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Ephesians 6:21-22: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF THE FAITH

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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You know the closing words of Paul, in any of his letters, should never be hurried through. There are always some beautiful nuggets there. So we want to look at v21-22. I want to entitle this "The Unsung Heroes of the Faith." These are the people whom you might not have heard about. They are going to be rewarded just like the others you have seen and heard.

Ephesians 6:21-22,

"But that you also may know about my circumstances [Paul has just asked them to pray for him.], how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. And I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts."

I want you to look at "the beloved brother and faithful minister," the terms Paul uses to identify the man by the name of Tychicus. Let's back up a little bit. Ephesians has been a wonderful book. In chapter 1 we found the riches of our salvation. Verse 3 should thrill all of our hearts for we have been given every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Now I don't know about you but there are a lot of days in which I am not tapping into that which is mine even though I know they are all resident in Christ Jesus. We have all the blessing in Christ Jesus. Many Christians are spending their life trying to get into a room they are already in, not realizing what they already have, who they are, whose they are and what they have.

Ephesians 2 (Msg on Ephesians 2:1-6) (Msg on Ephesians 2:7-10) (Msg on Ephesians 2:11-19) (Msg on Ephesians 2:19-22) gives us the reasons of our salvation. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We couldn't save ourselves. God quickened us. In His love He came. By repentance and faith we have been quickened in the inner man. We have been put into eternal life. We have been given eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. His Spirit has come to live within us.

Ephesians 3 (Ephesians 3:1-13) (Ephesians 3:14-17) (Ephesians 3:17-21) discusses the revelation of our salvation. Paul is a converted Jew, and he is writing to converted Gentiles. He is saying, "Listen, guys, He didn't make the Jew a Gentile and He didn't make the Gentile a Jew. He made us all into one new man in the body of Christ." We find that the church is called the body of Christ, made up of both Jew and Gentile, those who by repentance and faith have received the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Ephesians 4, 5 and 6 cover the responsibilities of our salvation.

In Ephesians 4:7-10 the Apostle Paul says,

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.' (Now this *expression*, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

The first thing Paul mentions is that He gave to the body different gifts according to the measure of His gift. In other words, there are many who received more gifts than others. I am just grateful that I got a piece of the pie. God cuts the pie. He is the One who determines who got the most and who got the least. But for the one who had been given much, much is required.

Then in Ephesians 4:11 he says,

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers [or pastor-teachers], for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

He gave gifted men to the church, but He also gave the church gifts through which they themselves might minister. What we understand from 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 (verses 3-6, verses 7-9), and this passage in Ephesians, is the members of the body have varied functions (see Spiritual Gifts Chart). There are some who are out front. There are some who are behind the scenes. Whatever the assignment, we are all ministers in the body of Christ.

Whoever came up with the clergy and the laity completely perverted what the Word of God says. Every believer filled with the Spirit of God is in the ministry. Some of us have the luxury of being paid by those we minister to, but some of you have other ways of doing that. You may have a job as a plumber, or an electrician, or maybe even a doctor. Whatever you are, God will use that to fund the ministry He has given to you. We are all in the ministry. We are all ministers, and we are all gifted differently. Some are out front and some are not. That doesn't matter. When Christ is getting His work done, it doesn't matter who gets the credit as long as Jesus gets the glory. That is the key. The picture of the body is the picture of the organs in our physical body. None of them are being selfish so the body can be healthy and be about what it is supposed to be about.

If we go back to our text we see a man who was not out front. The Apostle Paul was the one out front. He was one of the gifted men given to the body. But around this gifted man were many other gifted people who came alongside to assist him and to do a lot of the things he asked them to do, never with any recognition. They never got a pat on the back. Periodically he would mention their name but other than that they were the un-sung heroes of the faith that you will find throughout God's Word.

In the book of Philippians there was **Epaphroditus**. Remember John Mark? He and Paul had a little rift on one of Paul's missionary journeys, but Paul called him back later. Then you have Demas who loved the present world and moved away from the work of the ministry. There are a lot of these unsung heroes of the faith, particularly those assigned to Paul. They are not going to get recognition. Paul is. But they are just as important to the ministry as the Apostle Paul himself.

We live in a star-studded world. If you are not a somebody, you are a nobody. There is no in between. That is not the way it is in the body of Christ. Many of you have gifts that nobody will ever see function, but you are just as important as the people who are out front. One day when the rewards are given out we are going to be surprised by who are first in line. They may not be the people we thought they were going to be. It doesn't matter who is out in front as long as each of us are loving God and serving Him out of the gifts that God has given to us. Because when the job gets done it is not man's work anyway. It is God's work, and He will get the glory for all of that.

Tychicus was the "Joshua" behind Paul. Do you realize that for 40 years all Joshua did was say "Yes" to Moses. That is a real good job. "What do you do?" "I do whatever Moses wants me to do." "Come on, what else do you do?" "I do whatever Moses tells me to do." "How long have you been doing this job?" "Forty years." That is real thrilling. But behind every person who is out in front, there are many you may never see or hear but they are just as important to God as the people who are the most visible.

Let's look at Tychicus and see what Paul has to say about him. There are three things that he calls him. Two of them are in this passage and one is in Colossians 4:7. To me this helps us understand how the people who are the unsung heroes work alongside the heroes of the faith and how the work of the ministry gets done in the New Testament. Verse 21 says, "Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister." First of all, he is a beloved brother. The term "brother" immediately casts the idea of a family. Some of you may have brothers that you might want to think about today. I don't happen to have one. I have a sister.

You may have a brother. They tell me brothers are very close. They share a lot in common. There is kinship, a blood tie. There is something about being a brother. There is something about being in a family. We know Paul is not talking about a natural, physical brother. He is talking about a spiritual brother.

You may ask, "How in the world can I find brothers in the family of God? Do you mean when I receive Jesus into my heart I become a part of a huge family? Do you mean if somebody else has received Christ, he is a brother or she is a sister?" Yes. The family of God is wonderful. By the way, the family of God is a functional family. Thank God He took us out of the dysfunctional family of Adam and put us into the functional family of the Lord Jesus Christ, into eternal life. He put us into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. So we are a part of the family, a spiritual family, and I have many spiritual brothers just like Paul.

The key to the whole thing is not the fact that he is a spiritual brother, but that he is a beloved brother. The term beloved is a term of endearment. It is someone that you love, but it also someone that you are deeply devoted to. You don't call everybody "beloved." Beloved means they have struck something in your heart. There is a common cord there. There is a bond of love, a bond of faith that draws you together. In this picture of being beloved, it is not just from me to you. If you were beloved to me, then I would be beloved to you. In other words, Tychicus could say of Paul that he was a beloved brother, just like Paul says of Tychicus that he is a beloved brother. Why? Because they were devoted to each other. The term "beloved" is a two-way street. There is a flip side to that. You are not going to call somebody who doesn't love you, somebody you don't trust, somebody you don't share things in common with beloved. But when you find somebody who loves you that way and you can love them that way, the two of you to each other are beloved.

I was thinking about this beloved brother. That is someone who is part of the family, someone who has been alongside me, Paul says, to assist me in the tasks that are absolutely unsung, the tasks of doing the things I can't do, the "dirty work" of getting the work of Christ done. Here is a man who has come alongside. I call him a beloved brother. I was thinking about this as I was studying it. How in the world can you put relationships together like that? You know that is incredible. You don't go out and find somebody like this. God has to draw you together. When you call somebody beloved, you know something about them. There is a bond in your heart, in your love for God, in your faith towards God, in your purposes that you have to do His work and to let Christ do His own work through you. That is when you say, beloved brother. There are people out front, but how we need the people who are coming alongside, the people we can call beloved brothers, people who love the work just like we love it, but are gifted differently, people who are willing to do the work and never take any kind of applause for it, people who are willing to go behind the scenes so His work might be done through the body called the church and nobody ever knows what they do just. How in the world do you find people like that?

The term "**beloved**" is only found twice in the book of Ephesians. I like the order in which it is found and I like the way in which it is found. I think it draws a picture—at least it does for me. Look back in Ephesians 5:1 (message). How do you qualify to be a beloved brother, especially in the language we are understanding in Ephesians 6? In Ephesians 5:1, notice what Paul says:

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children."

What does that say? It is not simply saying that you are beloved of God. Yes, you're that, too. Paul has spent a lot of time telling us that. But it also means you love God. You are bonded together. His purposes have become your purposes. All you want is to love Him. Therefore, Paul can say you are a beloved child. You are not just a child. You are a beloved child.

Tychicus did not wake up one morning and say,

"You know, I think I'll be a beloved brother to Paul."

Tychicus woke up one morning and said,

"You know, I want to be beloved by God Himself. I want to love Him. I want to be called a beloved child. I want to surrender to Him. I want to devote my life to Him. I want to devote my life to His work."

Then God said,

"Hey, here is Tychicus, and he loves Me. He loves My work. Here is Paul, and he loves Me and My work. I think I will put them together. Tychicus, you do what Paul wants you to do. He is out front. You are behind. The two of you work together so the work of Christ can get done."

What a picture the church could be! Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a whole church filled with people who want nothing but to serve Christ and to see His work done in and through them? Then you could begin to filter down and refine the gifts. "Let me see, oh, serving. There are 150 people with the gifts of serving. Will you do this, this, this and this?" "Oh yes." "And here is mercy. You all need to work together."

You are probably saying,

"You are always out front. You get all the credit. If the church grows, you get the credit."

That is right, but if it falls, I get the blame. It goes both ways. It doesn't matter who is out front. Behind the people who are out front are hundreds of people you may never know about. They are just as effective as the person who is visible.

When we get to heaven one day and the rewards are passed out, Tychicus is going to be blessed every bit as much as Paul is, because his heart was the same. His heart was to devote himself to God and to devote himself to God's work. Therefore, the two of them could be matched together.

In John 21 after Simon Peter had denied the Lord Jesus three times he said,

"I am going fishing. I am sick and tired of all this."

There is no record of his repentance. There is no record of him being able to deal with the fact that he denied Jesus three times. They went out fishing and the Lord Jesus came to them but they didn't recognize Him. Do you know why? Because they were not looking for Him. Jesus said, "Children." I love the way He does that. He said,

"Children, you haven't got any fish, have you?"

He knew. They said,

"You are right. We have caught nothing."

I can see Simon Peter now.

"Who is this guy over here irritating us?"

About that time He says,

"Throw the nets on the other side of the boat."

John, the beloved disciple, says,

"It's the Lord."

After they caught all those fish, Peter said,

"You're kidding me. I can't see Him."

He threw his coat on, hopped in the water and swam to Jesus. He couldn't wait to get to Him.

Jesus was standing there on the shore by a fire. They had breakfast and Jesus sat down with them. The whole chapter is for Simon Peter's benefit. He sat down with them and said,

"Simon, do you love me?"

He used the word that means,

"Are you absolutely sold out, totally committed to Me, regardless of feelings and emotions? Have you come to the point that you are willing to do that?"

Simon Peter said,

"Oh, you are the best friend I have ever had. I cherish you. I really like being with you."

Peter used a different word. Jesus said,

"Feed My sheep."

Then using the same word the second time He said,

"Simon, do you love Me?"

Simon said back to Him the same thing, and Jesus said,

"Tend My lambs."

The third time Jesus got down on his level and said,

"Do you really love Me like a friend?"

And by this time Peter was a little upset. He said,

"Lord, You now everything. I can't lie to you. You know that I love you."

He said,

"Feed My sheep."

Do you know what? Jesus never asked him if he loved sheep. He never asked him if he loved to minister. He asked him,

"Do you love Me?"

What makes a beloved brother is not that you love the Apostle Paul or somebody who is out front. The key is do you love Christ? If they love Christ and you love Christ, and both of you love His work, then you become a beloved brother and you can come alongside and you can do the things that nobody will ever recognize. Be filled with joy because the work of Christ is getting done no matter who is out front taking the credit. God will get the glory ultimately. That's a beloved brother.

When you all love Christ and only want His work to be done, you can be beloved brothers to one another. It really doesn't matter who is out front as long as the work gets done. Tychicus was a beloved brother.

Secondly, not only was he a **beloved brother**, he was a **faithful minister**.

The word for "faithful" there is *pistos*. (Click for in depth word study of *pistos*) It is the word that means somebody who can be depended upon. When you've got somebody who loves God like you do, somebody who wants to see God's work done like you want to see it and he is a beloved brother, he becomes a faithful servant. That is somebody you can trust, somebody you don't have to run along behind to make sure they are saying the right thing. They are loyal. They are people you can put your confidence in.

Second Timothy 4:12 gives us a clue about this. Timothy was assigned the ministry to the church at Ephesus. The Apostle Paul wanted him to come to him so in 4:12 of II Timothy Paul says,

"But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus."

Then Paul tells Timothy to come as fast as he can.

"I want you here. I am sending a replacement to you. The person that I can trust with the responsibility is the man Tychicus. He is a beloved brother. Because he is a beloved brother, we have solved all of his love for God, his devotion to God. He is a man in whom you can put your trust. He is a man in whom you can put your confidence. He is a faithful minister."

In Titus 3:12, he does the same thing for him. On the island of Crete, Paul says,

"I want you to come to me. I am sending somebody as your replacement."

Verse 12 says,

"When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis."

In other words, I want you with me so I am sending you a replacement. Who would you pick? Who would go? Who would take the long journey? Who would go over and do somebody else's work? Who would go over and be trustworthy and you could put your confidence in? Somebody who is a beloved brother. See? When your heart is devoted that way, when all you want is what God is doing, not what man can do, then you become a faithful minister, somebody who can be trustworthy, somebody in whom you can put your confidence.

The term "**minister**" says even more about Tychicus. The term minister there is *diakonos*. The word literally means servant. As a matter of fact, if you take it a step further into the secular world it meant a person who was willing to wait tables. It is a person who has the heart of serving, and it doesn't matter how much credit he gets for it.

The word "deacon" means minister (click for related word *diakonia*) but the root of all ministry is servant hood and willingness to do whatever it takes, especially according to the gifts that God has given to you. So a person who is a faithful servant is a person you can trust, a person you can put your confidence in, a person who doesn't mind not getting any recognition and doesn't mind rolling up their sleeves so that the greater work of getting the Word out, the greater work of the prevailing ministry of the Word might take place. I didn't set this up. God set this up. Thank God for people like Tychicus. I love the people who are willing to come alongside and be selfless and willing to do whatever is necessary so that God's work might take place.

Many people in my church worry about my wife because I travel so much. They say, "You are gone all the time. How in the world does Diana put up with that?" It is by grace. Years ago Diana shared with me that she was alone in her quiet time when God put on her heart that God had given me an assignment, a calling. He said, "Diana, I am going to give you a calling, to come along beside Wayne and not gripe or complain. I am going to honor you if you do that." Years ago, my dear sweet wife did that. Do you know what I think about Diana? She is beloved to me. She is a faithful servant. Everybody patted me on the back for a message that I had just preached, and she didn't catch any of that. She is beloved to me.

It works in a marriage. It works in anything. You've got to have people who are out front, but you have other people who are behind them. If you don't have the people behind them, then you've got problems in all the ministry of what God is trying to do. It's not what man can do, but what God is seeking to do.

Tychicus was a beloved brother and a faithful minister.

Thirdly look over in Colossians 4:7:

"As to all my affairs, Tychicus, *our* beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information."

He has called him three things: beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow bond-servant. The word is *syndoulos*. *Syn*, means together with, and *doulos*, means a slave. Anytime you see the word "slave" in connection with a Christian it is always a bond-servant, a love slave, one who has chosen to be a slave to the will and the ways and the Word of the Lord Jesus Himself, a bond-

servant.

Paul says he is a bond-servant with me. He is saying we come out of the same heart. This is the bottom line of the whole thing. Do you want to see where Paul's heart is? Look in Acts 20:24: "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, [here is a bond-servant] in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received [not achieved] from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." Paul is saying, "I want everything about me to bring testimony to the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, both living in me and motivating me to do what I do. I want my life to count for Christ." He says, "Tychicus is a fellow bond-servant. He has the same attitude I have. We share the same heart."

The unsung heroes of the faith are the people we don't know about. You can go through Paul's letters and pick out the people who helped him. That would be a wonderful study. Just write out what Paul says about them. These are the people who said, "I believe in what you are doing. I believe it is for the same God I love. I believe it is His work in you, and I believe God has led me with my gift to come along beside you. I am going to do everything I can possibly do. If I am never known, that is okay. I will do whatever it costs me so that Christ's work might be done."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody said, "God, that is all I want in my life," and we began to team together, join hands as beloved brothers and sister, confident in one another, never having to be suspicious of what somebody says behind your back, never having to be suspicious of somebody's agenda, just getting together and doing what God has told us to do and that He might receive the glory.

Tychicus was a beloved brother. Paul is tickled to death to have him on his team. Paul said, "I am going to send him to you. I will send him over there and whatever else I've got to do, he will do it because he is a man I can trust. He is a man who is not in it for himself, and he knows I am not either. All we want is Jesus to be glorified in the midst of it. The unsung heroes of the faith. God give us congregations full of them and we will see Jesus be glorified because of it.

Ephesians 6:23-24: ONE LAST LOOK

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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Let's just wrap it all up and make sure we have remembered what we have learned in the book of Ephesians. Let's read verses 23 and 24:

"Peace [in all of its aspects] be to the brethren, and love with faith [which is the richest kind of love. Faith here means obedience, love with obedience. That is the kind of love God wants] from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with *a love* incorruptible."

Now the ending of Ephesians 6:24 doesn't quite convey what these two verses are saying. When Paul says, "with a love incorruptible," it is better than that. He is saying, "in incorruptibility." Let me explain that to you. The Apostle Paul ends his letter to the Ephesians on the same high note that he started the letter. In 1:3 he says that we have been given every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Now he says in verses 23 and 24 that there is peace, there is love and there is grace. All three of these are incorruptible.

Try to understand what he is saying. Our bodies are corruptible. That is why I Corinthians 15 says we must put on immortality or incorruptibility.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory."

Paul is saying,

"Everything that God has given us in Jesus Christ is incorruptible. Nothing can ever take away from it. Nothing can ever happen to it. It is ours forever, especially those who love the Lord Jesus Christ."

Nobody can take away anything I have in Jesus Christ. If I love Him and do as Ephesians has told me, I can appropriate every spiritual blessing that is mine in Him and they will be mine forever and ever and ever and ever. They are incorruptible. Nobody can lay their hands on that which God has given me in Jesus Christ.

Paul is writing this from prison, so he is probably sending another signal:

"They may take my life, but they can't touch my Jesus in whom I have been made complete and will live with

forever and ever and ever."

That is the way he closes the letter. He starts off with every spiritual blessing in Jesus. He ends by saying every one of them can be summed up in three words: grace, peace and love. They are incorruptible for all of eternity, and those of us who love Him can draw from them daily and recognize them and realize them in our life.

Someone in our congregation has done a painting of their view of what Ephesians is all about. It is a picture of Jesus putting the garment on one who is kneeling before Him. He is standing in front of the cross. At the bottom of the painting they put, "And put on the new nature." Think about the new life that we have in Christ. I have had families come up to me and say,

"My kids caught on to Ephesians and they are asking us all the time, 'What garment do you have on? Do you have the new one on or do you have the old one on? Just how are you living?'"

I think the accountability that Ephesians calls us to is very important to keep in the forefront in the days ahead.

Turn to chapter 3 for one last look at Ephesians. When I go place to place I try to start in 3:14. Why? Because the prayer of Paul in 3:14-21 is the hinge of the whole book (click message). It sums up everything in chapters 1, 2 and 3 and it sets up everything in chapters 4, 5 and 6. If you can grasp this prayer, everything flows into it and out of it in the book of Ephesians. Paul says in Ephesians 3:14,

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father."

**A LOW VIEW...
NOT OF SELF
BUT OF SALVATION**

We already know how Paul starts his prayer back Ephesians 3:1. He is a man who is overwhelmed with his salvation. People are telling us in these days that the problem with the church is that we have a low view of self. No, we have a low view of salvation, and because we have a low view of salvation, we have a low view of Christ. We have a low view of God's Word. "It won't work in our lives." "Jesus can't help me in my problems."

Paul has a high view of salvation. As a matter of fact, he has such a high view, he tries to pray. He says in 3:1:

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles."

Then instead of starting his prayer, he takes another 12 verses to talk about the wonder of his salvation and how it was revealed to him. Then he comes back in verse 14 and finishes his prayer.

To find out why he bows his knees before the Father you have to go back Ephesians 2:19-22 where you discover what this converted Jew is trying to say to converted Gentiles over in Ephesus. He says in verses 19-22 (click message):

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Let's just milk this down. What is he saying? He is saying,

"Listen, all of you Gentile believers, you must understand that you are a part of God's household, a part of the Temple. You are the dwelling of God on this earth."

That is exciting, isn't it?

"Do you mean to tell me God lives in me?"

He is telling the Ephesians,

"Hey, you have everything you need right now as believers resident within you in the person of Jesus Christ whose Spirit lives in your heart. Every single thing you could ever want or need is there in Jesus Christ. You are the dwelling of God on this earth."

If I wore my hat inside the church and you walked up to me and said,

"Take that hat off, you are in God's house,"

what would I say back to you? I should say,

"This hat is not **in** God's house, it is **on** God's house."

Is that right? Is that correct? 1 Corinthians 6 says,

"19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

"Do you mean to tell me God is in the church because we are?"

Well, He is omnipresent but in the sense of His Spirit, yes. He lives in us. Wherever we go, God goes with us. He wants us to be conduits so that through us He can reach out and touch the people who are around us. Paul says,

"You are the dwelling of God. You are the household of God. You have God living in you. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father."

Now the God who lives within us wants us to experience Him. He wants to draw us into who He is. He is always working in our life. He is sovereign. He never slumbers. He never sleeps. He is always up to something. We don't have to get in a meeting to decide what we can do and ask God to bless. No. We get sensitive to Him and let Him draw us into what He is already doing. Look in Ephesians 3:16. Paul starts making his requests. He says, "that He would grant you."

First of all he wants us to experience His power. He continues, "according to the riches of His glory." I hope you have noted all the times it said "**according to**" when we went through this earlier. It is used over 15 different times in the book of Ephesians, and every time it is used it is significant. It is not out of, it is according to. That automatically determines a standard. If I were a rich man and wanted to give you some money out of my wealth, I would give you nothing but a token. A lot of people give that way. But if I wanted to give according to, then whatever gift I gave you must somehow reflect what I have to give out of. So "according to" determines a measure.

Paul says,

"Listen, you need to be strengthened according to the riches of His glory."

Now what are the riches of His glory? Back in 1:3 we see,

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ."

"You mean to tell me when I received Jesus in my life, He is the First National Bank of God and every spiritual blessing under heaven is resident in Him?"

That is exactly right. God wants us to know that. He wants us to know we lack nothing on this planet for life and for godliness. Simon Peter used those identical words. He said God has given us everything for life and for godliness. It doesn't matter whether it was outward life or inward life.

He says,

"to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

Therefore, we need to be strengthened, which means to be made mighty, with power. The word "power" means ability that you don't have. Ability that only God has within you. "You mean the Spirit of Christ, who lives within me, possesses all the spiritual blessings I could ever want, hope for, ask for or even think about?" That is right. I need to be strengthened according to everything I have that is in Jesus Christ.

Can I ask you a question? Are you living your life according to what you have in Jesus or are you simply living out of some of what you have in Jesus Christ? Where is the standard of your Christian life? The Apostle Paul is concerned. You say,

"Well, I think I understand now what I have in Jesus Christ, but how do I tap into what I have in Jesus Christ?"

It is one thing to know what you have, but it is another thing to be able to draw it out. So in verse 17 Paul tells us how to do that. He says,

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

"Do you mean to tell me that faith has something to do with me drawing out what I have in Jesus Christ?"

That is right. To understand this phrase, you have to understand faith. What is "faith"? *Pistis*. It means to be so persuaded by something that you are willing to commit everything to it, to surrender to it and to obey it. You can never separate faith and obedience.

"You mean to tell me that when I am willing to obey God, that obedience begins to become that which draws out of Him everything that I have in Him?"

That is exactly right. If I am not willing to obey Him in any room of my heart, then automatically I am going to shut down the power that is already there in Jesus Christ resident within my life.

The term "dwell" is the term that means to be at home. You know that. We have studied it. To be at home means exactly that. I need to learn to accommodate His presence.

Ephesians 5:10 says I am always seeking ways to please Him. We went through the areas of what the inner man is all about, which is the heart. We looked at our heart as if it was a huge house with different rooms.

We saw in Luke 9:47 the room of our thoughts.

"But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side"

We saw in Matthew 18:35 the room of our attitudes, which is forgiveness.

"So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

We looked over at the room of our emotions in John 14:1,

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."

We looked over in 2 Corinthians and we saw the secret areas of our heart. We also saw the hidden motives of the heart. God wants every part of us. In other words, He didn't come into my heart to rent a room. He came in and purchased the whole thing. His blood was shed to purchase the whole house. I have no right to slam the door in His face.

But the Holy Spirit of God can be grieved as we saw in chapter 4. He is a gentleman. When He comes into my life, He says,

"If you want Me here, then you accommodate Me. Make Me be at home. Give over to Me every area of your life. As You are willing to give it and trust Me and obey Me, then I am willing to strengthen you in the inner man with power you never dreamed about."

God wants us to experience His power. Ephesians, you can't forgive. Paul is saying,

"Ephesians, you can't love. Ephesians, you can't do the ministry. But Ephesians, you can receive and let God do it in you. God will strengthen you. God will enable you to love. God will enable you to forgive. God will enable you to do what you couldn't do before the Holy Spirit took up residence in your life."

Do you want to experience the power of God? Accommodate the presence of God. That is the message of Ephesians. Accommodate Him in your life.

You may say,

"I have been treated so badly by some people in my life, I will never be able to forgive."

Thank God, go on and make that confession because that confession helps you get one step closer to the fact that is right. You can't. God never said you could. He can and He always said He would. Be willing to admit to it. Confession is not for His benefit, it is for our benefit. We need to say,

"Lord, I am missing the mark. Lord, I am not measuring up. God, I can't measure up."

God will say,

"That is right. You can't. Now bow before Me. Trust Me. Obey Me. I will measure up inside you, letting Jesus be Jesus in your life."

Once you begin to experience the power of God, you begin to experience the passion of God.

There are two little Greek words that are translated "in order that." One of them is found in verse 17 and one of them is found in verse 19. Verse 17 says,

"in order that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to the all the fulness of God."

In other words, A comes before B.

"I want to understand the love of God. I want to know that God loves me. I want to know that love for other people."

First of all, you've got to learn to love Him. It is incredible. It is like a cycle. You realize He loves you and you respond and begin to love Him. Then you begin to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of His love. Then you begin to experience for yourself. The word "know" means to experience for yourself the love of Christ. All of a sudden you begin to realize that God does love you. God is loving you all the time. All of a sudden people start getting sweeter to you. You go out to eat and order beans, but they give you peas and they are cold. The Lord Jesus inside of you reaches out and loves the people who have to deal with you and minister to you. Everywhere you go you exhibit love and compassion. You begin to see the world that God sees. You talk about missions and evangelism.

So many people get on my case and say,

"You are not evangelistic."

I think I am as evangelistic as anybody who ever walked. I am looking at Step One of evangelism, not just Step Two and Three. Most of the people who accuse me of not being evangelistic are people who think evangelism is nothing more than sowing and reaping. Friend, before you can ever sow and before you can ever reap, you have to learn to cultivate the soil. You've got to learn to plow up the ground. Until my heart is cultivated before God, how in the world can I cultivate somebody else's? The quickest way to evangelism is not in the class which teaches you how to pass out a tract. The quickest way to evangelism is getting the right response to God, loving God and surrendering to God. Then God in you will show you the compassion of Jesus. Then you comprehend. Then you know for yourself what the love of God is. That is evangelism. That is lifestyle. That is across the street. That is next door. Evangelism is every moment of your life. It is every fiber of your being. It is someone who loves Jesus and Jesus now is loving others through them wherever they are. It never stops and it goes on until Jesus comes again.

Paul says you have to accommodate the presence of God. Once you begin to know the power of God you see the way it is manifested is in the passion of God, the love of Christ. Then the next thing you enter into is the potential of God. That little "in order that" comes up again in the middle of verse 19,

"in order that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

In other words, that all of God can fill all of you. The word "fill" there means to control. It doesn't mean you are pouring something into something. It means to dominate, to take over, to control your life. As a matter of fact, in 5:18 he says,

"be filled with the Spirit,"

He says be constantly be being filled with the Spirit. Paul tells you how in chapter 3. You can't study chapter 5 without coming back to chapter 3. You do it by giving Him absolute accommodation in every room of your heart. When you do that you start tapping into that which only God can do in you, not what you can do for God.

If we start living that way, what will the church be like? Ephesians 4:1-2 we see it in the way we behave towards one another. It says,

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

The word "worthy" means live up to the standard which God says you can live up to. In other words, give a proper estimate as to what salvation is by the way you live. It is a set of scales. If you have this in your life, then live that way and balance it out. Measure up. Make sure the intrinsic value of your salvation is determining how you walk as a believer.

Then he shows you how it will happen in a congregation. With humility you will have a proper attitude towards yourself, and with gentleness, you will have a proper attitude towards God. With patience you will have a proper attitude towards others. Then he says, "showing forbearance to one another in love." What does "forbearance" mean? If you add humility, gentleness and patience together, the result is forbearance. It means that you and I will be able to stand up against each other. It is the idea of leaning up against each other and holding each other up. In other words when things go wrong, when you have a problem, when someone has provoked you or insulted you, thank God that you have humility and gentleness and patience and you don't have to react. We can pray for each other and stand up with each other and hold each other up. We don't divide just because there is a problem. We don't divide just because there are things going on. We have Jesus living in us. Jesus will take us to and through whatever circumstances we ever have to encounter.

Ephesians 4:4-6 (click message) shows us doctrinally how we believe. There are seven doctrines. I have said over and over again there are some people who can fool you because they are so sincere and they cry and they talk about Jesus. You had better check

out what they believe because their devotion to God has got to directly stem and flow from their doctrine. If a person is doctrinally wrong, his devotion is somewhere off center. It doesn't matter how sincere he is. He can be sincerely wrong.

Ephesians 4:7-16 (click message) describes how we are being built together into the body of Christ. It talks about each one working out of their gift. It talks about the gifted men who God has sent. Why? So that the whole body can grow up into the stature and fullness of Christ.

Then almost as if Paul says,

"You know, I am not sure you are getting this. Let me change gears here for a second."

In verse 22 he says,

"in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit."

Then in verse 24 he says, "and put on the new self." What he is talking about is a lifestyle. He is not talking about the old man that is dead. He is saying,

"Listen, live differently because the old man is dead. Live differently because the Spirit of God now lives in your life."

What is the difference in wearing the old garment and wearing the new garment? I don't want you to forget this. What does it look like to wear the wrong garment? When you get up some morning and you don't want to be filled with the Spirit of God, how does God look at you? How do you look when you come to church and argue all the way to church and don't make it right with one another before you walk in? How do you look when somebody provokes you and you react to them with anger and bitterness and talk them down? We've got to understand how stupid it looks for us to wear the wrong garment. Paul says when you are strengthened in the inner man, you will have the right garment on.

Now, when you have the new garment on, you live differently than when you wear the old garment. Remember that. Live like you know how you can live. How is it when you wear the new garment? Ephesians 4:25 and following tells us to lay aside falsehood or the lie and tell the truth:

"speak truth, each one *of you*, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

When you put the new garment on, you can't lie. If you put the old one on you will lie in a minute and you will always protect yourself. You will be constantly hiding behind whatever it is that is said to you. On one side you have nothing to hide. God already knows it. You are transparent. You can admit it and tell the truth when you are wearing the right garment.

Ephesians 4:26 (click message) says,

"Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

The second word for "anger" there is a provocation of anger." "Anger" is not the same word as the word used for "angry." The first word simply means be angry. It is a sense of anger when anger is right. In the new garment it will always be aimed at the right thing, the sin. In the old garment it will be aimed at the wrong thing, the person. So, when you see something in our society that is wrong and you want to take a stand against it, you had better make sure which garment you have on because the anger of man never accomplishes the righteousness of God. You don't attack people. You attack the problem. You love the people. Always love the people.

Verse 27 reads,

"and do not give *the* devil an opportunity."

He will try to divide the body by putting on the wrong garment.

Verse 28 continues,

"Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have *something* to share with him who has need."

In other words, the new garment gives and the old garment takes. Verse 29 says,

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth."

The word "unwholesome" means rotten. If you have a rotten apple in a barrel, it is going to rot the whole bunch. It goes on to say,

"but only such a *word* as is good for edification."

The word "edification" means to build a house. Suppose somebody calls you on the phone and wants to be negative about a brother or a sister. The moment they open their mouth and start becoming that way say, "Phew, something is rotten on this phone. That smells like the old garment to me. I can't talk to you any more." Hang it up. You don't need to be a part of that. Wear that new garment. Make sure you are wearing the right garment.

Paul goes on in verse 30,

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

Verse 31 is the cesspool of the old garment. Verse 32 is the well-spring of the new garment.

Then Paul comes into chapter 5 (click message) and says,

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children."

Mime it. Don't talk it, walk it. Then he says don't become immoral. Don't even talk about immorality. Don't even let it be named among you.

He comes on down in Ephesians 5:11 (click message) and says,

"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."

In verse 18 he says, "but be filled with the Spirit," as you learn to walk wise in a perverse generation. Further on down in the chapter he says that is going to affect your family. Wives will submit to their husbands. Husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the church. He comes into chapter 6 and says children who are filled with the Spirit of God and are wearing the right garment will even obey their parents.

Then in Ephesians 6:5-9 (click message) Paul talks about the work place. In verse 10 he begins to close the book.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."

What did he mean by that? He simply means,

"I have been spending five and a half chapters trying to tell you this. Be strong in the Lord. You are not strong in yourself. You are strong in the Lord and the strength of His might."

He tells you very clearly that the garment of Ephesians 4:24-6:9 is the armor in 6:10-18. The garment and the armor. The armor is nothing more than the underlying attitudes that cause you to wear that garment, that new lifestyle. That is all it is. Your loins are girded about with truth. You wear the breastplate of righteousness. Your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You take up the shield of faith which is an intention to obey God at all costs. He goes on and says in verse 17 that the helmet of salvation is the hope that we base everything on and the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

Standing firm is the first thing you have to do in wearing this garment. Secondly he says in Ephesians 6:18, you have to pray at all times in the Spirit. You see, you can't pray in the Spirit until you are filled by the Spirit. But you can't just stand, you've got to pray something. The two have to go together. As you stand, you will pray and the Holy Spirit will lead you in prayer.

Then Paul finishes the book. He says,

"Remember everything you have in Jesus Christ is incorruptible. Nobody can take it from you. You didn't get less than somebody else got. You got the same thing they got. Now, live out of it and let your life be seen to be a life worthy of your calling."

Do you know what that says to me? There are a lot of people, including myself some days, that are not living worthy of their calling. We need to be held accountable to that. A wife needs to look at her husband sometime in love and ask, "Which garment do you have on?" A husband should ask that of his wife. We need to start holding each other accountable for the way we live because we have been given everything for life and for godliness. It is incorruptible and it is there. All we have to do is learn to appropriate that in our life.

That is Ephesians in a nutshell. No pop test. No final exam. I guess the final exam is to see how it has changed our lives. How we live is determined on whether or not we just read it or whether or not we have received the Word into our lives. I love the painting of the man kneeling and Christ putting the garment on him. You don't really put the garment on. You purpose in your heart to obey Christ, and He puts the garment on you. It is Him and His righteousness lived out through your life. That is the book of Ephesians. Somebody asked me,

"If you could only have one book of the Bible from now on until Jesus comes back, what would it be?"

I said,

"Give me Ephesians. That is all I need."

It is salvation from God's view down to me so that I can understand it and appropriate it in my life.

Let me ask you a question. What garment have you been wearing? The way you live on the outside is a picture of what is going on on the inside. If I am being strengthened in the inner man, the outer garment will be a witness and a testimony to others that there is a power bigger than myself in the person who lives in my life