

The Whole Armor of God

Final Greetings

Ephesians 6:21-24

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Final Greetings

Scripture

Today we shall conclude our sermon series on “The Whole Armor of God” in Ephesians 6:10-24. Previously, we examined our spiritual warfare, our terrible enemy, our only strength, our shining armor, our mighty weapon, and our secret resource. I would like to conclude with Paul’s final greetings to the Christian believers in his letter to the Ephesians.

So, let’s read Paul’s final greetings in Ephesians 6:21-24:

²¹ 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. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. (Ephesians 6:21-24)

Introduction

Some of you may recall Dr. Peter Smuts, a visiting preacher we had about 16 months ago here at the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. And you may also recall that Pete and I have been friends since we first met in 1978 as university students at Driekoppen Residence at the University of Cape Town. After a few years in Driekoppen we shared an apartment with two other students. We were involved in campus ministry together, attended the same church, were involved in

the same campus ministry, had many of the same friends, and I was Best Man in his wedding in 1981. We have been friends now for more than 40 years. And yet, even though we only see each other about every four years or so, our friendship seems to pick up just where we left it off several years earlier.

And yet, Pete and my friendship seems to pale in comparison to the friendship that Paul and Tychicus enjoyed. They had a profoundly deep friendship. And, of course, the Apostle Paul also had a deep love for the believers in the church at Ephesus. And so, as he comes to the end of his letter to the Ephesians, we learn about Paul's view of others.

Lesson

Ephesians 6:21-24 shows us Paul's view of others.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Bearer of the Letter to the Ephesians (6:21-22)
2. The Blessings in the Letter to the Ephesians (6:23-24)

I. **The Bearer of the Letter to the Ephesians (6:21-22)**

First, let's look at the bearer of the letter to the Ephesians.

Paul usually dictated his letters to a secretary. In order to let his readers know that he was the one in fact dictating the letter, Paul often wrote a sentence or two in his own handwriting at the end of the letter. He did that in his letters to the Galatians (6:11), the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 3:17), the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:21), and the Colossians (4:18). And he did it again in this letter to the Ephesians.

It seems that Paul's secretary was **Tychicus**, whom Paul mentioned in verse 21. Interestingly, **Tychicus** is mentioned

five times by name in the New Testament (in Acts 20:24, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4: 7-8, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12). Kent Hughes makes the following comment about **Tychicus**:

Though the mentions are brief, we can draw some revealing conclusions about his experiences and place in life. Tychicus first appears at the end of Paul's missionary work in Ephesus, and since he was a native of the Province of Asia (Acts 20:4), of which Ephesus was the major city, we surmise that he was almost surely a convert of Paul's long ministry in Ephesus. Thus, he likely witnessed the great Ephesian silver-smiths' riot against Paul, which prompted the apostle to leave Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts 19:35–20:1), and as an ardent supporter of Paul shared his danger and bravery.

A short time later, when Paul decided to return to Jerusalem where he would ultimately be arrested, Tychicus was one of the seven who accompanied him as traveling companions (Acts 20:4). Tychicus was probably the one who actually carried the offering for the poor in Jerusalem. When Paul was arrested, Tychicus, along with Dr. Luke and others, stayed with Paul through his epic journey to Rome, which included his arrest and imprisonment in Caesarea, his dramatic appearances before kings and governors, his miserable voyage and shipwreck en route to Rome, and his residence (under house arrest) in Rome awaiting trial.

Tychicus shared an immense mutuality of experience and of soul with Paul. When Paul said, "I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked" (2 Corinthians 11:26, 27).

Paul was saying it for Tychicus too!¹

As Paul took the stylus from Tychicus, he wrote these words in his own handwriting in Ephesians 6:21-22: **“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.”** We learn several things about **Tychicus**, the bearer of the letter to the Ephesians.

A. Tychicus Was Loved (6:21)

The first thing we learn is that Tychicus was loved.

Paul called Tychicus **“the beloved brother”** (6:21). Tychicus was greatly loved by Paul and also by the believers in the church in Rome, the city from which Paul was writing. Tychicus had been through thick and thin with Paul, and Paul loved him dearly for his constancy and companionship.

B. Tychicus Was a Man of Character (6:21)

Second, we learn is that Tychicus was a man of character.

Paul said that Tychicus was a **“faithful minister in the Lord”** (6:21). What a wonderful affirmation that was of the character of Tychicus! We don’t know much about Tychicus, but the Apostle Paul affirmed him as a **faithful minister in the Lord**. Surely, this is the kind of affirmation every believer hopes to hear from Jesus himself, when we stand before him, and he says, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 262.

been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

Faithfulness in ministry is attained by using the spiritual gifts God has given us for his glory and the good of others. Let me encourage you to know and use your spiritual gift so that you may hear Jesus’ affirmation to you too.

C. Tychicus Was Dutiful (6:21-22)

Third, we learn is that Tychicus was dutiful.

Paul gave Tychicus two duties. First, Tychicus was to deliver this letter to the Ephesians. In addition, Tychicus also delivered Paul’s letters to the Church of the Colossians (Colossians 4:7-8), the Church of the Laodiceans (Colossians 4: 16; although this letter is now lost to us), and to Philemon.

The second duty Paul gave Tychicus was to give the believers an update about Paul. In fact, he mentioned this three times. He wrote in verse 21a, **“So that *you also may know how I am and what I am doing.*”** And again in verse 21b, **“Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord *will tell you everything.*”** And a third time in verse 22a, **“I have sent him to you for this very purpose, *that you may know how we are.*”** This threefold emphasis on Tychicus’ duty to tell the Ephesians how Paul was doing may also explain why there are no personal greetings to individuals: Paul expected Tychicus to pass along his personal greetings to the individual brothers and sisters in the Ephesian Church.

D. Tychicus Was an Encourager (6:22b)

And fourth, we learn is that Tychicus was an encourager. Paul wrote about Tychicus in verse 22b, **“...and that he**

may encourage your hearts.” Apparently, Tychicus had the ability to encourage people, and Paul wanted him to do so with the Ephesian believers.

It is a wonderful blessing to be encouraged by someone, isn't it? You know when you have felt down, for whatever reason, and someone comes alongside and is able to encourage you. What a blessing that is! Someone who has been able to put courage into you, to en-courage you! Oh, that God would raise up an army of such people to bless his saints!

II. The Blessings in the Letter to the Ephesians (6:23-24)

And second, let's examine the blessings in the letter to the Ephesians.

Paul wrote in verses 23-24: **“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.”** John Stott writes the following in his commentary:

It was the custom in the ancient world for correspondents to end their letters with a wish—usually a secular wish, even if the gods were invoked—for the reader's health or happiness. Paul sees no reason to abandon the convention in principle. But as he has Christianized the opening greeting, so now he Christianizes the final wish. Indeed, what he writes is half wish, half prayer. For the blessings he desires for his readers will come *from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. What blessings are these?²

² John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 289–290.

Paul wished four blessings for the believers. Kent Hughes writes, “As we ponder these [blessings], we must keep before us the fact that they are the greatest blessings we could wish for, and we must learn to wish them for ourselves and for all we love.”³ So, what are these blessings?

A. The First Blessing Is Peace (6:23a)

The first blessing is peace.

Paul wrote in verse 23a, “**Peace be to the brothers....**”

Kent Hughes writes that many years ago a retired couple, alarmed by the threat of nuclear war, began a serious study of all the inhabited places on the globe. Their purpose was to determine where in the world would be the place to be least likely affected by nuclear war—a place of ultimate security. They studied and traveled and traveled and studied. Finally they found *The Place*. And at Christmas they sent a card from their new home to their friends in the States. It was the Falkland Islands—the soon-to-be battleground between Britain and Argentina!⁴ People want peace in their lives, but they do not know what true peace is.

The first kind of **peace** in the Bible is *peace with God*. All people are born alienated from God and live in rebellion against him. However, when God regenerates us and we are converted, we are then reconciled with God. “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace *with* God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

The second kind of **peace** is the *peace of God*. Now that

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, 264.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, 264.

we are in a right relationship with God, we are able to enjoy his blessing. The blessing of this kind of peace is captured in the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24–26, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

And the third kind of **peace** is *peace with one another*. Paul had written earlier how Jesus came to reconcile us to one another. He wrote in Ephesians 2:14–15, “For [Jesus] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.”

B. *The Second Blessing Is Love (6:23b)*

The second blessing is love.

Paul wrote in verse 23b, “Peace be to the brothers, **and love....**” Paul used the word “**love**” fourteen times in his letter to the Ephesians. In seven places it has the connotation of love for one another, which is its use here in verse 23b. The Ephesian believers excelled in love. Earlier, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus *and your love toward all the saints*, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:15–16).

Sadly, over time this love for one another waned. By the time the Apostle John wrote the Revelation, Jesus said of the church in Ephesus, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first” (Revelation 2:4).

Let that not be true of us. We have the ability to love “because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Let us love one another.

Hughes writes, “As with so many things which rest on deep spiritual realities, it comes down practically to the human will. In his sister epistle to the Colossians Paul says, ‘[P]ut on love’ (3:14). Is it hypocritical to act lovingly toward someone we don’t ‘like’? No! It is never hypocrisy to bend our wills to the Scriptural mandate. And the glorious fact is that as we continue to put on love, we will begin to wear it unconsciously.”⁵

Let us love one another.

C. The Third Blessing Is Faith (6:23c)

The third blessing is faith.

Paul wrote in verse 23ac, “Peace be to the brothers, and love **with faith...**” The word “**faith**” appears seven more times in the letter to the Ephesians. The **faith** to which Paul refers is, in the words of James Montgomery Boice, “a general confidence in God....It is knowing that when God says that he is able to keep us from falling and present us before his presence with exceeding joy, he means exactly that and will do it.”⁶ Paul wishes every believer to experience this kind of **faith**.

D. The Fourth Blessing Is Grace (6:24)

And the fourth blessing is grace.

Paul wrote in verse 24, “**Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.**” Interestingly, “**grace**” was the first word of the formal greeting at the beginning of the letter (1:2), and now Paul uses it as the final thought in the close of his letter to the Ephesians.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, 265–266.

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 248.

Kent Hughes tells the story of a man who appeared at Heaven's gate and was met there by an angel who told him, "It will take 1,000 points to get in. Tell me about yourself so that I will know how many points to give you." The man smiled and said, "Well, I've been going to church almost every Sunday all my life." "Excellent," the angel said. "That will give you three points. What else?" The man was shocked. "Only three points?" he gasped. "Well, I was a Sunday school superintendent for a while, and I tithed, and I tried to be a good neighbor." "Very good," the angel said. "That will give you ten points." The man gasped again. "At this rate," he said, "I'll never get in except by the grace of God!"⁷

And that is the point, isn't it? God's grace is his unmerited favor extended to unworthy sinners. Paul wishes that believers may know experientially God's grace in their daily lives.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of greetings in Ephesians 6:21-24, let us wish for peace, love, faith, and grace for ourselves and others. May we experience:

- *Peace*—"**Peace be to the brothers**"—peace with God, the peace of God, and peace with one another.
- *Love*—"**and love**"—love for one another.
- *Faith*—"**with faith**"—a general confidence in God.
- *Grace*—"**Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible**"—experientially knowing God's unmerited favor.

I pray that each one of you may know these blessings in your daily life. Amen.

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, 266.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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