

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 2 June 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **Remember Your Position in Christ**

### **Ephesians 6:20-24**

On 10 October 2004, on the streets of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, there was an event called “Outfest National Coming Out Day.” The people who gathered for this event were there to flaunt their sinful lifestyle before the world. Now, while these people were celebrating their sin, a tiny group of four Christians, ranging in age from 17 to 72, quietly held up signs with messages such as “Homosexuality is a sin. Christ can set you free”: and one of the four preached the simple message of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, to anyone who cared to listen. All of this was done with permission from the police department beforehand.

Well, many of the people in the crowd linked arms and gathered around these Christians. They shouted obscenities at them, blew ear-piercing whistles directly in their ears, and made very threatening gestures. Then, while the Christians were peacefully singing “Blessed Be the Name of the Lord,” the police came and arrested them. They spent 21 hours in jail; and upon their release, they found themselves charged with 8 crimes (3 of which were felonies). All these charges against them were based upon the charge that they had committed a “hate crime.” Incredibly, some of them found themselves facing up to 57 years in prison—simply for warning people about the seriousness of their sin, and proclaiming the Gospel!

All these fallacious charges was eventually disproven. However, these four Christians first had to go through half a year of court sessions; spend tens of thousands of dollars in attorney’s fees; and go through the trauma of being unsure whether they would spend the rest of their lives in prison.

Why do I mention this story? Because I want every Christian to be aware that persecution for the name of Christ is coming our way. Laws against our faith in Christ are being passed everywhere. In the not-so-distant future, Christians not only in America, but around the world, will be facing the prospect of prosecution, simply for telling people the life-saving message of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul was certainly no stranger to prison. Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians from prison; and he didn’t spend 21 hours in prison, either. He spent *most of the final years* of his life in prison. Yet, he was not ashamed of the Gospel. He knew his position in Christ; and he knew the incredible privileges that he had in Christ. He knew that no prison wall could separate him from the love of His Saviour.

As we conclude this series of messages from **Ephesians**, it is my hope that every Christian in this room has come to understand his position is in Christ Jesus, and the privileges and responsibilities with come with that position. It is also my prayer that those who are not “in Christ” (who have not been saved) *will* place their trust in Christ. The title of this message is ***Remember Your Position in Christ.***

**Read Ephesians 6:20-24.**

If you know Christ as Saviour, there are four privileges that you have because of your position in Christ.

## I. Privilege #1: You are an ambassador (v. 20).

(Read verse 20 again.) According to this verse, one of the privileges of being a Christian is that of being an “ambassador” for Christ. Paul considered *himself* to be an ambassador of Christ; yet, he also made it clear that *every* Christian is an ambassador. Christ Himself told His disciples, “*Ye shall be witnesses unto me*” (Acts 1:8). To “bear witness” in someone else’s name is to be an ambassador for that person. *Every* Christian has been given the task of going into the world, as Christ’s representative, and telling lost people how they can be reconciled to God.

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

In the political sense, an ambassador is someone who goes to a foreign country, at the appointment of his country’s ruler, to make known his nation’s policies. Throughout history, the office of ambassador has always been a prestigious and privileged position. Likewise, it is a privilege to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ. This position is far greater than that of any earthly ambassadorship. Before we were saved, we were God’s enemies, and were condemned to eternal death in hell; yet, God has now made us His ambassadors!

By the way, if you know Christ, being Christ’s “ambassador” is not optional. God doesn’t say to new believers, “Now that you’re saved, why don’t you consider being my ambassador?” If you have truly been born again, you *are* His ambassador. At the moment of your salvation, you were appointed by the King of the Universe to represent His Kingdom. And what is the foreign country in which we are ambassadors? It is the sinful world in which we live. Because we have been called *out* of this world, and have been translated from Satan’s kingdom to God’s kingdom, this world, in which we once delighted, is now a foreign country to us. We are “*strangers and pilgrims*” in this wicked, sinful world.

Now, if there were ever a Christian who didn’t *look* like an ambassador, it was the Apostle Paul. His body was horribly scarred from the deep wounds and lacerations that he had received on many occasions. Furthermore, as he wrote this letter, he was *in prison*. That is why he called himself an “*ambassador in bonds*.” You see, it had all begun four years earlier. At that time, Paul left the believers in the church of Ephesus, and began his final journey toward Jerusalem. His intention was to make a “*prosperous journey*” to Rome after visiting the brethren in Jerusalem. However, while he was at the Temple in Jerusalem, he was recognised by his enemies; and they began a false rumour about Paul. The rumour was that he had brought a Gentile named Trophimus into the Temple. (This was a crime that was punishable by death under Jewish law.) A riot ensued, and an angry mob nearly killed Paul; but by God’s providence, the Roman soldiers intervened, and arrested him. Because of the false charges that had been laid against him, Paul ended up spending two years in prison; and during that time, his case was brought before one Roman governor after another. Finally, Paul appealed directly to Caesar, and was sent to Rome, to be tried by Nero himself. During the voyage, his ship was shipwrecked at sea, and God miraculously saved the life of every person on board; but finally, after many months, Paul arrived in Rome. As he walked down the streets of Rome, alongside hundreds of other prisoners, he was bound in chains, as though he were a criminal.

Now, when you think of an ambassador to another nation, you don't normally picture a prisoner who is waiting to stand trial on high charges of felony, do you? Yet, that is exactly how Paul viewed himself. He considered himself an ***“ambassador in bonds.”*** As far as he was concerned, his trip to Rome, as a prisoner, was an expense-free trip, paid for by His heavenly King. In fact, Paul did not really consider himself to be a prisoner of Rome: he considered himself to be ***“a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”*** He considered it a privilege to be both an ambassador *and* a prisoner for Jesus Christ. He considered his journey to have been truly prosperous. And how so? In what way did Paul consider his trip to be “prosperous”?

**Read 2 Timothy 4:14-18.** (Paul's ***“first answer”*** was his court case before Nero.)

What did Paul mean when he said, ***“that all the Gentiles might hear”***? Were ***“all the Gentiles”*** in the world present in the courtroom to hear Paul make his defence before Nero? Of course not. However, Paul knew that what he said publicly in Rome would eventually be heard throughout the world, and would result in the salvation of many Gentiles. We are here today, under the sound of the Gospel, because Paul was not ashamed to be an ***“ambassador in bonds”*** in the foreign land of this world. Furthermore, Paul didn't think it a disgrace to die the death of a criminal. Instead, he looked at martyrdom as a free passage to his heavenly country, and to his heavenly King.

Christian, do you see yourself as an ambassador? You should! Just as an ambassador in a foreign nation is careful not to bring disgrace to his ruler and nation by any wrong conduct, so you should be conscious of the fact that your conduct in this world is bringing either glory or shame to your King. Just as an ambassador speaks boldly on behalf of his country's leader, so you, Christian, should speak boldly for your King.

We are far from home, brethren; and we have much work to do. Being an ambassador for Christ is a high honour; but it involves much toil—and, possibly, even danger. Are you prepared to suffer for Christ, if need be? Would you consider it an honour to be a prisoner of Jesus Christ, as Paul was? Whether in freedom or bondage, are you determined to do the King's business, and to speak in His name? Or do you treat your position casually and half-heartedly? If so, allow the Spirit of God to convict your heart today, and give you boldness!

## II. **Privilege #2: You are a minister (vv. 21-22).**

**(Read verses 21 and 22.)** In just a moment, I will tell you a little more about Paul's co-labourer named Tychicus. There is much we can learn from Tychicus. However, I would first like to focus on that word ***“minister.”*** This is an important word, because *every* believer is a minister of Jesus Christ.

Now, perhaps some of you are surprised to learn that all Christians are “ministers.” Many Christians think of a “minister” as a “pastor”; and the reason why they have this image in their mind is that they learned it from the world. When the world uses the word “minister,” they usually are referring to a “clergyman.” Most people think of a “minister” as a “respectable pillar in the community”—someone who walks around stiffly, looking very pristine and pious, speaking religious words in ancient tones, and not working overly hard, or doing any dirty work. Unfortunately, many Christians have this notion, as well.

As a pastor, I do not disdain to clean the church toilets, sweep the floors, clean the windows, pick up rubbish in the parking lot, or scratch ground food out of the carpet. Most of you know that my week is very busy, and that I put in long days. Any Gospel minister who is worth his salt does the same. The Apostle Paul taught and preached from morning to evening, all the while making tents to support himself. Even when he was in prison (which was often), he worked tirelessly to spread the Gospel, and to encourage believers, and to train young men for the Gospel ministry. *That* is the kind of work ethic that a true Gospel minister has.

**However, pastors are not the only ones whom God has called to be “ministers.”** A “minister” is not a “clergyman”: he is a *servant*. The Greek word for “minister” is *diakanos*; and *diakanos* means “servant.” A *diakanos* is someone who does menial jobs, runs errands, and does other tasks that no one else wants to do. That is what *you* are, Christian. You are a servant. You are not a beautiful “pillar” for people to admire. You are a servant, who is here on earth to do his Master’s bidding.

**Read 1 Corinthians 16:15-18.**

**Read Mark 10:35-45.**

In the passages above, the words “*ministry*” and “*minister*” both come from the word *diakanos*, which means “servant.” In **1 Corinthians 16**, we are told that Stephanos was a “minister.” Paul held up Stephanos as someone whom the other members of the church of Corinth should imitate: yet, Stephanos was not a pastor. He was an ordinary church member, who served the Lord and others with all his heart. In **Mark 10**, Jesus told His apostles that He had called them to be *diakanoi*—servants. And just in case that statement was not clear enough, Jesus used yet another word for servant. In **verse 44**, when Jesus said, “*Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all,*” He was using the word *doulos*; and *doulos* means “bond-slave.” Christ Himself demonstrated this kind of lowly service by washing the disciples’ feet; and He informed them that He expected them to do the same.

Reckon yourself to be a servant, Christian. Reckon yourself to be a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. Reckon yourself as one who has fallen to the ground and died. Reckon yourself as one who has “died to self.” In **John 12** Jesus said, “*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*” Of course, He was speaking of Himself. By His death on the cross for our sins, He would bear much fruit: multitudes of souls would be saved. However, Jesus had more to say. He made it clear that *we* must die, too. He went on to say, “*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him shall my Father honour.*” Christian, you and I are servants. The question is: How *faithful* are you in your service?

Tychicus was a “*faithful minister* (servant) *in the Lord.*” However, we have no reason to believe that Tychicus was a pastor. Tychicus is mentioned in **Acts, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Timothy** and **Titus**; but none of these passages indicate that he was a pastor, or even a pastor-in-training. He was simply a servant. He travelled with Paul, and served in whatever way he could. On this particular occasion, his job was to deliver this letter to the church in Ephesus.

This was a dangerous journey of hundreds of miles, by land and sea. Tychicus was also commissioned to deliver a letter to the church of Colossae, which was in the same region. Upon arrival, he was to tell the brethren of Paul's affairs, and to comfort them. Tychicus also took with him a personal letter to deliver to a Christian named Philemon, in the city of Colossae; and he brought with him a Christian named Onesimus. Onesimus was a model servant of the Lord, as well. Onesimus was former thief, who had stolen from his master, and fled to Rome; but while he was in Rome, he met the Apostle Paul; and Paul led him to the Lord. After his salvation, Onesimus realised that he needed to return to his master and make things right; and so, along with Tychicus, he returned to Colossae as a changed man, and as a servant of Jesus Christ. And how did all these things happen? It was because Paul considered himself to be a lowly "*minister*" (servant) of Jesus Christ. Even in prison, Paul never stopped serving. He shared the Gospel with everyone with whom he came into contact.

Christian, have the truths that we have studied throughout this letter sunk into your heart? As a Christian, your position is that you are "seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." You are a "joint-heir" with Christ. You possess all the riches that are in Christ. Yet, the realisation of these truths should not make you proud and haughty. On the contrary, it gives you every reason to be *a lowly servant* of Jesus Christ. Serving Christ with all your heart is the least you can do to thank Him for giving His life for you, that you might be saved. Your Master made *Himself* the lowest of servants: and you are not above your Lord! Christian, are you faithfully performing your duty as a servant?

### III. Privilege #3: You are a recipient of peace and grace (vv. 23-24).

In every one of Paul's letters (except for the book of Hebrews), Paul began his letter by bestowing a blessing upon his readers; and in every instance, he used the words "grace" and "peace." (In a few of his letters Paul said, "*grace, mercy, and peace.*") As you may remember, that is how Paul began this letter to the Ephesians. In **Ephesians 1:2** Paul said, "*Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*"; and now, as we come to the end of this letter, we find that Paul uses these same words again. (Read verses 23 and 24 again.)

Now, Paul did not use these words "*grace*" and "*peace*" casually. This was not merely a polite formality. These words "*grace*" and "*peace*" were given to Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Lord means for us to be comforted by this blessing! These two little words, "*grace*" and "*peace*," are extremely important; and we need to know their meaning well.

First, let's examine the word "*peace*." What kind of "peace" is Paul talking about? To answer that question, let's go back to **Ephesians 2**.

#### Read Ephesians 2:14-18.

The "peace" that Paul is talking about in this passage is a peace that only a born-again child of God can have. It is the "peace" that comes to a person's heart when he is saved from his sin, and reconciled with God. That is why Paul gave this blessing of peace to the "*brethren*"—those who were saved. Paul could not have given this blessing to *unsaved* people, because unsaved people have not been made at peace with God. Here is how peace with God is made possible.

**Read Romans 5:1.** (“Justified” means “declared to be righteous.” Every Christian is justified.)

Now, you’ll notice that Paul says that we who are justified “***Have peace with God.***” Paul did not say, “*Let us have peace with God*” (as the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible reads): Paul said, “***We have peace with God.***” My friends, there is a huge difference between the statement “***We have peace with God***” and the statement, “*Let us have peace with God*”! To say “***We have peace with God***” is to make a definite statement about our position with God. To say “***We have peace with God***” means that the enmity between us and God has been removed. Now, if Paul had said, “*Let us have peace with God,*” it would imply that peace with God is not a sure thing. It would mean that we are *striving* to be at peace with God, but that we can’t really be positive that we have that peace. In short, it would mean that our salvation is not certain. It would mean that we are trying to be reconciled to God through some effort of our own. My friends, nothing could be further from the truth! Anyone who thinks he is good enough to earn his way into the gates of heaven is still lost in his sins, condemned, and on his way to hell! The Bible says that we *cannot* be saved by our own good works. Salvation is a free gift, which Christ purchased for us by taking our death penalty upon Himself on the cross; and we must, in simple, humble faith, receive that gift.

What is the difference between someone who *has* peace with God, and someone who does *not* have peace with God? Let’s see how Isaiah described it.

**Read Isaiah 57:19-21.**

It doesn’t matter how relatively “*near*” or “*far*” you are from the Lord. The Jewish people of Isaiah’s day were “*near*” the Lord, in that they had the Scriptures at their disposal, and thus knew all *about* the Lord; however, merely *knowing about* the Lord did not make them saved. Mere knowledge about God never saved anyone. *Every person*, no matter what his ethnicity, religion, education, privileges, station, wealth, or seeming morality, is a sinner, and is separated from God *by default*. You don’t have to do anything “really bad” to be separated from God; you were separated from Him from the moment you entered this world. In order to be saved, you must admit that you are a wicked rebel, who has broken God’s laws; and you must repent of your sin. (This means that you agree with God that your sin has earned you eternal death, and that you turn your heart, mind, and will toward Christ.) You must believe in your heart that Jesus paid the full penalty for your sin on the cross, and that His saving work is all-sufficient to save your soul. You must stop trusting in your own worthless self-righteousness, and, in simple faith, ask Christ to save you, and to be your Lord.

If you have not come to the Father through His Son Jesus, then your sin is still upon you: and God calls you “*wicked.*” You *do not* have peace with God. Instead, you are like the “*troubled sea*”—constantly troubled in heart and mind, constantly in turmoil, and casting up “*mire and dirt*” in your soul. (Perhaps you are so troubled, that you have thought of taking your own life.) My friend, should this Scripture describe you, I am here to tell you that God loves you; and He wants you to heed His call, and come to Him for salvation.

Do you see how important this statement “***Peace be to the brethren***” is? It is the same blessing that Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection, when He appeared to them in

the upper room. The first words that came out of Jesus' mouth were, "***Peace be unto you.***" To this very hour, Jesus is still declaring "peace" to all who place their trust in Him.

Now, let's talk about the word "***grace.***" What is "***grace***"? It is the unearned favour of God. It is something that we don't deserve, but which God, in His mercy, offers us. The Greek word for "grace" is *charis*; and *charis* literally means "gift." That is exactly how Paul describes salvation. It is a "gift." (See **Ephesians 2:8-9.**) Peace with God is possible only when a person receives the gift of God's grace. Have *you* received that grace? If you *have* received the gift of salvation, are you thanking Him daily for the grace that He has given you? Are you telling others about the gift you have received, so that *they* may receive His grace?

#### IV. **Privilege #4: You are a recipient of "love with faith" (vv. 23-24).**

There is one more privilege that we Christians have. Paul says that we are recipients of "***love with faith.***" (Read **verse 23.**) Now, you'll notice that this "***love with faith***" comes from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ. Both love and faith are gifts from God. Is your faith weak, Christian? If so, God can give you all the faith that you need! You need but ask Him. Are you having trouble showing God's love to others? If so, ask God to empower you to love as *He* loves. He has boundless love in store; and He is able to impart that love to you, and manifest it through your life, to others. **Romans 5:5** says that "***The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.***"

Now, there is one more thing that I would point out. In **verse 24**, Paul declared the grace of God to those who "***love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.***" (Read **verse 24 again.**) The word "***sincerity***" literally means "unconcernedness." In other words, true love is not mixed with selfish motives. Now, remember: who has received God's grace? Only saved people! So, then, if this grace has been declared to those who love Christ with sincerity, it means that loving Christ with sincerity is a mark of a person who has been truly saved. **In contrast, not loving Christ is evidence that one has not been saved!**

A person may *claim* to be saved, and even *think* that he is saved. A person may *say* that he has faith in Christ. However, *faith* in Christ cannot be separated from *love* for Christ; and love *always* manifests itself in *obedience*. Jesus said, "***If ye love me, keep my commandments.***" A person who claims to be saved, yet has never stopped living a wicked life, and shows no evidence of love for Christ, does *not* have true faith, and is no true child of God.

**Read 1 Corinthians 16:22.** (The word "***anathema***" means "cursed.")

We who are saved are no longer "***anathema.***" We are no longer under God's curse. We *do* have faith in Christ, and we *do* love Him. We have entrusted our souls to Christ for eternity. However, God wants our faith in Him, and our love for Him, to grow daily. *You*, in yourself, are not able to produce faith and love, Christian: but the Father has boundless faith and love to *give* to you, from His heavenly riches in Christ Jesus. Are you availing of those riches?

**Conclusion:** Multitudes of people in this world consider themselves to be Christians; but their lives show that Jesus Christ means nothing to them. They might get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside when they go to a Christmas service, and sing about the babe in the manger; and they may even shed some tears when they watch a movie about Christ's passion. However, there has never been a change in their lives through the

saving grace of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they use Christ's name when it is time to act "religious"; but there has never been a time in their lives when it dawned upon them they are lost in their sins and on their way to hell, and that that they need to repent. They do *not* have peace in their souls, and they do *not* know the joy of God's saving grace. They do not have these things in their lives, because they have never thrown aside their worthless religion and good works, and asked Christ to save them from their sin. Does this describe you? If so, I urge you to cry out to Jesus today, and trust Him to save you!

As we close our study of **Ephesians**, I would ask one more question, of those who are saved: How real are these privileges to you? Do you consider it an honour to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ? Are you doing the *work* of an ambassador? Do you reckon yourself to be a servant of Christ? Are you bearing the message of God's peace and grace to a lost world? Are you growing daily in faith in love?