

## **Sermon Notes: *Encourage One Another* (Ephesians 6:21-24)**

**Intro:** Having heard “the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation and believed in Jesus Christ, we were *sealed in him* with the promised Holy Spirit” (1:13). The Spirit dwells in the believing heart “forever” (Jn 14:16). The Spirit preserves God’s child in his grace! He is not only saved but safe. But how does the Spirit keep us in the grace of God? One means is the “encouragement” that we receive within the household of faith. God enables our perseverance in part through the support of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thus Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to “encourage” the hearts of God’s people. “Encourage” translates the Greek term *parakaleo*—a favorite word of Paul’s. We experience the encouragement of God within his worshiping and fellowshiping community.

**#1: Tychicus: a giver of encouragement (21).** We meet Tychicus first in the NT in Acts 20. Luke describes him as an “Asian.” But he also pairs him with Trophimus who was an “Ephesian.” That and the fact that Paul feels no need in this letter to introduce Tychicus to the Ephesians may mean that Tychicus was also an Ephesian. The few other references to Tychicus show him to have been a faithful servant of God’s people. When we remember that the church is the “body and Christ” and the Temple of God, then we see Tychicus’ “encouragement” in a whole different light. Tychicus’ hands and mouth are the vessels which the Divine Comforter, the Spirit, uses to encourage the children of God. The hands of God’s Spirit. We learn in Colossians, a letter delivered at the same time as Ephesians, that Tychicus was accompanying Onesimus, the once-runaway-now converted slave back to Colossae and his owner, Philemon (Col. 4:7ff). It says a great deal about his Christian character, his heart knowledge of God’s grace, and his wisdom that he was entrusted with brokering the return of a slave to his Christian master as well as carrying the apostle’s precious teaching. At the end of Paul’s life, he stood with him in his imprisonment (2 Tim 4:12). The mouth of God’s Spirit. Perhaps Tychicus served as Paul’s scribe even discussing the contents of this letter with Paul! He was probably the first minister to expound its teaching to the Ephesian congregation. Paul says Tychicus will be faithful “to tell you everything.” This probably means more than “everything about me, Paul.” It means “everything that you, Ephesians, need to know about how to apply the teaching of this letter.” Tychicus is a model of the truth and grace Paul expounds in his letters. A vessel of the Spirit. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Encourager (*Paraclete*) to be with his church forever. We who are indwelt by that heavenly Encourager must, like Tychicus, *parakaleo* or encourage and console one another. We must be the hands and mouthpieces which the Spirit uses.

**#2: Paul: a recipient of encouragement (21-22).** Paul wants the Ephesians to know how he is doing. The purpose for this letter may be as simple as that! Paul was in prison. Paul had ministered in Ephesus for years, and he wants to encourage his many friends with how wonderfully God is strengthening him in prison. He also wants the Ephesians to know that he needs their encouragement too. Paul needed prayer (19-20). How remarkable! Here we have an apostle who had been given a revelation of Jesus Christ. The risen, ascended, and glorified Son of God had personally appeared to Paul and commissioned with authority and power to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus. Paul possessed a unique anointing from God. He performed the miracles of an apostle. He enjoyed a fruitful ministry. Still, Paul says, God had deposited this treasure of apostolic grace within a jar of clay (2 Cor 4:7). He was an apostle empowered by God. Yet like a clay jar, he was weak and frail. He could be in distressing circumstances.

Sometimes he was lonely and afraid. He was not a stranger to despairing of life itself (2 Cor. 1:8). Yes, God's grace is sufficient. But God's power is made perfect in our weakness which teaches us to rely on him and on the prayers of his people. Paul needed friends. We may read his letters and think of him as authoritarian and severe and sometimes his apostolic office required him to be. But his numerous greetings in his letters also reveal him to be a man who, like his Lord, was capable of deep and tender relationships. We can only really minister to others if we are able to enjoy their friendship and share love with them. Paul needed accountability. Remarkably he felt duty bound to report to the church what God was doing in his ministry. Surely he felt accountable to God. But in addition he felt accountable to the church. We must maintain close ties with Christ loving brothers and sisters!

**#3: Peace, love, grace: the blessings of encouragement (23-24).** Ephesians began with a Doxology of praise to God and ends with a Benediction of blessing from God. Summary of our blessings in Christ. Peace. Not merely the ending of hostilities but the mending of relationships broken by sin. "*Shalom*" or well-being. Assurance of reconciliation to God through Jesus' blood and deliverance from darkness into God's light. Love. God's love known as our election, redemption, and adoption. This love must be expressed to others. Grace. The source of God's blessing and cause of all praise.