

15.
PERSONAL WORDS
Ephesians 6:21-24

In Paul's entire letter, he had said nothing about himself except that he was under arrest. He closed with a few personal words, but only to tell the Ephesians that Tychicus would inform them about his health and living conditions and about the activities in which he was engaged. His letter to the Ephesians was not about himself but about revelations from God.

Other than Tychicus, Paul did not mention a single individual in the entire letter. Commentators have considered those omissions strange, especially in light of the long list of people to whom he sent personal greetings in his letter to the church at Rome (Rom. 16:30-24). The most common suggestion for Paul's failure to mention individuals in this letter is that Paul intended this letter to be a circular letter to be passed from church to church. As it circulated, the same personal greetings would not have been appropriate in each church. The evidence to support the suggestion that Ephesians was intended to be a circular letter was considered in the first chapter of this commentary and was shown to be weak. A more likely reason Paul did not mention individuals is that Paul had spent such a long time in Ephesus that he knew most of the members there and could not send greetings to some without omitting many others who would have been disappointed to be left out. His relationship to the church in Ephesus was entirely different from his relationship to the church in Rome, which he had never visited before he wrote his letter to them and where he only knew people with whom he had worked in other cities before they moved to the capital city of Rome.

Paul did close the Book of Ephesians with a few personal words. Those words were warm and loving, but they were extremely brief. They were so limited, because Paul sent Tychicus to share with them personal greetings and information about himself. That information shared by a living person were much more meaningful than any written words could be.

²¹ But that you may know about me, what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will make everything known to you, ²² whom I send to you for that same purpose, that you may know about us and [that] he may comfort your hearts.

²³ Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from Father God and Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ without corruption.

Verses 21-22. Personal information about Paul. Paul knew the Ephesians would be eager to receive personal information about him. He had spent three years among them, and nothing indicates that tension or disagreement ever had arisen between them and him. They loved him, and for sure they wanted to know about his health and living conditions. They also were eager to know about any work he was able to do for Christ under his conditions of house arrest. Paul did not take time to write that information. Instead he sent Tychicus to deliver his letter to them and to give them full information about his personal conditions. Tychicus was a companion of Paul who perhaps was as close to Paul as anyone in the world. He

knew all about Paul's circumstances, because Paul said he would tell the Ephesians "everything." Paul trusted Tychicus to share with the Ephesians everything he knew about Paul's circumstances, needs, and accomplishments in Rome.

Paul indicated that the information Tychicus was going to share with them was going to be encouraging to them. At that time Paul was being treated kindly and allowed to live in his own rented house while he was awaiting trial. All indications were that he was going to be acquitted when the time for his trial would come. Paul was alert, strong, and vigorous, and he was eager to resume his travels and his efforts to spread the gospel to

new areas. That kind of information would be highly encouraging and inspiring to the Ephesians.

We also would like to know details about Paul's experiences under house arrest in Rome, but Paul did not write his letter to the Ephesians to tell about himself. He wrote it to tell the Ephesians about the spectacular plans God has for all His believers and for all of His cosmos in the End. Paul did not consider himself to be important. God's truth was supremely important, and he devoted his letter to communicating that truth. We also should put our major emphasis, not on studying Paul's life but on studying the revelations God revealed through Paul. The example of Paul's devotion and sacrifice surely are greatly inspiring, but the truth God revealed through Paul inspire us much more to preserve and spread the message to which Paul devoted his life.

The man whom Paul sent to Ephesus to deliver this all-important letter was Tychicus. Tychicus is mentioned five times in the New Testament. Those five brief references to Tychicus reveal him to be one of Paul's most intimate and useful helpers. He stood in the background, but he made contributions without which many of Paul's accomplishments would have been impossible.

Acts 20:4 says, Tychicus and Trophimus were two Asians out of six fellow workers who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. Asia was a Roman province in western Anatolia, and Ephesus was located in that province. That brief bit of information indicates that Tychicus had been working with Paul in Ephesus before a riot forced Paul to leave that city (Acts 19:11-20:1), had traveled with Paul for three months through Macedonia and Greece to strengthen and encourage the churches there (Acts 20:2-3a), had traveled separately from Paul to Troas as they returned to Jerusalem because another riot had occurred in Greece (Acts. 20:3b-5), and then had accompanied him on the remainder of his journey to Jerusalem (Acts. 20:6-21:17). Since Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, was sent to Caesarea for safety, and then after two years as a prisoner appealed to Caesar in an attempt to get a fair trial, and since Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians while he was in Rome

under house arrest and sent Tychicus to deliver it, it seems almost irrefutable that Tychicus continued to minister to Paul throughout his imprisonments to be available to him in whatever way he might be needed. If so, it is easy to understand why Paul commended Tychicus to the Ephesians as "the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord." This mention of Tychicus in the Book of Ephesians is the second reference to Tychicus in the New Testament.

Paul also mentioned Tychicus in his letter to the Colossians, which he wrote at the same time that he wrote his letter to the Ephesians. He sent his letter to the Colossians by Tychicus as well and described him to the Colossians in much the same words that he used in Ephesians (Col. 4:7-9). His reference to Tychicus in Colossians is the third time Tychicus is mentioned in the New Testament.

The fourth reference to Tychicus in the New Testament is Titus 3:12, which says that Paul sent Tychicus to Crete to serve as interim pastor of that church in Titus's place, so Titus could come to Paul. Apparently Paul was acquitted and released at his trial before Caesar. After his release, he continued his ministry and spent some time in Crete. When he had to leave Crete, he left Titus to continue the work there (Tit. 1:5-6). Later he needed Titus and wrote the Book of Titus to ask him to prepare to meet him in Nicopolis and spend the winter with him there (Tit. 3:12). He said he would send either Artemas or Tychicus to relieve him so he could come. That reference shows that Paul had great confidence in Tychicus and was comfortable to send him on difficult and challenging assignments with assurance that he would accomplish them with faithfulness and effectiveness.

Tychicus is mentioned a fifth time in 2 Timothy 4:12. As Paul continued his travels to spread the gospel, an intense time of persecution arose against Christians, instigated by Caesar Domitian. Probably it was during that persecution that Paul was arrested again. This time he was charged with offenses against Rome rather than offenses against Israel. He was faced with much stronger opposition this time than he was in his first trial before Caesar. He says in the Book of First

Timothy that in his first hearing to defend himself against the new charges against him all of his fellow workers deserted him and he had to face his accusers alone (2 Tim. 4:16). As he awaited a second hearing, at which it is likely he was condemned to death, he wrote to Timothy who was serving in Ephesus, and asked him to come to him and bring Mark with him (2 Tim. 4:6-14). He sent Tychicus to relieve Timothy in Ephesus, so Timothy could come to Paul (2 Tim. 4:12). He again trusted Tychicus with a crucial responsibility at the most excruciating and dangerous time in his life.

These five references reveal that Tychicus was one of Paul's most faithful and useful companions as he continued to expand his work farther and farther across the Roman Empire, in spite of the most powerful and ferocious of enemies.

It is highly probable that Paul also used Tychicus to record his letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians, and in all likelihood Philemon was well, since Philemon was written at the same time as Ephesians and Colossians. If so, Paul trusted Tychicus with the most important and responsible task any helper could perform. He used him to record the inspired Word of God. Paul and Tychicus may have discussed some sentences together to obtain exactly the right wording to convey the idea God placed in Paul's mind. He then depended on Tychicus to write those words on papyrus to preserve the awe inspiring words of God just as God had revealed them. Whatever process Paul and Tychicus used to record those words, the result was to give to the world some of the most exalted revelations that have ever come from heaven to the minds and hearts of people.

After the letters were recorded, Paul trusted Tychicus to protect them and to deliver them to Ephesus, Colossae, and Philemon. When Tychicus undertook that assignment, he began those letters on their journey to bless the whole Christian world from that day until today.

Tychicus is not given primary attention anywhere in the Scriptures, but he was no minor

figure in the early spread of the gospel across the Roman Empire.

One responsibility Paul definitely entrusted to Tychicus was to share information about himself with the Ephesians (and the Colossians, Col. 3:7-9). That responsibility is what Ephesians 6:21-22 is all about. Paul described that responsibility in a few brief words, but it was a much bigger responsibility than those few words indicate. God's work is accomplished through redeemed people as they work together in comradeship and companionship. Without friendship and cooperation among God's people, God's work cannot be accomplished in this world. Love, compassion for each other, knowledge of each other's needs, and efforts to assist and help each other are absolute basic necessities for the success of the gospel. Tychicus had to spend a large amount of time, invest considerable money, and expend great effort to travel to Ephesus and share information about Paul with those churches. The effort was worth all the sacrifices required of Tychicus. Without the kind of sharing Tychicus performed, much of Paul's work may very well have languished, and even wasted away. Tychicus has not received much attention for his contribution to fostering and maintaining comradeship among God's people in those crucial days, but their value far outweighed the credit that has been given to him.

Verses 23-24. Closing blessings. Paul closed his letter with words of blessing on the Ephesian believers. The blessing he expressed included his favorite words: "peace," "love," "faith," and "grace." Those blessings are the pinnacle of what it means to experience Christ and to live a Christian life. Paul expressed his deep desire for the Ephesians to abound in each of those blessings.

Paul revealed why he longed for the Ephesians to be blessed in that manner when he called them "brothers." He had the deepest kind of human relationship with them. He obviously missed them and longed for them to experience the best of all things. But he knew he could not give them the blessings he longed for them to have. Those blessings could come only from Father God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He also called them

“those who love our Lord Jesus Christ without corruption.” He recognized that being that kind of people made them eligible to receive God’s best blessings. So Paul expressed his desire for the Ephesians to receive from the many-sided true and only God all the blessings that make life worthwhile.

Paul’s words of blessings were not magic formulas to bring down good fortune. They were expressions of the highest of all good treasures that come only from knowing the exalted God of all gods, who sacrifices Himself in order to serve His people and give to them the best of all blessings.

With those words of inspiration, Paul committed his converts in Ephesus into the hands of God for God to do in them the things he never could do himself and certainly could not do from a distance. But Paul had not labored among them so he could elevate their lives through his own strength and ingenuity. He had done it to introduce them to the One who could elevate their lives with the greatest of all blessings. In the arms of that One, he left them, knowing that through Him they could grow in the likeness of the Savior who would make their lives both beautiful and useful through the magnificent blessings of peace, love, faith, and grace.