

“Peace be to the brethren . . .”

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Read: Ephesians 6:21-24

Paul ends where he began with the words of peace, love, faith and grace. Packed between these two towering bookends, found within the greeting and the benediction lays the unfathomable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). It is a vast expanse of God gifting His people peace, love, faith and all this because of the surpassing riches of His grace (Eph. 2:7). Paul lies before the reader the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (3:18, 19). Consider with me once more the path laid before us and on which we have tread.

Ephesians 1:3-14 lays down the Trinitarian involvement in securing for Himself a people by the purpose of the Father, provided for by the Son and promised in the Holy Spirit. All this was done long before we, as individuals, came into existence.

Ephesians 1:15-23 provides us with Paul's passionate prayer for his audience so that they might comprehend the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe as stated in the previous paragraph.

If Ephesians 1:3-14 gives the divine perspective on God's redemptive activity, then Ephesians 2:1-10 is a rock skipping across the surface of God's great redemptive ocean.

Ephesians 2:11-22 shows the implications of God's redemptive activity in the forming of His body, the church from two very distinct entities; first, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles and of God and humanity. In the cross of Jesus Christ, all things are reconciled to the Father, and thus to one another.

Because of Paul's relationship to the letter's recipients he explains his place in the unfolding of the Story in Ephesians 3:1-13. Paul is a steward of God's grace which was given to him for them (v. 2). He was in prison because of this stewardship and his desire was to comfort and encourage those who expressed concern for him (v. 13; 6:21, 22).

Once more Paul prays for his audience in so far he desired for them to know the vast nature of God's love for them as seen in the redemption and adoption of their souls (Eph. 3:14-21).

Chapter 4:1 through 5:21 speaks to the application of these great truths to the Church at large. The cross changes everything. Reconciliation to God openly manifests itself toward the outside world. His body, the church, behaves differently than the non-reconciled. Paul moves from the general to the specific and makes direct application within the household of faith (Eph. 5:22-6:9).

In my most intimate relationships within my immediate household, my conduct and attitude are greatly altered. I no longer seek my interests above that of others. I place others first. The

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Spirit's indwelling overflows in stunning displays of rich and succulent fruit (5:19-22). A simple sampling is intoxicating. If the part or whisper is staggering, what might the full disclosure impart?

This is the immeasurable and unfathomable riches of God's grace openly revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ and made known by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Yet we must not rest on our proverbial laurel. The believer is at war with all that is outside of God. His enemies (and ours) seek to rob His people of this knowledge. They desire to strip His people of fully enjoying all that He is for them, and they are in Him. Therefore we are called upon to be strong, put on and stand firm (Eph. 6:10-17). It is regrettably easy to forget the Story in which we live (Rev. 2:4). Therefore, pray (6:18-20). Pray for one another; pray for the advancement and proclamation of God's Story. And lest we forget, Paul sends a reminder, Tychicus (6:21, 22).

The preservation and preaching of the Letter is so that we will not forget but will always remember our place within the larger Story of God. Thus Paul ends with peace, love, faith and grace . . . exactly where he began.

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