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Morning. It's good to see you this morning. If you are a guest of Providence, and you made your way in while we were singing over the last few minutes, then I want to be sure to welcome you. Very glad to have you with us this morning as we get to study God's word together.

We're going to be in Ephesians chapter six, so I invite you to find a Bible, open up to Ephesians chapter six with me. If you made your way in this morning, and you don't have a Bible to call your own, then you can find one underneath the chair in front of you. Encourage you to open that up, and if you don't have a Bible at the house, then take this one with you. We'd love for you to have it, and to read it, and to enjoy God's word. We're happy for you to take that one home with you.

As we get ready to talk about Ephesians this morning, I think it's just good of us to notice the grace of God in the life of Providence and providing so many college students for us to have as part of our family here. Getting ready for finals in this next week, and the week after that. A few of our design students have already made it through, but we'll be sure to be praying for them in the days ahead. Aren't you glad you're done with that?

So, Ephesians chapter six. While you're making your way there, let me give you a little bit in terms of background about what we've seen that'll help frame up this morning for us. The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church in the old city called Ephesus from a jail cell in Rome. He wrote to affirm the church in their identity that they have in Christ. Big idea is that union in Christ gives people a radically new identity to live out in the world. We have put off the old self, and we put on the new self. This is what Ephesians teaches.

And if we could have the wherewithal this morning to think about the things that God has done through this book, not just in history, just in our last couple of months of studying God's word together. I think it would be really encouraging for us to consider that people have been saved through the preaching of this book in the last couple of months together. Others have decided to join Providence as their church, and to join into life groups, because of this letter in the last couple of months.

Others have been called into full-time vocational gospel ministry, or moving overseas as missionaries through this letter. And others have been called to serve in different parts of Providence through this letter as well.

And for such a hugely important letter, it's interesting for us to consider how is Paul going to wrap this up. Where's he going to land the plane? What does he leave us with, as we get to study the last few verses of this incredible book this morning?

And what I want to show you over the next few minutes, is it's as if the Apostle Paul looks at you and looks at me and says, "Now it's your turn. This is who God is. This is what God has done. This is what's available to you. This is who you are in Christ. Now, what are you going to do about it?" It's all right here in these last few verses of Ephesians six. Let's pray, and we'll enter in together.

Father in heaven, we need to encounter you right here and now. So we pray you will do what only you can do. God, you will take the word that you once inspired, and you will now illuminate it afresh for us here at Providence to hear you speaking into us. I pray you'd speak words of purpose, of life, of our direction. I pray that you would do thousands of things through this one preaching moment. Overcome weakness and brokenness in thee God, I pray. God speak like only you can. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Ephesians chapter six. We're going to pick up the action in verse 18. He's halfway through a prayer as he's bringing this talk about the armor of God to a close. Let's focus on some of these things in verse 18 and following. It says, "Pray and at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplications for all the saints and also for me. That words may be given to me in opening my mouth, boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. So that you may know how I am and what I'm doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible."

He set it up with this idea. History has a way of pushing one person into the spotlight, when reality reveals it was a whole host and company of people working together to make any great thing happen. For example, has anyone in this room ever heard the name William Wilberforce? You can raise your hand if you have. An Englishman, a philanthropist, Parliamentarian. And he is credited with being the leader to abolish the African slave trade. But here's how history works. Has anyone in this room heard the name Thomas Clarkson? Virtually no one. Yet Clarkson was born in 1760. He was 19 years old as a student at Cambridge University in 1779, and he entered an essay in a Latin essay competition, and he won. And the title of that paper was "Is the Slave Trade Lawful?"

In 1785, he translated it over to English, and around this time, people were starting to become aware of the issue of slavery. In 1787, under death threats, he formed the Abolition for the African Slave Trade. Thomas Clarkson didn't work alone. He had a small company around him that you're guaranteed not to have heard of. He was working with Granville Sharp and Josiah Wedgwood. Clarkson approached a member of Parliament, Wilberforce, and Anglican who was eager to join their cause. In 1791, 12 years after the college essay was translated into English so Wilberforce could even read it. Wilberforce and Clarkson combined forces, and in 1807, the Slave Trade Act changed history. And if we remember that fact, we usually remember Wilberforce with it. But who we don't remember? Thomas Clarkson, Josiah Wedgwood, and Granville Sharp, who lived this out, and who delivered one of the greatest events in history.

Wilberforce has been pushed into the spotlight of history, most people have never heard of Clarkson, because he was in the background. He reads in the fine print of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, and he is a world-changer. Even though relatively few people will ever know his name. Just as it is with every great thing that happens on earth. Some people in this story are known and other people in this story are not known. One person seems to be in the spotlight, one person might seem to get the credit, but Wilberforce wouldn't have made it without the skills and sacrifices of Clarkson.

Now, let me illustrate this same idea one more way, and this might hit closer to home for many in this room. Has anyone ever heard of Tom Petty, John Lennon, or 50 Cent? You can raise your hand. Ever heard of any of these guys? And here's a man you probably never heard of. His name is Jimmy Iovine. He's the recording engineer behind Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty and John Lennon in the '70s. He's the producer behind U-2's Rattle and Hum. Supervised the music for the film 16 Candles, the romance film in 1984, and Scrooged, starring Bill Murray, in 1988. He founded Interscope Records. Now follow this. He signed Tupac Shakur, helped fund Dr. Dre, and was the financier behind Death Row Records. These events orchestrated the rise of Snoop Dog and Eminem. He's the talent scout who found Gwen Stefani and Trent Reznor. He helped launch the careers of Eminem, 50 Cent and Lady Gaga. He produced the movie 8-Mile, along with Eminem, which was number one in the box office and grossed 240 million dollars.

He helped LeBron James vision out his documentary, More than a Game, and this guy gave Dr. Dre the idea for Beats headphones and the two of them together sold it to Apple for three billion dollars. And everything, from our experience of gangster hip-hop to LeBron James, to the very speakers we listen to these things through, was supported and framed up by this guy. Yet, if he even walked through the main terminal in the Atlanta airport, we all probably would have walked right past him.

He's the mastermind behind Apple's music right now. This is the ultimate guy behind the guy. Yet, most of us in history have never heard of him. And here's what's mind-blowing and what it has to do with us this morning. The spotlight doesn't always shine where the real action is. History is produced by people who were largely unknown to the rest of the world. They are people who have never walked onto a stage, but we are all impacted by their gift, and what each of them did, is they were faithful in their cultural moment. And the story of God is a lot like this. The spotlight of history tends to shine over here. Tends to give us a little bit of what's in view in a moment, when the real movement-makers, the real history-shapers are hard at work in the background, playing roles in obscurity, that you don't have the spotlight without people being faithful in their own moment.

And here's what this means for us, Providence, we don't get to choose who history remembers and who history forgets. We do get to choose if we will do our roles and play our part in the story of God. And here at the end of Ephesians, we see this principle at work, as we're introduced to this man of relative obscurity. Tychicus, who is he, and what was his momma thinking when she named him this?

That's what we're talking about this morning. Because history has a way of pushing one person to the top, when many people are responsible. And all of Ephesians was inspired by God, and all of Ephesians is given to the entire people of God. And it's important for you to consider the spirit of God could have omitted Tychicus from this letter, but the spirit of God chose for him to be present. Chose for you to get to hear him at the end of all of his doctrine, all of this theology, to draw your attention to a man of relative obscurity.

I want to conclude our time in Ephesians by giving you a vision of how God wants to work in your life and through your life. By considering the life of this one man, Tychicus, and the grace of God in Christ that sustained him. Three parts to the vision. The first one is this, God appoints people to roles in his story. It's what you see in verse 21, isn't it? "So that you may also know how I am and what I'm doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything."

Up until this point, we've just seen Paul. Paul's been in view non-stop, but here at the end, we see there's been somebody at work with him. We see there's been somebody that was at work as Paul was either writing this, what we imagine is, Paul was actually chained up in a jail, and then here at the end, after all of this doctrine, all of this theology, everything that God's done in the world through this book, we see it's probably even this guy, Tychicus, who was sitting over there, scribing it out in candlelight, as Paul spoke the letter to him.

Now, who is this guy, and why do we need to think about him this morning? Biblically, we know Moses, Abraham, David, Peter, James, Paul, and John, and at the same time, we don't know as much about Tertius, Onesimus, Priscilla, Aquila and Tychicus. We have a tendency to skim over the seemingly insignificant figures of history. I mean, let's be honest, when we all even read the Bible, isn't this one of those parts that we just kind of like, "And ...," and we're just done, you know?

I mean, don't we consider the beginning and the ending of a lot of these New Testament Epistles to be like the crust on a really good sandwich? Let's cut that junk off, move it aside so we can get down to the meat of the thing? The whole thing's inspired by God, intended for the whole people of God.

As a culture, we get distracted by celebrities and leaders and forget who the real movement-makers are, don't we? We'll remember Wilberforce, and yeah, a lot of us know who Bruce Springsteen is, but no one knows about Thomas Clarkson and Jimmy Iovine, the man behind the man, setting up the movement and making so much of this possible.

So allow me to introduce you to Tychicus. He was commended as a man of Godly character. Mentioned five times by Paul in his various correspondence. Entrusted with carrying five letters of the Bible that you hold in your hands. Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Second Timothy, and Titus. We expect that Tychicus was the man that carried these to various churches and assignments. This man was loved and trusted to much by the Apostle Paul, that the Apostle Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus another time to give Timothy a break from preaching. Timothy had to go to Paul for some mentoring and some on-the-job-training, and it was Tychicus that rolled into Ephesus and was the itinerate minister, you see this in Second Timothy 4:12.

He traveled to Greece, Troas, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Colossae, and possibly Crete. All the money, all the hustle, all the effort, all the expense receipts. Everything for the mission of God. Yet, he doesn't really appear in the spotlight of history at all. If we're all honest with each other, until these last few moments, not many of us ever gave a thought to who he is, and why his life matters.

But while traveling, he assisted the Apostle Paul in serving multiple churches. Tychicus is one of the men whose fingerprints are all over the New Testament church. No wonder the Apostle Paul calls this man a beloved brother and a faithful servant of the Lord. So in verse 21, Tychicus would report on Paul's condition. He was so trusted that Paul could send him to give a report about us. About how Paul's group, Paul's squad, Paul's unit was doing. This also reveals that there was a company of people with Paul. If anything, it's at least Paul and Tychicus, but as I'm going to show you in a moment, there's probably even more at work than that.

The Ephesians were to be encouraged. But how? How are you going to encourage them? Because the Apostle Paul is in chains. Yeah, that's the very thing that's encouraging. The Apostle Paul, who wrote this letter under the inspiration and authority of the spirit of God. He's in chains, and he's keeping the faith. It was the job of Tychicus to deliver that news. Because God has established many valiant things for all of his children. For all of his people, in God's word, and all of his people today in this room and in this church. Providence depends on the faithfulness of many Tychicuses, got that one right, playing their part.

History is full of references to great movements that depended on teams working together in unity. Unless you think I'm just making this stuff up this morning, and I'm just trying really hard to find a sermon in Ephesians six, this is actually how your life works. Imagine going to the doctor, and you go to the doctor and he does some tests, and we won't even talk about the people that are involved in him being able to do those tests. And the doctor comes to you and says, "Listen, we've got bad news. We're going to need to do an operation. But we've got good news, there's hope. We think you're going to make it."

Now think about all the people that go into that act that's about to unfold. Because oftentimes, we get to the end of a major event like this, and we'll look back and we'll just say, "Oh, yeah. This was great. The doctor healed me."

But think about the many people that were actually at work. I won't even bother talking about the person who financed the buying of land and the coming in, and the people at the real estate office that actually settled it, and the many people with the construction crew that came in and built the whole thing, and made sure all the lights worked and that stuff. You can tell I know a lot about this stuff. But then, think about the people, once this hospital is up and running, think about the many people who were involved in you getting healed.

The check-in people were involved. The schedulers were involved. Insurance companies were involved, and you know they were. Nurses were involved. Nurse practitioners were involved. Lab techs were involved. Anesthesia crew was involved. The CICU team was involved. Diagnostic people, imaging specialists, even the food service people, thank God. Janitorial team, the parking people, the gift shop, building maintenance, and rehab specialists. Oh, but man, we have this tendency, don't we? We get down to the end of any event, like, "Oh, the doctor made me well."

Yeah, the doctor and a whole host of people working together in unity to deliver someone through a process. This is a general principle about how God's world works, and you see it right here in the mission of God.

But listen, if you find yourself doing anything other than pastoral ministry, and that's just about the whole room, you need to be encouraged that wherever you serve and whatever you do, that's the place that God has given you the opportunity to be a kingdom of priests unto him. These are the places, in all of our different spheres of life, this isn't when we just do a job, this is how we minister to people on behalf of God.

And God had a role for Paul to play in his story, and God had a role for Tychicus to play in his story as well. And here's the punchline. There's a place for you to play in the story of God. There's a place for you. Just read your Bible. Yeah, it seems like one person's in the spotlight. Pay attention to the margins. See who's mentioned at the beginning and the end. Go back and read your Old Testament. Yeah, it's a few big key players. That's right. Look at the nations, listen for the names, look at the people, there's a place for you to play in the story of God.

God has embedded unique skills, gifts and capacities in your life. And listen, this is all grace from the top down and this is all delivered to us through the cross of Christ. Isn't this what's in the real punchline and thesis of Ephesians as a whole? Yeah, in Ephesians one through ten, that we were once in sin, but now God's brought us life, and it's not by anything that we have done, we've been saved by grace, before good works that we can go and we can walk in them.

So at the end of Ephesians, consider the question, What has God uniquely designed you to do? What role has God uniquely equipped you to play? Because when you think about it, for Providence to live out all that we can be as a local church, it takes each and every person doing what only they are capable of doing. What would Providence look like if every person were faithful with the task put in front of them? What would history look like if every single one of us were faithful to be obedient to the spirit of God in each and every one of our cultural moments? Aren't you glad for Thomas Clarkson? That was working long before Wilberforce was ever in office.

The church is not built on the talents of the few, it's built on the sacrifices of the many. And you have a sacrifice to make.

Second part of the vision. God provides community to keep us in his story. This is what you see in verse 22. "I sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are." Not that you can know how I'm doing. Not that you can know what I'm thinking. Not how you can know what I'm planning next. How you can know that we are doing. Do you ever ask yourself the question, and this wrecked me on Thursday this last week. How did Paul do it? How'd he do it? How do you sustain all the church planting, all the preaching, all the evangelism, all the discipleship, all of the disciple making, all the counseling, all the elders' meetings, all the leadership development, all the church fights, all the theology training seminars, all the travel, all the wear, all the tear. How did he do it?

I'll tell you how he did it. He had a team around him. And guess where you find this team? You find this team on the fringes of many of the letters that he wrote. In the greetings and conclusions. The crust of the bread that we commonly toss aside, that's where the credit for all of the people and all of the work is actually found. Marking them in the marks and the fringes of the letter reveals significance rather than obscurity. It's as if Paul is saying to a people, "Listen, this letter comes because of the support of these friends." And let me introduce you to the friends.

Take a look at these two charts. The list of missionary travel companions that Paul names. Look at this list of co-workers, fellow prisoners and supporters and friends. Just take it in. Look at the names. Think about the stories. Imagine the faithfulness this required behind the scenes, in obscurity. No one's watching. No one's paying attention. Every one of these people, facing hundreds, maybe even thousands of opportunities in their lifetime, the opportunity to make a mess of the whole thing. Imagine the faithfulness. Imagine the endurance. Imagine the character-building that each and every one of these people went through.

Largely unknown to the world, they don't make their way onto the big stage. Spotlight doesn't seem to fall on them directly, but it's hard to imagine the Apostle Paul and the New Testament church without them. Because history has a way of moving certain people into the spotlight when reality reveals a whole host and a whole company at work behind the scenes, being faithful, embracing obscurity and faithfulness to make any great movement possible.

And this is what wrecked me on Friday. If the Apostle Paul needed this, how much more so you and me? If the Apostle Paul, who Jesus showed up, Jesus shared the gospel with him, Jesus converted him? If that guy needs this level of support, oh man. How much more this guy, right? How much more this room? How much more this church? How did he sustain it? How did he do it? He practiced what he preached. He gave himself to community. He surrounded himself with people to be strong when he was weak. He let people in to point out the blind spots so he wouldn't become conceited. He had a team of people who literally spoke life into him. Imagine the conversations. "Paul, you're doing great. You're doing great. You need some deodorant right now, but you're doing great. You're crushing it. Just stay after it, right? You're doing great."

2:00 am, after this long drawn out elders' meeting, "Paul, you're doing great. Let's go crash, you're doing a great job. Let's stay in this. Let's stay faithful. That sermon worked. That beating was real. Come on. Let's get you cleaned up, let's take a breather, and let's get back in the fight. Listen, I know we're about to go to Ephesus. I know that silversmith, he abused you when we were last there. Don't worry, I'll stand with you this time."

Imagine the times he's about to be thrown in prison. There are names on the board of people who said, "You're going to throw him in? Put me in, too because I'll keep him company while he writes the next letter."

Imagine the faithfulness. Imagine the words, "Keep going. Keep preaching. Keep planting. Keep developing. Keep training. Keep leading."

While Paul might emerge as the leader, he had a team of people pushing him there, and literally holding him up. And listen, isn't this true about what we're doing right here and now, this moment? We're in here, under these ceiling lights receiving God's word? And think about the host of people that's making this moment possible for us. People in the parking lot being sure you could park your car. City officials being sure that this was a safe place to walk around. People to greet you as you made your way in. Multiple people there to teach and care for our children. Hallelujah, they're in the nursery areas. Many people to look after children and other family members and friends right here and now in this moment.

Not to mention the people that are sure that the lights get turned on, and the bills get paid, and the floors get swept, and the trash gets taken out. Think about the company of people that's at work right now in this moment. God provides community to keep us in this story. And this was the praying community of support. Look up in the verses 18 to 20. Paul reaches out to this community in a time of need with a prayer. He said, "Listen, I need you to pray at all times in the spirit. With all prayer and supplication."

Essentially, if you know a prayer, go on and offer that one up. To that end, "keep alert with all perseverance, making supplications for all the saints, and also for me." Listen to how personal this is, "Also for me. That words may be given to me and the opening of my mouth to boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, because even here, I want to declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

So Paul had a community to keep him in the story. Here at Providence, we provide a community to help keep you in the story as well, and they're called life groups. How are you going to sustain a life of consequence in your own generation? Through community and support. And here at Providence, we call them life groups. They're groups of people that come together to talk about God and to talk about life. These are groups of people where we come together to work on the great commandment, and the great commission. We work on loving one another well, and taking care of each other and encouraging one another, yet we also work on fulfilling the great commission together. We share our stories with one another. We share the gospel with one another. We take practice with this, and listen, I know this might be kind of weird. If you're coming in here, and it's like, "Yo, they talk about this when I'm not here?"

We do, because we love you and we believe God is love, and God loves you, and God has a wonderful plan for you life where he wants to come in and he wants to heal anything that's broken and make it right. He wants you to experience the fellowship that can only be found in Him. So yeah, when we meet, when you're not here, we practice sharing the gospel with each other, we actually talk about people that we're praying for to share the gospel with, because this is really what it's all about.

We practice sharing the gospel, we pray for one another, we encourage one another. Paul needed a community to keep him in this story. We provide these communities. Are you in a life group? Here at the end of Ephesians, looking at Tychicus, considering the grind that Paul had. Are you accessing the resources that God has made available to you?

Third part of the vision is this. God unleashes his grace so that we can be an enduring people. Paul concludes the letter with three words, and I really appreciate it, because this has a way of kind of summarizing and bringing together the big things that he's been talking about so far. These words emphasize the major blessings that belong to the church, because God's grand plan is to unite everything under Christ. You see this in Ephesians chapter two. So here are three words that describes how it all works. You see grace. That's the origin of how things are united under Christ. This has been the dominant theme of the book. this is grace unleashed. This is grace from the top-down that makes all of this possible.

You see peace. The result of God's plan to unite everything under Christ. Everything. And all people under the name of Christ. This is God's multi-generational, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic family. Where God's bringing all people together. We don't have to live in conflict. We can live under peace.

And here's love. That's the content of what happens when everything is united under Christ. And listen, the big idea as Ephesians ends, is that all of this has been given to you, church, so that you can endure. Brings up the idea of an endurance race. Where you kind of do the thing, and you keep doing the thing, and you keep showing up, and you keep staying faithful, and you don't quit, and you just keep on.

All of Ephesians is given to us, Providence, so we can endure. So that we can finish the race. All of these blessings are here to be appropriated with prayer and faith. And this is what Paul talks about. Look at how verse 24 finishes, “Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.”

So the grace is going to be with those who love God with the love that doesn't stop, that doesn't fade, that doesn't get jammed up. And what's amazing about the book of Ephesians, is that the people that it was written to, they lost their love. Follow me over to Revelation two. It'll come up on the screen.

“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.” That's Jesus speaking. Jesus says these words to this people. “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. How you cannot bear with those who are evil, but if tested, those who call themselves Apostles and are not, and have found them to be false. I know how you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my namesake. And you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love that you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the works that you first did. If not, I will come to you, and I will 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 from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

Listen Providence, we are all at risk. Here at the end of Ephesians, we're all at risk. Just like the people who received this letter for the first time, we are all at risk. We are at risk of losing our first love. We're called to endure, and we're at risk. If we depend on anything other than the grace of God, then we will lose it. We have access to the benefits described in Ephesians, and these things become ours through prayer and faith. So what does this mean for us? It means that you don't simply get involved in a life group. But it means that when you're in life group, you're really in the room, and you're present, and you're contributing to what's going on around you. It means that when we get together to pray, we don't simply let somebody pray and let our hearts think about what's for lunch. It means we actively engage in these prayers, because we're at risk.

And all the benefits of Ephesians are available to us if we will have them through prayer and faith. So how do you lose your first love? First, you forfeit your role, second you forsake your community, and third, you forget to pray.

Micheal Revis says that prayerlessness is practical atheism because you have every truth of Ephesians. God is saying this is true of you in Christ. It's all here. When we go out through prayer and faith, and when we appropriate them and claim them for our own, and make them active in our lives. It seems like the enemy has bent all of the force of his attack on stunting the spirit of prayer among the people of God. So we pray always. We pray for one another. We pray for the messengers, and we pray for the people because we are utterly dependent on the spirit of God and on the grace of God. And we express our dependence through a very specific language called prayer.

And you can endure. You can. Because God enabled Paul to endure. God enabled Tychicus to endure, and God has given you everything necessary to endure. Will you appropriate it through prayer and faith. There's a few ways we live this out this next week, and I'll start to wrap it up. Let's embrace our unique roles in God's story. The spirit did not say, "Let's not give this much space to people, that people never really hear about."

Instead, it's as if the spirit says, "The church is built on the backs of people who have never been known."

What if you were to pray, and God were to give you the name of a specific people group somewhere in the world, and that was your thing, that was your calling, and your burden by the spirit of God. And you, inspiring, and a few others here at Providence, you together, you pray for that people. What if you never know that people, and that people never gets to know you, but one day you get to heaven, and you get to see the results of your faithful prayers? We all have a unique role. God is calling all of us to specific tasks. Everyone has the same grace, everyone has the same God. Thousands of people are at work, even right now, to make this room possible and what it is.

Second, let's contribute to our community of faith. Remember, this is Paul. If this is a guy that got converted by Jesus, and he needs a squad about 35 deep, how much more so you and me and our own struggles? Because you need to know this. We need this community around us because the viability of any successful enterprise is a host of people specializing in a number of things that no one else can do but them. We want to be a people who are okay with, "Yeah, that guy's on platform, and she's up there. Yeah, that's great. She's leading this movement, she's over at this ministry, great. He's leading this thing now, great. Good for them. Let me pray for them."

But let's not get jammed up on if we have the visible role or not. Let's recognize the fact that everything that's visible depends on everything else behind it. This is the viability behind anything that will ever come into visibility. And Providence is not going to succeed based on who we can get on a stage. Providence will succeed based on if we can be faithful to the love of God, and if we can get the gospel to the people around us. We have a vision to see all people come alive to the gospel story. And this is only possible if all of us'll make the sacrifices that only us can make. The church is not built on the talents of the few, but the sacrifices of the many.

And last, let's fix our eyes on Jesus. I hope you're encouraged, as you get to consider the life of Tychicus for a few moments. Consider Paul. Consider the Ephesian church, and then find ourselves here this morning. A life that was not as visible as Paul's, but Paul's life is hard to imagine now without it. And what's really important is not Tychicus, it's Christ behind Tychicus and it's Christ who Tychicus was bound in, because Christ knows his name, and Christ knows your name, too. Christ is the one who's intimately aware of his endurance, his sacrifice, his character and his influence. See, it doesn't matter if our roles, they seem to be peripheral, or if they seem to be background.

Let's embrace a paradigm that we're not really noticing the approval of other people, but we're fixing our eyes on Jesus. We're noticing, "He sees me. I see him. I can be faithful here. I can do the work that he's calling me to do in my moment."

Because it's Jesus who sees you. It's Jesus who cares. It's Jesus who knows. And it's Jesus who give us our significance. So, consider the words of John Newton, "Look unto the Lord, Jesus Christ. Right here and now in your heart, just look at Him. Look unto Him as he hung naked, wounded, bleeding, dead, and forsaken upon the cross. Look unto Him again as he now reigns in glory, possessed of all power in heaven and earth, with thousands upon ten thousands of saints and angels worshiping before Him. And 10,000 times 10,000 ministering unto him. And then, compare your sins with his blood. Your wants with his fullness. Your unbelief with his faithfulness. Your weakness with his strength. And your inconsistency with his everlasting love."

Let's be the kind of people who care deeply about the right things. Let's be people who crave the approval of Jesus Christ. Who seek to earn the victor's crown as we run the race. As I'll close with Hebrews 12. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. Of Paul, and Tychicus alike, let us also lay aside every weight and sin, which clings to us so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising its shame. And he is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Ephesians doesn't end by looking at ourselves or looking at our wounds, but by looking to Christ. Let's look to Him in prayer. Father in heaven, we love you. We thank you for the book of Ephesians. Thank you for ministering to each one of us over the last couple of months that we've been here together. God, we thank you for the things that are ours because of Jesus, and Father, we want to, in this moment, to capitalize the work you've done in this book by looking to Him.

Jesus, as we look to you, we see you standing among the seven lampstands. We want to hear your voice. We want to think what you're thinking. We want to feel what you're feeling. And in looking to you, we pray that you would transform us from one degree of glory to the next. Father in heaven, we want to be a church and we want to be a kind of people that are sensitive to who you are. That are sensitive to the places that you've called us, and the unique works that you've created us to do. So God, we ask for grace, and we ask for boldness to step into what you have for us. We know this is all possible because of you, Jesus. You are the headline. You are the main story, so we look to you now. Father we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



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