

Last Words and Testament

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0 : 00] I would like you to turn your Bibles this morning to Ephesians chapter 6 verse 24.! And Pastor Saul has rightly identified the fact that this is the last sermon at this point in the book of Ephesians.

Lord willing, next Sunday it will be my blessing and my privilege to join you in opening the book of John and beginning to preach in John chapter 1 verse 1.

I do want to explain by way of introduction that there is a reason that preaching in an expositional fashion begins with John 1 verse 1 or Ephesians 1 verse 1 and carries through to the end.

And that the timing of the sequence of sermons is not preordained. I believe fully that the Word of God is to be taken in its entirety.

I believe that preaching, which is the passionate declaring of the truth of God, is to be something that fundamentally is dependent upon the text.

[1 : 23] And at the end of the day, when I make a statement in the passage or in the process of preaching, one of the things that you should be able to do in every case is you should be able to connect that statement, even where there is an illustration, it should have linkage back to the Scriptures themselves.

When someone comes to this pulpit, they come in some sense with an obligation, with a responsibility of saying, Thus saith the Lord.

I am not an Old Testament prophet. And the best I can do when I say, Thus saith the Lord, is say, Here it is. You can read it for yourself and you can see what God has to say to you.

I want you to understand this morning that the words of God are supremely important. We underestimate the importance of words other than when we are zinged and dinged by them.

Do you understand what I'm saying? They fall sometimes all too carelessly from my lips and I would rather suspect from others' lips. God has said that words are supremely important and I want you to understand that it was by His Word that the universe was formed out of nothing.

[2 : 52] I think of one other illustration. I was reading earlier in the book of Ezekiel where Ezekiel the prophet is given that very, very sad responsibility of making it clear to God's people that He's done messing with them and He is going to discipline them for a long time.

I remember with my children that one of the things they wanted to know when we were going to the place of judgment.

How many of you know what I mean by that? Our protocol in my family was that I would usually have to go and pray so I could kind of balance my thoughts and my heart and be reasonable in the process.

And I wanted them to spend some time deliberating upon the offense or issue and whatever. And then we would come together and we'd have a little conversation and then I would go somewhere privately so we could deal with this more directly.

And one of the questions that my sons were more inclined to this, they were all about, so how many times? Do you follow that? How many times? I would say to them, eventually it dawned on me, early on I'd say, well, there will be three.

[4 : 08] And they'd be counting. And they would kind of grit their teeth and take the three and it, how many of you know as parents that sometimes you know you're not getting through with three? And I remember the first time that having given the diagnosis in advance when I decided it was time to add a few for the sake of impact, my son said to me, that's more than you said.

And that was the last time that I ever advised them in advance of what was coming. In Ezekiel, God says you're going to catch it for a long time. And Ezekiel is broken as he considers the burden of what God is going to do to his people.

And then God says, I want you to see this valley of dried bones. We are having all kinds of microphone issues, and I am the contributor to most of them.

God says, I want you to see this valley of dried bones. And God says to Ezekiel, can these bones live again? I love what Ezekiel says.

King James, he says, thou knowest, Lord. In other words, it's up to you. I like that. But then God says, listen, speak to them.

[5 : 38] We underestimate the power of the word of God. And so this morning, as we take this passage in hand, I ask that you pray.

That the Spirit of God may take these words and have them make a difference in your life. Let me read them. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Father God, we are right to be dependent upon your Spirit this morning.

And to plead with you with all humility and with confessed inadequacy that both the hearing and the declaration of the word of God, apart from the power of the Spirit, are much like what is recorded in 1 Corinthians 13, where it says, I'm just a clanging cymbal or a banging gong.

And so we would ask that you would take your word and that it would be heard by your people. And the effect of your word on the hearts of people that know the Lord Jesus Christ would be evident in the progressive transformation that is described in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, that beholding as in a mirror the face of our Lord Jesus, we grow from glory to glory.

[7 : 20] And that's by the Spirit. And we ask this in your precious name. Amen. I guess it's no accident that Paul closes out the book of Ephesians with the word grace.

And that's what we find here. Verse 24, it says, Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. And I want to appeal to you this morning that while it is the last verse and this is the last sermon, by no means should it be something that we kind of, well, let's get on with it. We're going to do some other book later and move on through it. No, no, no. The words are supremely important to you today. And the apostle, as he was instructed by the Spirit of God, said, Hey, listen, I want to close off with this profound central thought in the life of the church at Ephesus. And so here he is using the word grace. And we recognize that it is a word that if I were to track its significance through the book of Ephesians, we would find that Paul used it over and over again.

I will at least recognize for you that it's the way he began the book. Over there in Ephesians chapter 1, I think it is in verse 3 or 2, it says, Paul, an apostle to the saints, grace to you.

[8 : 33] And so I want you to understand that if we're really going to grasp the significance of this word, while it's so brief and we have a tendency to gloss over it, I want you to recognize that, first of all, grace must be understood against the backdrop of man's condition.

The truth is, is before the Bible tells us the good news, the Bible tells us the bad news. It tells us the ugly reality of the heart that we have, and it recognizes for us, whether we're inclined to it or not, to grab a hold of the truth that apart from God doing something in us, we are beyond measure, inadequate, insignificant, ineffective, in bringing about anything of eternal value in our soul.

I want you to think with me of just how Paul plays this out, and we want to take a look at Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1 through 5, where we find a fairly robust argument to help us understand just how bad the news is.

I'm not going to take the time of fleshing all of it out, but recognize as we look at this passage, Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, it says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.

How dead is dead? I want you to understand that dead is beyond any possible redemption, or any remedy, or any resuscitation.

[9 : 59] When a person is genuinely dead, they are absolutely incapable of doing anything at all.

The idea that some people have, that salvation is a partnering where God does something and man does something, has no basis in Scripture.

Now, is it true that we are responsible for responding to the Gospel? Absolutely, without question. And the Scripture is clear on that. But mark this, it is the work of God that makes us responsible.

And as we look at this passage and mark what it says, Paul uses one of the very, very graphic indicators of just how bad the unregenerate heart is. He says, You were dead.

And dead men cannot help themselves. He says, How many of you, when you listen to the news, find yourself appalled at the world we live in, and the absolute depravity that you see everywhere you turn?

This last week, jets shot out of the sky by rebels or by Russia. We don't know at this point the fact.

[11:22] But mark it, what is going on now is that whoever was responsible, instead of saying, Man, I messed up, and having a humble and a contrite heart and saying, That was wrong to do. Do you know what's going on?

Everybody's trying to do their best to cover what's going on and hide the truth. And it's not just in Russia that that kind of behavior is going on. The Bible makes it undeniably clear that we in our sinful state, mark it, we are dead in sins.

That's what we find in the passage. We are slaves to Satan in our passions. And furthermore, as we look at it here, it says there in verse 3, it says, We were by nature children of wrath.

In other words, we are doomed to eternal judgment. Have you ever wondered why the unbelievers seemingly can get away with some things that believers cannot get away with?

You ever remarked that? The fact of the matter is, is that the condemned man gets his last meal. And God deals with his children on a profoundly different basis than he deals with unbelievers.

[12:27] He, for a large part, allows unbelievers to kind of bumble along in their wickedness, and eventually they face the judgment. God, in his long-suffering patience, allows far more than you or I would.

Now listen carefully to me. Until we stop and realize how much he has allowed for us, and then we are sympathetic, and when we pray for those who are caught in their sin, our prayer should be this way.

Lord, be as merciful with them as you have been with me. Paul says, listen, the grace that God has given to you is something that is appreciated against the backdrop of the darkness of depravity and sin.

There's another fact that I think we need to understand as we think about the matter of God's grace, and that is this, that grace is Christocentric. And what I mean by that is that grace is all about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And understanding God's grace and appreciating God's grace cannot be separated from getting a hold of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ himself and being affected by him.

[13:40] Let me put it this way. Grace really refers to the unmerited favor and work of God in Christ Jesus. Let me have you look at a couple different passages to kind of track this if you would.

And I strongly encourage you to follow in your own Bible so you can allow the text to resonate with your heart and you can look at it and identify what's being said.

Turn to Titus chapter 2 verse 11. Titus chapter 2 verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people. Well, what was the appearance of grace?

Was it some kind of aura? How many of you have ever seen pictures of the Aurea Borealis or however it's said? You know, the wonderful night sky over Alaska and over the polar region.

The grace of God that has appeared is not talking about some kind of vision out there abstractly. It's talking about the reality of the Christ himself coming to us.

[14:43] Over in John chapter 1. See, you knew I would get there, didn't you? John chapter 1. It just happened to work out that way. But John chapter 1. I want you to listen as we look at a verse that we won't get to in the first several weeks.

Verse 14. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth.

That word full that is used there talks about pleroma. It means absolutely packed with all there is of grace and truth. Jesus Christ was not a personification of the grace and truth of God.

He is the fullness of the grace of God. It goes on to say in verse 15, John bore witness about him and cried, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me.

And from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. grace. You know what it's saying? It is through the Lord Jesus Christ that we have received the fullness of the grace of God that is packed in upon our lives beyond measure.

[16:02] How many of you when you want to emphasize something say the word more than once? Your children. You say this is really what? Really, really important.

This is very, very hot. When we have hot food we will say to family members that are eating with us, this is, you know, this is the pleban and this is the generic version to be eaten by people that are not of our persuasion.

But this, talking about the curry that's real, is really, really hot. Judith refers to it as smoking. Okay? We emphasize with kind of doubling up and so in John the apostle says we have, from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.

It is in the Lord Jesus Christ in his person that we receive the fullness of what God has for us and grasping that means that our heart is touched by the reality and the sweetness of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In another way we could say that grace is the full and effective one-way love of God in Christ Jesus. I want you to think with me about that.

[17:27] Grace is the full and effective one-way love of God in Christ Jesus. Now I want you to think with me about that because for the most part we have a great tendency to have our love governed to a certain degree by what we're getting out of the investment.

How many of you would admit that publicly and say, that's me? No, we wouldn't. But hey, when people behave in an unloving fashion towards us, what often happens to our love?

What happens? If it diminishes significantly then I would have to say that that love that we have professed at one point or another really doesn't have a close connection with the love that comes from Christ.

Christ's love for us is a love that is one way in its affection and care for us. And I think it's important for us to recognize just the nature of this.

So when Paul here makes that statement that we enjoy the grace of God he is speaking about the way in which Christ loves us. So when Paul closes off this wonderful book by using the word grace as a summary he really is using it in one sense to remind us of the wonderful fact that our salvation is not the work of human effort and none of us who enjoy genuine conversion can say, hey listen, and by the way I earned that you don't know how much I suffered to get it.

[19:05] Those who appreciate the grace of God are always humbled by the reality that what they have has nothing to do with who they are or what they've done but they are struck by the reality that salvation has come to them by virtue of the grace of God.

Well with that said let's take a look at the second part of this passage and mark that God's grace works in such a fashion that it produces a difference in the heart of the person who is a genuine believer and I think that it's very interesting that Paul here at the very last how many of you know that when you're coming towards the end of your instructions or your lesson where your children or whoever you always try to press it together to make it pretty simple so you can get their hand they can get their hands around it.

Grace and then mark what he says be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Grace that is of God produces something that Paul wants us to understand. Grace to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let's stop just for a minute so that we again can frame this idea what Paul is saying when he says grace to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20:36] Does everybody in the world love Jesus? What's the answer? No. Are there those who actually hate the Lord Jesus? Yes. I want you to recognize that Paul has some pretty strident pretty militant things to say about this business of loving Christ.

Turn back in your Bible if you will you're in Ephesians so turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 22. 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 22.

2. If anyone has no love for the Lord can I read the rest of it and you'll track with me?

Let him be accursed. If anyone has no love for the Lord let him be accursed our Lord comes.

Now our sign out there says Maranatha. It actually is Maranatha. Since my email has NBC Columbus on it and someone will say well what does M stand for?

[21:46] I always opt for the mother instead of the Maranatha to explain. It's like mother boy cat. I don't go Maranatha boy cat because it always kind of flummoxes them when you give them the Maranatha part.

I appreciate the fact that our sign says Maranatha our Lord comes. I'm curious if anybody ever thought about saying if anybody doesn't love Jesus they're cursed. Put that on the sign too.

I mean hey we're being pretty divisive to split the verse in half right? No well it's alright stop while I'm ahead. But hey loving Christ is pretty serious business.

And Paul as he takes and summarizes the matter of salvation he says listen grace brings about a love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what salvation produces. How do I know that I am a child of God that I have genuine salvation that I am one of his and I will spend eternity in heaven?

[23 : 00] Is it because at one point or another I said Lord Lord and the answer is not necessarily. Is it because at one point I was baptized?

Not necessarily and it will be our joy this morning to hear the testimony of a young lady and see her be obedient to the Lord in a matter of baptism.

But is her salvation dependent upon her going through that motion? The answer is no. Salvation is the work of God and the work of God produces something that can be identified and we look now at this passage and recognize the character of saving and keeping grace.

As we take up the last part of this text we see that Paul puts a great deal of weight on the idea of love. Not in an abstract sense but in a very real and practical way.

Now you'll remember the great commandment in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5 it says Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one and you shall love him.

[24 : 09] I remember in an earlier day I was a teacher in a Christian school and our president of that Christian school a sweet man named Ralph Bainham would get up almost on a daily basis and his how many of you know that sometimes we fall into standard patterns of praying.

Some people cannot start their prayer out with something like dear heavenly father it's like hitting the starter key you know can I pray without saying dear heavenly father Ralph could not pray without saying we love you today and I have to tell you as a young man sitting there I had to believe that it wasn't true of all of us because we is what we is more than I and I knew some of the other jerks that I was working with all their Christian I knew some of their hearts and and I knew some of the little disputes and little petty things going on in lots of our lives and I thought we love you today I wish Paul says this he says hey listen grace to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and when we stop and think about it we recognize that this business of loving God is pretty serious Mark chapter 12 verse 28 through 31 and I'm not going to go there but mark it for you in Mark chapter 12 we have an attorney come to Jesus and said all right all right which is the big law which is the big one keep that one now understand that the

Jews had developed this system where I think they had a total of 618 laws I mean you have the Ten Commandments that are the biggies but under the Ten Commandments there were there were kind of categories there's sub categories and really if you're into keeping the law I mean it's not like you get to do some and not the others we're all about that but really keeping all of it and everybody reckoned oh let's go for the biggies the ones that are important so they came to Jesus and said all right which is the biggie and you know what he said he didn't say keep the Sabbath he didn't say tithe he didn't say show up at services he says love God love God I want you to understand that the grace that saves is also the grace that changes and the power of God that changes the sinner from being a crass lover of self into a lover of

Christ is the salvation that we mark and recognize as genuine so let me stop you here just for a second and ask you to look at that little phrase who love the Lord Jesus Christ I wonder if as you think about your salvation you would say the real marker the thing that sets me apart from the rest of the world is that I do sincerely love Jesus Christ that's what Paul's saying he's saying a real believer one who has received the fullness of God's grace can be ultimately characterized by the fact that they love Christ I want you to understand that loving him is not a simple discipline of the intellect do you understand that how many of you have decided to love people more just kind of arbitrary you realize you're a little on the south side of this thing and so all right let's try a little bit of better love for other people what happens the minute you make that conscious deliberate decision at least for me here's how it plays out

I make that decision and the Holy Spirit says hey let me test you and I'll be sitting in the family room thinking you know you know I want to work at love but I'd rather work at people that are in Africa or India and my wife is sitting there as I'm kind of relaxing she says would you get me a drink of water you got to be kidding me are your legs broken hey love right right how many of you understand that the test plays out in real time right where you are I want you to look at 1st John chapter 4 verse 19 as you think about this matter of love 1st John chapter 4 verse 19 we love him because what because he first loved us here's the truth the grace of God that has appeared bringing salvation to all people takes those who by nature prior to their conversion were self focused naval gazers and

turns them into people who from their heart love the

[29 : 19] Lord Jesus Christ he loved us enough that he pursued us in our selfish arrogant stubborn belittling character and he found us where we are he wrapped his arms around us and he saved us by his kindness and his grace paid the price for our sins upon the cross and has granted us everlasting life and Paul says hey listen grace to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ I want you to recognize that that being a person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ has very real effect on the way in which we relate to other people isn't that right let's go back just for a little bit to Ephesians chapter 6 verse 21 very interesting the way Paul closes off this this very very theological book Ephesians chapter 1 through 3 is perhaps one of the most theological expositions of the the nature or the work of God in salvation it's deep and heavy the last three chapters are about how

God having worked our salvation works to amend and transform our behavior the closing statements he makes in Ephesians are about the matter of love so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord will tell you everything I've sent him to you for this purpose that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts Paul's saying hey I just as I've stopped this letter I want you to know I love you and then verse 22 or 23 peace be to the brothers and love with faith characteristic of genuine Christian fellowship as a love for one another that transcends what the unbelieving world understands the unbelieving world is very limited in their comprehension of love and it is largely self-serving I had the wonderful opportunity this last week of talking with an individual who called in way in advance normally most of my premarital wedding calls are March April May this person called and said I'd like to talk to you about a wedding in 15 I thought we're way ahead and as I began to talk it became quite evident that this person also needed to hear the sweet truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel and I explained to that person there's a fundamental difference now both a civil marriage and a church wedding can accomplish in some senses something somewhat similar they're both binding in the court I said the difference is that a civil wedding is a contract where both parties whether stated or otherwise are kind of agreeing that well I'll do this if you'll do that I'm amazed at how many times I bump into people who think that marriage and love is all about kind of a 50-50 bargain that's not the Bible's view the Bible sees marriage as a one way covenant I'm going to do this for better or for worse sickness and in health richer for poorer and then there's that little statement at the end how's it go till death do us part after I came back from

Caleb and Charity's ceremony on Friday night I happened to stop by and went into the nursing home to see dad and mom and found that they were sleeping I didn't awaken them but I noticed that my brother had pushed my dad over next to my mom's bed that's covenant work that's not a contract and that kind of love is what Jesus does in the life of a person who's transformed by grace do you understand that Ephesians makes it clear that when the work of God is at play in our life it makes a difference in the relationships we have and so as you look at this passage

I want you to understand that the apostle is kind of bringing things to a close and he says listen he wants us to understand grace this undeserved richness the work of God in saving you produces a love for Christ how do I know I'm saved I have a love for Christ that I didn't create he did so do you really love him do you really love him mark the last little part actually very interesting statement it says with love incorruptible I actually as I was thinking about this last week I kind of thought about being a juvenile I love lots of people girls so we get this clear you know I remember in fourth grade losing my way for the first time in memory because I walked home following

[35 : 02] Wanda Cooper I remember her name how I got home I have no idea but Wanda I found out later she was a Presbyterian and that wouldn't work for a Baptist so I stopped my interest but Wanda swept me off my feet fourth grade and it was the first time I was lost I do want you to know that ever since then it's been downhill you know I remember actually this is the truth sitting in a field on a hillside with daisies around me and I thought I was trying to figure out if Claire Blickenstaff loved me at that point so I went to the flower routine how many of you understand the flower routine okay it's embarrassing but you know there I was she loves me she loves me not but you know I figured out that you know being that's a binary formula I could figure out that she always loved me do you know how I did it it was either 2 4 6 8 whatever the pick and it worked out but she actually didn't so flowers didn't play out there were lots of reasons not to love me our love is a relatively fickle thing isn't it

I can't tell you how many times I've had couples in my office and I'll have the husband or the wife say well I don't love her anymore and I'm happy to say that's not a problem to Jesus do you follow that I'm not concerned if you don't love her because that's your problem that's not hers and I can tell you that Jesus can fix the attitude you have love that is incorruptible is love that comes from God and is sustained by God and that's love that is his and never changes it's a very interesting way to end this book do you follow that do you know how the book begins chapter 1 through 3 is fairly robust in its argument for the unconditional affection for God of God for individuals that he saves and he ends off kind of challenging us to think pretty seriously about whether we have it or not that's interesting isn't it do you really love him unconditionally or is your love something that well look at it grace be with all who love our Lord

Jesus Christ with love incorruptible What's your love like? Can you track the fact that it has grown over the years?

Can you? Can you? in Revelation chapter 3 you remember that the spirit of God actually Christ comes to the church there at Laodicea not Laodicea church at Ephesus I think it is and he says you have lost your first what?

Love What's your love for Christ like this morning? If you are his child he is at work and has been at work and will continue working to cause you to grow in your love for him do you realize that?

[38 : 44] That's what he's going to do now listen to be carefully so you don't miss this it's a whole lot better to come along willingly saying I want to work at that I need help at that I really want to take this seriously let me continue to grow in love because if you're his child and you decide I don't care right now now guess what he does to the I don't care right now crowd everybody here who has any miles on their tires knows that the I don't care right now can cause him to do what we sing that song oh love that will not let me go when does it become evident that he will not let you go it's when you try to walk off and do your own thing for a little the apostle says I want you to understand grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible!

Is that you? Is that you? That's a fair question let's close in prayer Father God without question this morning as we take this word and handle it by your grace and power we're overwhelmed to stop and realize that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and he and his love pursued us while we were unloving and unlovable while we were yet burdensome and dark and by your grace you have taken hearts that were stony cold and dead and you've made us to be lovers of the living God and we need to confess that sometimes our love gets cold and self-consuming and we are so very thankful that you will not let us go and you continue helping us grow we want to be quick to confess the frailty of our affections and ask your spirit to work to stir our hearts up anew to remember that it's all of grace and you are the one that is supremely worthy and we ask that you do that this morning in your precious name amen so