

(32) TRUTH, LOVE, AND GRACE
(SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2020)

Scripture Reading: Numbers 6:22-27; Eph. 6:21-24

INTRODUCTION

Stereotype – a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.¹

The satire site the Babylon Bee plays on the idea of stereotypes in a number of their articles.

Protesters Attack Presbyterian Worshipers after Mistaking Them for Statues

Another satire article: **Motion-Activated Lights Turn Off During Presbyterian Worship Service**

Beyond satire, the stereotype for many Christians who love the Reformed Faith is that we care more about doctrine than people.

Or it is often said that those who believe in God's sovereignty in salvation have no concern for evangelism.

What is most important for us to consider is not what other people might think of us.

Our main concern should not be stereotypes but doing what Scripture calls us to do.

Utterly more important than pleasing people is doing the will of God.

In our final verses we see that loving concern for other people is important.

The focus in the book of Ephesians is truth. That is the foundation.

Based on this great foundation of truth, of God's sovereignty over all, we must also be concerned about others.

We will look at the final four verses of this wonderful book in two parts: verses 21-22 and 23-24.

Concerned for truth we are concerned for others as we rest in God's grace!

1) THAT YOU MAY KNOW, VV. 21-22

First message – September 8, 2019; this is message #32.

¹ Oxford Dictionaries, Microsoft Word

This letter was written about 1959 years ago.

In the first message I stated that though we call this book or letter **Ephesians**, the heretic Marcion called this book "To the Laodiceans."²

It is very likely the case that this book was not just written to believers in Ephesus, but rather it was a general letter to believers in southwestern Asia Minor.

We know this book as Ephesians likely because it was the most important city in that area.³

This idea is supported by the fact that unlike other books, Paul does not give a personal greeting. And there are statements that suggest that Paul did not personally know all who would read this letter.

I am not thinking of anyone in particular, but there are some people in preaching or speaking who focus more on themselves or stories rather than the truth of Scripture.

Would you say this was true of Paul? Far from it!

The focus in Ephesians is on God's truth. It is not that what was happening to Paul was unimportant, but it was not the focus of this letter.

We see here at the end that Paul was concerned for those that he both knew and did not know personally.

And he also was concerned that they would better know about his situation for the purpose of prayer and the expression of Christian love.

Look back to Eph. 6:19-20.

It was good that Paul's first readers did know about what he was facing for the purpose of prayer and also so that they would not be discouraged by the difficulties Paul was facing.

When we think of the Apostle Paul, we most often think of the letters he wrote, his powerful preaching, his boldness, and his willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ.

We should also consider how Paul was not just about himself. He did not run the Apostle Paul Ministries. And Paul was not a lone ranger on the mission field.

He trained many others; he worked with many other people for the spread of the gospel. One estimate is that Paul worked with around 100 different people.

² Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 532.

³ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, 21.

One of the key people who worked with Paul is mentioned here in verse 21, Tychicus. Recall from the book of Acts the end of what we call Paul's Third Missionary Journey. For about 3 years Paul worked in Ephesus.

Acts 19:21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Right after this verse, we have at the end of Acts 19 the description of the massive riot in Ephesus, the Ephesians Lives Matter movement, we could call it.

Paul's life was in great jeopardy, but he was not directly caught up in this riot.

Afterwards, he knew it was time to leave. He was headed to Jerusalem.

Remember, a significant part of Paul's reason for travelling to Jerusalem was to bring a gift of support and relief for Jewish Christians from Gentile churches.

To this end, Paul travelled with key people from churches that he had helped establish.

Acts 20:4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia – also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

In Colossians we read a very similar thing concerning Tychicus as we have here in Ephesians.

Col. 4:7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.

When Tychicus was sent by Paul from Rome, he carried with him at least three letters – Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians.

Colossians also mentions that one named Onesimus, another faithful and beloved brother, would be travelling with Tychicus.

Nothing is said about Tychicus in the book of Philippians. Maybe someone else travelled to Philippi with this letter.

Then several years later, we have two more verses which tell us about Tychicus.

Titus 3:12 When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

2Tim. 4:12 And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

Here and in Colossians we see that Tychicus is described as a beloved brother and faithful minister or deacon.

What is the heart of all true ministry? It is love and faithful service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul loved Tychicus.

And we know that love is not just a warm, bubbly, emotional feeling.

It is also not a coldness.

It is obedience to God's Word with respect to how we sacrificially care for others.

Paul as he himself testified was the chief of sinners. He was saved by God's grace. He needed God's continued grace every single day of his life.

By God's grace Paul loved others.

By God's grace, Tychicus faithfully served the church of Jesus Christ.

We can be certain that he gave up much to serve

Focusing on some of the details here in verses 21 and 22, Paul was sending Tychicus so that the believers in Ephesus and the area would know about Paul and what he was doing.

The words - how I am doing could be translated in terms of how we use the phrase, how are you doing, or it could mean more *what* Paul was doing.

The difference is not significant.

Tychicus would give a full update to the believers.

This is significant for two reasons - for prayer and as part of the bond of love and unity that we enjoy.

Verse 22 then repeats the sense of verse 21 and adds a little more detail about the purpose of Tychicus's visit.

Tychicus would give an update on more than just Paul but others who worked with him. And as Tychicus did this, he would seek to comfort their hearts.

The verb translated as comfort is a rather common verb used over 100x in the NT.

The verb could be translated as comfort, encourage, or strengthen.

A Greek lexicon defines the word in its usage here as: 4. **to instill someone with courage or cheer, comfort, encourage, cheer up.**⁴

No doubt the believers in that region were living in uncertain and dangerous times. Paul has just spoken of the spiritual battle that they were facing.

I have mentioned in the past how amazing it is to consider that the believers who first received the letters of the NT were delivered out of gross perversion and idolatry not many years before.

And yet these new believers were given deep truth.

There is nothing of pabulum, baby food that is given.

On the other hand, we can appreciate how these believers in the midst of great testing and uncertainty also needed to be encouraged.

Even though Paul himself was facing great uncertainty, his focus was not on his own needs but on the needs of others.

John Calvin wrote:

Another man would have said, "My own affairs require all the attention I can give. It would be more reasonable that all should run to my assistance, than that they should expect from me the smallest relief." But Paul acts a different part, and sends in every direction to strengthen the churches which he had founded.

We do well to consider how this applies to our own circumstances and situation.

Is there in your life a pattern of prayer, concern, and love for others?

How self-absorbed are we vs. concerned about others?

Phil. 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

2. PEACE, LOVE, FAITH, AND GRACE, vv. 23-24

⁴ BDAG, s.v. "παρακαλέω," 765.

It is easy to skip over the beginning and end of the letters in the NT.

We have heard the words peace, love, faith, and grace many, many times.

There are no more precious words, however, in any language than these.

MacArthur notes how these three words along with grace are a summary of the entire book:

peace (v. 15; 1:2; 2:14, 15, 17; 4:3), **love** (1:15; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:25, 28, 33), and **faith** (v. 16; 1:15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13) from God and Jesus Christ.⁵

Peace is knowing that you stand forgiven and accounted as righteous because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been accounted to us.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph. 2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

There is peace with God which is most important.

There is the peace that we desire to know in our hearts.

There is peace with other believers that is also a gift that God gives.

Love with faith

Love with faith is an interesting combination. This appears to be the only time this combination is used in the NT.

A somewhat similar expression is found in 1 Tim. 1:14.

1Tim. 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, **with faith** and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Francis Foulkes writes:

In one sense love springs from faith, and without faith's union with Christ love cannot begin to grow. Faith in the sense of faithfulness (see on 1:1), however, is a fruit of love.⁶

⁵ Mac Arthur Study Bible.

⁶ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/ Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 186.

What is most important to see if that peace, love, and faith come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's play an apologetics game.

If a Jehovah Witness came to your house and showed you verse 23 and said, you see only the Father is God. Jesus Christ is not given the title of God.

What would you say in response to this?

At least two things can be said in response.

First, the simple fact that the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are mentioned as the source of these blessings is most significant.

So, there is a unity that we must see here which shows something much more profound than just two people giving a gift.

Second, Jesus is given the name of Lord.

The name Lord in the NT in this context is the equivalent of Yahweh in the OT.

Further we know there are passages where God is directly used of Jesus. In this passage, the word Lord carries the same significance.

Interestingly we might ask, why is there no reference here to the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes in benedictions in the NT there is a direct mention of the Holy Spirit.

2Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

So yes, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned directly in verse 23, but that doesn't mean anything in terms of lack of support of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Ephesians begins with direct reference to the Father and Son.

Eph. 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We noted how in verses 3-14, how there is focus on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There is no law of interpretation or Scripture that says every time you mention the Father and Son you have to mention the Holy Spirit.

Anyone with eyes to see cannot miss the profound instruction on the Doctrine of the Trinity throughout Ephesians.

Let us focus finally on verse 24.

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

One commentator notes how in Greek the word grace has an article with it – **the grace**.⁷

The idea might be this.

What grace is this?

It is the grace that has been discussed throughout this entire book.⁸

Grace is God's love and favor to us which we know supremely in Jesus Christ.

God ministers and reminds His people of His grace and peace through His Word – the reading, preaching, and teaching of His Word.

Your response of prayer and seeking God is another means that God uses to minister His grace.

And God has also determined to use baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of encouraging you to know the grace and peace that is found in the work of our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Grace we know is totally undeserved.

You and I had nothing to do with earning it or putting ourselves in the position of receiving God's grace.

Here we see this grace is for those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Does that seem like grace is a response to something you do?

Well, if we understand the entire flow of Ephesians, this is not what you would conclude.

Eph. 2:1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

However, we can also say this: Those who do not love our Lord Jesus Christ know nothing of God's grace.

⁷ Francis Foulkes, 186.

⁸ Foulkes, 186.

How many people sadly fill churches, pulpits, and positions of power and know nothing of a true love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

John Calvin wrote:

But let there be no hypocrisy; for most men, while they are not unwilling to make some professions of religion, entertain exceedingly low notions of Christ, and worship him with pretended homage. **I wish there were not so many instances in the present day to prove that Paul's admonition, to love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity is as necessary as ever.**⁹

The word **sincerity** is a word that means without decay or interruption.¹⁰

Other versions read undying love or love incorruptible.

The words can be connected with love, with grace, or with the Lord Jesus Christ.¹¹

The most common translation is to see this is referring to our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This might not be the best theological understanding.

Klyne Snodgrass argues that the best understanding is that we are reminded in the end that God's grace does not depend on our undying love, but on His faithfulness to His promise.¹²

Going back to love, we can also say this.

If you love the Lord Jesus Christ – what a work of grace has been done in your life.

And oh, that we might often pray, more love to thee O Christ, more love to thee.

Elizabeth Prentiss in her hymn continues:

Hear thou the prayer I make
On bended knee;
This is my earnest plea,
More love, O Christ, to thee,

⁹ John Calvin, s.v. Ephesians 6:22.

¹⁰ BDAG, s.v. "ἀφθαρσία," 155.

¹¹ Snodgrass, Klyne. Ephesians (The NIV Application Commentary Book 10) (p. 365). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹² Snodgrass, 365.

More love to thee,
More love to thee.

Obviously, we do not make our love for Christ the main thing we consider.

No, we begin with God's love for us.

But let us also hear the call of Scripture that you are to love God with everything that is part of you.

What is the greatest commandment?

Matt. 22:37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' **38** This is the first and **great commandment**."

CONCLUSION

Truth - Love - Grace

Concerned for truth we are concerned for others as we rest in God's grace!

Lucian, an unbelieving Greek writer, in the 2nd century wrote this about Christians.

"It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator [Jesus] has put it into their heads that they are brethren."¹³

Eph. 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

Eph. 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

Prayer

Hymn 278

Benediction

¹³ Edited by Michael Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, 225.

Jude 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present *you* faultless

Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

25 To God our Savior,

Who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty,

Dominion and power,

Both now and forever.

Amen.