

Ephesians 6b Epilog and Review

7/17/00 6:28 AM

Overview

Verses 21-24 are the formal closing to the letter, corresponding to 1:1-19, and may be thought of as part of the “envelope.” Their structure is stylized by the conventions of letter writing, though not every element appears in every letter (see notes to Paul course, and table there).

Epilog

21-22, *Tychicus*

His Background

Acts 20:4, one of Paul’s traveling companions. We learn here:

- He is of Asian origin (his companion, Trophimus, comes from Ephesus, 21:29).
- He has been with Paul in Greece. Did Paul meet him along the way, or did he join himself with Paul at Troas on the outward journey in Acts 16:10, along with Luke? (Note the change from “they” to “we.”)

Here and Col 4:7, carries the letters of the first imprisonment to Asia Minor. Thus must have accompanied Paul to Rome.

Titus 3:12, with Paul between the imprisonments, and available to be sent from one church to another.

2 Tim 4:12, during the second imprisonment, Tychicus is also with him, and once again makes a trip to Ephesus for Paul.

Thus we gain a picture of Tychicus as a member of Paul’s staff, frequently sent on missions for Paul.

21b, His Credentials

Beloved brother.—Paul treasures him first as a brother in Christ, not as an employee or staff member. This is the basic relation from which the others grow.

Faithful minister.—*διακονος*, lit., “servant.”

- This does not mean that he was ordained a deacon, any more than does the similar commendation of Phoebe in Rom 16:1,2. Col 4:7 adds “fellow-bondslave.” The point is that he is devoted to serving.
- The addition of “in the Lord” emphasizes that while he is working with Paul, his relation is not hierarchical, but organic, through their shared membership in the body of Christ.

21a, 22, His Task

Twofold:

That ye might know our affairs.—Paul anticipates that they will be concerned over his condition in prison. Tychicus will be able to give them a first-hand account, in far more detail than the Spirit has led Paul to commit to writing. This is the exercise of his role as a “beloved brother.”

Different prepositional phrases in 21 and 22. 21 is addressed most immediately to their concern over how he is doing in view of the privations to which he has been exposed, but v.22 is more general, including the opportunities that face him.

Τα περι χ: (Eph 6:22; Col 4:8) appears to be more general, including the things that Paul has done.

- Lk 24:27, what Christ expounded from the OT
- Acts 13:29, prophecies of his death
- Acts 23:11, what Paul testified of Christ in Jerusalem
- Acts 23:15, what the council wanted to enquire of Paul
- Acts 24:10, what Paul defended before Felix
- Acts 28:15, what the Roman brethren heard to bring them to Three Taverns
- Phil 1:27, 2:19 what Paul wants to learn about the Philippians
- Phil 2:20, what Timothy will naturally care for

Τα κατα χ: (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7) may have the implication “what was done to him.” More passive.

- Acts 24:22, what Felix wanted to learn (διαγινωσκω) from the chief captain; cf 25:14 “Paul’s cause”
- Phil 1:12, the things that happened to Paul, his experiences

That he might comfort your hearts.—Here is the work of the “faithful minister.” Same word as 4:1; includes exhortation as well as comfort. Tychicus is to seek to apply personally the instruction that Paul has written down. He would read the letter to them and be its first expositor.

23-24, Double Benediction

23, to the Ephesians

Frequently in his epistles, he prays that the God of peace would be with them. What is the meaning of “peace” here?

- Internal peace in the church between Jews and Gentiles?
- Peace with their external adversaries?
- A good hint may be 1 Thes 5:23,24, recalling the Hebrew sense of *shalom*: wholeness, integrity, completeness. There he spells out what may well be in the background in other places, a desire that they would “hang together” spiritually.

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One aspect of this is love among the brethren, which he mentions next. But this can only be achieved “with faith.” This phrase, “love with faith,” is a great antidote to the current notion of love independent of belief. (Maybe love → inheritance 2:11-3:13, faith → strength 1:20-2:10?)

24, to all believers

“Grace to you” is Paul’s characteristic signature at the end of every epistle. The one characteristic of God’s dealings with men that is foremost in Paul’s mind is grace, unmerited favor where wrath is deserved.

Everywhere else it is addressed specifically to the addressees, but here he makes it far more general, to all who love the Lord Jesus in “sincerity,” lit. “incorruptibility.”

- It is not for all, but only for those who love the Lord. A beautiful expression of our trust in him.
- But not all who say, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom. In some, this love is temporary; cf. Luke 8:13, “for a while believe.” Those who truly receive God’s grace are those who love him permanently; “perseverance of the saints.”

Review of the Book

Its Author

Paul alone, rather than Paul with an associate.

- Paul is not alone at this time; we know from Col, Phm, and Phil that Timothy was with him.
- Nor do the cosigners seem to have much to do with the content of other epistles; Paul is clearly the main author.

Of all Paul’s epistles, Romans and Ephesians are unique in this feature, and they are also unique in not addressing specific problems in the receiving churches. We hypothesize that Paul is operating under the principle of “two or three witnesses,” Deut 17:6. His authority as an apostle is sufficient to set forth doctrine, but rebuke and chastisement requires the participation of others; cf. 2 Cor 10:8, “our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction.”

Thus we should understand Ephesians (and Romans!) as the most theological of Paul’s letters, dealing with general principles rather than specific presenting problems.

It follows the same outline as Romans:

| | Romans | Ephesians |
|--|---------------|------------------|
| Salvation | Ch. 1-8 | 1:20-2:10 |
| Relation of Jew and Gentile in Christ | Ch. 9-11 | 2:11-ch.3 |
| Practical Implications of these two themes | Ch. 12-16 | Ch. 4-6 |

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Its Theme

Why then have both Romans and Ephesians, if there are no special problems to address and both cover much of the same ground? A clue to the answer may be in the relative frequency of the term “church” in the two books, and indeed throughout Paul’s epistles. The following table shows the epistles ranked by occurrence of the word (singular or plural) per chapter. (Second row excludes any address in the first verse or two “to the church”)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 2 Tim | Phm | 1 Th | Rom | 2 Th | Gal | Titus | Phil | 1 Tim | 2 Cor | Col | 1 Cor | Eph |
| 0 | 1.00 | 0.40 | 0.25 | 0.66 | 0.50 | 0.33 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.69 | 1.00 | 1.38 | 1.50 |
| 0 | 0 | 0.20 | 0.25 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.62 | 1.00 | 1.31 | 1.50 |

Romans mentions “church” only in the greetings in ch. 16, in exchanging greetings among the churches. Ephesians contains the densest references to “church” of any epistle. Romans focuses on the plan of God for the *individual believer*; Ephesians, on his program for the *church*. Paul here reaches the pinnacle of his appreciation of the believer’s position “in Christ.” The book’s amazing claim is that Christ is being completely filled by his body (1:23).

If Eph is most similar to Rom in its theological depth and its outline, it is most similar to 1 Cor in its emphasis on the church. Yet 1 Cor is an intensely practical book, dealing with deep specific problems. Galatians offers a similar pairing for Romans; together with 1 Tim, they are the only NT books with more than three occurrences of πιστις or πιστευω in the NT.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2 Co | 1 Co | Phil | Col | Eph | Phm | 2 Ti | 1 Th | 2 Th | Tit | Heb | Rom | 1 Ti | Gal |
| .54 | .94 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 1.67 | 2.00 | 2.25 | 2.60 | 2.67 | 2.67 | 2.67 | 3.25 | 3.50 | 3.67 |

Think of Galatians as practical application of Romans on the subject of sin; 1 Cor as practical application of Ephesians on the subject of the church.

Its Lessons

Two great lessons emerge from our position “in Christ.” They are reflected in the outline of the book, captured in Paul’s two prayers:

| Chapter 1 | Chapter 3 | |
|--|--|------------------------|
| 19 And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe | 16 That he would grant you ... to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; | 1:20-2:10 (6:10-20) |
| 18b what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, | 17 that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge | 2:11-3:13 (4:1-6:9) |
| 18a what is the hope of his calling | 19b that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. | 4:1-6:20 |

The two prayers bracket the doctrinal portion of the book, which lays the foundation for the themes of God’s power and God’s inheritance. Then ch. 4-6 works out the practical implications of this doctrinal section as the hope to which God has called us.

You are One with All Believers in the Lord

Since we are the body of Christ, and he is one, we are one with all true believers, and our lives should manifest the life of Christ. The theological foundation is laid in 2:11-3:13. God has established this unity as a testimony to the angels (3:10). Therefore we must conduct ourselves in its light, 4:1-6:1:

- Walk in unity, 4:1-16
- Walk not as the Gentiles walk, 4:17-5:7
- Walk as children of light, 5:8-6:9.

You are Victorious over Satan in the Lord

Since we are the body of Christ, and he is victorious over Satan, so are we. Again, the theological foundation is in the first part of the book, between the prayers (1:20-2:10). The same power that raised Christ from the dead has raised us. God has not done this in secret, but as a public display (2:7). Therefore we must live it out in our lives, being strong “in the Lord,” 6:10-20.

Heightening both of these is the pervasive message that we are being watched.

- 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in [his] kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
- 3:10, To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God

God delights to say to the angels, as he said to Satan in Job 1, “Hast thou considered my servant?” We know that women are to be covered when they pray or prophesy “because of the angels” (1 Cor 11:10), but we do not adequately consider that the angels are watching everything else that God enjoins on us as well.

Summary of the book: Our position in Christ gives us unity with the brethren and confidence facing the enemy, thus glorifying God before the angels.