

## **THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS**

### **I. Ephesians: Nurture In Living Focused On God's Eternal Purpose For Christians**

#### **C. Nurture In Applying The Believer's Positional Truth To Life And Ministry**

##### **11. Nurture In Delegating Encouraging Ministry Duties To Faithful Believers (Ephesians 6:21-24)**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. When Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. To nurture his readers, Paul sent his Ephesian epistle by the hand of Tychicus, a fellow servant of the Lord who could readily encourage the Ephesian believers in particular due to his record of faithfulness before all:

### **II. Nurture In Delegating Encouraging Ministry Duties To Faithful Believers, Ephesians 6:21-24.**

- A. Paul was concerned that his Christian readers at Ephesus know of his welfare as a prisoner, Eph. 6:21a, 22b:
  - 1. In writing he wanted his readers to know of his status, Paul explained it, using the verb, *prasso*, what one *habitually* does, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 680; R. C. Trench, Syn. of the N. T., 1963, p. 361; Ep. 6:21a.
  - 2. Thus, Paul was concerned that his readers know of his daily routine as a prisoner (Eph. 4:1; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, p. 1672, "Intro. To the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians: The Prison Epistles") that they not be distressed at what he experienced on a daily basis in his prison cell, but even to be "comforted, cheered up" (*parakaleo*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 622-623), Eph. 6:22b.
- B. To that end, Paul sent his letter to them via Tychicus, "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord," Eph. 6:21b, and the history of Tychicus' life would have made his words especially edifying to Paul's readers:
  - 1. Since Paul's epistle to the Ephesians was written in his first Roman imprisonment noted in Acts 28 around A. D. 61 (*Ibid.*, Ryrie), Tychicus' joining Paul at Ephesus to travel with him in his ministry in Acts 20:1-5 after the huge Ephesian town riot against Paul's ministry of Acts 19 would have meant Tychicus was a recognized, respected Christian by Ephesian believers.
  - 2. Indeed, Tychicus and Trophimus "were the two Asian Christians chosen" by the giving churches "to bear the collection to Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:19ff) along with six other delegates" (Acts 20:4-6; Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., v. Five, p. 832), and since Ephesus was a major city in the Roman Empire besides being the key city in the Roman province of Asia (Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 613), Tychicus would have been highly regarded as to his integrity by the Ephesian believers to be entrusted with such an important oversight.
  - 3. In addition, when Paul sent Tychicus with the Ephesian epistle, he was not only delivering Paul's letter to them, but he was also traveling to Colossae to deliver another Pauline epistle there (Colossians 4:7-9), and accompanying him was Onesimus, the runaway slave Paul was returning to his master, Philemon at Colossae under Tychicus' oversight, *Ibid.*, Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib. There was a risk that Philemon could have Onesimus brutally punished (*Ibid.*, v. Four, p. 754), so Tychicus' oversight of Onesimus coupled with Paul's letter on directing Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a beloved brother (Philemon 16) indicates the great confidence the Apostle Paul had in Tychicus' reliability and leadership.
  - 4. Accordingly, for Paul to have written to his Ephesian Christian readers that he was sending Tychicus, "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" to convey all the facts about Paul's imprisonment so as to cheer his readers was for him to send his best representative to that set of believers in addition to one who was the most trusted of men by his readers, all to accomplish an edifying ministry!
- C. Accordingly, Paul could confidently call for "peace" to the brethren in Christ at Ephesus "and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 6:23.
- D. In closing, Paul urged that the grace of God be with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in *aphtharsia*, or literally in "incorruptibility" (*Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 124-125), a love that is not corruptible since it is true and empowered by God Himself, Ephesians 6:24. Sending Tychicus, a man of impeccable qualifications as to his personal leadership and integrity via his reliance upon the Holy Spirit would only edify Paul's readers.

***Lesson:*** *To certify exactly his daily routine as a prisoner of Rome to very concerned believers at Ephesus, Paul sent Tychicus, one of their own countrymen with the highest qualifications of integrity and oversight before all.*

***Application:*** *May we like Tychicus rely on the Holy Spirit to live impeccably upright and edifying lives that God might use us to minister effectively in settling and edifying His needy people for His glory.*