

Remnant Life Church
August 18, 2024
Saying Goodbye
Ephesians 6:23-24

Katerina and I spent this past week in South Carolina saying goodbye to my mother.

- Most, if not all of you have been faced with the difficult experience of losing a loved one
- There is no easy or comfortable way to go through it
- You do the best you can, and, hopefully, everyone is loving and considerate of one another since we all process and deal with it in different ways

But it got me thinking about saying goodbye

- How should we, as Christians, embrace saying goodbye?
- Should it be any different than anyone else faced with similar circumstances?
- In particular those who do not know Jesus?

I think by now you should know that I believe every way we respond to the events of our lives should be different because of Jesus Christ

- Jesus said in **John 14:27** - *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*
- He spoke these words to His disciples in a time that He was getting ready to leave them
- When He would need to say goodbye

But there is someone else in the Bible who actually had the most practice saying goodbye.

- The Apostle Paul was involved in ministries throughout most the then known world
 - He started churches in Thessaloniki, Phillipi, Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus
 - He was a spiritual father to the Christians who attended the first churches in Rome
 - He worked with Titus, Philemon, John Mark, Barnabas and Timothy
 - He spoke before thousands and could be called, I suppose, a forerunner to the likes of Billy Sunday, John and Charles Wesley, and Billy Graham.
- He wrote many letters to all those he worked with, of which 13 of his writings make up nearly half of the NT books
 - Paul had a lot of practice saying goodbye
 - Especially toward the end of his life when he was imprisoned and then eventually executed in Rome
- His letter to the church in Ephesus, the book of Ephesians, was written from prison, and because of that, Paul did not know if he would ever see these spiritual loved ones again or not.
 - His goodbye in this letter, while brief, is a wonderful blueprint for how we should release one another no matter the circumstances

Eph 6:23-24 - *Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.*

- Paul gives four points of farewell that are a blessing to the reader and ones that I believe we should keep in mind and attempt to convey, not only when we say goodbye, but even in our everyday lives.

1. Peace

- a. Paul mentions the word peace seven times in his brief letter
- b. We can see how important Paul knew that was to the people of that small church
 - i. Just as it is today – although it is not easy to maintain peace in the difficult times
 - ii. Especially when everyone’s emotions are so high
 - iii. Our emotions last week
- c. And people try and find peace in many places and in many ways
 - i. One person said, “My therapist told me the way to achieve true inner peace is to finish what I start. So far today, I have finished two bags of chips, a pint of mint chocolate chip ice cream and a chocolate cake. I feel better already.”
 - ii. The word for peace here means a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that God would give them a type of peace.
 1. But do separations from friends and loved ones allow us to find that peace, let alone pray it on someone else?
 2. That can only come, as Paul had written earlier in his letter, because *Jesus is our peace who has broken down the walls that separate us from one another (Ephesians 2:14)*.
 3. And in **Romans 5:1** he said, *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - iii. It is only in Christ that we find this type of peace that keeps our emotions in check so that they do not end up controlling us
 1. I spoke of Mom’s gentle spirit even through the pain
 2. That truly is the peace that passes all understanding

2. Love

- a. Paul uses the word love 15 times in his letter
 - i. And of those, 7 times it was attached to “one another”
 - ii. What is love in this context?
 1. Perhaps a better question is “what type of love is this”
 2. The Bible uses three distinct words for love all with unique meanings
 - a. Phileo – brotherly or friendship love
 - b. Eros – physical intimacy love
 - c. Agape – perfect unconditional love
 3. The word here, is agapé.
 - a. You might think, “That is God’s love”.
 - b. And you would be correct
 - c. Agape is always used to describe the love that is of and from God, whose very nature is love itself:

- d. **I John 4:8** - *God is love*
- e. IOW - God does not merely love; He is love.
- b. Another one of Paul's letters is to the church in Corinth
 - i. It contains an entire chapter written about love – the 13th
 - ii. In his writing, Paul describes all of the qualities of love. And each of them are expressed in connection with others.
 - iii. That is because love can't be done alone with just your feelings.
 - iv. Love is active; the word is a verb.
- c. The letter to the Ephesians provides us with principles about how we are to treat and deal with each other within the body of Christ, the church.
 - i. It gives us guidelines about how we live together as husband and wives, parents and children, and how to treat each other in the workplace.
 - ii. Paul is expanding on the words of Jesus in **John 13:34-35**, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*
 - iii. Jesus gave the command and Paul, in **I Cor 13** is saying, 'Here is what that should look like.'
 - iv. Sadly, over time, the love the Ephesian church had for the Lord and one another got weaker as other things began to take their affections
 - 1. By the time the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, Jesus said of the church in Ephesus, *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (Rev 2:4)*
 - v. Be sure that your interactions with others are always filled with and motivated by love – even when you are saying goodbye

3. Faith

- a. Paul uses this word 8 times in the letter
 - i. In that day, the original meaning of faith was visually presented by a stool or chair
 - 1. It was something you could rest on, something that would reliably hold you up, something you could trust.
 - 2. Is that not a perfect word picture of faith?
 - a. You do not have visible assurance that a chair or stool will support your weight
 - b. You sit down, going past that point of no return, believing in faith that it will hold you up and not collapse
 - 3. There is a sense and a biblical principle in which we know that God loves everyone.
 - a. But the only ones who can experience that love in its fullness are those who have the faith to trust Jesus and submit to Him as the Lord and Savior of their lives.
 - b. Let me share with you something I read in an article that continues that thought...

We are to live by faith to have real meaning in life. Faith is taking action on what we believe! An obedient faith in Jesus Christ provides forgiveness of sins and makes one justified, made right, before a Holy God. What are we to believe about Jesus Christ to be justified? We are to believe that He is God who became a man, lived a perfect life and, died on the cross for our sins, was buried, but on the third day, rose again, and is King of kings and Lord of lords. If one truly believes all of this about Jesus Christ and then responds by repenting of sin and being baptized into Christ, that person becomes a child of God, knowing His peace and love! Recognize what that means. When Jesus rose from the dead, how much sin was taken care of by God? Can God take care of your personal sins? The answer is faith-filled, emphatic, YES! Jesus Christ died for all our sins, and He has claimed victory over sin with God's resurrection power!

Peace – Love – Faith...

4. Grace

- a. 11 times we see this word in these 6 short chapters
 - i. The definition of this word remains the same throughout the Bible – something you receive, a gift, forgiveness, or an increase, through no merit of your own
 1. The forgiveness of our sins does not happen because we are, or become, good people.
 2. No, it is only by the grace of God that the sinful, evil things we have done can be removed from us as far as the east is from the west.
 - ii. In the same way, when we say goodbye to people in our lives, we do not recount and tally the good they did to us against the bad
 1. Because of the grace each of has received we then should extend that same grace to others
 2. Without God's grace, none of us could experience a relationship with God, because none of us could even begin to live a life that would please Him.
 3. And we must keep the grace of God in mind as we relate to others in the body. We need to treat others with the same kind of grace that God has bestowed on us.
- b. Isn't it interesting that in the introduction to **Eph1:2**, it says, *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- c. Paul then wraps the entire letter by ending in the same way
 - i. With Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ii. He gives his final goodbye to the Ephesians using those very same words – grace and peace

And so, yes, that is how a Christian should say goodbye, depart, leave any circumstance in their life.

- This applies if you are leaving someone's house after spending an evening with them – speak a blessing of peace over them and their home

- You are leaving a meeting with a person or people who were nasty and aggressive – speak a blessing of grace by your forgiveness
- You are leaving the presence or company of a dear friend – speak a blessing of love over them
- You are saying goodbye for the final time, as we did this past week; speak a blessing of faith, knowing that you will be reunited with them again one day.

Will others see those qualities in you as a child of God? As a Christian, they certainly should!