

PROVISIONS FOR THE FIGHT

Ephesians 6.23-24: Three essential provisions for the victorious Christian life

We've arrived at the final passage of the Book of Ephesians: The “Benediction.”

- A lot of people will simply gloss over verses like these while thinking that it's just Paul's way of saying “goodbye.” And that may be so, but...
- It may also be that every word of God is pure and important; and therefore there may be something for us to learn in every passage of Scripture (even a “benediction” where Paul says “goodbye”).

In these final two verses of Ephesians, Paul mentions three things: Peace, Love, and Grace.

- After all is said and done (after Paul wrote all that he wrote), we are left with peace, love, and grace.
- So, let's keep in mind what Paul wrote up to this point—what we've learned in Ephesians...

Theme of Ephesians: Ephesians is a book about what we have “in Christ.”

- That phrase, “in Christ,” is repeated several times in Ephesians; it's a central theme in the book.
- Remember that the Ephesian church would eventually develop a very serious problem:
 - ✓ (Rev 2.1-3) John, writing to this same congregation some 25 or 30 years after Paul wrote to them, has some very *good* things to say about this church.
 - ✓ (Rev 2.4) But he also points out a problem: In spite of their good doctrine and tireless work in the ministry, they had *left their first love*.
 - ✓ (Rev 2.5) And John exhorts them to *remember* from whence they have fallen, and *return* to the “first works” (get back to their first love).
- The Holy Spirit, through Paul (in the Epistle to the Ephesians), had already given this congregation the instructions on how to do that (how to avoid the problem that cropped up 25 to 30 years later).

Ephesians falls naturally into two parts (two halves):

1. (Eph 1-3) Doctrine: “Remember” from when you have fallen.
 - Remember what you have in Christ...
 - (Eph 1) Remember your new beginning in Christ. From the moment you were saved and placed in Christ, you got it all (v3)! And you can't lose it (v13-14)!
 - (Eph 2) Remember your big change in Christ. In time past, before Christ, you were dead in your sins; but now, in Christ, you are made alive (v1)! Before, you were a stranger with no hope; but now, in Christ, God has brought you near to Himself (v11-13).
 - (Eph 3) Remember your new Apostle. God didn't leave you without specific instructions on how to live in our dispensation; He gave you Paul (v1-4)!
2. (Eph 4-6) Application: Return to the “first works.”
 - (Eph 4) One of the those first (fundamental, essential) works is walking in the new man (v22-24).
 - (Eph 5) We also need to walk (live, develop a manner of living) as children of light (v8; which required constant, consistent effort: v15-16).
 - (Eph 6) And lastly we've been studying how we need to “walk in the fight”—we need to *fight* in the spiritual warfare that is the Christian life.
 - These are the first (fundamental, essential) works that for the bedrock and foundation of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so Paul ends this Epistle with three words: Peace, Love, and Grace.

- If we hope to finish this warfare in victory, then we need these three things.
- If we hope to do the first works, and not grow distant from our first love, then we need these three things.
- If we hope to grow in Christ and fulfill our Mission, then we need these three things.
- We need **peace** because the Christian life in this world is a constant fight and struggle.
- We need **love with faith** because that is what will keep us going when we get weary and want to quit.
- We need **grace** because in grace we find God's sufficiency for every need.

I. (v23a) The Provision of Peace

A. God's peace is available to anyone and everyone.

1. But, God's peace is only found in Christ. That's why Paul says, "Peace be to the brethren."
2. The lost man is at enmity with God—he and God are enemies.
3. (Rom 5.1) To end the enmity and have peace with God, the sinner must repent of the sin he loves and turn to Christ as his Lord and Savior.
4. (Php 4.6-7) Then (and only then) is the peace of God available to him.
5. God's peace is available to anyone, but everyone who wants it must come to God on God's terms to get it.

B. God's peace is not always the lack of chaos.

1. I think a lot of times we have this idea that peace is a quiet, warm spring meadow with no difficulties, distractions, or dandruff.
 - That may be "peaceful" but it's not necessarily the peace God offer to us in Christ.
2. Most often, the peace of God that He so graciously provides to the brethren is peace in the midst of the storm...
 - a) (Mat 8.23-25) Christ is our example: In the midst of a storm that frightened seasoned fisherman, Jesus slept peacefully.
 - b) (Mat 8.26-27) And then the Lord rebukes His disciples for their lack of faith in fearing!
 - (1) You see, God can calm the storm—He can remove the external circumstance that has you so agitated.
 - (2) But that is never the ultimate goal because He wants us to learn to trust Him (have faith in Him) and rest in that, like Jesus.
 - (3) The peace we experience when God removes the difficulty is peace that requires no faith.
 - (4) But the peace of God that we can experience in the midst of the storm does require faith, and because it requires faith, it also glorifies God (it shows to all creation that He is worthy of our trust).
3. So, at the end of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul desires peace to the brethren.
 - a) He knows they are in a warfare (in the midst of a continual storm). And he knows that this warfare will never cease until death or the rapture.
 - b) But he also knows that the peace of God is available to all of us (just like Jesus in the boat, we can rest peacefully in the midst of the storm).
 - (1) But, that requires faith. It requires that you know God's promises to you, and that you take Him at His Word! God is trustworthy.
 - (2) You can rest in Him even when life's circumstances are out of your control. Peace of God!

II. (v23b) The Provision of Love

A. Observe two things about the love that Paul desires for believers.

1. It is love *from* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (it's not us loving others; it's about God's love for us in Christ).
2. It is love *with faith*.

B. Our provision of love is God's unconditional love in Jesus Christ.

1. (John 3.16) God's love is available to anyone and everyone, but it's only offered at the cross.
2. (Heb 13.5) But, once you have God's love in Christ, know this: It is unconditional!
 - a) Once the sinner is saved, God's love is given to him based on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (not on anything the sinner is or has done).
 - b) God will *never* leave us; He will *never* forsake us. It is unconditional.

C. Our provision of love from God is only accessed by faith—it is “love with faith.”

1. Most often you will not feel loved, you will not feel worthy of God's love (and right so!), and you will wonder how God could ever love someone like you.
2. (Heb 11.1) That's why our provision for today is “love *with faith*”: You have to *read* about it in Scripture, *believe* what you read in Scripture, and *rest on* what you read in Scripture (that's faith!).
 - a) One day we will *see* God's love in total and complete manifestation.
 - b) But, until then (until death or the rapture), you have to believe God's Word (faith).

D. God's love (with faith) is what will keep us going in the fight.

1. Just like soldiers in battle, Christians (who strive to live as they should) get tired and weary, and they want to give up.
2. But one thing that a soldier will hang onto during those tough times is the love he knows is waiting for him at home.
 - a) There is someone at home who loves him and who wants him make it (parents, a spouse, kids).
 - b) They taught us the same thing Defensive Tactics in the Police Academy: When the fight wears you out, you *have* to focus on your reason to win—your reason to not give up (my kids; I want to go home to my family).
3. God loves us unconditionally in Christ and we will one day get to *go home* and be with Him forever!
 - a) So no matter how hard it gets; no matter how tired we become in fighting for holiness or fighting to rescue the perishing... remember that one day, we get to go home and be with God who loves us unconditionally. Don't quit.
 - b) (1Cor 15.58) It's that “love with faith” (believing in God's love: 1Cor 15.51-57) that will make us steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the ministry.
 - c) (1Thes 4.18) Knowing (by faith) that we get to go home one day (1Thes 4.13-17), after having fought battle after battle here, is what will comfort us until that day.
 - d) God's love for us in Christ is unconditional. He will never leave us nor forsake us. He has fixed our eternal destiny in Christ and that will never change!
 - (1) (2Cor 5.8-9) So be confident (have faith!) and labor!
 - (2) By faith let God's unconditional love for you in Jesus Christ keep you going in the fight. Don't give up. Focus on the love that waits for you “at home” and keep fighting.

III. (v24) The Provision of Grace

A. God's grace is God's power working in and through us to accomplish His good and perfect will.

1. (2Cor 12.9) God's grace is sufficient to meet any and every need we have (or could have).
2. Even when we are weak, God's grace is sufficient to make us strong in Christ.

B. But, the working of God's grace in our lives is conditional.

1. (Eph 6.24) God's grace works in those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.
2. That love is a decision, not a feeling; it's not just words, but action (and that comes from a decision and commitment).
 - a) (John 3.16) God's love for us was manifest in His decision to give His Son in our place.
 - b) (1Jn 3.16-18) Our love must be like that: Action, not just words; a decision and commitment, not just a feeling.
 - c) (John 14.21) As the Bride of Christ, our love for Him will manifest itself in our decision to submit to Him and follow Him in obedience.
3. If we will do that (if we will love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity), God's grace will be available for every need we have.
 - a) We will not only have sufficient grace to grow in Christ in spite of continual opposition...
 - b) But we will also have sufficient grace to fulfill our life's mission of making disciples through the preaching of the gospel and God's Word.
 - c) God's grace is sufficient for us in everything. But that grace is only available to those to choose to love the Lord in sincerity.

Conclusion:

Ephesians is a book about what we have in Christ.

- (Eph 1-3) We have been given so much! ...a new beginning; a complete change (death to life; from far to near); direction in this world (through Scripture).
- (Eph 4-6) But, we have also been given a Mission to accomplish: To be and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we hope to live a “victorious Christian life,” we have to have God's provision: Ephesians 6.23-24.

- If we hope to stay close to the Lord and not leave our first love, we need these three things:
 1. **Peace:** Because the Christian life is always a fight.
 2. **Love with faith:** Because that is what will motivate us and keep us going when we grow weary and tired, and when we want to just quit.
 3. **Grace:** Because that is God's sufficiency for every need we have.
- Never lose sight of how all this out practically in your life: It all depends on being in Christ (saved) and then growing in Christ—in a personal relationship with Him (through His Word—learn it, love it, submit to it, obey it).