

Devotional Guide
Words of Encouragement
Ephesians 6:21 – 24

Monday

Ephesians 6:22; Acts 20:4; Colossians 4:7 – 9; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12

Paul brings the epistle to the Ephesians to an end in the same way he began it – with a word of blessing and encouragement for his readers. Encouragement requires someone to bring it, and the bringer of encouragement in this case was Tychicus, a Christian from the province of Asia whose name meant “the fortunate”. He was with Paul during his journey from Macedonia to Jerusalem, and later helped Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome. He carried the epistles of Colossians and Ephesians and Philemon, also returning the runaway slave Onesimus to his owner.

Think About It: What made Tychicus an effective encourager? From whom have I received encouragement? Do I strive to bring encouragement to others?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who bring encouragement to Your church.

Tuesday

Ephesians 6:23; John 10:30; 17:11, 21 – 24; 1 John 2:24; Ephesians 2:11 – 14; 4:3

Paul’s word of encouragement begins with truth about God. In Ephesians 6:23 God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are placed on equal footing as the source of peace. The New Testament repeatedly affirms the divinity of Jesus and the co-equality of the Father and the Son.

Think About It: What encouragement arises from the truth about God as the source of peace? The unity of the Father and the Son reminds us of the unity that we have with the Father and the Son, and with one another. Thinking back on the epistle to the Ephesians, what themes of the epistle are reinforced by this theological reminder?

Am I making fast the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace?

Prayer: Praise God for bringing us together in Christ.

Wednesday

Ephesians 6:23

Paul’s word of encouragement continues with reference to the peace which we have from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament concept of peace has three primary aspects:

1. Peace with God, (Romans 5:1).
2. Peace within (2 Thessalonians 3:16; John 14:27; Romans 15:13)
3. Peace with others (Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18; 14:19 – where peace is linked with encouragement and building one another up, a theme expanded upon in 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 4:12, 29; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Think About It: Why is this word of encouragement regarding peace necessary? (Review Ephesians 2:12 – 19). Am I at peace with God? Within myself? With others? If not, why not? Am I doing the things that make for peace?

Prayer: Praise the Lord for His peace-making work; may I have the grace and wisdom to be part of that work.

Thursday

Ephesians 6:23; 1 John 4:19 – 5:1; Galatians 5:6; James 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Galatians 5:1, 9

Paul’s word of encouragement continues with reference to the love and faith that is ours from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Love and faith are also linked together in Galatians 5:6, and 2 Thessalonians 5:8. There can be no genuine faith that does not work in love.

Think About It: According to 1 John 4:19 – 5:1, why do we love, and how do we demonstrate that love? How does the link between faith and love relate to the teaching in James on faith and works? Why is the encouragement regarding faith and love so important?

Prayer: Lord, strengthen me to show demonstrate genuine faith in works of love.

Friday

Ephesians 6:24; Ephesians 4:1

Paul’s encouraging words continue with reference to grace. Grace is succinctly defined as “God’s unmerited favor.” Some other definitions of faith:

A. W. Tozer: "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving."

Berkhof: "Grace is the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit."

MacArthur: “Grace is the free and benevolent influence of a holy God operating sovereignly in the lives of undeserving sinners.”

MacArthur wants to emphasize that grace works in justification and also in our sanctification. Those who are justified by grace will continue in sanctification by grace - -in other words, they will experience being conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Think About It: According to Ephesians 6:24, on whom does God bestow his grace?. Why do we need the encouragement of knowing we are recipients of God's grace?

Prayer: Praise God for His Amazing Grace!

Saturday

Ephesians 6:24; 1 Corinthians 15:42, 50, 53, 54

The last word of encouragement from Paul in Ephesians is the very last word of the epistle in the Greek New Testament: the word *aphtharsia*, which means "incorruption." A literal, word order translation of v. 24: "The grace with all loving the Lord our Jesus Christ in incorruption." The ESV and many other translations interpret incorruption as modifying "loving". While this is in accordance with a valid point – that our love for God should be pure and incorruptible -- it is not in accordance with early Christian usage of the word *aphtharsia* (J. A. Robinson finds no early uses of the word in the moral sense; it usually refers to our incorruptible state in the resurrection body – to eternal life); nor is it in accordance with the grammar and syntax of Ephesians, where the preposition "in" is used in the "comitative" sense, i.e., it is used to attach the word that follows to one or more preceding words to complete a series. Bearing usage and grammar in mind, the verse can be translated, "Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, grace and eternal life."

Think About It: While there is nothing wrong with an exhortation to love God with incorruptible love, and while it is also true that God's grace works to sanctify us (incorruption in the moral sense) translating "incorruption" as a modifier for "love" might be misconstrued to imply that God's grace is applied to those who qualify for it by having a pure quality of love. How would this clash the concept of grace – and with the message of New Testament about grace (Ephesians 2:8 – 9, Romans 5:8)?

Prayer: Lord, I strengthen me to love You in purity and holiness. Thank You for loving me, an unworthy sinner.

Sunday

Ephesians 6:24; Titus 1:2; 3:7

The Lutheran commentator (and Greek scholar) Lenski notes it is both certain that 1) *aphtharsia* means "incorruption", our eternal state after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:42, 50, 53, 54), and that 2) Paul means to end Ephesians with a major concept, beautifully concluding a theme which began the epistle. Namely, that God, who conceived and planned our salvation in eternity past, has blessed those who love Him with the assurance of that salvation for all eternity future. We need assurance of where we are going, which is what the New Testament means by "hope"; and it is that assurance with which Paul closes the great epistle to the Ephesians.

Think About It: Why is the encouragement of hope so important to us? Do I know the hope to which God has called me (Ephesians 1:18)? How can I know for certain that I have eternal life (1 John 5:11 – 13)?

Prayer: Praise God for the peace, grace love, faith, and hope of eternal life that is mine through the Lord Jesus Christ.