

Seated in His Presence

Overview

So I begin with this verse. In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 6, 7, the Apostle Paul is speaking of God's people. And he says, and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. In order that in the coming ages, he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. A not so casual reading of the book of Ephesians, you will find three verbs in there that are ever so important.

Because this is the Apostles teaching to us who are following Jesus. He's saying, if you are walking, if you are in concert with him, you get to sit, you get to walk, you get to stand. You get to sit in heavenly places. You get to walk in heavenly places. You get to stand firmly because of where you sit and where you walk. Wonderful words. You know what the Lord has done for us through the gospel. It is so deep and so incredibly incomparable. And how does the Lord help us to understand the things that our little two by four somewhat shredded at times into slivers? How can we comprehend these things? The Lord gives us word pictures. If we can see it with our imagination and the Word of God is a rich book that shows us in word pictures.

So this morning I want to talk about the chairs again. Those of you who are familiar with how I carry on on this platform by times are familiar with my chairs. But those of you who are watching by internet today probably haven't seen my chairs and with guests and visitors here don't know about my 3 chairs and those who know about my chairs, you love my chairs. Can you say amen? Oh yes. So I begin by talking to us about the idea that God is three in one, not three gods, but he's three persons identified as a powerful singular.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit. How do we see that? How do we comprehend it? How do we wrap our heads around it? Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Well, there's some identifying traits that are given to us that Jesus sits on the right side. So that places the Father in the middle. And I've told you at great length of how my struggles went when I was a teenager and I was trying to get into the Lord. I didn't want to be just a worshiper and a worshiper and a follower of my mom and dad's God. I wanted to know him for myself. And so I gave myself to prayer. I did so in my Volkswagen. I won't bore you with all of that. But I was at the height of my stupidity at that time. I've reached new heights since then. But I knew I had to kneel down. I wasn't going to tell you this, but I knew I had to kneel down because that's the posture of prayer. And it was too difficult to get from one chair to the other.

If you have never had a ride in a bug, you have no idea what I'm talking about. To get from the driver's seat to the passenger seat, you've got to be a gymnast. You can't get over there without probably having a race into emerge. And they say, how did you do that? And so I stayed in the driver's seat and then I would try and turn myself around so I could kneel at the chair. So there I

am now. I put the seat back as far as I'd go. The steering wheel was still stuck in my back. I think I cried every time I prayed, not because I was overwhelmed with emotion to the Lord, but it was a painful, enduring thing. It was hurting like mad. But in that prayer time, who should I talk to? Should I talk to the Father? And I literally did this. I would apologize to the Son if I got carried away. I'd say, oh, oh, Jesus, I meant you too, and also Holy Spirit. Now, I didn't know which one you talked to. Now, Jesus said, pray this way, our Father. But at other times we're encouraged to pray in the name of Jesus.

So you know, like, which one, which one, which one? And the reason why I struggled with which one, which one, was I had a picture of them sitting just like you are. You're sitting in the nice, uniform, fashion, all sitting nicely. We could have met. I know this. If I had turned this auditorium this morning into a bunch of circular chairs, some of you would have stood there and said, no, this is confusing. Because you're so used to being regimental. I told somebody the day I said, you know, I said, I know exactly where you sit. I said, you never change your chair. They did today. Somebody got here ahead of them. It must be driving you nuts. You don't get to sit in your chair. But the idea I had was that this is how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, you know, they, the Word of God talks about gathering.

We, this morning in our worship, we gathered at His throne. The Word of God describes God's heavenly realm and talks about the throne room. So I have to think in terms of individuals in heaven. The Lord is not a gas or a vapor. The book of Revelation describes Jesus to great detail. John saw a person. He talks about his head, his eyes, his face, his feet. So we have this picture, but then I came to realize they don't sit like that. They actually sit like this because Jesus talks about His fellowship with the Father. He talked about His relationship with the Holy Spirit. And so the best way to have a conversation is face to face. It's face to face.

And this is how face to face works. And now I can come to understand when Jesus said, I am the Father, I one. Because you see, they work, they think together as one. You never get three opinions. If you ask the Father, Jesus is there. The Holy Spirit is that of the Father and the Son's bidding. They work together not as a team, but as a singular component, each one having specific roles as we read in the Word of God. The wonderful thing that I just wanna throw in here from the book of Ephesians that I just read a moment ago, is that the Lord God raised us up with Jesus and caused us to sit together with Jesus in heavenly places. I, this is a pretty strong word, but we have been elevated.

We're not like animals. We've been elevated. The Word of God says, then in our creation, we were already made just a little lower than the angels. Folks, you've been raised up little above the angels now in a glorious way. That takes spiritual understanding. It takes time to think about this 6 and to let it sink in and to do some things for you. I wanna go on now understanding our position in Him, in Him and with Him. So now I go on to this passage. The Lord is my shepherd. And he says, and I lack for nothing. But I love this again, a pictorial, you see? Doesn't just say, God is there, but he says, the Lord is my shepherd. And to those who knew the writer of the Psalm, this made total sense. The role of a shepherd. We don't know about the role of a shepherd. We have to read books to find out how to do shepherd? They still are, still are thousands of shepherds all over the world. And each one of them in different cultures, in

different ways of function, in different fashions I would suppose. We don't understand about shepherds, but the people of David the Psalmist, they understood perfectly. And Jesus, when he said, I am the good shepherd, they understood. When he talks about his lambs, they understand.

So here he says, the Psalmist says, the Lord is my shepherd. And I lack for nothing. And then he goes on to expound on that. Said, did I tell you I lack for nothing? He talks about his shepherd and how he leads his sheep into green pastures, not burned over places that are stricken with drought. He talks about the still waters and our understanding about sheep is that fast moving waters frighten them. My shepherd doesn't take me at the precipice of Niagara Falls. He takes me besides still waters where I won't be afraid and I will drink and slake my thirst until I'm abundantly satisfied. He goes on to say, did I, didn't I tell you that I lack for nothing, even though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid because like a shepherd, you will walk with me.

I wanna remind everyone out there in this place and beyond. Valleys are not terrible places. It's in the valleys that you can find lush vineyards, it's in the valleys where the cows can quietly chew their cud, it's in the valleys that the most lush gardens take place. But sometimes there are shadows in the valley that can frighten us. And death is one valley that nobody anticipates with any sense of, I wanna go there. I wanna go on though, I don't wanna spend any more time on that, but here's the verse that I've been just thinking over, working on, you prepare a table before me, where, in the midst of my enemies. So I have this picture of the psalmist, and he knows the Lord is not far because he speaks of the Lord's presence.

And I hear the psalmist looking up, maybe from a deep valley, and as he looks up at the mountain range, the rims of the high hills all around him, all the way around, he can see his enemy. The sun's rays are touching their swords, acting like mirrors shining at him. He doesn't have to wonder if those swords are sharp. Every one of them was up there poised to take his life. They're all against him, and his heart is filled with anxiety. He can almost smell death near him. There might be a cry from his heart. Lord, save me. What are you gonna do for me? And at that moment, one needs to have what we've come to understand in our reading of the sacred scriptures, you need to have a divine revelation.

Revelation, a prophet had his assistant with him. The enemy was approaching, and the assistant was scared to death. Mess or they're gonna kill us. We're outnumbered, this is terrible. I'm putting this story in my own vernacular, and the prophet prayed, Lord, open his eyes, because all around was the army of the Lord. And as long as the army of the Lord is standing nearby, the other army walks away already defeated. You need a divine revelation. You need your eyes to be opened, to perceive, to comprehend. There's nothing to be afraid of. Remember the Lord is your shepherd. You lack for nothing. What does the Lord do? As the enemy is around, let's call him David the shepherd. He fears for his life, and there were times when David did feel totally, totally abandoned and disarmed. There were armies out to kill him. Saul, the king, had put a price on David's head. So much so. It's indicated, we have not spoken clearly.

Bring me his head and I'll give you a reward. There were soldiers out there combing the

wilderness, looking in caves. I mean, they were out there everywhere looking for this David. David was being pursued. Lord, what are you gonna do for me? I'm in trouble. The Lord opens his psalmist's eyes, and what's before him is a big table. And it's loaded with food. Delicious, wonderfully prepared. Candy to the eye. An exciting, wonderful banquet. And the Lord says, come on David, pull up and cheer and sit down. Don't worry about them. Lord, how can I eat at a time like this? This is your answer. This is your answer and the Lord would say, this is my answer. Suck it up, buttercup.

This is how I function. This is how I function today. You're afraid, you're undone. You feel like a field that's been plowed up. You're crying out, oh God, what is this? And the Lord says, hey, you. Look what I've done for you. I prepared a banquet. When do we have banquets? To celebrate things, don't we? We have banquets when we celebrate the opening of a grand new building. We have banquets to celebrate weddings and birthdays. Wedding anniversaries. Lord says, sit down. What's the occasion, Lord? The occasion is I'm your provider and it's time for you to remember that. The Lord is my shepherd. I lack for nothing. And now I'm not losing my trek. Not losing my mind here. I'm jumping now to Second Samuel.

I'll get my readers on here. Second Samuel nine. One day David asked, David was now the new king. He asks, is there anyone left of Saul's family? And if so, I'd like to show him some kindness in honor of Jonathan. Pause, who's Jonathan? The earlier king's name was Saul. David came to the rescue for Saul on the occasion where David killed the Goliath and the Philistine army ran for fear. So David became a familiar person to be in the courts of Saul. The people in the streets were singing about David. Every young girl wanted to marry David. I mean, the whole country went crazy for David and David did not need a special pass to go into the palaces and indeed the private home of Saul for David being so familiar to all of the palace became personal best friends with Saul's son, Jonathan.

The day came when Saul and Jonathan on the same day, probably in the same hour, they were both killed. Broke David's heart, his friend Jonathan. Now David has been anointed king over Israel and his quest is this, I want to honor my very personal best friend, Jonathan. So he asked those in his court, can you find me, members of Jonathan's family? Why would they be so out of the way? How come David had to ask that? Well, we know from all kinds of history, not just Israel's history, but all kinds of history. We know that when a new person arose to the kingship, they would more than likely put to death, get rid of any threats to their kingship, which would mean that David, by all accounts, should have wanted to kill any of Saul's family. Sons who would have thought, my dad dies, I should succeed to the throne. The more likely one at that point in time would have been Jonathan, but Jonathan was dead. Who then would be heir to the throne if they were to follow in a successive line from Saul?

It turns out his name is Mephibosheth. David didn't know that. Is there anyone left of Saul's family that I can honor? Jonathan's family was his focus. It happened that a servant from Saul's house, a servant named Ziba, was there. They call him into David's presence, and he says, you're Ziba, the king asks, is there anyone left from the family of Saul to whom I can show some kindness? Ziba told the king, yes, there is Jonathan's son, lame in both feet. There's a story behind that. When Saul died and David was on his way to take over the throne, every member of

Saul's family fled for their lives. They didn't think their life was worth a hair. He'll kill us all. Jonathan was five years of age at the time. His woman, his nurse, who would have looked after him in the royal household, scooped him up in her arms and she fled to save the little boy's life. Something awful happened on that journey. Did she stumble over a stone? We don't know exactly how, but she dropped the child. And in dropping the child, his limbs were ruined. There was no opportunity to seek out some kind of medicinal help and that little fellow, Mephibosheth, his legs were never set properly. And he was a cripple all of his days. Yes, they said to the day, to the new king, there is a young fellow, but he's lame.

Why would they even have to bring that up? He's no threat to you, David. You see, they're not sure that David isn't gonna try and kill off everybody and he's playing a game. Oh, I wanna honor him. With my knife. Where is he? Well, he's living at somebody else's house in a place called Lo-debar. He's hiding from the king. King David didn't lose a minute. He sent and got him from the house where he was living in Lo-debar. And when Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, who was the son of Saul, came before David, he bowed deeply, abasing himself and honoring the king. David spoke his name, Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth thinks he's got about five minutes left to live. Yes, sir. That's my name. And David said, Mephibosheth, don't be afraid. I'm not gonna harm you. I'd like to do something special for you in memory of your father, Jonathan.

To begin with, I'm gonna return all the property that your grandpa owned, the former king. Shuffling and stammering, not looking him in the eye. Mephibosheth says, who am I, that you pay attention to a stray dog like me? Who am I, Lord, that you would choose to put me in the chair, in your house, I'm less than a dog, I'm less than a worm. Nobody knows my failures, nobody knows my faults. I acknowledge what the Bible says to me, David, you're a wretched, horrible sinner. And like a leper cannot get rid of his leprosy and like the leopard cannot get rid of his spots. Your sin is what comes before me. I cry out, so who am I? David said to Ziba, everything that belonged to Saul and his family, I've handed over to your master's grandson, you and your sons and your servants will work. Mephibosheth's land that I'm returning to him and you will work it and provide for Mephibosheth from his fields, but from now on, the cripple Mephibosheth will sit at my table. Mephibosheth ate at David's table, just like he was a member of the royal family.

Mephibosheth also had a son. Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, taking all his meals at the king's table. He was lame in both of his feet. I love this story. A young man in those times took pride in his physical ability. If he was gonna work the farm like his daddy, he wanted to work harder and faster and be more productive than his dad. If for some reason he was conscripted or volunteered to serve in the army, he wanted to be the best soldier in that entire army. To do so, he had to be strong in every way. Mephibosheth was afraid of his own shadow. He had nothing to offer anywhere. His legs, he was a cripple. He couldn't work the farm. He couldn't sign up as a soldier. He couldn't go to the corner store and get himself a cold, coca-cola. He had to have somebody go and do it for him. He couldn't make his own way to the kitchen table. He had to be lifted and carried and put in that place.

If anybody was feeling, not only deformed in his lower person, but deformed in every way. It was Mephibosheth and David sought him out, brought him to his house. And here's the picture I have.

When Mephibosheth, when the king would be, the king would be the last one to come into the banqueting room, right? All the servants would be there, the food's all laid out. This is a meal fit for a king. All the royal people would be there. Mephibosheth would be seated as well. He would have been probably brought in a little early because it'd be a challenge of just getting him in play. When the king walked in and took his rightful place at the head of the table, his sons, his daughters, his wife, those who were invited guests, they were all sitting there. And there's that Mephibosheth and his crooked, withered legs were not seen. They were under the king's table. And Mephibosheth dined sumptuously the rest of his days. The word of God says, there's no God like our God who rides the heavens to help us. In my head, I see this picture of God leaving point A to get to point B. He's at point A, I'm at point B. The Lord will ride in the heavens, unimpeded by gravity, unimpeded by anything. He rides swiftly and he's there in a moment. He rides the heavens to get to where you are and to look after you, to bless you, to adore you, to kneel down if necessary to lift you up is what Jesus did in his whole life here on, on the earth.

He stooped down to be among us, to lift us up. He'd be there in a moment as he rides the heavens to come and help you. You need to sit at his table and underneath the everlasting arms. You're too crippled to get to that table. You're crying unworthy, unworthy, unworthy as he's carrying you to that place. He says, sit at my table, but my failures, my faults, they're under the table, I can't see them. In truth and reality, the cross eliminates all of our failures, removes any trace of our having been broken, battered by disappointment, by our own silly ideas and by our proneness to do that which is ungodly. For all have sinned the word of God and we've all come short of our heavenly Father's expectations, but he invites you to come and sit at his table.

There are people going through things in this very hour that I can't reckon with, I can't identify with. Two nights ago, my phone rang. We had guests. We were eating our meal, and the phone rang. When I heard this gentleman's voice, I left the room, so I could be alone with my friend. He said, I'm gonna cry, you know. I said, you go ahead. Men don't cry, don't you know. Big boys don't, they don't let you know who they are. Tears are a sign of weakness, but the word of God says that they, whose sowing tears shall reap with joy. He cried in Maple Ridge, and then I cried in Vineland, and I cried. I felt so helpless, there's nothing I could do, there's nothing I could do. The pain was incredible. I couldn't fix it, and I felt so desperately helpless.

I've been troubled ever since. I'm losing sleep at night. My friend is in trouble. He's at the other end of the country, but then this came to me. He prepared a table for me while I was afraid of what was coming. And so I'm going to give you in my closing thoughts here, something that I suggest is a spiritual something that I cannot claim, been there, done that, follow me. Because people sitting here right today have experienced difficulties. I've yet to experience, not that I anticipate that I will, but every good garden usually has rose bushes. And those thorns can be pretty harmful. Every life, every one of us will go through valleys that we might describe as having shadows of death.

My favorite old-time preacher's name was J.H. Blair. No question in my mind. He stood in this room and he preached. No question in my mind whatsoever. He was everybody's spiritual grandpa. And this was a statement he made when I was 15, 16 years of age, and it resonates in my mind and in my heart to this very moment. He said, we who know the Lord know how to live

right. And we who know the Lord, we die well. I'm suggesting that no matter how deep the valley and no matter how frightful are the shadows, pray that God will open your eyes and see there's a place of feasting. But Lord, they're about to, the Lord says, I know that. I feel the pain of their swords already. I know that. Put it out of your mind for now. Sit with me. I'm a picture guy. I picture this. That when he says, I know you're afraid and here's my antidote. Sit down at my table. Does the Lord sit beside you? That's kind of awkward. Sit down at my table. I sit across from you. Eyeball to eyeball. Something that I learned in Ethiopia. I love it to this day. We would be so uncomfortable. Because we don't function this way. The people of Ethiopia still, they can afford hardware. A fork, a knife, and a spoon. But they like to eat like Adam ate. Yummy, yummy, yummy. And this to me is beautiful. Because when the brothers, and I were considered brothers, sitting at the table, a round table, and the endura was piled sky high. Now, it doesn't pile up. It's a flat green bread. It's been pickled for days. Pickled bread. It tastes pickled. It's green. Kind of frightful. It's a taste you have to acquire. But what's piled on there is all kinds of foods. Potatoes and maybe some pieces of meat and vegetables. And what you do is you tear off a piece of this flatbread, this endura, and you use it as a table napkin that you're going to eat.

So you get a hold of that and you grab a hold of some potato or a morsel of chicken and you put it in your mouth. And you don't let your fingers touch your mouth because it's going back in the bowl. You can't double dip. And Brian, this was amazing to me. All of a sudden it just happened simultaneously. A man across from me at the table picked up the endura, picked up a morsel of meat, and turned to his friend who was sitting beside him. It was like they're playing the game like mama used to play with the baby. Here comes the airplane. Where's the airplane hanger? Open the door. Yeah, and then it goes. It's speechless, what they do. But they take that morsel of food and they turn to their brother. And in essence, they're saying in a historical cultural way, I'm not your enemy. I'm not going to poison you. I'm going to feed you with my own hand. And this brother with trust opens his mouth. And this fellow slides the food off of these fingers with his thumb.

He never touches his face and the food rolls into his mouth. And they did it all around the table. And the fellow right beside me grabbed an endura, picked up some potatoes, came toward me and I said, I feel quite full right now, thanks. I was uncomfortable. I was uncomfortable. Listen to David before you leave this house. Jesus with his own hand wants to feed you. And you have the nerve at his table to say, I'm a little uncomfortable. People get so uncomfortable with God. Are you serious? I can think of some people in high places in this country. You need to be afraid of them to have an agenda. But God, you can trust. Open your mouth, sister. Open your mouth, brother. And let them put the delightful manner of heaven in your mouth.

You never tasted anything so good. In the hour of your despair, in the darkest moment of your life, pray that God will show you that while the tears are running down your cheeks, the only thing you can plant right now, because you feel empty otherwise, the only thing you're planting right now are tears. They who sow with tears, they will reap with joy. This crying, this torment may endure for a night. The birds start chirping about four. If you've ever been awake that early to find out, I hear them every morning right outside my window. Before the sun is up, the birds are announcing. It's morning joy joy joy. I'm going to finish one more time. It's 14 minutes after 12. I'm going to finish one more time. I watched a film, *The Life*. Oh, David. *The Dutch Lady*.

Europe, The War. Thank you. I just had a senior moment.

Felt good like a good sneeze or a yawn. Corey Tenboon is looking after her sister. Her sister is dying in the concentration camp. And the sister is losing her faith. She's struggling with this. Corey, why? Why are we being tormented like this? Where's God in all of this? And Corey, it's recorded in film. It's recorded in writing. Corey said to her sister, my darling, there's no pit so deep that his hand cannot touch you. In your agony, in your pain, there's no pit so deep that he can't meet you there. There's always a table. There's always something there for you. It's hard to be disenfranchised, to feel disenfranchised. It's hard to get upset about anything when you're enjoying the finest meal you've ever had. It kind of takes your mind off of things. Feed on the Lord. He'll not let you down. I've got to find a Kleenex. I'm slobbering all over the place. You better shut off.

For those of you who are watching, forgive me for my meandering this morning. Thank you both nostrils of God.