

Final Lessons from the Book of Ephesians
Various Texts
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 4, 2021

Before we get started in our sermon time this morning, I just want to mention we are at a crossroads in the life of our church today, we're at a turning point, because this is our last message in the book of Ephesians. This is the last sermon in a book that we've been in since the fall of 2019, if you can believe that. That's how long we've been in this book, since the fall of 2019.

Time flies, doesn't it? It goes by so quickly. And you could add to that, that there's a lot that's happened since that time. Because just to mention a few things, the Coronavirus has happened since then. I don't know if you've heard of that or not. But that's taken place since then. COVID-19 has occurred. Before that time, nobody knew what that was. I remember calling one of our doctors on the phone and asking him should we have church on Sunday when the whole thing was breaking out. Because we'd never heard of it before. Now everybody's heard of that. I don't think we'll ever forget it.

And not only that, but it's also the book we were in when all the race riots happened in the States. This is the book we were in when major cities in the US like Minneapolis and Seattle just about burnt to flames over the issue of a white police officer shooting a black man, George Floyd. Some of you may not remember that, but I do. In fact, today's the Fourth of July, so the US is kind of on my mind, and it affected a lot of my friends down there. I remember when I called some buddies in Los Angeles, and he said, "We're under martial law right now. We can't go outside of our house at night." And this is a book that carried us through all that. It's also the book we were in when we came back from all of those things. Ephesians is the book we were in when we started meeting here on the farm, under the tent, and on the outside like this.

But all that to say is, it's taken us through a lot as a church. The book of Ephesians has carried us through a lot of difficult times, so much so that it's kind of been like a friend to our church. It's sort of become like one of our close companions. And it's gonna be hard to say goodbye to it. But nothing lasts forever. All good things must come to an end. And this morning, we're going to wrap up our study of the book of Ephesians. So if you would open there with me in your Bibles, for one final time, would turn in your Bibles with me for one last time, to Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus.

And as you're doing that, several people have asked me what we're going to do when we finish this series. They've asked me what we're going to do when we're done with it. And the answer is we're going to do a few messages on the church. We're going to do a few sermons on the body of Christ because that seems to be an important issue nowadays. It's something that's on a lot of people's minds. Because we are meeting outside in a tent. We are meeting in such an unusual way that it's kind of raised the question, "Well, what are we doing this for? What's the goal here?" What do we mean when we say the word church? Is it just a building? Is it just a piece of property where the people can gather? Or is it more than that? Is it about something else? And that's what we're going to talk about next. It's not going to be a whole series. We're not going to spend a long time on that topic, but I do want to say a few words about it before we move on to the next thing.

But for this morning, we're going to look at the last words in the book of Ephesians to finish off our series, and I want to read them to you before we get started. If you would look at Ephesians six, starting in verse 10, Paul writes, and he says,

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

Just to say a few words about this, if you notice, Paul starts off with the word “finally” back up in verse 10. He starts off, it's the first time that word is used to say, “Finally, after all, I've said to you so far,” “Finally, after all this other material that we've gone through, it's time to bring the book to a close.” Paul says it's time to end it. And he does it by talking about the armor of God, which we've talked about in previous weeks. So I'm not going to say any more about that here. But I do want to tell you why he put this in here in the first place. It'd probably be helpful to talk about why he mentioned the armor of God in a book like this. And that is because the Ephesians needed it so badly. The reason he wrote about the armor in this book is because they lived in such a terrible place. If you look back in chapter one, verse one, it tells you where they lived, where they were from. When it says in the first verse of the book, it says,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus.

So that was the audience of this book. That was where they lived. They lived in a town called Ephesus. And just to tell you a little bit about that, according to most scholars, at this time in history, the population of Ephesus was somewhere between a quarter million to half a million people, making it one of the largest cities in the world. It was one of the biggest cities in the world at the time, because it was located on the western side of Asia Minor, in what is modern day Turkey, right across the ocean from Rome. So it was right across the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, the Romans actually had a law which said that if you wanted to travel from Rome to Asia Minor, you had to go through Ephesus. It was a landing point for that. So not only did you have all the people who live there, you also had all the travelers as well, and the traffic, which made the town very prosperous because the Bank of Asia was there. It was a large bank located there to hold all the gold that came into the city, to hold all the money. They also had the market of Asia there as well, which was a large outdoor shopping center, a large outdoor mall that

people could spend their money in. They had the gateway to Asia as well, a large column-lined road that stretched from the ocean into town, which made the city beautiful. By all accounts, it was a stunning place to see. Today if you go to Ephesus, you're going to go far inland, way, way far from the ocean, because it's been covered up in silt. There's been a lot of deposits made into the water there. But back then it was on the ocean.

And I might add that all of this population made Ephesus a very sinful place, made it very wicked. Because the Ephesians had a famous temple there, built to the Goddess Artemis. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. But it was nothing more than a brothel. The temple was nothing more than a place for sin. Because Artemis was the goddess of fertility. She was the goddess of childbearing. And so in order to worship her, the Ephesians did all kinds of horrible things. They committed all kinds of terrible atrocities, such as prostitution and homosexuality and so forth. And, in fact, it was so bad one eyewitness said the Ephesians should be drowned over this. He says, that's what you should do to the people of Ephesus: you should kill them all.

And yet this is where the Lord decided to plant a church. Wonder of wonders, this is where he decided to start a work of God. Which was quite a thing as well, because just a little background about the church, the book of Acts says it was started by Priscilla and Aquilla. You remember those two figures in the book of Acts. It was started by that missionary team. Then it was pastored by Apollos, that famous preacher, led by that man of God. Church history says, or the Bible says, later on it was led by Timothy who probably pastored it at this time. Timothy was probably leading the church at Ephesus when this letter was written. And it was also led by the Apostle Paul. From what I could put together, he spent three years there, which was more time than he spent in any other church. Which is why so much happened in Ephesus, it was why it was such a dynamic place. So for example, Ephesus is where a fight broke out over the goddess Artemis. If you remember the book of Acts, it's where a riot broke out over the worship of her because the people thought Paul was trying to steal her followers away, which was true. They thought he was trying to steal away her disciples. So they fought over that. It's also where a group of magicians were converted to Christ, and they burned their books in a fire. Acts 19 says that the books themselves cost 50,000 pieces of silver or several million dollars worth. But they came to Christ, they trusted in him, and they threw all their sorcery books in to be burned. Ephesus is where several disciples of John the Baptist received the Holy Spirit for the first time. It's where Paul laid hands on them, and they received the Spirit. But all this happened right here in this place. All this happened in the church at Ephesus. Which is why Paul mentioned the armor of God to them. Because they had so much going on. It was such a great work that they needed it, they needed his help. And so he mentions that here.

You know, if you think about it, it's quite a story. It's quite a thought to think that God would plant a church here in a town like this. Because if you're honest about it, most of us wouldn't do that, would we? We wouldn't bother. Most of us stay out of places like... I mean, hate to throw the word out, but cities like Vancouver, where all the sin happens. We stay out of there. But not God. God didn't stay out of a city like this. He came in there to save them, which is what the letter of Ephesians is about. I mean, that's what the whole story of the book is about. I'll say more about chapter six in the closing words in a minute. But the whole point of this book is that God was not giving up on the Ephesians. The whole point is he's not giving up on people who lived in a terrible place like this, even though other people said they should be drowned. God didn't do that. Because he didn't come to save the best of us. He came to save the worst, amen? Can I get an amen to that? We're in a tent. This is the place for amen-ing. He didn't come to save the greatest of us; he came to save the least. He came to save the bottom of the barrel, which is what the Ephesians were. They were the scum of the earth back then. And yet God chose to save them and give them this marvelous book.

And I mention that, I bring it up to you to begin, because I meet people who come to our church from time to time. And they say, “You know, I shouldn't be here.” They come and they say, “I shouldn't be in a place like this, because I'm not worthy. I don't deserve it.” And when I hear that, I have to remind them, “Well, no, you don't. But neither does this person and that person and that person.” No, you don't deserve it. But neither did the Ephesians. Neither did these people. And God has given them all this, to remind you that he can do the same thing for you as well. I mean, other people say, “Okay, I get that, I understand what you're saying, Pastor Jeremy, but you don't know what I've done. You don't know how bad it is.” And the truth is, no, I don't. I have no idea. But it doesn't matter. Because I know this. I know that the Lord can save you anyway. I know that no matter how bad it is, no matter how evil it is, no matter how terrible it is, His grace is sufficient for you. There's hope for you today. Because that's what this book is all about. This is one big book about hope from beginning to end. It's one big book about grace. It's been said that grace is like water because it flows to the lowest part. It's like a river because it goes down to the deepest part of us. And that's what God does. That's what his grace does. It doesn't go to those who are up high; it goes to those who are down low.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning, because this morning, I want us to look at three lessons that we've learned in the book of Ephesians. And that's our outline for today. That's what we're going to look at. This is all a review. This is all a reminder. But if you're taking notes this morning, we're going to look at three lessons that we've learned so far in this book, as a way to close it out. And we're going to do that because this book really has meant a lot to us over the past several years. It's really carried us through a lot as a church. In fact, I often think about where we were when we started this because we had just created an elder board here at Grace. I remember that. We had just started, brought on our first elders, and we were in the process of doing the same thing with the deacons. We were about to make a deacon board as well. And now we're here. I mean, now those positions are established, and we're looking to do things for the summer, make new summer plans. But this is the book that carried us through that. And it did it by talking about this subject, by talking about God's grace. By talking about his mercy. It's a subject that's often misunderstood today. It's something people don't often quite get. So this morning, let's talk about it again and just review what we've learned to refresh your memory by looking at three lessons that we've learned in the book.

The first one is this: You are blessed. The first lesson that we learned in the book of Ephesians is that you're blessed, which means God has been so good to you. God has been so kind, because he's treated you better than anything else in all creation. And that may sound familiar to you, like you've heard it before. And that's because you have. This is a review. But if you look back in chapter one, again, starting in verse one, here's where you see this. And it says,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

We'll stop the reading there. I won't say too much about verses one and two, because we've already said some about that. But after telling us about himself, and how he was an apostle, Paul begins the book by giving us his audience. He tells us who it was written to: the saints who are at Ephesus, the Christians who are living in this

town. And then he does something strange. It doesn't come across well in English. You can't really see it very well in your English Bibles. But he does something unusual because in Greek, he starts a sentence that begins in verse three. And if you look in your Bibles, it goes all the way down to verse 14, without a pause, and without a break. I don't know if you remember your English literature, but you're not supposed to write that way. It's called a run on sentence. But he wrote a sentence that goes from the verse we just read all the way down to about halfway through the chapter without even stopping. Some have called it the longest sentence in the Bible. They've called it the longest sentence in the Greek language.

And just to tell you why he did this, Paul often dictated his letters when he wrote. He often dictated them to a scribe, where he would speak out loud, and they would write the words down. Then he would pause, and then he would speak again, they would write it down, he would pause and give them time, and that sort of thing. But apparently, as he did that here, this subject got him so excited. All this talk about blessings got Paul so worked up that he just kept going and going. He just kept talking and talking without taking a break. And the scribe kept writing and writing until he gave you this. This one long sentence about the blessings of God. It's good to get a preacher excited, isn't it? It's good to get a pastor worked up. Well, this is Paul getting worked up here. This is his excitement pouring forth on the page.

And he begins by saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has blessed us." That's a summary of the whole sentence. That's what it's about. God has blessed you, which means that he's shown favour to you. He's shown kindness, which is what you can see in the rest of this passage. If you look on, if you notice in verse four, this is what these blessings look like in verse four. It says that God chose us in him. That means he chose us before we were born. He chose us before the foundation of the world, as it says, which is a big deal. That's a huge thing, because I'm guessing most of you weren't doing too much before that time. I'm guessing most of you weren't doing too much before you were born or before the foundation of the world. And that's the point. That's the idea here. Your salvation is all of God. It's not about you. It's not about what you've done. It's about him.

Then verse seven, he goes on to say (this is another blessing), "In him we have redemption," which means in him our sins have been paid for. They've been washed away. Which also comes from his choosing, because there's nothing else that would make him want to do that for us. There's nothing else that would make him want to be so kind. Verse 11 says that because of this, we've obtained an inheritance, which means we have a future now. We have something to look forward to. Before you didn't have that. Before there was no future in your life, eternally speaking. Now you have that, an inheritance. Verse 13 says we've been sealed by the Spirit as well. But the point is that God has given you all of this now. He's done all this for you, Paul says, because he's blessed you. Because he's been so kind, even though you don't deserve it. Even though you're not worthy. The Lord has done all of this.

In fact, if you notice, as you read back over this passage, you're not even mentioned in here. I mean, your works aren't even in here. Because this is not about you. You don't get any glory for this all the glory goes to God. Which makes sense because it was written to a place like this. It was written to a place like Ephesus. Because nobody at this time would have looked at the Ephesians and said they're worth saving. Nobody would have looked at them and said they're worth doing this for. Because this is all of God. We've all heard the saying, or maybe you've heard the saying, that "God doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called." Have you ever heard that? God doesn't save those who are lovely or beautiful. Instead, he makes them lovely, and he makes them beautiful. That's what you see here. Which means that if you feel like you don't deserve salvation today, if you feel like you

shouldn't have it, or have any of these things like redemption, and an inheritance, and being chosen, and all that, then I have good news for you. And that's that you're in the right place. You've come to the right God, because that's the kind of person he saves. He saves those who don't think they deserve it. If you think you deserve it, you're in the wrong place. If you think you deserve it, you might as well walk out of the tent. This is not a tent of that kind of thing. If you feel like you don't deserve to be blessed, if you feel like you shouldn't feel his kindness and feel his mercy and experience his love, I could say the same thing about you as well. I have good news for you too. And that's that you're exactly where you need to be. Because that's the point of this whole thing.

I tell you this, because I think we often get this backwards today. And we often get this wrong, because we think it's all about our works. And we think salvation is about trying hard to be a good person and trying hard to be a Christian, and trying hard to get our life cleaned up. But I want you to notice, that's not the way Paul puts it in here. That's not the way he writes the book. Because the works come after the blessings in the book of Ephesians. The deeds come after the salvation. I mean, all that stuff in the end about your marriage, and your family, and your life, changing your life, all that comes after this. Because you get saved first, and then that happens. You get saved first, and then you experience a change in each of those areas. Because this is entirely a work of God.

Which brings us to another point to talk about this morning, another lesson that we've learned in the book of Ephesians. The first one is that you're blessed, which means that God has been so good to you. He's been so kind because even before you were born, even before the foundations of the world... You've got to see this in this book. I mean, this book starts before time began. This book starts before you or I were even here, to remind you where your salvation starts. That's where it begins. Which brings us to another point to talk about. We could end the sermon right there and say a word of prayer, couldn't we? I mean, that's, that's all you need to say. But the book goes on, it has more chapters. And so let's talk about some of these other lessons here.

Another one is this, you've been raised as well. The Book of Ephesians says that not only have you been blessed, but a second lesson we've learned is that you've been raised as well, which means this is how good God has been to you now. This is how kind he has been. He's been kind enough to raise your soul from the dead. You want to talk about something you couldn't do on your own? You want to talk about something you were unable to do? Well, this is it. He's raised you. If you look in chapter two, verse one, Paul says this, he says, "And you were dead." Quite a way to start a chapter, isn't it? Why don't you get to the point, Paul?

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

You know, when you come to chapter two, here, when you look at the way this is written, you can see that there's actually a connection between this passage and the previous one. Because if you look back up in chapter one, at the end of it, Paul talks there in verse 19, and says,

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which he brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

So the connection between chapter one and chapter two is God's strength, His power. And Paul says, to show you this, this is how powerful God is. This is how he showed his power in you. Verse one says, when he saved you, this is what you were, you were dead. It doesn't say sick. It doesn't say in trouble. It doesn't say confused. It says dead in your trespasses and sins, to the point you couldn't get out of it, you were stuck in there. Verse two says, you also walked according to the course of this world, and the word walking means you weren't just dead, you were the walking dead. You were living your death out all around you. The sin was just pouring out of you. It goes on to say you did this according to the prince of the power of the air, which means you did this according to Satan. You might say, well, I wasn't a Satan worshiper. I didn't worship the devil. Well, maybe not. But Paul says you were on the same side.

But then if you look in verse four, you have these marvelous words in the book of Ephesians, "But God." Those have been called the two most important words in this book, the most important phrase, because it marks a transition. And it means that where you were all of those things, God did this. Where you sinned and failed and walked according to the power of the devil, this is what God did. "But God" made you alive and raised you and seated you up in the heavenly places in Christ.

This is another thing that doesn't come across well in English. But when you read in Greek, starting in verse five, there are three verbs in here that all have the same prefix. They all start with the word "syn", or "with," or "together with." And Paul writes them in a way that they alliterate in Greek. They sound the same because they sound like this: "syzōopoieō," and "synegeirō," and "sygkathizō." So you could translate it this way, "God made you alive together with Christ, and he raised you together with Christ, and he seated you together with him." And what that means is this: You sinned on your own. You sinned by yourself. You were raised together with Christ. Which means this was an intimate thing for you. This was a personal thing God did. He could have left you alone. He could have left you dead. In fact, he should have. He had every reason to. But instead, he did all this. He made you alive, which means he reversed the power of death over you. He changed its course of direction. And he raised you as well, which means he brought you out of that. He brought you out of your sin. And he seated you with him in the heavenly places, which means he puts your soul in heaven. Your soul is as good as there.

But the point is that this is how much God has blessed you. Now this is how good he has been. You can search the whole history of religion, and you will never find a God who did anything like this for his people. You can search the face of Hinduism, Buddhism's Zoroastrianism, atheism, agnosticism... you just put it out there and name it, and nothing comes close to this. Muhammad said, "I'll show you the way to God." Buddha said, "I'll show you the way." God said, "I will come down to earth and take you there."

In fact, if you want to put all this in a nutshell, you could say it like this: God found you dead, and he left you alive. He found you dead in your trespasses and sins, lost in them, covered and consumed in them, and he left you seated in heaven by the Father's side. Because that's how much he loved you. That's how much he cared. So that if you trust in Jesus, friends, you're not just *being* saved but you *are* saved. It's a done deal. If you believe in him and hope in Him and give your life to Him, like we're talking about this morning, you're not just trying to get there. You're not just trying to climb a ladder on the way to heaven. The ladder has been removed because you're seated there at his side. Heaven is already yours now. You're just waiting for graduation day.

You know, when I was studying this, I was reminded of the fact that in the Jerusalem temple. according to Jewish tradition, there were no seats in the Jerusalem temple. There were no chairs there because the work was never finished. It's never done because if you were a priest, you're always making one more sacrifice, always killing one more animal. It's just an ongoing thing. One constant bloodbath. So you had to stand, you had to stay on your feet. But if you notice, this passage here says Jesus sat down because his work was finished. He sat down because the work was done, and get this: Wonder of all wonders, he sat you down with him. He seated you by his side.

Which brings us to one more thing to talk about this morning, just one more lesson in the book of Ephesians. The first one is that we are blessed. Aren't we blessed, friends? Amen. God has been so good to us. He's not this good to us because of us. Paul even says he didn't choose the smartest among you and the strongest. So before you get proud about that, he chose the weakest, right? You are the weakest; we're all the weakest. And secondly, he also raised us as well. A second lesson we've learned in the book is that this is how good he has been, this is how kind he has been, kind enough to bring our soul back from the dead. You couldn't do that on your own. Well, what can a dead person do, right? You had no power. So God did everything. Which brings us to one more thing to talk about just one more lesson that we've learned in the book of Ephesians. And that is this, you need to respond to this now.

The third lesson that we've learned in the book of Ephesians (and this is all simple stuff, just kind of big picture stuff), but that is that you need to respond to all of this now. Which means that not only has God done this for you, not only has he given you all of this, but he's done it with this intention: he wants you to respond. He wants you to get out of your chair and do something with this. This was not a book that was written for you to go home and say, "Wow, that was interesting. Let me just think about it." It's not just for you to think about it. He wants you to act.

And just to walk you through this and go through the rest of the book, after talking about blessings in chapter one, and raising us from the dead in chapter two, Paul goes on to show you what that looks like in the next several chapters. He shows you what it looks like to be blessed and to be raised. And he talks about it in your families and marriages and in your homes. If you've missed some of this material, it's all online, we've gone through these chapters. In chapters three, four, and five, he tells you what this looks like in your job and in the workplace and in your personal life, with your mouth and with your tongue and with the ways you act. And then he mentions the armor of God in chapter six, because that's how you protect all this now. He mentioned the armor of God at the end of the book, because this is how you keep it safe. You keep the blessing safe by wearing his armor. You keep it safe by using the weapons that God has provided. And after saying that, Paul finishes the book up this way, if you look in chapter six, verse 21. This is how he ties it off, he says,

But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus with incorruptible love.

As you read that, you can tell that Paul mentions a new person in verse 21. This is somebody who we haven't seen before in the letter. He's the only other person who's actually named other than Paul. He's a man named Tychicus. He was the bearer of the letter. He's the one who brought it to the Ephesians. So Paul gives him an introduction here. The way it worked back then is if you wanted to communicate with somebody, you didn't send an email, or a text. They didn't have those back then. So you had to send a letter. And it had to go with somebody who could explain it to the people after they read it. So Tychicus or someone in the church would read the letter to everybody because a lot of people back then couldn't read. And then Tychicus would stand up there and answer questions. That was who this guy was.

And after mentioning him, Paul gives a final salutation, the closing words of the letter where he mentions the words grace and peace, because that's really what this book is all about. That's the overall theme of it. God has given us a peace which refers to a quietness or calmness of the soul. Anybody want that this morning? Anybody looking for peace? That's a word that we love to throw out there and just let it settle for a minute. We live in a very restless world today. But this is a calmness deep down in your heart. That's what God has given us. And he's also given us grace, which means unmerited favor, undeserved reward, which is what we've been talking about this morning. And then after saying that, if you look in your Bibles, Paul gives us one more word here, one more term, which is an unusual one, because he mentions incorruptible love, verse 24:

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus with incorruptible love.

That's one word in Greek. And it's a very important one in the passage, because this is how Paul says you should respond to all this. This is what you should do in light of your great salvation. He says, You should love God back. That's what you're supposed to do. You don't earn it. You don't work for it. You don't climb your way to heaven. You're supposed to love God back. That's all. With an incorruptible love. That means a love that cannot be corrupted or changed or quenched in any way. I think we all understand the world loves to do this, it loves to quench our love for God and loves to pour water on it and put it out. But when that happens, Paul says, this is what you have to do. You have to remember his grace and love him back for it. Go back to the fact that God has been so kind to you, God has been so merciful. He's been so generous and has blessed you.

And I tell you this, because I don't know where everyone's at on this today. I don't know what you're going through. But I'm guessing, just knowing the way churches operate, that some of you had a hard time this week. I'm guessing some of you had a bad week, fighting your sin, fighting your lust, fighting your pride to the point that you didn't want to come here today. You didn't want to come to church. Because it was too embarrassing. It was too humiliating for you to think about what all you did in the week. If that's the case, I just want to say this. I'm glad you didn't stay home. I'm glad you came here today. For this reason: Because this is the point of the church. The point of the church is to remind you that God loves you, no matter how bad your week was. The point of the church is to remind you that if you're in Christ, and you've trusted him, and you've believed in Him like we've talked about, then he loves you, no matter how bad it was for you. No matter what the sin was, no matter what the struggle was. The church is not here to remind you that God hates you. The church is not here to remind you that he's mad at you, and he's upset, and he's frustrated. He feels that way toward the world, but not toward the church. He feels that way toward the lost but not toward the saved. Church is here to remind you that he's forgiven you for it. And we just come here to celebrate that. We come here to rejoice.

This is so important because this is how Paul ends the book of Ephesians. I mean, this is how he brings it to a close. He does it by reminding you that God is the star of the show. He's the hero of the story. So you need to take that off your shoulders, take it off your backs, and just love him for it. Just say thank you for all he's done. This book ends on the word love. Because it's the word the word love or the idea of love that started the whole book. God loved you in the beginning. You love him in the end. You love him all between. Will you do that today? Will you love him back for this?

In my studies this week, I came across a story of the time a British Royal went to visit an infirmary full of casualties from the First World War, a hospital just full of sickbeds, men who were shot up and wounded. And when he got there, seven patients refused to come see him. Seven patients refused to come out of the rooms because they were too embarrassed. They were too ashamed of what they looked like. So upon hearing that, the British Royal said this, he said, "Don't worry about it. Don't have them come to me. I will go to them. I will take care of everything."

And friends, I tell you that story because that's what God has done for you. That's what our Savior has done. Even when you were too embarrassed to see him, even when you were too ashamed because of what you looked like, and because of your sin, and because of your depravity, this is what he did for you. He said, "Don't have them come to me. I will come to them. I will take care of everything." And now, all he wants you to do is love him. That's it. Now all he wants you to do is show your affection and praise. Will you do that today? Let me pray that you will. There's no better way to respond to the love of God.

Heavenly Father, we have talked about deep things this morning because we have a deep, deep God. And we can't even think of anyone who would want to love us the way you have. And yet, Father, it's something that has been written in detail to us in this passage. It's something that's been spelled out from one page to the next, the amount of kindness you have shown toward your people. Lord, I pray that we would be a church that remembers this. I pray that we would be a church moving forward that just basks in your kind and gracious love. We all have a tendency to want to stay home. We all have a tendency to want to stay away in our sin and our wickedness. Yet, it's your love that drives us here. It's your love that compels us. And may we go out now worshipping you for that. And Father, I do pray for those who are here this morning, who are thinking about these things. For those who are saved, I pray they would be encouraged and their heart would be overflowing with what we've talked about and the blessings and the kindness that you've shown them. For those who are lost, Father, I pray they would know that they don't have to sit around and wait to be zapped by a lightning bolt from heaven. They don't have to wait for anything. They can believe and trust in you now and be saved, right where they are. And I pray they would do that today, and Christ would be glorified for it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.