

An Ambassador in Chains – *Ephesians 6:19-24*

Introduction – Ephesians was a personal letter from Paul to the “*saints who are in Ephesus*” (1:1), but also to the “*faithful in Jesus Christ*.” The letter ends with a benediction of grace upon “*all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (incorruptibly, unceasingly)*.” The letter has focused upon how it is that sinners can be saints loved by God (Eph 1-3) and how it is that such saints can live faithful lives unceasingly and in all sincerity (Eph 4-6). His letter is a beautiful balance of the powerful gospel of grace, all accomplished by Christ that we might be empowered by Christ to live powerfully in Christ.

An Ambassador in Chains – You have to notice the incongruity here. Ambassadors have diplomatic immunity and are expected to speak boldly on behalf of the government they represent. Instead, commissioned by the mightiest of sovereigns, Paul has been in chains for years. The good news he proclaims is for Jew and Gentile alike, and both are responsible for his imprisonment. Like Joseph in Egypt, like David fleeing Saul, and like Jesus before Herod and Pontius Pilate, being in prison is the prelude to the throne. Consider other words written by Paul while in prison (Phil 1:21, 4:11-13, 2 Tim 4:6-8).

The Mystery which is the Gospel – And it is the substance of the message and his Sovereign which gives Paul such optimism, an optimism that is for all in Christ. The Gospel is no mystery religion; it is not hidden knowledge reserved for the elite. It is for all, Jew and Gentile alike; for the whole world. In 1:9-10 he made clear that this mystery was “*that He might gather together in one*” meaning that He has united or recapitulated and restored all things, drawing everything up to Himself. All things are new because God has reconciled the world through Christ (2 Cor 5:17-19). He spoke of the “*fellowship of the mystery*” which stunned the principalities and the powers because through Christ the greatest problem of the world was solved: how to make sinful man acceptable to God. How could God be both just and the One Who justifies (Rom 3:26)?

Asking for Prayer – What a staggering thought that this mighty man of God would ask for prayer. “*The greater the Christian the more he realizes his dependence upon the prayers of others*” (Lloyd-Jones). There is no self confidence in Paul and he believed in the power of intercessory prayer. Who is praying for you? Who knows your needs that must be brought before the throne? Are we faithful in lifting up the names of those who stand in the gap and preach the gospel? Paul makes two requests:

For an Utterance to be Given – Most gospel tracts or presentations generously use the words of Paul (i.e. Rom 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10, the so-called “Romans Road”), and so the point is not that Paul does not know his Bible or the doctrine of the gospel. He knows that with each circumstance, there is just the right way to use the truth, the wise turn of phrase, the Spirit-wrought perfect moment of saying just the right thing at the right time. We also should be well prepared to give an account for the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15) and for just the right way to speak of that hope in the next situation. And so we should pray for one another to have just that.

For Bold-Speak to be Given – The syntax emphasizes more the request that “*God may open my mouth*” so that he may speak “openly, clearly, boldly with a clarion call.” Paul has precedence to ask for this as an apostle, for the prophets of old were to speak as God opened their mouths (Isaiah 59:21, Ezek 3:27, Psalm 39:9). We now have those words and pray that God would give us courage and clarity, along with winsome grace, to speak clearly of the reconciliation which is ours and the worlds through Christ. We will be considered fools for Christ among the philosophies of men, but Jesus says there is a white harvest out there. We should pray that He would raise up laborers who are equipped to go and get that harvest.

Ministry through Personal Care – Paul had many opportunities to openly give utterance. We know Onesimus was converted by Paul while in prison (Philemon) and we know that Paul wrote many letters while in prison which are the Word of God. We also know that for the first two years in Rome while under house arrest, he had a very full ministry (Acts 28:30-31). At the end of his letter to the Ephesians, he says he will send Tychicus and it appears that the Ephesians know him (6:21-22). He is sent to calm fears, probably dispel rumors, and “*comfort your hearts*” regarding Paul’s affairs. Paul was never a man of doctrine only. He loved those he taught (1 Thess 2:8).

Benediction to the Body – Benedictions (good speaking, a blessing) were traditionally the way a service of worship was ended and it is good to take these benedictions and use them as we are commissioned by God to go with His blessing. It is the liturgical practice of placing the name of God and His blessings upon His people as they go. It is a final reminder that everything the Lord commands (be at peace, love, be gracious, be faithful) He gives (peace, love with faith, grace). After giving the Great Commission Jesus said, “*and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” And He is. Amen.