

God uses Gospel Means to Accomplish Gospel Ends

Introduction

Good morning, Church Family! My name is Trent Houck, and I am a Staff Elder here at Faith Community Bible Church. I am married to my wife, Lauren, and I have three kids, Samuel (6) Damaris (3) and Sophia (12 weeks). I have been on Staff here for about 5 years. It's a joy to be a pastor here. I wanted to begin by publicly commending you all for the ways that you cared for our family during our transition from 2-3 kids this Summer. We felt loved by two weeks of paternity leave, meals, and visits. We are deeply fond of you all. Thank you for loving us so well!

Series Conclusion:

Before we read the text, I want to make three brief introductory remarks for those who have *not* been with us for very long.

1. We are concluding our study in the book of Ephesians today! My text is a conclusion, and we are also concluding this series. If you've been with us:

- a. You know that Paul wrote to the Ephesians in **AD 62**.
- b. Paul is imprisoned under house arrest in Rome.
- c. You remember that **in the early 50s** the former sorcerers, witches and pagans of Ephesus were radically converted to Christ and became the congregation known as the Church in Ephesus (You can read this story in Acts 19).
- d. You remember that Ephesians 1-3 conveys Gospel-doctrine. Or, right teaching about who God is.
- e. You know that Ephesians 4-6 is primarily imperatives or commands that point us to the right way to enjoy Jesus forever.
- f. You know that *Ephesians* is Scripture. Or, God's very word.

2. We have *not* exhausted the book of Ephesians! In this series, we preached about 23 sermons on Ephesians. Over his career, Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) preached around 250. John Piper has preached around 80 sermons. John MacArthur, 130. The point is that we have barely scratched the surface of all that is there in Ephesians. Our 11 preachers[1] have all done a great job! But, there is so much more to see in Ephesians. Keep coming back to this book!

3. Our Church *needs* the book of Ephesians as much *now* as it did in the first century. We believe that God spoke through the inspired writers of Scripture, and that he continues to speak as the Word of God is unfolded by

the power of the Spirit. So, we should be listening this morning, not to hear man or man's opinion, but to hear from God.

Aside: If you're *not* a believer, consider that Scripture describes and defines reality as it really is. It would be profitable for you to consider how clear Scripture is about what is broken, what God can do to repair the heart, and what God's intentions are in speaking to you today. Christians believe that reading the Bible is one of the most important things that we can do together.

So, please turn in your Bible's to Ephesians 6:21-24. As you're turning there, I will set up my main point. [**Note:** I want you to know that I am not using any visuals or tech because I want this to feel like we're in the first century; I will post my manuscript. I will go quickly. Don't try to take notes. Just listen!]

Main Point:

God uses Gospel-*means* to accomplish Gospel-*ends*.

Or, God's *message* and his *methods* are *incorruptible*. God *never* fails. He chooses the best route and *always* gets to his desired destination.

God uses Gospel-*means* to accomplish Gospel-*ends*.

For the sake of the argument, imagine for a moment that the *Letter to the Ephesians* was *not* in your Bible. Maybe it got lost in the mail. Paul wrote *Ephesians*, certainly. He edited it and revised it. He sealed it and signed it as a summation of the highest theological and doctrinal themes in the New Testament. He took over 3,000 hours of lectures, sermons, and writings originally preached in the Hall of Tyrannus (See Acts 19), and decades of other ministry experiences, and he condensed it down to a rich, five-page letter. He majestically tailored his words to the Church at Ephesus. Yet, for whatever reason, it was adrift in the Aegean or Mediterranean Sea or it was misplaced at some lodging location along the 1,100 miles between Rome and Ephesus. Given the tumult of first century travel, it's quite possible.

Losing this letter would be a hundred thousand times worse than losing your wallet. It would be more like losing someone else's child in New York City. It would be *deeply* discouraging, to say the least.

The reason it would be so devastating to lose this letter is because this letter is the *very means* by which the Church is preserved, protected, and guarded against false doctrine, or teaching. It's a lifeline in the storm. The Church at Ephesus was constantly threatened by drift. Without this letter, the Ephesians *might* have

swerved to their own destruction. To be sure, a Christian is saved by the completed work of Christ on the cross, his death, burial, and resurrection and by *faith in his name alone*. However, God *keeps* the Christian through a series of sovereignly ordained steps and *means* that ensure the Christian makes it to the end. The Christian life is *not* easy! Without Ephesians, a *significant* step would be missing. Without that step, the Ephesians *might fall*.

So, our text today tells the story of God preserving his church through the *rehearsal* of the Gospel-message, Ephesians, and through the *arrival of a Gospel-messenger*, Tychicus. The Gospel-message is *Ephesians* and the Gospel-messenger is *Tychicus*.

With that being said, let's stand to read Ephesians 6:10-21. After I read, I will pray, and then we'll unpack our points.

Imagine with me that you're standing in Ephesus, hearing Tychicus read this passage for the first time. He's walked 1,100 miles to deliver this message. He's read the first five sections of the letter. He's beautifully expounded on the sovereignty of God, the glory of the church, the beauty of marriage, the rescuing love of God in Christ, and now he is landing the plane with spiritual warfare and a conclusion.

Read the Text

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Final Greetings

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

This is God's Word. Let's pray together.

Pastoral Prayer:

Father, we bless you because you are "...the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..." (Eph. 1:4). We praise you for "...predestining [those who have trusted in you] for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:5). We praise you that even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, you made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4-5). Thank you that your main aim is to make a display "in the coming ages [of] the immeasurable riches of [your] grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). Father, you are worthy of all our praise and all our adoration this morning.

Jesus, we worship you for your beautiful, glorious, and radiant act of self-sacrifice on the cross. When you were *sent* by the Father, you obeyed willingly at every moment, from the heart, even dying on a cross for our sakes. You are the embodiment of the Ephesian letter. You obeyed every command in Ephesians in word, deed, and heart. Thank you for giving us your life, death, burial and resurrection. Thank you for saving and sending Paul, Tychicus, and the Ephesians. Thank you for saving and sending this church into the Valley so that the Nations might know your glory. Thank you for winning for us access to the armor of God so that we might stand against the devil.

Holy Spirit, we would humbly pray with Paul that, "...according to the riches of his glory he might grant us to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith—that we being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:16-20). Holy Spirit, I pray for all those who have yet to trust you, or those whose faith is wavering, please use your word to open eyes and reopen hearts.

I pray for those who are suffering from discouragement this morning. Uphold them. I pray for those who are experiencing chronic pain. Minister to them now. I pray for those who are facing significant surgeries. Bring your Spirit's comfort. I pray for marriages that have been in conflict all week. Cause your Word to pierce the divide. I pray for our Elders who need wisdom, unity, and strength to lead. Open our hearts to your plans. I pray for those who have just lost loved ones. Speak to them this morning. I pray for those who are burdened by depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts this morning. Oh God, bring relief through your word. I pray for those who are single and searching. Give direction. I pray for those who fell again into besetting sin this past week. Encourage their hearts. I pray for those who are doing well. Cause them to see and strengthen the family of God.

Finally God, we declare together that we trust you. With Paul, we know that you are "...able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us," So then, "...to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

You may be seated.

Main Question/Tension:

Our lives are filled with unresolved tensions and questions. We live with the frayed fabric of broken stories and incomplete knowledge.

So, a central question of the human heart and this text is: Does God write conclusions? Does he finish what he starts?

This is the central question of a *discouraged heart*.^[2] Creation was originally designed in glorious perfection, where work and rest were equally pleasurable, meaningful, worshipful, and completable. Adam and Eve lived in perfect communion with God and each other in a garden. God asked Adam to name all the animals, and by all accounts, he named them, which is a great feat of zoology.

However, once creation was complete, Satan entered the garden to argue that something was *incomplete*. His question, "Did God really say..." implies that God left something out, *something unsaid, or undone*. To eat the fruit of the tree was to finish something that God seemed to leave open ended. To touch the one untouchable tree. To have the experience of *being* like God, even *being* God. Not only being *with* God, but being your own god.

This was to rip the pen out of God's hands and put a period on a sentence that God was still in the process of writing. It was a choice for humanity to say, "I am that I am," and "I am complete" according to the dictates of my own conscience.

This rebellion caused the whole universe to enter a state of condemnation and disorder. Only God can be God. We *now* live in a world of incomplete projects, lost possessions, broken friendships, cycles of diminishing returns, fraud, lost jobs, frustrated communication, misplaced affections, disordered loves, and broken trust. That *anything* gets done today is an evidence of God's grace. Amen?

All the while, we are committed to believing that we are *complete* without God. We are so radically committed to our own self-deception that we harden our hearts to the voice of God. We suppress the truth in our unrighteousness. We are by nature people who run from God. We're inclined to be rebels. To drift.

So, *how does God put everything right again and again and again? How does he keep us on track?*

Here is the answer to this question:

Main Point: God uses Gospel Means to Accomplish Gospel Ends.

God Uses Gospel-Means to Accomplish Gospel-Ends.

God appoints the *means* as well as the *ends* of his Gospel work to make a display of his glorious grace. That is, *the way* God sanctifies and *the way* he saves are interrelated. His *methodology* and his *destination* are *never* mutually exclusive. That means that God always puts things *right* in ways that surprise us.

In other words, God *loves* to frame his *message* with *methods* that reinforce his message. He chooses *mediums and messengers* that strengthen his message. This *does not* mean that God's messengers are strong. They are not. God is strong, humans are weak.

His Gospel is surprising good news.[3] So, it makes sense that the characters that God uses to communicate his message are just as surprising.[4]

Outline:

Here are our main points. God sustains the Church in three ways:

- 1. Paul writes the Scriptures.**
- 2. Tychicus recites the Scriptures.**
- 3. The Ephesians delight in the Scriptures.**

We will unpack those three points, and then we will conclude with two points of application:

- 4. FCBC:** The Church *must* recite and delight in the Scriptures.
- 5. The Valley:** As we recite and delight in the Scriptures, the world will be drawn to the *light* of the Scriptures.

Main Point:

God uses Gospel *means* to accomplish Gospel *ends*.

1. Paul: God *inspires* Paul to Write Scripture

First, Paul writes the Scriptures. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:19,

To that end [that is, to the end of making spiritual progress in prayer], keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹*and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,* ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Do you remember how *unlikely* it is that Paul pens these words?[5] I imagine that when the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit decided in eternity past how they were going to reach the Nations with the Gospel, God ordained the salvation of the most *unlikely* character, Saul of Tarsus, to write 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament. God likes doing that.

Paul sees this. He writes to the Corinthians, "...I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9). He writes to Timothy, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15). In other words, when God chooses to make himself known, he chooses the most *unlikely means* because he is highlighting the majestic *unlikelyness of the message*. Paul recognizes that if the Gospel is going to advance, he *needs* words. He *needs* the Ephesians' help in prayer. He's a sinner.

And, God is saying: Pay attention to this message! Look who is preaching it!

Illustration: We understand this implicitly. We attend to messages *depending* on the *method* by which they reach us and who they come from. The *way* information comes to us through...

- Texts.
- Phone Calls.
- Meetings.
- Personal conversations.
- Recorded messages.

...Changes the way we listen. God knows this. Further, the person communicating to us matters. We don't listen to everyone the same way.

When God chooses to reach people, he decided to go through Paul. So, Paul asks for prayer so,

that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly *to proclaim the mystery of the gospel*, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

This is the purpose of the armor in Ephesians 6, Paul *needs* boldness to proclaim the Gospel. He *needs* words that fit his Ambassadorial Position, even though he's under house arrest.

Do you see God's providence here? God says, "I'll radically rescue Paul. Then, I'll allow him to be arrested and tried by Rome. While he's being tried, I'll *inspire* him to write letters to the Churches. And, by the Spirit's inspiration, Scripture *will uphold* and maintain the church for 2,000 years." Paul gets this. He realizes that *bold* speaking befits a *bold* message. It's no mistake that he's in prison. He needs to write. He *needs* the armor of God and the Ephesians' prayers.

Here's the point: When God has something to say to the Church, he speaks through *means*. In this case, he speaks through Paul. He *inspires* him to capture his words in writing. And, he sends Tychicus to deliver them so that the Church might be upheld. That leads us to our next point.

Tychicus recites the Scriptures.

2. Tychicus recites the Scriptures.

Second, Tychicus recites the Scriptures. This is the second *means or method* by which the Church is upheld. Tychicus is Paul's Amazon Prime. He's the fastest, surest route to connecting to the Ephesians.

Paul writes,

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

See, God does *not* drop messages from the sky to the Ephesians, though he could. He doesn't write something in the clouds, or in the seashells of the Mediterranean, though he could. He does *not* speak primarily through promptings or intuitions or

thoughts or feelings or dreams. God speaks *primarily* through his *inspired* word. That means that you must have access to God's word to hear God!

The Ephesians had been left with an open question: after Paul was arrested, what happened? They wanted to know: Do Gospel-ministers and missionaries just get arrested and disappear? Does Paul still care about them? Does God still care about them?

Tychicus, you might imagine, looked up from his reading and smiled at this point. Tychicus, who is the "beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" is sent to "tell you everything," and "that he may encourage your hearts." After travelling 1,100 miles from Rome to Ephesus, after eating a good meal and being welcomed by all the brothers, the room being filled by the love of God by the power of the Spirit, I imagine there wasn't a dry eye in the room at this point. The Ephesians would have known to the core of their being:

God loves us.

Paul loves us.

Paul loves Tychicus.

Tychicus loves us.

God hasn't forgotten us.

He won't forsake us.

He is speaking to us again.

We're going to make it.

I want you to see three things from this text:

First, Paul is modeling faithful discipleship. Paul uses *means* to accomplish his goals. He trusts Tychicus. He is modeling what commends elsewhere, "...what you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses *entrust to faithful men*, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). [By the way, we're going to keep following the Church in Ephesus as we study 2 Timothy in the Fall]. I imagine Paul might say, "Who wants to walk 1,100 miles to go to Colossae and Ephesus?" Tychicus says, "Sounds fun. I'll go." Paul gives him the letter. Tychicus delivers it. Faithful discipleship is *entrusting* ministry to others. Elders, Life Group Leaders, Ministry Leaders, if we want to disciple our people, we must entrust them with ministry. God entrusts *us* with ministry, why shouldn't we trust others?

Second, Paul models transparency. Paul expects that Tychicus will tell the Ephesians "Everything." Paul is *not* super interested in having a private life that is comfortably restricted from the view of the Ephesians. All that he does is accessible to others. Paul expects integrity. Trustworthiness. Likewise, our lives should be open to one another.

Third, Paul plans for the encouragement of the Ephesians. Paul probably thought, prayed, and discussed who would be best person to go to the Ephesians. Who would they be most encouraged by? Who would be able to speak their language and encourage their hearts? Then, he sends Tychicus to do that. We should be just as thoughtful and intentional in our encouragement of others!

This is why I think they are teary-eyed. Everything is coming together.

How was Tychicus expected to encourage their hearts? Well, here are a few ways:

- If someone walks 1,100 miles to see me, I'm encouraged [this is the equivalent of walking from Ensenada, Mexico to Boise, ID. It would take over a month of walking 8 hours per day!].
- If someone reads *Ephesians* to me, I am encouraged.
- If someone explains the Bible to me, and answers my questions, I am encouraged.
- If someone updates me on how my best friends are doing, or how the Gospel is advancing, I am encouraged.
- If someone preaches the Gospel to me again, I am encouraged. [I am so quickly forgetful!]
- If someone counsels me based on the Gospel in my marriage, parenting, and discipleship, I am encouraged.
- If someone is just *there*, physically, spiritually, and emotionally, and not distracted, I am encouraged. [this is basically all counseling is].

So, Paul writes,

²²I[Paul] have sent him[Tychicus] to you for this *very purpose*, that you may know how we are, and that he *may encourage your hearts*.

Tychicus did all these things.

Now, the word “encourage” here doesn’t just mean “comfort.” It does mean that, but it also means to exhort, call or summon. It is one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit, the *paraclete*(same word here). It can be assumed then that the *primary* encouragement came to the Ephesians as Tychicus read, interpreted, and taught the Ephesians the letter he carried from Paul. I imagine the Holy Spirit powerfully used Tychicus to restore, uphold, and transform the hearts of the Ephesians.

Illustration: Maybe you’ve been changed by live performances like I have. I grew up listening to Handel’s Messiah as a child. Then, as an adult, I attended the LA Philharmonic’s Performance of Handel’s Messiah at the Disney Concert Hall.

It changed my heart to hear Scripture set to classical music like that. To see the best musicians in the world perform it.

It was the same way here with Tychicus. The Gospel was being reenacted right in front of them. It was as if God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Paul, Tychicus and the Ephesians were all crowded together into one room. The atmosphere was charged with the grandeur of God. It was a world of love. An outpost of heaven. They lingered over questions that would last long into the night by the fire about predestination, God's sovereignty, marriage, family, the nature of truth. They would leave that night thinking, praying, and acting in entirely new ways. Meanwhile, Paul was left in prison. He was chained in Rome, praying every day that the letter would make it to them. Like a good pastor, he wanted the Ephesians to hear him pray through the pages of his letter. He prayed for Tychicus as he went along. He longed to receive word that the Ephesian Church was continuing in the faith.

Will God finish what he started?

The answer to this question is: Yes. Because God ordains the *means* as well as the *ends*, God completes *everything* that he starts. He brings his work to its conclusion, even in a fallen world.

There are at least three applications to this. I will just read the sentence, but I have specific ideas in my posted manuscript that you can take home and pray about:

Application:

1. Read the Bible with Others. We can often begin to think that we need to have some special superpowers to preach the Gospel, evangelize, or move the gospel forward. But, Christians throughout history have asked this simple question: "Can you read?"

- If you can read, you can read Scripture, which contains within it the best preaching that this world has ever known.
- God preaches himself through Scripture. I would highly encourage you in the Fall to do what Tychicus did: take someone else through a book of the New Testament. Just read it with them and meet with them once per week. See if they are not encouraged by the end.

§ A great resource for this is David Helm's, *1 to 1 Bible Reading*. You can find it [here](#). Please talk with me if you want ideas for this!

Aside: How many of you were converted to Christ by reading the Bible?

2. Let the Scripture Evangelize. We must admit the evangelism methodology of the New Testament is *very* simple.

○ Tychicus doesn't get in there and start a Youth Ministry or a Women's Ministry or a Men's Ministry or Life Groups or anything else. He just gets people together to read the Bible. It's painfully simple. I'm *not* saying we shouldn't have any of those things, I'm saying that they ought to be focused on Scripture. Scripture is a sufficient means to convert the soul to Christ *and* to the way that men and women are presented mature in Christ.

§ Read *Evangelism* by Stiles (published by 9Marks).

§ Read *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Coleman.

3. Recognize Scripture's Sufficiency. Christian discipleship is *not* merely reading the Bible, but it is not less than that. All our practices, rhythms, goals, and aspirations as a Church ought to be encouraged and upheld by the Word of God. We can sometimes overemphasize other means for God's grace in a reaction against the faulty assumptions about *how Scripture is sufficient*.

Leadership Aside: As an aside, we are looking for a Pastor for Preaching and Vision. We should be on the lookout for men like Tychicus:

²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

All I really want in a Pastor for Preaching and Vision is someone who will rightly interpret Scripture and encourage our hearts to the glory of God.

So, Paul writes Scripture. Tychicus recites Scripture. Then, the Ephesians are *filled with Scripture*. Now what? That leads to our third point.

3. Ephesians: the Ephesians *Delight in Scripture*.

Third, the Ephesians Delight in Scripture. When the Gospel explodes onto the scene, and the Ephesians threw away all their magic books and idols, losing 50,000 days wages, they were after a superior pleasure than magic can provide. If you were to ask them, they would have said: "I lost nothing!" They personally experienced "...the expulsive power of a new affection."^[6] They had been transformed to enjoy God. They had a new heart.

So, Paul writes,

²³Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Commentators note that “brothers” refers not only to the Ephesians, but also to the broader big “C” Church. Further, the final verse, “Grace be *with all* who love our Lord Jesus Christ...” implies that there were people beyond the Ephesians that God was reaching. As the Ephesians delighted in God, Ephesus was to become a repository of Gospel-witness in Asia Minor. Remember that Ephesus would become the epicenter of Timothy’s pastoral ministry. It becomes the subject of three of the Apostle John’s letters. John also includes them in his letters to the Churches in Revelation.

Ephesus mattered so much to God because God delights to save. And, he delights to send. And, he delights to sanctify. Ephesians 2:14 says, “[Jesus] is our peace...” As the Ephesians became more and more acquainted with the grace and peace of God in Christ Jesus, they would become proclaimers of this message. They would begin to reflect God back to God. They would love God with a love *incorruptible*. This love for each other necessarily spills over to love for the world.

So, does God complete what he starts? Yes. He appoints the means as well as the ends to ensure that he saves from first to last those who hope in Jesus.

As time passed, and the visit from Tychicus faded into the background of their memories, God would use Timothy, John, and others to reinvigorate their faith and keep them on track.

Nearly four decades later, John would write this warning and encouragement:

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

²“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.[i.e. that day when you threw away all of your idols, etc.] ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from

its place, unless you repent. ‘Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ’He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

Temptations to drift *never* went away for the Ephesians, but God never left the Ephesians without help. So, Paul writes this benediction:

²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love *incorruptible*.

The Ephesians had been given a love that was *incorruptible. Eternal. Everlasting. Indestructible. It would not fail. God cannot deny himself.*

God uses Gospel-*means* to accomplish Gospel-*ends*.

1. **Paul writes the Scriptures.**
2. **Tychicus recites the Scriptures.**
3. **The Ephesians delight in the Scriptures.**

That leads us to our last couple of points of application.

4. FCBC: The Church is Called to Recite and Delight in the Scriptures.

Fourth, God *Intends to Advance the Gospel Among Us.* As we recite[read] and delight in the Scriptures, we grow in our affections for God and for one another.

1. **We become fluent in the Gospel.** Over time, as we delight and recite the Scriptures, we learn to speak about God, each other, and our world in light of the Gospel.
2. **We become fully integrated by the Gospel.** God means to advance the Gospel into every area of our lives [Paul addresses ecclesiology (church structure), salvation, marriage, family, parenting, sexuality, truth-telling, spiritual warfare all with the power of the Gospel in view]
3. **We become family in the Gospel.** God saves us *to* something as well as *from* something [God not only saves us from the wrath of God, but he saves us *into* the family of God. We are adopted into true fellowship and spiritual friendships].
4. **We become a Missions Agency.** Our love for each other is always open-ended in the Gospel. We are looking for more friends. We are open to our lives being disrupted because we’ve seen that done for us. We’re like Tychicus, just waiting to be sent.
5. **We become an outpost of Heaven.** Jonathan Edwards wrote that “Heaven is a world of love.”[7] As we delight and recite the Scriptures, we

rehearse the lines, culture, and feel of heaven. Our relationships start to smell like God's throne room.

This necessarily leads you outward and to our last point.

5. The Valley: As we recite and delight in the Scriptures, the world will be drawn to the *light* of the Gospel.

Fifth, the world is drawn to the light of the Gospel. Acts 18 details Paul's visit to Corinth. God personally encourages Paul by saying, "...Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, *for I have many in this city who are my people*" (Acts 18:9-10). No doubt, God is saying the same about the Valley! "I have many in the Valley, who are my people."

Paul's response was, "And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). So, if you're doing this, don't give up! Stay! Don't just preach the Gospel once and then give up! Keep preaching! Paul encourages Timothy in the same way in Ephesus, "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, *remain* at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith" (1 Timothy 1:3-4).

Whether you stay or leave the Valley for the sake of the Gospel, *God will go before you and be with you. He promises to finish the work he starts.*

He appoints the *means* and the *ends* of his Gospel work. He writes conclusions. He is putting the whole world right again.

His message and his delivery system are *incorruptible*. He *never* fails.

Tychicus made it Ephesus. Paul finishes his course. And, this is the end of Ephesians. What about you? God will surely be faithful. Amen?

Transition to Communion.

Today is communion Sunday, where we celebrate and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes by taking the bread and the cup.

God the Father sent the Son more than 1,100 miles, even from his throne in heaven, to the Cross, on which the Son bore the wrath of God for all those who would trust in Him for salvation. The Lord's Supper pictures the Gospel and nourishes the believer as we *continue* to place our faith in Jesus for

salvation from our sins and place our hope in God that he will finish what he has started in us.

We will sing one song together, and then take the elements together before our closing song.

Communion Text: 1 Corinthians 11

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”^[g] ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Closing Prayer.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we pray that you would strengthen your body by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We pray in his name, amen.

[1] Steve Walker, Dave Gibson, Brian Baughman, Patrick Carmichael, Ryan Patterson, Josiah Gerbitz, Benj Foreman, Nate Foreman, Ben Kreckman, David O'Hara, and Billy Mogensen

[2] Proverbs 13:12 “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.”

[3] God himself took on human flesh in the person and work of Jesus to satisfy the wrath of God against sin so that sinners might become the righteousness of God, and those sinners become the main communicators, evangelists, and shepherds, who advance the Gospel today. Christians are instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.

[4] You should be surprised that God saved you. See Dane Ortlund's Surprised by Jesus.

[5] See Acts 8-9.

[6] See Chalmers, The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

[7] See his sermon by this name.