

Paul's Final Words to the Ephesians

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul leaves the Ephesians with a final word of encouragement and blessing
2. aim – to cause us to seek out ways to be encouraging to one another in the grace of God
3. passage – Ephesians 6:21-24

b. outline

1. Paul's Messenger to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21)
2. Paul's Message to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:22)
3. Paul's Benediction upon the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:23-24)

c. opening

1. my **approach** to the end of the letter
 - a. first, an exegesis of the final words of Paul (**vv. 21-24**)
 1. because all Scripture is "profitable," this text is just as valuable (albeit differently)
 2. because to ignore it as "add-on" text is to miss **the connection Paul had with this church**
 - b. second, a conclusion sermon to consider the entirety of the letter (again)
 1. because it is possible that we may have forgotten the flow and purpose of the letter by getting "bogged down" in the details along the way – just like an introduction, we need a conclusion
2. my **flow** through the end of the letter
 - a. first, a *biography* of the man prominently featured in these verses
 - b. second, how Paul connects *him* to what he *desires* for the Ephesians in the end

I. Paul's Messenger to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21)

Content

a. the biography of Tychicus (**very briefly**)

1. Paul (here) employs an ending similar to some of his other letters
 - a. he ends by making reference to some *commonly-related people* as a part of a benediction
 - b. **e.g.** in **Romans**, **1 Corinthians**, **Philippians**, **Colossians**, **2 Timothy**, and **Titus**, he references a number of people that were known to both him and them, either sending greetings from them or noting that he is sending these people to them for ministry in some way
2. in this case, Paul makes reference to Tychicus, a close friend and ministry assistant
 - a. Tychicus joins Paul on his Third Missionary Journey, probably while he is in Ephesus, or after leaving the city due to the secular opposition against him (**Acts 20:4**)
 1. the only true biographical detail is that he is "*Asian*" – **i.e.** from Asia Minor c. Ephesus
 2. it is highly likely that Tychicus was a direct convert of Paul, given how Paul speaks of him here
 - a. **i.e.** he is (probably) not Jewish, but a Gentile convert, possibly in Ephesus itself
 3. together with six (6) other men, he travels with Paul back to Jerusalem carrying the Gentile "collection" for the saints struggling in Judea under the famine there (**Acts 20**)
 - a. and winds up (somehow) in Rome ministering to Paul there (maybe all along?)
 4. comparing **2 Corinthians 8:18** with **1 Corinthians 16:3f** (and here), some believe Tychicus to be "*the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel*"
 - b. Tychicus is also mentioned in **Colossians 4:7f** in almost the same language as here
 1. he is clearly the one who will be delivering these two (2) letters back into Asia Minor from Rome
 2. he will also be accompanied by Onesimus (**Col. 4:9**) who will carry back the letter to Philemon
 - c. Tychicus returns to minister with Paul even after Paul is released from this imprisonment
 1. in **Titus 3:12**, Paul tells Titus that he will send either Tychicus or Artemas to relieve him
 2. however, in **2 Timothy 4:12**, Paul tells Timothy that he has already sent Tychicus to Ephesus to relieve him (thus Artemas went to Crete) – this makes sense, given that a) Tychicus was probably a native of Ephesus, and b) Tychicus was a powerful gospel preacher

b. the importance of Tychicus

1. Tychicus as a “beloved brother”
 - a. “brother” = male sibling; fellow countryman; neighbor; fellow believer; lit. someone with a common heritage or connection, such as members of a family or group or ethnicity (**note v. 23**)
 1. obviously, Tychicus is not Paul’s blood relative (**i.e.** a literal or genetic brother)
 2. **thesis: the term describes a man who is, by virtue of a common faith in Christ, an adopted sibling in the family of God, with a kinship transcending human family life**
 - a. **remember:** the matter of adoption was of *keen* importance to Paul (**see 1:5, 11, 14**)
 1. it is at the heart of the entirety of the divine decree – God’s intention was, in his divine will, to establish a people for his own, and not just as a “group” but as *children* (family)
 2. but (for Paul) this adoption by God is more than just a *legal* connection
 1. **the adoption by God of his elect is to actually make them the literal (or genetic) sons and daughters of their heavenly Father**
 3. so when Paul looks at Tychicus, and sees his utter commitment to God by faith in Christ, he sees a man who is *more* than just a blood relative, he sees a true child of God
 - b. “beloved” = a loved one; a very dear one; lit. one loved who is the only one in a class (**i.e.** spouse)
 1. the Greek word is a variant of the word *agape* = **i.e.** one who is loved in a **unique** way
 2. the Greek word is used by the Father to describe Jesus at both his baptism and transfiguration “*this is my beloved Son, with I am well pleased ... this is my beloved Son, listen to him*” (**Mt. 3:17; Mk 9:7**)
 3. the Greek word appears in virtually all of Paul’s letters to either describe a) the readers or b) those like Tychicus who were important to Paul
 4. **IOW:** Paul uses this word to describe fellow followers of Christ in the same way that the Father uses it to describe his Son – someone of a special class loved without reservation
 - c. **principle: our relationship to other members of this body is much more than just “those people I go to church with” – we are bound together in Christ in a way that is even higher than our relationship to family itself, and that comes with great responsibility**
 1. (**by inference**) Paul is saying to the church at Ephesus: this Tychicus **is one of you** – *he* is beloved just as *you* are beloved
 2. **thus, there is no “room” in the church for any sort of “distance” between its members – just as the Father loves his Son (and Paul loves Tychicus) so we are to love one another**
 - a. **question: what is the extent of your commitment to this body of believers?**
 - b. “beloved” = a loved one; a very dear one; lit. one loved who is the only one in a class (**i.e.** spouse)
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 2. Tychicus as a “faithful minister”
 - a. “minister” = servant; attendant; waiter; lit. a deacon (but not necessarily holding the office)
 1. **i.e.** someone who serves others; someone who **sacrifices** himself for the good of the church
 - b. “faithful” = trustworthy; sure; reliable; lit. from the same word as one who is trustful (*pistos*)
 1. **i.e.** an adjective applied by Paul to Tychicus’ role as a minister: he is trustworthy in that role
 - c. **IOW:** Paul could **trust** him to deliver this letter and to properly report on Paul’s situation
 1. (**by inference**) Paul is saying to the church at Ephesus: this Tychicus **is one of us** – he is our **ambassador**, and when he speaks, he speaks for us and you should believe him

II. Paul’s Message to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:22)

Content

a. the message being relayed back to Ephesus (by Tychicus)

1. to relay back to the church at Ephesus Paul’s current state and efforts (“*tell you everything*”)
 - a. certainly the Ephesians would be curious to know **how** Paul is doing and **what** Paul is doing
2. **but:** Paul does not write down in the letter itself a list of his current issues (under imprisonment)
 - a. because he wants his current situation related **directly**, to answer their questions well
 - b. because he does not **really** wish to burden the Ephesians with a list of his **parochial** issues
 - c. because he does not want to end this great letter with a focus on **him** rather than Christ
3. **IOW:** although Paul certainly hopes the Ephesians will pray for his situation, he is much more concerned that they get the point of the letter and not focus on the minutia *or the wrong thing*

b. the intention being relayed back to the Ephesus

1. to “*encourage your hearts*” in the church at Ephesus from Paul’s current state and efforts
 - a. Paul wants the Ephesians to be “*uplifted*” by what is happening to him (because their “*natural*” reaction would be to look upon his circumstances and focus on his suffering)
 - b. **question: does your reaction to circumstances cause others to be encouraged in faith?**

III. Paul's Benediction upon the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:23-24)

Content

a. the peace and grace of God

1. benediction = the bestowing of a blessing; a mini-prayer by which the supplicant asks God to bestow a sense of "peace" and "grace" (or blessing in general) upon those in view
 - a. **i.e.** very common in Paul's letters, just as his salutation of "grace" and "peace" is (**see 1:2**)
 - b. **e.g.** we have been reading together **3:20-21** this past year as our EOS benediction
 1. for God to be glorified in the church as he does far more abundantly than we think possible
2. Paul seeks for God for:
 - a. a sense of genuine "peace" between "the brothers" (**i.e.** as the elect; **see above**)
 1. a true sense of harmony built upon a real relationship between them (not just tolerance)
 - b. a sense of genuine "love" on the basis of "faith" (**i.e.** as the beloved; **see above**)
 1. a true sense of affection and commitment to one another built on a common faith in Christ
 - c. a sense of genuine "grace" upon them from "God the Father" (**i.e.** as the adopted; **see above**)
 1. a true sense of being chosen by God to be more than just "saved"

b. the love that is incorruptible

1. "love incorruptible" (*aphtharsia*) = with immortality; as unceasing; imperishable; lit. those who love Jesus Christ without end; a love for Christ so "sure" that it invades every other aspect of our existence
 - b. **IOW**: the grace of God whereby he grants us an ability to love his Son *and our Christian brothers and sisters* without any hesitation from now until the end of time
2. **Paul desires that the content of this letter (which focuses the reader upon the decree of God to save a group of formerly dead reprobates, raise them up into a temple for his own worship, unite them together in a unity of faith and practice, and then arm them with his own righteousness as they pass through much spiritual opposition) would produce an incorruptible love amongst them as the product of God's amazing grace and peace**