

Protecting Our Heavenly Position  
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### Protecting Our Heavenly Position

Have any of you ever noticed that when presented with the truth it's a lot easier for your soul to see it than it is for your mouth to explain it? That's kind of been the case for me this week. I feel like I've had 1 million different views of the same thing roll around in my head but then every time I go to open my mouth I feel like I don't know where to start.

So saying what I just said, I guess I'll start by asking all of you to be extra gracious with me as I work through finding some of the best ways to present certain things. We are all familiar and very comfortable with Jason's style of teaching. He has an inclusive way of presenting his view of the Lord and with the way he shares, it's almost like he just gathers us all up into his view, or rather into the place he's standing while he's looking at that particular view of the Lord. And I think I do an okay job presenting what I see to be real when Christ, but sometimes it's easy to forget that the Lord needed to take me several steps back before he could take me one step forward. And I think in presenting the truth it's just as important to present the several steps back, as it is to share the one step forward.

I think as far as the Lord is concerned, all the steps backward in His mind are part of moving forward. God is always working to move forward with an increased comprehension of His eternal plan purpose. But like we said last week, we have a tendency to deviate from God's direct line as we wander off looking for something of ourselves again. So once we've drifted off in search of self, if we decide to humble our hearts again it will be necessary that there is a period where the Lord will be bringing us back to the point from which we departed. And in the time that's happening, it can feel like a crisis in our life, but it's a necessary crisis in order for the Lord to get us back to a place where He can continue to move forward. I don't know if we understand that all the time but I think that's true.

So what I'm trying to say is that if I throw something out there as being a reality that I've seen to be true in the Lord, there's at least a good chance I may not have done a great job taking those few steps

back so that we can all come to this view together. We all know there are many reasons that truth can appear to be confusing, and most of those reasons I have no control over because it's just a matter of the Lord dealing with our hearts individually. But if it's something I said that could've been said better or something I didn't say at all that needed to be said, then please don't hesitate to grab me at some point and let me know. I would much rather talk through something like that one-on-one as opposed to having people leave feeling confused.

You know Julie actually calls me a badger because I have a tendency to reduce things to their lowest common denominator, and though I think that's a necessary thing that needs to happen in our hearts, having all things reduced to just being Christ himself, it's not always the most helpful way to share Christ with others. And I don't mean we add things to Christ, but I do mean taking the time to consider that there is an order to spiritual comprehension and addressing that is an important part of communicating. So I guess just be gentle with me as I work through some of my communication deficiencies.

So with all that being said, what I really wanted to talk about today was the nature of the body of Christ. And I know we've explored this reality in the past, whether it be the question of what and Who is the church or most recently dealing with "relating in love", but I'm still certain that this is something we haven't exhausted and I'm even more certain that this is something that hasn't been exhausted in my own heart. But then as I started to sit and think about how I wanted to communicate this, I felt confronted by the importance of the foundation that the Lord needs established in all of our hearts before He can even find room for sharing even just a tiny fragment of the reality of His Heavenly Body.

So as I started to get ahead of myself, as I typically do, I wanted to share this wonderful and transforming view that I had caught a glimpse of about this heavenly church in Christ. And rather quickly I felt like the Lord spoke to my heart and said "Don't you just suggest that you or anyone else should consider participating in My Body, the Church. The sharing of My Body is unavoidable for those who involve themselves in My Sons Death." And it's true, that as many things as we share with one another, all the different realities that exist in Christ, are never anything that we decide we want to be involved in.

As an example, the last time I shared, I talked about our church as being a safe environment for those who desire to know the Lord, and that is true, but it's true as a result the corporate desire working in the

individual members to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Not because anyone here decided that that's what it should be, but rather because the people here live from a heavenly perspective. There is only one choice that needs to be made in this church at all times, and this is "Do I want to know Christ in His Death so that I may be found in His Life?" Because being found in His Life is undeniable for those who's heart screams YES as the answer to that question.

And then we can share, in one way or another, all of the distinctive facets that we've come to know as being part of the Universe of Christ. But we don't come to know any of those aspects other than by participating in His Death. Paul says in the letter to the Philippians:

*"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, (How Paul?) by being conformed to His Death."*

So here's where I think we get stuck all too often. We stop short of allowing the Lord to secure a great enough understanding in us that would settle and make real our true state of being, and that is we are citizens in Heaven.

*Philippians 3:20 – "For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"*

We sometimes live as though our citizenship and our homeland is the place of our natural birth, but we are told time and time again that we are NOW seated in Christ. We have NOW come to Mount Zion. We have NOW been raised together, seated together and are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. And just where do we think this workmanship exists that we could even come to know it? Well, Ephesians 2:10 tells us, *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus."*

And each time we turn from actively seeking Lord as the One in Whom we now have our home, and in Whom is our true state of being, our heavenly residence as made know by the Cross, we enter right back into an extremely hazardous and counterfeit state of being. And this is where I would like to spend most of our time today.

And I think a lot of this relates to what Jason had talked about last week in regards to being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might and not being lured away by giving our hearts attention to these

breadcrumb trails that exist outside of Christ. And I guess specifically what I want to look at today is the power of these breadcrumb trails, or maybe you could say the power of ignorance. And maybe that sounds harsh but the potential impact of wandering out of the light and back into the darkness is extremely important to understand and never underestimate.

So I'm just going to read some verses that I think will serve as a good framework for what I'm hoping to communicate.

*Ephesians 6:13 - therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

*1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:8 - But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

*Ephesians 5:15-16 See then that you walk circumspectly, (or guarded or vigilantly) not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

*Matthew 10:16 - Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*

*1 Peter 2:11 - Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.*

*1 Peter 1:17-19 - And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

So let me just try to summarize the picture I see in these verses. The first thing I see is the assumption being made, and not being taken for granted, that the people to whom these statements are being made are a people whose citizenship is in the heavens. The people being addressed are already, as a complete fact, a new creation in Christ

Jesus. There is also an assumption being made that because they are a people born of God that they need to be aware of the immeasurable difference in these two creations and the threat that the one poses to the other when not adequately understood in the Light. And simply speaking, this is because this natural realm is the position that our bodies are still joined to. We have this natural connection into a world whose day is called evil.

I'm not talking about specific bad people in the world that we should stay away from; I'm talking about the life source and the nature of those who truly call this world home. Let's just be honest here, to make your home in this world is to make your home in darkness. And to find true comfort in this world is to find comfort in a nature that is at all times at enmity with God. Jesus says:

*John 3:19-20 - And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

I'm not saying that we are the light, but the light is the life we live by. Jesus later on says:

*John 15:17-19 - These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Here is where this leads to... the breadcrumb trails or exit ramps offer a way back into a world that is extremely dangerous to the body of Christ. This world has a way of constantly inviting us back in to find a home here, to find rest and purpose and a multitude of other things that can only be found in Christ. And apart from the light we are desperate to believe the world's persuasions.

The more of the Lord I see the more I realize how unsafe it is for me to relate to anything in this world without some measure of the mind the Lord working in me. And it's not necessarily the world that has the problem; it's really me that has the problem. And the problem is this, when I leave the light of his life I will immediately clean to this world and begin to at least attempt to suck life out of it. When I'm not letting the Lord reign as king in my soul, then I begin to create my own kingdom here on earth.

Just a few moments ago I read some verses that speak about being sober minded and there are actually several verses where we are admonished to live that way, and when I first started looking at them I realized that it's not beer and wine that these writers are warning us against, it's living in darkness. They're desperately trying to caution us about entangling ourselves with the mind-altering was of the darkness.

*1 Thessalonians 5:4-8 - But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

Now I'm not endorsing the consumption of alcohol, but I also don't think he's specifically and exclusively just talking about things like alcohol. But in a lot of ways the darkness has similar effects as and I see a type of an analogy being used. A child of God doesn't need a bottle of tequila to become intoxicated, just simply involve yourself in an inappropriate relationship with the darkness and you will very quickly find yourself under the influence.

No I won't put anyone on the spot here this morning, but I would guess that there are at least a few of you here who have experienced the effects of consuming inappropriate amounts of alcohol. And for those of you who may not know what I'm talking about, I've read in books somewhere that it will leave your natural faculties extremely impaired. You see when you introduce something like alcohol into your body, it doesn't just stay in your stomach, it quickly becomes absorbed into your bloodstream and then is been distributed throughout your entire body leaving nothing untouched. It affects your judgment, it affects your emotions, it affects all of your five senses, and because it changes you it also affects the people you come in contact with. And then comes the tricky part. Once the effects of the alcohol wear off you're left wondering and questioning all the things you said or did while you were under its influence. What bridges that I burn? Who did I offend? What did I say? Did I entangle my self with something that is going to leave me and the people I love negatively affected for years to come?

But obviously we're not talking about alcoholic beverages and impaired natural faculties. I am, however, talking about the effects that living in

the darkness have on the God-given faculty of faith. The darkness just doesn't weaken our faith; it will cause faith to become completely arrested and no longer accessible to your soul, until and if we turn our hearts back to the Lord and beg for his light. (For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?)

And so I know personally speaking that I many times underestimate the power of the persuasive darkness. I see one harmless little breadcrumb and just as soon as I reach down to pick it up, there's another one and I can't help but pick that one up, too. But then there's another one and another one. And then slowly but surely my awareness and my consciousness is being lured out of the Light and is becoming infiltrated with darkness and awareness of self and consciousness of sin and I forget who I am and I forget where my home is, and then quite naturally I begin to make a home where I find my heart.

Now I'm not trying to alarm anybody but I do want to caution us because we do have natural bodies and we do have ties to this earth and places that we will inevitably be involved. And so that being the case, we must understand that regardless of what our eyes see, as pleasant as things appear, we're cooperating with a world that is at war with our soul.

*1 Peter 2:11 - Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.*

This is exactly why Paul says put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. The wiles of the devil are not in Christ in the heavens; they're here in this world. And our only protection is continually coming to a greater understanding of what we have been brought in to and whom we have been brought into, and then with wisdom and in a sober mind we can understand the world of which we have been taken out.

Nobody involved in a war or a battle walks into enemy territory without the tools necessary to protect oneself from the enemy. Our weapon against the world is our faith; and the moment we find ourselves in the world conducting ourselves like natural born citizens, it's like we become an open sore on the Lord's body. Can you understand what I'm saying? Whether we walk in the knowledge of it or not, we are members of the Lord's body, but the sad part is that

when we walk opposed to that reality we act as an entrance for disease and infection, and it's contagious.

Well I bet at this point are wondering what does any of this have to do with the body of Christ. And the answer is everything. This has absolutely everything to do with the body of Christ. When we allow our individual lives to be defined by the world around us and not the world within us we end up with an extremely pathetic and disjointed view of the body of Christ. And then we end up running around trying to build something or fix something or add something to His body which is already perfectly complete, perfectly incorruptible, perfectly undefiled, permanently unfading, and kept in heaven, yet completely accessible to you and I through faith.

I just recently read a book written by T. Austin Sparks entitled "The Church Which Is His Body" and to me it's just a great overview of the resurrected Church of God. It's not very long, only 33 pages, and it's available free online at [AustinSparks.net](http://AustinSparks.net) as well. I just wanted to read a portion that I thought was relevant to what we are looking at today and maybe looking at more next week.

Sparks writes:

This letter (to the Ephesians) undoubtedly emphasizes the fact that the Church is a corporate Body; not that it one day will be when the work of grace is completed; not that it is merely that in the mind and thought of God, the will of God, the intention of God; not that it was intended to be when the Lord started it; but that it IS; that in spite of what is seen here on the earth; in spite of the ever-increasing number of divisions and separations, all the unhappy schisms which have entered into the fellowships of God's people on the earth, in spite of everything that ever has been and ever is or will be along that line, the Church is still a corporate whole.

It is that, not as to the people as on the earth, but it is true as to the essential nature of the Church, the Body of Christ, and the sooner we get that rooted and settled in our spiritual acceptance and consciousness the better. No schism, beloved, that is incidental to the relationships of Christian people on the earth can alter that fact. The differences which exist or which come about by the different mentalities, choices and preferences, likes

and dislikes, intellectual acceptances or rejections; all those differences do not touch this ultimate fact that there is a realm in which there is a togetherness, a oneness, a corporateness which is unaffected by anything that is of man in himself.

We are inclined to accept what we see, to be affected by the divisions that are here, and are almost in despair because of what we see. The sooner we sweep that whole thing aside the better, and let there be fifty thousand earthly departments of Christian people, the Body of Christ remains one. It is a seamless robe, it is a Body which cannot be divided, it remains one. That is the basic fact to which we must come back, that is where we begin.

It is only as we get up into the heavenlies and away from the earthlies that we begin to enter into that fact and realize what that fact means to God, to the heavenlies, to hell, and to this world. So, in order that we should enter into the fact with all that that fact contains of effective vocation and life, we have to introduce the whole matter by our position in Christ in the heavenlies, and see exactly where we are placed spiritually: for not until we come to recognize that and to enter into our heavenly position in Christ can we see, appreciate, or come into the meaning of this heavenly reality the Church, which is His Body. We cannot see the Church from the earthlies; we can only see it from the heavenlies.

You know this heavenly position that sparks talks about is exactly like he said, it is a position that we must come to recognize and enter into... but then it goes one step further, we have to understand what it means to protect that position.

I love that verse we passed over in 1 Peter 1:17. I'll read it again.

*"And if you call on the father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the*

*precious blood of Christ"*

Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay in fear. In fear of what?

1. Let us not become ignorant to whom this earthly world belongs and that all flesh is waging war with the soul. Even our own flesh.
2. Let us not be unaware of how our place in the Lords Kingdom was purchased. The investment our Lord has made in securing His home along with a means of bringing us into His house was nothing less than the precious blood of Christ.
3. Let us all also not forget that every member of His Body has been made clean by that same precious blood. If we have little or no understanding of that then with fear in our hearts we should seek to know His Body in the same way He knows and sees and involves Himself with that Body.

Even all of the way back in Numbers, in the midst of Israel's state of ignorance and disobedience, the Lord still looked at a blood covered Israel and said:

*"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them."*

Amen.