

AMBASSADORS IN CHAINS

(Ephesians 6:18-24)

I. WELCOME/OPENING PRAYER/ILLUSTRATION

- A. This is the biggest ship, hull, prop, contrast in the world (Slides)
- B. Is this the biggest (longest, strongest) CHAIN in the world? (S)
- C. Answer: No! And this morning we'll find out what is!

II. INTRODUCTION/OUTLINE

- A. Today we wrap up, next week we sum up
- B. Surveying our text, I noticed how it is filled with *grace*
- C. My outline reflects this theme (S):
 - (18) The Grace of Prayer
 - We certainly have a part in it: prioritizing prayer; learning the various forms of prayer; cultivating a ministry of intercessory prayer; persevering in prayer, etc.
 - But in the end, fervent, effective prayer in all forms is *a gift of God's grace*, for He calls us to be “praying at all times in the Spirit.”
 - Application: Let us therefore set aside times—privately and corporately—to seek and wait on the Spirit of prayer, and to give ourselves to Him
- 1. (19-20) The Grace of Evangelism
- 2. (21-22) The Grace of Courteous and Comforting Communications
- 3. (23-24) The GREAT Grace of Love for God and Christ

II. (19-20) THE GRACE OF EVANGELISM (S)

A. Text: *Pray also for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

B. A little about Paul:

- He's in prison in Rome (S)

- He has lots of opportunities to share, not only with Christian visitors, but also with guards, prisoners, government officials, and maybe even the Emperor himself!
- He knows himself to be an ambassador of the High King of Heaven, sent with an important message for these Gentile people.
- He feels his innate inadequacy for this altogether *supernatural* task, and a corresponding need of God's grace to complete it.
- So he asks for prayer: prayer for the *right words* to say, and the *right spirit* in which to say them.

C. Points of Application:

- Though all of us are not apostles or evangelists, *all of us are ambassadors of Christ*, sent by Christ with a message for certain chosen people whom God puts in our lives (S: Proverbs 25:25, 23:13)
- We are ambassadors *in chains*: chained to *our Lord, his purpose* in the Earth, *his truth, his Spirit, and his love*. ***This is the greatest chain in the world! Very long, very strong, very heavy!*** And all who are wrapped in it are perfectly, blessedly free!
- Gospel ambassadors *know their message*: The mystery of the Gospel (S: John 3:16)
- Gospel ambassadors *are given utterance* (S: John 14:10, Mt. 10:19-20)
- Gospel ambassadors *receive holy boldness from Christ*:
 - a. Here, Paul mentions boldness *twice*
 - b. What is this boldness?
 - Daniel Wallace Definition (S)
 - Dean's definition: It is a gift of the Spirit, who, from time to time, lifts us above our natural reserve by depositing a living word in our hearts, thereby filling us with eagerness to bring that word to others, and a supernatural confidence that it will accomplish its purpose.
 - The example of David vs. Goliath
 - The example of Peter before the Sanhedrin (2 S)
 - c. It is granted to those who *walk in all dependency* before the Lord, John 15:1f (S: 1 Cor. 2:1-5)
 - d. It is granted to those *who walk in all humility* before the Lord (S: 1 Cor. 2) (Note: humility involves submission, servanthood, gentleness, respect, patience, etc.)
 - e. Example of Dean and Wardell

D. A few tips on *personal* (vs. outreach) evangelism:

- “Go—as led!” (The word of the Lord upon the Church; why the Church is in the world, and why the world goes on)
- “Salvation is of the Lord” – and he might be pleased to use you
- God means for the wheat to mingle with the tares (insulation vs. isolation)
- Become all things to all people (Jesus reduces himself to us)
- Don’t hide your light under a bushel (be your usual Christian self, no more no less; conversational candor)
- If the Lord gives you something to say, say it—but consider asking permission first!
- In the face of every impression: Am I being led by life, love, liberty, longing and laughter (joy), or being pushed by guilt, fear, compulsion?
- Spend some time in prayer and study developing an approach to sharing the gospel that’s “you”
- Along the way, pick up as much Apologetics as you can
- The perfect launching pad: your testimony

III. (21-22) THE GRACE OF COURTEOUS AND COMFORTING COMMUNICATIONS

A. Text: *But that you also may know my circumstances and how I am getting along, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. (S)*

B. Exposition:

- Tychicus, a believer from Asia; a companion of Paul on his third missionary journey, and now in Rome; a trusted messenger of his letters to Ephesus, Colosse, and Philemon.
- Tychicus’ mission was not only to deliver Paul’s letter, but to comfort the Ephesians on how Paul was doing, the challenges he faced, the opportunities he enjoyed, the victories he had won.

C. Application:

- Part of love is keeping loved ones in the loop! In a world where things often go wrong, no news can be bad news, with the result that folks worry!
- Part of life in God’s Kingdom is “looking in” on brothers and sisters, and on partners in ministry, telling them how we’re doing, and finding out how they’re doing. Schedule this

- The example of the Shepards (Reading)

IV. (23-24) THE GREAT GRACE OF LOVE TOWARDS GOD AND CHRIST

A. Text: *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love imperishable. Amen.*

B. This is a Double Benediction

1. A word about benedictions: They are prayers, but they are also more than prayers: Being inspired by the Spirit of prayer, they are also *prophecies* about what *will* happen, because they reflect *divine decrees* as to what *must* happen. (Note: No form of verb to be)

2. Benediction #1:

- Paraphrase: *May peace and love, with faith, flow to the brethren—and they surely will, since this is God’s purpose and plan!*
- They come from the two-fold fountain of all **grace**: God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Jesus is divine, a Fount of all blessing)
- All three, though gifts of grace, involve our participation
- To note especially: *Faith* is the spiritual soil in which all other spiritual blessings grow. Having received the gift of faith *from* God, we must now exercise faith *in* God and his promises. This in turn will calm our doubts and fears, and secure the release of his Spirit within.
- Reading: Newton (S: 162) (cf. Phil. 4:6-7)

3. Benediction #2:

- Paraphrase: *May God the Father continually give grace to all who love Christ with the imperishable love that the Father himself has planted in their hearts—and he surely will give that grace, because the saints surely will love the Lord, since both are part of God’s eternal purpose and plan!*

V. A MEDITATION ON THE SAINTS LOVE FOR GOD AND CHRIST

A. Prior to our conversion, we were slaves to a sinful nature that was hostile to God (S: John 5:42, Rom. 1:29-30, 8:6-8)

B. In the act of regeneration, God deposited within us a new nature that loves both Him and Christ (S: John 8:38-42)

C. This makes sense, since in regeneration we are united with all three Persons of the Trinity, and now participate in the eternal exchange of love that characterizes the Trinity.

D. This spiritual re-union with the God of love has three big implications that we need always to keep in mind:

1. We DO love Christ

- The new nature ever loves Christ (i.e., imperishable, incorruptible)
- *Caveat*: The residue of the old nature still is hostile to Christ
- When we experience the struggle between the two, we are greatly distressed! (Rom. 7; Gal. 5:17)
- But by FAITH we can rise above our distress, saying in truth, with the Scriptures, and with the blessing of the Spirit: I—THE NEW MAN (OR WOMAN) CREATED IN CHRIST—LOVE THE LORD!
- Newton Reading

2. We MUST love Christ

- Because of residual sin and the promise of sanctification, there is work to do:
- We must love Him with our *mind* (the more we see, the more we are kindled) (Note: C. S. Lewis)
- We must love Him with our *affections* (and pray!)
- We must love him with our *choices* (S: John 14:15, 1 John 2:5)
- It is God the Father who enables us to do all this, and it is God the Father who will reward us when we do. (Phil. 2:13)

3. We WILL love Christ

- God has predestined His people to love (S: Eph. 1:4-5)
- Even now He is perfecting it (S: Gal. 5:22, 1 John 4)
- As we do our part, God will shower his *grace* us on us, bringing our love for Him and Christ closer still to perfection

E. Concluding thoughts on love for Christ

- The wise advice of Dianna's Grandmother: "Leave a little room for romance in your life: All the money in the world can't make up for the lack of it!" (S)
- Jesus agrees (S: Rev. 2:2-4)
- Why? Because the New Covenant is a MARRIAGE covenant (Gen. 24, Hosea 2, John 2 (Cana), John 3 (John the B.), Rom. 7, Eph. 5, Rev. 21-22)
- So let us emulate the great lovers of Scripture: The sinful woman, Mary, John, etc.
- And also . . . Lucy