

INTRODUCTION

Before you know where you are going, you must always know where you are, and what your spiritual location is. Jerry Clower likes to tell the story about the four men who were driving down the road in Mississippi and they entered the little town called Kosciusko, Mississippi. One of them said, “Well, this is Kasciusko.” The other said, “No, you mispronounced it. It’s not Kazi-us-ko it’s Kozy-us-ko. A third one said, “No, both of you mispronounced it, it’s Kusy-us-ko.” They argued until they pulled into a fast food restaurant and went inside. They asked the teen behind the counter, “Ma’am, perhaps you can help us. We have a disagreement here. We don’t know how to pronounce the name of this place. So, real slowly, would you pronounce the name of this place for us?” She gave them an odd look and said, “Daaaare-eeee-queen.”

If you are a Christian, you are in Christ Jesus. If you don’t understand where you are spiritually; you’ll have no idea where you are going. Paul gives us three pictures of a Christian in this passage of scripture. I want to ask you to ask yourself if you fit this picture.

I. THE PATTERN FOR A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN

Number one, notice the pattern for a healthy Christian. When a seamstress sews a dress, she lays a pattern over the cloth and cuts it along the pattern. What is God’s pattern for a healthy Christian?

Ephesians 1:15-16. “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

Mark #1: Faith in Jesus

Paul said there’s a kind of Christian that caused him to thank God when he thought about them. This is what I call a healthy Christian. There are two marks of a healthy Christian according to the apostle, Paul. Number one is faith in Jesus. He says, “I thank God because of your faith in Jesus.” You cannot be a Christian unless you put your faith in Jesus. But it is not your faith that saves you. It’s your faith in Jesus that saves you. It’s the object of your faith. You can have a ton of faith but if it is in the wrong thing, it won’t help you a bit.

Jack London, wrote a short story about a young girl who was ice skating. She skated over some thin ice and it collapsed and she fell into the icy water. Some people tried to crawl across the ice to rescue her, but as they got near her, the ice began to crack and they were afraid, and nobody would go out and rescue her. But, there was one man who had lived there a long time, and he went around behind her and approached the broken ice from another direction. He crawled out to her and rescued her and, of course, he was a hero. They said, “My friend, you must have a lot of faith!” He said, “Well, it wasn’t faith that kept me up it was the ice that kept me up. I just knew where the thick ice was.” That’s a good story about our faith in Jesus Christ. It’s not our faith that saves us or sustains us—it is Jesus that saves us and sustains us; it is our faith in him. Your faith is only as effective as the object of your faith. If your faith is in Jesus, you can say, “I am a healthy Christian.”

Mark #2: Love for all Christians

There’s another mark; love for all Christians.” A-L-L Christians. Look at verse 15. “Your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love.” He doesn’t say for *most* of the saints; he doesn’t say for *some* of the saints; he doesn’t say for the people that love you back. He said, “You have a love for ALL Christians.” You are a healthy Christian if you love all brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, that’s a mark to determine whether or not you’re even a Christian at all, because in 1 John 3:14, the Bible says, “By this you can know you have passed from death unto life if you have love for all the brethren.” If you do not truly love all brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of their race, regardless of their background, regardless of their nationality if you do not love all Christians, you cannot claim to be a child of God.

What is love? We throw that word around, and you say, “Of course, I love all Christians.” Charles Lowery has come up with a good acrostic for love.

L The L in love means you will listen. If you love someone, you will pay attention to them and what they say to you is very important. I heard about the couple who had been married for over 50 years and he was getting a little hard of hearing. They were sitting at the breakfast table and she looked at him and said, “Honey, I want you to know I am proud of you. And he said, “Yeah, I’m tired of you too.” We get in a lot of trouble when we don’t listen carefully to what people say to us. And, if you love somebody, you will listen.

O The O means you will overlook you will overlook their faults, limitations, weaknesses, or shortcomings. The opposite of love is “fault-finding.” 1 Corinthians 13:5 says, “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” The way to know you truly do NOT love someone is if you keep a list of everything about that person you don’t like. “You did this back then.” Or you write down or keep sort of a mental list of everything about that person you do not like. That’s a clear sign you don’t love them. Love is overlooking weaknesses and accepting them in spite of their limitations.

V The V in love means that person is valuable to you. They have value in your eyes, because they have value in God’s eyes. You may think they are worthless, because they don’t dress like you or act like you they may irritate you but, according to God’s perspective, they are valuable so they ought to be valuable to you. Sometimes we think people are worthless, but no one is worthless in God’s eyes.

E The E in love means we ought to encourage someone if we love them. You will either be tearing somebody down, or you will be building them up. Wouldn’t it be a wonderful world, community and church if this week you concentrated on trying to say only nice and encouraging things to the other believers in Christ? Don’t say anything negative; just to try to encourage. That’s what love is all about.

II. THE PRAYER FOR A GROWING CHRISTIAN

Can you honestly say you have LOVE for all believers? There is a second thing Paul writes about: The prayer for a growing Christian. Are you a Christian? Are you a healthy Christian? Are you a growing Christian?

Ephesians 1:17-18. “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. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

The title of this message is “Are You Enjoying Your Inheritance.” That’s what we want to talk about for a moment. Paul makes a prayer for a growing Christian, “I pray three things for you. I pray that you will know God. I pray that you will know God better. I pray that you will understand who you are and what you have in Jesus.”

1. Do I know God?

Here’s a little test. Number one: Do I know God? that’s a simple yes or no answer, but you may not want to check it yet, because let me tell you what that means. For some of you it is as foreign a concept as you have ever heard. “Know God? What are you talking about?” That is what salvation is. It is knowing God. Jesus said in John 17:3, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” That’s what eternal life is. An atheist says, “There is no God.” An agnostic says, “Well, there may be a God, but you cannot know him.” The Bible says, “There is a God and you can know him personally.” Everybody knows about George Washington, but no one *knows* George Washington. When I ask you if you know God, some of you are thinking, “I think there is some supreme being up there who snapped his fingers and the world came into existence. I believe there is somebody up there but that’s not the same thing as knowing him.” Knowing about God is not the same thing as knowing God, and you can know God. That’s what Paul writes here. He said, “I pray that you may know God!” Do you know him? Check it yes or no if you know God—that means you are a follower of Jesus—you are a Christian. But if you cannot check, “Yes, I know God.” you need to examine whether or not you have ever had an encounter with God.

2. Do I know God better?

The second question is, “Do I know God better today than I did one week ago?” Paul says in verse 17, “This is what I am praying for you that you may know him better.” It’s one thing to say, “I know God.” It’s another thing to say, “I know God BETTER.” Our relationship with God ought to be a growing relationship. You ought to know him better today than you knew him last week. If you don’t, you are either stagnant, or you are backsliding. You get to know God better by spending time with him. The only way you know a person better is by spending time with them. That takes an effort. It takes time. It takes an investment of energy.

Let me illustrate. Next week you may go off in the community and somebody may say, “Where

do you go to church?” You say, “I go to Green Acres Baptist Church.” They may say to you, “Do you know David Dykes?” You are probably going to say, “Yes, I know David Dykes,” because if you sit out there and you watch me, and I have maybe met you and shook your hand or something, you may feel like you know me. But, did you know if you wanted to know me better, there are some things you could do to get to know me better? You could invite me over to your house for a bowl of soup or something, or you could come by my office. You say, “Well, yes, I know him.” But, you don’t know me as well as Mike Parks knows me, because Mike and I work together every week. You don’t know me as well as some of these men with whom I pray every week know me. And, you don’t know me as well as my wife knows me. The only way you get to know somebody better is by spending time with them. If you want to know God better, you have to set aside time every week to spend alone with him. Do you know God better? Yes or no? This is a self-test. You are not going to be graded.

3. Do I know how rich I am in Jesus?

Here’s number three and this is the whole point of this message: Do I know how rich I am in Jesus? Look at verse 18. Paul says, “This is what I am praying, that the eyes of your heart...” Doesn’t that sound funny? Does that mean when a cardiovascular surgeon opens up somebody’s chest and cuts into their heart, there are eyeballs staring out at them? Does it mean you have eyeballs in your heart? Of course not. When he says, “the eyes of your heart” he is not talking about that pumping organ in your chest. The word *kardia* literally means “the control center of your life” and he says you have eyes there to be able to see things spiritually. He says for a lot of Christians those eyes are closed and “I pray that suddenly you will see it. See your glorious inheritance in Christ.”

I suppose the person who ought to get the prize for being the greatest miser was a woman who lived in upstate New York named Hettie Green. She inherited a tremendous fortune, but she continued to live as a pauper. She ate cold oatmeal, because she was afraid to spend the money for the energy to heat it up. She lived in a shack. Her son had to have his leg amputated, because she refused to take him to a hospital and pay for it. She looked for a free clinic. That’s how miserly she was. When she died in 1916, she left an estate of 40 million dollars. Why would somebody who had so much wealth live like a beggar? I’m going to tell you what is even more fascinating than that. There are multitudes of Christians who are rich in Jesus Christ, in their spiritual inheritance, but they are not living like it. Why aren’t you? Because you just haven’t seen it yet. Your eyes haven’t been open.

Have you ever seen a stereogram? Those collections of colors and you are supposed to look at it and see something else. Last year people started showing me those pictures. It made me so mad. First of all, I thought they were lying. “There’s nothing in there. You can’t see it.” I thought it was a joke or something some kind of conspiracy really. Then, I thought since I am a little bit color-blind that being color-blind was the reason. But, somebody gave me one of those Magic-Eye books for Christmas. I spent hours over the Christmas holidays just staring at it. It almost drove me crazy. But I was looking at that thing one day and POW! All of a sudden I saw a whale in there and then it was gone. I looked at it and POW! I see it again—and this time it stayed there a little bit longer. Then, I turned the page and I looked and there are the three pyramids in Egypt. I turn another page and there is a guy riding on a horse. I could not believe it. I had looked at all

of those pictures for hours and hours and I hadn't seen it until finally I looked at it in just a certain way and it came into focus. Those of you who have ever looked at one of those pictures, you know what I am talking about. Those of you who have never seen one still think we are lying about it, but they really are there.

The same thing must happen to you spiritually. You can look at this verse of scripture I am talking about for years and say, “Huh?” It is possible for God to open your spiritual eyes and suddenly you say, “WOW, I am rich spiritually in Jesus! I have a tremendous inheritance.” Are you enjoying your inheritance yet? Look at chapter 1, verse 5. “He predestined us to be adopted.” Think about being adopted and your inheritance. Some of you were adopted as children and you understand what it is to adopt someone or to be adopted. How do you enter the family of God? How do you become a Christian? Are you born into it? or are you adopted? The answer is yes. You are born into the family of God by a new birth—regeneration—that's the only way to enter the family, but then the Father adopts you. So if you are born into it, why do you have to be adopted? Here's the reason a man may have more than one wife. That's called polygamy. It's also called stupidity, I think. Just because he had a biological son did not mean the son was the legal heir to him. He could have lots of sons, but only if he legally adopted them did they become the heirs of his estate. We all must be born into the kingdom of God, but that term “adopted” means that to everyone of us God has bestowed upon us the status of an heir. Romans 8:17 says, “If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” In other words, God the Father has given you the same legal standing as the Lord Jesus Christ. You are an heir and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.

When we started talking about this a couple of weeks ago, I said “What would happen if you suddenly got a letter in the mail informing you of a \$12 million inheritance from some obscure aunt? Wouldn't it change your life? From that point on wouldn't you live differently?” You'd look at life differently. You'd think about different things. You'd act differently. The same thing is true here. You have inherited all spiritual riches in Christ Jesus and once your eyes are open to that, POW! You'll start living differently. Where is your inheritance right now? When someone is the recipient of an inheritance, they don't always get it all at once. For instance, a six-year-old boy inherits \$20 million. Do you think the bank is going to give him \$20 million and say, “Here, sonny. Spend it wisely.”? No. He will get it in stages. He will receive an initial pledge for anything he needs, like a bicycle, some ice cream...pay off all the bills.

That's what salvation is to a child of God. You receive a deposit of everything else; that's the Holy Spirit we studied last week. But then, do you know what else that child is going to receive? All of his daily needs are going to be met. The conditions of the trust, the provisions, will say, “Whatever you need, we will give you a weekly or a monthly amount.” That's what it means for us as a Christian. Day by day Jesus meets our needs and then, finally, at some age designated in the provisions of that trust fund, you'll receive it all. That's a picture of who we are in Jesus. When you are born into the family of God, God gives you a down payment: the Holy Spirit. Day by day God will supply all your needs according to the riches in glory, but one day when you reach Heaven and you become like Jesus; that's when you will receive the totality of your inheritance. From the moment you are born again you can look ahead with certainty and know “I am an heir of God.” Do you know God better today than you did a week ago? Can you honestly say, “I know how rich I am in Jesus?”

III. THE POWER FOR A STRONG CHRISTIAN

Well, there is one other thing he talks about in this passage. We see the power for a strong Christian. Are you a healthy Christian? Are you a growing Christian? Are you a strong Christian?

Ephesians 1:19-23. “and his incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

1. I have been raised with him

Paul is going to make three statements about the power of God and what it did for Jesus but what does it mean to you and me? Let’s look at those three statements. First of all, the power of God tells us Jesus has been raised from the dead. But what does that mean to me? I have been raised with him.

2. I am seated with him

The second thing he says about Jesus is he is seated in the heavenly realms, in a place of authority, perspective. Here’s what it means to you: I am seated with him. Look at Ephesians 2:6. “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” That is more than just statements about Jesus. This is what God wants to do to you. Jesus has been resurrected and God wants to raise you up spiritually so you can be a totally new person. Jesus has been seated in a place of authority and God has placed you right there beside Jesus.

Here’s the problem. A lot of you are saying now, “You know, pastor, I am really underneath it. There is so much stuff threatening to bury me right now. I feel like I am having a hard time keeping my head above the water level. I’m under the circumstances. I’m under so much pressure, I’m under so much strain, I’m under so much difficulty.” He said, “God has put everything under his feet.” *Everything!* He also says we are seated with him. Here’s the bonus truth: Nothing that is under his feet can be over your head! When you think about that, it will make you a shouting Baptist in a hurry! You may be thinking, “I’m underneath it right now.” Have you ever heard somebody say, “How are you doing?” and they say, “Well, I’m doing pretty good, underneath the circumstances.” Well, you are not supposed to be *underneath* the circumstances in the first place. You are supposed to be on top of them, because that’s where Jesus is. It is all under his feet and you are with him. You are not recognizing your position in Christ if you are underneath anything.

This reminds me of the time Jesus was walking on water. None of us have a real problem

thinking the Son of God can walk on water. But, that’s not all that happened. Peter was standing there in the boat and asked, “Lord, can I walk to you on the water?” Jesus said, “Come on.” Peter threw his leg over that boat and started walking on top of the water. He was not walking on the water; he was walking on the word, because it was the word of Jesus that said, “Come to me, Peter.” And it was the word of God holding him up, not the water. But, you know what happened. Peter started looking around at the wind, the waves, the thunder, the lightning, the rain and his faith started getting weak, and he began losing his trust in the word of God and he started sinking. Jesus has to pull him out and help him. That’s a great lesson to us. When you recognize who you are in Jesus Christ, you can be on top of your circumstances, as long as you keep your eyes on Jesus. When you start looking around at the circumstances and the problems, that’s when you start sinking. Everything is under the feet of Jesus and if you are seated beside Christ, everything under his feet is under your feet.

3. I am a member of the body

Number three. Paul says Christ is the head of the body. God has made him the head of the body, which is the church, and this is what it means to us: I am a member of the body. Here’s the church, all believers, and the Bible says it’s like a body and it has different members. You may be a finger, you may be an arm, you may be a leg, but Jesus is the head.

The other day I was visiting a prospect for our church. This man looked at me and said, “Before I join that church, I want to ask you something. I want you to tell me who runs that church down there? Who’s the head of that church?” I said, “I want to assure you the pastor does not run the church, the staff doesn’t run the church, the deacons don’t run the church, committees do not run the church: We only have one head and his name is Jesus. If God knows my heart, Jesus runs that church down there.” He smiled and said, “That’s all I wanted to know.”

Do you know what that means? It means Jesus is the head, and when your brain sends a command to a part of the body, it responds. When the Lord Jesus Christ tells you to do something you don’t do it—that’s paralysis. That’s a problem. That’s a disease, and it causes frustration. That’s what happens to a stroke victim. Their brain can’t get the word to their muscles. And it’s tragic in the body of Christ when you as a member of the body will not do what the head tells you to do.

Put your faith in Jesus. If you are a Christian, follow him in believers’ baptism. Love all Christians. You can’t really say you are a member of the body unless you are doing what the head tells you to do. You say, “Well, I like this idea of inheritance. Boy, that sounds so good.” Don’t seek an inheritance or spiritual riches. Seek Jesus and when you seek Jesus, he’ll *provide* all of that. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you.”

CONCLUSION

There is a true story from of England. A number of years ago a very wealthy man was married to a woman whom he loved dearly. They wanted to have children and tried for many years, but she had a lot of difficulty in getting pregnant. Finally, she became pregnant, but still had a lot of

health problems during the pregnancy. Their greatest fear was realized the night she died giving birth to their son. Of course, the man was heartbroken and mourned his wife. Yet, he loved his son dearly. He hired an elderly lady to be a nanny to raise his son. His entire life revolved around the boy. Tragically, when the boy was twelve, he contracted an illness and died. The man was so heartbroken, he died two years later. He left a tremendous estate. Nobody knew who would inherit the estate. But, according to his will, there were a large number of relatives, servants and former servants who were invited to the reading of the will. The lawyer opened the will, and read, “The final provisions of this document will be revealed at a later time, but on this date everyone who has been invited to the reading of this will may go throughout the estate and choose any one item they desire.” It must have been like the starting pistol for a race! VROOM! There were relatives and servants running through the mansion taking priceless works of art, grabbing for gold, silver utensils, furniture, everything they could think of. “This is mine! This is mine!” But the poor old nanny climbed the stairs, hoping no one had gotten it yet. She walked down to the end of the hall upstairs and there was a portrait of the boy painted just before he died. She loved that little boy so much! She walked to the end of the hall and took the portrait down. Nobody else had chosen it. She happened to glance at the back of the picture and there was a note that said, “Whoever chooses my son gets it all!” In other words she was the sole heir of the entire estate, because she chose the son.

That’s good advice to you. If you choose Jesus, the Son of God, God says, “All that I have is yours for eternity.”

OUTLINE

I. THE PATTERN FOR A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN

Mark #1: Faith in Jesus

Mark #2: Love for all Christians

Listen

Overlook

Valuable

Encourage

II. THE PRAYER FOR A GROWING CHRISTIAN

1. Do I know God?

2. Do I know God better?

3. Do I know how rich I am in Jesus?

III. THE POWER FOR A STRONG CHRISTIAN

1. I have been raised with him

2. I am seated with him

3. I am a member of the body



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes