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C0525 -- June 29, 2005 – Ephesians 6:21-24 -- Epilogue

Tonight, we will complete the Epistle of the Ascension. J. Armitage Robinson considered Ephesians “the crown of St Paul’s writings”. Raymond E. Brown says “Among the Pauline writings only Rom can match Eph as a candidate for exercising the most influence on Christian thought and spirituality.” These are remarkable statements for an epistle of six chapters. Indeed, it is stunning to realize the influence of this book on the spiritual lives of many who have been imprisoned as Paul and martyred as Stephen. It is clearly an indispensable portion of the Divine Library that has influenced more men and reached themes that are not even touched on in the classics. In my library I have the privilege of possessing “The Harvard Classics” which contain what is considered the greatest literature in the world. The greatest works of Homer, Plato, Epictetus, Chaucer, Dante, Bacon, Milton, Shakespeare, Thoreau, Tennyson, and Darwin are included. Some of these works voyage beyond the physical to the metaphysical but such voyages extend no further than human opinion. None come with divine authenticity and authority as Paul claims in Eph 1:1. Therefore, I ask you, in this set of the greatest literature, where are the works of the divinely inspired Paul? To my knowledge none of these great works contain the knowledge that imparts eternal life. How much less do any of these cast the new creature in Christ into the heavenlies? Insomuch it can be said with God’s authority that none hold so much as a candle to Ephesians. For in it are found the keys to eternal life and the means to abundant Christian living. It is indeed a book that takes us beyond the mere opinions about reality to reality itself. Therefore, it is with great humility and a strong sense of duty and honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we conclude this letter by faithfully unfolding Paul’s concluding themes, which in large part sum up the major themes of this potent epistle.

Greek Text 6:21 Ina de eidete kai umeis ta kat eme, ti prasso, panta gnorisei umin Tuchikos o agapetos adelphos kai pistos diakonos en kurio,

Translation 6:21 Now in order that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make everything known to you,

In large part the words of 6:21-22 resemble those of Col 4:7-8. In fact, 32 words are identical.

Ephesians 6:21-22

As to my circumstances, *how I am doing*, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about us and that he may comfort your hearts.

Colossians 4:7-8

As to my circumstances, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant and *fellow bond-servant* in the Lord, make everything known to you. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about us and that he may comfort your hearts;

This parallel demonstrates that the letters of Colossians and Ephesians were written about the same time and that Paul still had the first letter before he sent them both to Asia by way of Tychicus. The phrase **you also** indicates that this letter was probably sent along with the letter to the Colossians, perhaps indicating that Colossians was written first and Ephesians second. The intent of both passages was to give the recipients some idea of Paul's circumstances in prison. Both letters were sent by way of **Tychicus**. The postal system of the early Roman Empire was similar to the Pony Express where one messenger would relay the message to a second messenger and so on until the message reached its destination. However, this system was changed by Augustus so that only one messenger took the message from sender to recipient. This added a personal element and enabled the messenger to give first-hand information about the sender. It is clear that this is the method Paul used in sending this messenger. Tychicus had apparently been with Paul for some time. Tychicus is described by Paul as being a **beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord**. **Tychicus** is mentioned five times in the NT (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12). Tychicus was a companion of Paul immediately after the Ephesian riot in Acts 20:4. At another time, Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to relieve Timothy so that Timothy could come and visit Paul (2 Tim 4:12). At another time, Paul sent either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus so that Titus could visit Paul in Nicopolis (Tit 3:12). Apparently, Tychicus carried five of Paul's letters to their destinations (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, 2 Timothy, and Titus). It is no wonder that Paul considered him **the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord**. Had it not been for Tychicus' **faithful service** we would not have access to these five indispensable portions of the Divine Library.

The reason **Tychicus** was personally sent by Paul was so that he could fill the Ephesians in on Paul's circumstances since it was for their sake that he was in prison. Remember, in Ephesians 3:1 Paul said, **For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--**. What **reason** was Paul a prisoner? For the reason of preaching the message in 2:11-22 about believing Jews and Gentiles united in one new body (cf also 3:6). Thus it was **for their sake** that he was in prison yet at the same time Paul does not consider himself a prisoner of Rome but a **prisoner of Christ Jesus**. This is because Christ Jesus purchased Paul out of the slave market of sin and therefore Paul became the prisoner of Christ Jesus. Paul's old master was sin but His new master was Jesus Christ. Paul knew that if he was imprisoned for carrying out His new master's will then that was God's will for his life. Paul firmly believed in the sovereignty of God in and through our circumstances. He did not believe in blind chance or accidents but in the personal sovereignty of God. He believed that God had a definite plan for his life and that plan

included his being in prison. Some would consider imprisonment a great obstacle, but not Paul. Paul was not unwise but wise and he therefore made the most of his time by writing four of the most potent letters the world has ever known from prison. Paul did not fight with the sword but with the divine pen crafted to record precisely God's infallible word. We can learn a lesson from Paul's attitudes and responses. Because of our mental and spiritual limitations, we should never think of our circumstances as debilitations or obstructions. Rather we should give thanks in everything for this is the Lord's will (Eph 5:20; 1:11; 3:11). Each must carry his own lot as God has apportioned. Since God is the one who supplies our strength (Eph 3:20) and since He never gives us more than we can handle we should rest in the fact that we are accomplishing His will whether we are able to discern His purposes or not.

Why was Paul so eager to share his circumstances through Tychicus? Because of the unity of the body of Christ. "Unity" is a major theme of Ephesians. Ephesians 4:1-6 is THE key passage on walking in unity in the NT. Paul is therefore demonstrating this unity of the body of Christ by sharing with fellow brothers and sisters his conditions in prison through a fellow brother, Tychicus. Paul realized that all saints were in this together and that his imprisonment was directly related to these Gentile saints in Ephesus. He was there for their sake. Therefore, they would be interested in how he was getting along.

Greek Text 6:22 on epempsa pros umas eis auto touto, ina gnote ta peri emon kai parakalese tas kardias umon.

Translation 6:22 whom I am sending to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may comfort your hearts.

The two purposes for Paul sending Tychicus are explicitly stated in verse 22. First, **that you may know how we are**. There is new information that Paul wants to share with the believers in Ephesus. Second, **that he [Tychicus] may comfort your hearts**. How often would a report concerning someone's condition in prison be a **comfort**? Yet it is with Paul because Paul was not a whiner about his circumstances. This point cannot be overemphasized. Because of **Tychicus'** closeness with Paul he would be able to give them intimate information that would convey how Paul truly felt about them and his circumstances. This would **comfort** their **hearts**. The word **heart** is *kardia* and refers to the center of a person's being, where the emotions are either stirred or settled. Tychicus' information would be settling to the Ephesians **hearts** because they would realize that God's will was being accomplished through Paul even though he was in prison. If Paul had not given up in these circumstances how much more should they press on with the mystery of the gospel. How much more should you be comforted today by knowing that God's plan is going to be accomplished. I want to encourage every one of you to continue your faithfulness to the Lord. Continue to take in Bible doctrine and continue to teach this to

others. The Bible says, “commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others”. That is one of my primary tasks is the personal discipling of men in this congregation; the imparting of truth, guidance into the truth, and the entrusting of the truth to those who wish to be discipled and who have the willing desire and ability to teach these things to others.

Greek Text 6:23 Eirenen tois adelphois kai agape meta pisteos apa theou patros kai kuriou Iesou Christou.

Translation 6:23 Peace to the brethren and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 23 and 24 mention **peace** and **grace**. Paul began Ephesians with **grace and peace** (1:2). Now he closes in the reverse order with **peace** and **grace**. **Peace** in the Book of Ephesians is both vertical and horizontal. Vertically, believers are at peace with God (2:14). Horizontally, believing Jews and Gentiles are at peace with one another (2:15). The **peace** provided here is **peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. Who else could be the source of **peace**? The world wants to be at peace but only God can provide peace and peace comes solely on His terms. World peace will only come when every person on earth is redeemed. This will be the case after the sheep-goats judgment of Matt 25.

The second attribute mentioned here is **love with faith**. Here **love** is combined with **faith**. In chapter they were commended for their **faith and love** but were lacking hope. We discover in Rev 2:1ff that in just thirty years the Ephesians had left their **first love**. **Love** combined with **faith** originates once again with God so that it is obvious that if they depart from God then they are departing from **a love combined with faith**. Two members of the Trinity are mentioned here, the Father and the Son. God is our Father in an intimate sense because we have become the sons of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord or Master of all things including our Christian lives.

Greek Text 6:24 he charis meta panton ton agaponton ton kurion emon Iesoun Christon en aphtharsia.

Translation 6:24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruption.

Lastly, Paul closes with **grace**. The message began with **grace** in 1:2 and now it appropriately closes on that same high note. **Grace** means “unmerited favor” and is what enables Christians to live victoriously. The type of **love** mentioned here is an **incorruptible love for our Lord Jesus Christ**. **Love** is also a major theme of Ephesians (5:1-6). We are told to love one another because Christ first loved us and was gracious toward us. The word

incorruption means a love that does not decay, is not subject to decay, is continual and eternal, undying love. It is the undying love of God and Christ for us that serves as the model for how believers ought to love Christ unceasingly. It is completely logical to love Christ for He first loved us. He continually loves us even when we sin against Him. Therefore, we ought to continually love Him with an undying, eternal and continual love.

“The conclusion of this letter (6:21-24) illustrates to believers the kind of love and oneness that Paul had been demonstrating throughout the book. Although imprisoned in Rome, his thoughts were for the welfare of the Ephesian believers. In light of this he sent Tychicus to them to report on his situation. His purpose was to comfort them. In addition, he sent a letter (now known as the Book of Ephesians) to instruct them in doctrine and their daily walk.”ⁱ

Basic Outline of Ephesians

- I. The Doctrine of the Church
 - A. Prologue (1:1-2)
 - B. Praise for God’s Plan of Redemption (1:3-14)
 - C. Prayer for Wisdom and Revelation (1:15-23)
 - D. Dead to Sin Now Alive to God (2:1-10)
 - E. Hostile Jews and Gentiles Now at Peace (2:11-22)
 - F. The Mystery of the Church (3:1-13)
 - G. Prayer for Strengthened Love (3:14-21)
- II. The Daily Walk of the Church (4:1-6:24)
 - A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)
 - B. Walk in Holiness (4:17-32)
 - C. Walk in Love (5:1-6)
 - D. Walk in Light (5:7-14)
 - E. Walk in Wisdom (5:15-6:9)
 - F. Stand in Warfare (6:10-20)
 - G. Epilogue (6:21-24)

ⁱ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 878.

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