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WHAT DOES GOD THINK OF ME NOW?

Now that I'm a Christian, where do I stand with the Lord? How strong is this new relationship? Is it as shaky as my ever-changing emotions? What really happened the day I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior?

The answers to these questions can be found through a study of what is often referred to as positional truth. Our staff has combined their efforts in the following pages to show that our position in Christ is closely related to what God thinks of us now.

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WHO AM I, REALLY?

It's been said that each of us is at least four different people: (1) The person we think we are. (2) The person others think we are. (3) The person we think others think we are. And (4) the person we really are.

But who are we, really? Is there any better way of answering that question than to say that we are who God says we are? Our successes are what He says are our successes. Our failures are what He says are our failures. Our limitations are what He says are our limitations. Our potential is what He says is our potential.

Fine, you say. But what in the world does that mean? How can I know what God thinks of me? For example, I keep hearing that God loves me.

But I have mixed feelings about that. Deep down inside, I feel that He must hate me for the things I think and feel and do. Sometimes, when things are going right, I'm sure He must be smiling at me. But then, when I get bad news or when things start to go wrong, I get the impression that He's really disappointed or upset with

*Who are we,
really? We are
who God says
we are.*

me. When I'm good, I know He accepts me. But when I do something really bad, I'm not so sure anymore. I wonder, when God looks at me, what does He see?

WHAT GOD USED TO THINK OF ME

Before we were Christians, God saw us in a completely different way than He sees us now. He used to see us as:

- condemned (Jn. 3:18).
- lost (Mt. 18:11; 2 Cor. 4:3).
- guilty (Rom. 3:19).
- spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5).
- alienated from Himself (Eph. 4:18).
- His enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21).
- children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).

God saw us condemned because we did not live up to the light He had given us. He saw us as lost because we wandered aimlessly down our own sinful paths. He saw us as guilty because we kept breaking His laws. He saw

us as spiritually dead because we had separated ourselves from Him, the

*God saw us as
guilty because
we kept breaking
His laws.*

source of all life. He saw us as alienated, His enemies, and children of wrath because we kept choosing wickedness instead of goodness.

God, therefore, saw us as needing forgiveness. He saw us as needing to be found. He saw us as needing a Substitute to take away our guilt. He saw us as needing a new birth to make possible a restored relationship with Himself. He saw us as needing reconciliation—a removal of the hostility between ourselves and Him.

WHAT GOD THINKS OF ME NOW

Every Christian is seen by God as being “in Christ.” In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul told us that in Christ we are:

1. Blessed with every spiritual blessing (1:3).
2. Chosen before the beginning of time (1:4).
3. Loved (1:4).
4. Predestined (1:5,11).
5. Adopted (1:5).
6. Accepted (1:6).
7. Redeemed (1:7).
8. Forgiven (1:7).
9. Given wisdom and understanding (1:8).
10. Shown the mystery of His will (1:9-10).
11. Given a guaranteed inheritance (1:11,14).
12. Made “the praise of His glory” (1:12).
13. Secured by the Spirit (1:13).
14. Recipients of God’s power (1:19).
15. Made alive together with Christ (2:5).
16. Raised up and seated in the heavenlies (2:6).
17. Recipients of God’s grace and kindness (2:7).
18. God’s masterful workmanship (2:10).
19. Created for good works (2:10).
20. Brought near to God (2:13).
21. United into one body (2:15-16; 3:6).
22. Fellow citizens with other Christians (2:19).
23. Members of God’s household (2:19).
24. Built into the Spirit’s habitation (2:21-22).
25. Partakers of God’s promise (3:6).
26. Given bold and confident access to God (3:12).

Other parts of the New

Testament fill out this picture of who we are in Christ:

27. Children of God (Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).
28. Justified (Rom. 3:24; 5:1; 8:30).
29. Dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11).
30. Recipients of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).
31. No longer condemned (Rom. 8:1).
32. Foreknown (Rom. 8:29).
33. Called (Rom. 8:30).
34. Glorified (Rom. 8:30).
35. Sanctified (1 Cor. 1:30).
36. New creations (2 Cor. 5:17).
37. Reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19).
38. Righteous (2 Cor. 5:21).
39. Citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20).
40. Rescued from Satan's power (Col. 1:13).
41. Placed into God's kingdom (Col. 1:13).

42. Complete (Col. 2:10).
43. Perfect (Heb. 10:14).
44. Holy and royal priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9).
45. A chosen generation (1 Pet. 2:9).
46. A holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9).
47. God's own special people (1 Pet. 2:9).

What a tremendous list!

Compare this to the way God saw us before we trusted Christ as our Savior and Lord. We are a privileged people, aren't we? Not because of anything we deserve, but because of who we are in Christ.

Although it would be wonderful to discuss each item in the preceding list of who we are in Christ, the size of this booklet prohibits us from doing so. Instead, we will take a close look at how Paul answers the question "What does God think of me now?" from the first chapter of Ephesians.

THE EPHESIANS FACTOR

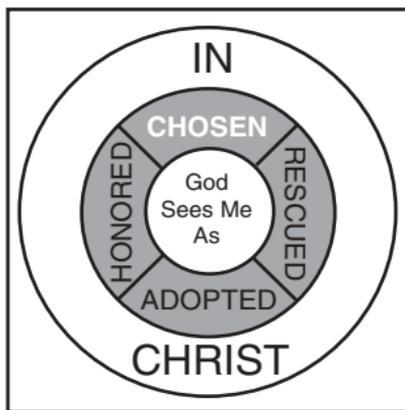
Since the book of Ephesians uses the expression *in Christ*, or its equivalent, more than any other book (35 times), we will turn to it as the basis for our study. From the first chapter we will discover that when God looks at us, He doesn't just see us. He sees us as inseparably united with Christ. More specifically, He sees us as:

1. Chosen In Christ (v.4).
2. Rescued In Christ (v.7).
3. Adopted In Christ (v.5).
4. Honored In Christ (vv.7-14).

As we study these truths, we should be both encouraged and challenged. It's encouraging to realize the richness of our position in Christ. But

this knowledge should challenge us to respond with proper attitudes and conduct. The overall principle is this: *Privilege always brings responsibility.*

I. GOD SEES ME AS:



Chosen In Christ (1:4)

The first answer to our question “What does God think of me now?” is that He sees me as one who is chosen. This answer takes us back to the eternal past, even before God created the world. Before time as we know it began, God chose us to salvation. In fact, every Christian is a chosen individual. But we are not

chosen on our own merits.

We are chosen in Christ:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:3-4).

These words bring us to the wonderful and yet mysterious truth of election. The Bible teaches that salvation begins with God, not with us (Rom. 8:33; 1 Th. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2). It began with Him in eternity past when He chose us, as stated here in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" (Jn. 15:16).

The teaching that God chose some to salvation has troubled many people. They have said things like: "That's unfair!" "It takes away from human freedom!"

Paul demolished the objection that election isn't fair. In Romans 9:14-16 he wrote:

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

But isn't it possible that God merely chooses those people He knows will choose Him? No, not according to Paul. Look at what He says in Romans 9:11-13. Speaking of God's choice of Jacob over his older twin Esau, he wrote:

(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election

might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

Paul said that God freely and sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau. His choice had nothing to do with any decisions He saw them making ahead of time.

Even though God has chosen us, we are responsible to choose God.

The Bible also teaches, however, that even though God has chosen us, we are responsible to choose God. The words of Jesus in John 6 show both sides of this truth. In verse 44 He said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws

him." But He also said, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life" (v.40). God has the sovereign right to choose whomever He will, but everyone has the responsibility to choose God.

The apostle Paul did not introduce the doctrine of election to stir up controversy or speculation. He did so to assure us that our salvation doesn't rest on the unsteady foundation of our weak and sometimes faltering faith. It has its basis in God. It is all rooted in His plan that reaches back before the creation of the world. It reaches forward into future eternity when in Christ we will be perfectly holy and without blemish, in fact as well as in standing.

God chose us in Christ both for present salvation and for future perfection. We need not go through life

afraid that sometime or somehow we will in a moment of weakness lose our salvation. It doesn't rest on our own fickle faith. It stands firmly on God, His plan, and His work.

Our Response

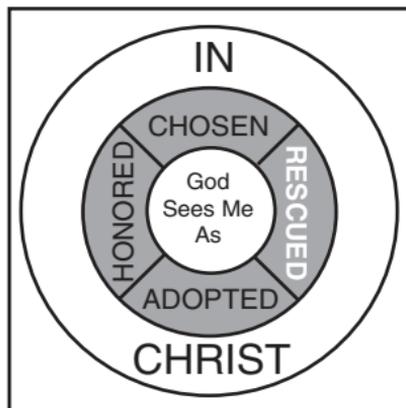
- Knowing that God chose us in Christ should reassure us when we doubt God's love for us.
- Knowing that God chose us in Christ should cause us to be overwhelmed with gratitude and a desire to be more committed to serve Him.
- Knowing that God chose us in Christ to be "holy and without blemish" should cause us to make it our goal to live that way.

God's Response

Surely God is pleased when our attitudes and actions show that we see ourselves as chosen in Christ. On the other hand, He must be grieved when we refuse to accept His view of us, when

we are ungrateful, and when we have little concern about living up to our high and privileged position as His chosen ones. Our position in Christ is secure. Although the joy that comes from an awareness of this position can be withheld, our failures will not change our status as a chosen one.

2. GOD SEES ME AS:



Rescued In Christ (1:7)

As we continue with our answer to the question "What does God think of me now?" using Ephesians as our basic text, we discover that we were not only chosen by God but also

rescued by Him. This rescue is represented by Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:7, "In Him [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Our rescue in Christ is described by two important words: redemption and forgiveness. In Christ we are redeemed. In Christ we are forgiven.

We Are Redeemed.

Redemption is not a commonly used word, but the meaning of the term is not difficult to understand. To redeem a slave in ancient times meant to set him free by paying a price. Since the slave was the property of his owner, he could not leave his position as a slave until someone paid the purchase price to his owner.

The redeeming of a slave illustrates our spiritual redemption through Christ's blood. We are free from the

guilt and power of sin because Jesus paid the ransom price. Paul wrote, "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. 1:7). The Lord Jesus said that He came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28).

The ransom price for our redemption was Christ's death. Another way of saying it is that He paid this ransom price "through His blood." The expression "through His blood" denotes the totality of Christ's work as our Savior—His mission as God in the flesh, His sinless life, His undeserved suffering, His substitutionary death, and His glorious resurrection.

To whom did Christ make this payment for our redemption? Some early church fathers said that He paid it to the devil. But the devil doesn't own us, God does! It's true that Satan has great power over mankind

(1 Jn. 5:19), but God owns everything and everyone. The ransom price, therefore, had to be paid to Him. As the holy Judge, God sees all people outside of Christ as guilty of breaking His moral laws and as deserving the punishment of death—eternal separation from Him.

God cannot remain right if He lets wrong go unpunished.

God cannot remain right if He lets wrong go unpunished. The ransom price must be paid to satisfy His very nature. That's what Jesus did. The second person of the eternal Trinity became one of us and took the punishment we deserve. This made it possible for God to release us from the guilt and slavery of our sin without

compromising His character in the process. Paul declared that God brought about redemption through Christ's death in order that He might retain His honor while letting sinners go free (Rom. 3:21-26).

In Christ, we who believe have been set free:

- ***We are free from the law*** (Gal. 3:10,13; 4:1-5). We do not need to place ourselves under the rules and regulations of the Old Testament law-system or even think of any kind of law-keeping as necessary for salvation.
- ***We are free from sin's guilt***. Because Jesus Christ paid our ransom price, we have been delivered from the place of condemnation and brought into the place of forgiveness and acceptance. This is the meaning of justification (Rom. 5:1).

- ***We are free from sin's power.*** We have been delivered from slavery to sin and Satan so that we can live victoriously. In Titus 2:14 we are told that Jesus Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

We Are Forgiven.

In paying the price for our rescue, God fully forgave us. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have . . . the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Now that’s total forgiveness! What a tremendous concept!

The Greek word translated “forgiveness” here means “release,” “pardon,” “cancellation.” The totality of this release from guilt, this pardon of transgression, and this cancellation of our debt is expressed in the words

“according to the riches of His grace.” This grace has infinite worth.

In summary, then, because we are in Christ we are free—free from the guilt of our sin, free from

Our eternal safety is assured because God has canceled all our debt. Jesus Christ paid the full price for all our sin.

the domination of our sin nature, free from bondage to Satan, free from enslavement to the world. And we are forgiven. Our eternal safety is assured because God has canceled all our debt. Jesus Christ paid the full price for all our sin. What freedom! What riches are ours in Christ!

Our Response

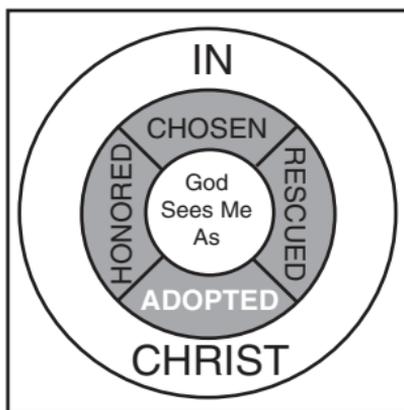
- Knowing that in Christ we have been redeemed from sin's guilt, we can have confidence that we will never be condemned.
- Knowing that in Christ we have been released from sin's power, we can overcome the sinful world-system in which we live, the self-centeredness of our fallen nature, and the temptations of the devil.
- Knowing that God has bought us for Himself gives us reason to be thankful, submissive, and ready to serve.

God's Response

God rejoices when our behavior reflects His view of us as having been rescued from sin's penalty and power. But He is grieved when we live as slaves of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He is unhappy when we don't show appreciation for the price He paid for our rescue. God may even allow

us to live powerless, guilt-ridden lives. But He will always treasure us as those whom He rescued at great cost. He is ready to forgive and ready to restore our power over sin and our peace of mind.

3. GOD SEES ME AS:



Adopted In Christ (1:5)

God views those who have received His Son as full heirs of all His riches. Paul declared that in Christ God both chose us and "predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph. 1:5). This adoption goes beyond being made a member of God's

family. The term *adoption* refers to giving someone adult status with full rights of inheritance. The Romans and Greeks were almost fanatical about a male heir. If they were childless they would adopt a boy who was

“Christ’s future inheritance is wrapped up in His church. We are ‘joint heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:17), which means that He cannot claim His inheritance apart from us.”
Warren Wiersbe

nearly grown up, giving him all the rights of an heir. Even in instances where there were several sons, parents

might “place as son” the second or third boy if they believed the oldest would not be a good manager of the family property. In either case, the adoption ceremony gave the favored young man adult status.

In salvation we enter God’s family by both birth and adoption. God imparts new life to us, making us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4), “little children” in His family (1 Jn. 2:1,12). At the same time, we are given adult status as heirs. In our birth we are newborn babies (1 Pet. 2:2), but as adopted sons and daughters we are already full heirs. We can claim our inheritance! We can enjoy our wealth! We can experience the relationship of Romans 8:14-16.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear,

but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

This in-Christ adoption to which all of God's children were predestined also has a future aspect. We read about this in Romans 8:22-23.

We know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

We now have adult standing and full heirship. But we haven't cashed in on the full riches it affords. Furthermore, our adoption into God's family is a rather private affair right now. The world can't see

how rich we are. John wrote: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 Jn. 3:1-3).*

In Christ, we have been given adult status in God's family. We are heirs of heaven with Jesus Christ, who is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters (Heb. 2:10-12). Although the world cannot see how rich we are now, that will change when Jesus Christ comes for us and gives us our resurrection bodies!

Our Response

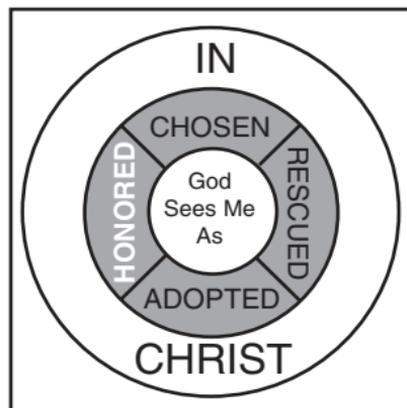
- Knowing that in Christ we are members of God's family should cause us to live up to the family name by being kind, honest, true, loyal, and pure.
- Knowing that we are full heirs with Christ should give us a confident, assured, triumphant attitude.
- Knowing that all who are in Christ are members of God's family should motivate us to treat one another like brothers and sisters.

God's Response

Because God has adopted us as full-grown sons and heirs with Christ, He is pleased when we live up to His view of us as spiritual adults and future kings. However, He is distressed when we act like spiritual infants or hapless paupers. If we fail to see ourselves as members of God's family, we will not experience His

close, loving, fatherly presence. But He is always eager to restore the intimacy when we confess our failures to Him.

4. GOD SEES ME AS:



Honored In Christ (1:7-14)

When God views us in Christ, He sees us as inducted into the highest honor society of all. God made us part of His "inner circle" by revealing to us His plan that in Christ we and all nature will eventually be brought together in beautiful oneness. We still live on earth and share all the imperfections of life on this

planet, but in Christ we have already been given our share of the “inheritance” of the saints (v.11), we possess the Holy Spirit as the “guarantee” of glory (vv.13-14), and we have been made to “sit together in the heavenly places” where Jesus is (2:6).

Our honor in Christ is both present and future. Paul spoke of it as a reality right now, but he also referred to it as a wonderful anticipation. Because God sees us in Christ as very special, He has made us objects of unique honor, given us a unique role, and made us His unique possession.

God has made us objects of unique honor. Paul said that God honored us by giving us special revelation.

Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that

in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:9-12).

We are the ones to whom God has chosen to reveal “the mystery of His will.” He has let us in on His plan—a plan that angels could only “desire to look into” (1 Pet. 1:12). Warren Wiersbe writes:

The word *mystery* has nothing to do with things eerie. It means “a sacred secret, once hidden but now revealed to God’s people.” We believers are part of God’s “inner

circle.” We are able to share in the secret that God will one day unite everything in Christ. . . . Sin is tearing everything apart, but in Christ, God will gather everything together in the culmination of the ages (*Be Rich*, Victor Books, p.21).

**“We believers
are part of God’s
‘inner circle.’”**
Warren Wiersbe

God honored us by letting us in on His wonderful plan. He even gave us priority over His angels. They had to learn indirectly as He revealed Himself and His plans to us. In so doing He made us members of His “inner circle.” And He has assured

us that we are an essential element in His divine program of history.

God has given us a unique role. Ephesians 1:12 says that we are to “be to the praise of His glory.” We bring special glory to God because we are trophies of His grace. Both now and forever, we can sing a song of praise to God that even the sinless angels cannot sing.

In Revelation 5, the 24 elders (who represent the redeemed) sing “a new song” to Jesus Christ:

You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

The old song by Johnson Oatman says:

But when we sing
redemption's story,
They will fold their wings,
For angels never
knew the joy
That our salvation brings.

No, angels do not know
the joy of salvation. And
they cannot praise God
for His grace in the same
way that we can. We have a
unique role as His redeemed
ones.

*We bring special
glory to God
because we
are trophies of
His grace.*

**God has made us
His unique possession.**
God has honored us in
Christ and refers to us as His
special treasure. Paul spoke
of us as God's "purchased
possession" (Eph. 1:14). God
thinks so highly of us who

are in Christ that He gave
us the Holy Spirit as His
guarantee of eternal glory.
The Holy Spirit in us today
is God's downpayment,
assuring us that we will
share heaven with Him.
Paul put it this way:

*In Him also we have
obtained an inheritance,
being predestined
according to the purpose
of Him who works all
things according to the
counsel of His will, that
we who first trusted in
Christ should be to the
praise of His glory. In
Him you also trusted, after
you heard the word of
truth, the gospel of your
salvation; in whom also,
having believed, you
were sealed with the Holy
Spirit of promise, who is
the guarantee of our
inheritance until the
redemption of the
purchased possession,
to the praise of His glory
(Eph. 1:11-14).*

We are unique because we are twice God's—by creation and by redemption. This truth is illustrated by the following story. A little boy carved out a small boat and put it into a pond, only to lose it as it was carried out by the current. He cried in disappointment. But a few weeks later he saw it in a pawn shop window. He wanted it so badly that he worked at extra projects until he had enough money to buy it. Walking home with it, he said, "Little boat, you are twice mine. First I made you and lost you. Then I bought you back." That's what God has done for us.

Paul referred to our special place as God's unique and eternal treasure in Ephesians 2:4-7. He said:
God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us

alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

***We are unique
because we are
twice God's—by
creation and by
redemption.***

We are to be the great eternal exhibit of the wisdom and love and grace of God in Christ. The verb translated "show" really means "to display," "to exhibit." (See how it is used in Romans 2:15 and Titus 3:2.) All the other intelligent

beings God has created, the myriads of angels and any other sinless beings that may exist in God's great and vast creation, will see us as His special trophies—trophies of grace. They will marvel as they witness God's kindness to us through the ages of eternity.

Our Response

- Knowing that God favored us with special revelation should make us thankful for the Bible and help us to be diligent in studying it.
- Knowing that we are saved “to the praise of the glory of His grace” should stimulate us to worship, praise, and adoration.
- Knowing that we are God's special possession because we are “twice His” should move us to express our gratitude by godly living.

God's Response

God is glorified when we who have been honored by

Him as His special people respond to His grace by listening to His Word, by praising Him in heartfelt worship, and by seeking to please Him with godly living. But He is insulted when His favored ones show little regard for His Word, little interest in praise, and little desire for godliness. Such behavior makes it difficult for God to give us gentle guidance, joyful assurance, and living hope.

When we fail to see ourselves as honored by God, He doesn't change our position in Christ. God will always see us as set apart for a unique honor, as called to a unique role, and as chosen to be His unique possession. However, when we begin to see ourselves as He sees us, He will make the wonderful truth of our position in Christ a living reality in our daily experience.

LIVING UP TO OUR REPUTATION

We have been using Ephesians as a guide and answering the question, “What does God think of me now?” We have observed that His opinion of us is determined by our position in Christ. Because we are chosen, rescued, adopted, and honored in Christ, God sees us as part of the heavenly realm.

But how are we to respond to this? It should fill us with *gratitude*, first of all. It should also cause a deep *joy* to reign within our hearts and spill over into our everyday lives. We should be overwhelmed with the great *privilege* of being identified with God’s Son. And we should be filled with *expectation* as we look forward to the glorious fulfillment of all that

began with us in Christ.

But that is not all.

We should also accept the responsibility for Godlike behavior that comes with our position in Christ. Since we are in Him, we should be living for Him and growing in our likeness to Him.

*Since we are
in Christ,
we should be
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and growing
in our likeness
to Him.*

But how do we do that? Once again, Ephesians helps us. The first three chapters are *doctrinal* in nature, teaching us what it means to be in Christ. The concluding three chapters, however, are *practical* in

tone, telling us how to live up to our reputation in Christ. Let's briefly walk through Ephesians 4–6 and see what Paul said about living as members of the heavenly realm.

- **Live up to your position (4:1-3).** Walk worthy of your identification with Christ by being humble, gentle, patient, loving, and united.
- **Use your spiritual gifts (4:7-16).** The abilities Christ has given you must be put into practice within the church.
- **Put off the old life (4:17-19).** Reject the futility of the devil's way of life.
- **Put on the new life (4:20-24).** Decide to live in accordance with your position in Christ.
- **Love others (5:2).** We are to love people sacrificially, as Christ loved the church.

- **Stay away from wicked people (5:5-7).** They will drag you back toward the darkness.
- **Walk in light (5:8-9).** We do this by manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.
- **Walk wisely (5:15).** Avoid the wasted days of the old way of life.
- **Let the Holy Spirit fill you (5:18-21).** Let Him take full control of your life.
- **Put on the armor of God (6:10-17).** This will protect you from Satan's attacks.
- **Pray continually (6:18-20).** Let all of your thoughts, deeds, and circumstances become a cause for communication with God.
When you are following these directives and growing in holiness, you will be living up to your reputation in Christ.

PICTURES OF OUR POSITION IN CHRIST

The New Testament portrays what it means to be in Christ by using several metaphors or pictures. A brief look at them will help us to appreciate more fully the wonders of our position in Christ.

Head And Body. The apostle Paul was speaking of believers in Christ when he wrote:

He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23).

Paul was speaking here of the relationship between Christ and the church. A body and its head are one unit. In the same way, believers and Christ are one. The parts of the body relate

equally with the head and they cannot function separately from the head. As members of Christ's body, we are inseparably linked with Him. What He dictates, we do. And when one part of the body hurts, all parts hurt.

Branch And Vine. A believer is to Christ as a branch is to the vine from which it grows:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).

The branch originates in the vine and draws its nourishment from it. Without the vine, the branch would quickly wither and die. Our relationship with Christ is as the branch to the vine. We were created in Him, we are nourished in Him, and in Him we produce fruit. Apart from Him we have no life.

Cornerstone And Building.

Believers are the building and Christ is the cornerstone.

Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ

Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:20-21).

A brick lying by itself has no purpose or meaning. But when it takes its place in a building, alongside all the other bricks that make up the building, it has an identity and purpose. And it is all held together and given

meaning in the cornerstone.

When the bricks are fitted in line with the cornerstone, the walls become solid and straight.

We are all part of one building—the church. Christ is the cornerstone. He is the One who

The seven “togethers” of the Christian. We are:

1. Crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).
2. Dead with Christ (Col. 2:20).
3. Buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4).
4. Made alive with Christ (Eph. 2:5).
5. Raised together with Christ (Col. 3:1).
6. Sufferers together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).
7. Glorified together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

—A. H. Strong

holds it all together and gives each brick, each believer, individual identity and worth.

Shepherd And

Sheep. We are related to Christ as a flock of sheep is related to the shepherd. Jesus describes His relationship to the sheep this way:

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep . . . My sheep hear My voice,

and I know them, and they follow Me (Jn. 10:14,27).

The

shepherd is the guide and protector of the sheep—the one who leads them to water, to pasture and to the safety of the sheepfold. As our shepherd, Christ watches over us and cares for us as His own. We are part of His flock.

Bridegroom And Bride. The apostle Paul indicated that our relationship with Christ is like that of a bride and groom. In Ephesians 5:25,27, Paul stated:

26

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also

loved the church and gave Himself for her . . . that He might present her to Himself a glorious church . . . that she should be holy and without blemish.

We are His select ones—His chosen bride. Because of

that, the truth of the unity of a husband and wife becoming one flesh is applied to our relationship with the Lord Jesus (Eph. 5:31-32).

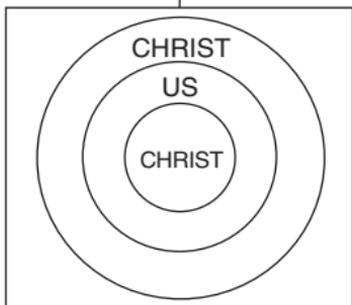
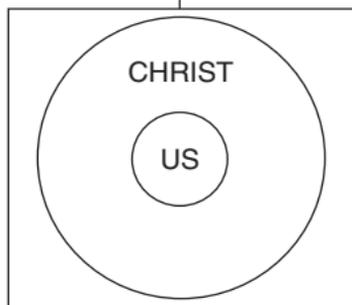
Our union with Christ is:

- **Organic**—We are members of Christ and part of His body (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30).
- **Vital**—our life is dominated by Christ, who lives within us (Gal. 2:20; Col 3:3-4).
- **Spiritual**—The Holy Spirit is the source and author of our union (Rom. 8:9-10).
- **Permanent**—Our union can never be diminished or destroyed (Jn. 10:28; Rom. 8:35-39).
- **Mysterious**—Union with Christ was unknown until the New Testament church age (Eph. 5:32; Col. 1:27).

CHRIST IN US

We have been talking about the believer's

position in Christ. We have seen that we are in union with Christ and identified with Him in His death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation. But that is only part of the story, for the Bible also teaches that Christ is in us. The apostle Paul expressed this aspect of our rich relationship with Christ when he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Thus our complete relationship with the Lord Jesus may be indicated by a three-circled diagram, as



shown below. This special relationship applies to all believers, for Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus "that Christ may dwell in your

hearts through faith" (3:17). And he spoke to the Colossians of the mystery now revealed: "Christ in you, the hope of

glory" (1:27). And Jesus indicated this aspect of His relationship with us in His prayer to the Father when He used the phrase "I in them" (Jn. 17:23,26).

We are in Christ; He is in us. This formula expresses the depth and wealth of our relationship with the Lord

Jesus. And it gives to us identity, confidence, hope, and a stirring motivation to walk in holiness.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF GOD?

We have seen that the answer to the question “What does God think of me now?” depends on your answer to another question: *What do you think of God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ?*

In this booklet we have pointed out that if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, you have become a member of God’s kingdom. You are a citizen of heaven. You are part of God’s family.

Now that God sees you as His child, you are responsible to live up to your new name and position. How are you doing? Is your walk worthy of Christ? Are you living as a citizen of heaven? Are you growing steadily in your Christian life? If not, you have some work to do. Confessing your failure,

ask God to forgive you. Then, depend on the Holy Spirit to help you grow in obedience.

But what if you have never trusted Christ as your Savior? Then God thinks of you as:

- still “in your sins” (Jn. 8:21,24).
- “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).
- alienated from Himself (Col. 1:21).
- His enemy (Col. 1:21).

If this describes you, what should you do? Acknowledging your sin and your inability to save yourself, call on Jesus Christ. Place your trust in Him, asking Him to save you. The Bible says:

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (Jn. 1:12).

CHANGED LIVES

Some Christians don't care to hear doctrinal teaching about our position in Christ. They think it has very little practical value. We don't agree! In this study we have tried to show that every aspect of our position in Christ has corresponding practical truths.

Let's look at how three people's lives were changed after they gained a better understanding of what it means to be in Christ.

A Better Self-Image. A deeply discouraged man called a RBC Ministries counselor for help. He said that even though he had become a Christian and had joined a good church, he still found himself going on an occasional drinking spree. He said that he felt worthless and that he couldn't blame his wife

and children for leaving him. He wanted to be accepted by people but he felt unworthy to reach out to anybody. He saw himself in a vicious circle. His drinking contributed to his feelings of rejection and his feelings of rejection drove him back to the bottle.

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The counselor, after being satisfied that this caller had a solid understanding of salvation truth, read to him from Ephesians 1 and gave him the basic truths set forth in this book.

Today, this man enjoys going to church, has found some Christian friends, and hasn't been on a binge for more than a year. He says that his path to victory started when he began to understand his riches in Christ.

*His path to
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Victory Over Sin.

A prominent Christian speaker said that a young man came to him after a service and asked him to pray with him about a nagging sin in his life. The preacher asked him if he had already prayed about it alone and the young man

answered, "Yes, of course." "Did you pray with others about this sin?" the speaker inquired. Again the answer was yes. Then he said, "I don't think I'm going to pray with you. Instead, I want you to understand what happened when you were saved." He took the young man to Ephesians 1 and Romans 6 and told him that being in Christ meant he was already a citizen of heaven, that he had died to sin just as Christ did, and that he had to accept that this was true.

Then he said, "Whenever you are tempted, remind yourself of who you are in God's sight. This will help you see how inappropriate it would be for you to continue in sin. Then, remember that because Jesus overcame the power of sin, you can see yourself as an overcomer with Him." A few weeks later the young man returned with a huge

smile, excited about the victory he had been experiencing.

Abiding In Christ.

A young woman with remarkable singing ability was greatly distressed because she knew that her life didn't correspond with the Christian songs she was singing. Pride, self-will, and self-centeredness ruled her life. She had become a Christian as a child and had been well-instructed in the Scriptures. She knew exactly what was meant when somebody talked about our riches in Christ. And she clearly understood the difference between a Christian's position and practice. But she knew that something was missing.

One day she heard a sermon on the words of Jesus, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit" (Jn. 15:5). Although she knew that she

was in Christ, she hadn't found this truth very significant. Now she realized why. She hadn't been abiding in Christ. She had not experienced the

***She had not
experienced
the riches of
her position
in Christ
because she
had not explored
His Word and
enjoyed a close
relationship
with Him.***

riches of her position in Christ because she had not explored His Word and enjoyed a close relationship with Him.

When she combined her knowledge of her position in Christ with the practice of having close fellowship with Him, she began to experience His power in her life. She automatically began to bear fruit.

***As Christians,
our goal is
to practice
our position.***

In Christ we are chosen as God's special people, rescued from sin and its consequences, adopted as full heirs in God's family, and honored as His special treasure. That's our standing or position. But that's not the whole picture!

Our citizenship is in heaven, but we are still

living on this planet. We have been made perfect, yet we are sinners living in imperfect bodies. We worry about earthly things when our inheritance is in heaven. We seek the honor of men even though we have been specially honored by God. In other words, our state or practice does not yet equal our standing or position. As Christians, our goal is to bring these two together—to practice our position. To do this, we need to remind ourselves daily of our riches in Christ and then abide in Him by practicing His presence.

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