

# Paul's Parting Words

INTRO: Well, we have finally done it. We have reached the end of our series on Ephesians. It has taken us a grand total of 15 weeks in the book, but I think it has been a great journey. In fact, our closing passage is quite short and focused. So what I want to do today is kind of an overall review of the book of Ephesians so that we can recall the great themes of the book, and hopefully get those themes ingrained in our heads and our hearts. Then, after our review, we will finish off the book.

## I. Ephesians in review

### A. Ephesians 1:3ff - God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ

1. So if we belong to Christ, there is not one spiritual blessing that any of us has missed out on because we have every spiritual blessing
2. Some of those blessing include
  - a) Being chosen before world began
    - (1) That means before we did one thing right or wrong, God chose us
    - (2) If you recall, we went over why that is such a comfort for us
      - (a) It means it is not about us
      - (b) It is about Him
      - (c) It should increase our humility, and our gratitude toward Christ in all things
  - b) We were chosen with a purpose
    - (1) To be holy and blameless
    - (2) To be adopted into God's family
      - (a) So we are not just guests, or friends, but we are a part of the family
      - (b) As such, we have a Father, and brothers and sisters like most people on earth never experience
  - c) We have redemption through His blood
    - (1) The forgiveness of sins
3. All of this was done to the praise of God's glorious grace
  - a) Remember what we said - it is as if Paul is getting so excited at the thought of all of these blessings that he can hardly contain himself
  - b) Which is a great reminder for all of us
  - c) Think through the blessings God has given you - especially the spiritual blessings
    - (1) Think through their implications
    - (2) Think through God's grace to you and you will be amazed at the ways in which you will grow

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4. The final thing to remind you of from the very beginning of the book is that when we believed the message of the gospel, all of the spiritual benefits became ours - including the Holy Spirit
  - a) He was given as a deposit guaranteeing our future inheritance
  - b) So if you have the Holy Spirit in your life - you have eternal life
- B. Ephesians 1:15ff
  1. The second part of Ephesians 1 is Paul's prayer for the believers
  2. Paul asks for very specific things for the Ephesians and because of that, we learned a lot about prayer and praying for others
  3. Paul wanted them to know God better
    - a) To rely on the Holy Spirit to know and understand God deeper and deeper
  4. Paul wanted them to understand the hope that they were called to
    - a) Their glorious inheritance
    - b) And to know the value of God's holy people
      - (1) The church is an inheritance - by that I mean the people
      - (2) We often don't look at it that way - to some, God's people can be a burden
      - (3) Paul says that God's people are a treasure
  5. Paul also prayed for them (and us by extension) to understand the power that is at work inside us
    - a) That is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead
    - b) The same power that raised Jesus to the rule and authority
- C. When we make it to chapter 2 Paul illustrates how this power has been at work in us
  1. Chapter two is one of my favorites in scripture
  2. The whole theme: This is what you were
    - a) Dead in sin (remember the parallel - Jesus was dead physically and raised to new life - we are dead spiritually and raised to new life because of Jesus)
    - b) We used to follow the way of the world, used to be subject to the ruler of this world, used to be objects of God's wrath due to sin
  3. "But God"
    - a) Has there ever been two sweeter words in all the Bible
    - b) God, who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ
    - c) It is by the grace of God toward us that we are saved - it is not about us
    - d) And we (the church - all of us) are God's handiwork - created to do good works

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- (1) The order of this is crucial - God saves us by his grace - then we are to do good works
- (2) I dare say most people, including people in the church, have that backwards - we do good works, and then God saves us - that is wrong
- e) And as a reminder that when you signed up to be a Christian, you did not just sign up for fire insurance - Now I won't go to hell
  - (1) When you signed up to be a Christian, you became part of a family - part of a something far greater than yourself
  - (2) And showing your gratitude to the Lord for all He has done seems like the least we can do
- D. The second half of chapter two is a further display of God's power - He was able to bring Gentiles and Jews together and reconcile them to each other
  1. This is known as the church
  2. And the church, being the place that God was able to bring everyone together, the church is what brings God glory
  3. Even though too often the church does not act like the glorious place God expects it to be
    - a) That is what the rest of Ephesians is about
    - b) The ways in which genuine Christians are to treat each other, so that the church will truly bring glory to God the way God always intended
- E. We get to chapter three and Paul seems to get sidetracked easily
  1. He starts to tell them one thing related to the church being God's glory, and then gets sidetracked by the mission God has given him
    - a) God called him to be a missionary to the Gentiles
    - b) This is the part of the book of Ephesians that can often make people squirm
      - (1) Paul talks about his mission from God as a grace from God
      - (2) He views his ministry to the Gentiles, with the beatings from Jews, being incarcerated, being run out of town, as grace from God
      - (3) Which challenges us how we view our ministry
        - (a) When I have mentioned everyone getting involved in ministry before, and that I need help because I can't do everything myself, I often get the question: "What can I do to help"
        - (b) So I am going to tell you what I need, but what the church needs to
        - (c) Much like Paul, what I need is each person in the church, and more importantly what the church needs from each person is

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this: Choose a ministry that is your baby, and do it to the best of your ability

- i) Here is what I mean: I need a teacher in the youth group to help teach
    - (1) Someone steps forward and says they would like to
    - (2) They make that their ministry - they keep that night clear, the work hard at what they do to teach - teach that group of kids that I give them, that is their baby and they do everything they can to glorify God in that ministry
  - ii) This would go for any area of ministry that we have, or that we are able to create to reach out to the community - not just the youth ministry
    - (1) It becomes your baby and you take that on to glorify God in all you do
  - iii) What I see happening is people that will help out when needed but do not want to make that their ministry
    - (1) They don't want to claim one area of ministry in the church and say, "This is my baby and I will glorify the Lord in all I do with it"
    - (2) They want to remain free to help out in whatever ministry, but not be tied down
    - (3) What I need, and what the church needs is people that claim their ministry, they are loyal to it, and seek to glorify God in it
    - (4) That does not mean that you can't help with other things in the church if you have the time - but you have one prime ministry and you go after that, rearrange your schedule for it, and glorify the Lord by serving Him
  - c) See what happens, Paul gets sidetracked, and so does the Pastor - we have to keep moving here
2. The second half of chapter three is one of Paul's most amazing prayers
- a) In short, Paul asks that God would help them know the love of God
  - b) A love that Paul says "surpasses knowledge"
    - (1) That is a love that you experience
  - c) And God can do all of these things and more than we can ask, or imagine
- F. In chapter four we see Paul now combining our theology and our practice
1. The maturity that God desires for us is found in the fact that we realize that we are unified
    - a) One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, etc

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- b) We are unified by being "in Christ"
- 2. At the same time we are different
  - a) Christ gave out gifts to all people
  - b) Each of us has a gift, we have a ministry for the glory of God
  - c) And those gifts, those ministry are to build up the church
- 3. The second half of chapter four shows us the old and the new
  - a) Paul reminds us that we should not allow our minds to be darkened like the Gentiles
    - (1) Theology drives practice
    - (2) What we believe drives how we behave
    - (3) If our mind is darkened, than we will not behave properly
  - b) We, however, were taught in Christ
    - (1) We know better
    - (2) We know the truth and as such should be behaving better
  - c) Then Paul goes on to name several things that we should not be involved in and gives us alternatives
    - (1) It is like, off with the old, and on with the new
    - (2) We had this old self, and we have to take it off and put on the new self which is created for holiness
- G. Chapter 5 Paul continues regarding areas that do not reflect Christian behavior
  - 1. Most notable is the area of sexual immorality
    - a) Paul hits on that area right before he turns and addresses Christian households
  - 2. Again, Paul reminds us that we used to be darkness, but now we are light in the Lord
    - a) This is a theme that rolls around over and over in Ephesians
    - b) This is what you were, but this is what you are now
  - 3. Later, Paul talks about how a Christian household should run
    - a) Mutual submission
    - b) Husbands have been charged with the task of headship over the household and over their wives
      - (1) Never in a domineering manner
      - (2) Because they are to love just as Christ loved the church - sacrificially
  - 4. Then Paul moves on to children obeying mom and dad
  - 5. Then slaves and masters
    - a) Which slaves back then were not slaves like we think of them today
    - b) And the closest cultural equivalent would be employees and employers - however, that is still not quite the same

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- c) Regardless of the cultural equivalent we learn that we are to work with our whole heart as unto the Lord
- d) And if we are over others, we are to treat them in a loving manner, no favoritism, because we are under God Himself
- H. That was the beginning of six, and the middle of six was the infamous passage about the armor of God
  - 1. Multiple times Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord and to stand
  - 2. The rest of the armor and the passage is describing how we do that
    - a) That we put on the breastplate of righteousness
    - b) Put on the belt of truth
    - c) Use the shield of faith
  - 3. Not only the armor itself, but we are armed with the gospel, and with prayer
  - 4. Paul believed so strongly in prayer that he even asked for them to be praying for him to be a bold witness to those he will encounter
- I. So there is Ephesians in a nutshell
- II. Let's look at Paul's parting words in Ephesians 6:21-24
  - A. This last section has two purposes
    - 1. First is to commend Tychicus and the message he carries to them
    - 2. Second to close the letter formally with a benediction
  - B. So let's look at Tychicus first
    - 1. The first time we see Tychicus in scripture is in Acts 20:4
      - a) He is listed as a companion of Paul's to deliver the offering collected among the Gentiles to be delivered to Jerusalem
      - b) En route Paul stops at Miletus where he meets with the elders from Ephesus
        - (1) Some think that Tychicus stayed there or went to Ephesus with the elders
        - (2) What little evidence there is, it seems more likely that he continued on with Paul to Jerusalem
      - c) Now remember, when Paul delivered the offering in Jerusalem is the same time Paul got arrested that sent him to Rome to see the Emperor
    - 2. Tychicus is mentioned a few more times in the Bible
      - a) It seems he may have gone to relieve Timothy in Ephesus
      - b) But the big thing is that Tychicus carried the letter for the Ephesians (which may have meant all the area churches), the letter for the Colossians, and the letter to Philemon
    - 3. Something else to note: this section is word for word the same as the end of Colossians - at least 32 words are

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- a) So the notion that someone else wrote Ephesians and took great care to change things to look like they were not copying it, now they are copying word for word
- b) Seems unlikely - more likely is the same person is writing, and because the same thing is happening, he (Paul) just copied what he said from one to the next
- 4. Tychicus is called a "dear brother" - we could say a valued friend or beloved brother
- 5. He is sent to let the people know how Paul is doing
  - a) Another indication that Paul is writing from house arrest in Rome
- C. One of the main things we can learn out of this section is Paul's care for his friend Tychicus and for those he is writing to
  - 1. Tychicus was a guy that had been in the trenches with Paul
  - 2. Because of this, they had developed a close relationship
  - 3. I thought a little about this looking back at Frank Smith's funeral
    - a) Frank was a guy that we fought in some trenches together
    - b) He was in leadership during some of the rougher times in the history of the church, and we wound up having to fight together on some issues
    - c) I think of that now because he was the first person I think, from our church that I know well enough where I struggled at the start of his funeral
      - (1) And that was why
      - (2) We walked through the fire together
  - 4. I'll tell you that those are the best kinds of relationships
    - a) When someone walks with you through the difficult times
    - b) Especially when you are brothers and sisters in Christ - there is a deeper bond that forms
- D. On to verses 23-24 - no other letter closes like this
  - 1. This closing is more liturgical in nature
  - 2. It brings back around many of the themes of the letter
    - a) Peace
    - b) Love
    - c) Faith and faithfulness
    - d) Grace
  - 3. No other letter of Paul's closes with phrases like "peace...from God" or "love...from God"
    - a) Several of his letters start that way
    - b) This is the only one that ends this way

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- E. The closing of the letter is a great reminder for us of the source of all the spiritual blessings we have received
  - 1. The source is from God in Christ
  - 2. The grace we need to receive is from God in Christ
    - a) The grace we need when we sin against God
    - b) When we sin against others - it comes from God
  - 3. The peace we need comes from God in Christ
    - a) Christ reconciled us to Himself through His death, thus bringing us peace with God
    - b) The peace we need to live this life comes from knowing that God has already achieved what we need to live
  - 4. We would never fully understand love if it were not for God displaying that love through Christ
- F. The closing of this letter is really a great overview of the whole letter
  - 1. God provides all we need in Christ
  - 2. And as the letter says over and over again - walk worthy of the gift you received in Christ