

Series: Ephesians
Title: Peace, Love, Faith, Grace
Text: Ephesians 6: 23-24
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Ephesians 6: 23: Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24: Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. « *To the Ephesians written from Rome, by Tychicus.* »

This will be our last message from our Ephesians series. Here we have Paul's benediction.

Here is my main point. In scripture, benedictions at the end of the epistles are not mere wishes but they state what every true believer continually has from God and that which the apostles asked God to increase in their brethren. For instance, here Paul speaks of "peace, love, faith, and grace." Every true believer is given peace, love, faith and grace from God. And every true believer shall have peace, love, faith and grace increased from God. We want the best for those we love. These four things are the very best! We could not ask a better petition to God, for our brethren, than peace, love, faith, and grace. Let's take this benediction a phrase at a time.

PEACE

First, the apostle says, "Peace be to the brethren." (Eph 6: 23)

Every true believer filled with God's Spirit has peace. We have peace with God. We have peace in our conscience; We have peace between brethren and seek to maintain it. If it is disrupted we are troubled. And we seek to live peaceably with all men. Even when the LORD caused his people to be carried away captive, he said, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." (Jer 29: 7)

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is our Peace and he is the great Peacemaker. We have peace only Christ gives—his peace. He said to his disciple, just before he went to the cross, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn 14: 27) What is the peace that Christ has given to the believer?

First, the eternal covenant by which our salvation was and is eternally secured is called the covenant of peace. God said, "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." (Eze 37: 26) This is how our peace begins experimentally—how we come to enter into the peace Christ gives.

Secondly, when the covenant of peace is written on our hearts then we behold Christ the Mediator is the Maker of peace between God the Father and his elect. By his blood, every believer has established the law through faith in Christ. Every believer has attained to the righteousness of God in Christ. Our conscience is purged by his blood so we have peace within toward God. So we are made one with God. Now we know,

Romans 5: 8: God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9: Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10: For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Thirdly, the chief way Christ gives us peace and makes us peacemakers is by giving us the Gospel of peace. The gospel is concerning Christ and him crucified. Therefore, the gospel causes great division between us and many who hear us. Christ said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household." (Mt 10:34-36) But only those who are yet warring against God are divided against us. For by the gospel of peace Christ makes peace in the hearts of his children. And not only between us and our heavenly Father but between us and our brethren. Through the gospel of peace, Christ makes us alive and gives us the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph 4: 3)

So as Christ says through the Psalmist, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, [and] prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace *be* within thee." (Ps 122: 6-8) Truly, when Christ speaks peace then we shall have peace even as he spoke peace and made the raging sea be still.

LOVE WITH FAITH

Secondly, the apostle says "And love with faith." (Eph 6: 23)

Believers have love and believers have faith. Here he asks that they might be given an increase in love accompanied with their faith. These two go together, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." (Gal 5: 6)

Wherever God gives faith in Christ, God gives love for Christ and for our brethren.

1 John 5:1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1John 4:21: And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

By God's grace, as he increases faith, he increases love. Paul wrote the Thessalonians saying, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." (2 Thess 1: 3)

Brethren, the more God helps our unbelief, the more he gives us faith to enter into the great love wherewith God loved us in sending his only begotten Son and in all that Christ suffered for us. As he increases our faith then the more we constrained by the love of Christ and the more "faith worketh by love."

Let's look at this a little more closely. The more effectually Christ works in us to increase our faith, he also increases our love. This growth is not what the self-righteous world speaks of. The more they grow, the more proud they get. True growth is totally different. The more effectually Christ works in his child the more we acknowledge all good gifts come from him alone. And at the same time, the more we acknowledge our utter nothingness apart from him. The more effectually Christ makes faith behold how he served God for us, the more his love for us makes us we want to serve him by serving one another simply because we own that it is our reasonable service. Paul writes of this very thing to Philemon, saying,

Philemon 1:4: I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, 5: Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; 6: That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

They communicated their faith toward all the saints. It means they served one another. Paul prayed that God might use those good works to effectually make them acknowledge that every good thing their brethren did was because they were in Christ and Christ was working in them both to will and to do his good pleasure.

For example, the other day, I overheard someone that I have been preaching the gospel to for a long time answer another person who was objecting to the gospel. They answered with a good answer. It was an answer according to the scriptures, according to something we had just looked into. It made me thank Christ for working in them to answer that way. It was only by Christ that they did answer that way.

This is how Christ increases true love for him together with faith and at the same time humbles his people. The more faith is made to see that every good thing my brother does is Christ working in them then the more Christ brings me to glorify Christ for his grace. At the same time, the more I am brought to acknowledge my own weakness and inability except Christ be my strength. And the more faith sees how truly Christ is in his people, the more his love constrains us because what it causes me to realize more and more that what I do to my brother, I am doing to Christ. Christ is in his people, one with his people. So all the way around, in every way, his effectual grace causes us to put no confidence in our own flesh but all confidence in Christ. The constraint of Christ's love increases together the more faith increases.

THE FOUNTAIN

Thirdly, we see the fountain from which all these gifts flow, "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph 6: 23)

The best questions we can continually remind ourselves of is this, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor 4: 7) Life, faith, righteousness, hope, acceptance with God all come from God. The ability to sing, pray, preach, and study all come from God. All spiritual and temporal gifts come from God. "Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor 4: 7)

We truly have no room to glory in ourselves in any regard. Every good gift was freely given to us by God by his free and sovereign grace.

GRACE

Lastly, the apostle says, "Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." (Eph 6: 24)

There are only two kinds of people in this world: those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and those who are enmity against him; those saved by his grace and those lost in rebellion; those born of his Spirit, and those dead in Adam; those who are sincere and those who are hypocrites.

To those who are enmity against God and reject God's gospel, Paul said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Cor 16: 22) But here he says, "Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

We cannot end this series without looking at the very last word in this epistle, "Amen." Do you know what Amen means? When Christ wrote to the church of Laodicea he said, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (Rev 3: 14) Christ's name is "Amen." The word means this is a "faithful and true witness." And Christ is indeed "the faithful and true witness." This is Christ's name! The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness! We end a faithful and true witness with this word. So it is fitting that this epistle end with this word: **Amen!**