

PM Ephesians 6:10-20 Sit-Walk-Stand

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[0 : 00] And what I want to do this evening is give a sort of bird's eye view of the whole of the book of Ephesians. Sometimes preachers will look at just a couple of words or a verse or even just a paragraph and that's great.

But it's also sometimes quite good to step back and look at the whole overall pattern of a letter of the New Testament. And so I want to take that sort of bird's eye view of the whole of the book of Ephesians this evening.

To that end I could have read from anywhere in Ephesians but I want to read from chapter 6 at verse 10. A well known passage. Ephesians chapter 6 at verse 10.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore put on the full armour of God so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything to stand.

[1 : 26] Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Pray also for me that whenever I speak words may be given me, so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. Amen and may God add his blessing to the reading of his word.

[2 : 27] And we just pray. As I've said, I want to look at Ephesians as a whole. Ephesians was a letter that Paul wrote.

Said it's to the Ephesians, although many commentators think it was a, although primarily for Ephesians it was a general letter meant to be read in a number of churches. But what do you do when you get a letter?

Do you just read the first paragraph and then put it away and think, I'll come back to the rest of the letter later on? Or I'll read maybe the first page and then come back to the rest of it later on?

I'm old enough to remember when folk actually wrote letters to one another, not just short cryptic emails. When my wife and my wife were courting, we didn't see one another apart from at the weekend.

And we wrote letters to one another. And I can assure you when my fiancée, as she was, wrote a letter to me, I didn't just read the first wee bit of it and then put it away and think, I'll read the rest of it tomorrow.

[3 : 35] Yet that's sometimes how we treat scripture. We read just a little bit of it and not the whole of it. And so I thought it would be interesting for us this evening to try and get a bird's eye view of what this letter to the Ephesians is all about.

Someone once described the Bible as God's love letter to us. And it's always useful, I think, to be able to give an outline of a book of the Bible.

I mean, if I was to pass you a piece of paper and pencil and ask you, without looking at your Bible, to give me an outline of Ephesians, how would you get on? Now, I think you probably would get on

quite well.

How would you get on about giving an outline of Haggai or Zephaniah or whatever? Hendrickson, the well-known Bible commentator, says no Christian is taking the Bible seriously unless he can, off the top of his head, give an outline of every book of the Bible.

Now, I would have to confess, I don't know if I could give you an outline of every book of the Bible off the top of my head. I could give you an outline of a lot of books of the Bible. But it's a good measure of how seriously we take God's word.

[4 : 55] Ephesians divides into two very clear parts. The first three chapters deal with Christian principles and theology.

And chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal with practice and lifestyle. And I've used as a sort of headline, as it were, to hang this outline on the title of a book by a Chinese evangelist called Watchman Nee that some of you may be familiar with.

Sit, walk, stand. And that's actually quite a good summary of the book of Ephesians as I hope we shall see.

First we sit, then we are to walk, and then we take a stand. And I want to unfold that for you now.

So, the first heading is that of sitting or, if you like, our position in Christ.

And so we come to the beginning of this book and some basic Christian truths. In the first three chapters, Paul carefully spells out the fundamentals of Christian belief.

[6 : 17] The nearly opening sentence of chapter 1, which runs from verse 3 down to verse 14, is actually just one sentence where all this tumbles out from Paul of who God is and what he has done for us.

And as we come into this, I think a good text for us, if you like, is Ephesians 1.17, where Paul says, Above all things, Paul is writing that his readers might get to know the Lord better.

to know him in terms of their understanding and to know him in terms of their relationship, knowing in both of these senses, with the head and with the heart.

Well, these opening chapters of the letter, the first three chapters, focus on God. Paul wants us to have a clear grasp of who God is and all that he has done for us.

And chapter 1 is a wonderful insight to the being and the character and the work of God. As I say, I'm doing this at a bird's eye view so we can only sketch this in.

[7 : 45] But I would draw your attention, first of all, in this great sentence of Paul, to its Trinitarian structure. He is setting a God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit before us.

And when he talks about the plan of the Father, in verse 4, for he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

And we're reminded there that God is a sovereign God who is working out his purposes. Working out his purposes in what to us is the confusion of human history.

But it speaks of a sovereign God who chose us, his plan, the plan of the Father. And then we find the passion of the Son.

Verse 7, In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. And so, having pointed us to the plan of the Father, Paul points us to the passion of the Son.

[8 : 55] And we're reminded that the Son of God has paid a price, a terrible price, to set us right with our Father God. It is through Christ, and only through his blood, through his death, that we are forgiven.

And we must never play that down or minimize it. Now, clearly, we could, I could spend, you know, the rest of the sermon on the plan of the Father or on the passion of the Son.

But as I say, we're just sketching this in an outline. And after the plan of the Father and the passion of the Son, we find the promise of the Spirit. Verse 13, You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. And so we are reminded that we are given the Holy Spirit to enable us to live the Christian life.

And this all relates to our, who we are, our position, if you like, in Christ. Because if, you like marking your Bible, and I think marking your Bible is a good idea, some folk don't, but I do.

[10 : 08] But if you're to go through this first chapter of Ephesians, and every time you come across in him, or through him, or by him, you mark that, you'll find you've got a pretty densely marked first chapter of Ephesians.

Verse 4, in him. Verse 7, in him. Verse 13, in Christ. It's all talking about our position in Christ. And having pointed us to the plan of the Father, and the passion of the Son, and the promise of the Spirit, Paul spells out the benefits that accrue to us from these things.

If the primary focus of that first chapter is in God, there is a secondary focus, which reminds us of the benefits and the blessings that God lavishes on us.

In verse 4, we find that we are chosen. We didn't decide to follow Jesus. He, in his sovereign will, chose us.

Verse 4, he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. God knows each of us individually, and has a plan for us individually.

[11 : 30] In verse 7, we find we are forgiven. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace. Through Jesus, our sins are forgiven.

We are cleansed, renewed. The slate is wiped, clean. We are set right with God. The barrier that had existed because of sin between us and God is removed. And that is what the gospel is all about.

And it's not something that's going to come to us at some future date. In him we have, as a present possession, redemption. And more than being forgiven, we find that we are adopted.

Going back to verse 5, he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will. not just that we are forgiven.

We are made the children of the living God. I sometimes think we stop short in gospel proclamation at the forgiveness of sins.

[12 : 35] But the forgiveness of sins, if you like, is only the prelude to us being adopted as his children so that God becomes our father. What a tremendous consequence of the cross.

Do you remember how John puts it in 1 John 3? How great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are.

And in verse 8, we are reminded that God doesn't just give us this meagerly, but that he lavishes things upon us.

Verse 8, he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. So all these benefits God have been choosing us, forgiving us, adopting us, are lavished upon us.

And all that comes to us freely from God's grace. We contribute nothing. And so, as we move into chapter 2, Paul underscores how all that is given to us freely.

[13 : 47] We find that all the blessings of salvation come to us gratis. We do not earn or deserve God's blessing, and indeed we cannot.

the first little section, I think, about the first 10 verses of chapter 2 is a condensation of what Paul expands in Romans, because Ephesians chapter 2, 1 to 10 is Romans chapters 1 to 3.

And in Romans 3, 21, we read, now a righteousness from God apart from law has been made known. Our righteousness from God apart from law, apart from anything we do, has been made known.

In Ephesians 2, the first three verses spell out our condition by nature as dead and sin. Verse 1, as for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. That means we were separated from God, estranged from God.

But then in verse 4, we read, but because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions.

[15 : 01] It is by grace you have been saved. And verse 8, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

So we're reminded that our salvation in a sense has nothing to do with us. We contribute nothing to us. It is, as we were thinking the last time I was here, about grace alone.

But having said that, Paul reminds us that we are called to work. And one of the great blessings of the gospel is being allowed to serve the Lord.

In verse 10, for we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

So in gratitude for what the Lord has done for us, we give ourselves to his service. And the key verse here is verse 6, where Paul writes, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[16:16] And that's my first heading, sit. This whole first section is to remind us of our position in Christ, to remind us who God is, what he has done, and the benefits that have accrued to us.

it's all about what we are in Christ now. By nature, we were dead, as Paul puts it, sinners, rebels, estranged from God.

But in Christ, who we are, not in ourselves, but who we are through our union with Christ, we are God's saints, God's children, adopted members of the family of God.

In Christ, we are not the sinner, but we are the saint. And it's interesting that Paul, so often in his letters, begins by addressing them to the saints at wherever.

And I must confess, it's one beef I've got with a lot of modern translations, because they gloss out the saints, and just say, God's people are something. But it's to the saints. One of my favourite hymns was a favourite of the great missionary leader, Hudson Taylor.

[17:34] And I would imagine most of you will know the hymn, Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what thou art.

I am finding out the greatness of thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon thee, and thy beauty fills my soul, for by thy transforming power, thou hast made me whole.

Jesus, I am resting in the joy of what thou art, our position in Christ. So first, we are to sit, but then we are to walk, realising who we are in Christ.

we are to embark on a walk, namely Christian behaviour. And so when we come to chapter 4, Paul turns from the principles of Christian life to its practice.

Doctrine is meant to affect our living. And so he calls us to live a life worthy of God. I tend to use the New International Version, which begins in chapter 4, as a prisoner for the Lord that I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

[18:59] In other words, God has blessed you, so live in a way that shows your gratitude. But in the interest of my headings of sit, walk, and stand, if you go back to the authorised version, verse 1 reads, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

Now, I obviously don't have time to get into all the details of the practicalities of what Paul says in these chapters about the Christian life. I sum it up under a couple of headings.

First of all, Christian character. In a world of sin, in a society scarred by godlessness, we have to seek to live like Jesus.

Chapter 5 begins, Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us.

Be imitators of God, be imitators of the Lord Jesus. And that always poses the question, well, how well do we measure up to be reflections of the Lord Jesus?

[20:20] How loving are we? How patient? How focused on God's kingdom? And then there's a lengthy section, a fairly lengthy section, which is given over to our relationships, and life's made up of our relationships.

And you'll find that Paul deals with our relationships as husbands and wives, parents and children, and I've said employers and employees, because I think we can read masters and slaves in our modern world as employers and employees.

And so Paul covers these basic relationships that make up our lives. And in these relationships, I think at least strikingly in contrast to our modern world, Paul encourages us to think not of our rights in these relationships, but our responsibilities.

Our responsibilities as a husband and a wife, our responsibility as a parent or as a child, our responsibility as an employer or an employee.

Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. chapter 5 verse 21, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[21:43] The Christian then is called not to be self-centered, but centered first of all of course upon God, but then upon others and seeking to fulfill the responsibilities that God has given us in the different relationships which frame our lives.

so as you go through Ephesians, we have set our position in Christ, who we are in Christ, and then in the light of that the call to walk worthy of the Lord, and then finally a call to stand firm in the face of a Christian struggle, having set before us the character of God, and the blessings he bestows on us, having outlined what our Christian character and relationship should be, Paul ends with a reminder that we are engaged in a spiritual battle, engaged in a struggle between good and evil,

between truth and error, between God and Satan.

Chapter 6 verse 10, finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

It's actually quite interesting how many well-known hymns are based on this passage of the Christian armour, or the Christian struggle. We can think of Wesley's Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armour on, or the one that we will conclude with this evening, stand up, stand up for Jesus, put on the gospel armour, each piece, put on with prayer.

And so I think with these three headings, you've got a handle on what this whole letter is about. Sit, walk, stand. Sit, rest in who you are in Christ.

[23 : 49] And then in the light and the joy of that, this call to walk, walk, to follow Christ day by day, to seek to live as one of his disciples, concluding with this call to stand, to engage in a spiritual battle.

So in summary, sit, get to know God better. I find it interesting that there's two significant prayers in Ephesians, one at the end of chapter 1, and the other at the end of chapter 3.

The thrust of both of these prayers is that we get to know God and his love better, more fully. Verse 17, and I've already quoted this, Paul says, I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. so that you may know him better. How often in our prayer meetings do we pray that others might simply get to know God better?

That was a fundamental desire for Paul. And then in Ephesians 3, verse 16, I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

[25 : 22] And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

And it seems to me that here is the heart of the letter. Get to know God better because it's in knowing him that we find true fulfillment and meaning in life.

And knowing him better than to sit to rest in all that he is and all that he has done for us. And then realizing all that God is and all that he has done for us to seek to walk, to live worthy.

As a prisoner for the Lord then I urge you to live a life worthy or to walk worthy of the calling you have received. Live lives that show the world around that we belong to Jesus.

And finally stand, take your stand. Verse 11 of chapter 6, put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

[26 : 36] Christians. And the world today desperately needs folk who will take their stand. Folk who will stand up and speak out for Jesus. Folk who will stand up and be counted for truth and righteousness.

How firmly are we standing for the Lord Jesus? And so I think this is an easy way to remember what Ephesians is all about.

sit our position in Christ, walk, seek to live lives that are worthy of him and stand. Realize that we are in a spiritual battle and take our stand in that battle.

Verse 6, sit, hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Chapter 4, verse 1, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

In chapter 6, verse 10, finally be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

[27 : 52] And we can only walk lives that are worthy and take our stand in that Christian battle. still by the Lord, in the future.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.
Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.