

PASSAGE (ESV)

INTRODUCTION

- So far in our series on what it means to be a healthy church member we have looked at our confidence in the sufficiency of Christ, spiritual maturity, living the Word, delighting in the gospel, faithfully proclaiming the gospel, the importance of accountability, and our commitment to one another. Today we are going to bring all of these things together and look at how the Spirit empowers us to do these things; how the Spirit empowers the church to fulfill God's mission.
- I talked to several people trying to figure out what passage we would be looking at to see, to address, how God uses His Spirit to empower His church to fulfill His mission. Thankfully everyone gave me a passage from Ephesians; unfortunately no one gave me the same passage from Ephesians. So we are going to do something a little different today and go through the entirety of Ephesians. I am going to attempt to attempt to read the majority, if not the entirety, of this epistle today with a special focus on highlighting how God is about the process of fulfilling His mission, through His church, by the working of His Spirit.
- From his Roman imprisonment Paul is sending the converted slave Onesimus home to Philemon, who lives in or around Colossae; which prompts the writing of Colossians and Philemon. Along with Onesimus he sends his co-laborer in the Gospel Tychicus and since they will sail there from Rome to Ephesus he writes to address that church as well. Ephesians is unique in that it was not written to address a specific situation. In all likelihood Paul had intended that it be read at numerous Gentile churches along their route and in the larger region of Asia Minor. Since they were written at the same time the themes and wording of Ephesians and Colossians are strikingly similar which really helps to further explain the teaching of these two epistles.
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IV. Conclusion (6:21-24)

I. Prologue (1:1-2)

vv. 1-2: ¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Paul begins with the typical elements of his customary greeting but he is also teaching. Paul's greetings are not a mere formality. We just finished Galatians a while ago which begins, "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father." We know that Galatians addresses the singularity of the gospel. This is why he begins by asserting that his apostleship, and subsequently the gospel he has been sent to proclaim, is not from man but from God. This is the theme that occupies the rest of that epistle.

B. Here in Ephesians, and in Colossians, Paul begins with the assertion that he is an apostle "by the will of God." Everything that follows is a working out of what the will of God is; what the mission of God is. We are going to see what that is, what Paul's role in that is, what the role of the Ephesian church is, what our role is, and how the Holy Spirit is fulfilling that mission through us.

II. Theological Exposition of the Mission of God (1:3-3:21)

A. The Mission of God in Overview (1:3-14)

vv. 3-4a: ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

1. Paul immediately begins by praising God for His divine plan for the cosmos. God is worthy of praise because He has, "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world." He is blessing us in this way so that we will "be holy and blameless before him." God is creating, in Christ, a holy people for Himself.

vv. 4b-6: In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

1. God has blessed us, He has set us apart, He has predestined us to be adopted through His Son that we might be co-heirs with Christ and He is doing all this "according to the purpose of his will." This is the mission of

God; that He sets a people apart for Himself, and for His praise, turning to the end of the story in Revelation we see “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (7:9-10)!

2. He has done and is doing all of this in love. We see this early on with Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6-8, “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers.”

vv. 7-10: ⁷In him [meaning the Beloved, Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, [which is] the forgiveness of our trespasses, [and God is doing this not because of who we are but] according to the riches of his grace, [This is why Paul begins his description of the mission of God as praise. Praise God for the richness of His grace whereby He redeems us by the blood of His Son.] ⁸[continuing in verse 8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

3. He further defines His purpose here, this is the purpose “which he set forth in Christ.” As purpose that is working towards a time of fulfillment, that is what he means by “for the fullness of time,” and the goal of this purpose is to unite all things in Christ. The mission of God is not merely about our redemption it is about the redemption of the entire cosmos. The mission of God is about uniting, or reconciling all things in Christ.

4. Paul says it this way in Colossians, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” (1:15-20).

vv. 11-14: ¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance [Paul is echoing the language of Deuteronomy 4:20, where Israel is said to be God’s inheritance. In keeping with the two themes above of God setting apart a people for Himself and our adoption in Christ we both obtain and become an inheritance in Christ.], having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according

to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In 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, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

5. I said we were going to be looking at how God is fulfilling His mission, through His church, by the working of His Spirit. Here we see that this is the “promised Holy Spirit” this points us back towards all of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Spirit. This is that very Spirit and He has sealed us and guarantees that we will receive an inheritance as co-heirs with Christ and that we will become God’s inheritance, His people for His praise.

B. The Mission of God in Relation to the Ephesian Church (1:15-2:10)

1. Paul is not using his typical means of theological discourse. He began by setting forth the divine plan as praise to God and now he explains how that plan relates to the Ephesian church in a prayer for their sanctification.

vv. 1:15-23: ¹⁵For this reason [pointing back to everything we just read i.e., because of the mission of God], because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him [they have already been given the Spirit so Paul is praying that the Spirit would work in them for the purpose of wisdom and revelation which he defines as], ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know [and here he is going to lay out three truths into which he prays the Spirit will give them insight. First,] what is the hope to which he has called you [this hope does not pertain only to ourselves but encompasses the reconciliation of the entire cosmos in Christ], [Secondly,] what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints [here we clearly see that we are God’s inheritance and Paul prays that we would grasp the riches of what it means to be the people of God], ¹⁹and [Third,] what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

2. Did you hear that? The same power which has worked to reconcile all things in Christ, that exalts Him and gives Him authority over everything past, present, and future is at work for us! While he is praying that the Spirit would illumine their minds to comprehend this he continues and explains how they are already experiencing “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.”

vv. 2:1-7: ^{2:1}And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God being “rich in mercy”] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and [God being “rich in mercy”] raised us up with him and [God being “rich in mercy”] seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

3. We experience “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe” because we who were dead have been “made us alive together with Christ,” we have been resurrected with Christ, and we who were under the influence and power of Satan have triumphed in Christ and are seated with Him above those rulers, and powers, and authorities to reign with Him.

vv. 2:8-10: ⁸[Paul now explains the “immeasurable riches of his grace” mentioned in verse 7,] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

4. This is the mission of God. He is taking a people who “once walked, following the course of this world” (2:2) and He is redeeming them reconciling them to Himself to be “holy and blameless before Him” that they might walk in the works which He prepared for us beforehand. Paul is going to lay out what it means to walk in these works in chapter 4; however, before we get to that Paul is going to step back and explain the mission of God in relation to the global church.

C. The Mission of God in Relation to the Global Church (2:11-22)

vv. 2:11: ¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—

1. Before we go any further I want it to be clear that Paul is not saying that the Gentiles were separated from Christ due to physical circumcision. As we will see the nature of their alienation is far worse than that. Furthermore, he makes it clear in Colossians 2:11-12 that true circumcision is made without hands. So what Paul is doing is beginning with their social alienation, marked by their uncircumcision, and then moving to the greater issue of spiritual alienation.

vv. 2:12-22: ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of

promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [In 1:18 we saw that our hope is the cosmic reconciliation of all things in Christ. Because Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise they could not share in Israel's messianic hope they were indeed separated from God.] ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [I have and I am sure you have heard this dividing wall explained in any number of ways; however, Paul clearly explains how Christ breaks down this wall verse 15] ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances [The dividing wall is the law and Christ fulfills the law! And here we see the two aspects of the reconciliation brought about by this], that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. [Horizontally He reconciles Jew and Gentile by creating a new covenant people, the church. Vertically He reconciles the church to God by turning away God's wrath at the cross.] ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

2. The theme of temple flows throughout the whole of Scripture. We can look back to Eden, then the Tabernacle as the dwelling place of God among His people, then we can look to the temple built by Solomon as the Lord fills it with His glory, and then in Ezekiel 8-11 God abandons the temple and it is destroyed. Turning forward to Ezra we see the exiles return and the temple begins to be rebuilt; however, God does not fill that temple with His glory and dwell there among His people. Against this backdrop Paul proclaims the building of a new temple, a new dwelling place of God comprised not of physical stones but the people of God in Christ. This morning's Scripture reading was from Ezekiel's vision of the new temple in 43 and 47 where we read of the glory of God indwelling His temple once more and of a river flowing from the temple. This river will later be revealed as the living water of the Holy Spirit and on the banks of this river trees grow whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Paul is that these promises to Israel are being fulfilled in this one new people of God His church.

D. The Mission of God and Paul's Unique Purpose in Its Fulfillment (3:1-13)

1. Now Paul will explain his unique purpose in fulfilling the mission of God. Beginning in chapter 3,

vv. 3:1-13: ^{3:1}For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation,

as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. [We have experienced the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us in our triumph over these powers in Christ and because of that God is making His wisdom known to them through us, the church.] ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. [Paul is in prison in Rome and tells the church not to lose hope because he is suffering these things for their sake; he is making the mission of God, the gospel, known among the Gentiles.]

E. Prayer for the Church's Participation in this Mission (3:14-21)

1. Paul begins verse 14 "For this reason" this is the continuation of 3:1 and informs us that the driving force behind this prayer is what God has done in reconciling to one another and to God in creating the church.

vv. 3:14-21: ¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [As in his prayer earlier Paul prays that the Spirit would work in us, specifically here that the Spirit would enable us to be strengthened so that we are filled with the presence and love of Christ.]

[Paul closes this portion of the epistle the way he began; by praising God for His divine plan, for His reconciliation of all things to Himself to the praise of His glory and grace.] ²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

II. Practical Exhortations towards the Spirit-Enabled Fulfillment of this Mission (4:1-6:20)

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

1. Beginning in chapter 4 Paul is transitioning between his theological explanation of the mission of God to a series of practical exhortations on the Spirit-enabled fulfillment of this mission. Looking back to 2:10 we read “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” And here Paul is going to explain what it means to walk in those pre-prepared works. First, because we have been reconciled to God and to one another we are to walk in unity.

vv. 4:1-16: ^{4:1}I therefore [meaning because of God’s divine plan to reconcile all things in Christ], a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

⁸Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended [meaning Christ in His incarnation] is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [Because we are to walk in unity God has uniquely gifted certain individuals to equip and build up the church so that we will not be deceived but] ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. [Because of the Spirit’s work through these leaders the church builds itself up in love in unified submission to its head, Jesus Christ.]

B. Walk as a New Creation (4:17-32)

1. Second, we are to walk as a new creation.

vv. 4:17-32: ¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that

is not the way you learned Christ!—²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. [Again we have been reconciled to one another, we are one body, and are mutually dependent upon one another to walk as a new creation.] ²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

C. Walk in Love (5:1-7)

1. We are also to walk in love.

vv. 5:1-7: ^{5:1}Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [We have a positive picture of what love is in God and Christ. As well as a negative example of what love is not in the self-seeking foolish and empty talk of the immoral.]

D. Walk as Children of Light (5:7-14)

vv. 5:7-14: ⁷Therefore do not become partners with them [meaning the immoral from vv. 3-6]; ⁸for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,

and Christ will shine on you.” [Paul summarizes this section on walking as children of light with what is likely a song sung by the early church that would be familiar to the Ephesians and encourage them, as it should us also, to reflect the light of Christ.]

E. Walk Wisely (5:15-6:9)

vv. 5:15-21: ¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit [Paul is not telling us to yearn for a greater gift of the Spirit or that we need to actively pursue being filled with the Spirit. Rather this is similar to what we looked at earlier in the series in regards to living the Word. This is a passive filling. God is the one who fills. Strive to walk in wisdom, study the word and submit yourself to it so that God, through His Spirit, can sanctify you in that truth. Or more simply we live spirit saturated lives by], ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

1. The opposite of this is the grieving of the Spirit he mentions in 4:30. Do not grieve the Spirit be filled by it. This is one of those I Corinthians 15:10 “I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me” passages. Where we have this exhortation to walk wisely, which allows us to be filled with the Spirit rather than grieve it, but at the same time our wise walk demonstrates that we are Spirit filled.

2. Paul is going to lay out what this wise, Spirit-filled, walk looks like in terms of several relationships. We see this first in terms of wives and husbands, then with children and parents, and finally through bondservants and masters.

vv. 5:22-6:9: ²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

^{6:1}Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

⁵Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

3. Here we have a powerful example of how this looks. In my introduction I mentioned that Paul is sending the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon with Tychicus and Onesimus. This looks like the bondservant Onesimus returning home to Philemon as more than a bondservant, as a brother in Christ.

F. Walk in the Lord’s Strength (6:10-20)

1. Paul begins, “finally” Everything that he has written thus far works towards this closing address. I almost entitled this section walk like a warrior as Paul prepares the collective church for spiritual warfare. For anyone who remembers going through Ephesians in 2011 during that study we looked at how the armor of God is synonymous with the character of God. Keep that in mind as I read,

vv. 6:10-20: ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [Despite Christ’s triumph over these powers our struggle is still with these defeated powers until the kingdom is consummated. This is part of the already and the not yet. Christ has already triumphed, and we in Him, yet this victory awaits a future consummation. But be encouraged because these rulers are spiritual forces are defeated.] ¹³Therefore [because of this conflict] take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to

proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

2. Paul is calling for incarnational ministry. Just as Jesus was the incarnation of God so too is the church, as His body, to demonstrate His attributes. We are to reveal God and make His glory known through our collective lives. This is the mission of God. God is making His glorious and praiseworthy attributes known through His people, the church, who He predestined before the foundation of the world, who He has redeemed through the blood of Christ, and who He has filled with His Spirit so that they, that we, might display before the watching world how He has reconciled all things to Himself in Christ to the praise of His glorious grace. That is the gospel and people should look at our lives and see that, they should come into relationship with us and experience that, they should listen to the words upon our lips and hear that and be profoundly and unalterably changed by God through it.

3. And Paul asks that we pray for him, and all the saints, towards this great end.

III. Conclusion (6:21-24)

vv. 6:21-24: ²¹So 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. ²²I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

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