Sermon 30: Drawing Strength from God's Sustaining Grace: Ephesians 6:18-24

Text: Ephesians 6:18-24 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might 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 them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen…"

Introduction:

- **Ephesians is the least personal Pauline epistle:**
  - There are virtually no personal references outside this section.
  - This is significant, because Paul personally planted the church, ministered there for at least 3 years, and continued to maintain a close relationship through Timothy.
- **These verses address a unique personal concern:**
  - Paul was in prison.
  - The church loved him and was deeply concerned for his wellbeing.
  - He wanted them to know that he was encouraged and actively ministering despite his difficult circumstances.
  - He wanted them to know that God's daily sustaining grace was strengthening him while in prison.

Summary: Despite unjust and frustrating circumstances, God's daily grace can sustain us and enable us to see the unique opportunities that our situation offers.
Proposition: We must embrace the gifts He has provided to strengthen us.
Introduction: What are those gifts?

Gift 1: The gift of intercessory prayer: 6:18-20

- **Three Preliminary thoughts:**
  - He was writing to people who were not physically present.
  - They loved him but were powerless to reverse the situation.
  - How could God use them to sustain Paul?
- **Paul's request: 6:18-19** "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be

given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel…"

- **Don't just go through the motions, but pray fervently:** "Praying always…with all perseverance and supplication…"
  - "Always"
  - "With perseverance"
  - "Supplication"
- **As you pray for others, remember me:** "And for me…"
- **Pray with big picture priorities:** "That utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel…"
  - He doesn't mention his health.
  - He doesn't mention freedom.
  - He prioritizes seizing opportunity.

- **Paul's perspective:** Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were written during this same imprisonment.
  - **I do not want to waste this opportunity: Colossians 4:3-5** "Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ…That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak…redeeming the time…"
  - **God is using this opportunity to strengthen discouraged Christians and take the gospel to needy places: Philippians 1:12-14** "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear…"
  - **There are specific people He wants to reach through me in these circumstances: Philemon 1:10-16** "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me…perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me…"
- **The power of intercessory prayer:**
  - God works through the prayers of His people.
  - People who intercede in prayer are a gift to the church.
  - Every season brings unique limitations and opportunities.
  - Many forms of ministry in the church are seasonal.
  - Prayer is something every Christian can do and must do no matter their season.

Gift 2: The gift of faithful ministers: 6:21-22

- **A few preliminary thoughts:**
    - Over the course of our lives, God brings the dependable people at the right time to encourage.
    - Tychicus was an example in Paul's life.
    - He was mentioned five times in the New Testament.
    - Three examples are notable to establish how God used him in Paul's life and ministry.
- **Three Notable Examples:**
    - **When he needed coworkers: Acts 20:4** "There accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus…"
    - **When he needed someone to represent him: Colossians 4:7-8** "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts…"
    - **When everyone abandoned him:**
        - **2 Timothy 4:10-11** "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...only Luke is with me…"
        - **2 Timothy 4:16-17** "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me…"
        - **2 Timothy 4:12** "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus…"
- **Tychicus was a gift from God to Paul and the churches:**
    - **He was a faithful minister:** "Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord…"
    - **He was a comforter:** "I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts…"
- **This principle at work:**
    - **God uses people to channel His sustaining grace into our lives: Galatians 6:2** "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ…"
    - **God uses trouble to shape these people so they can effectively channel that sustaining grace: 2 Corinthians 1:3-5** The "Father of mercies" and the "God of all comfort"…comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ…"

Gift 3: The gift of sound doctrine: 6:23-24

- **A few preliminary thoughts:**

    - **These verses complete Paul's letter and connect back to the way he opened it:**
        - **Setting the tone for what is coming: 1:2-3** "To the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ…"
        - **Looking back at what he has said: 6:23-24** "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen…"
    - **God sustains us through the gift of sound doctrine.**
    - **He personally implants His word into our hearts so the Spirit can cause the word to root and flourish in our souls: James 1:21** "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls…"
- **Four foundational concepts that sustain embattled souls:**
    - **He has reconciled us to Himself:** "Peace be **to** the brethren…"
    - **He cultivates faith and love in us:** "And love **with** faith, **from** God…"
    - **He is the source of every spiritual blessing:** "**From** God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ …"
    - **His grace permeates every aspect of our salvation:** "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity…"
        - What we have comes from His grace
        - What He is doing in and through us flows from His grace.
        - What He has secured for us and will give us for eternity is given and kept by His grace.
- **When we embrace these core doctrines, He uses them to strengthen us.**
    - **We have peace with God because He initiated it:**
        - **1:4-5** "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love…"
        - **1:7** "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace…"
        - **2:4-5** "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ…by grace ye are saved…"
        - **2:13-14** "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ…he is our peace…"
    - **We are being transformed because He is working in us:**

        - **2:10** "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works…"
        - **3:16** "According to the riches of his glory…strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man…"
        - **3:20** "According to the power that worketh in us…"
    - **His grace permeates all we have, all He is doing, and all we will one day enjoy forever:**
        - **All we presently possess:**
            - **1:3** "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ…"
            - **1:6-7** "According to the riches of his grace…"
            - **2:8** "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God…"
        - **All He is presently doing:**
            - **3:7-8** "I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power…"
            - **4:7** "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ…"
        - **All we will enjoy eternally:**
            - **1:13-14** "Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession…"
            - **2:6-7** "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus…"

Applying this final section:

- **The Gift of Prayer:**
    - Be attentive to the needs of others.
    - Cultivate the discipline of intercessory prayer.
    - Make the most of your current season.
    - Be vulnerable with trustworthy people.
- **The Gift of Ministers:**
    - Cultivate a strong connection to the local church.
    - Cooperate with what He is doing in your life so you will grow into a faithful minister.
    - Look for mature Christians to cultivate mentoring relationships.
- **The Gift of Doctrine:**
    - Remember He has reconciled you to Himself.
    - Remember He is cultivating faith and love in you.
    - Remember He is the source of every spiritual blessing you have.
    - Remember His grace permeates every aspect of your salvation.