

May God Bless You – Eph 6:21-24

Eph 6:21-24. After 6 chapters, 151 verses, and a host of topics, Paul's almost done. From the heights of theology and doctrine in chapters 1-3, to the depths of application and instruction in chapters 4-6, this is it.

Intro

We started this series on February 2, 2020. Under the theme of *Live Coram Deo*. A constant reminder that we are *in* the presence of God as followers of Christ, and we ought to live like it. Under his authority and for his glory.

And then came March 15th of last year. When the world shut down, and you watched from your living room. And the passage we were on, just happened to be Eph 1:11-14. Where Paul speaks of our blessed assurance in Christ. That in him, we are safe and secure. Ephesians was good fare in those days.

And every day thereafter. From the riots and the derecho, to the election and our culture. Its been food for the soul. Giving us exactly what we need, when we need it.

And now, 50 sermons and 19 months later, this is it. 50. With a ton of notes and knowledge and application on your part to show for it. I've seen it. In your lives and in your Bibles. Like this **photo** that somebody sent me. A page from Ephesians 1 that's full of notes, circles, underlines; and even *hearts*. To each his own. Some of you even came to *Christ* in the middle of this series. Praise God. For all of it.

➤ But Paul's not done. Oh he's done with the doctrine and exhortation, but not with his message; his thoughts. And just because he's signing off, doesn't mean this passage is a throw-away. In fact, it's as pertinent as ever, because it's as *personal* as ever. A personal *blessing* from his heart to theirs; the church in Ephesus.

And I want to share the same with you. Just like *he* conveys God's blessing, *I* want to convey God's blessing. From my heart to yours. V21.

[21] *So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything.* [A comment that set the pattern for missionary reporting to this day]. [22] *I have sent him to you* [the church in Ephesus] *for this very purpose, that you may know how we are* [Paul and his companions] *and that he may encourage your hearts.* [And then he ends with this.]

[23] *Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* [24] *Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.* (ESV)

➤ If you've ever heard the word "benediction," and wondered what it is, this is it. A prayer or message of blessing, from the Lord. The essence of which, is God bless you. May God bless you. That's the idea. And here, there's 3 parts to it. It's a 3-fold benediction. Starting with this:

May God bless you with faithful friends (v21)

Faithful friends, as in beloved brothers and sisters in *Christ*.

Secular friends are good too, but apart from Jesus, apart from the Holy Spirit within you and between you, you're missing out. Missing a connection at the spiritual level.

So from my heart to yours, may God bless you with faithful friends in *Christ*. Partners in life and ministry. People who are loyal and reliable to the end. Brothers and sisters to laugh and cry with. Buddies to talk and think with. People to bear your burdens and share your joys; give you the shirt off their back; be there when you need them. May God bless you with faithful friends like *that*.

Because that's exactly what Tychicus was for Paul. A faithful friend, and partner in ministry. V21. *So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything.*

➤ We don't know a *lot* about Tychicus, but he's mentioned 5 different times in Scripture. All by Paul. He accompanied him to Jerusalem where Paul was arrested. He stayed by his side when Paul was escorted to Rome. He stood by his side when he appeared before kings and governors. He was there when he sat in prison, and ships, and remote islands. He stuck with Paul while he was under house arrest. And now he's delivering a letter on his behalf.

They shared it all. Joys and sorrows, ups and downs, successes and setbacks. And through it all, they remained together. So it's no wonder Paul calls him *the beloved brother and faithful minister*. Not just "a" beloved brother, but "the" beloved brother. As if he was well known as Paul's friend and companion. And probably theirs too; having *come* from the region of Ephesus.

He was a brother in Christ, he was a partner in ministry, he was well-loved, and he was faithful; faithful to the end. What a blessing.

May God bless you with faithful friends like Tychicus. People who make your life better and richer. People who stick closer than a brother (Prov 18:24). People you can't imagine doing life without.

➤ But you know as well as I, it often starts with you. If you're going to be blessed with faithful friends, you have to . . .

- **Be one yourself.** *You* have to be faithful. *You* have to be loyal. *You* have to be there. Chances are God won't bless *you* with faithful friends, unless *you're* a faithful friend. It goes both ways. Just like Paul. It could just as easily have been said of him that *he* was a beloved brother and faithful minister.

Be one yourself, and . . .

- **Look for them.** Faithful friends don't just show up like Amazon packages. You have to seek them out. Keep your eyes peeled; your antenna up. Look for people with the qualities of Tychicus: loyal, servant-oriented, dedicated.

Men, look for guys who share your values. Your love for the Lord; your passion for the church; your desire for godliness; your hunger for the Word; your dedication to family. Women, look for gals who serve the Lord, and live godly, upright lives. Women who

think biblically and love deeply. Women dedicated to the Lord and their family. Women whose *strength* is the joy of the Lord.

God will *bless* you with faithful friends, if you *look* for faithful friends.

And when you find them . . .

- **Invest in them.** Instead of waiting for them to invest in you, take the initiative and invest in them. Spend time with them. Invite them over. Have coffee. Ask them to *serve* with you. Encourage them to join you for Bible study. Because good friends don't just happen. They develop and grow as you *invest* in them. Like Paul invested in Tychicus, and Titus, and Timothy. Even John Mark at the beginning of his ministry.

He looked for faithful followers of Christ; he looked for devoted men of character; he looked for people eager to learn and grow, and then invested in them. Inviting them on his missionary journeys, entrusting himself to their care, asking them for help, and no doubt sharpening them along the way. (Prov 27:17)

Look for faithful friends, *invest* in them, and be one yourself. It's God's way of *blessing* you with faithful friends.

Second, in this 3-fold benediction . . .

May God bless you with regular encouragement (v22)

Encouragement that you *receive*, and encouragement you give. Encouragement *from* others, and encouragement *for* others. May God bless you with that. Regularly.

V22. Speaking of Tychicus, Paul says – *I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts*. Paul wanted to encourage them with an update, and encourage them with a personal emissary. So he wrote a letter, and sent Tychicus.

Why? Why go to such great lengths to encourage? Because we need it and desire it. Every single one of us. From the highest leader to the lowest follower. We want someone to commend us. Congratulate us. Inspire us. Support us. Notice us. It's how we're wired.

Plus, encouragement is one of the most powerful incentives we can receive. I'll never forget the basketball practice my freshmen year of college, when the assistant coach pulled me and my roommate aside in the middle of the court, and told us he thought we could be the best big men in the conference someday. It didn't happen. But for the rest of the year I worked harder, jumped higher, ran faster, and played better. And set goals I probably wouldn't have. That's what encouragement does. It's that powerful.

Which is why we find it all over the Bible, bearing fruit in all kinds of ways.

Let me give you 7 of them.

- **7 Fruits of Regular Encouragement.** 7 outcomes. 7 benefits.

1. It spurs us on. Regular encouragement spurs us on. Like when God told Moses in Deuteronomy 3, to encourage Joshua, because he would lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Dt 3:28). With such a daunting task and responsibility on his shoulders, encouragement spurred him on. That's the first fruit.

2. It lifts our spirit. Like when Paul says in 1 Thess 4, that we will rise at the appearance of Jesus when he returns; and then says, *encourage one another with these words*. (1 Thess 4:18) Why? Because it lifts our spirit, even in the face of death.

3. It strengthens our resolve. Like the encouraging guarantee of God to *bless* us, even in difficulty; Hebrews 6. So that we *might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us*. (18) Regular encouragement strengthens our resolve; to hold fast, stay the course, keep on.

4. It builds us up. *For God has not destined us for wrath* [1 Thess 5], *but to obtain salvation* . . . *Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up* (9-11). Encouragement builds us up.

5. It assures our heart. Col 2:2 says that Paul struggled on behalf of the churches he planted, *that their hearts may be encouraged . . . to reach all the riches of full assurance*. All the riches of confidence in God's salvation. God's protection. God's provision. Encouragement assures our heart of biblical truth.

6. It leads to hope. Especially the encouragement of God's Word. Which was written, that *through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*. Rom 15:4. Encouragement leads to hope.

7. It results in joy. Like when the Gentile believers read the letter from the Jerusalem Council, telling them they didn't have to keep the Law to be saved. *They rejoiced* [it says in Act 15] *because of its encouragement* (32). The letter's encouragement.

7 fruits that I pray you experience regularly, because you receive regular *encouragement*. That's what it takes. *Regular* encouragement. Because just like fruit, it doesn't *last* forever. It grows stale; and bland; and even rotten after a while.

It's like the stereotypical wife who tells her husband he never encourages her. "How come you never tell me I look nice?" To which he says, "I have. I said it on our wedding day, and I still mean it." Brother, that fruit went bad a long time ago.

Make sure you offer *regular* encouragement to those around you. Because regular encouragement yields fresh fruit. Fruit that's pleasant to the soul and inspiring for life.

And may God bless *you* with the same.

And then last . . .

May God bless you with spiritual blessings (v23-24)

Gifts from above. Gifts from him. Look at v23-24. *Peace be to the brothers* [Paul says; the brothers and sisters in Christ, there in Ephesus], *and love with faith* [love be to them as well; along with faith], *from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* [they're gifts from above]. [24] *Grace* [favor and blessing] *be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible* [love pure and never ending].

It's an expression of blessing to those who love the Lord. Those devoted to him. Those who treasure him. No love, no blessing. That's the implication. V24. *Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ* (24). It starts with love. Love for the Lord.

But make no mistake, that love is *given* to us. As a spiritual blessing. We don't muster it, and we can't create it. V23 – *Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. Love, just like peace and faith, is a *gift* of God. A gift that Paul desires them to have, but one that starts with God himself. Like the Apostle John says – *We love, because he first loved us* (1 Jn 4:19). God did.

➤ So loved one, if he hasn't already, may God awaken you to faith, and bless you with the spiritual blessing of **love**. Love for him and love for others. Love incorruptible and love unshakable. Love unconditional and love sacrificial. And if he already has, if he's *already* blessed you with love from above, may he give you all the more. May God bless you.

And give you **peace** as well. May God bless you with the spiritual blessing of peace. Not just the absence of conflict and strife; but the presence of rest, and wholeness, and inner tranquility. Like God told Moses, to tell Aaron, to speak over the Israelites in **Numbers 6**.
[24] The LORD bless you and keep you; [25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; [26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Nu 6:24-26)

May God bless you with the spiritual blessing of peace.

And **faith**. V23 again. *Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, [that too] from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. Just like love and peace, faith is a spiritual blessing from God. A blessing to believe and trust. That's *biblical* faith. The spiritual capacity, given by God, to believe and trust him. Believe and trust in Jesus to save and keep you. Believe and trust his Word and ways. Believe and trust his provision and protection.

May God *bless* you with that. With faith and more faith. Because faith opens up a whole *world* of blessing.

➤ And last but not least, may God bless you with the spiritual blessing of **grace**. Unmerited favor. Unconditional favor. Unspeakable, unrepayable, unfathomable. Straight from the heart of God.

Coram Deo, my desire is that God would lavish you with such goodness in your life, that you're nearly embarrassed by it. May he enable you to find such favor in the eyes of man, you can't explain it. May he open doors of opportunity and close doors of danger; and do so with such clarity as to leave you in awe. May his Coram Deo presence *go before* you to light the way, *with* you to set you apart, and *behind* you to guard your life.

May God bless you with the spiritual blessing of grace, upon grace, upon grace.

From my heart to yours, may God bless you. With faithful friends, regular encouragement, and spiritual blessings in abundance.

Prayer – Father, you're so good to us. You've poured out so many blessings in our lives and church, we can't keep track. But we sure do praise you. And humbly ask that you continue. For your glory and our joy, God, pour yourself out. On our marriages, our families, our children, and our children's children. May you bless us, and keep us, and make your face to shine upon us, all the more. (No amen)

You Are Loved