

PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

Ephesians 6:18-24

This week I read the entire book of Ephesians - decided to do one more message. We are going to do a quick flyover – fasten your seatbelt.

Chapter 1: The Plan of God

1-2 - Salutation

3-14 - Our Great Salvation

3-5 – Chosen by God the Father

- In time past
- To be blameless
- Adopted to be his very own
- To the praise of his glorious grace

6-12 – Redeemed by the Son

- Saved by his blood
- Forgiven by his grace
- Given the knowledge of his eternal purpose
- Promised an inheritance
- To the praise of his glory

13-14 – Sealed by the Spirit

- You heard
- You believed
- You were sealed
- Your inheritance is waiting
- To the praise of his glory

Our salvation is like a hymn with three stanzas – past, present, and future; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each stanza concludes with a refrain of praise – It's all about Him!

15-23 - Paul's prayer

15-16 – His praise

17-19 – His prayer

- A spirit of wisdom and revelation
- Enlightenment regarding:
 - o The hope of his calling
 - o The riches of his inheritance
 - o The greatness of his power

20-23 – His doxology exalting Christ

Chapter 2: The Body of Christ

1-10 - A Showcase for God's Grace

1-3 – The Unregenerate man

- Dead in sin
- Ruled by Satan
- Living in the passions of the flesh
- Children of wrath

4-6 – The Regenerate Man

- Made alive in Christ
- Seated in heavenly places with Christ
- To show His amazing grace

7-10 – The Plan of Salvation

- Saved by grace, not by works
- Saved for good works

11-22 - United in one body

11-12 – The life of the Gentiles

- Separated from Christ
- Alienated from the people of God - Israel
- Strangers to the covenants
- No hope and without God

13-18 – The Work of Christ

- Brought near by the blood of Christ
- The dividing wall broken down
- Jew and Gentile brought together
- One new body – the Church
- Equal access to God

19-22 – The Body of Christ – the Church

- Fellow citizens of the household of God
- Being built into a dwelling place for God

Chapter 3: The Mystery of the Gospel

1-13 - Mystery and Ministry

1-6 – The mystery of God's Plan for the Church

- Gentiles would be fellow heirs
- Members of the same body
- Partakers of the promise

7-12 – The mystery of God's purpose for the Church

- The Gentiles should know Christ
- Everyone should understand the mystery of the gospel
- To reveal his manifold wisdom to all creatures

13 – Encouragement in ministry

14-21 – Paul's Prayer

14-19 – He asks that they might be:

- Strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit
- Realize that Christ dwells in them
- Be rooted and grounded in love
- Be filled with all the fullness of God

20-21 – A hymn of praise

Chapter 4: The Christian Walk

1-6 – A walk worthy of the Lord Jesus

Characterized by:

- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Forbearance

Built on a foundation of unity

7-16 – Unity, Diversity and Maturity

7-10 – The distribution of gifts

- Given by Christ
- According to his grace

11 – God's gifts to the church

- Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers

12-13 – The purpose of the gifts

- To equip the saints for ministry
- To build up the body of Christ
- To produce unity and maturity in the body

14-16 – The characteristics of a mature body

- Stability in faith and practice – no longer children
- Security in our relationships – speaking the truth in love
- Support for one another – building itself up in love

17-32 – The New Life

17-19 – The unconverted life

- Their understanding is darkened
- Their sensitivity is gone – a dead conscience

20-24 – The process of conversion

- Put off the old self
- Have your mind made new
- Put on the new self

25-32 – The converted life

- Replace old sins with new habits
- Live a Spirit-pleasing life (*lots more could be said here*)

Chapter 5:1-6:9: Imitating God

1-21 – Becoming imitators of God

- We must live pure lives
- We must live transparent lives
- We must live Spirit-filled lives
 - o In wisdom
 - o Understanding the times
 - o Controlled by the Holy Spirit
 - o Filled with praise and thanksgiving

22-6:9 – Living in Harmony

22-33 – Harmony in marriage

- Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord
- Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loves the church

6:1-4 – Harmony in the family

- Children, obey your parents
- Fathers, do not provoke your children

5-9 – Harmony in the workplace

- Servants, work as for the Lord
- Masters, treat your servants well

Chapter 6:10-18: Fighting the Battle

10-13 – The nature of the enemy

- A spiritual enemy – not flesh and blood
- A devious enemy – he is out to deceive

14-18 – Preparing for the battle

- Beware of hypocrisy – the belt of truth
- Silence the accuser – the breastplate of righteousness
- Stand firm on the one true gospel – the shoes of readiness
- Put out the fires – the shield of faith
- Think like a soldier – the helmet of salvation
- Use your weapon – the sword of the Spirit
- Above all – pray

Well, we have just covered the book of Ephesians in the past few minutes. Well, almost. That was a very brief summary of this very important letter, but I just want to conclude by looking at the last few verses of this letter, which we read earlier in the service.

These last few verses of the letter are easy to overlook, yet I believe they have something important to say to us. I call it...

Partners in Ministry

The Apostle Paul was arguably the greatest Christian missionary this world has ever known. Unfortunately, we often isolate him in our thinking as though he single-handedly changed the world of his day. That is far from the truth and he was well aware of it. Paul often spoke about his fellow labourers and the role they played in his ministry – Romans 16, Colossians 4 and others.

We see it also in these closing verses of his letter to the Ephesians.

****There are two specific areas of partnership that Paul refers to here.**

1. ****Prayer partnership** – Paul sees prayer as playing a vital role of his ministry for Christ. *Read vv. 18b-19a.* To Paul it was important that his readers, the believers in Ephesus be labouring in prayer for one another, for the saints everywhere, and specifically for him—Paul. And what was his key request? ****For the right words and the boldness to express them as he sought to proclaim the wonders of the gospel.** This was even though he was currently bound in chains in Rome. Even there he had opportunities to proclaim the gospel and he knew he needed the prayers of the saints behind him. Have you ever wondered how to pray for the missionaries that you know and support. Certainly there are other things as well, but here is a wonderful suggestion. Pray that they will have the wisdom to know what to say and when to say and the boldness to proclaim it without fear.
2. ****Ministry partnership** – Paul knew it was neither safe or effective to try to carry on a “Lone Ranger” kind of ministry. He travelled with other men—Luke, Barnabas, Silas, and others who worked together with him. He often mentioned others who were vital to the work he was doing. One of the classic passages is in Romans 16. *Turn and read Rom. 16:1-16.*
****Here in Ephesians, Paul mentions a man named Tychicus, a man who had faithfully served alongside Paul and was with him there in Rome. Now Paul was sending him along with these letters to Ephesus and Colossae, so that he could take news along to them of how things were going with Paul, and so he could be an encouragement to them, as he knew they worried about him.**

This is an area I have been very weak in over the years. It is easy for some of us—for people like me—to become isolated and try to carry on our ministry, whether it is vocational ministry or what we sometimes term ‘lay ministry,’ all by ourselves without realizing the need for companionship and partnership in our work for the Lord.

Conclusion:

Well, as we leave behind this letter to the Ephesians I trust that we will not leave behind the lessons we have learned. As we wrap it up, remember to pray for one another. ****Make supplication for all the saints, *and also for me.*** I need your prayers, as we each need to be praying for each other.

And may we continue to work together in the ministry, to accomplish the will of God for our fellowship and for our community.

And if you are still unsure about your salvation, I urge you to settle that question once and for all, so that it can be said of you as Paul said of his readers in Ephesus:

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:13-14 ESV)

Prayer