

Sitting Close to the Saviour – Ephesians 2:1-7

I. Introduction:

- A. Before we return to *Ephesians 2*, I would like to take you back to *John 13*.
1. You don't need to turn there; I will just try to stir your imaginations.
 2. *John* doesn't follow the same outline as the Synoptic Gospel, but it is all there.
 3. Christ and His disciples were alone in the upper room.
 4. They were all reclining on mats on the floor around a low table.
 5. The "*Last Supper*" was either about to begin or it had just finished, but John doesn't describe it.
 6. Judas was contemplating his betrayal of Christ, but he hadn't yet left the room.
 7. Jesus had just washed the men's feet, and He told them they should do it one another from time to time.
 8. For, "*the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*"
- B. Then Jesus exposed Judas without naming him, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*"
1. The disciples couldn't believe it, and there was a calm in everyone's conversation for a moment.
 2. "*Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*"
 3. It appears to have been John. He is the writer of this account, and he seems too modest to name himself.
 4. At that point Peter looked over toward his friend, and probably using gestures, urged him to ask the Lord to reveal the traitor. "*He then lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?*"
- C. I confess to having a hard time picturing and explaining the intimate relationship between John and Christ.
1. There was certainly nothing immoral or inappropriate about it.
 2. But it was more than any relationship I have ever had with any man except perhaps my father.
 3. My wife will sometimes lay her head on my chest, and I enjoy that very much. It is special.
 4. But no one, except my children & my grandchildren have done that, and not since they were small children.
 5. And what they did as children was not the same as what John was doing.
- D. I think John is an illustration of the sort of relationship we should have with the Lord Jesus – close, intimate.
1. The disciples were gathered around the table, John was at Jesus' right hand with perhaps Peter on His left.
 2. There were two disciples across the table from the Lord, and the rest were scattered around.
 3. Without making any accusations, couldn't we say that beyond John and Peter, the rest of the disciples were at various distances from the Lord?
 4. Perhaps illustrated in the arrangement – spiritually, some were closer to Christ than others.
- E. And that raises the question: Where are you in relationship to your Saviour?
1. Are you near, a little more distant, next to, or laying on His breast?
 2. Certainly there are saints who are clearly closer to the Lord and in greater fellowship with Him than others.
 3. Sadly, that is the nature of Christianity: some disciples are closer to Heaven than others.
 4. Some earnestly set their affections & their eyes on things above, where Christ sitteth at Father's right hand.
 5. And even during our lives, there are periods when **we** are closer to the Saviour than at other times.
 6. The problem is totally our own. It has nothing to do with the Lord's choice of His choicest friends.
 7. It appears that John yearned to be as close to Jesus as he possibly could be.
 8. And I suppose that some might have been jealous of that relationship, but that was on them – not on John.
 9. Jesus' bosom is big enough for all His brothers and sisters.

II. Now let's return to *Ephesians 2*.

- A. The chapter begins by reminding us of what wretches we have been – and what we are still – in ourselves.
1. Every Christian has been, in the past, spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.
 2. And in the flesh each of us lived our lives reflecting outwardly what was residing in our souls.
 3. We patterned ourselves in our own version of how the world lives – without its Creator.
 4. Plus, we were pushed around by Satan, the prince of the power of the air, without even being aware of it.

5. He possessed that control over us, because we were all children of disobedience – like everyone else.
6. We lived like the devil because it was our nature to live that way.
7. *“Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”*

B. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

1. *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).”*
2. The chapter begins with the words, *“And you hath he quickened.”*
3. God, in His sovereign love towards us, when there was nothing in us to love, chose to have mercy upon us.
4. Because of that divine love and that mercy, the Lord also chose to resurrect us from that spiritual stillbirth in which we came into the world. He quickened us.
5. He gave us life, in a way which parallels His call to Mary and Martha’s brother: *“Lazarus, come forth.”*

C. With that in the background, we come to what originally caught my attention.

III. Eph. 2:6 – God *“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

A. First, notice the **tense** of the verbs Paul uses.

1. God **has** raised us up and we **continue** to be raised up.
2. And God has **already made us to sit** together in heavenly places.
 - a. We have been raised up together with Christ, & we will always be in that quickened, living state in Him.
 - b. This verse hints at a truth more clearly taught in many other scriptures – there is eternal life in Christ.
3. Once there was a day when the saint of God was spiritually dead, but then a few moments later he was alive in Christ, through a miracle of divine grace – the new birth.
4. *“My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”*
5. The people to whom Paul was writing – you and me – we have been quickened and raised up together in Christ Jesus.

B. Perhaps you picture that as real a life as the life you have in your physical body.

1. It **IS** as real, actual and veritable as the screams of a new born baby telling his mother that he lives.
2. But it is more than that – even if I am at a loss to properly explain it. We are **alive IN Christ Jesus**.
 - a. In **Colossians 3:3** we are told that *“our lives are hid with Christ in God.”*
 - b. Obviously, that is not to be confined to physical life, but in some ways it is included.
3. And the effect is – as long **as Christ lives**, we shall live.
4. Furthermore, **wherever** Christ is at this moment, there we are with Him.
5. When He **intercedes** on our behalf, we aren’t just stumbling around in this world, we are beside Him.
6. One of the lessons of the **Book of Hebrews** is that we are at rest because He is at rest.
7. Salvation is not something which we will one day enjoy, we possess it today – at this moment.
8. We haven’t been wrapped in our own version of the righteousness of Christ; we are wrapped up in Christ.

C. To put it another way, we have been resurrected, **and** we are currently sitting with Christ in Heaven.

1. He *“hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*
2. Don’t think of **verse 6** as if our sitting with Christ is something for what we must await.
3. Just as *“he hath raised us up together,”* he hath *“made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*
4. In a nearly inexplicable way – in the will of God – we are already sitting together with the Saviour in Glory.

D. And now I take you back to **John 13** to consider these things in the light of tonight’s prayer meeting.

1. Here in this world, we should be somewhat like **Martha**, Lazarus’ sister, up until the Saviour arrives.
2. We have work to do for the Lord; we have service to perform.
3. We not only have responsibilities directly related to Christ, but we also have responsibilities to one another.
4. Martha often gets a bad rap. I think in some ways we should all be Marthas.

5. But we also should be like **Mary**, Lazarus' other sister, sitting with the Lord Jesus, loving Him.
6. We should be like **John** with our heads on the heart of the Saviour.
7. *"He hath raised us up together"* and he hath *"made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"* somewhat as the disciples were seated with Christ at the last supper.
8. Our heads should be resting on the bosom of the Saviour, we should with loving eyes be gazing into the Lord's face.
9. We should be whispering into His ear – praying – the way that John was that evening.

E. You who have pets may appreciate this:

1. There is a cat living at our house, who appears to adore Judy and me.
2. For example, as soon as I sit down in the evening, he will jump onto my lap and then onto my chest.
3. For a few minutes, he will insist on rubbing his face on my whiskered chin.
4. Then settling down and laying back, he will turn his face towards mine and stare up at me, purring with all his heart.
5. That will go for five or ten minutes until **he knows** that **I know** he appreciates me, and then he'll jump off.
6. I have little choice but to return his affection and to squint down into his adoring face.
7. I wish I had a more appropriate illustration, but perhaps it will help you grasp what should be going between ourselves and our Saviour.

IV. Why *"hath (the Lord) raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?"*

- A. I am convinced that there is no direct benefit to the Lord in saving any of us.
 1. He is not made rich because we are rich in grace; it is just the opposite.
 - a. He is not made more glorious by the praise we might give to Him.
 2. Even after the commencement of our salvation, our service to Him is of relatively little eternal value.
 3. I suppose some things, like evangelism do have everlasting effects, but it is not as if **WE** ever saved a soul.
 - a. We may talk about Martha's service or we may remember the broken alabaster box & special ointment.
 - b. But that service and that aroma were only for a few minutes, and then they were gone.
 4. Even when a child is born again, and quickly begins to serve the Saviour, living for eighty years, preaching the gospel and leading many to the Saviour, what is eighty years of serviced compared to what the Lord has done for him?
- B. No, the Lord has graciously saved us and blessed us with the primary purpose of His own glory.
 1. *"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."*
 2. As I say, He who is eternally glorious is not made more glorious when we praise His name, or rest upon His breast, or obey Him in some matter.
 3. Yes, we are blessed in being children of God, but the real blessings are all **for** Him and **by** Him.
- C. But I think that eternity will give us the opportunity to be like John, laying upon Jesus' bosom.
 1. He has our names written in His heart, and there is where our heads should be.
 2. The sad fact is, so few us regularly consider these blessings.
 3. So few saints, consider themselves to be sitting with Christ in heavenly places.
 4. And if the first disciples might be used as an example, less than ten percent of us are laying our heads on the Saviour's breast, gazing into His wonderful face & whispering our questions & requests into His ears.
- D. One of these days, we shall leave this world to join the Lord in a permanent, physically-spiritual way.
 1. Then, in a sense, we will begin to sit next to the Lord with our heads on His bosom.
 2. But what about now? Why not now?