

Thursday, January 10, 2019:
SEATED IN CHRIST –
“A Study of the book of Ephesians”

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the *New Kings James Version* of the Bible.

SEATED IN CHRIST - "A Study of the book of Ephesians"
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World Outreach Missions
PO Box 491464
Lawrenceville, GA 30049-0025
+1-770-934-1347

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THURSDAY NIGHT: WALK WORTHY OF YOUR POSITION

I have gone to great lengths to establish that the Christian experience does not begin with walking but with sitting.

As I was writing these lessons over the Christmas holidays, my grandchildren came to visit.

One of them is only 6 months old and it was a delight to see him seated as his first experience before crawling or walking.

Is that coincidental or a divine design by God to remind us of His order in our human experience.

Every time we reverse the divine order, the result is disaster.

Therefore it must be strongly emphasized that all true spiritual experience begins from rest.

But it does not end there.

Though the Christian life begins with sitting (rest), it is always followed by walking.

Once we have been well and truly seated and have found our strength in sitting down, then we do in fact begin to walk.

Sitting describes our position with Christ in the heavenlies.

Walking is the practical outworking of that heavenly position here on earth.

As a heavenly people, we are required to exemplify the qualities of heaven in our earthly conduct, and this raises new problems.

What does the book of Ephesians have to say about walking?

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,
Eph. 4:1-2

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
Eph. 4:17, 23

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.
Eph. 5:2

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.
Eph. 5:8-10

Eight times in the book of Ephesians the word “walk” was used.

It means “to walk around” and is used figuratively by Paul to mean “to comport oneself; to order one’s behavior “

It immediately reminds us of the subject of Christian conduct.

This is what the second part of the book of Ephesians is about.

Paul proceeds, in the light of our heavenly calling, to challenge us on a wide range of our relationships where this would be worked out daily.

He addresses five critical but practical areas of relationships.

- Relationship with other believers.
- Relationship with our neighbors.
- Marital relationships.
- Parental relationships.
- Work Place relationships.

These relationships are like laboratories that God created for us to grow in - to teach about Himself and put His character on display for the world to see.

Upon coming to a greater understanding of God's grace, my home life were the first areas that the Holy Spirit helped to focus on - my relationship with my wife and children underwent drastic revamping.

Next were my relationships in my community of faith and those who labor with me in ministry.

The Body of Christ is not something remote or unreal to be expressed only in heavenly terms.

It is very present and practical, finding real test of our conduct in our relations to others.

I once visited an Amish community in Maryland, USA.

And while talking to an Amish Elder, I asked him if he was born again. I was not prepared for his answer as he casually said without blinking "ask my neighbor". That spoke volumes.

For while it is true that we are heavenly beings, we must bring heavenly realities into our homes, offices, shops, kitchens and practice it there otherwise we make empty noise.

After all the goal of God is to bring heaven down to the earth (Mt. 6:10).

Let's take a cursory look at the lists of commands in this section (Chapters 4-6) before us to help make the point of the need for corresponding actions based on our established position.

"Walk....with long suffering, forbearing one another".

"Putting away falsehood, speak the truth each one with his neighbor". "Be ye angry, and sin not". "Steal no more". "Let all bitterness....be put away from you". "Be ye kind....forgiving each other". "Subjecting yourselves to one another". "Provoke not". "Be obedient". "Forbearing threatening" (Eph.4-6)

Nothing could be more realistic than this list of imperatives.

The Lord Jesus Himself begins His teaching on this very note.

Notice carefully the wording of the passage from His Sermon on the mount:

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your [b]brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the [c]tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Mt. 5:38-48

But you say, "I cannot do it". These are impossible demands.

You feel you have been wronged - perhaps terribly wronged - and you cannot bring yourself to forgive. You were in the right, and your enemy's action has been wholly unjust. To love him may be ideal, but it is impossible (so you think).

Of course in the natural, it is absolutely impossible.

Nothing has done greater damage to our Christian testimony than our trying to be right and demanding of others. We become preoccupied with what is and what is not right. We ask ourselves, have we been justly or unjustly treated? And we think of vindicating our actions.

But that is not our standard.

The whole question for us is one of cross bearing (Mt.3:14-15).

As Christians our standard of living can never be "right or wrong", but the cross. The principle of the cross is our standard of conduct.

With God it is a question of His grace, not right or wrong.

That has to be our standard also. **"Grace filled people must be gracious".**

Forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Eph.4:32).

Right or wrong is the principle of the “old man” from which we’ve been separated.

Our lives should now be governed by the principle of the cross and perfection of the Father:

“In a word, what I’m saying is, Grow up. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”

Mt. 5:48 (MSG)

Matthew Chapter 5 sets a standard that we may well feel is impossibly high, but Paul in this section of Ephesians endorses it.

The problem is that we just do not find in ourselves by nature the means to attain to that standard - to walk “as becoming saints” (5:3).

WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEM OF GOD’S EXACTING DEMANDS?

The secret is, in the words of Paul, “the power that works in us” (3:20). In a parallel passage (Col.1:29) he says: “I labor also, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily”.

What is the secret strength of the Christian life?

From where does it derive its power?

THE ANSWER IN A SENTENCE: The Christian’s secret is his rest in Christ. His power derives from his God given position.

We sit forever with Christ that we may walk continuously before men. Forsake for a moment our place of rest in Him, and immediately we are tripped.

But abide in Christ, and our position there ensures the power to walk worthy of Him here.

Here is a good illustration.

Think of a man in a car or better still of a cripple in a power driven carriage (like a motor scooter). How does he go?

He must “first” sit before he can go. And he keeps going because he remains sitting. His progress follows from the position in which he has been placed.

Paul had seen himself seated in Christ; therefore his walk before men takes its character from Christ dwelling in him.

No wonder that he prays for the Ephesians “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (3:17).

REDEEMING THE TIME:

There remains a critical element to be added to this lesson on our Christian walk.

The word “walk” has, as must be obvious, a further meaning.

It suggests first conduct or behavior, but it also contains in it the idea of progress.

15 See then that you walk [a]circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Eph.5:15-17

You will notice that in the above verses there is an association between the idea of time and the difference between wisdom and foolishness. “Walk...as wise; redeeming the time....Be ye not foolish”. This is important. There are two other passages that bring these similar thoughts together.

6 “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Matt. 25:1-13

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Rev. 14:1-5

There are many scriptures that assure us that what God has begun, He will finish. He saves to the uttermost those who come to Him. God will perfect every man who has faith in Him, even though it may not look like that momentarily.

Paul said, we are “confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil.1:6).

There are no limits to God’s power. He “is able....to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish” (Jude 24, 2 Tim. 1:12).

It is when we turn to the subjective aspect of this - to its practical outworking in our lives here and now on the earth - that we encounter the question of time.

In Revelation 14 there are first-fruits (vs.4), and then there is a harvest (vs.15).

What is the difference between the first fruits and the harvest?

It is certainly not a matter of quality; for the crop is one.

Their difference lies only in the time of their ripeness.

Some fruits reach maturity before others, and thus they become “first fruits”.

All will reach ripeness, but the Lamb is seeking first fruits.

The “wise” in the parable are not those who have done better, but those who have done well at an earlier hour.

The others, it should be noted were also virgins - albeit “foolish” no doubt but not false.

Along with the wise, they had gone out to meet the Bridegroom. They too had oil in their lamps, and their lamps were burning. But they had not reckoned on His tarrying, and now that their lamps burned low, they had no reserve of oil in their vessels, nor had the others enough to spare them.

All were virgins (2 Cor. 11:2).

What distinguished the foolish was that they had no reserve in their vessels.

As true Christians, they have life in Christ, and they have a testimony before men. But theirs is a fitful testimony, for they live a **hand-to-mouth** existence.

They have the Spirit, but they are not “**filled with Spirit**” (Eph.5:18).

When crisis comes, they must go out and buy more oil.

In the end all ten had enough. But the difference is that the wise had sufficient oil in time, while the foolish missed the purpose for which it was intended.

It is all a question of time and thus is the point the Lord seeks to drive home when at the end of the parable He urges His disciples not just to be disciples but watchful disciples (Mt. 25:13).

Wisdom hinges on this one point alone: that if you’re wise, you will seek this fullness sooner but if you are foolish, you will put it off till later.

Wisdom is connected with time. Those who are wise redeem the time.

May the eyes of our heart be enlightened to know what “the hope of His calling” is and then may we walk as those who “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph.1:18; 5:17).