faith that enables us to sense God dwelling within us. 3:17.

And Paul then calls upon grace to belong to the believer for salvation comes by grace. In Christ we have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

That it is God's plan it is God's purpose. It is God's intention according to 2:7 that he shows us the immeasurable riches of his grace.

[17:10] Staggering. What is God up to? Well let me show you how much grace I actually have toward you.

love, this quadruple blessing. Peace, love, faith, grace is met by a singular response.

You see it, don't you, in verse 24? For those who have received peace, love, faith, and grace, a response is demonstrated.

grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus. We are those who have received love from God, and as a response, display love for God.

this is the mark of the Christian life. For those who have received peace and love with faith from God, their response is love for God.

[18 : 28] Love from results in love for. As his love comes down, our love goes up. The highlights of the relational aspect of the Christian faith are right here.

It's crucial to understanding true Christianity. He is a God that loves us, and we love him in return. It's a reciprocated relationship. In response to the love that he shows, we, in our feeble attempts, love him back as best we can.

We love because he first loved us. There are people who love God or there are people who love the bread that he provided.

He could read about that. There are people who love the wonders and the miracles that he performs. He could read about that. And there are those who love the blessings that he pours out. and there are those sadly who love him merely for what he does, but not who he is.

[19 : 39] I love all the benefits, but I don't love the benefactor. Oh, I love to drink the blessings. Oh, love the fount from which the blessings come.

And here as the letter closes, Paul notes this distinction of the Christian life. We are those having received love from God live as ones who demonstrate love for God.

It's a quality of love described or translated by the ESV as an incorruptible love. The NIV translates it as an undying love. The old King James as a sincere love.

Whatever it is, there's ambiguity there. It speaks of the quality of the love toward the Lord Jesus.

And as the close of this letter or 20 sermons, 20 weeks on Ephesians closes, there hanging out for you and I is a book, a love letter to you and I and the summons and the challenges right there are we those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now as we've come to the end, I want to just take, it's going to take a moment to revisit the book.

[21 : 11] You know, like, oh, bang, we're going to do a review session now? We are because it's for your encouragement. Because what Paul did here is I sent Tychicus for your encouragement.

And I believe and I'm confident that actually this whole letter is for your encouragement. Because as the letter opens up, you need to know that God has not withheld anything from you.

That every spiritual blessing is yours in the Lord Jesus. And as we do this flyover, I want to give you what some call a melodic line.

As songs have melodies that give it coherence and order, a melodic line in the book of the Bible is a concise statement that tries to unify the whole.

It's no easy task, but it's a worthwhile task. And I have been banging my head, maybe literally, trying to get a good one.

[22 : 20] I wanted to write a run-on sentence with a bunch of commas and ands, which would account for more detail, but would become memorable. So here it is, the answer to the question, what is Ephesians?

What is Ephesians? Ephesians tells us that God's plan for all things is fulfilled in Christ and displayed by his people.

God's plan, I wrote it actually right here on the, I do sacrilegiously right in my Bible, but right here, the letter to the Ephesians, melodic line, God's plan for all things is fulfilled in Christ and displayed in his people.

Since you have your Bibles open, allow me a flyover. God's plan, God has a plan, and you know it, and I know it, as a plan for the fullness of time, according to chapter one, you'll want your Bibles, nimble fingers, and I don't know if you have dry hands, you'll want to lick all the fingers, I guess, but here it is, God has a plan, and it's a plan to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth, that everything, according to Paul, is being brought together and summed up in Christ.

This plan, chapter 3, verse 11, is realized in Christ Jesus. A facet of this plan is what we call the gospel.

[24 : 01] Paul calls it a mystery, but it's not a mystery in the sense that we know it. It's actually something unknown, but it's a sense that what it was once hidden is now disclosed or made known.

You may call it a human rescue plan, but it is more than that. It is more than a human rescue plan. The gospel is actually a battle plan as well. It's a battle plan over evil.

We've read about this in the heavenly places. Authorities and powers and dominions, cosmic powers, the present darkness in chapter 1, verse 21.

You see it in the end of chapter 6. We are to put on armor and to know what? That we are fighting against rulers and authorities.

Darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. It's not only a human rescue plan that we read about in chapter 2, that when you were dead in your sins, God was able to rescue you, but it is a battle plan against evil, declaring his victory.

[25 : 09] It will demonstrate his power, as we've seen, to not only raise the dead, it will demonstrate his power in reconciling the divided.

This is the gospel. It results in our salvation. It results in our unification. It results in evil and Satan's destruction. The gospel is not just, I get to go to heaven.

The gospel is, we get to go to heaven. Together. The gospel is us unified as one man.

The gospel is Satan, crushed, destroyed, evil, vanquished, banished, the garden restored.

God has a plan, and he's made it known in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And secondly, the second half of the book, four, five, six, chapters four, five, and six, we are a people that display this plan.

[26 : 23] We are a people that display this plan. How do we display it? Well, I'm glad you asked, or at least you're thinking. Through praise. How do I display this plan? Through praise.

You've heard it earlier from this pulpit. Christ's church exists. Why? To praise the everlasting, inexhaustible, boundless, and permanent glories of God.

Glories of God's grace that are ours in Christ. We exist for his praise. To borrow the language from another New Testament writer, we offer up a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of our lips that acknowledge his name.

How do we display his plan? Through praise. How do we display his plan? Through proclamation.

Through proclamation, Paul is found preaching, preaching, proclaiming.

proclaiming. It's the only need he's expressed in this book. You know, I might be short on money. I might be getting, I might have fading health.

[27 : 32] I might have poor eyesight. I might have mean soldiers guarding me. I might have all these things. I'm just envisioning, Paul saying. But he didn't request deliverance from any of that.

He asked for one thing. And do you remember what it was from last week? He asked for, pray for me that words would be given to me that I would open my mouth and boldly do what?

Proclaim the mystery of the gospel. Do you know how we display his plan? Through praise.

Through proclamation of the gospel.

Through prayer. Praise. Prayer. Praise. Proclamation. Prayer. The plan is so marvelous. Chapters one to three.

That Paul is writing. Or he's not writing. He's probably speaking. And someone else is transcribing. But there he is. That while he's transcribing, while this guy is transcribing, he can't help but roll into prayer.

[28 : 38] You saw that in chapters one and chapters three. That as he's telling you about the plan and the purposes of God, they are so grand.

So marvelous. He knows that the human mind, the human heart, our self-deception, our doubt, our stubbornness is not going to believe it.

And he rolls into prayer. And he turns to prayer in this letter as if to say that the people of God cannot live out the plan of God without praying to God.

Listen, this plan, you cannot live out without prayer. And the letter closes with an exhortation to pray without any reservations.

When is it appropriate to pray? At all times. And this is what's I've been thinking about this whole armor passage. And it's interesting because it's this militaristic image that we may not at least in these times kind of frown upon.

[29 : 59] But what's interesting about this armor is it's not asking us to advance. It's not asking you to take land.

It's not asking you to cross national borders. It's not asking you to force yourself upon someone. But the armor is given actually to provide resilience and perseverance.

That know this as the onslaught comes and as the arrows fly and as the rage goes on towards you. You have this armor and you're to stand in truth and in faith and in righteousness holding the word. But the clincher is this. If you want to know how to advance it's what Paul asks for.

Pray and proclaim. But I want to kind of be like Peter. I got a sword and there's a guy with two ears that I think I could take down one and if you don't know the reference Peter takes down the ear but that's not how this kingdom is going to advance and Paul knows that.

[31 : 14] The armor is not there to fight and advance and take. It's to defend and to stand to withstand and against stand.

But how do we like progress? Well Paul tells us pray proclaim no no you know when I pray it's kind of like I'm not doing much and when I proclaim the message is pretty weak and Paul would say do it all the more pray and proclaim how do we display his plan through praise through proclamation through prayer and finally through participation through participation how do we participate?

you have a gift I have a gift and we all brought our gifts in this room use them exercise our gifts as one unified body it's demonstrated we participate it's demonstrated as God's people renew our thinking transform our speaking correct our acting our minds our mouths our movements are all now realigned to Christ we are to walk in a particular manner you have this strut as a Christian we are those who behave in love belong to light and walk by wisdom chapter 5 our participation in God's plan is not only this internalized thing that happens in here is externalized and made visible it shapes our marriages it shapes how I parent it shapes my child and their upbringing it shapes how my presence in the workplace that all of my relationships are now governed by the

Lord Jesus in other words there's no realm of our experience that Christ does not lay claim to it's the Dutch theologian who once said Abraham Kuyper said this there's not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ who is sovereign over all does not cry mine it's all mine all mine it's demonstrated finally as God's people demonstrate resilience against the schemes of the enemy we're armored to stand and to withstand and to stand firm and when the onslaught comes you stand and you proclaim and you pray what is our participation bring your gifts change your thinking speak anew stop stealing and start working yes that's what

I take that from the text we behave in love belong to light walk in wisdom it informs our relationships parents husband wife employer employee in ephesians you will find we have found God's plan for all things fulfilled in Christ and displayed by his people as a body of believers here at Christ Church Chicago we know the plan let's go be the people father we marvelous are your ways marvelous are your works marvelous is your wisdom and we pray that we would be a people that know the plan it culminates and it's held together and brought forth all in the

[35 : 36] Lord Jesus and that we would become a people worthy of this gospel by which we've been saved help us be that congregation empower us strengthen us encourage us help us to stand for Jesus sake amen to to to to to!