



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

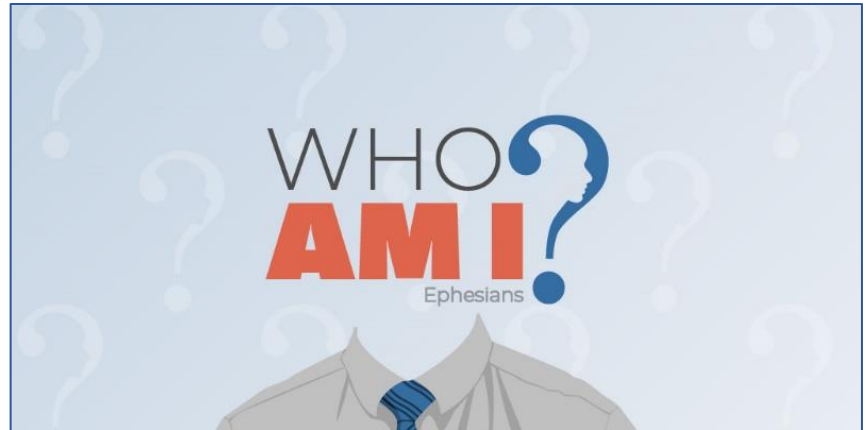
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

A “Weeble” Life

WHO AM I?

Ephesians 6:18–24

Tim Badal | May 7, 2023



It's my great privilege to say open your Bibles, for the last time for the foreseeable future, to the book of Ephesians. We are at the end of our series on this letter that the apostle Paul wrote to a

group of believers who were trying to understand who they were—their identity—in a fallen and pagan world. Paul reminds them of who they are in Christ. He reminds them of all the privileges and the position they hold as sons and daughters of God. He speaks of how much God loves them and cares for them, how He has equipped them and filled them with His Spirit, how He longs for them to live in victory and not in defeat.

In the last three chapters of this incredible letter we have learned the application of these truths. Once we know who we are and how God has uniquely equipped us for every good work He has for us, now we are to go out and live in light of that identity and that truth. The people in Ephesus were blessed by Paul's writings, and we who are now 2,000 years separated from its original writing are reading it in a world of fallenness, in a world of lies and deception.

Over these many weeks, we have also asked, “Who am I? How do I define myself? How do I understand my purpose in this world?” If I don't know who we are, the question of meaning and significance will never really be answered. We will go about looking at all the things the world says will give us our identity—the things that define who we are—but none of these will satisfy. None of them will give us security in the place God has designed us to live and prosper.

God writes this letter to us through the apostle Paul, wanting the truths of this book to seep into our hearts and minds, to know who we are, to be grounded in the truth of who God has made us to be, then in doing so, to act, respond and live in a way that corresponds with that identity, with that defining purpose for which God created us.

This morning we come to Ephesians 6:18-24. In these closing verses, Paul is landing the plane. I want to mix what Paul says in these last verses with the verses we've already visited in order to remind us of all God is saying. I want to speak as your pastor to you, right where you are, in what I believe will be a practical picture of the book of Ephesians for you to take with you.

My hope is that this picture will enable you to not be knocked down by the lies of the world, the devil, and yes, even our flesh, but that you and I will live in victory and power by the Spirit of almighty God; that we will be able to stand strong in the battle we find ourselves in. So let's look at these last few verses in this incredible book, beginning in verse 18:

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.

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.

Bible scholars and Christians say this book is one of the most meaningful in all the Scriptures because of the truths it contains. Tim Keller says this about this book: "Ephesians is a call to live the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, a call to embrace the fulness of life that is only found in Him."

Listen to me, church, Ephesians is telling us that the real life, the good life, the only life you and I ever find worth living is found in Christ Jesus our Lord. The world will tell us we don't need God, we don't need this religious stuff. But our Creator is saying in the book of Ephesians, "You can have the life that is only found in Christ."

Another scholar says, "Ephesians is a letter of immense spiritual power, the words of which can transform the human heart." We need transforming change in our lives. The lies of the world, the devil and the flesh will knock us down, but the truth of God's Word is what transforms us—and I hope and pray the book of Ephesians has done that. Another writer says, "In Ephesians we see the glory of Christ and the power of His resurrection; we are invited to participate in that power by faith."

Did you know Ephesians says the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is alive in you by the Spirit of almighty God? You have this kind of dynamite power within you. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is alive and well in every Christ follower today, and the book of Ephesians says you can grab hold of that.

Finally, another writer says, "Ephesians is a letter that reminds us of our spiritual blessings in Christ and challenges us to live in light of those blessings." We're going to learn today that we've been blessed with everything we need in this life. For everything that will impact you in a negative way, God has the answer. We are reminded in Ephesians 1 that we are blessed by our God and Father in heaven with every spiritual blessing in heaven:

- He chose us before the foundation of the world.
- He predestined us as adopted sons of God.
- We have been given meaning and purpose by His grace.
- He has forgiven our sins and has redeemed us in His Son.
- He has given us His unmerited favor in every way we need it.
- He has also lavished on us all wisdom and insight.
- He has promised us an inheritance.

We have so much more in Christ than we could ever imagine. The purpose of Ephesians is that we would know these things and take hold of them, living in light of them.

This morning I'm going to ask you to challenge the lies you've believed and begin to hear the truth of God's Word. But first, I want to introduce you to a friend of mine who will be my illustration today—Karate Ken. My whole sermon will revolve around Karate Ken. I believe this is a way for you to remember what God wants us to learn.



Now, when I bought this little toy, I was told I was getting two of them. What I really got was one that was double-sided. Because I don't want the guys to feel subconscious about the six-pack, we're going to use the Karate Ken side. My hope is to show you a contrast between the two. Some of you have no idea what this is. It's something we grew up with, so for a lot of the older people folks today, you know these as "Weebles." It was advertised as "Weebles wobble, but they won't fall down." All you old people nailed that. If you're young, you're thinking, "I've never heard of such a thing."

Weebles were a toy that had some science behind them. You could hit it, punch it, or beat it up—you could do whatever you wanted—and it would always come back up because it was designed with a weight in the bottom. You're thinking it's probably just full of air. but when I lift and drop it, you'll hear it hit the floor, I'm glad they built this stage well. There's a whole lot of water in the bottom of this Weeble.

Now, Weebles come in all shapes and sizes. This model is for young kids to punch, kick and tackle.

Now, I want us to look at our lives and ask, "Do we have a Weeble faith? A Weeble life?" As the Bible told us last week, we're in a war. As Ephesians 6:10 tells us, we are to be *"strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."* We're to put on the full armor of God, so that we might be able to *"stand against the schemes of the devil."* We learned last week that the devil uses three things:



himself, the world—that is, the world's ideas and lifestyles—and the flesh. Our flesh is corrupted because of sin, so we are given to sin more than we are given to holiness.

The devil is waging this war against us and he longs to knock us down. Some of you find yourself down and out because you're believing the lies of the devil, you're believing the lies you're telling yourself; you're believing the lies of the world. You're finding your identity in all those things. When hardships and difficulties come, you wonder why you're on the ground. Why you're hurting and can't get up. The problem is there's a battle in which the devil wants to knock you out.

In the book of Ephesians, we've seen no less than ten times what keeps us from falling down and staying down; that's the Spirit of almighty God. Ten times He's introduced as the Spirit that we're to be filled with. If we don't want to be knocked down by the lies of the devil, the deceit of the world and the deceit of our flesh, we need to be filled with the Spirit. Instead of being filled with wine and debauchery, or being filled with ourselves, we must be filled with the Spirit, so when the devil, the world and our sin knock us down, we come back up.

The book of Ephesians says the thing that's in the bottom of the Christian life is not of your own making or your own doing. Rather, the ballast that allows you to come back up is your identity. It's what you know about yourself, who you are, why you've been created and what God has called and purposed you to do. If your identity is founded in God's idea of who you are, when the devil knocks you down, you're going to come right back up.

But if you find your identity in the world's lifestyles, the world's pursuits and the world's places of significance, when you get knocked down, you'll need supernatural help. Like the life alert bracelets' commercials say, "I've fall down and I can't get up." Some of you right now are down and wondering why God has promised all these great things, but you're not feeling very good about where your life is.

The question is this: are you filled with the Spirit to the extent that when you get knocked down, you come back up? Again, it's not of your own doing or making; it's the power of God that is at work within you. To get there, you must identify yourself through God's eyes, not your own.

Now, throughout the Bible we have seen physical manifestations of this spiritual war. Remember as I told you last week, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but we fight against principalities and spiritual forces in this dark world. Still, these have physical manifestations. We see in both the Old and New Testaments lies that are used to knock people down and out. Let's start in the **Garden of Eden**. Each of these are ancient lies, where people start building their identity around things instead of God, then we see how they fall apart. In the Garden of Eden, the devil comes to Eve and says, "Did God really say you can't do this?" Then instead of identifying as individuals created by God to worship Him, both Eve and Adam fall for the lie.

Think of who find themselves with the **spirit of Pharaoh** in our world today. He held people in the bondage of slavery and fear. Some of us are down now because there's sin in our lives that has chained us. We keep returning to these sins, then instead of standing upright, we're down and out. We're beating ourselves up, wondering why we keep falling for these things. We're chained to them. If that is you, you've fallen for the lie of the spirit of Pharaoh.

Then we come to a guy named **Goliath**. He's big and strong; he's mocking the people of God, He's speaking the lie that many of us are believing today, that our present circumstances are bigger than the God with whom we identify. Goliath mocks the people, saying, "Someone come and fight me." Everybody is too afraid of him, so all the nation of Israel is down and out because they've fallen for the lie. Some of you have fallen for the lie that God is impotent and unable to do what He says He can do. So when the enemies of God come, we believe their lies instead of standing strong as David did.

Then there's the **spirit of Absalom**, the son of David. He had all the opportunities, all the rights and privileges of the son of a king. But instead of believing who he was, instead of grabbing hold of the rights of his position, he allowed himself to fall. Do you know what did it for him? Anger, resentment and bitterness. Some of us are laid down, not standing tall, not filled with the Holy Spirit, because someone did something to us a while ago, and we've never let it go. We've held on to it and we're eating and drinking that poison, as if it's affecting that other person in an adverse way, but it's only affecting us. We're down and out, wondering why we're not standing strong. It's because we're believing the lie of Absalom. living in a place of revenge. bitterness and wrath.

There may be the **spirit of Jezebel** in some of our lives. She said, "I can do with my body as I wish. Any kind of sexuality or perversion I can do." Queen Jezebel lived during the time of Elijah, thinking, "You get out of my way as I express myself and don't

you dare tell me what God has to say about my expression.” So this strong man, Elijah, starts believing the lies of Jezebel and finds himself discouraged and downtrodden. He’s ready to give up and give in. Some of you are down and out because you find yourself saying, “Culture is so messed up. Things are so off kilter, it will never be the same again. Who am I? I’m just one person.” You’ve allowed yourself to be down and out.

The Bible is full of these spirits. How about the **spirit of Herod**? Herod is the king of Israel when Jesus is born. Word comes that the king of the Jews has been born in Bethlehem. King Herod says, “I’m in charge, I am king.” There are a great many people who are down and out, even though they feel like they’re in charge, because they have made themselves king. They’ve made themselves god, so anybody—including Jesus Christ Himself—who gets in the way of their self-expression and pursuit of pleasure says, like Herod, “I’ll kill anybody in my way.” So you know what he did? He killed the innocents in Bethlehem. He killed the most fragile ones there. We live in a time when we are willing to kill the innocent among us so we can express ourselves, so we can have autonomy in our bodies and our lives. The spirit of Herod is alive and well; it’s knocking down a many people.

Then there’s the **spirit of a church**. You’re thinking, “I’m glad, because I’m in church and don’t have any of those spirits active in my life.” The Bible says there’s a spirit in the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation. Jesus says to this church, “You are down and out because you’re lukewarm. You’re neither hot nor cold. You think your religiosity is going to save you, is going to fix you.” Do you think that being here today, being a part of this activity, is enough? Jesus says, “I want to spit you out of my mouth.” With all these spirits, this is inevitably what is happening.

I’m going to give you the benefit of the doubt, believing you want to stand tall and strong. But the devil, the world and the flesh are knocking you down, and sadly, you’re down and out. Here’s what the book of Ephesians says more than ten times, at least once in each chapter. The spirits that are out in the world waging war against you have no chance against the Spirit of almighty God. We have the Spirit of God within us. We are called to allow that Spirit to fill us, so that when we get beat up and knocked down in the world, we don’t stay down. Some of you have had a hard week and you’re beaten down. Notice what the Spirit of almighty God does. A Weeble wobbles, but he does not fall down. We need that kind of faith. The book of Ephesians was written to give us the ballast we need to make us stand strong.

So why do you need to know who you are? Because knowing who you are in Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior assures you of the only ballast that will let you stand strong in troubled times. This is why the young generations’ identity is such a big thing. The devil knows if he can get young people to not believe who they are in Christ, they’ll fall for anything. If he can get them to not know they are loved by God and purposed by God for great and awesome things, that they have been redeemed by God, gifted by God and are going to be used by God, then if the devil can get them not to believe this, they’re out of the game,

But who can ever come against us when we are founded on, grounded in and centered on the truth that “I am a child of God, bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, filled with Holy Spirit and awaiting the inheritance of a lifetime.” When we know that and are founded on that, we’ll be able to stand, no matter what hits us.

So with that as our mark, how then does Paul end this letter? What does he have to say to Weebles who are wobbling? He tells us three things that add to the ballast that allows us to stand strong, that grounds us.

Prayer

In verse 18, after talking about spiritual warfare, Paul writes that he wants us to be *“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.”* Then he adds, *“[Pray] 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.”*

You may be sitting there thinking, “I’m down and out. I’m struggling today. Tim, what should I do?” The first thing you should do is pray. Here’s why. Prayer is the true barometer of your identity. Here’s what I mean. You can say, “I identify with Christ.” You can say, “I am a child of God.” You can say, “I’m a follower of His.” You can say, “I have an inheritance waiting for me in heaven.” You can say all the truths of Ephesians 1-3, but I will respond, “Do you really? Then show me your prayer life.” If you believe God is all He says He is, if you believe God is doing all He says He is doing in your life, then you and I will pray a whole lot more. We will recognize that apart from God, our identity is fragile, finite, broken and foolish. We don’t know what’s coming tomorrow. We’re beat up, abused and knocked down. We don’t have what is needed for the fight. Prayer is the place where we say, “I can’t do this,

but You can." Prayer acknowledges, "I'm down and out. I need someone bigger, better, stronger, wiser and greater than myself to get me back to where I need to be."

Paul says, "Pray at all times, with all types of prayers, for all types of people." This is because you're not the only one who is down and out. Pray when you're down and out. Pray when your friend is down and out. Say, "God, take those of us who are weak and make us strong."

This is the problem with our prayers: We say, "God, I'm struggling; make me comfortable. Make this easy." God says, "What I want you to pray for is that I would fill you, so you're able to take on more of the fight and you're able to stand strong." He is telling us we need to be in tune with Him.

You might be thinking, "Okay then, give me a plan for prayer." When you're down and hurting, when you need a helping hand, does it sound religious to you? Does it seem rote? Or does it sound like someone who is desperately in need of a helping hand? Prayer is saying, "God, I don't have this, but You do. I need You. I desire You to enter my world, enter my life, and pull me up."

Paul also says, "I want you to pray for me." He's being transparent. He's saying, "I'm in prison and my circumstances have me thinking I need to stay silent, but would you pray that God would fill me in such a way that I would preach the message I ought to preach." Some of us are not standing courageously in our schools, workplaces or communities. We're living hunkered down because we're not willing to pray, "Let me stand tall, not for my glory, but so that Your gospel can go forth."

The first way we allow the Spirit to fill us is we start praying prayers through that Spirit.

Partners

In verses 21-22 Paul pivots into his final greeting: *"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."* So Tychicus comes to the church in Ephesus and brings this letter. "Hey, I've been with Paul. He sends his greetings and has written you a letter. Can I read it to you?"

Of course then there are all kinds of questions for him. "What's Paul doing? What's going on? I hear he's in prison. He says he's an ambassador in chains. How is he?" Tychicus is there to say, "Paul is doing all right. He's praying that he won't remain silent because there's a lot of hostility in the Roman jail. Would you pray for him?"

Then he goes on. "He's full of joy. He told the Philippian church they should be full of joy. He finds great solace in Jesus being the pre-eminent one. When I dropped the letter off to the Colossians, he told them to keep their eyes on Jesus, Who is the greatest of all, and because of that, He should be pre-eminent in our lives."

He then starts telling them all these stories about Paul, encouraging them that Paul is doing okay, but notice the vision behind this. Paul writes in verse 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."*

The Greek word "encourage" means "one who comes alongside and fills." When Paul sends them this letter, they're feeling deflated, but when they hear this letter, they're reminded of God's love for them and their position in Him. That starts to help a little bit more. Then Tychicus says, "Let me make sure you are filled up and standing strong."

Some of us are down and out right now. We're hurting. We're dying on a vine. Maybe you're here today and you're filled with worry and despair. You're dying in your sin because you give in to temptation. But then when we do our greetings, someone asks, "How are you doing?" You say, "I'm good, I'm good." But not really. You're down, but you're not going to tell someone else. Paul is modeling for us the need for partners, for people in our lives. Tychicus shows us what we should be doing in the lives of others and what others should be doing in our lives. When we're down and out, the Tychicuses of our lives come and fill us up with the truth of God's Word. They literally are the conduit, the hose, that fills us with the good things of God. For that to happen, three things need to take place.

You need to be transparent.

Every study tells us that people are living lies. We come to church, yet we're dying inside. We're down and out. We're sad. But then when the time comes to talk with people, we say "I'm fine. You're fine. We're all fine." We're all smiles. Transparency says, "I need

help. I need help from God first, then I need help from faithful friends who will take me from where I am to where God wants me to be.”

Are you transparent enough? As a society, the studies are all incredibly damning to our social construct right now. We are more isolated than we’ve ever been before. We’ve talked about this in our small group studies. Especially among young people, many of them don’t have friends. They’re used to doing things alone. So we have fewer friends than we used to have and we’re not honest with the ones we do have, then we wonder why we’re down and out.

You need time.

Paul and Tychicus didn’t just fall into their relationship—they had to dig into it. They had to invest time and attention. They had to have conversations. They had to get to know one another.

You need trust.

We have to trust when we tell somebody we’re down and out that they’re not going to weaponize our situation. They’re going to respond with something like, “Hey, brother, I’ve been there too. Hey, sister, I know what it’s like to feel that way. Let me remind you what God’s Word says.”

Some of you are buying into the ideas of the world, the flesh and the devil and you can’t shake these lies. You need someone outside yourself to say, “Listen, God loves you. God has a plan for you. God has everything you need. If you will just lean into Him and rely on Him, you will find victory.” Sometimes we need a faithful, trusted friend to encourage our hearts.

So let me ask when you are down, who are you turning to? Who’s that trusted friend you can go to and be transparent with? Who trusts you to be that? Who trusts you to be honest with them to speak truth into their lives when they’re struggling?

Yes, prayer is essential, but we need partners as well who will love us to the place where God already has us in the heavenly realms.

Perseverance

Finally, it will take perseverance. Paul says we are to pray *“with all perseverance.”* Right away you’re thinking, “I’m down, so I just need to work really, really hard to get back up on my own.” Notice what he says at the end of this letter, in verse 23: *“Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Notice that it’s not from us.

Then he concludes, *“Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible...”* This means we are to love with a sincere love. Here’s how we know if we have a sincere love for Jesus. When we are down, we don’t try to get up on our own, through our own thinking, through our own power, through our own devices. Rather, when we are down, we get back up by the grace of almighty God, by faith, by being reminded of God’s love and the peace we have with Him. All of these gifts God has given to us are things we lean into. We say, “God, I can’t do this on my own. I can’t persevere. But in Your strength and might, I was down but now I can stand tall.”

Are you leaning into God’s grace that reminds you who you are? Grace that gives you the truth of God’s Word, not the lies of this world? As we close out the book of Ephesians, the question we’ve had to come to grips with is, “Who am I? Am I who God says I am? Is that how I identify myself? Is that what brings me significance? Or do I believe the labels and identities of this world that will only knock me down?”

God says that as we allow the Spirit of God to fill us, even when those lies come our way and knock us about and seem to push us away from His truth, the Spirit of God will give you the ballast, strength and perseverance to stand strong. The book of Ephesians is telling you and me who we are and the victory that is found in that identity and that identity alone. Amen?

So live in light of what God says you are, of who God says you are, and as you do this in growing measure and growing maturity, the darts and schemes of the devil, the world and your flesh will be no match for the mature spiritual view of who you are. “I’m a child of God. Yes, I am.”