

Week 14: Ephesians 6:21–24: Encouragement and Blessing

Hook



Main Point: Paul's letter was overall a message of encouragement and blessing.

Q: Have you ever finished a great book, TV series, or movie and immediately wanted to go back and experience it again? Why?

Sometimes when you reach the end of a story, you understand the beginning differently. Things that seemed small suddenly make sense. Themes you barely noticed at first become obvious because now you know where the story was going.

Today, we've reached the end of Ephesians.

For weeks, Paul has taught us about our new identity in Christ, unity in the Church, relationships at home, how we should live, and even how to stand firm in spiritual battle. But as Paul writes his final words, he doesn't introduce something new. Instead, he brings us back to the heart of everything he has written: grace, peace, faith and love.

Q: As we finish Ephesians, what is one truth from this study that has stayed with you?

RECAP: In the first half of the letter to the Ephesians (chapters 1–3), Paul gave us doctrine: how the Gospel transforms us into new creations in Christ. In the second half, he described how to apply that doctrine to our lives, how to live as transformed people in the church community (4:1–5:21), in the home (5:22–6:9), and in the world (6:10–20).

In these concluding verses of the letter, Paul encourages the Ephesians in their faith and leaves them with a blessing of the peace, love, faith and grace of Jesus.

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Book

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Ephesians 6:21–22 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Tychicus not only brought the Ephesians Paul's letter, he updated them on Paul's life and ministry in prison.

Q: Why did Paul send Tychicus to the Ephesian church?

Q: Why might Paul need to update the Ephesians on how he was doing?

Paul wrote Ephesians (and Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) when he was on house arrest in Rome, awaiting his trial before Caesar (60–62 AD). Tychicus had been with Paul, not as a fellow prisoner, but helping with his ministry there. Paul likely sent the letter to the Ephesians with Tychicus.

Acts tells us Tychicus was a Christian missionary from the Roman province of Asia, where Ephesus was located, and one of Paul's coworkers on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). In Ephesians, Paul called him "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (6:21). In Colossians, Paul also called him a "fellow servant" (Colossians 4:7).

A few years later, Paul wrote that he was sending either Artemas or Tychicus to relieve Titus so Titus could come to Paul in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Later, when Paul was in prison a second time and about to be martyred, Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to pastor there and asked Timothy to come be with him before he died (2 Timothy 4:12). Tychicus was not just a letter carrier, he was a beloved and trusted coworker of Paul.

In their time and culture, persons who carried a letter from an apostle such as Paul to a church was more than just a courier. They were trusted representatives who not only delivered the letter but also answered any questions the recipient had about the letter. Tychicus would have had to understand the content and theology of the letter and be able to interpret it for them if they were confused or had specific follow-up questions. They couldn't just call or text Paul for clarification. They may have written a reply with questions, but they would have also asked Tychicus in the moment because he would have been considered Paul's personal representative.¹

Tychicus also updated them on Paul's condition in prison. Paul had a close personal relationship with the people in Ephesus; he spent at least three years in ministry there. They were his beloved spiritual children, and he was their spiritual father. Paul said the news of how Paul was doing would encourage their hearts (6:22).

Paul was on house arrest in Rome for two years, where he was allowed to welcome anyone who came to see him and he preached with boldness and without hindrance

(Acts 28:30–31). Paul said that because he was in prison, he was able to share the Gospel with the imperial guard and this inspired other Christians to be bolder in preaching the Gospel without fear. No matter what happened to him personally, he found great joy in that (Philippians 1:1–14). It would have encouraged the Ephesians to know that not only was Paul safe, but also, God was using his imprisonment to advance the Gospel even more in Rome.

Paul said “how we are” in verse 22, not just “I am” because several people joined him during his time in prison in Rome. Tychicus was there; this is why he was able to personally report to the Ephesians how Paul was doing. Timothy was also with him (Philippians 1:1). Epaphroditus had come from Philippi with a gift for Paul and ministered to him during his imprisonment (Philippians 2:25–30; 4:18).

Mark, Epaphras, Demas, and Aristarchus were with him (Colossians 4:10–14). Philemon’s runaway slave Onesimus became a Christian under Paul’s ministry in Rome and served Paul faithfully. It would have encouraged the Ephesians to know that Paul was surrounded by fellow believers who cared for and supported him.

Paul’s experience in Rome modeled what he had been writing to the Ephesians – how to live in community as “new self” people and be a light to the world, even in suffering. Here we notice just how collaborative Paul’s ministry was, even under house arrest. Sometimes we read Acts and come away thinking of Paul as kind of a one-man show. But when we dig a little deeper, we can see just how many coworkers he had. Every missionary journey included people who went with him. In his letters, he regularly mentioned people who had worked with him in various places. Even when he was on house arrest, he was not alone.

This is the theology of ministry Paul taught in Ephesians put into practice: we are one body in Christ, everyone has different gifts and roles, and we all build each other up to carry out the mission together (Ephesians 4:1–16).

Paul’s model was a team ministry. The goal isn’t for one gifted leader to do ministry while everyone else watches or just financially supports them. The whole body ministers together.

Most of Paul’s coworkers aren’t household names. We know Paul, and even Timothy and Luke because their names are titles of the books we read. But we don’t know much about Tychicus, Trophimus, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Syntyche, Phoebe, Euodia, etc. Yet Paul called them “fellow workers,” “faithful servants,” and those who “labored side by side with me” (Philippians 4:2–3; Romans 16:1–16).

This was an encouragement to the Ephesians, and it can be an encouragement to us. You don’t have to be a Paul to contribute to God’s kingdom. We all have a part to play in the mission – some big, some small, but every part is needed to make the body work.

Q: Give an example of a time in which hearing other people's stories encouraged your faith.

Q: How can you work with others as a team to be more effective in ministry?

Ephesians 6:23–24 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Paul closed Ephesians with a blessing of peace, grace and love.

Q: How do peace, grace and love each connect to what Paul has been writing about?

Paul opened Ephesians with a greeting of “grace” and “peace” (1:2), and he returned to both themes as he closed the letter. “Peace” (*shalom*) was a traditional Jewish greeting, while Paul’s use of “grace” (*charis*) reflects and transforms the conventional Greek form of greeting. These words were more than polite greetings for Paul; they summarized important realities of the Gospel that he developed throughout Ephesians. God saves us by grace (2:5, 8), and through Christ He has made peace, reconciling us to Himself and uniting Jews and Gentiles as one body (2:14–18). Now here at the end of the letter, Paul’s blessing of grace, peace and love brings the letter full circle. Grace and peace form an *inclusio*, a literary device in which biblical writers use matching phrases to begin and end a section to highlight that theme throughout the whole work.²

Grace and peace were the foundation of everything Paul taught. It is by grace we have been saved through faith (2:8). This grace gives us peace with God and peace with each other. Ephesians describes how the Gospel brings reconciliation. Christ is our peace (2:14): He has reconciled us to God through the Cross and given us access to the Father (2:16–18).

This grace has also reconciled us to one another. Christ has broken down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile so that both are reconciled to God “in one body” and both are given access to the Father “by one Spirit” (2:16, 18). When Paul ended with “peace to the brothers (i.e., Christians)” he was not just saying “have a peaceful day, y’all.” He was blessing them with this reality that God created by His grace: peace with God and peace with one another in the body of Christ.

In biblical thought, “peace” (*shalom*) isn’t just absence from conflict; it’s wholeness, well-being and flourishing (Numbers 6:24–26; Isaiah 32:17; 52:7).³ This new life we have in Christ is a life of *shalom*. This is why Paul encouraged them to be eager to maintain the *unity* of the Spirit *in the bond of peace* (4:3).

The church community is to be a place of flourishing because it is the earthly representation of the kingdom of God. But Paul also encouraged believers to take that peace out *into the world*. To fight the evil “present darkness” in the world around them, they were to put on the boots of the “Gospel of peace” (6:10–18). As believers, we carry the Gospel of *shalom* with us as we walk out into the world.

Paul also blessed them with “love with faith.” To the Galatians, Paul had written that religious rites mean nothing, but “only faith working itself out through love” (Galatians 5:6). Love is the way our faith shows itself in action. Those who have faith in Jesus love others the way He loves (John 13:35). Everything Paul said in the second half of Ephesians about how to live as transformed people is undergirded by love:

- Walk in love (5:2)
- Speak the truth in love (4:15)
- Bear with one another in love (4:2)
- Be kind and tenderhearted (4:32)
- Love your wives as Christ loved the Church (5:25)

Paul ended his letter as he began it, with grace and love (1:2; 6:24). His blessing of grace was for all who love Jesus “with love incorruptible.” The word “incorruptible” carries the idea of something imperishable or immortal. Paul was describing a genuine, enduring love for Christ that is not corrupted by divided loyalties and will continue into eternity. This doesn't mean our love for Jesus must be perfect, but that genuine faith produces a love for Him that perseveres. Tragically, Jesus would later rebuke the Ephesian church for abandoning the love they had at first (Revelation 2:4).

There is a beautiful symmetry to the letter: Ephesians begins with grace and peace, then teaches believers to walk in love, then ends with grace, peace and love. After all these instructions about how Christians are to walk, Paul ended with blessing. He didn't end with a list of things we have to do, but by reminding us that the Christian new life is sustained by God's grace, peace and love, not our own effort.

Q: How would you describe God's grace to someone who doesn't know Him?

Q: What is a tangible way you can show God's love to someone this week?

Q: How can our church work to be a place of shalom in our community?

Ephesians 1:15–23 and 3:14–21 and reread 6:23–24 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Ephesians is about living as transformed people together as one body, reflecting the character of God to the world.

Q: Now that we have gone through all of Ephesians, what jumps out to you about Paul's prayers for the Ephesians earlier in the letter?

As we come to the end of Ephesians, it can be meaningful to look back on Paul's prayers for the Ephesians earlier in the letter. Paul had an intimate relationship with these people; his heart for them is evident throughout the letter, beginning to end. As much theology as Ephesians contains, it is first and foremost a letter from a pastor to the people he loves. His prayers for them can give us a lens through which to understand all

we have learned because his prayers are where we see his heart for these people the most.

Ephesians gives us a beautiful picture of what it looks like to live together as people who have been transformed by the Gospel. To live in unity, grace, shalom and love. In the first prayer (1:15–23), Paul prayed for the Ephesians to have wisdom and revelation to know God better. But not just to know God intellectually, to know Him personally. To have the eyes of our hearts enlightened is not just an intellectual knowledge but a spiritual knowledge that comes from fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

In his second prayer (3:14–21), Paul prayed that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith and that they would increasingly comprehend and experience His immeasurable love. That love would then shape how they loved others (4:2; 5:2). Paul emphasized what Jesus Himself said matters most: loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37–40).

Paul's language about love is intense. He prayed that they may be rooted and grounded in love. That they might have the strength to comprehend the vastness of God's love. To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. It's as if Paul didn't even have the words to explain it. That is how much God loves us and how much His love changes our lives.

Everything Paul taught in this letter about the Church, spiritual gifts, family, forgiveness, unity and spiritual warfare all ultimately depends on believers' being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. Anything "religious" we try to do without love is just empty noise (1 Corinthians 13:1–4). Everything must be motivated by love.

Christian maturity isn't just knowing about God; it's walking and living and moving in His love. Paul's instructions to the Ephesians aren't a to-do list of religious do's and don'ts. It's about how to live with one another in the agape love of Jesus.

After studying Ephesians, we have a much clearer picture of just how far-reaching God's work is. He is not just changing individual lives; He is building a kingdom, His Church. He is bringing a divided people together into one community of people who live by His ways and reflect His love to the world.

God is creating a people who are humble, gentle, patient and willing to bear with one another in love. A people who speak the truth, forgive as we have been forgiven, encourage one another, and use the gifts He has given us to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1–16, 25–32).

When we live and love each other this way, people on the outside will take notice. They will want to be loved this way, too, and will be drawn into our communities. Our goal is not just to believe the right things individually, but to become a people who display the character of Christ together.

Christian unity does not mean that everyone looks or acts exactly alike. Unity is not uniformity. True unity is unity in diversity, where differences in culture, personality and gifts are embraced as part of God's design for the Church – a tapestry of many colors, a body of many parts. Paul celebrated the different gifts and roles God gives His people.

What unites us is Christ – one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. The goal is not just that we as individuals would be saved and transformed in Christ. It is that we would become a transformed people who live out the Gospel together, displaying the fullness of Christ to the world.

Q: How can people loving each other well show the world what Jesus is like? Give some specific examples you have seen or experienced.

Q: In what ways might God be leading you to connect more deeply with your church community, to love and serve together?

Q: What impacted you the most from your time studying Ephesians?

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Took

Main Point: Paul's letter was overall a message of encouragement and blessing.

At the beginning of Ephesians, Paul tells us what God has done for us in Christ. Then he spends the rest of the letter showing us what life should look like because of it.

So maybe the best question as we close Ephesians isn't, "What did I learn?"

It's "What will be different because I learned it?"

Paul has called us to walk worthy of our calling, walk in love, walk as children of light, walk wisely, love and serve one another, and stand firm in Christ. And now he sends us out with the same grace and peace with which he began.

Q: If you genuinely lived out what God has shown you through Ephesians, what is one thing that would look different in your life?

This week, go back and read Ephesians from beginning to end in one sitting. As you read, ask God to show you one truth to remember and one step to take.

We may be finished studying Ephesians this semester, but we're not finished living it.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Look back through Ephesians and reflect on all the things you learned throughout our study. What things stuck out to you the most? What things made you think differently? What things challenged you? What things were new to you? How will you live differently going forward because of what you learned through this study? How could you share what you learned through Ephesians with other people?

PRAY: Thank God for all that you have learned through this study. Thank Him for his love, grace and peace through Jesus Christ. Then pray for the Church to live as transformed people and be a light to the world. Pray specifically for yourself and your family to love each other the way Jesus did as a light to the world. Then pray for your small group, your church community, and the Church as a whole. Pray that we can shine as a beacon of Christlike agape love to the world.

ACT: Take some time this week to read back through all of Ephesians and write down things that jump out to you now, after you have gone through the whole study. Spend some time journaling about all that God has taught you through Ephesians and how that may impact your life going forward.

¹ Matthew S. Harmon, "Letter Carriers and Paul's Use of Scripture." *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 4, No. 2 (2014).

² Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (InterVarsity Press, 2008).

³ Leslie C. Allen, "Shalom as Wholeness: Embracing the Broad Biblical Message." Fuller Theological Seminary, No. 9 (2017) - [Shalom-as-wholeness.pdf](#)