

The Conclusion of Love

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[0 : 00] Four verses of Ephesians 6 from verse 21 to the end. We find these verses on page 979 of our church Bibles.

Let's read again from verse 21. Paul, his concluding words to the church there in Ephesus, writes, 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've sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace, and in the benediction, peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be with you all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. So, Paul has now come to the conclusion of his letter.

As we've seen right at the start, it's a letter written to dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. It's a letter that's made clear the love of God towards undeserving sinners.

[1 : 12] It's a letter that's shown the love of the Lord Jesus that reaches out to undeserving sinners. It's a letter that tells us of that new life that we have in the Lord Jesus because of the love of God for sinners.

It's a letter that tells us of the need that Christians have, that we have to practice the love of God in our lives and show that love one to another, in that brotherly love and reaching out with that love of Christ, one to another, to maintain that bond of unity in the Spirit.

I mean, it's a letter we'd have to say that really, if you like, we might say drips, drips with the whole subject of that love that never lets us go.

So, in this letter, we've seen God's love, we've seen that love that none of us deserve. As we went through each of the five, each of the six chapters, or certainly five up to now, we've seen, as we've mentioned at the start, God's electing love, and then God's saving love, God's strengthening love, the love that we have to respond to, and as we said, loving God in return and showing obedience in love.

It's a letter that demands that we show the genuineness of our love for God in loving one another, in bearing with one another, in conducting our lives, even within the context of a congregation, of a church, in building one another up, in seeking the best one for another, in seeking, as we said, to maintain the unity of the church and the bond of peace that God gives His people.

[3 : 15] So, as we've said, love has been the dominant theme of this letter, and Paul has reached the point where he's now going to sign off. And notice, notice again, right at the end, they're signing off with love.

The very last words that he's writing to these believers in Ephesus, you know, brings out the whole, if you like, the whole aspect of Paul's ministry, his true friendship in the Lord with the people there in Ephesus, his true fellowship in the Lord.

We're seeing here the true faith that Paul has in the Lord, and we're seeing here, as we'll look at in more detail in a moment, what truly defines somebody who's in Christ by faith.

And so, as we've come to the conclusion of this letter, then, it's for each one of us here, for you and for me, to apply and seek to apply the message that Paul gives us here about particularly concerning what defines you in your faith.

Is your faith seen in acts of love that bind you with fellow believers in the Lord Jesus? Is your faith seen in true brotherly love one to another?

[4 : 29] Is your faith as a believer enriched by the love of God? Does your love for Christ define you as a Christian? Well, as I say, we're going to explore these questions, these so important aspects of who you are as a Christian, if you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior.

And three areas, as you see in your notices, in the bulletin, three areas that we're going to focus our thoughts on this evening. As we said, this is the conclusion of the letter, the conclusion of our studies in Ephesians.

But three things, just to focus our hearts on this evening. The love that binds, and the love that believes, and then the love that defines.

And, you know, as we look at these aspects of certainly the latter part of this letter, then, I pray, you know, even as we've been considering this whole theme of love in Ephesians, that we will have learned of the true wonder, of the love of God, that reaches to sinners' hearts, to my heart, your heart, that love that reaches into the very depth of your heart, that love that changes lives and continues to change lives, that love that's turned your life around, that love that's transformed you, that love that transforms once-hardened sinners to become trophies of grace.

And I pray that, yes, as it were, bathed and basked in the love of God, that that knowledge of God, that knowledge of His love, that demand that God gives on us to love one another, that we will do so, as servants, as servants of the Lord Jesus, as servants, the servant of love.

[6 : 19] So, first point then, the love that binds, and as we see, certainly in these verses, verses 21 to 22, sometimes we can just, I suppose, skip these verses, but they're very crucial, because in these verses, 21 to 22, these verses that focus on this individual, Tychicus, this really captures this whole sense of the love, that binds one another together, in the unity of God, in the unity of God's love.

You know, as we read these verses, concerning this individual, Tychicus, there's something about, you know, fellow workers, fellow workers, and the work of the kingdom, that the more we think of, you know, being a fellow worker, one with another, and the work that God gives us to do, it's the very privilege of being a worker, a fellow worker, one with another, that should stir your heart, that should, you know, give you that sense of, yes, joy, and thanksgiving, and that determination, to continue, and maintain that work, that God gives us, each one.

Now, think of Paul himself, I mean, Paul, Paul himself, was a worker for the Lord. He was that apostle to the Gentiles. He was so blessed in the work that God had given him to do.

I mean, he was the author of, what, 13 letters, letters to churches, letters to individuals, letters written under the divine inspiration of God. I think I'm right in saying that there's no other writer of Scripture who wrote so many individual books, as it were, and I suppose you could count David in the Psalms, but, you know, here's Paul.

Paul, a worker for the Lord, being given that particular work that God had given him to do, but he knew that he couldn't do it alone. I mean, the very circumstances that he's in as he's writing this letter to the church in Ephesus, he's in prison.

[8 : 19] So, it means it's impossible for Paul to make a personal visit to Ephesus. And he's writing to Christians there. He wants them to receive this letter.

There's no email in these days. The letter is physical. It has to be delivered physically. So, he needs a companion. He needs a companion in the Lord to take that letter, to take that letter all these miles, these sea miles from Rome to Ephesus.

That letter that's going to be passed on to the church to give, it's many things, but even personal details about Paul, Paul's situation there is a prisoner in the Lord.

So, Paul needs a companion to deliver this letter, this crucial link in the chain, as it were. And Paul has that companion, this individual, Tychicus.

And notice how he's described. He's described as a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord. It's the same Tychicus, we can suggest in another letter, the letter to the church in Colossae, Colossians.

[9 : 25] Again, Tychicus described there as a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant of the Lord. So, so Paul has this absolute trust in this individual.

He trusts him fully as a, as a faithful fellow worker. And so, this man's entrusted with this, this precious letter. And this letter, as we say, is going to give much teaching, much teaching about God, much teaching about the church, much teaching about the responsibility of Christians, how to live for the Lord.

And, even the particular aspects of Paul's life. This letter is going to inform the church and Ephesus, how Paul is. And this letter then will encourage the hearts of the believers there in, in Western Turkey.

So, we might say that love is weaving its way through even the very handing to Tychicus, this, this letter, this letter that centers on love. This letter that contains even very personal details about Paul. I mean, even as we read there in verse 19, Paul's telling the church there in Ephesus to pray for him. So, here's this mantificus. Here's this beloved brother in Christ.

[10:40] He's got a mission. He is a vital individual, a vital link in that chain. He's got a mission to accomplish. And that mission being, to bind these believers in Ephesus with Paul, their mentor and teacher.

So, there's Paul having given instructions in the letter, as we said, his teaching. He's, you know, even asking them to pray for him, and to pray one for another.

He's this beloved brother Tychicus, this brother in Christ. He's been given a particular role to perform, to accomplish, in building up the church, to building up the body of Christ, doing it as that worker in that, in that, as it were, this chain of events.

He's being that witness, that true witness, as Paul's fellow worker, and doing what he's been entrusted to do, because he loves his Savior, because he has brotherly love one for another. He has that brotherly love for Paul. He's got that brotherly love for those there in the church in Ephesus. He's been sent to build up the church there in love.

[11:56] Now, again, if you look at the details, Tychicus is going to have to travel. He's going to have to travel some months. He's going to have to go by sea, and then land, to reach Ephesus.

He's going to be carrying a precious treasure, the treasure of gospel truth. He is that trusted servant of the Lord. He's faithful by name, and faithful by nature.

He's doing what he's doing. First and foremost, for his love, for love to his Lord and Savior. Love, yes, for Paul, love for the church.

So here, love in action, even demonstrating these verses there, 21 to 22, of this individual, this man, Tychicus. Here's love in action.

Somebody who's, yes, beloved of Paul. I mean, Paul calls him, as we said, his beloved brother, beloved of Paul, and beloved of the church. And even in that individual, Tychicus, don't we see an example?

[12:56] An example for each one of us. You, whom God has given work to do. Here's this example of someone who's faithful in the carrying out of the particular ministry that God's given him.

And look at the ministry, that enriching ministry. Yes, communicating in love. Showing that personal commitment to, yes, to sharing the good news of the love of God for sinners.

Here's this man, Tychicus, in love, being that servant of the Lord. Isn't he such a good example for the work that God has given you to do?

Tychicus, you see, is showing the very truth of the love of God that binds fellow believers together. That love that binds one another together in that knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

And that surely is a responsibility for each believer. Seeking the good of others. Seeking their growth in grace.

[14:02] Seeking their growth in knowledge of the truth. The knowledge of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowledge of how we are to live out our lives to the glory of God. So, when you're given the work that God has given you to do in His name, whatever work that is, whatever capacity, whatever role God gives you, remember who's given you that work.

It's the God of love. He's given you a particular task to perform or tasks to perform. And remember this, He's blessing you in love and giving you that work.

And He requires of you, therefore, to act in love. Yes, like Tychicus going, as it were, the second mile. Even in that calling, when you've been called to, to bear the precious treasure of God's Word. Yes, tell others of the goodness and glory of God. Tell others salvation found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And go in love. And speak in love. Exactly as Tychicus would do there in his personal communication with the brothers and sisters in Ephesus.

Having that direct contact with these believers. And I pray, even in his example, that's an encouragement to you in your work.

[15:26] Whatever God's given you to do in work and witness, be prepared to communicate the love of the Lord Jesus. Be prepared, yes, even to do so in contact with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Encourage one another. Strengthen one another in the Lord. Because let's never neglect the work of witness, the work of love, even between one another, between Christians.

Because all too often, isn't that the case, all too often we can tear down rather than build up. We have that responsibility, that also important responsibility to practice the love that binds believers together. So, be an encourager. Be an encourager in love one to another, brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes, speak the truth in love.

Be in contact, direct contact one with another as you build, as we build the body of Christ here or whatever God sends you to build the body of Christ. And remember, it's his love, the love of God that binds believers together.

[16:39] And let's nurture that love. Let's seek to grow as Christians in that love. And yes, show forth the love of God as we do so. Remember the, well, I suppose, well-known comments, I suppose, by the early church Father Tertullian.

Remember, Roman observers were watching Christians and I pray that these words that we're going to listen to in a minute, that these words still are pertinent today.

Behold, how they love one another. Whether it's done two millennia ago or said two millennia ago or whether it's said in 2019, may it be said, even believers here, behold, how we love one another.

The love that binds. But secondly, the love that believes. Verse 23, Peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, as we've seen Paul throughout his letter, he's emphasized love and here is the conclusion of this letter. You see love actually mentioned three times. Verse 23, verse 24.

[17:51] As we've come to the benediction, the closing part of the letter. Right at the start of the letter, Paul wished his readers peace, in fact, grace and peace.

And now, he's ending this letter in the same vein. In fact, somebody's called what he's written here in verse 23 and 24, a half wish, half prayer. You know, this desire that Paul has that all who read this letter know the peace of God.

But, it's this next part in this so-called half wish, half prayer that's actually very intriguing. Love with faith. Peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This isn't the first time that actually Paul's written of love and faith in the same breath as it were.

You go to another one of Paul's letters, a letter to the Galatians, chapter 5, verse 6.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith working through love. Faith and love together. And you might ask, what's the connection?

[19:03] What does Paul desire? What's his prayer here? For those he's writing in relation to faith and love. Well, there's divine logic here.

Think of it like this. God is the source of faith. God gifts faith to everyone who believes. You who believe, he gifted you that faith to believe.

And of course the true test of true faith. The true test of true faith is love. It's love. I mean, if you claim faith in the Lord Jesus, if you profess faith in Him, ask yourself this, is your faith coupled with love for the Savior?

Can you truly say, yes, yes, I believe and in my faith, my belief, in my trust, I truly do love my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because there's no faith without love.

And that applies to your life as a Christian. But you see, if you profess faith in the Lord Jesus, that will and must be accompanied by love.

[20:11] Love for God, love for your neighbor. The Apostle James wrote of that connection. In his epistle, remember, when he wrote of faith, true faith being evident in the works that we do for the Lord.

of course, the works of love. Or you go back to Paul. Paul, obviously, totally consistent in what he teaches in all his letters.

Go to the great passage in 1 Corinthians 13. He writes that, if I have all faith as to remove mountains that have not love, I am nothing. You see, when Paul's expressing in love with faith, that love with faith statement, well, we know that many people claim faith.

You know, you can say with a mouth, I believe. But where's the evidence? The evidence of true faith is true love for God.

And that true love surely recognized in your works of righteousness rooted in love. Love for the one who saved you. Love towards those whom you're telling and showing forth the love of God, the love of the Lord Jesus.

[21:28] It's that very mindset, that very practice. Remember that Jesus himself spoke about when he spoke of true faith, true discipleship. Matthew 25. I was hungry and you gave me food.

I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. And the reply of those whose faith was evident in their actions of love.

When did we see you a stranger and welcome you and naked and clothed you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

There's no faith without love. But then, we have to say this as well. There's no love without faith. And that's a truth that's, as you know, so challenged and continually challenged in a world where all religions are considered equal.

You know, you've heard that expression, your truth is as valid as my truth. The good deeds of non-believers equated with the good works of Christians.

[22 : 40] Now, of course, we know in God's common grace, many women, many who are not Christians, will help and will heal. The skill of the surgeon, the protection of the forces of law and order, even the beauty of the artist, all given under the kindness of God.

But a true love for the Lord Jesus, a true love for Jesus in these actions is impossible without true faith in the same Lord Jesus.

A true love for the unlovely can't be truly fulfilled where true faith in God is absent. Now, of course, we know that as Christians, we can all fall in that matter.

We have a natural selfishness that, you know, can so often replace true love for others and replace it with true love for self. You know, a desire for God's glory or a desire for God's honour.

So often, we have a desire for self-honour, self-glory. But remember, we love because He first loved us.

[23 : 55] God's got to be our first motive in love. And your faith in Him is going to drive you to love. Yes, to love and to love unselfishly and to love for the good of others and to love for the glory of God.

So yes, even in our worship, in your worship of our Saviour, we'll give praise. Give praise to God. Give praise to Him who's blessed you with that blessing of faith in love.

Love for undeserving sinners such as ourselves. Give thanks. Give praise to God. Give praise, yes, to the Lord Jesus who's made it possible for you to receive that love, the love of God through Jesus dying on the cross.

So faith with love. Well, that was Paul's prayer, prayer for these Christians there in Ephesus. Surely it must be your prayer as well. Prayer for each and every believer.

May it be your desire, the desire of your heart that each and every believer knows and practices faith with love. And that that love that you exercise will tell of your faith in God, will be that evidence of the true faith that you have in the one who saved you and given you new life in Him.

[25 : 17] The love that believes. And then, finally, the love that defines, verse 24, grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Well, Paul's benediction, it's begun with that desire, that prayer for those who are in the church in Ephesus. The brothers, they're in that particular place, that prayer for peace and love with faith. But notice, notice the change. Because as he ends this letter, his scope goes beyond Ephesus, goes beyond Western Turkey, it goes to all who are in Christ.

Grace be with all. So, in other words, Paul's expressing this benediction of grace to be to all believers in every land, in every nation, in every language group.

Believers. Believers who wish to believers who are defined, who are given a particular definition as those who are believers.

[26 : 28] Yes, through the love of the Lord Jesus. And through a love that's pure and unadulterated. Love that's, as you said there, incorruptible. Love that isn't tainted with anything false.

Love that's not contaminated with anything that corrupts the heart and mind. You see that wide scope that Paul has in his benediction. It's for the grace of God to be with all who are true believers. All who are defined by love of the Saviour, love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the scope of Paul's love for the church. That all who love the Saviour are blessed continually with the great grace of God.

Now, remember some years ago we looked at a number of benedictions in the Bible. There are many, many benedictions. And these benedictions that express the heart's desire of the one who

seeks God's blessing on his people.

These benedictions are words of sincerity. These words of genuine desire for the good of those who receive the love of God and salvation.

[27 : 40] And this benediction is no different. Because here Paul seeks the blessing of God while the blessing of God's undeserved favour. Grace.

Grace to every believer in Christ. To every true believer whose love for Jesus is true. And, you know, if we're going to grasp this God given definition of the Christian believer, the true believer, the one who's truly in Christ, then we see how this definition pans out.

The one who is blessed of God is marked by love. It's a love that the world can't offer, can't give. It's a love that's sourced in the God of love. It's a love here that's expressed as incorruptible love. It's special love. And that's what we want to focus our hearts and minds on even in these last few minutes.

As you marvel at the love of God, that love that defines a Christian, that defines your relationship with the Lord Jesus. And it's then for you and I to live out that love.

[28 : 52] Look at the kind of love that Paul expresses here that defines the Christian. It's a love that can never be lost. It's a love that's not corrupted by sin.

And it's a love that lasts eternally. That's another translation that gives it undying love. In other words, a love that's going to last from all eternity.

Love incorruptible. Now, yes, my love, your love for the Saviour is going to falter at times. Your love for the Lord Jesus may well dim so often.

But remember that love that you have in the Lord Jesus and for the Lord Jesus. It's a love that you can never wholly lose. And what a joy to know that.

Because you know, as I know, that your love for the Lord Jesus was not always in your heart. One time you loved the world, you had that corrupt love put through the grace of God.

[29 : 49] You've been enabled to love the Saviour and you know that love is a love that's eternal. You've been enabled to love the Lord Jesus. Well, show it.

Show the kind of love that loves the Saviour. Don't be ashamed to testify to the love of God for you. Don't be ashamed to tell others of the love that you have for God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and have that and live with that assurance, that absolute assurance, that the love that you have for Him now can never be removed.

You cannot fall out of love with the one who's loved you with that eternal love. And that being the case, that it's not for any Christian to deny your love for the Saviour.

Because when that happens, we've done it, we know we've done it. When you deny your love for the Saviour, we might say this, it's spiritual adultery. But no, in love, serve Him.

Do God's will. Know that the love that you have for the Saviour, the love that's that love incorruptible, that that love has prospect, the prospect of heavenly glory, that you will see Him face to face in that place of incorruptible love.

[31 : 16] But what if you can't yet say, I love the Lord? We were saying in Psalm 116, I love the Lord. Can you truly say that? What if your love's directed elsewhere?

Well, there's that solemn warning in God's Word that unless you love the Lord, God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind, you will not know life eternal, that you'll be lost in the eternity of hell, the hell of loveless torment.

And that's no idle warning. Because Jesus warned in love. He warned those who rejected His Word. Jesus spoke of the eternal torment of hell.

And Jesus spoke, yes, in love, but spoke so graphically. And Jesus said there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But you know, when Jesus spoke of that hell of torment, of loveless torment, in the same breath, Jesus spoke of the blessing of eternal life when Jesus said the righteous, Matthew 13, the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

You know, when we started this mini-series a few months ago, when we looked at the emphasis of love here in Paul's epistle, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, remember, I suppose that the driving force that alerted us to all this was the infrequency of the identification of love as a characteristic of our denomination.

[32 : 50] Well, I pray that the lack of love, the lack of the identification of love isn't a characteristic of this congregation. But, you know, as we preach the love of God for sinners, as we show forth that love and practice, well, I pray that yes, we will be characterized by those who love the Lord.

Behold how they love Him. And yes, show forth that love and self-giving love and second-mile love. May that love characterize both the life of this congregation, this church, and characterize your life. And that you are identified with that incorruptible love that can never disappear. So rejoice. Yes, rejoice in the love of God that reaches even to the sinner of sinners.

And may you know that love of God that's reached your life, has touched you, and brought you into His glorious kingdom, His kingdom of love.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we bless you for your word, and we give praise to you for the love that has reached undeserving sinners such as ourselves.

[34 : 15] May we not hide our light, but rather may we show forth the light of the love of the Lord Jesus as we walk in love, as we show forth the love of Christ to others by our word, by our witness.

Give us that strength, give us that courage, not to fail, but to do your will, and to do it with delight. Continue with us, Lord, now as we close this part of the service, may we sing with gladness, as you have so given us to do.

Continue then with us now as we continue in worship with you through praise, and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 145, again on page 190, and we'll sing from verse 17 to the end.

The Lord is just and good in all His ways. He shows His love to all that He has made. The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call in truth to Him for aid.

17 to 21, Psalm 145.