Opening Words

What does it mean to be enthroned with Christ? What does it mean to be seated with him in heavenly places? It means that God's attitude toward us is that he treats us as kings and queens in the making.

128 Eph Enthroned with Christ

We have been refreshing ourselves in the living waters of Ephesians 2:4-6 where Paul talks about our being alive with Christ. I shared with you how I did not believe this was talking about regeneration. Other passages talk about that – John 3:3-5 – where Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, and Titus 3:5 where Paul says we are regenerated and renewed by the power of the Spirit. But here, when Paul says we have been made alive, he is not talking about that because he says our being made alive was *with Christ*. In other words, he is talking about Christ's resurrection and our union in that resurrection.

To learn more about this, we must go back to Romans 6. Listen to verses 8-11.

> 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul says that at one time death was master over Christ. That is a strange phrase and something we don't like to hear. When we think of Christ we think of his mastery over all disease, over all demons, and over death itself, but Paul says that death was master over Christ. By this he means that Christ had to die to obtain our release from sin and death. There was no other way. There was only one road to freedom for us and that road led to death on the cross for our sins. So, in that way, Paul could say that death was master because death justly demanded the payment for sins.

This brought great grief to Christ. This brought great grief to the Father. How the Father loved the Son! How the Son loved the Father! How the Father wanted to exalt the Son but he could not, at least, for a while, because the Father had to lay upon him the iniquity of us all. But once that was done. Once Christ died to sin once for all, once the payment was made, the Father could raise Christ from the dead and do for him what he wanted to do all along. The Father could exalt the Son. The Father could give the Son all authority. The Father could bring all the promises to pass through the Son. And that is exactly what the Father did.

The Father raised Christ to the place of highest praise. All heaven resounds with the praises to the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. The Father bestowed upon Christ the name that is above all names – the title of Lord. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." And the Father has placed all promises into the safe keeping and stewardship of Christ. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20," All the promises of God in him are yes," and in Romans 15:8, God confirmed all the promises in Christ.

Christ never needs to die again. There is no shadow of death hanging over Christ. There is no guilt or condemnation that must be paid, and the reason we know that is because Christ was made alive on the third day, Christ was raised from the dead never to die again.

Now, here is where the good stuff comes in for you and me. You and I have been raised with Christ, not physically, not yet, that will occur when Christ returns. But God looks upon us as having already been raised and he treats us as resurrected sons and daughters. This means that if we are in Christ, he does not look upon as in any way as having any guilt. This means that he does not have any condemnation for our sin. All that is gone. We died to that and have been raised with Christ and Paul tells us to present ourselves to God, not to a new death, but to present ourselves to God as those who have been raised from the dead.

Listen to Romans 6:11 again and Romans 6:13.

> Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus and present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

When Christ rose from the dead, the Father had no more thoughts of having to lay our iniquity upon him. And when Christ rose from the dead, he not only rose for himself, he rose from the dead for us which means that when we present ourselves to God, we come to a throne of grace and mercy with boldness because there is no hint of guilt or condemnation upon us. Just as the Father raised Christ to give him blessing, so the Father invites us to come to him as those who have been made alive with Christ in order that we might receive blessing. Just as the Father raised Christ that he might give him all the promises, the Father invites us to come to him as ones who will receive all the promises, and just as Christ was raised from the dead that he might receive authority we are invited, urged, even commanded to come to Christ that we might receive the power of the Spirit and the authority to reign with him.

We are now getting into the verse 6. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 2:6: "God raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

There is that phrase, "heavenly places" that we saw in 1:3 where Paul said that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Paul also talked about these heavenly places in 1:20-23 when he prayed that we would know the power of God that raised Christ from the dead and seated him above the prince of the power of the air. Paul teaches we have died with Christ to the penalty of sin, and we have been raised with Christ to a new life of no condemnation and we are now enthroned with Christ at the right hand of God.

Now, we are not enthroned physically, just as we are not raised physically. That will happen for us when Christ comes again, and I don't know about you, but I am about ready for that! But until that happens to us physically, we must realize that it has happened physically for one person – Jesus of Nazareth. He has been physically raised from the dead and enthroned at the right hand of God, the place that you and I were created to live. And when he was raised and enthroned, he was raised and enthroned for us.

What does that mean to be enthroned with Christ? What does that mean to be seated with him in heavenly places? It means that God's attitude toward us is one where he treats us as kings and queens in the making. If you were born into the royal family in England, you would receive an education and you would be treated as a king or queen in the making. You might be a rascal. You might not even be a good student. You might run around like a wild person for a while. But your parents and your tutors would constantly remind you and discipline you and shape your life for a future of royalty. That is the way God is towards you. He is constantly wanting to remind you, to discipline you and to shape your life for a future of royalty which is guaranteed because when Christ was seated in heavenly places, you were seated there with him.

So, to review, you died with Christ – that is, you died to the penalty of sin.

You rose or were made alive with Christ – you are no longer guilty, condemned, or in sin. You are a justified man or woman and can come boldly and gladly to the throne of God for mercy and grace.

You were enthroned with Christ – your destiny is sealed. God is putting you through a training course to prepare you for royalty.

I feel like we are now a million miles from Paul's description of our being dead in trespasses and sins. What a contrast – walking according to the spirit of the world, walking according to the evil one, walking according to our fleshly impulses. That was our life but God was rich in mercy because of his amazing love and even when we were dead in sin, he sent Christ to bear our sins, to rise from the grave and to be enthroned in heaven for us, looking forward to that great day when we would be born, we would realize our need for God, we would embrace him by faith and those things that he had already done for us would now be ours. No wonder Paul says, "by grace you have been saved." Even before we took our first breath, it was all settled for us forever.

But Paul has one more blessing he wants to tell us about. In verse 7 he says explains, from a different perspective, why God did all of this for us. Listen to verse 7.

> so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus

God did all of this for us so that in the ages to come, which is Paul's way of saying, "forever and ever", God might show more and more of grace to us in kindness in Christ Jesus. Are you beginning to get the idea that God's grace is endless? In chapter 1:6 he said that he did all things to the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us. In 1:7-8 he said that he redeemed us and forgave us our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. And here he said that God made us alive with Christ, raised us with Christ, and enthroned us with Christ so that forever and ever, as his royal sons and daughters, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace to us.

You know what? I just misquoted the verse. I left out a couple of key words. God is not just going to show us the surpassing riches of his grace. God is going to show us that grace in *his kindness*. Let me draw this distinction for you. If you go to a museum, you could look at everything on display. That would be nice of the museum curator to do for you. But looking at museum pieces and experiencing

the museum pieces are two different things. It's one thing to look at the beautiful displays, it would be quite another to hold them, to touch them, to feel them, and to own them. And Paul says in this verse that God is not only going to show us the surpassing riches of his grace, but he is going to let us experience them in his kindness. Forever and ever you and I will experience the grace of God. We were dead. Now we have been made alive in Christ! And that is a wonder of the spiritual world!