



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

February 27, 2007



Dear friends,

Jackie and I greet you again in Jesus' wonderful name, I in Ukraine, and Jackie is in Minnesota.

I have just finished a week of teaching the four great lessons of Ephesians: Sit, Kneel, Walk, and Stand. Here is part of that teaching...

You're sitting with Jesus in Heavenly Places!

The apostle Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians to young believers who had been saved out of great spiritual darkness. The city of Ephesus was full of witchcraft and idolatry. Acts 19 is the record of Paul's evangelism and church planting in that city.

You might think that his letter to them would be full of warnings about going back to their demonic practices; but no, the book of Ephesians instead points them to higher ground. It focuses their attention purely on Christ and His great redemption.

Although the battle with Satan's kingdom is mentioned in the book, it is not until the very end, after Paul has described the great revelation of Christ and His church.

Only after speaking fully about Christ and about who we are in Christ, does Paul write about spiritual warfare: "*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*" Eph. 6:10

Standing firm against the devil is not the *first* lesson of Ephesians, but the *last* lesson of Paul's great teaching. As a great teacher, led by the Holy Spirit, Paul wanted to put first things first. The first thing to learn was NOT how to stand firm against the devil.

Indeed, the first lesson of Ephesians was not about standing. The first lesson was about being seated, about learning to sit down with Jesus.

This lesson is stated in Ephesians 2:5,6: "*While we were dead in our transgressions, he made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and **seated** us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*"

A Christian must first learn to sit, before he or she can learn to stand. Of course, he is speaking of our heart and our mind, rather than our body. It is in our hearts and minds that we learn

to rest in Christ first. And then we can learn to stand firm against the devil. The greatest power against the devil is to know you are at peace with God, and at rest in His love.

Christian, do you know that, in your heart and your spirit, you have been given a place to sit with Jesus and the Father in heaven? It is already true, and you are already there!!

What a glorious reality is described in the first two chapters of Ephesians, that all believers in Christ have not only been made alive, but they have been raised up to a very high place, the very place where Jesus has been placed.

Jesus was the One first seated in the heavenly place, "*seated by the Father at His own right hand, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come...*" Ephesians 1:20,21

That in itself is glorious news, to know that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, far above all other powers.

How much more glorious is the news that you and I have been raised up with Him, and seated WITH HIM in the heavenly places!!!

This is not about the future, when we die physically and go to heaven. No, this is the description of something that has already happened. It says He already raised us up, and already seated us with Jesus in the heavenly place!

Do you know where you are? Have you found your seat in heaven? Do you know that by faith you can take your seat, and sit down in your rightful place with the Father and the Son? This is not a place you deserve to be, but it was made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ.

The death and resurrection of Jesus accomplished complete forgiveness of all our sins. If only that took place, we would rejoice, for we would have peace with God. But that is only the beginning. God also took us up out of our destroyed or wasted lives and brought us right into His presence, and gave us a favored seat with Him.

This is the resting place of the believer, the place that was given to us freely with our salvation. It

is the result of our being justified by faith and having peace with God.

It is a spiritual place, of course, and speaks of the connection between us and God. It means that we are not far away from Him. Ephesians 2:13 says,

"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Later, in verse 18, we read that *"through Him (Christ), we have our access in one Spirit to the Father."*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do you realize that in your heart, in your spirit, you have been brought right into the presence of God? Do you realize that you have an open relationship with Him, and that you have a direct access to Him all the time?

Do you realize that God has already provided this, and that you do not have to work for it? Instead, just receive it. Just agree with God and say this to yourself: "I am seated with Jesus in the heavenly place!"

Brothers and sisters, we need the heavenly perspective on our lives. You probably understand that God is above your problems, and so is Jesus. But the truth is that you are also far above your problems. You have been brought up from the dead, and raised up above the problems of this world. You have been placed where Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father.

This means that in the middle of a problem, you must remember that you are with Jesus. You are above the problem and safe with Jesus at the right hand of God the Father.

This means you can look down on your problems. Your problems are smaller than God and your problems are beneath you. Instead of seeing your problems as mountains looming over you, you must look down on them from far above where you are in Christ.

If you ride in a passenger jet airplane, you will be carried so high that even tall mountains look small.

God has carried you up in Christ far above the problems of the world.

From that place you always find hope and faith and peace.

From that spiritual place, you can expect God to answer prayer and supernaturally intervene in your life.

From that place you will know that God and you will be able to overcome all your problems.

What's next...

Next week, on March 6, Gregory and myself, along with Anya our interpreter, will fly to a country to the east (mentioned in our last letter.) For security reasons, we won't mention the name of the country in this letter.

Our purpose is to be with a Christian family there who are evangelizing and beginning to develop church. Such activity in that country is illegal and dangerous. This Tajik missionary and father of four has already faced death for his faith in Christ more than once. In his home country, gunmen pointed weapons at his head and planned to shoot him for preaching. God preserved his life then, and also several other times when death seemed certain.

We are going there to establish the vision for reaching people with the gospel. We hope to strengthen the working relationship with this family and the people who have already come to Christ through their ministry.

Thank you for praying for us during the week of March 7-14 while we are in that country.

I will fly home on March 15.

"Strengthen the stakes...."

After being home a few weeks, I plan to return to Ukraine for several weeks of ministry away from the main church in various regions of the country where there are networks of village Churches of Praise.

We need to carry Bibles to many who do not yet have them, train the local pastors, encourage the people, and strengthen the church planters.

The Lord made it clear this winter that He wants the village churches to be strengthened this year. This direction came through Isaiah 54:2,3:

*"Enlarge the place of your tent; Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; **Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.** For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations And will resettle the desolate cities."*

It seems the "stakes" represent the hundreds of small village Churches of Praise.

Please pray with us for the strategy and plan to visit the 16 provinces (oblasts) of Ukraine that have Churches of Praise. I hope to visit all of them during 2007, and hope that other ministers and Bible teachers will join us in this effort.

Thank you for your prayer and support. As always, we can only move ahead with your prayer and support of our ministry.

With love,
John and Jackie