

## I. Introduction

- A. I have to start with a huge thank you to a couple hundred volunteers who made Easter possible last weekend. From the moment you drove into the parking lot, walked into the worship center, the butterflies, the decor, the cool picture spot with butterfly wings, the bricked off door on the stage, the awesome music, the countless volunteers who took care of kids, ushers, greeters, camera operators, audio, video, our incredible kid's choir. A huge thank you.
- B. And here's the cool thing — nobody wants any glory. You know why? Because for all we do, there's really only one name that matters. Jesus. Whatever needed to be accomplished, he did it. He did it, and he gets all the praise.
- C. Okay, so today, I'm starting a three week mini-series. I want to talk about

II. *Standing and State*

- A. We're looking at an amazing place in the Bible today. It has a special meaning for me. Because one of the verses in Ephesians 4 really impacted me as a young adult, when I was trying to figure out my place in the world.
- B. In case you're new, or have missed a few weeks, when we come to church, we open our Bibles together. We believe God guides our everyday lives through the Bible.
  - 1. He guides our thinking. He guides our choices. He guides our psychology.
- C. The only way to be wise, and healthy, and whole is to be grounded in the Bible.
- D. The place in the Bible we're focusing on today is called Ephesians. Ephesians were people. They lived almost 2,000 years ago in a place called Ephesus. This was a city in the Roman Empire.
- E. A man named Paul wrote this book. It was his letter to the Ephesians. He was their pastor for three years. Now, Paul is in prison for his faith. He remembers his friends. He reminds them of all he taught them about salvation and Jesus and God.
- F. And he reminds them about their place in the great big universe.
- G. Here's our key verse for today:
  - 1. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. (Ephesians 4:1)*
- H. So, one of the things you should know is that sometimes Bible verses are hard to understand the first time you read them. You have to be patient with yourself. So let me break this down.
- I. The person who is writing this is named Paul. He's the "I." He has also been arrested for standing up for his faith. That's why he calls himself a prisoner. He is in jail.
- J. This verse talks about two huge ways of looking at your life.
  - 1. The first way is your calling.
  - 2. The second way is your walk.
- K. The thing that Paul wants more than anything is that their walk would be worthy of their calling.
- L. This is actually a major theme in the Bible. It's everywhere. In theology, these two ways of looking at your life have been given names:
  - 1. Your calling is called your **STANDING**.
  - 2. Your walk is called your **STATE**.
    - a) Which means that...
  - 3. Your goal in life is to make your **STATE** live up to your **STANDING**.
    - a) Walk worthy of your high calling. Live up to your potential. Experience everything God has for you.
- M. This is a super-important teaching every child of God should understand.
- N. You need to understand what the Bible teaches about your Standing and State.

III. *Standing and State*

- A. Let me set this up, and then we're going to work through a chart together.
- B. Everything I'm going to teach today depends on one factor: you are saved. That means, you have received Jesus and put your faith in him. If you are saved, then I'm happy to talk with you, but these truths don't apply to you.
  - 1. The great thing is that you can be saved, and you can be saved today. I was going to say you can be saved any day, but none of us knows if we have tomorrow.
- C. So let's say you are saved.
- D. On the day that you were saved, God did something remarkable. God joined you to Jesus Christ. You became one with him. This is a kind of mystical and spiritual thing. You don't feel it when it happens. God promised it, so we take it by faith and move on.
  - 1. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*
- E. The instant you said yes to Jesus, you became a new creation. It's a really big deal. Old things passed away. All things became new. That is how God sees you.
- F. Here's the mind-blowing truth: to God, you look exactly like Jesus Christ. I'm not talking about our physical appearance. I'm talking about your moral and spiritual perfection.
- G. Morally and spiritually you are so joined to Jesus, that everything that is true about Jesus is now true about you.
  - 1. Is he perfect? Then to God, you are perfect too.
  - 2. Is he holy? Then, in God's eyes, you are flawlessly holy too, and God calls you a saint.
  - 3. Is Jesus powerful? Then, in God's eyes, you are able to do all things.
    - a) And on and on.
    - b) If it's true of Jesus, then God says it's true of you.
      - (1) But there's a problem here.
- H. The problem is that thing you did when you unloaded on the guy who took your parking space at Costco. Not very saintly. Not very perfect. Not very Christlike.
- I. So there is a difference. There is a difference between how God sees us and how we see us. It is a radical difference. I am in Christ, but I don't always act like it.
- J. How do we put these things together?
- K. We put them together by understanding our standing and our state.
- L. Let's work through our chart.

IV. *Standing and State*

- A. *Definition*
  - 1. *Standing: Official Status Before God. How God knows you. This is your High Calling in Christ. Perfectly holy, because sharing Christ's holiness.*
  - 2. *State: Your Everyday Lifestyle in the World. How you and others see yourself. More or less holy, depending on the day.*

- B. Term
  - 1. Standing: In Christ (New Self, “after the Spirit”)
  - 2. State: Walk (Old Self, “after the flesh”)
- C. Origin
  - 1. Standing: At Salvation (rebirth)
  - 2. State: At Birth
- D. Source
  - 1. Standing: Union with Christ
  - 2. State: Choices in life
- E. Nature
  - 1. Standing: Permanent, unchangeable
  - 2. State: Fluctuates, ups and downs
- F. Moral Quality
  - 1. Standing: Perfect
  - 2. State: Progressive
- G. Time
  - 1. Standing: Instantaneous/Eternal
  - 2. State: Gradual/Temporary
- H. Effort
  - 1. Standing: A Gift of Grace
  - 2. State: By Growth in Grace
- I. End Result
  - 1. Standing: Perfection
  - 2. State: Spiritual Maturity
- J. Resources
  - 1. Standing: Your Riches in Christ
  - 2. State: Maturity
- K. Psychology
  - 1. Standing: Resting, Believing
  - 2. State: Striving, Struggling
- L. Wholeness in Life (holiness)
  - 1. Standing: Root
  - 2. State: Fruit
    - a) “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)
  - 3. Result
    - a) There is coming a day when your state will exactly match your standing forevermore. That is when you die, or see Jesus face to face at his coming, which ever happens first.
    - b) On that day, your state will be as perfect as your standing. On that day, your enormous potential will come true. It will no longer be potential. Your potential will become actual. And you will blaze forth with a dazzling brilliance God intended all along.
    - c) Until then, you have these golden moments when you really do rise up to your high calling. You’ve loved a jerk. You’ve given generously. You’ve served someone unworthy. Your motives were pure, and you did something wonderful, and you know it was God in you. Have you ever had that feeling?
      - (1) When your state matches your standing, you’re a happy camper. When it doesn’t you’re kind of miserable.
- V. How You See Yourself
  - A. Big Idea 1: I am who God says I am.
  - B. Big Idea 2: I am who God says I am, even when I don’t act like it.
  - C. We are talking about your identity. We are talking about your sense of self. Who are you? Are you your standing or are you your state?
  - D. As Christians, we have to say you are your standing. The good one. You are your standing, though you don’t always act like it in your state.
  - E. Your identity is tied to Christ. Your identity is tied to how God sees you.
  - F. But, along comes the devil. He comes in a thousand different forms. Disapproving parents. Hostile children. Or memories haunting you from the past. Bullies. Mean girls. Stoned out parents. A spouse who cheated on you.
  - G. He whispers, God can’t accept you. Look at what a failure you are.
  - H. He always uses your state to attack your standing.
  - I. He calls your identity into question. He calls you names that God never calls you and never would.
    - 1. The devil attacks you by throwing your STATE in your face.
    - 2. This is his main thing today. In fact, the Bible calls him “the accuser” of God’s people (Revelation 12:10).
  - J. In this world, there will never be a day, no matter how saintly you become, where your state can’t be used to attack you.
  - K. So you begin to whisper to yourself the same lies the devil is whispering to you.
    - 1. God hates me, God ignores me.
    - 2. I’m worthless.
    - 3. I’ll never amount to anything.
    - 4. I should just die, the world would be a better place if I just died.
    - 5. I’ll never break this addiction.
      - a) I’ll never stop smoking, stop drinking, stop doing drugs.
    - 6. I’ll never get a job.
    - 7. I always pick losers.
    - 8. Why can’t I ever be a winner?
    - 9. I can’t make it on my own.
  - L. Is that the voice of God through your standing?
  - M. Or is that the voice of the Evil one through your state?

1. The devil's lies wound you. They create self fulfilling prophecies.
  2. Don't let him defeat you.
  3. Don't let him win.
  4. Don't let his lies take control of your identity.
  5. God has announced the truth about you.
  6. You need to study it. You need to declare it. You need to believe it. You need to confess it with your mouth.
    - a) I am forgiven (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Psalm 103)
    - b) I am accepted (Ephesians 1:6)
    - c) I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
    - d) I am united with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17)
    - e) I am bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)
    - f) I am adopted (Ephesians 1:5)
    - g) I am redeemed (Colossians 1:14)
    - h) I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)
    - i) I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1)
    - j) I am sealed by God (2 Corinthians 1:21)
    - k) I am protected from the Evil One (1 John 5:18)
    - l) I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)
    - m) I am able, and all sufficient, and competent (Philippians 4:13)
      - (1) I am all these things because I am one with Christ, and he is all these things and more.
  7. The only way you can live up to your high calling, the only way you can make your heavenly life into your earthly lifestyle, is if you first believe that what God has said about you is true.
  8. And this is enormously difficult. Faith is hard. Faith can be tough.
  9. You see, the devil has snuck all kinds of lies into your psychology. They lie dormant. They're curled up like a quiet rattle snake. Then something happens to you, and it's tempting or stressful or traumatic or hard. And BAM — the snake strikes. The lies come up to control you. They make you crazy, and make you depressed, and make you violent, and make you self-righteous and hyper critical and anything but Christlike.
  10. *Big Idea 3: My wounds and temptations run deeper than my convictions.*
    - a) I can say I believe God is good, but my woundedness probably tells me otherwise.
    - b) So what do we do about this? How do we rise above our wounds? How do overcome temptation? How do we defeat the devil's lies? What do we do?
    - c) *Big Idea 4: Through spiritual growth, my convictions begin to heal my wounds and break the power of my temptations.*
      - (a) Because the more you believe the truth about your standing, the more it shows up in your state. This is how God wired your psychology.
      - (b) Your STANDING is true truth, and everything else is ultimately a big fat lie, and it makes you crazy and dysfunctional and legalistic and desperate and sad.
      - (c) The way out is through spiritual growth.
        - i) This is how God heals your wounds, and delivers you from trauma, and breaks the strongholds of temptation in your life.
        - ii) There is no magic prayer for this. There is patient, steady spiritual growth over a lifetime. This takes Bible study and this takes prayer, more than anything else.
  - (2) And so...
- N. Grace Pathway
1. We have a golden opportunity for you called the Grace Pathway. I don't want anybody to be confused about this.
  2. The Grace Pathway is for everybody. It is for people who don't know Jesus. It is for people who do know Jesus.
    - a) It is for rookie believers — maybe you just received Jesus a few days ago.
    - b) It is for veteran believers — you received Jesus decades ago.
      - (1) You never stop growing.
      - (2) There is always another blessing to experience. Always another treasure to unearth. Always another stage of maturity in grace. And maturity in the Lord.
  3. So we have the Grace Pathway. It works on basic level. It works on an advanced level.
  4. What is it?
  5. The Grace Pathway is the pattern of spiritual growth that God gives us in the Bible. It consists of four milestones:
    - a) *God saves you.*
    - b) *God blesses you.*
    - c) *God grows you.*
    - d) *God uses you.*
  6. The Grace Pathway how you make your state begin to match your standing.
    - a) This is how you grow mature.
    - b) This is how you become more and more like Christ.
    - c) You display his wisdom.
    - d) You display his courage.
    - e) You display his character.
    - f) You display his love.
      - (1) Why? Because you are growing in grace. You are pushing away from the kiddie table, and joining the grown ups at a feast fit for royalty.
  7. I am super excited about our Grace Pathway Spring Semester. Check out what we have on [neighborhood.cc/grace-pathway](http://neighborhood.cc/grace-pathway):
    - a) God Saves You
      - (1) Essentials (3 sessions)
    - b) God Blesses You
      - (1) Secure Forever (3 sessions)
      - (2) Your Identity in Christ (3 sessions)
    - c) God Grows you

- (1) Who is God? (3 Sessions)
- d) God Uses You
  - (1) How to Share Your Faith (3 sessions)
  - (2) Understanding Your Spiritual Gifts (2 sessions)
- 8. We are committed to helping people find and follow God.
  - a) Find God — that's salvation. That's your standing.
  - b) Follow God — that's spiritual growth. That's your state.
- O. *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13,14)*
  - 1. This is the testimony of a really mature Christian.
  - 2. No, I haven't arrived. I still have some growing to do. I haven't apprehend — that means I have not yet laid hold of everything God had in mind for me on the day he saved me.
    - a) Neither have I.
    - b) Neither have you, right?
  - 3. But, he says, this one thing I do.
    - a) I love this.
    - b) When it comes to our life with God, most of us have to say, these many things I dabble in.
    - c) Here's a man who says this One Thing.
    - d) One priority. One main actionable item. What is it?
  - 4. It's spiritual growth. It's making his state live up to his standing.
    - a) Forgetting those things which are behind — don't let your past failures haunt you.
    - b) Reaching forward to those things where are ahead — discover the great potential that God has wired into your new nature, and start to make it real.
    - c) I press toward the goal — I have the football, and I'm getting to the end zone no matter how hard the devil tries to tackle me.
    - d) For the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. That is where we started today. That you would walk worthy of the high calling with which you were called in Christ Jesus.
      - (1) This one thing I do.
      - (2) This one priority I embrace... and never take it for granted.
        - (a) He says what I hope we all can say:
          - i) *PRIORITY ONE: The Grace Pathway*
  - 5. If you will do that, if you will get on a path of growth and stay on it... don't quit. Don't give up. Don't be on again off again with God.
  - 6. If you will get on the Grace Pathway and stay on it — if you will press toward the goal like your life depends on it... you will make some astounding discoveries. You will discover:
    - a) There is no need you face, that he hasn't supplied.
    - b) There is no wound you carry, that he can't heal.
    - c) There is no pain you feel, that he won't comfort.
    - d) There is no loss you've suffered, that he can't get you past.
    - e) There is no sin you've committed that he can't forgive.
    - f) And there is no problem you face that he can't solve.
    - g) He is the Lord of glorious unlimited resources, and these are at your beck and call if you will only:
      - (1) discover the truth about yourself.
      - (2) embrace the truth about yourself, and...
      - (3) by faith live the truth about yourself.
  - 7. When you walk out of here today, understand your potential.
    - a) You have the potential to love this week.
    - b) The potential to forgive an enemy.
    - c) The potential to give more than you thought you could.
    - d) The potential to lay down the cigarette, the joint, the bottle, to click away from the pornography.
    - e) The potential to close your mouth before the judgmental word comes out.
    - f) The potential to be healed.
    - g) The potential to speak a healing word and pray a healing prayer.
    - h) The potential to encourage somebody who's down.
    - i) The potential to get out of your own little cocoon and through kindness and grace, alter the shape of somebody's eternity.
      - (1) You have the potential to rise up to your high calling in Christ, to make your state match your standing.
      - (2) And that is my hope, and my prayer for you.