

PM Ephesians 6:21-24

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[0 : 0 0] Good evening, it's another Sunday evening where we can't be together, it's another Sunday evening where we can't gather together to study God's Word in person. But it's another Sunday evening where we have the opportunity to come together online, another opportunity to come and hear from God's Word.

We come this evening to the end of our studies in Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 6, and these last verses, 21, to the end of the letter.

You may be wondering what comes next, you may be wondering what comes after this. Well, next Sunday evening, hopefully, God willing, we're going to start a new series in the life of Joseph. We're going to consider this great Old Testament character.

We're going to try and see together what his life and what the experiences he goes through can teach us in our day today. So that's the plan. There'll be 12, 13 weeks on the life of Joseph, depending on what happens with the coronavirus, depending on what happens with all of these things.

But as we come tonight, let's read together from God's Word. Ephesians chapter 6, I'm beginning to read at verse 21. So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, take a gift of beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything.

[1 : 1 8] 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. Amen. This is the reading of God's inspired and inerrant Word.

Let's turn to the Lord in prayer now. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you indeed this evening for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that he does indeed love us with a love that is incorruptible.

We know, Father, that our love so often waxes and wanes. We know so often that our love changes depending how we feel. For we thank you, Father, this evening that indeed Jesus loves us with that love that is incorruptible.

We thank you for your goodness and your mercy and your grace. We thank you for the kindness that you've extended to us even over these past weeks. As we get bogged down in the coronavirus, as we get bogged down in lockdown, it's easy to forget your goodness.

[2 : 2 6] It's easy to forget the provisions that you have made for us. It's easy to forget the fact that you have kept us in good health, that you have sustained us in the weeks that have gone by. Like those lepers who are healed.

Heavenly Father, we are so slow to return. Thanks for all that you've done. And this evening as we gather, we want to give you thanks for the way that you've kept us, for the way that you've protected us as a fellowship, for the way that you've kept your hand upon us.

Remember again before you this evening, all of our frontline workers, remember all of those NHS nurses, doctors, porters, all of the NHS staff.

We pray, Father, that you would continue to grant them health and safety as they go about their work. Remember, Heavenly Father, all of those children who are perhaps stuck at home in situations that are less than ideal.

May your hand of grace and care and compassion rest on them, we ask. And may you go before us now as we come to study your word. May it do our souls good. May it build us up in our most holy faith, we ask.

[3 : 37] In Jesus' name. Amen. Let's turn then, please, in these verses in Ephesians 6, Ephesians 6, and verses 21 through 24.

These last couple of verses in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. The art of letter writing is largely lost today, isn't it?

You know, it's not very often that you'll get a handwritten note from someone. How do we communicate today? Well, we communicate today through text message. We communicate today through email. We communicate today through WhatsApp.

But those modes of communication feel so impersonal, don't they? Unless you're sending a message to someone that you don't know, chances are that you don't feel the need to include your name at the end of it.

It's the same with an email, isn't it? Whenever you send an email, you know that your name will pop up. You know that probably actually the first line of your email will pop up. Before the person's even opened the email, they know who it's from.

[4 : 38] And to a large extent, they probably know what it's about. It's not like that with a letter though, is it? When you get that handwritten letter delivered through the post, you have to prize it open.

You look at the writing on the front and you think, well, whose writing is that? Do I know this writing? You have to prize it open and see who the letter's from. It's a much more personal, much more intimate form of communication.

And as we come to the end of Ephesians 6 this evening, as we come to these verses in Ephesians 6 this evening, that's the feeling that we get, isn't it? It's intimate. It's personal.

It's loving. It's caring communication sent from the Apostle Paul to this church in Ephesus. Most likely here, Paul has taken the pen out of the hand of his scribe, out of the hand of the Immanuel Entis, and he is writing this final farewell himself, if you like.

It's deeply personal, deeply compassionate. We want to see three things from it. Think about three things together from it this evening. Firstly, we want to think about Christian compassion.

[5 : 51] Secondly, we want to think about Christian peace. And what is the true source of peace? And thirdly, we want to think about Christian love and see the wonderful truths that Paul reminds us of in Ephesians 6.

So firstly then, Christian compassion. Christian compassion. And we see that in verses 21 and 22. 21 and 22, Christian compassion. So we remember where we are in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus.

We thought last week in Ephesians 6 about that very famous section about the armor of God. We thought about those 10 verses, 10 through 20. We remember Paul outlined the armor to the Ephesian believers and he reminded them why they needed it.

Why did they need the armor of God? Because the devil was at work. Because of the reality of the devil and his power, Paul says, put on the armor. Finally then, we thought about Paul's heart.

That the gospel would advance. He may be in chains. Yes, he may be in prison. Yes, but Paul's heart, Paul's prayer, Paul's concern was that they would pray that the gospel would go forward.

[6 : 56] That the gospel would advance despite his chains. That the gospel wouldn't be bound, but that he would speak boldly as he should. And then we come to this verse then in verse 21 and we see that this begins his final greetings.

His final farewells, if you like. Even as we look at the letter, we see that this is going to be the end of it. And we see the concern, the love that Paul had for these believers.

The care and concern that he had for the church in Ephesus. He says, verse 21, so that you may know how I am and what I am doing.

Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything. So that you might know how I am. So that you might know how things are going with me.

I'm going to send Tychicus to you. I'm going to send this faithful brother to you so that you might know how I am. Paul, of course, loved the church in Ephesus, didn't he?

[7 : 58] He had that special care and concern for them. We remember that scene in the book of Acts, don't we? In Luke's record of the spread of the early church.

We remember that scene where Paul gathers the Ephesian elders to him. He calls the Ephesian elders to come to him. He assures them that they won't ever see his face again.

He assures them that they won't ever see him again. And what do they do? They kneel down and pray and weep together. Such was the depth of care.

Such was the depth of concern that Paul had for the church in Ephesus. Such was the depth of care and concern that the Ephesian church had for Paul. They weep and they cry together.

It tells us of the depth of feeling. It tells us of the depth of fellowship that existed between these two parties. And you can imagine them then worrying about Paul.

[8 : 59] The last time they'd seen him, he was on a voyage. The last time they'd seen him, he'd assured them they wouldn't see his face again. And you can imagine them thinking, well, I wonder how it's going for Paul.

I wonder if he's alright. I wonder what's happened to him. I wonder if the gospel has spread and advanced as Paul hoped. I wonder if he's okay.

And yet notice Paul knows that. Because what does he say? He says that you may know how things are with me.

I'm going to do this for you. I know you're worried. I know you're going to be concerned. I know you'll be upset at the last word that was spoken. And because of that, I'm going to send Tychicus to you.

He's going to tell you all about it. He's going to tell you about everything that's happened. He's going to tell you about how I am. The bond that ties us in Jesus Christ should be the bond that ties us most deeply.

[10 : 04] There is a depth of fellowship. There is a depth of care and concern that existed between the Ephesian church and the Apostle Paul. This wasn't just superficial fellowship.

This wasn't fellowship that was on the surface level. This fellowship went deep. This wasn't just fellowship over a cup of tea and saying, Well, how are Aston Villa doing this season?

No. There was a care there. There was a depth there. There was a concern there. There was a compassion there for one another. Paul knew they were worried and so he sent Tychicus.

The believers there were worried for him. We are bound together in Jesus Christ. All of those old dividing lines. All of those old walls of hostility have been broken down in Christ.

We are one in Christ. When one member of the fellowship suffers, then all suffer. When one member of the fellowship rejoices, then all rejoice. If that's how it was for Paul and this group of believers in Ephesus, then that's how it must be for us today.

[11 : 12] That we are bound together as a group of Christians. That we are bound together as a group of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not each individual little islands floating around doing our own thing, coming together as a group of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are bound together in Christ. If that's how it was for Paul and this group of Christians who lived miles apart, how much more should it be true of us as Christians who live in the same vicinity, who live close together.

And yet notice how Tychicus is described. How does Paul describe him? So that you may know how I am and what I am doing. Verse 21. Tychicus, the beloved brother. Tychicus, the faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything.

Tychicus, the faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything.

Tychicus, the faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything. And now you have to say, hey, I'm not going to take it away from my heart. So you can understand why being a paperboy didn't last for very long. But at least, in my defence, at least I quit. Other people were sacked.

[12 : 46] Some of the people, some of the paperboys in Carrick would go and they would get their papers. They'd go and collect them and then they would dump them behind a block of flats near the paper shop. Or they would go and get their papers and they would just never deliver them.

They would leave them somewhere. I'm not quite sure what they expected to happen but the upshot of it was that they were sacked. Why? Because they weren't faithful because they couldn't be trusted to deliver the message.

But that couldn't be said of Tychicus. He was faithful in the Lord. Paul could trust him to bring the news. Paul could trust him to bring this letter.

Paul could trust him to tell the Ephesian believers how it was with him. He was faithful. What a description that would be of us, friends.

That when people think about us, when people hear our name, they think, well, there is someone who's faithful. There is someone who's reliable. There is someone who's trustworthy.

[13 : 50] There is someone who can be depended upon. I wonder how often we do our Christian witness harm by saying that we're going to do something and then not doing it.

I wonder how often we do our Christian witness harm by saying that we're going to do something and then actually doing it really half-heartedly. What a witness it would be if people were to say to us, well, they are faithful in all that they do.

But why is it such a big deal? Why does it matter? Well, because when we are faithful, it shows that the God we serve is faithful. When we are trustworthy, it shows that the God whom we claim to follow is trustworthy.

It may not be enough to convert someone. It may not be enough to bring someone to Christ. But it might be enough to get someone thinking. Well, why is their behavior different? Why are they trustworthy?

Why are they reliable whenever everyone else isn't? Are you faithful in the menial jobs that are given to you at work?

[14 : 59] Are you faithful to do all of the things that you've promised to do? Are you faithful in giving those employees under you their due rewards?

So we see the compassion of Paul then. He knows the Ephesian believers will be worried about him. He knows that they'll be concerned for him. And so he sends Tychicus to make it right.

He sends Tychicus to tell them how things are with him. Secondly then, this evening, we want to think about Christian peace. Christian peace.

And we see that in verse 23. We see as we come to verse 23 then the peace that Paul offers. The Christian peace as we might call it. We see he offers peace to the brothers and love with faith.

But notice who it's from. Notice who it's from. Verse 23. From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This isn't peace that Paul offers.

[16:00] This isn't Paul's peace. This is the peace that comes from God. This is the source of peace. This is the source of reconciliation.

This is the source of hope this evening. It's the peace that comes from God. It's the love of God the Father. It's the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's crucial that we understand that this evening because we are by nature people who are at enmity.

We are by nature people who are at enmity with God and people who are at enmity with one another. It was the same for the church in Ephesus. The whole, part of the whole point of writing the letter to the Ephesians was to remind them that they are one in Christ.

It was to remind them that the old divisions between Jew and Gentile have been broken down. That the enmity that existed was gone. We are by nature people who live in enmity.

Enmity with one another and enmity with the God who created us. If we are going to have any hope of peace in this life then it has to come from outside ourselves.

[17:06] If we are going to have any hope of peace in this life then it has to come from God because we are by nature people at enmity. I think I see this most clearly today in the political divisions that exist across the globe really but I see it most clearly I think in Scottish terms in the division that exists between the SNP and the Conservative Party.

You go onto Twitter you look at an SNP MSP's timeline and you see the Unionists come out in force and attack whatever position it is that the SNP take.

You go onto Conservative MSP's timeline look at all the responses to a position that they've put out and again you'll see the same thing. you'll see hatred you'll see enmity you'll see vitriol of the worst kind.

And what's the only hope of peace in that situation? It's not a negotiated settlement it's not somehow the SNP and Conservatives coming together the only hope of peace in that situation is actually the peace that God offers it's the peace of the Gospel.

This peace that Paul speaks of here is peace with one another yes but it's also peace with God. Peace with one another comes about because of the peace with God.

[18:31] Because our most fundamental relationship because the thing that we are designed and created for has been restored that peace with God then we can live at peace with one another. Because the peace with God the enmity that exists between man and God has been broken down in Jesus Christ the enmity that exists between man and man can be broken down again in Jesus Christ.

The relationship with our Creator has been restored through the Gospel through the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that overflows into our life that impacts our relationship then with one another.

And that's the peace that God offers each of us this evening. That peace with Him that hope of right relationship with Him restored that peace that Christ won through His life death and resurrection.

Right relationship with God that right relationship that has been broken by sin being restored. once that fundamental relationship has been fixed once that that breach has been fixed then we can know peace with one another.

All of this is the gift of God none of this can be achieved by ourselves none of this can be achieved by just sinking more loving thoughts by just doing more loving actions fundamentally it comes about as the work of God it is the gift of God.

[20 : 09] Thirdly finally tonight then we see Christian love Christian love and we see that in verse 24 Grace be with those with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love that is incorruptible this love that cannot be broken this love which cannot be corrupted grace grace to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ but you see the problem is that our love is corruptible the problem is that our love waxes and wanes yet this evening the love that God has for us the love that God has shown us in his son the love that God has revealed to us through the mystery of the gospel can never change the love that Jesus Christ has for his people this evening can never change we have been loved with an everlasting love we have been loved with that love that set itself upon us in eternity past we have that love that sets itself on the elect from before the beginning of time a love that never changes a love that never waxes or wanes following the death of his child

Johnny Gibson wrote a book called The Moon Is Always Round he was seeking to explain to his son what had happened to this baby he was trying to explain to him the goodness and the mercy and the grace of God even in the most difficult circumstances in life he wrote this book The Moon Is Always Round and in it the basic premise is that the moon is always round sometimes you can't see it sometimes you only see a sliver of it but it doesn't change the fact that the moon is always round and he compared that to the love of God we may not always see the love of God we may not always feel the love of God we may not always feel the goodness of God towards his people we may not always understand the love that God has for us and the providences of life but the truth remains

God's love is always good God's providences are always good just as the moon is always round in Jesus Christ this evening you have been loved with a love that is incorruptible if you have faith in Jesus Christ this evening you have been loved with a love that never changes a love that never waxes or weans a love that set itself upon you from eternity past and will keep you until eternity future and what a cause for rejoicing that is what a cause for hope and celebration that is in a world full of darkness in a world so troubled so upset by this global pandemic in a world where people doubt goodness and love what a reassurance it is to know that as Christians we have been loved with a love that is incorruptible with a love that never changes so what have we seen from this book from this letter to the church in Ephesus what have we seen from Paul's letter to the Ephesians what are the big take away points for us well

I suspect the main one the main one is this great reminder that Paul has given us that we are one in the Lord Jesus Christ that there is one people of God remember that that middle wall of hostility has been broken down that there is now no longer Jew and Gentile but Christ is in all and through all all worship the same God through the Lord Jesus Christ there is only one people we've seen the priorities Paul has for prayer time and time and time again haven't we Paul's prayer wasn't that his suffering would be ended that his suffering would be eased but Paul's prayer was that the gospel might advance we've seen the appropriate relationships that are to exist within the church we've seen the appropriate relationships between husbands and wives we've seen the appropriate relationships between father and son we've seen the appropriate relationships between employer and employee as we leave this letter friends let those of us in Jesus Christ this evening let those of us in Christ this evening rejoice because as we read this letter it is a letter of rejoicing it is through Christ alone this evening that we have been brought near it's through personal living faith in him as our saviour as our substitute as our sin bearing saviour tonight that we have been brought near let's share that gospel let's share that good news with others so that others might come to know Christ because it is God who is able to bring the dead to life it is God who is able to bring people from darkness into light it is God who is able to bring people off that wide road that leads to destruction onto that narrow path that leads to life our God is able to do that but are we willing to share?

are we willing to take that risk? are we willing to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ? Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen I love you Amen Amen Thank you.

[27 : 04] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[29 : 34] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 04] Thank you.

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[34 : 34] Thank you.