

The Arrival of the Future in Christ: Until Then

Ephesians 6.19–24

Pastoral prayer: Eph 1.16–23

Introduction

Eph 1 (p. 786). Txt in ch 6 (p. 789), but since last msg in Eph, want to remind you where we've been. Series on Eph: arrival of future in X. 1st 3 chs unpack this reality: what we expect in future age has dawned in the present. Not fully realized, but present nonetheless. What in particular? Opening hymn of praise (1.3–12): every spir blessing, chosen to be holy & blameless, adoption to sonship, grace, redemption, unifying all under X, marked w a seal, Sp the guarantee of inheritance. Prayer for knowledge (1.13–23): hope, inheritance, power—all begun yet awaiting fulfillment. Descrip of indiv salv (2.1–10): made alive, raised up w X, saved (past tense). Descrip of racial recon (2.11–22): in X walls divided, created new humanity, reconciled w X & w one another, no longer far & near but all near by blood of X. Rev of mystery (3.1–13): Gens are heirs tog w Isr—not just will be, but are. Prayer for power (3.14–21): extravagant love of X known more fully, to be filled to fullness of G. All these things we expect would come at the end of the age, but it has dawned on us here & now—not in full, but still present. Eventually G will gather everything up under X's headship. Until then he is gathering Jew & Gen, black & white, Asian & Hispanic, women & men in X, into union w X, making a new humanity in a new comm that is a precursor of what fut age will be like.

Until then, while we wait, what now? 2nd half of Eph. Six ways we walk, marks of Xian comm: walk tog in unity (4.1–16), holiness (4.17–32), love (5.1–7), light (5.8–14), wisdom (5.15–6.9), mission (6.10–18). & now the end: 6.19–24 (p.789). Not just a throwaway, but ill of whole letter. What pts from Eph does Paul ill in its conc?

From beg of our short study we've emphasized that Eph is all about what G has done for peo in X. By virtue of union w X G awakened

new era, brought blessings of fut age into pres era, thus produced new relats, aggressive opposition, intl mission. Now after all this instruction, Paul closes w a very practical word that ills what he's been saying all along. Three primary relats chs have, orientations of Xian perspective, movements of Xian comm: all on display here.

1st appears in 1st word: *pray* (19). Xians have **upward** orientation, i.e., God-ward. Fund relat, most imp perspective, since this one creates others: no outward or inward wo upward. Whole book has emph this very pt. Temptation: if all of grace, then we can sit back; if G is sov, then we are passive; if G saves us apart from works, we can live as we please. Paul's response: sov no excuse for passivity. Proof? *pray* (18–19). Not "since G is sov, it'll all work out, don't need to pray," but "since G is sov, I pray about everything, only he can do anything of substance." Packer: anyone who has prayed for another to be saved believes in the sov of G. Prayerlessness not a sign of conf in sov, but an admission either that you don't believe he's as powerful as he says he is, or as loving. Cp. Mt 7.9–11.

What to pray about? G's peo (18–19). Two opp errors in praying for others: either way too general or specific in wrong way. General: "bless em & be w em." Specific: "heal her broken foot, give him a job, let them find an apt." No wonder we have a hard time praying for others: if we don't know an obvious need, we don't know what to say. Instead let's pray specifically for what really matters. Pray for them to know G better (1.15–23) & to be filled to fullness (3.14–21), for their faith to hold in midst of spir warfare (10–13), for them to put on X in word & deed (14–17), to have the right words at the right time (19). Can't remember this? Take your Scr reading today & pray that for others. *pray in Sp* (18) begins w praying Sp's words.

1st orientation produces 2nd: **outward** (19–20). As Xians under the smile of G in X, here on purpose, for a reason, to be on mission. May have noticed new usage of a familiar word: mission, not just missions. Often think of missionaries as peo who go somewhere

exotic to take the gos. Good! But what we forget: we're on same mission. GC for all, not just professionals, pastors, missionaries. All called to live missional lives: mission of X permeating all we do.

Paul clearly unusual, yet models what what is true for all Xians. Needs *utterance* (19), words. Spec words about *mystery of gos* (19), Jew & Gen united to X as one (3.6). Not looking for new rev, he already knows truth. Not praying for more words but right words at right time. Since an *ambassador* (20), wants to faithfully represent his home kingdom, his true K, by what he says. & bc his true K is the true K, he wants to speak *fearlessly* (19–20). Even as an apos, he recog his need of divine grace to live on mission.

How much more for us! "If [our] own grasp of the mystery is due to G's grace, it is no less true that [we need] divine assistance" to proclaim it (O'Brien). Here again we face two dangers. On one hand, fearfulness: what will peo think of me? will I be shunned? lose friendship? will I be exposed as a hypocrite? & so we remain silent. On other hand, goodnewslessness: happy to speak boldly about society's probs, how far peo have drifted from G, how Amer needs revival, but fail to proclaim the grace that is greater than all this sin. Ill of R Moore: "if all I knew of Xianity was what I heard on Xian talk radio, I'd hate it, too. There are some peo who believe that fidelity to the Gos simply means speaking, 'You kids get off my lawn.' That is not the msg that has been given to us....It's easy for us to simply point out what is wrong w the lost peo in our comms wo reminding ourselves that these peo are also our mission field. We have to point out what's wrong, but we have to point out what's wrong the way J did, w an eye toward seeing people saved."

At 1st we're a peo on mission: not just to say what's wrong w soc but also what's wrong w ourselves—and why the gospel is such good news for the world & for us. Good news we desperately need: when we wouldn't/couldn't go to G, he came to us in X, sacrificed himself to pay our debt & bring us to G. No hope that we

could rescue ourselves. But since he came to us, we look to G as source of *peace, love, faith* (23). Couldn't end divine hostility, produce love for peo, even bring ourselves to faith—as Spurgeon said, "all of grace." Good news for you if you repent & believe.

As peo come to faith in X, a third orientation created: **inward** (21–24), i.e., Xian comm. Gos produces genuine care among Xians for one another, even outside a local cong. "Although imprisoned in Rome, his thoughts were for the welfare of the Eph bels" (Hoehner). So wrote a letter out of concern for them & also bc he knew they were concerned for him, would want to know about his cond. Not just Eph, wrote four while imprisoned in Rome (Acts 28). Not just Pual but Ty too. Carried at least three of these. After release, wrote 1Tim & Titus, 2nd of which perhaps by Ty. Then reimprisoned six or seven yrs later, wrote 2Tim & sent it by Ty. So Ty carried perhaps five of Paul's thirteen letters. What would inspire a pers to do this? Much sacrifice of time, resources, health, safety. Love, care.

Paul's love for Eph Xians produces an unusual quality: transparency (*how I am* = the things re me, 21). Opens his life up to bros/sis in X, not in a self-pitying way (woe is me, I'm in prison!). Hardly even mentions his cond. But when he does, interps his life in context of his union w X: *prisoner for the L* (4.1), *ambassador in chains* (6.20). Sure Ty would fill in other details, but he knew what would last longer than Ty's oral report was written words of this letter. & so he opened up his life to them in such a way that they'd be encouraged in heart (22) by the work of X for their dearly loved bro, Paul.

Love & transparency the root of Xian comm. Our soc, even Xian soc, promotes a kind of false modesty: talking about oneself seems proud. Can be, but failing to open up can be just as much a result of pride ("I prefer image peo have of me"). An area we need to keep growing in. Challenge: busy, only gather 1x/wk, don't see each other often. But if committed to this kind of love & transparency, we'd figure it out: phone, txts, soc media, n groups, corp worship.

Conclusion

Most chs do one well, one ok, one terribly. Can almost look at it like a Venn. Where would you locate 1st? One of my chief jobs as pastor: to keep centering us, pushing us to sweet spot of Venn. In that sense this msg, conc to our study of Eph, really a beg. As Antonio says in *The Tempest*, "What's past is prologue." Upcoming series: focus on outward (summer study, A Mission of Mercy [check SermonAudio if you're away]), then inward (fall series, A Covenant Peo, meaning of membership).

A sense in which we'll never get it right. Ch is always penultimate at best, even best chs. But we are in X & the Sp is in us, & G is making us a hosp where the sick become doctors, where he is gathering peo under the headship of X until the day comes when everything in heaven & on earth will be unified under the LJX. Friends, that day will come. Until then, let's show off his glory for the eternal joy of NYers who have yet to hear & believe.

Closing Prayer: Ephesians 3.16–19

Benediction: Ephesians 6.23–24