

Fare Well  
*The Armor of God*  
By Don Green

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**Bible Verse:** Ephesians 6:21-24  
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Our text for our message this morning comes from Ephesians 6. We are concluding today a series that we have done on the armor of God, as we have seen that there is a very real spiritual battle that takes place and that we are seeking to live for Christ and to evangelize and to build his church in the midst of supernatural opposition, and we've been blessed over these past few weeks to see the provision that God has made for his people in Christ that is sufficient for that battle even though it is beyond our human strength. God has revealed himself to us in Scripture. He has revealed himself to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "If anyone has seen Me, he has seen the Father." And we have the teaching of Christ and the teaching of his apostles, we have a broad revelation given to us that is sufficient for everything in for life and godliness. We don't need outside sources. We don't need psychology. We don't need the contributions of man for our salvation and for our growth in Christ. God loves us enough that he's given it all to us and with the indwelling Spirit, we have the help and power we need to draw upon those resources. We have the righteousness of Christ to defend us against the accusations of Satan, and to fit us for an appearance before the judgment seat of God. And we have been reconciled by Christ to God. Our sins, those of us that are in Christ, our sins have been forgiven. They have been taken away. They have been paid for in full at the cross.

That's what Jesus meant when he said as he was hanging there in agony and he said, "It is finished!" The work of redemption was done. Christ had purchased our salvation and had guaranteed through his death that the Spirit of God would take that redemption and apply it to his people so that we would most certainly be saved. You must understand that when Christ died on the cross, he did not die and then leave open for what the application of that would be. He didn't die and then have to go up to heaven and wait with worried hands wringing, "I wonder if anyone's going to get saved or not." That was not the plan of God and that's not the sovereignty of God at all. Christ had a plan, he accomplished it, and now the Spirit comes and applies it to the people of God that Christ died for, and on the basis of that perfect redemption, we proclaim to all men everywhere, without exception, without hindrances and qualifications that you can come to the Lord Jesus Christ and find forgiveness of your sins and receive the promise of eternal life. Jesus said, "If any man come to Me, I will most certainly not cast him out."

So the Gospel is a wonderful wonderful revelation from God and how blessed we are to gather around it, while being mindful of the fact that Satan is sowing his tares, that Satan is hindering and bringing opposition and making things difficult, it is a battle, after all, it is a battle that generates casualties along the way, but we have the promise of our God to be with us. He said, "Lo, I am with you always as you go out and teach everything I commanded you. Lo, I'm with you always even to the end of the age." Psalm 23, "I fear no evil for You are with me." "I am with you. I am with you. I am with you," it says repeatedly in the prophets. And so we come, having come through this, having been acquainted with the reality of the battle, the provision of God which is sufficient for it and we're simply called upon to draw upon all that God has done for us by believing prayer.

Look at Ephesians 6:18. This is where we were at on Tuesday. Paul having laid out all of these things says to us in verse 18, he says,

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

All, all, all, all, giving us a sense of the comprehensive provision of God and our complete and utter dependence upon him for all things. As you grow in Christ, my friends, you don't grow in a sense of self-sufficiency but rather a sense of dependency upon Christ as these things grow upon your mind and understanding. The Spirit develops those who are dependent on Christ, not those who are independent of him and indifferent to him.

So we see all of these things laid out, and now Paul, having completed his discussion of the armor of God, having given us everything that we need for life and godliness and shown us our resources in Christ, we come now to a very, in one sense, a very human dynamic as the letter closes in the final four verses beginning in verse 21, and let's just read those and then we'll try to unpack them in the 45 minutes or so that lie ahead. Paul closes his letter by saying this,

21 But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. 23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

Now before getting into the details of the passage, I just want you to note the closing sentiment of this entire text. It would be possible to talk about the armor of God and the battle with Satan that we engage in and leave us on a note of fear and intimidation, but Paul does not do that because that's not the reality of our position in Christ. Paul ends on these notes of peace, love, faith, grace, giving us a sense that even as we're going through the battle, our gracious, loving, patient, merciful, forgiving Lord is with us to carry us

through to the end. And what I want you to see here and think about is that as we come to this passage, we are reading Paul's parting words. This is the final sentiment, as it were, that he leaves with his readers. And notice this, he had just asked his readers to pray for the people of Christ and for the proclamation of the Gospel. This is the crucial aspect of the church is that we go out and we proclaim the Gospel as we do so in the context of body life within a local church, and here's what I want you to see, is that Paul's words give us an abiding example of how sincere concern for one another marks life in the church. We're mindful of the glories of Christ, Ephesians 1-3; we're mindful of our duties, Ephesians 4, 5 and the first half of chapter 6; we're mindful of the fact that we're engaged in a spiritual battle, verses 10 through 20; and yet as we walk through with all of these transcendent themes received by grace and revealed in God's word, beloved, we come back to a point of emphasis which is love and unity within the church.

Paul had made that point earlier in Ephesians 4, if you'll look back there with me in verse 1, a passage I've referred to many times over the years, and Lord willing, I suspect I'll refer to it many more as the Lord gives me breath, because it's so vital to understanding the nature of life in the local church. Paul says,

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

That's how he starts this second section, he starts on the note of love and peace and patience and, beloved, when he comes to the end of the section, he's circled back and he's come to that point again.

You see, as we gather together as the people of God week after week, as we receive people into membership and the Lord builds his church, beloved, there should be a sense that we have toward one another that is like this, there is this sense of sympathetic concern for one another. We're not individuals that happen to congregate, we're a body that is joined together and as a body, we care for what's happening for others in the body. We seek their well-being. We seek to be gracious and forgiving to them as Christ was first gracious and forgiving to us. And this loving sympathetic concern becomes the glue that holds a body together in the bond of peace, that holds us together in the bond of love. And if you just think about it, beloved, it could be no other way. If the world hates us, and Christ has made that plain, he said in John 15, "The world will hate you and persecute you because it hated Me and persecuted Me. If you're My disciple," you know, follow the logic, "you're going to be hated and persecuted in the world yourself." If we're all, those of us that are in Christ, if we are on the receiving end of supernatural opposition from destructive demons who want to harm us and destroy our witness and to make us miserable in life, and that is a supernatural reality that Paul's been writing about here in Ephesians 6, and if we know the truth enough about each other to know that you and I, we face our own private battles within our own hearts, don't we? We battle against the flesh. We struggle with discernment. Our noses sniff after temptation from time to time, speaking collectively. And there's this battle within, there's this battle in the heavens,

there's this battle in the world, and everything is arrayed against us like that? Well, then there ought to be a sense in which we come together mindful that not only are you having that battle and I'm having that battle, but each one of us to one degree or another are having battles like that, and what that should do in your heart if the Spirit of God dwells in you at all, either he does or he doesn't but you get my point, if the Spirit of God dwells within you, then there should be a sense as we gather together and as you interact with one another over the course of the week and over the months and years, this sense of sympathy and concern that animates everything that you do. You're slow to judge, slow to criticize, slow to speak badly against and quick to love, quick to affirm, quick to encourage because there's a sense in which on a horizontal human level, we are all we've got. We're all that we've got in terms of finding an oasis of loving sympathy among people as we go through this world. We're all we've got because everything else is hostile to the people of God.

So you and I need to develop a sense of participation in the body of Christ and an attitude toward the body of Christ that utterly transcends, "What do I get out of it? You know, what's in it for me today?" And as we gather together, we're looking for a sense of, "You know what? The Lord has my spiritual back and so that frees me up to care about the people that are in front of me." And I know from my own personal experience in days gone by when I was out in California especially, you know, there were times where I selfishly have to resent going to church a second time on a Sunday or something like that and I wouldn't go with the best of attitudes. "You know, I don't know what's in it for me here." And then there would be times where when I'd go to church with that attitude, I would find maybe an isolated widow, share a word with her, listen to what she had to say, thinking particularly of Ruby Knell, if Ruby ever hears this, what a sweet woman she was, and by my presence there she was encouraged in a way that wouldn't have happened. And I just had to repent of the awful selfishness of the spirit with which I approached things, realizing that, you know what? There doesn't have to be anything in it for me to be with the people of God, I can go with an attitude of a servant even if my own heart is heavy. Well, do you know what? What can I do for you? How can I minister to you? How can I encourage you in my time here together? And if you find a body of believers, you know, you find a couple of hundred believers that want to come together with an attitude like that, thinking what can I give rather than what can I get, all of a sudden the Gospel of Christ and the beauty of holiness is going to be on display like a 30 carat diamond against black velvet and sparkling with all the wonder of the majesty of God as he works through the lives of his people.

So sincere personal concern marks life in the church. Even in light of these spiritual realities that Paul has written about, he closes on this kind of theme. We're going to look at this in two ways: life for us now as Christians on the human level, life on the divine level. So let's look at life on the human level, first of all, as we take a look at this passage and, you know, it is easy, especially when you read the epistles because we're so accustomed to learning doctrine and following the flow of thought of letters and all of that, and that's very crucial for us to do as we study God's word, but it's easy for us 2,000 years later to forget a most basic fact about the letters that we are reading. The early church was filled with real people who had a real love for one another. They knew each

other by face in many cases. Paul wrote to churches sometimes that he hadn't visited, but within the church there were people who knew each other, knew each other by name and had a real love for each other. Now follow what this means on a human level. The Bible we understand, we know, we've taught at length about the fact that the Bible is the word of God, it is the revelation from God to man and every word is inspired by God, it is inerrant, it is infallible, it is the perfect word of God that we read. But in the wonder of the work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible came to birth, you might say, the Bible was born, the Spirit worked through real people like the Apostle Paul as he wrote to real people with real problems and real sin issues in their life, and the Bible for the sake of today as you'll see very plainly in what we're about to see, here's what I want you to pick up for now, the Bible, this letter from Paul to the Ephesians in particular, the Bible was born in the midst of – watch this – real relationships between real people who really cared for each other. The spirit of Christian love was animated and was active even as this letter was being written and you can see that plainly as Paul tells them that a man named Tychicus would bear the letter to them.

Look at verses 21 and 22. This is so, in one sense it is so ordinary and so human and yet it gives us insight into how all of these wonderful things play out in the life of a local church. Verse 21, the Apostle Paul says,

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

Three times in those brief two verses Paul tells them that Tychicus would inform them about Paul's situation. He says, "You'll know about my circumstances," verse 21. "How I am doing," verse 21. "He'll make it known about us and he'll make everything known to you about us as we go about so that you may know," verse 22, "you may know about us." What is he saying here and why would he say that? Why would he say that to these people? "I mean, you've already taught us the doctrine, Paul. You know, this letter's already gone for six chapters. I've got a roast in the oven. I need to get back." No, there was nothing like that. No, here's what I want you to realize, is that the people who were receiving this letter, they loved Paul and they were concerned for him while he was in prison. They were not physically able to minister to him as they would have liked, and because he was their beloved apostle, he was a direct link from them to the Lord Jesus Christ, so to speak, he was their champion and they were concerned for him. They wanted him to be well. They were concerned lest he was being harmed or he didn't have what he needed. They're concerned for him. What you see as Paul writes these things, this is amazing, Paul was concerned for them that they would be encouraged, that they would be strengthened. Tychicus was more than a messenger carrying a letter to them, Tychicus was a ministry of the Gospel of Christ in his own right, and he was coming to comfort those who would receive this letter.

Look at it there. "Tychicus," verse 21, "the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you." Paul says, "I've sent him so that you may

know about us and that he may comfort your hearts." Beloved, we talk about a lot of lofty things when we study the Bible together, but what I want you to see as we think through what this means for body life at Truth Community Church, there is something so ordinary and so very human about what Paul is saying in these things, there's a temporal concern that he has for the people receiving this letter that they would be encouraged and at peace in their hearts. He wanted that for them and so he sends Tychicus to do that. He knows that these people are anxious about him. They're concerned for him. It's going both directions. There's this great mutual concern in the body of Christ.

Now why does that happen when the real thing is operative? When Christ truly has a body of believers that are truly born again, why is it that something like that dynamic starts to manifest itself at the core of life? Well, listen, Jesus Christ saved us at the cross because he set his love upon us. He took our sins in his body, he took the wrath of God in his body because he loved us and wanted to deliver us from sin and from damnation and from eternal judgment. There is this vast magnetism to the love of Christ that should draw all men to him, and when the Spirit came and applied Christ to your heart, renewed your heart, changed your heart, put a new principle of life in you, well, he was replicating that love of Christ in your heart in seed form in a way that's meant to be watered, to be nurtured, and is to grow and manifest so that – watch this – the principle of love that first saved you would start to replicate itself in your own heart, and from there spill out over into the relationships that we have within the body of Christ. Spirit of love marks a true church.

So Christ saved us and put a principle of love in our hearts that is patterned after the love with which he loved us at Calvary. And so you see this mutual love between Paul, Tychicus and the readers taking place, and what you realize is that something like that is to reproduce itself in a flourishing local church like ours, and so what does that look like? It's so very ordinary at one level. We interact with each other. We know something about each other's lives and that depth of relationship informs the way that we respond to one another. It makes us people who want to pray for God to help, "God, help these people that I love. Help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. God, keep Your preserving hand upon them until they enter safely into Your heavenly kingdom. Sanctify them, God. Help them in their temptations, God. Help them in their difficulty relationships, God. I'm asking You, God, because I love them, I care for them, and I want Your help to be upon them because I know You can do far more for them than I can."

So that all flows from the fact, look at it there in verse 18, Paul said pray for all the saints, persevere and petition God on their behalf. We do that because we love them, and as we go through life horizontally if we have opportunity to meet their practical needs, we do that too. Just like the cross has both a vertical and a horizontal beam to it, there's both a vertical and a horizontal beam in our love for one another. Vertically we're praying for each other. That's what real Christians do, my friends, we pray for one another. And horizontally we encourage them, we help them. And what does all of that do? What does all of that do? I love this. I love this. What that perspective does is this, it lifts you and me out of that realm of selfishness within the church, it lifts us far beyond that mindset that says, "What can I get out of this? Does this have what I want in it?" It lifts us from all of

that and places us in a realm where we have a mindset that in response to the love which Christ has shown me, I want to love his people something like what he did too. And that happens because the Spirit of God plants that principle of love within those who are true disciples.

You know, we read from Matthew 13 earlier, right? Wheat and tares. Well, I want to tell you, one of the ways that would distinguish a wheat from a tare is not external conformity to attendance in church patterns or things like that, these outward characterizations of things, but rather that principle of love that is intangible but is very real. Jesus said in John 13, he said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another." It means that we're not thinking about what's in this for me when we gather. Christians, real Christians seek the well-being of others within the body of Christ. A church, you can write this one down if you're taking notes, a church thrives on that kind of mutual concern, and on the other side, a church dies without it.

So let me just step back here and say this with all those principles enunciated, I just want to tell you I'm very grateful to God that this kind of spirit of love animates life at Truth Community Church. I see it all around. It's why people can't ever get out of here within an hour of closing time. That's evidence of, that happens because you love one another and you care about each other enough to stay around and talk. "How are you doing? How can I pray for you? Do you have any needs I can meet?" And that spirit, I believe, animates life at Truth Community and I'm grateful to God for each one of you. I'm saying these things not to rebuke you but to affirm you. Well, let me back up. I'm saying these things, first of all, because it's in the text, that's the most important thing. I say them not to rebuke you but to encourage you and to ask you to excel still more. We can all grow in this even more, can't we?

So that's life at the human level within the body of Christ. There's this spirit of mutual love and concern that is reflected in the very ordinary way Paul said, "Tychicus, take this letter to them and comfort them. They're concerned about me. Assure them that I am well so that they will be at peace." And Tychicus like the loyal soldier that he was, you trace the life of Tychicus in Scripture, he was alongside Paul for 10 or 15 years. It's really amazing to see. He was one of those unsung heroes in Scripture by his faithfulness to the people of God.

Well, that's life at the human level, let's consider life at the divine level as this letter closes up for us. The custom in letter writing in the ancient world was to finish a letter with a wish for the reader's health or happiness, and we see something of that, we see the shadow of that earthly custom in the way that Paul ends the letter here in verses 23 and 24. He does it with a spiritual twist, you might say. Verse 23, he says,

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

So what Paul is doing here is this, he takes that custom of wanting to end, you know, "I wish you well. I wish you happiness," that typically marked the end of letters in ancient times, he takes that general custom and adapts it to a prayer for them and for a final blessing upon his readers.

Now understand this with me here, and I had kind of wished I had made this point last time when I was talking about prayer. I'm going to kind of bring it in here as well. Throughout this letter, Paul has been praying for them in a very earnest profound way, and let's take a moment to just remind ourselves of the prayerful spirit that Paul had for those that were under his spiritual charge. I want you to turn here with me, chapter 1, verse 15. He says,

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 [I] do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that

And then he unfolds for them exactly what it is that he prays for them. What are the contents of his prayers? Well, he prays that, verse 17,

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

He says, "I am praying to God that He would expand your understanding so that you could understand the glories of being in Christ; that God would give you wisdom to know the great hope that is yours in Christ; that your spiritual future is certain in Christ, and that God will certainly receive you into heaven in the end. I'm praying that you would know that because I know it'll transform your life." He says, "I'm praying that you would know that in the meantime the power that is at work in you is the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead." And so he's praying for these wonderful spiritual blessings to come upon the people of God.

In chapter 3, verse 14, he keeps praying. He's praying for them to know power in the inner man. Chapter 3, verse 14, he says,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

Verse 16, for the sake of time,



16 [I pray] that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

In this rich Trinitarian prayer, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he asks that they would have the spiritual understanding, the spiritual experience of somehow comprehending and appropriating the unfathomable, immeasurable love of Christ for his people so that they would dwell in peace, joy, and confidence as they walk through this wicked world in the midst of demonic opposition.

So as you come now to the end of chapter 6, you get kind of a short summary synopsis of the things that he had been praying earlier throughout the letter when he says, and this is, in essence, a real prayer, he says, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." What is it as Paul is closing his letter that he wishes for these readers? What is it, what is it by application, by extension, that we ultimately seek for each other within the confines of the local church? What is our aspiration for each other? What should be my aspiration for you and your aspiration for me? It's not so much that we would experience the blessings of health and prosperity in this life. Those things are all temporary, they're fading, and you know what? You're not going to be buried with them. Job said, "Naked I came into this world, naked I'll depart. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." It's a matter of indifference by comparison to having this peace, love and grace that comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is more to us, beloved, there is more to us than our outer man. Man does not live on bread alone, it's not merely a physical existence we have but a spiritual existence by which we feed on the word of God, and that that renews and changes our inner man so that we walk through in a sense of communion with God and love for one another wherein such things is found life indeed. Peace has the idea of spiritual wholeness. Before Christ saved you, you were separated from God and he did not even hear your prayers or acknowledge them. He was aware of them but he was not your covenant God, he was your judge and you were under his wrath. But in Christ, you're reconciled. You have peace with God. He's no longer angry with you because all of his anger was spent on his Son at the cross which frees him now to receive you in love and harmony. And what Paul is saying here in this text, "Peace be to the brethren," I pray that all of the harmony and wellness and goodness of that reconciliation would flow from God through you to each other. The vertical beam, the horizontal beam. That vertical harmony with God expressing itself horizontally as you interact with one another, that peace from God would flow through you.

Look at it there again in verse 23, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith." Paul wants them to know that God blesses them; that they are on the receiving end of God's

favor, God's provision, God's protection. Understand that in the love of God which sent Christ into the world, there is this comprehensive realm of care that you enjoy from God the Father that is received by faith, and that is designed to calm your heart in every uncertain circumstance as you look to the week ahead, it calms the heart of every person dealing with terminal illness, the realm of other aspects and relationships of life. Paul wants them to know the undergirding foundational nature of the love of God for them as they live by faith. Now that's no small thing, huh? You compare it to the anxiety, the uncertainty, the hostility of the world around us toward Christians in general, some of you experiencing that individually even as we speak, but you compare it to the hostility of a demonic environment designed for your destruction, you compare it to the hostility of a world that crucified Christ and has the same things in its heart toward you, compare it to your own doubts and inconsistencies, to take all of that heavy spiritual reality and place it on one side of the scale, so to speak, and realize that the love of God in Christ more than counterbalances it, that the love of God is a forgiving gracious dynamic in your life toward your sins, the love of God protects you from Satan and his foes, protects you in the midst of a hostile world, if you grasp something of that, then you can walk through the other with a sense of faith and confidence and joy and gratitude. "God, You saved me out of all of that. You pardoned all of my sins. You've given me the righteousness of Christ. I'm at total peace."

Then in verse 24 he says, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love." Undeserved favor which brought you to salvation. Beloved, let's remember something that we say a lot but you can never say it too much. Remember that before Christ saved you, you were dead in trespasses and sins. You were under the wrath of God. You were a guilty, vile rebel before God and what did God do to you, for you in that state, those of you that are Christians? He brought the Gospel to you. He brought the good news of forgiveness of sin in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit put a new principle of life in you and you exercised faith in Christ, and God forgave your sins and cleansed your conscience, and set upon you an eternal love that will not let you go. Despite how bad and vile and wicked your past was, that's what God did while you were like that. Well, how much more, then, if you've been reconciled to God through faith in Christ, how much more, then, will he love you now that you've been adopted into his family? How much more will his love abound and overflow?

So Christ has done everything that is necessary for God to accept you and when you receive Christ by faith, receive forgiveness of sin, receive eternal life through faith in him, then all of the riches of Christ belong to you. In the same way that God accepts Christ, his own Son, is the way that he accepts you because he does not accept you, my Christian friend, on the basis of things that you have done in righteousness. That could never be the case. Your works are always going to be marred by sinful motives or imperfections to one degree or another. That's not why God accepts you, he accepts you for the sake of his beloved Son who loved you and gave himself up for you. You are safe in Christ. You are accepted in Christ and because of that, you're at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul's prayer here is that the Spirit of God would cleanse us from that false legalistic approach to life that thinks, "God accepts me more or less based on the current level of my behavior." Understand that it was grace all along. It was undeserved favor all along. It wasn't what you had done, it's who God is that makes you safe in Christ. And now that grace is operative in your life, sanctifying you, conforming you to the image of Christ as you love him with a love that can never be broken because it's a love that God himself is the originator of.

So how do you love Christ? What does love for Christ look like? Charles Hodge, that great Professor of Theology from Princeton Seminary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century said this, he said, "Love to Christ includes adoring admiration of His person, desire for His presence, zeal for His glory, and devotion to His service." You admire the person of Christ. You long to be in his presence, to walk with him closely here on earth, but even more to desire that day when you're with him in heaven and realizing that being with Christ in heaven, that will be the culmination of existence. Everything else is paltry by comparison to that. You're zealous for men to know his fame, his glory, his righteousness, and your life is devoted to his service.

Well, beloved, those of you that, oh, how should I say this? We've been talking about wheat and tares in the providence of God here today. Are you concerned that you might be a tare? Well, look, look, at some point and somewhere in your heart is there a love for Christ or not? Do you really love him as though he was the only thing worth living for or can you take it or leave it? Do you long to be with him or are you so preoccupied with this life that being with Christ hardly ever crosses your mind? That's a bad sign. Do you long for the glory of Christ or just the things and plaudits of this world? Is there something in your life by which you serve him even if it's in the quiet faithfulness of being a loving mother at home for young children? That's a great way to serve Christ. It doesn't have to be outward, it doesn't have to be public but somehow what I do, I do for Christ. Whether I eat, drink, live, whatever I do, it's for his glory. That's what a Christian is like. That is the kind of life that the Holy Spirit works into the people that he saves.

Now if those marks are absent from your life, no matter what you've claimed to know about Christ in the past, my friends, I beg you to go to Christ and to ask him for mercy on your soul either to repent of the coldness that you've let your believing heart fall into, or with a Spirit-engendered recognition that, "I've never been saved in the first place. God, have mercy on my soul. Thank You for not letting me die before I came to this understanding."

Look at it there in verse 23. These are spiritual realities that are real in true Christians to one degree or another. We're not trying to quantify it here. We're not being legalistic. This is just the real thing. "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, grace be with those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love." Paul here is seeing his readers from a divine perspective and it shows us how to care for each other in the church. We look beyond the inevitable imperfections of the men and women who gather here. I hope by the grace of God you look past the imperfections of the elders that serve you. I pray that by the grace of God you look past things that this church doesn't do and

simply look for the things of God in what has been expressed here, and to recognize that life in the body is governed by this dynamic. Jesus Christ not only loves you, my Christian friend, he loves everyone that's in the body and therefore in light of that, then what we want preeminently for each other, we want each other, we want each other to share in these blessings of the grace and love and peace of which Paul speaks.

So we've come to the end of Ephesians 6 and as we say farewell to Ephesians, may God help you and me to fare well in our future devotion to Christ and each other, and that the life of this church would ever grow in these graces of which we have seen. May it be true in our individual hearts. May you seek it at the throne of grace not only for yourself but for all the brethren in Christ.

Let's pray together.

*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

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