

Standing and State

Perfect in Christ, Still Growing on Earth

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Standing and State – Perfect in Christ, Still Growing on Earth

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Introduction to the Series

There are two statements in Philippians 3 that look like a flat contradiction until the Bible student learns to distinguish standing from state. Paul says in verse 12, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” and then says in verse 15, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” In one verse Paul is not perfect; three verses later he includes himself among those who are perfect. The religious corrector immediately reaches for another translation, a lexicon, and a scholarly explanation long enough to make everyone forget the question. But the King James Bible is not confused, Paul did not lose his train of thought, and the Holy Ghost did not change doctrines between sentences. Paul was perfect in his standing because he was complete in Christ, yet he remained unfinished in his state because he had not completed his course, received his glorified body, or reached final conformity to the Saviour. He was perfect before God and still pressing toward the mark on earth.

That distinction is the foundation of this series. The believer’s standing is his fixed, judicial, spiritual, and eternal position before God because he has been placed in Jesus Christ. His state is his present condition as he walks through this world—his fellowship, conduct, growth, discernment, obedience, usefulness, testimony, and practical holiness. Standing concerns what Christ has accomplished for the believer; state concerns how consistently the believer is living in the light of that accomplishment. Standing is settled by the blood; state is affected by the walk. Standing is perfect because Christ is perfect; state fluctuates because the Christian still carries Adam’s flesh. Standing cannot improve because Colossians 2:10 says, “And ye are complete in him.” State must improve because 2 Peter 3:18 commands, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” A complete standing and a developing state are not rival doctrines. They are two rails upon which a rightly divided Christian life runs.

The believer’s standing is not God pretending that his daily conduct is flawless. God sees every sinful thought, selfish motive, neglected duty, careless word, and wasted opportunity more clearly than the believer sees them himself. Standing means God has judged the believer’s sin in the body of His Son and placed the believer into Christ’s righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” God does not call evil conduct good; He points to Calvary and declares that its eternal penalty has already been paid. The Christian does not stand before God dressed in the faded garments of his best religious afternoon. He stands “in him.” Religion starches Adam’s grave clothes and presents the corpse for inspection. Grace buries Adam’s claim and clothes the believer in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1 describes that standing with language strong enough to make every legalist nervous. The believer is blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” He is chosen “in him,” accepted “in the beloved,” and redeemed “through his blood.” He possesses “the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” and is sealed “with that holy Spirit of promise.” None of those blessings rests upon the emotional temperature, recent performance, or religious reputation of the Christian. Feelings can rise and fall like a cheap thermometer nailed outside a country store, but Christ does not rise and fall with them. The believer may feel strong one morning and miserable by nightfall, but no angel rewrites Ephesians to accommodate the weather inside his head. Standing is not what the Christian presently feels about himself. It is what God has eternally declared concerning him in Christ.

The Christian’s state, however, can become disgraceful. First Corinthians addresses believers who were “sanctified in Christ Jesus” and “called to be saints,” yet Paul also called them “carnal.” They divided over preachers, tolerated fornication, took one another before heathen judges, abused Christian liberty, dishonored the Lord’s supper, competed over spiritual gifts, and entertained confusion concerning the resurrection. Their standing was perfect while their state resembled a religious junkyard after a windstorm. Paul did not tell them their behavior was acceptable because they were secure, nor did he tell them to get saved again because they were carnal. He rebuked them as sanctified saints behaving beneath their position. Grace did not excuse their filth; their standing in Christ made the filth more shameful. A pig in the mud is following its nature. A son of God wallowing beside it has forgotten his nature, ownership, and name.

Failure to distinguish standing and state drives doctrine into one of two ditches. The legalist makes salvation depend upon daily conduct. His eternal life rises and falls with his performance, his assurance changes with his feelings, and the finished work of Christ is placed on a religious payment plan managed by Adam’s flesh. He is saved before breakfast, condemned by lunch, restored at the altar, and uncertain again before bedtime. He begins in the Spirit and then expects the flesh to keep what grace gave him. Galatians 3:3 asks, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” The legalist’s entire system answers yes. He trusts Christ to pull the sinner out of the pit and trusts the sinner to keep Christ’s hands from slipping.

In the opposite ditch lies the lawless professor who uses eternal security as a mattress upon which to sleep through every commandment addressed to the Christian. He imagines that because standing cannot be lost, state cannot matter. Romans 6 asks his question before he has time to clear his throat: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” The answer is “God forbid.” Grace does not place the believer on probation, but neither

does it give the flesh diplomatic immunity. Titus 2 says the grace that brings salvation teaches believers to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Grace is not God installing padded walls around rebellion so nobody gets hurt. It is God saving the sinner completely and then teaching the saint to live like he belongs to the Saviour.

The distinction also explains sanctification. Hebrews 10:10 says believers “are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,” while 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” The believer has been sanctified positionally, must pursue sanctification practically, and will be sanctified completely when Christ changes his body. He has been set apart in Christ, he is learning to live as God’s possession, and one day his entire condition will be conformed to the Saviour. The saint is not working to become God’s property. He is commanded to stop treating purchased property as though the devil still held the title deed. Salvation establishes ownership; practical sanctification begins cleaning out the rooms.

The conflict between standing and state also appears in the two natures. The new man is created “in righteousness and true holiness,” while the old man “is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Salvation does not repair the old man, improve the flesh, or place Adam into a religious rehabilitation program. Romans 8:7 says the carnal mind “is enmity against God” and “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” God does not waste eternity trying to make Adam behave. He creates a new man, spiritually circumcises the believer from the body of the sins of the flesh, and commands him to walk in the Spirit. The old man has been crucified positionally, but he has not yet been removed physically. Anybody announcing that the flesh is dead should watch the coffin. The old rascal has a habit of sitting up when temptation enters the room.

This doctrine separates relationship from fellowship. A disobedient son remains a son, although he may lose the joy, confidence, privilege, and communion of his father’s household. First John 1 does not teach that eternal life must be repeatedly recreated every time a Christian gets his feet dirty. It teaches fellowship with the Father and the Son. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confession restores fellowship; it does not repeat regeneration. John 13 provides the picture: “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” The complete bath has occurred, but the feet gather dirt from the road. Religion either leaves the feet filthy or throws the entire Christian back into the bathtub every evening.

Security does not remove the Father's rod. Romans 8:1 says there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," while Hebrews 12 says, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Condemnation and chastening belong to different courts. Condemnation deals with a criminal's guilt; chastening deals with a child's conduct. Christ exhausted the believer's eternal condemnation at Calvary, but the Father still corrects His children in time. A carnal state can bring rebuke, exposure, weakness, loss, sickness, ruined opportunities, and even physical death. First Corinthians 11 records believers who became weak, sickly, and slept under divine discipline, yet Paul says they were chastened "that we should not be condemned with the world." The rod may fall precisely because hell never will.

The believer therefore occupies an astonishing position. Ephesians 2:6 says God has "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," although the Christian's shoes are still gathering dust in a fallen world. He is seated in heaven while stumbling through the wilderness. Israel's wilderness journey supplies a practical warning without making Israel and the Church the same people. Israel was a literal nation under a literal covenant, traveling toward a literal earthly inheritance. The Church is Christ's spiritual body with a heavenly calling. Yet 1 Corinthians 10 says Israel's failures were written for our admonition. A redeemed people can murmur, lust, doubt, wander, exaggerate giants, remember Egypt selectively, and live beneath its privileges. The faces change, the dispensations differ, but the flesh keeps bringing the same suitcase.

Spiritual growth changes that daily state without adding one ounce to salvation. A newborn Christian possesses the same Christ, righteousness, Holy Spirit, forgiveness, and eternal life as the mature saint, but he lacks developed knowledge, discernment, stability, discipline, and usefulness. First Peter 2:2 commands newborn babes to desire "the sincere milk of the word," while Hebrews 5 rebukes those who, after sufficient time, remain "unskilful in the word of righteousness." Milk is proper for a baby and embarrassing as a permanent diet. God did not save Christians to spend forty years in the nursery fighting over bottles, throwing tantrums over personalities, and mistaking the noise of a rattle for the sound of a sword.

Maturity does not mean collecting religious information until pride swells three hat sizes. It means learning the Book, rightly dividing its truth, obeying what has been learned, exercising discernment, enduring hardship, controlling the flesh, and becoming useful to others. Ephesians 4 says the goal is that believers "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." An immature believer is easy merchandise for every doctrinal carnival barker with a microphone, a dramatic testimony, and a mailing

list. He follows confidence instead of Scripture, personalities instead of principle, and novelty instead of truth. The mature saint keeps his ears open and his Bible wider.

Eternal security also establishes accountability at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The believer's sins were judged at Calvary, but his service will be examined by Christ. First Corinthians 3 says the only foundation is Jesus Christ, while the materials built upon that foundation may be "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." The fire will test every man's work "of what sort it is." If the work survives, the believer receives reward. If it burns, "he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." A poor state cannot destroy a perfect standing, but it can reduce a lifetime of religious activity to smoke. Grace guarantees the destination; it does not guarantee a crown.

The distinction will finally disappear from experience when Jesus Christ comes for His Church. Philippians 3 says He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." First Corinthians 15 says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Romans 8 declares that those whom God justified He also glorified, speaking of the future completion as an accomplished fact because nothing can prevent it. At the Rapture, corruption will put on incorruption, mortality will put on immortality, the old man will be gone, the warfare with the flesh will cease, and every saved person will be conformed to the image of God's Son. What the believer already is in Christ will then be displayed in everything he is.

Until that trumpet sounds, the Christian presses toward the mark. He does not press in order to keep Christ from casting him out; he presses because Christ has apprehended him. He does not pursue holiness to maintain the blood; he pursues holiness because the blood has purchased him. He does not serve to become accepted; he serves because he is accepted in the Beloved. He does not confess sin to crawl back into the family; he confesses because he belongs to the family and desires fellowship with the Father. Standing supplies the foundation, security, identity, and power for the state. The root is settled in Christ; therefore, the branches ought to bear fruit.

This series will follow that distinction from the believer's perfect acceptance to his unfinished walk, from positional sanctification to practical holiness, from the new man's righteousness to the old man's corruption, from broken fellowship to restored communion, from parental chastening to spiritual growth, from heavenly seating to earthly stumbling, from the secure foundation to the coming fire, and finally from a vile body to a glorified one. The purpose is neither to pamper carnality nor to terrify the saints. It is to put salvation where God put it—in Christ—and put Christian responsibility where God put it—in the daily walk of the believer.

A crooked walk cannot change the believer's position, but his position ought to straighten his walk. Failure does not undo the finished work of Christ, but the finished work of Christ gives failure no respectable excuse. The Christian is perfect in Christ, still growing on earth, accountable before the Judgment Seat, and destined for final conformity to the Saviour. Standing tells him who he is. State reveals how he is living. Grace secures the first, addresses the second, and will one day bring them into flawless agreement.

1 of 10: Standing and State – What God Sees in Christ and What Men See on Earth

Key Passage: Philippians 3:12–16

Introduction

There are two statements in Philippians 3 that look like a contradiction to anyone who reads the Bible with one eye closed and a denominational pamphlet covering the other. Paul says in verse 12, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” and then three verses later he says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” In verse 12 Paul is not perfect, while in verse 15 Paul is perfect. The modern religious mechanic immediately reaches for his theological wrench and tries to tighten one verse until the other one breaks. But the Holy Ghost did not stutter, Paul did not change his doctrine within three sentences, and the King James Bible does not need a committee of nervous scholars to rescue it from itself. Paul was perfect in one sense and imperfect in another. He was perfect in his standing before God because he was in Christ, yet he remained unfinished in his state because he was still living, learning, fighting, suffering, growing, and pressing toward the mark. That distinction is not an insignificant theological label stuffed into the back of a dusty textbook. It is the difference between assurance and despair, holiness and hypocrisy, liberty and license, and Bible doctrine and religious confusion.

The standing of a believer is his settled, fixed, judicial, spiritual, and eternal position before God because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for him. His state is his present condition as he walks through this present evil world. Standing concerns what the believer is in Christ; state concerns how the believer is behaving on earth. Standing is determined by the finished work of another; state is affected by the daily choices of the Christian. Standing is perfect because Christ is perfect. State fluctuates because the Christian is still carrying around a carcass called the flesh, living in a world that advertises sin like a department-store sale, and facing a devil who has had thousands of years to study human weaknesses. A Christian's standing cannot improve because it is already complete in Christ, but his

state ought to improve because he has been commanded to grow in grace. His standing cannot deteriorate because it is held by Christ, but his state can fall into such ruin that his fellowship disappears, his testimony collapses, his usefulness evaporates, his rewards burn, and the chastening hand of God lands upon him. The trouble begins when somebody tries to make standing depend upon state or pretends that standing makes state unimportant.

Confuse these two truths, and you will fall into one of two ditches. On one side is the legalist who thinks the Christian's eternal position rises and falls with his daily performance. His salvation has more ups and downs than an elevator in a skyscraper. He is saved before breakfast, lost by lunchtime, restored during the invitation, and uncertain again before bedtime. He talks about trusting Christ while secretly trusting his own ability to keep himself presentable. On the other side is the grace-abusing libertine who says that since salvation is secure, conduct does not matter. He uses eternal security as a mattress upon which to sleep through every commandment addressed to the Christian. One fellow makes salvation depend upon the walk; the other fellow thinks salvation has nothing to say about the walk. Both are wrong. A crooked walk cannot alter a believer's position in Christ, but a believer's position in Christ ought to straighten his crooked walk. Grace does not put the Christian on probation, and grace does not give the flesh diplomatic immunity. God does not confuse standing with state, and any Bible student who wishes to remain out of the ditch must learn to distinguish them.

1. The Bible Describes Two Realities at the Same Time

The Bible speaks of the believer as possessing a present perfection that has already been accomplished. Colossians 2:10 says, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." It does not say that the believer hopes to become complete if he behaves himself until death. It does not say that he is nearly complete, provisionally complete, or complete so long as he keeps the account paid up. It says, "Ye are complete in him." The completeness belongs to the believer because he is in Christ, and Christ does not admit incomplete members into His spiritual body. First Corinthians 1:30 declares, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." God has not merely handed the Christian a list of qualities and told him to manufacture them. God has placed him in the One who is his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The believer's standing is not a home-improvement project. It is a divine placement accomplished by God on the basis of Christ's blood.

Yet the same Bible that calls the believer complete commands him to grow. Peter writes, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" in 2 Peter

3:18. Paul tells the Ephesians to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” He tells the Colossians to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” If being complete in Christ meant the believer’s daily condition were already flawless, those commands would be unnecessary. You do not command a full-grown man to become an infant and then grow back up again. The Christian is complete as a member of Christ’s body but incomplete in his understanding, discipline, discernment, consistency, service, and practical holiness. He possesses all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, yet he must learn to walk on earthly streets without stepping into every mud puddle the devil has dug. His standing is not maturing, but his state should be. A believer does not grow into salvation; he grows because salvation has already placed divine life within him.

This is why Philippians 3 can call Paul both imperfect and perfect without so much as blinking. When Paul says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” he is speaking about the practical and future completion of his Christian course. He had not yet apprehended everything for which Christ had apprehended him. He had not finished his race, received his glorified body, or reached sinless conformity to Jesus Christ. But when he says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded,” he includes himself among mature believers who possess a perfect standing and understand the proper direction of the Christian life. He was complete in Christ but had not completed his course. He was perfect in position but still pressing in practice. There is no contradiction unless a man insists that one word must always refer to one aspect of one subject. The Bible does not flatten truth into a sheet of religious cardboard. It shows the believer as God sees him in Christ and as he presently walks before men, and both realities must be believed at the same time.

2. Standing Is What God Has Made the Believer in Christ

The believer’s standing begins with justification, not self-improvement. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Justification is God’s judicial declaration that the believing sinner is righteous because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been placed to his account. Romans 4:5 says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Notice carefully whom God justifies: “the ungodly.” He does not wait until the sinner has polished himself into something worthy of heaven. If God waited for that, heaven would have more empty space than a modern sermon has doctrine. God justifies the man who quits presenting his works as payment and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner’s record is charged to Christ, and Christ’s righteousness is credited to the sinner. Standing begins where boasting ends.

Second Corinthians 5:21 gives the great exchange: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Christ did not become sinful in character, but He was made sin for us as our substitute. The believer is not merely encouraged to imitate righteousness; he is made the righteousness of God “in him.” The words “in him” are the lock on the door that legalism cannot pick. God is not pretending that the Christian’s daily behavior is flawless. God knows every foolish thought, idle word, neglected duty, and selfish motive better than the Christian knows them himself. But standing does not consist of God falsely calling bad behavior good. It consists of God truthfully declaring that the believer’s sin has been judged at Calvary and that the believer now stands in the righteousness of His Son. God does not overlook sin; He points to the place where He punished it. The cross is not divine forgetfulness. It is divine satisfaction.

Ephesians 1 piles one positional blessing upon another until the religious bookkeeper runs out of red ink. The believer is blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” He is chosen “in him.” He is predestinated unto the adoption of children. He is “accepted in the beloved.” He has “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Every one of those blessings rests in Christ, not in the emotional temperature or recent performance of the believer. Feelings may rise and fall like a cheap thermometer, but Christ does not rise and fall with them. The believer may awaken feeling victorious one morning and miserable the next, but no angel rewrites Ephesians 1 to match his mood. Standing is not what the Christian feels about himself; it is what God has declared concerning him in Christ. Faith does not stare into the foggy mirror of human experience to determine whether God told the truth. Faith opens the Book and lets God have the final word.

3. State Is How the Believer Is Walking on Earth

The believer’s state includes his present fellowship, conduct, spiritual strength, understanding, fruitfulness, and usefulness. It is described by the word “walk” throughout Paul’s epistles. Ephesians 4:1 says, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Paul does not tell them to walk worthily so that God might eventually call them. They have already been called; therefore, they are to walk in a manner becoming that calling. Ephesians 5 tells them to “walk in love,” to “walk as children of light,” and to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” A man’s standing is established by his birth into God’s family, but his state is revealed by the direction of his feet. Nobody on earth can see the spiritual baptism that placed him into Christ, but everybody around him can see whether he lies, cheats, gossips, lusts, forgives, serves, prays, gives, and keeps his word. Men cannot inspect the heavenly record, so they examine the earthly walk.

The Corinthians provide the Bible's grand exhibition of perfect standing combined with an embarrassing state. Paul addressed them as "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," yet he also called them "carnal." They were divided over preachers, tolerated fornication, took one another to court, abused Christian liberty, corrupted the Lord's supper, misused spiritual gifts, and became confused about the resurrection. If salvation depended upon flawless state, First Corinthians would have been a letter to former Christians. But Paul did not tell them to get saved again. He told saved people to clean up their conduct because their bodies belonged to God. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" Their position supplied the argument for correcting their practice. Paul did not say, "Become God's temple by living better." He said, in effect, "You are God's temple; now stop conducting pagan business in the sanctuary." Grace does not deny the filth on the floor. Grace reminds the saint whose house it is.

A believer's state can change several times in a single day. He may begin in prayer, walk in the Spirit, answer a harsh word with meekness, and serve another person without seeking applause. Later he may yield to pride, speak carelessly, entertain bitterness, or neglect an opportunity God placed before him. His standing remains unchanged through every fluctuation, but his fellowship, joy, usefulness, and spiritual strength do not. Ephesians 4:30 warns, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The same verse that warns the Christian he can grieve the Spirit assures him that he is sealed. The grieving concerns his state; the sealing concerns his standing. The carnal man emphasizes the sealing and ignores the grieving. The legalist emphasizes the grieving and denies the sealing. The Bible prints both truths in one verse and leaves both camps to argue with the punctuation.

4. God Sees the Believer Through the Finished Work of Christ

When God looks at the believer's standing, He sees him joined to Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." This is not water baptism, a church membership ceremony, or a denominational initiation. It is the operation of God by which the Holy Spirit places the believing sinner into the spiritual body of Christ. Once in that body, the believer is connected with Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and heavenly position. Romans 6:3-4 declares that believers were baptized into Jesus Christ and into His death. Colossians 3:3 says, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The believer's eternal life is not hidden inside his own ability to behave. It is hidden "with Christ in God." If the devil wishes to reach that life, he must first break into God, remove Christ, and undo the Spirit's baptism. That would be quite an

afternoon's work, even for a cherub who once imagined he could climb above the stars of God.

God sees the believer as crucified, buried, risen, and seated with Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Ephesians 2:6 says God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The believer's body may be sitting at a kitchen table, standing at a factory line, lying in a hospital bed, or kneeling beside an open Bible, but his spiritual standing is already associated with Christ in heavenly places. The verse does not say he may be seated there after decades of successful religious labor. It says God "hath" made him sit there. His position has run ahead of his experience. Heaven has recorded a fact that earth cannot yet fully display. The believer still stumbles through the dust below, but his eternal address is registered above.

This is also why Romans 8:1 can announce, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The key phrase is not "them which have behaved perfectly this week." It is "them which are in Christ Jesus." Condemnation was exhausted upon the Substitute. God cannot demand a second payment without denying the sufficiency of the first. The believer may require correction as a son, cleansing for fellowship, and rebuke for disobedience, but he does not return to the condemned position of an unsaved man. His Advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous, and the propitiation remains sufficient. The Judge who declared him righteous does not reverse Himself every time the defendant has a bad afternoon. Christ did not purchase a salvation with a thirty-day warranty. The standing of the Christian lasts as long as the standing of Christ, because the Christian's standing is in Christ.

5. Men See the Believer Through His Daily Conduct

Men cannot see justification, spiritual circumcision, regeneration, sealing, or the believer's heavenly seat. They see what comes out of his mouth when he is angry. They see how he handles money, temptation, inconvenience, correction, authority, suffering, and success. They judge the doctrine by the visible merchandise displayed in the life of the man who professes it. Paul told the Philippians, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." In the King James Bible, "conversation" often refers to the entire manner of life, not merely speech. The gospel cannot be improved by human conduct, but its reputation before men can be adorned or disgraced by those who profess it. Titus 2:10 tells servants to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." A jewel does not become more genuine because it is placed in a clean setting, but a filthy setting may prevent anyone from noticing the jewel.

This visible state is why James can say, "I will shew thee my faith by my works." James is not teaching that works replace faith as the means of receiving Paul's gospel of grace. He is making the plain observation that invisible faith must be demonstrated before human eyes through visible action. God could see Abraham's faith before Isaac ever climbed Mount Moriah, but men see the reality of faith through obedience. Paul deals with justification before God apart from works; James discusses the demonstration and vindication of faith in a man's conduct. A Christian may possess a standing that men cannot inspect, but if his state continually contradicts his profession, nobody is obligated to applaud the contradiction. The world has seen enough church members whose bumper stickers travel in one direction while their tempers travel in another.

The answer is not to make public opinion the judge of salvation. Men are poor judges because they see only the outside, misunderstand motives, reward hypocrisy, and often condemn righteousness. Jesus Christ Himself was called a gluttonous man, a winebibber, a blasphemer, and a deceiver. Nevertheless, the Christian is commanded to provide "things honest in the sight of all men" and to maintain "a good testimony of them which are without." The believer does not live rightly to earn his heavenly standing, but he should live rightly so that his earthly state does not slander the Saviour who gave it to him. A disgraceful Christian does not make the gospel false, any more than a dirty window makes the sunlight dark. He merely blocks the light and then wonders why nobody can see it.

6. Legalism Makes State the Foundation of Standing

Legalism takes commandments meant to govern the believer's walk and turns them into conditions for retaining eternal life. It tells the Christian that Christ saved him, but his flesh must finish the preservation work. Paul addressed that very insanity in Galatians 3:3: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" The legalist answers yes. He begins with the blood, continues with rule keeping, and hopes the two together will be sufficient at the final audit. His doctrine is a spiritual relay race in which Christ runs the first lap and hands the baton to Adam's flesh. But the flesh that could not get the sinner saved cannot keep the saint saved. A dead man cannot assist in his resurrection, and corrupt flesh cannot serve as the security guard of eternal life.

This system produces either pride or despair. If the legalist thinks he is succeeding, he becomes proud, critical, and suspicious of everyone whose religious uniform does not match his. He measures spirituality with an assortment of visible regulations, some biblical, some traditional, and some apparently delivered from Mount Sinai to his grandmother's church committee. If he recognizes his own failure, he sinks into despair because his assurance is chained to his performance. He does not look to Christ's wounds; he checks his spiritual pulse. He does not ask what God promised; he asks how

faithful he has felt. The result is a soul trying to rest on a mattress stuffed with its own works. No wonder it wakes up aching.

The proper distinction between standing and state drives a stake through the heart of legalism without weakening a single command for holy living. Romans 6 does not say, “Continue in sin because grace has settled your standing.” It asks, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Paul bases the appeal upon what the believer already is. The Christian is not told to die to sin so that God may place him in Christ; he is told to reckon himself dead to sin because God has already joined him to Christ’s death. True holiness grows out of standing. Legalism tries to nail fruit onto a dead tree, while grace gives the tree life and commands it to bear fruit. The legalist threatens the branch in hopes of producing roots. God establishes the root in Christ and then deals firmly with every barren branch of Christian conduct.

7. Lawless Grace Treats Standing as an Excuse for a Rotten State

The opposite error is to learn enough about eternal security to become dangerous while refusing to learn why God saved anyone in the first place. Romans 6:1 asks, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Paul answers, “God forbid.” He does not answer by denying grace, weakening security, or putting the believer back under the law as a means of justification. He answers by pointing to the believer’s union with Christ. The saved man has been identified with Christ’s death and resurrection, so continuing under sin’s dominion contradicts his new position. Grace is not God smiling politely while the Christian drags Christ’s name through a sewer. Grace delivers from sin’s penalty, breaks its reigning authority, teaches the saint to deny ungodliness, and promises final deliverance from sin’s presence. Any “grace” that only protects sin and never opposes it is wearing a stolen name tag.

Titus 2:11–12 says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Grace is a teacher, and its classroom has rules. It does not teach the believer to brag about being secure while living like the devil’s unpaid intern. It teaches him to deny ungodliness. The grace that saves also instructs, disciplines, corrects, and changes the direction of the life. Growth may be uneven, battles may be fierce, and failures may be real, but the divine purpose remains unmistakable. God did not redeem the Christian so that sin could retain the same throne under a new constitutional arrangement.

A careless state carries terrible consequences even when standing remains secure. The believer can lose fellowship, joy, testimony, opportunities, usefulness, health, earthly

blessing, rewards, and even physical life. First Corinthians 11:30 says, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” Those Corinthians did not lose eternal life, but some lost earthly life under God’s chastening. First Corinthians 3:15 describes a man whose works are burned: “he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The verse is a funeral for both legalism and license. “He himself shall be saved” buries the legalist’s claim that failed service cancels salvation. “He shall suffer loss” buries the libertine’s claim that conduct has no serious consequences. The saved man can arrive safely and still arrive empty-handed, smelling like smoke from a wasted life.

Conclusion

Standing and state are not rival doctrines; they are two biblical truths that guard one another from abuse. Standing assures the believer that Christ’s work is complete, God’s verdict is settled, the Spirit’s seal is secure, and eternal life is truly eternal. State reminds him that the God who saved him has claims upon his body, time, speech, mind, labor, money, relationships, and testimony. Standing says, “Ye are complete in him.” State says, “Walk worthy.” Standing says, “Accepted in the beloved.” State says, “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.” Standing says, “No condemnation.” State says, “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” The Bible does not ask one truth to murder the other. It places them side by side like two rails carrying the Christian life in the proper direction.

The legalist must stop measuring the finished work of Christ with the crooked ruler of human performance. If salvation depends upon the believer maintaining a flawless state, then nobody has eternal security because nobody has a flawless state. Paul did not. Peter did not. John did not. The man claiming that he does has added lying to whatever sins he has forgotten. The answer to failure is not to deny Christ’s sufficiency but to confess the sin, receive cleansing for fellowship, submit to correction, and resume the walk. First John 1:9 was written for family cleansing, not repeated spiritual rebirth: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God’s faithfulness, not the believer’s dramatic promises, restores the interrupted fellowship. The Christian does not crawl back into Christ every time he fails. He turns from the failure because he is already in Christ.

The careless Christian must stop using eternal security as a permission slip signed in invisible ink. A settled standing should produce gratitude, humility, obedience, courage, and holy fear—not swaggering indifference toward sin. The believer has been bought with a price; therefore, he is commanded to glorify God in his body and spirit, which are God’s. What God sees in Christ is perfect, settled, and beyond the reach of accusation. What men see on earth should increasingly agree with that heavenly reality. The two will not match

perfectly until Christ changes the believer's vile body and fashions it like unto His glorious body, but they ought to resemble one another more clearly as the years pass. Your standing is the masterpiece of Christ's finished work; your state is the daily canvas upon which that masterpiece ought to become visible. You do not live right to become accepted. You live right because, in the Beloved, God has already accepted you.

2 of 10: Standing and State – Accepted in the Beloved While Acting Unacceptably

Key Passage: Ephesians 1:3–7

Introduction

Ephesians 1:6 declares that God has made the believer “accepted in the beloved.” Every word in that statement is loaded. The believer did not make himself accepted, behave himself into acceptance, or persuade God to lower the entrance requirements. God “hath made us accepted,” and He did it “in the beloved.” The Beloved is Jesus Christ, not the improved version of the sinner that religion keeps promising to manufacture. God's acceptance rests upon the person, righteousness, blood, death, burial, resurrection, and heavenly position of His Son. The Christian is accepted because he is in the One whom the Father accepts absolutely. If God were accepting believers according to their daily conduct, there would not be an accepted Christian alive for fifteen consecutive minutes. The most polished church member has enough pride, selfishness, unbelief, neglected duty, wandering thought, and concealed motive to sink his little religious rowboat before it clears the harbor. Salvation rests upon Christ because God knows better than to hang eternity from the frayed thread of human consistency.

Yet the New Testament repeatedly addresses Christians whose behavior was thoroughly unacceptable. The Corinthians were called “sanctified in Christ Jesus” and “saints,” but they were also called carnal. They divided over favorite preachers, tolerated open fornication, sued one another before unbelievers, turned Christian liberty into a stumbling block, disgraced the Lord's supper, competed over spiritual gifts, and became confused about the resurrection. They possessed a perfect standing while exhibiting a humiliating state. Paul did not solve the contradiction by telling them they had never been saved, nor did he excuse their conduct because they were eternally secure. He planted both feet on Bible doctrine and dealt with them as sanctified saints who were behaving like unsanctified fools. Their standing did not excuse their condition; it made their condition more shameful. A pig in the mud is acting according to its nature, but a son of God wallowing beside it has forgotten both his nature and his name.

This distinction cuts through two ancient lies. The legalist says the believer must behave acceptably to remain accepted, thereby moving the foundation of salvation from Christ's righteousness to human performance. The lawless professor says that because the believer is accepted, unacceptable conduct carries no serious consequence. One fellow turns the Christian life into probation; the other turns grace into a padded room where rebellion cannot hurt anybody. Both have mishandled the Book. Salvation is not maintained by good behavior, but good behavior matters greatly to the God who saved us. Sin cannot reverse justification, but it can grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt fellowship, destroy testimony, corrupt a church, injure weaker brethren, bring reproach upon Christ, consume rewards, and invite severe chastening. The Christian is accepted entirely because of the Beloved, but he is commanded to live acceptably because he belongs to the Beloved.

1. God Made Us Accepted in Someone Else

Ephesians 1 begins in heaven before it deals with the Christian's walk on earth. Verse 3 says God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Verse 4 says He chose us "in him." Verse 5 says He predestinated us "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." Verse 6 says He "hath made us accepted in the beloved," and verse 7 says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The entire passage points away from human merit and toward divine accomplishment. The blessings are in Christ, the choosing is in Christ, the acceptance is in Christ, and redemption is through Christ's blood. The believer does not stand before God wrapped in his best day; he stands before God wrapped in Christ. Religion offers God Adam's pressed fig leaves. The gospel clothes the sinner with a righteousness heaven itself cannot improve.

The phrase "hath made us accepted" describes a completed action, not a religious campaign still waiting for final results. God is not gradually deciding whether He likes the believer well enough to keep him. The Christian is not accepted on Monday, suspended on Wednesday, reinstated on Sunday morning, and placed under review again Sunday afternoon. The verse says God "hath made" him accepted. This acceptance is as settled as the work by which it was obtained. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The offering occurred once, and its effect upon the believer's standing is "for ever." Christ did not make a down payment on redemption and leave the monthly installments to the flesh. Calvary was not the opening bid in a negotiation between grace and human effort. When the Saviour cried, "It is finished," heaven did not add, "Subject to the customer maintaining an acceptable behavioral score."

The believer is accepted “in the beloved,” not independently of Him. That distinction demolishes boasting. God does not look at the Christian’s flesh and discover something naturally deserving of eternal favor. Romans 7:18 says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” God accepts the believer because He has placed him into Christ by the operation of the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” The Christian’s standing is therefore inseparable from Christ’s standing. The Father would have to reject His own Son before He could reject anyone who is spiritually joined to Him. Our assurance is not that we have finally become impressive; our assurance is that Christ has never ceased to be acceptable.

2. The Corinthians Were Saints Who Behaved Like Sinners

Paul’s first letter to Corinth opens with language that would make a legalist spill his coffee. He writes “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.” Before Paul exposes a single scandal, he identifies their standing. They are the church of God. They are sanctified in Christ Jesus. They are saints. He does not call them probationary church attendees who might qualify for sainthood after several documented miracles and a committee vote. Their sainthood was positional because they had been set apart in Christ. First Corinthians 1:8 says Christ “shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Verse 9 adds, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Their security rested upon God’s faithfulness before Paul ever addressed their unfaithfulness.

By chapter 3, however, Paul writes, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” The words are plain enough to offend every system built upon pretending that a saved person cannot be carnal. Paul calls them “brethren,” says they are “in Christ,” and then calls them “carnal.” They were not false brethren outside Christ; they were immature brethren inside Christ. Their standing was in Christ, but their state was dominated by fleshly thinking. Their obsession with Paul, Apollos, and Cephas revealed spiritual infancy. Religious people often call party loyalty conviction because “carnality” sounds less flattering on the membership brochure. But when allegiance to personalities produces envy, strife, and division, the Holy Ghost does not call it discernment. He calls it carnality.

The evidence becomes worse as the letter continues. One man had his father’s wife. Believers were dragging one another before heathen judges. Some were entering idolatrous environments without concern for weaker brethren. Wealthier members were eating and drinking at the Lord’s supper while poorer saints went hungry. Spiritual gifts became instruments of noise, competition, and self-display. Some even said there was no

resurrection of the dead. Yet Paul continued addressing them as men and women for whom Christ died and in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt. Their conduct did not erase their standing, but their standing intensified Paul's rebuke. He did not say, "Behave so that your bodies might become God's temple." He said, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" The temple was already God's; that was precisely why their behavior inside it was intolerable.

3. Acceptance Is Not the Same as Approval

God's acceptance of the believer's person in Christ does not mean God approves everything the believer does. A father may fully accept his son as a member of the family while strongly disapproving of the son's rebellion. The relationship remains, but approval, fellowship, privilege, and enjoyment can be withdrawn. Second Timothy 2:19 says, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." That is standing. The same verse continues, "And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." That concerns state. God knows those who belong to Him, and those who belong to Him are commanded to depart from sin. The command does not create the relationship; it governs the conduct of those already within it.

Second Corinthians 5:9 says, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." At first glance, somebody may imagine that this contradicts Ephesians 1:6. It does nothing of the kind. Ephesians speaks of the believer being accepted "in the beloved" with regard to salvation and standing. Second Corinthians speaks of the believer's labor being well pleasing to Christ in view of the Judgment Seat. The next verse says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." One passage concerns acceptance of the believer's person because of Christ's work; the other concerns approval of the believer's service when Christ examines his works. The same English word can operate in different contexts without forcing the Bible to file an apology. A student may be fully enrolled in a school while submitting work the teacher cannot approve. His bad assignment does not erase his name from the family record, but it certainly does not earn an "excellent" at evaluation.

Paul therefore distinguishes salvation from reward. First Corinthians 3:13 says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire." Gold, silver, and precious stones survive; wood, hay, and stubble burn. Verse 15 describes the sobering result: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The worker remains saved because his standing rests upon the foundation, Jesus Christ. His works burn because his state and service were unacceptable. God does not cast the believer into hell, but neither does He hang a crown upon a wasted life merely to keep the awards ceremony pleasant.

Acceptance secures the believer's place in heaven; approval concerns how he lived on the way there.

4. Unacceptable Conduct Grieves the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." That one verse holds security and responsibility together so tightly that neither legalism nor lawlessness can pull them apart. The believer can grieve the Spirit, which proves that a genuinely saved person can act contrary to the will of God. Yet the believer is sealed "unto the day of redemption," which proves that grieving the Spirit does not cause the Spirit to abandon His seal every time the Christian fails. God did not say, "Grieve not the Spirit, lest He unseal you before supper." He said the Spirit by whom we can be grieved is the very Spirit who has sealed us until the redemption of the body. The warning is solemn, and the security is settled.

The surrounding passage explains how believers grieve Him. Ephesians 4 condemns lying, uncontrolled anger, stealing, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. These are not merely flaws in temperament or products of an unfortunate childhood. They are sins committed by people who have been taught to put off the old man and put on the new. The modern pulpit often sends sin to a counselor, gives it a diagnostic label, and hopes it will feel understood. The Bible calls it by name and orders it out of the house. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." "Let him that stole steal no more." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger...be put away from you." God does not ask bitterness to share its journey. He tells it to pack.

Grieving the Spirit affects the believer's state because fellowship, spiritual power, discernment, and fruitfulness require yielding to Him. Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." It does not say that a sealed believer automatically walks in the Spirit. Sealing is God's action securing the saint; walking is the saint's daily responsibility under the Spirit's control. A Christian may be indwelt by the Spirit while resisting His leading, ignoring His word, and feeding the flesh. He does not lose the Spirit as though God were a nervous tenant fleeing a poorly managed apartment. But he can lose the practical enjoyment and power that come from walking in submission. The Spirit remains faithful to His seal while the grieving Christian becomes spiritually dry enough to strike a match on.

5. Unacceptable Conduct Breaks Fellowship Without Breaking Sonship

First John 1 deals with fellowship among members of God's family. Verse 3 says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Fellowship is

the theme, not repeated justification. Verse 6 warns, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” John does not say the man ceases to be a son every time he walks in darkness. He says the man’s claim to present fellowship is false. A disobedient son remains in the family, but he cannot slam the Father’s door, ignore the Father’s word, insult the Father’s name, and then boast that communication has never been better.

First John 1:9 provides the remedy: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confession is not begging God to reapply the blood, restore eternal life, repeat regeneration, or perform another spiritual circumcision. It is the saved man agreeing with God about specific sin so that fellowship may be cleansed. The verse says God is “faithful and just,” not merely sentimental and accommodating. He is just to forgive because Christ has already satisfied the judicial penalty. The family cleansing rests upon the same blood that established the relationship, but the applications are not identical. At salvation, the sinner receives eternal forgiveness and a new standing; in daily fellowship, the saint confesses the sins that have dirtied his walk.

Jesus illustrated this distinction when He washed the disciples’ feet in John 13. Peter objected, and Christ said, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Peter then requested that his hands and head be washed as well. Jesus answered, “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” The complete washing had already occurred, but the feet picked up defilement from the road. The believer does not require another bath of regeneration every time his walk becomes dirty. He requires the cleansing associated with fellowship. Religion either leaves the feet filthy or tries to throw the whole man back into the bathtub. The Lord knows the difference between a settled cleansing and the dirt gathered during the journey.

6. Unacceptable Conduct Damages Testimony and Injures Others

A Christian never sins in a vacuum. His conduct affects his family, church, coworkers, weaker brethren, and the reputation of the gospel. Romans 2:24 rebukes religious hypocrisy with the words, “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.” Although that passage directly confronts the Jew who boasted in the law while breaking it, the principle applies with dreadful force to Christians who preach righteousness publicly and practice corruption privately. The world already hates biblical truth; it does not need church members supplying free ammunition. When a professing Christian lies, cheats, abuses, commits immorality, or behaves dishonorably, unbelievers often use his misconduct as an excuse to reject the Christ he professes. Their conclusion

may be dishonest, but the Christian who handed them the excuse does not escape responsibility.

First Corinthians 8 shows that even conduct a believer considers lawful may injure someone with a weaker conscience. Paul says, “But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.” Christian liberty is not permission to strut through the church swinging personal rights like a wrecking ball. Knowledge without charity “puffeth up,” and a puffed-up Christian resembles a balloon: larger in appearance, thinner in substance, and one sharp point away from public collapse. Paul concludes, “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.” He did not surrender doctrine; he surrendered a personal liberty for the spiritual good of another believer. Maturity is not proved by how loudly a man demands his rights. Sometimes it is proved by how quietly he lays them down.

Unacceptable conduct can also infect an entire congregation. Paul told the Corinthians concerning open fornication, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” Sin tolerated under the banner of compassion does not remain neatly contained. It spreads, normalizes itself, recruits defenders, silences rebuke, and eventually places the righteous on trial for making everyone uncomfortable. Biblical church discipline is not cruelty; it is surgery performed to preserve the body and awaken the offender. The goal in 1 Corinthians 5 was not revenge but correction, purity, and ultimately restoration. A church that never confronts public wickedness does not possess more grace than Paul. It merely owns less backbone.

7. Unacceptable Conduct Invites the Father’s Chastening

Hebrews 12:6 says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Chastening is not condemnation. Condemnation belongs to the courtroom and concerns the criminal’s guilt; chastening belongs to the household and concerns the child’s correction. Romans 8:1 declares no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, while Hebrews 12 promises discipline for God’s sons. These truths do not conflict because they address different relationships and purposes. Christ bore the believer’s judicial punishment at Calvary, but the Father still corrects His child’s earthly conduct. The cross settled the penalty of sin; chastening deals with the saint who insists upon playing with what crucified his Saviour.

The absence of chastening would not prove the broad-minded tolerance of God. Hebrews says, “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” God’s rod is evidence of relationship. The Father does not discipline every child in the neighborhood, but He deals with His own. His chastening may involve inward

conviction, exposure, loss, broken plans, diminished usefulness, sickness, or physical death. First Corinthians 11 records believers who became weak and sickly, while others slept, because they treated the Lord's supper with contempt. Verse 32 explains, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Their chastening distinguished them from the world; it did not place them back under the world's condemnation.

The purpose of chastening is restoration and fruit. Hebrews 12:11 says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." God is not an irritable tyrant flailing at His children to relieve a bad mood. He is a holy Father determined to produce righteousness in those who bear His name. The wise Christian responds quickly to conviction, confesses sin, and submits to correction. The fool stiffens his neck, blames circumstances, accuses other people, and demands that God explain why rebellion has become uncomfortable. Sin sends the invoice, and then the sinner acts surprised that grace did not intercept the mail.

Conclusion

The believer is accepted in the Beloved because Jesus Christ is eternally acceptable to the Father. That standing was purchased by blood, established by grace, received through faith, secured in Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. It does not rise and fall with the Christian's daily condition. If acceptance depended upon performance, "accepted in the beloved" would have to be rewritten as "temporarily tolerated in proportion to recent improvement." But God chose His words more carefully than theologians choose their escape routes. The Christian is not accepted because he has behaved better than his neighbor. He is accepted because he is in God's beloved Son. Christ is the ground, measure, security, and duration of that acceptance.

Nevertheless, conduct matters. The Christian can act unacceptably, and the New Testament wastes no ink pretending otherwise. He can become carnal, grieve the Spirit, interrupt fellowship, damage his testimony, wound weaker saints, corrupt a congregation, waste his service, lose rewards, and provoke chastening. Grace does not turn these consequences into harmless stage props. The standing remains perfect while the state may become wretched, but a wretched state is never presented as normal, desirable, or safe. Eternal security protects salvation from human failure; it does not protect human failure from divine correction. The blood keeps the saint out of hell, but it does not keep the Father's rod in the cupboard when the saint insists upon living like hell.

The proper response to being accepted is neither self-righteous boasting nor careless presumption. It is grateful obedience. Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Paul does not command them to present their bodies so that God might save them. He beseeches saved brethren “by the mercies of God” to offer reasonable service. The mercies come first; the sacrifice follows. Acceptance comes first; acceptable living follows. The Christian does not live right to persuade God to place him in the Beloved. He lives right because God has already placed him there. Our standing is the unchanging declaration of what Christ has made us; our state should become the increasingly visible testimony that we know to whom we belong.

3 of 10: Standing and State – Sanctified Once, Being Sanctified Daily

Key Passage: Hebrews 10:10–14

Introduction

The word “sanctification” has been dumped into one theological sack so often that many Christians no longer know whether they already possess it, are presently pursuing it, or must wait until the coming of Christ to receive it. One preacher says the believer is sanctified once for all. Another says sanctification is a lifelong process. A third says complete sanctification will occur when the Christian receives his glorified body. Then somebody in the back row concludes that the Bible has contradicted itself, while the religious expert begins explaining that the original Greek probably needs professional supervision. The problem is neither with the Bible nor its English. The problem is the failure to distinguish three different aspects of one great work. The believer has been sanctified positionally, is being sanctified practically, and will be sanctified finally. He has been set apart in Christ, he is commanded to live as one set apart for Christ, and he will eventually be made completely like Christ. God settled the standing, God is working upon the state, and God has guaranteed the final result.

Hebrews 10:10 says, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Verse 14 adds, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” That is not salvation under construction. It is not an installment plan dependent upon the Christian making regular payments of improved conduct. The offering was made “once for all,” and those set apart by it have been “perfected for ever.” Yet 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” If the Thessalonians were already sanctified in their

standing, why were they commanded to pursue sanctification in their conduct? Because a man can belong entirely to God while failing to behave consistently like God's possession. Position and practice are related, but they are not identical. The Christian is not slowly becoming God's property; God is progressively cleaning up the property He has already purchased.

This distinction preserves both the finished work of Christ and the necessity of holiness. The legalist turns practical sanctification into a continuation of justification, leaving the believer eternally suspended over hell by the frayed rope of his own performance. The carnal professor points to positional sanctification and declares that because he is already set apart, the actual condition of his life is nobody's business—not even God's. One fellow tries to become God's possession through effort; the other treats God's possession like an abandoned building. Both have missed the doctrine. Sanctification is not the sinner polishing himself until God agrees to purchase him. Christ purchased the sinner with His own blood, set him apart as holy in his standing, and now commands him to clean out every room of his life. Salvation gives God the title deed; practical sanctification begins the renovation.

1. Sanctification Means Being Set Apart unto God

The basic meaning of sanctification is to set something or someone apart for God's purpose. The related words "sanctify," "saint," "holy," and "holiness" belong to the same great biblical family. Something sanctified is separated from common use and devoted to God. Under the law, altars, vessels, garments, days, places, priests, and offerings could be sanctified. Those objects did not become morally sinless. A golden vessel did not develop a spiritual personality and overcome a bad temper. It was sanctified because God claimed it for a holy use. Exodus 40 records Moses sanctifying the tabernacle and its furnishings. The objects remained wood, fabric, brass, silver, and gold, but their ownership and purpose had changed. Sanctification begins with divine ownership before it appears in practical usefulness.

This prevents the common mistake of defining sanctification as sinless perfection in the flesh. First Corinthians 1:2 addresses "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," yet chapter 3 calls those same believers carnal. They were sanctified, but they were not sinless. They were saints, but they were not consistently saintly. Their position had been set apart unto God, although their practice often resembled the spiritual disorder of the city around them. If "sanctified" always meant that a Christian had reached flawless conduct, Paul would have been forced to tear up the first verse before writing the rest of the epistle. Corinth contained divisions, lawsuits, fornication, drunken disorder at the Lord's

supper, abuse of spiritual gifts, and doctrinal confusion. Apparently, the Holy Ghost can call a man sanctified without pretending that his daily condition is spotless.

Holiness therefore has both positional and practical dimensions. God calls the believer a saint because he has been set apart in Christ; then God commands the saint to live like one. The title establishes the obligation. Romans 1:7 addresses believers as “called to be saints,” while Romans 12:1 beseeches those same brethren to present their bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” They do not present their bodies to purchase sainthood. They present them because divine mercy has already placed them among the saints. The world says identity follows performance: prove yourself, achieve something, and earn a title. Grace gives the believer a new identity and then demands conduct worthy of it. God does not say, “Live holy, and perhaps I shall call you a saint.” He says, “I have made you a saint; now stop living like you still belong to the devil.”

2. Positional Sanctification Was Accomplished Once for All

Positional sanctification rests upon the offering of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10 contrasts the repeated sacrifices of the law with the one sufficient sacrifice of the Saviour. Verse 11 says that every priest stood “daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” The priests remained standing because their work was never complete. Animal blood covered sin ceremonially but could not remove its guilt or perfect the conscience. Verse 12 then declares, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Christ sat down because the offering was finished. The Old Testament priest stood beside an unfinished altar; the Son of God sat beside a finished redemption. Religion keeps standing because it always has another payment, ceremony, sacrament, promise, or performance to demand. Christ sat down because there was nothing left to add.

Hebrews 10:14 states the consequence: “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” The believer’s positional perfection lasts “for ever” because the offering responsible for it lasts “for ever.” If a Christian could lose this sanctification through imperfect behavior, then the verse would need to say that Christ perfected him until his next failure. It says no such thing. The perfection is not a claim that the believer’s flesh has become faultless; it is his completed standing before God through the merit of the sacrifice. Christ’s blood does not place a sinner on temporary religious probation. It sets him apart, cleanses his record, and gives him a position that matches the value of the offering. The blood of bulls and goats produced repeated reminders. The blood of Christ produced a finished result.

First Corinthians 6:11 confirms this completed work: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul uses settled language. “Ye are washed.” “Ye are sanctified.” “Ye are justified.” The Corinthians were not slowly becoming justified through progressive improvement. God had washed, sanctified, and justified them in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ and the operation of the Spirit. Their subsequent failures required correction, confession, cleansing of fellowship, and practical growth, but those failures did not reverse the divine operation. Positional sanctification is not a medal awarded after years of distinguished Christian service. It is part of the saving work God performs when a sinner trusts Jesus Christ.

3. Practical Sanctification Cleans the Walk of a Sanctified Saint

Practical sanctification concerns the believer’s daily state. It is the ongoing separation of his thoughts, affections, habits, words, body, relationships, priorities, and conduct from sin unto God. First Thessalonians 4:3 makes the matter plain: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” God’s will is not hidden behind a cloud while Christians chase impressions, coincidences, dreams, and tingling sensations. Before a man announces that God has called him to some grand undertaking, he might begin with the clearly printed will of God concerning his body. Abstain from fornication. Possess your vessel in sanctification and honour. Do not defraud your brother. The flesh prefers mysterious guidance because mysterious guidance rarely tells it to stop doing what it enjoys.

The fact that Christians must pursue practical sanctification proves that salvation does not remove the flesh. Romans 7:18 says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” Paul did not say that his flesh had gradually become forty percent good through apostolic discipline. The flesh remained flesh. Galatians 5:17 explains, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” The conflict does not prove that the believer is unsaved; it proves that two opposing natures are present. Before salvation, the sinner may experience conscience, religious restraint, or fear of consequences, but he does not possess the indwelling Holy Spirit warring against the flesh. After salvation, the battlefield moves inside the house. Practical sanctification is not repairing the old man. It is refusing his rule while yielding to the new life supplied by the Spirit.

This work progresses, but it does not progress automatically. Time alone does not sanctify anybody’s conduct. A Christian can be saved for thirty years and remain a thirty-year-old baby with a larger collection of excuses. Hebrews 5 rebukes believers who “for the time” ought to have been teachers but still required milk. Spiritual maturity requires submission

to Scripture, obedience to known truth, confession of sin, prayer, fellowship, suffering, correction, and repeated choices to walk in the Spirit. God supplies every necessity, but He does not command the Christian to sleep through the operation. Grace is not spiritual anesthesia administered so the flesh can remain undisturbed. Grace teaches the saint to deny ungodliness and live soberly, righteously, and godly “in this present world.”

4. The Word of God Is the Instrument of Daily Cleansing

Jesus prayed in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Practical sanctification does not come through admiring one’s own sincerity, collecting religious experiences, or listening for an inner voice that conveniently agrees with personal preference. God sanctifies through truth, and He has identified His word as truth. The Bible exposes what the heart excuses. Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,” discerning “the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The flesh does not object strongly to a Bible kept as decoration, quoted on greeting cards, or carried beneath the arm. It objects when the Book is opened, believed, and allowed to perform surgery without waiting for the patient’s permission.

Ephesians 5:25–26 says, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” The blood and the water of the word must not be confused. The blood deals with guilt and provides redemption; the word washes the believer’s practical walk. A Christian walking through a filthy world picks up defilement in his thinking, imagination, speech, and affections. Scripture washes away the world’s vocabulary, measurements, assumptions, ambitions, and lies. It renews the mind so that the believer stops judging reality through the cracked spectacles of the age. A Bible that never corrects the reader is not being read; it is being used as a religious mirror in which the flesh poses.

Psalms 119:9 asks, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” The answer follows: “by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Cleansing requires more than possession of a Bible. The young man must take heed. He must compare his way with God’s word and alter the way when the two disagree. Modern Christianity often reverses the process: it alters the Book until the Book agrees with the way. It trims the commandments, softens the warnings, replaces sin with therapeutic vocabulary, and then congratulates itself for making Scripture relevant. But the word does not need to become relevant to our filth; our lives need to become obedient to its holiness. The Bible is not a towel thrown over sin to hide it. It is water sent to wash it away.

5. The Believer Must Yield His Members unto Righteousness

Romans 6 establishes the believer's position in Christ and then commands conduct consistent with it. Verse 6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." Verse 11 says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Verse 13 then commands, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God." The order is essential: know, reckon, yield. God first reveals what He accomplished through the believer's identification with Christ. The Christian then reckons that divine statement to be true and yields his body accordingly. He does not crucify himself positionally through moral effort. He acts upon the crucifixion God has already placed to his account.

The word "yield" shows that practical sanctification involves daily surrender. The members of the body can be presented to sin or to God. Eyes can feed lust or behold truth. Ears can consume gossip or receive sound doctrine. A tongue can bless God on Sunday and carve up a neighbor before Monday lunch. Hands can serve, steal, build, strike, give, or grasp. Feet can carry the gospel or walk willingly into temptation. The body is not morally neutral equipment once it belongs to Christ. First Corinthians 6:20 says, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The purchase established ownership; glorifying God is the reasonable use of purchased property.

Romans 12:1 therefore beseeches believers by the mercies of God to present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." A living sacrifice has one persistent inconvenience: it keeps trying to crawl off the altar. The Christian may dedicate himself sincerely in a moment of conviction and discover by breakfast that the flesh has filed an appeal. Practical sanctification requires renewed surrender, not because salvation expired overnight, but because the old nature never accepted the terms of surrender. Paul said, "I die daily." He was not being regenerated daily. He was continually refusing the claims of self so that Christ's life could govern his service. A one-time dedication may mark a significant turning point, but no yesterday's surrender can substitute for today's obedience.

6. Practical Sanctification Separates Without Manufacturing Pharisees

Second Corinthians 7:1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Paul addresses "dearly beloved" people who already possess God's promises. He then commands them to cleanse themselves and perfect holiness. Their practical cleansing does not earn the promises; it follows them. Notice also that filthiness can affect "flesh and spirit." Some believers avoid a short list of visible sins while nursing pride, bitterness, envy, self-righteousness, malice, and unbelief within. They polish the outside of the cup until it shines beneath the church lights, while the inside smells like something died during last year's revival meeting.

Biblical separation is first separation unto God and therefore separation from whatever opposes Him. It is not merely a collection of external boundaries by which one religious crowd advertises superiority over another. External conduct matters because God commands holiness in the body, but external conformity can be produced without inward surrender. The Pharisees managed long prayers, visible fasting, enlarged religious garments, and careful tithing while devouring widows' houses and rejecting the Son of God. They specialized in polishing tombstones without addressing the corpses underneath. Practical sanctification reaches clothing, speech, entertainment, relationships, and habits, but it also reaches motives, ambitions, imagination, pride, resentment, and the secret courtroom where self always finds itself innocent.

Neither should biblical separation be confused with isolation from every unsaved person. Jesus Christ was "separate from sinners" in moral character while eating with publicans and sinners to reach them. Paul told the Corinthians that complete avoidance of fornicators, covetous people, extortioners, and idolaters in the world would require going "out of the world." The Christian is sent among sinners without joining their sin. A lighthouse does not help ships by moving inland, nor does it guide them by turning off the lamp to seem less judgmental. Practical sanctification keeps the believer clean enough to provide light and close enough to deliver the message. Separation without witness becomes monastic pride; witness without separation becomes worldly compromise wearing a gospel badge.

7. Final Sanctification Will Make the Believer Wholly Like Christ

The third aspect is final sanctification, when the believer's state will perfectly match his standing. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Positional sanctification has already set the believer apart in Christ, but he has not yet been sanctified "wholly" in experience. His soul has been saved, his spirit has been made alive unto God, but his body remains mortal, corruptible, and subject to fleshly appetites. The coming of Christ will complete what practical growth cannot accomplish. No amount of discipline can transform corruptible flesh into a glorified body. That requires divine power.

Philippians 3:20–21 says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Paul does not say Christ will educate, rehabilitate, or gradually refine the vile body. He will change it. First Corinthians 15 says the corruptible will put on incorruption and the mortal will put on immortality. The final cure for the flesh is not improvement but replacement. God has never undertaken a remodeling contract with

Adam's nature. He condemned sin in the flesh at Calvary, commands the believer not to yield to it now, and will remove its presence when Christ catches away His Church.

First John 3:2 states the glorious result: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "Now are we the sons of God" establishes present standing. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" acknowledges the unfinished state. "We shall be like him" guarantees final conformity. The believer does not hope that he might achieve this if his practical sanctification reaches an acceptable percentage before the trumpet. The promise rests upon Christ's appearing. First Thessalonians 5:24 follows the prayer for complete sanctification with this assurance: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." The One who began the work takes responsibility for its completion.

Conclusion

Sanctification must be understood in its three biblical aspects or it will be turned into either a treadmill or a hammock. Positional sanctification says the believer has been set apart in Christ through His one offering and perfected for ever in his standing. Practical sanctification commands that believer to cleanse his walk through the word, yield his members to righteousness, walk in the Spirit, and separate from sin unto God. Final sanctification promises that at Christ's appearing the believer will be changed completely, receiving a glorified body and perfect conformity to the Saviour. The first is accomplished, the second is ongoing, and the third is guaranteed. The first rests upon Christ's work for us, the second displays Christ's work in us, and the third will complete Christ's purpose concerning us.

The legalist must stop converting practical growth into progressive justification. A believer does not become more justified by resisting temptation, reading Scripture, praying faithfully, or serving sacrificially. Justification is complete because Christ's righteousness is complete. Positional sanctification is settled because Christ's offering was accepted. Nevertheless, the carnal believer must stop using completed standing as an excuse for an unclean state. God did not set a man apart so that he could remain devoted to the same idols under Christian terminology. The saint is not his own. His body belongs to God, his time belongs to God, his mind belongs to God, and his future belongs to God. Salvation is free to the sinner, but it establishes divine ownership over everything it saves.

The proper order is the power of the Christian walk. The saint does not work to become God's possession; he works because God has purchased him. He does not cleanse himself in hope of being placed in Christ; he cleanses his walk because he is already in Christ. He does not pursue holiness to keep the blood effective; he pursues holiness because the

blood has forever set him apart. One day, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, position and practice will meet in perfect conformity. Until then, the believer must allow what God has already made him in Christ to govern what he is becoming in daily life. Sanctification is not the flesh building a ladder toward heaven. It is God bringing heavenly ownership to bear upon every corner of an earthly life.

4 of 10: Standing and State – The New Man Is Sinless, but the Old Man Is Not Dead Yet

Key Passage: Ephesians 4:22–24

Introduction

Every saved Christian carries a civil war inside him. It is not the fashionable warfare between “your authentic self” and the expectations of society, nor is it a psychological wrestling match between competing versions of personal fulfillment. The Bible identifies the combatants without consulting a therapist: the old man and the new man, the flesh and the Spirit, the law of sin and the inward man. Ephesians 4:22–24 commands the believer to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” to “be renewed in the spirit of your mind,” and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The old man is corrupt; the new man is created righteous and holy. God does not rehabilitate the first and gradually rename him the second. Salvation does not put the old man through a religious training program, teach him church vocabulary, button a white shirt around his corruption, and present him to God as reformed merchandise. God condemns the old and creates the new.

That distinction explains why the same Christian can love the word of God and still encounter vile impulses from his flesh. It explains how Paul could say, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” while confessing, “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.” It explains why Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” If salvation removed the old nature, there would be nothing left to lust against the Spirit. If salvation merely improved the old nature, Paul would describe cooperation rather than warfare. But Scripture says the two are “contrary.” The flesh did not sign a peace treaty when the sinner received Christ. It lost its right to reign, but it retained its appetite for the throne. The old man has been judicially crucified with Christ, but he has not yet been physically removed from the believer’s mortal body.

This doctrine destroys two errors that have troubled Christians for centuries. The sinless-perfectionist mistakes the new man's nature for the present condition of the whole Christian and begins boasting that he no longer sins. The defeated believer makes the opposite mistake: he feels the activity of the flesh and concludes that no new birth ever occurred. One man confuses the presence of the new nature with the absence of the old; the other confuses the presence of the old nature with the absence of the new. The Bible corrects both. The new man is born of God and does not produce sin. The old man remains corrupt and produces nothing else. The believer's standing belongs to his union with Christ and the sinless life born within him; the instability of his state appears whenever he yields his members to the old nature. The flesh cannot crawl into heaven and stain Christ's righteousness, but if allowed back onto the throne, it can turn a Christian's earthly walk into a spiritual junkyard.

1. Salvation Does Not Repair Adam's Ruined Nature

The natural man enters this world connected with Adam's fall. Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Adam did not merely set a poor example that later generations unfortunately copied. Through his disobedience, sin entered the human race, death followed it, and every descendant of Adam inherited a fallen nature. Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." David was not accusing his mother of committing adultery; he was confessing that fallen human nature marks a man from conception. A child does not need to attend a seminar to learn selfishness, dishonesty, rebellion, jealousy, or anger. Those weeds grow naturally in Adam's soil.

Romans 8:7 explains the flesh's attitude toward God: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The flesh is not merely weak, uneducated, wounded, or awaiting encouragement. It is "enmity against God." It is not subject to God's law, and the verse shuts the door by adding, "neither indeed can be." Religion attempts what God says cannot be done. It takes the carnal mind to church, gives it a hymnbook, teaches it religious phrases, and expects it to become friendly toward God. But a scrubbed rebel remains a rebel. The flesh may enjoy ceremony, music, social respectability, emotional excitement, and opportunities to display itself, but it will not submit to God. Adam's nature can wear a clerical collar without surrendering one inch of its hostility.

This is why Paul says in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." He carefully qualifies "in me" with "that is, in my flesh," because another life now dwelt within him. Paul did not say his flesh contained several good qualities requiring

further development. He said no good thing dwelt there. Education can inform the flesh, culture can polish it, discipline can restrain it, and religion can decorate it, but none of those can change its nature. You may teach a vulture to perch quietly in a church steeple, but it will still prefer a carcass to a hymn. God's answer to the flesh is not renovation but crucifixion. Salvation does not make the old man new; it creates a new man and declares the old one condemned.

2. The New Birth Produces a New Man

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The first birth produces flesh, and no amount of religious effort changes its origin. The second birth produces something that did not exist before: spiritual life from God. Jesus did not tell Nicodemus to educate the product of his first birth until it became spiritual. He said, "Ye must be born again." Religion applies cosmetics to the corpse; God supplies another birth. The flesh can be moral, sincere, charitable, zealous, and deeply religious while remaining flesh. The new birth is not the old life turning over a leaf. It is divine life entering a man who was dead in trespasses and sins.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The new creature exists "in Christ." This is not a statement that every habit, memory, weakness, and bodily appetite instantly disappears. If that were what the verse meant, no honest Christian could claim it for twenty-four hours. It describes the believer's new spiritual identity and standing. He has passed from death unto life, from Adam into Christ, from condemnation into justification, and from alienation into reconciliation. God has not merely improved the old creature's circumstances. He has placed the believer into His Son and brought forth a new creature whose life is connected with Christ.

Ephesians 4:24 describes this new man as one "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Notice the words "is created." The new man is not developed from the old man, any more than light in Genesis 1 was developed from darkness through a slow educational process. God commanded the light to shine. The new man is created according to God's workmanship and therefore possesses a nature suited to righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Good works do not create the new man; the new man is created unto good works. The religious mechanic tries to assemble a new creature from used Adamic parts. God starts with a new creation in Christ.

3. Spiritual Circumcision Separates the Believer from the Body of Sin

Colossians 2:11 describes an operation performed upon every believer: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.” This is not the physical circumcision given to Abraham’s descendants, nor is it baptismal surgery performed by a preacher. It is “made without hands.” Verse 11 continues, “in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” At salvation, God performs a spiritual separation between the inward person and the body of sinful flesh. The believer still lives in that body, feels its appetites, and suffers its weakness, but his soul is no longer spiritually identified with it as before. God cuts loose what religion spends a lifetime trying to glue back together.

This spiritual operation helps explain the believer’s standing. Colossians 3:3 says, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” The Christian’s true life is not stored in his physical flesh, which remains subject to sickness, corruption, and death. It is hidden with Christ in God. The flesh may commit sin, suffer chastening, and return to the dust, but it cannot drag the life hidden with Christ back under condemnation. Romans 8:10 says, “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” The mortal body has not yet received redemption, but the inward man possesses life through Christ’s righteousness. Standing rests with the life God has hidden, not with the body Adam has ruined.

This does not make bodily conduct unimportant. The same Paul who taught spiritual circumcision commanded believers to glorify God in their bodies. First Corinthians 6:19 asks, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” The temple remains mortal and vulnerable to sinful use, but it now belongs to God. Spiritual separation from the body of sin does not give the Christian permission to rent the body back to the devil by the hour. Romans 6:12 commands, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Sin may remain present, but it has no God-given right to reign. The throne was vacated at Calvary; the Christian gets into trouble when he invites the old dictator back into the palace.

4. Romans 7 Reveals the War Inside a Saved Man

Romans 7 is not the diary of an unsaved pagan trying to earn salvation. It is the testimony of a saved apostle discovering that the flesh cannot perform the holy desires of the inward man. Paul says, “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” An unsaved man may hate consequences, exposure, guilt, or embarrassment, but Paul describes a man who inwardly agrees with God’s law and desires to obey it. Verse 22 says, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” The problem is not the absence of a holy desire. The problem is the presence of another law operating in his members.

Paul then makes a distinction that careless theology refuses to make: “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” He repeats the statement in verse 20. Paul is not dodging responsibility or blaming an imaginary second personality. He is distinguishing his new identity in Christ from the indwelling principle of sin in the flesh. The “I” that delights in God’s law is the inward man; the sin operating in his members belongs to the old nature. Paul remains responsible for what he yields his members to do, but he understands that sinful impulses do not originate in the new creature born of God. The new man does not produce sin any more than a clean fountain produces sewage. The pollution comes from the old pipe still running through the property.

The chapter reaches its cry in verse 24: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul does not ask, “What program shall improve this body?” He asks, “Who shall deliver me?” The answer is a Person: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Yet verse 25 acknowledges the continuing conflict: “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Deliverance from condemnation is already possessed, practical victory is available through the Spirit, and final deliverance from the body awaits the future. Romans 8 follows Romans 7 because the answer to defeated self-effort is not stronger flesh but the indwelling Spirit. The road out of Romans 7 is not a seminar on self-esteem. It is Romans 8.

5. Galatians 5 Shows How the Two Natures Produce Opposing Fruit

Galatians 5:16 gives the practical command: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Paul does not tell believers to eradicate the flesh, achieve a second blessing that removes it, or pretend it no longer exists. He tells them to walk in the Spirit so that they will not fulfill its lust. The flesh remains present enough to produce lust, but the Spirit provides power not to obey it. Victory is not obtained by staring at the flesh, analyzing its every twitch, and making dramatic vows about future perfection. Victory comes through yielding to the Spirit and obeying the word He inspired. The Christian does not defeat darkness by studying it under a microscope. He turns on the light.

Verse 17 identifies the warfare: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” The flesh has not become neutral since salvation. It opposes the Holy Ghost every step of the journey. If the Spirit directs the believer toward prayer, the flesh discovers sudden exhaustion. If the Spirit directs him toward Scripture, the flesh remembers twelve urgent distractions. If the Spirit directs him to forgive, the flesh produces a file cabinet of old evidence. If the Spirit directs him to give, the flesh develops an immediate concern about financial stewardship. The old man can quote practical

considerations whenever obedience threatens his comfort. He has been attending church long enough to dress rebellion in respectable vocabulary.

The works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21 include adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings. The fruit of the Spirit in verses 22–23 is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance.” These are not two stages of the same nature. They are opposite products from opposite sources. The flesh performs “works” because it labors to express itself; the Spirit produces “fruit” because divine life bears what belongs to its nature. You do not get the fruit of the Spirit by hanging artificial grapes upon Adam’s dead branches. You walk in dependence upon the Spirit, and He produces what the flesh can imitate for an afternoon but never originate.

6. First John Does Not Teach That the Christian’s Flesh Becomes Sinless

First John 3:9 says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The verse does not say that everyone who has been born of God never commits an act of sin in his total earthly experience. First John 1:8 has already declared, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” First John 2:1 says, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” John teaches that Christians should not sin, acknowledges that they may sin, and provides the Advocate when they do. He has not forgotten all of that by chapter 3.

The key to 1 John 3:9 is the phrase “born of God.” That which is born of God does not sin because God’s seed remains in it. The new man is the product of the new birth and shares the holy character of its divine source. It cannot generate sin. The flesh, which was born of Adam, remains capable of every sin it could commit before salvation. This is why the believer can confess sin without surrendering his identity in Christ. The sinful act came through yielding to the old nature, not through corruption entering the divine seed. The new birth does not produce a nature that begins sinless and then gradually spoils like milk left on a counter. What God begets remains suited to God.

The sinless-perfectionist takes the sinlessness of the new man and falsely claims it for his entire daily state. His doctrine usually survives until somebody follows him home, examines his motives, listens to his private speech, or asks his family for an honest review. First John 1:8 says such a man deceives himself. Notice that he has not deceived everybody else. His wife may not be deceived, his children may not be deceived, and the church member he has mistreated is probably not deceived. The man has performed the

deception upon himself. Claiming sinlessness is not the crown of sanctification; it is evidence that pride has turned off the lights and declared the dirt invisible.

7. The Old Man Must Be Put Off Until Christ Removes Him Entirely

Ephesians 4:22 commands believers to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” The old man is “corrupt,” not recovering. His lusts are “deceitful” because they promise satisfaction while concealing bondage, shame, loss, and chastening. Sin advertises liberty and delivers handcuffs. It displays the bait and hides the hook. Putting off the old man means refusing the patterns, habits, thinking, and conduct that belonged to the former life. The Christian does not put off the old man to create a new standing. He puts him off because the new standing has made the old conduct utterly out of place.

Colossians 3:9–10 says, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man.” Ephesians commands a practical putting off, while Colossians points to the accomplished change of identity that supplies the reason. Positionally, the believer has put off the old man and put on the new; practically, he must make his conversation agree with that reality. This is standing and state in the wardrobe of Bible doctrine. God has clothed the believer with the new man, but the believer can still reach into Adam’s dirty hamper and drag yesterday’s garments back over himself. A Christian telling lies is wearing grave clothes over a resurrection body.

The struggle will continue until death or the Rapture because the redemption of the body is still future. Romans 8:23 says believers “groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” The soul has been redeemed, the spirit has been made alive, and the believer’s standing is complete in Christ, but the body still bears the mark of Adam. At the Rapture, Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Then the old nature will be gone, the conflict will cease, and the believer’s state will perfectly match his standing. Until that moment, anybody announcing the funeral of the flesh should check the coffin. The old rascal has a habit of sitting up during the sermon.

Conclusion

The Christian life cannot be understood until the Bible’s distinction between the old man and the new man is believed. The old man comes from Adam, dwells in the flesh, resists God, produces sinful works, and cannot be rehabilitated. The new man is born of God, created in righteousness and true holiness, joined to Christ, and incapable of producing sin. Salvation does not combine the two into a religious compromise. It places them in opposition. The believer’s standing belongs to the new creation and his position in Christ;

his changing state reveals which nature he is presently yielding his members to serve. The war is real, but its presence does not cancel the new birth.

The doctrine delivers the struggling believer from hopeless despair. The presence of temptation does not prove the absence of salvation. The fact that fleshly impulses disgust the inward man may demonstrate the very conflict Scripture describes. An unsaved corpse does not complain about being dead. Yet the doctrine also strips the carnal Christian of excuses. He cannot blame the old nature as though he were helpless, because Romans 6 says sin shall not have dominion over him. God has supplied the indwelling Spirit, the written word, access to prayer, cleansing through confession, and power to refuse the flesh. The old man remains present, but he does not possess a legal right to the throne. A deposed king can still cause trouble when foolish citizens keep inviting him back into the palace.

The answer is neither to improve the flesh nor to pretend it has disappeared. Reckon the old man crucified, refuse his demands, put off his deeds, renew the mind through Scripture, and walk in the Spirit. Feed the new man and starve the old. The nature you supply will be the nature whose voice seems strongest when temptation arrives. One day Jesus Christ will remove the conflict completely by redeeming the body and conforming the believer to His image. Until then, the new man remains sinless, the old man remains corrupt, and the Christian remains responsible for which one receives the use of his hands, eyes, tongue, mind, and feet. The flesh cannot alter what God has made you in Christ, but it can disgrace what men see of Christ in you.

5 of 10: Standing and State – Out of Fellowship Without Falling Out of the Family

Key Passage: 1 John 1:3–10

Introduction

A Christian can be out of fellowship with God without being outside the family of God. That sentence is simple enough for a child to understand and apparently complicated enough to bewilder several acres of theological scholarship. A rebellious son does not cease to be his father's son when he disobeys, but he may lose the warmth, confidence, conversation, privilege, and enjoyment that belong to an obedient relationship. His birth established the relationship; his behavior affects the fellowship. The same distinction appears throughout the New Testament. Salvation joins the believer to Jesus Christ, places him into God's family, gives him eternal life, and seals him with the Holy Spirit. Fellowship concerns his

present walk with the Father and the Son. Relationship is established by the new birth; fellowship is enjoyed through walking in the light. Union is settled in Christ; communion is disturbed whenever sin is welcomed, defended, concealed, or excused.

First John 1:3 states the subject plainly: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” John is not writing instructions for repeatedly manufacturing eternal life every time a Christian sins. He is addressing fellowship. Verse 6 says that if “we” claim fellowship with God while walking in darkness, “we lie, and do not the truth.” Verse 7 speaks of walking in the light. Verse 9 speaks of confessing sins and receiving cleansing. The chapter concerns the daily communion of people who already possess a relationship with God. When sin enters the walk, fellowship is interrupted; when sin is honestly confessed, fellowship is cleansed and restored. The believer does not get born again every time he gets his feet dirty. If that were the plan of salvation, every Christian would require more births than a barnyard rabbit.

Yet the security of the family relationship must never be twisted into indifference toward fellowship. Salvation does not snap like a rotten shoestring whenever the saint stumbles, but neither does grace turn cherished sin into harmless furniture. A Christian cannot drag bitterness, lust, dishonesty, pride, rebellion, malice, or covetousness into the Father’s presence and expect unhindered communion. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit, quenches His practical working, silences the joy of salvation, weakens prayer, dulls discernment, robs the word of its sweetness, damages testimony, and invites chastening. The blood establishes the family relationship once for all; honest confession keeps family fellowship clean. The saint may leave the dining table, slam the door, and sit sulking in the far country, but he cannot reverse the birth that made him a son.

1. The New Birth Establishes the Family Relationship

John 1:12–13 says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Membership in God’s family comes through a birth performed by God. It is not inherited through Christian parents, transmitted by denominational membership, conferred by water baptism, or earned through respectable behavior. A sinner becomes a child of God by receiving Jesus Christ and being born of God. The first birth places him into Adam’s fallen family; the second places him into the family of God. Salvation is not God adopting Adam’s old nature after it completes a religious obedience course. It is God imparting new life from above.

Galatians 3:26 tells the Church plainly, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The verse does not say all mankind are already God’s children because God created them. All men are God’s creatures, but spiritual sonship belongs to those who are in Christ by faith. Ephesians 2 describes the unsaved as “children of disobedience” and “children of wrath.” Jesus told religious leaders in John 8:44, “Ye are of your father the devil.” That does not sound much like the modern universal-family reunion where everybody is declared a child of God except the fellow rude enough to quote the Bible. A man enters God’s family through faith in Christ, and once born into that family, he possesses a relationship that rests upon divine life rather than fluctuating human conduct.

A birth cannot be undone by bad behavior. A son may disgrace his family name, reject his father’s counsel, waste his inheritance, and suffer the consequences of rebellion, but he cannot crawl backward through his mother’s womb and cancel his birth. His state can become miserable while his relationship remains factual. In Luke 15, the prodigal entered the far country, wasted his substance, joined himself to a citizen of that country, and longed to eat swine’s food. Yet when he came to himself, he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” Distance had destroyed the enjoyment of home, but it had not rewritten the family record. The father did not tell the servants to perform another birth. He welcomed home the son who “was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” A filthy son in a hog pen is still a son, but only a fool would argue that the hog pen is therefore as good as the father’s house.

2. Union with Christ Is Settled, but Communion Must Be Maintained

First Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” At salvation, the Holy Spirit places the believer into the spiritual body of Christ. This union is not an emotional sensation, a second blessing, or a ceremony performed with water. It is the operation of God. The believer becomes a member of Christ’s body, and First Corinthians 12:27 says, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” The hand may fail to obey the head, but it does not cease being part of the body every time it moves improperly. The remedy for disobedient members is correction, not repeated amputation and reattachment. Some systems have Christ’s body losing fingers and toes so rapidly that heaven would need a full-time surgical ward.

Ephesians 5:30 says, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Colossians 3:3 adds, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” That is union. The believer’s life is not hidden in the reliability of his feelings or the spotless record of his recent conduct. It is hidden with Christ in God. The devil would have to reach through God, remove Christ, undo the Spirit’s baptism, reverse spiritual circumcision, and destroy eternal life before he could dissolve that union. The Christian’s standing is as secure as the

Person in whom he stands. Christ does not acquire and lose members according to the hourly temperature of their devotion.

Communion is different. Communion describes shared fellowship, agreement, participation, and enjoyment within the established union. First Corinthians 10:16 speaks of “the communion of the blood of Christ” and “the communion of the body of Christ.” Second Corinthians 13:14 mentions “the communion of the Holy Ghost.” Communion can be hindered because it involves the believer’s present response to God. Amos 3:3 asks, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Although that verse appears in God’s dealings with Israel, the principle is plain: fellowship requires agreement. The Christian cannot walk west while God walks east and claim they are enjoying close communion because both remain related. Union determines whose he is; communion reveals whether he is presently walking with the One to whom he belongs.

3. Fellowship Requires Walking in the Light

First John 1:5 establishes the character of the God with whom fellowship is offered: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” God does not adjust His holiness to make fellowship convenient for a believer determined to cherish darkness. He does not dim the light, shade the truth, or rename sin so the carnal Christian can feel less exposed. Modern religion has developed an impressive vocabulary for escorting sin around the word of God. Pride becomes self-confidence, covetousness becomes ambition, lust becomes personal exploration, rebellion becomes authenticity, and bitterness becomes a boundary. But the light of Scripture is not impressed by the costume department. Darkness wearing a name badge still cannot fellowship with light.

Verse 6 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” John includes himself in the warning by saying “we.” He does not teach that walking in darkness is impossible for a professing believer; he teaches that anyone doing so cannot honestly claim present fellowship with God. A Christian may sing loudly, pray publicly, quote verses fluently, and hold a church office while privately walking in darkness. Public religion cannot manufacture private communion. A man can shake the preacher’s hand while refusing the Father’s light. He can sit three rows from the pulpit and still be several counties away from fellowship.

Walking in the light does not mean attaining sinless perfection. Verse 7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,” and immediately adds, “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” The need for continual cleansing proves that walking in the light is not the absence of all failure. It is openness before God, agreement with His truth, and readiness to confess whatever the

light exposes. A man walking through a clean room may discover dirt on his shoes because the light reveals it; the man in darkness simply congratulates himself because he cannot see the floor. Fellowship belongs not to the Christian who claims never to need cleansing, but to the Christian who refuses to hide what God has revealed.

4. Confession Restores Fellowship Rather Than Recreating Eternal Life

First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confession means agreeing with God about sin. It is not offering excuses, explaining circumstances, advertising good intentions, or presenting a list of people who behaved worse. Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, Saul blamed the people, and Aaron claimed a golden calf somehow walked out of the fire. Human nature has been practicing excuse-making since Eden and has achieved remarkable fluency without requiring professional training. Confession stops the speech, drops the defense, and calls the act what God calls it.

The forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 concerns family fellowship, not the repeated restoration of judicial justification. At salvation, the sinner receives redemption through Christ’s blood, “the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” according to Ephesians 1:7. Colossians 2:13 says God has “forgiven you all trespasses.” Hebrews 10:14 says Christ “hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Those passages establish the believer’s standing. First John 1 deals with the cleansing required when a saved person’s walk becomes defiled. The Judge has already dealt with the eternal penalty at Calvary; the Father now deals with the conduct of His child. Confession does not persuade God to justify the believer again. It removes what has interrupted the enjoyment of an existing relationship.

God is “faithful and just” to forgive because the blood of Christ has satisfied His righteousness. He does not forgive because the Christian has produced enough tears, maintained an appropriately miserable expression, or promised never to fail again. Emotional sorrow may accompany genuine confession, but emotion is not the cleansing agent. The believer’s confidence rests upon God’s character and Christ’s propitiation. First John 2:1 says, “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Notice that the sinning Christian still approaches God as “the Father,” and Christ remains his Advocate. The verse does not say we need another Saviour. It says we already “have an advocate.” When the saint fails, Christ does not begin a new redemption; He represents the one His finished redemption has already secured.

5. Christ’s Washing of the Disciples’ Feet Pictures Daily Cleansing

John 13 gives one of the clearest pictures of settled relationship and daily cleansing. When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, Peter protested, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Peter, moving from one extreme to the other as only Peter could, replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Peter assumed that if a little washing was necessary, then another complete bath would be safer. Religious systems have been imitating Peter ever since, putting the whole believer back into the bathtub every time his feet collect dust.

Jesus corrected him in verse 10: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." The complete washing had already occurred. Only the feet required repeated cleansing because they contacted the dirt of the road. This pictures the distinction between the once-for-all cleansing associated with salvation and the daily cleansing necessary for fellowship. Titus 3:5 speaks of "the washing of regeneration," while Ephesians 5:26 speaks of "the washing of water by the word." Regeneration does not need to be repeated, but the believer's walk must be continually exposed to and cleansed by Scripture. The bath establishes cleanliness; the basin deals with the journey.

Christ added, "and ye are clean, but not all," because Judas was present. Verse 11 explains, "For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean." Judas did not merely have dirty feet; he had never received the complete inward cleansing. The other disciples required fellowship cleansing, but Judas required salvation. That distinction remains essential. An unsaved professor does not need confession as a substitute for conversion; he must receive Christ. A saved believer who has sinned does not need to be converted again; he must confess and be cleansed in his walk. One man needs the bath, while the other needs the basin. Confusing the two either gives false assurance to Judas or keeps Peter permanently soaking in religious uncertainty.

6. David Lost Joy and Fellowship, but Church-Age Believers Must Read Him Rightly

Psalms 51 records David's confession after his adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged death of Uriah. David does not minimize the crime. He says, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." He confesses, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." David had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, his family, his kingdom, and the testimony of Israel, but ultimately every sin is an act against God's holiness and authority. Genuine confession moves past the damage-control language of public relations and arrives at the throne of God. David does not say he made a mistake, experienced a moral lapse, or entered an unhealthy relational pattern. He calls it "my sin" and "this evil."

David prays in verse 12, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” He does not say, “Restore unto me thy salvation,” but “the joy of thy salvation.” His sin had destroyed the enjoyment of God, silenced his spiritual gladness, and broken the sweetness of communion. This is exactly what unconfessed sin does to the Christian. Prayer becomes mechanical, Scripture becomes dry, worship becomes performance, and spiritual conversation becomes uncomfortable because the hidden thing sits between the heart and God like a corpse at the supper table. The salvation remains, but its joy is gone. A man may retain the title deed to his house while refusing to enter the room where fellowship is enjoyed.

David also prayed, “Take not thy holy spirit from me.” That petition must be read dispensationally. David lived under the Old Testament economy, before the completed cross, before the formation of Christ’s spiritual body, and before the Church-age sealing described in Ephesians 1 and 4. The Spirit came upon Old Testament individuals for service and could depart, as He departed from Saul. The Church-age believer is sealed “unto the day of redemption.” He should not pray for God to avoid removing a Spirit whom God has promised will remain. Nevertheless, David’s brokenness, honest confession, and request for restored joy provide a powerful pattern. We apply the spiritual lesson without stealing Israel’s doctrinal mail and forwarding every line to the Church.

7. Grieving and Quenching the Spirit Make Fellowship Miserable

Ephesians 4:30 commands, “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” The verse contains both the possibility of damaged fellowship and the certainty of secure relationship. Only a person can be grieved; the Holy Ghost is not an impersonal force, religious atmosphere, or divine electricity. He indwells the believer and is grieved by lying, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. The same Spirit who seals the saint must endure whatever the saint permits in the temple. A Christian cannot evict Him, but he can make the house a grief to its holy Occupant.

First Thessalonians 5:19 adds, “Quench not the Spirit.” To grieve concerns causing sorrow through sinful conduct; to quench concerns suppressing, resisting, or hindering His operation. The believer quenches the Spirit when he refuses conviction, ignores Scripture, despises sound preaching, neglects prayer, and continually says no to divine leading. Each refusal hardens the conscience a little more. The Spirit has not departed, but His promptings are resisted and His practical influence is smothered. The Christian then wonders why worship feels empty and prayer seems to strike the ceiling. He has spent the week pouring cold water on the fire and arrives Sunday asking why the room is cold.

The way back is neither complicated nor painless. The believer must step into the light, stop defending the sin, confess it specifically, forsake it, make restitution where necessary, and resume obedience to the truth already known. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” In its immediate setting, that proverb belongs to God’s moral instruction concerning Israel, but its principle agrees with the New Testament pattern. Confession without a willingness to forsake becomes a religious mop used while the faucet remains running. God does not demand sinless perfection before restoring fellowship, but He does demand honesty. The path home begins where the excuses end.

Conclusion

Relationship and fellowship must be distinguished without being divorced. Relationship is established by the new birth, union with Christ, spiritual baptism, redemption through the blood, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship concerns the believer’s present walk in the light, agreement with God, responsiveness to Scripture, and enjoyment of communion with the Father and the Son. Sin does not undo the birth, remove the believer from Christ’s body, or reverse justification. But it does interrupt communion, grieve the Spirit, quench spiritual power, destroy joy, damage testimony, and bring the correcting hand of the Father. The saint can leave the table without leaving the family.

The legalist turns every failure into another funeral for eternal life because he has never learned the difference between the courtroom and the household. The libertine sees the security of the household and concludes that throwing furniture through the windows carries no consequence. The Bible rebukes both. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” but “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” The believer is not condemned as a criminal, but he is corrected as a son. Security does not make sin safe. It changes the relationship in which God deals with it.

Do not wait for sin to rot in the dark. Bring it into the light. Call it what God calls it, claim no virtue in hiding it, and trust the faithfulness of the Father and the advocacy of Jesus Christ. The blood that established your relationship has not lost its value, and the word still supplies water for the feet dirtied by the road. You do not confess in order to fall back into the family; you confess because you belong to the family and desire fellowship with the Father. Salvation provides a home that rebellion cannot erase, but only obedience enjoys the warmth of its table.

Key Passage: Hebrews 12:5–11

Introduction

When a believer sins, God does not drag him back into the criminal courtroom, reopen the case settled at Calvary, and ask whether the blood of Jesus Christ remains sufficient. The eternal judgment of the believer's sins took place at the cross, where Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The sentence fell, the wrath was endured, the payment was made, and the Judge accepted the sacrifice by raising the Substitute from the dead.

Romans 8:1 therefore declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The believer's standing is not under review every time his state deteriorates. He does not move from son to criminal, from justified to condemned, and from eternal life to eternal death whenever the flesh gets the upper hand. God does not conduct salvation like a courthouse with revolving doors.

Yet the absence of condemnation does not mean the absence of correction. The believer who sins does not face God as a condemned criminal, but he does face Him as a disobedient child. Hebrews 12:6 says, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The same grace that secures the relationship brings the rod into the household. Chastening is not God collecting a portion of the eternal debt that Christ somehow failed to pay. It is the Father correcting the earthly conduct of a son whose debt has already been paid. Condemnation is judicial and concerns the sinner's guilt before the law; chastening is parental and concerns the child's behavior within the family. Condemnation sends an unbeliever to hell; chastening trains a believer for holiness. The cross removed the sentence, but it did not remove the Father's authority.

This distinction wrecks the two usual counterfeits. The legalist sees the correcting rod and imagines the Christian has returned under eternal wrath. The libertine sees "no condemnation" and concludes that the Father threw away the rod when Christ died. One man turns every hardship into evidence that salvation is slipping; the other turns eternal security into a storm shelter for rebellion. Both have read only half the Bible and misread the half they retained. Grace does not place a child on probation, and grace does not raise spoiled children. The Christian's standing keeps him out of hell, but his state may bring weakness, loss, sorrow, exposure, sickness, shortened usefulness, and even physical death. God will not abandon His child to damnation, and He will not abandon him to destruction without correction.

1. The Courtroom Sentence Was Exhausted at Calvary

Isaiah 53:5 says of Christ, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Verse 6 adds, "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Calvary was

not a religious demonstration intended merely to inspire better behavior. It was a substitutionary judgment in which the sinless Son of God bore the sinner's guilt. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Christ received what our sins deserved so that those who believe might receive the righteousness that belongs to Him. The transaction was judicial, complete, and accepted by God.

Romans 8:1 gives the verdict: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The foundation of the declaration is the believer's location "in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:3 explains that God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Sin was condemned in Christ's flesh at Calvary; therefore, the believer joined to Christ is no longer under its eternal sentence. The latter part of Romans 8:1 points toward the sphere and character of the new life, developed again in verse 4, but it does not make justification a daily wage paid only when the Christian walks perfectly. If it did, Paul's "no condemnation" would last until the believer's next unspiritual thought, which would make "eternal life" one of the shortest possessions in the Bible.

Christ did not bear most of the condemnation while leaving a remaining portion for the believer to suffer. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." John 5:24 says the believer "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Notice the tenses: he "hath" everlasting life, "shall not" come into condemnation, and "is passed" from death unto life. That is not a sinner waiting for a final decision based upon his subsequent conduct. It is a settled transfer secured by Christ. God can discipline the believer severely without contradicting that verdict because chastening is not another installment of Calvary. The Son endured condemnation for us; the Father administers correction to us.

2. Chastening Belongs to the Household, Not the Criminal Court

Hebrews 12:5 addresses believers as children: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Every word places the matter inside the family. God says, "My son." The believer is not an unknown defendant standing before an uncertain Judge. He is a son being addressed by his Father. The relationship exists before the chastening begins and remains the reason the chastening occurs. God corrects him because he belongs to the household. The rod does not manufacture sonship; it recognizes sonship and governs its conduct.

Verse 7 says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." The passage then asks, "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" A human father who loves

his child does not permit him to run into traffic, play with poison, or set fire to the house merely because correction might upset him. Love that never restrains destruction is not love; it is cowardice dressed in soft vocabulary. God is not afflicted with the modern fear that authority might damage a rebel's sense of self-expression. He knows sin destroys, spreads, hardens, and kills. Therefore, He corrects His own before their rebellion carries them farther than His purpose permits.

Hebrews 12:8 delivers the sharpest part of the doctrine: "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The absence of all divine correction would not prove exceptional spirituality or unlimited grace. It would raise a question about relationship. A man can live in open rebellion without correction because the devil does not discipline his children for acting like their father. God deals with His own. The rod is not evidence that the Father has disowned the son; it is evidence that the Father refuses to do so. Condemnation says, "Depart from me." Chastening says, "You belong to me, and I will not leave you in this condition."

3. The Father's Love Is Holy Enough to Hurt

Hebrews 12:6 begins, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Divine love is the motive for divine correction. The sentimental religion of the age imagines love as permanent approval delivered in a soothing voice, preferably while nobody mentions judgment, holiness, obedience, or hell. But biblical love seeks the good of its object, and sin is never good for the Christian. Sin corrupts judgment, hardens conscience, damages others, steals time, weakens testimony, consumes rewards, and invites further bondage. A Father who watched His child march toward ruin without interference would not be gracious. He would be negligent.

The verse continues, "and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "Scourgeth" is not a word designed by a public-relations department. God's correction may be painful because stubborn rebellion sometimes requires more than a whispered suggestion. The Lord may begin with the convicting word, the rebuke of preaching, the warning of a mature believer, or the uneasiness of a violated conscience. If the child stiffens his neck, the pressure may increase. God knows precisely where pride is hiding and which support must be removed before the rebel looks upward. The Father never strikes blindly, but He does not apologize when holiness requires the blow.

Revelation 3:19 states the same principle: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Christ addressed the lukewarm Laodiceans, whose wealth had convinced them they needed nothing while heaven assessed them as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Their comfortable condition had become an

anesthetic for spiritual poverty. Christ's rebuke was an expression of love because flattery would have allowed the disease to continue. The Saviour who knocks at the door also carries the authority to correct the house. Grace will comfort the brokenhearted, but it will not tuck rebellion into bed and read it a bedtime story.

4. Chastening Can Touch the Believer's Earthly Life Severely

First Corinthians 11 records believers treating the Lord's supper with selfishness and irreverence. Some ate while others went hungry; some became drunken; and the assembly failed to discern the solemn meaning of the Lord's body. Paul did not treat the disorder as a minor worship-style disagreement. He said in verse 29 that the offender "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." In this context, "damnation" refers to temporal judgment rather than eternal damnation in hell, as the following verses demonstrate. The word is serious because the consequences were serious.

Verse 30 says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." "Sleep" is the ordinary New Testament description of physical death for believers. Some Corinthians experienced weakness, some sickness, and some died under divine discipline. Their behavior did not cancel Christ's redemption, but their standing in Christ did not make their state harmless. God can touch the body of a saved man who persistently uses that body to dishonor Him. A Christian may be eternally secure and temporally buried. The doctrine of eternal security was never intended to become a bulletproof vest worn while charging into rebellion.

Paul explains the distinction in verses 31–32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." There it is in one inspired sentence. Believers can be judged, yet the judgment is chastening so that they are "not condemned with the world." Temporal discipline and eternal condemnation are not the same. In fact, the chastening distinguishes the believer from the condemned world. The Father may shorten the child's earthly course rather than permit him to continue disgracing Christ, but He does not cast the child into the world's eternal judgment. The grave may become God's last disciplinary classroom for a believer who refused every earlier lesson.

5. Grace Does Not Cancel the Law of Sowing and Reaping

Galatians 6:7 warns Christians, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Paul wrote that warning to believers, not merely to heathen criminals. Salvation does not repeal the moral harvest built into life. A Christian who sows dishonesty may reap destroyed trust. A Christian who sows lust may reap a shattered marriage. A Christian who sows laziness may reap poverty and lost opportunity. A

Christian who sows bitterness may poison his own home. Forgiveness removes guilt before God, but it does not always uproot every crop already planted in the field. Grace can cleanse the farmer while the harvest still comes over the hill.

David provides a sobering Old Testament illustration of this principle. After his adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged death of Uriah, David confessed, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” Forgiveness was real and immediate, but Nathan continued, “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme,” consequences would follow. The child died, violence arose within David’s house, Amnon violated Tamar, Absalom murdered Amnon, and rebellion tore the kingdom. David’s sin was put away judicially, but the earthly harvest continued. The sword had been planted, and it grew.

This does not mean every consequence is a direct supernatural stroke beyond the ordinary effects of sin. Often the sin itself contains the rod. Alcohol punishes the body, pride destroys friendships, deceit breeds suspicion, and sexual immorality carries devastation without requiring a thunderbolt from heaven. At other times God intervenes more directly, as Scripture plainly records. The distinction is not always visible to observers, which is why Christians should be slow to pronounce judgment over another person’s suffering. But the principle remains: forgiveness is not permission to expect the field to forget what was sown. The blood can wash the sinner clean while the crop still bears his name.

6. Not Every Sickness or Sorrow Is Divine Chastening

Although God can use weakness, sickness, loss, and suffering as chastening, the Bible does not teach that every affliction is punishment for personal sin. Job’s friends built their theology upon that assumption and spent chapter after chapter accusing a righteous sufferer of hidden wickedness. God eventually told Eliphaz, “Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.” Their tidy formula could not account for spiritual warfare, divine testing, or God’s larger purpose. They had a religious calculator with one button: suffering equals secret sin. It produced the wrong answer with remarkable confidence.

In John 9, the disciples asked concerning a man born blind, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” Paul possessed a thorn in the flesh that kept him humble and displayed the sufficiency of Christ’s grace. Epaphroditus became “sick nigh unto death” through sacrificial service. Timothy had “often infirmities,” and Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. Scripture never accuses them of being

under chastening. Sometimes sickness corrects sin; sometimes it accompanies service; sometimes it reveals grace; sometimes it belongs to life in a dying body. The Bible has more than one shelf in its medicine cabinet.

The believer should therefore examine himself without becoming superstitious. First Corinthians 11:31 says, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” When affliction comes, it is proper to ask whether known sin has been resisted, whether warnings have been ignored, or whether God is correcting a specific area. But after honest examination and confession, the Christian should not invent sins to explain every headache, broken appliance, financial difficulty, or rainy afternoon. God is capable of identifying the matter He intends to correct. Conviction points to something definite; vague condemnation merely spreads fog. The Father uses the rod to teach, not to turn His children into frightened fortune-tellers interpreting every hardship as a coded threat.

7. Chastening Seeks Repentance, Holiness, and Fruit

Hebrews 12:10 says earthly fathers chastened according to their limited wisdom, “but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” God’s purpose is profitable and holy. He is not settling a personal irritation, satisfying wounded pride, or venting uncontrolled anger. His discipline is exact, purposeful, and measured by perfect knowledge. He sees the seed and the harvest, the present rebellion and its future ruin. The child sees only the pain of correction; the Father sees the destruction being prevented. God’s rod is guided by omniscience and held by love.

Verse 11 admits, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.” The Bible does not insult the sufferer by pretending correction feels pleasant. It is grievous. A loss still hurts, exposure still humiliates, and the collapse of a cherished plan still wounds. But the verse continues, “nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The word “afterward” matters. Chastening looks different when viewed from the pain of the present than from the fruit of the future. The rod is bitter at the root and peaceful in the harvest.

The final phrase, “unto them which are exercised thereby,” shows that suffering alone does not automatically produce holiness. Some believers become humble under chastening; others become bitter. Some confess; others blame. Some return to the Father; others sit in the pigpen criticizing the menu. Chastening must be received as instruction. Hebrews 12:5 warns against two wrong reactions: “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” To despise it is to shrug it off; to faint is to collapse in despair. The right response is neither defiance nor hopelessness, but submission. Bend

beneath the Father's hand, learn the lesson, confess the sin, and let the rod accomplish what rebellion made necessary.

Conclusion

The believer's sins have been judicially condemned at Calvary, and no eternal sentence remains against those who are in Christ Jesus. The Judge has justified them, the blood has redeemed them, the Spirit has sealed them, and Christ represents them as their Advocate. That standing cannot be overturned by the fluctuating condition of their earthly walk. When the Christian sins, he does not cease being a son and become a condemned criminal. He remains within the family, but he comes beneath the corrective authority of the Father. Condemnation concerns hell; chastening concerns holiness. Condemnation is the payment of guilt; chastening is the training of a child.

This security does not make rebellion safe. God may allow a believer to experience weakness, loss, humiliation, broken plans, sickness, the destruction of cherished idols, or even physical death. First Corinthians leaves no room for the cotton-candy doctrine that grace makes consequences imaginary. Some saints were weak, some were sickly, and some slept because they refused to judge themselves. Yet Scripture says they were chastened "that we should not be condemned with the world." The rod may come down precisely because hell never will. Eternal security keeps the saint from the lake of fire; it does not keep his earthly life from catching fire when he plays with sin.

When correction comes, do not despise it and do not faint beneath it. Examine yourself honestly, confess what God exposes, forsake what He condemns, make right what can be made right, and receive the Father's discipline as evidence that He has not abandoned you. The hand holding the rod is the same hand that was pierced for your redemption. Christ endured your condemnation so that you would never face God as a criminal; the Father administers chastening because He will never cease dealing with you as a son. Grace does not leave the child in the far country. It secures his place at home and, when necessary, makes the hog pen uncomfortable enough to send him back.

7 of 10: Standing and State – Seated in Heaven While Stumbling Through the Wilderness

Key Passage: Ephesians 2:4–7

Introduction

Ephesians 2:6 says that God “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The verse does not say the believer is trying to climb into heavenly places, hoping to qualify for heavenly places, or waiting to discover whether his conduct will earn him a chair. God “hath raised” him and “made” him sit there in Christ. His body remains on earth, his feet still gather dust, his hands still grow weary, and his mortal frame still carries Adam’s weakness, but his spiritual position has already been recorded in heaven. The Christian may feel as though he is crawling uphill through broken glass, yet God says he is seated with Christ. Faith must decide whether the believer’s changing sensations or God’s unchanging sentence gets the final word. The flesh checks the weather; faith checks the Book.

This heavenly standing exists alongside an unfinished earthly state. The believer is complete in Christ but incomplete in experience. He possesses all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, yet he can be discouraged before breakfast, tempted before lunch, confused by supper, and exhausted before bedtime. He is justified, sanctified, redeemed, accepted, sealed, raised, and seated, but he is also commanded to walk, grow, fight, endure, watch, pray, resist, mortify, and press toward the mark. There is no contradiction. Position describes what God has made the Christian in Christ; pilgrimage describes how that Christian is moving through a fallen world. Heaven sees the believer through the finished work of the Son, while earth sees the footprints left by his daily walk. The address is settled, but the shoes still require cleaning.

Israel’s wilderness journey supplies a powerful practical illustration of this distinction, provided nobody stuffs Israel into the Church or turns Church doctrine into a desert travel brochure. Israel was a literal nation redeemed from literal Egypt by the blood of a literal lamb, brought through a literal sea, placed under a literal covenant, and led toward a literal land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Church is Christ’s spiritual body, composed of saved Jews and Gentiles during the present dispensation of grace, blessed with heavenly rather than national promises. The two must not be confused. Nevertheless, 1 Corinthians 10:6 says Israel’s experiences “were our examples,” and verse 11 calls them “ensamples” written for our admonition. A redeemed people can belong to God while wandering, murmuring, doubting, lusting, and failing to enjoy what obedience would have provided. Israel and the Church are not the same people, but Christians can certainly repeat the same stupidity.

1. God Has Already Seated the Believer with Christ

Ephesians 2 begins with the believer’s former condition: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The sinner was not spiritually wounded, morally inconvenienced, or waiting for a motivational speaker to awaken his hidden potential. He

was dead. He walked “according to the course of this world,” followed “the prince of the power of the air,” and fulfilled “the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” He was “by nature the child of wrath.” Nothing in that description suggests that man contributes raw material to his resurrection. A corpse can neither reach for the defibrillator nor compliment the physician. Salvation begins with God acting where man is helpless.

Verse 4 turns the entire passage upon two glorious words: “But God.” “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,” intervened while sinners were dead in sins. Verse 5 says He “hath quickened us together with Christ.” The believer was made alive together with the risen Saviour, raised together with Him, and seated together with Him. These are not three religious goals at the end of a lifetime of successful performance. They are accomplished facts arising from union with Christ. The same God who raised Christ bodily from the dead has joined the believing sinner to Christ’s resurrection life and heavenly position.

The believer is seated “in Christ Jesus,” and that phrase protects the doctrine from every attack. His standing is not independent of Christ, as though God handed him a heavenly chair and trusted him not to fall out of it. He is seated because he is in the One seated at the Father’s right hand. Ephesians 1:20–21 says God set Christ “at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” The Christian’s position is secure because Christ’s position is secure. Satan cannot reach the believer’s standing without first climbing above the One who is “far above” him. The devil may trip the Christian’s earthly feet, but he cannot overturn Christ’s heavenly throne.

2. The Heavenly Position Is Complete While the Earthly Walk Is Developing

Colossians 2:10 says, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” Nothing needs to be added to the believer’s standing because nothing can be added to Christ. The Christian does not become more complete through church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, giving, witnessing, or moral discipline. Those things are essential to obedience and growth, but they do not finish what God says is already complete. A circle cannot become rounder, eternity cannot become longer, and Christ’s righteousness cannot become more righteous. The believer’s standing has reached its perfection because its perfection belongs to Someone else.

His earthly condition, however, requires constant growth. Paul told the Colossians to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” He addressed complete people and commanded them to increase. The increase concerns their state, not their completeness in Christ. A newborn child possesses complete membership in the family but lacks mature understanding, strength,

and usefulness. He does not become more of a son by growing; he becomes a more mature son. The Christian does not grow into his standing. He grows in the knowledge, enjoyment, and practical expression of what God has already given him.

This distinction keeps the struggling saint from despair without flattering his failures. Weariness does not cancel heavenly seating. Temptation does not reverse justification. Confusion does not break the Spirit's seal. A hard battle does not prove that Christ has abandoned the soldier. Yet none of those truths excuse spiritual laziness, neglected prayer, biblical ignorance, or repeated surrender to the flesh. A man seated in heavenly places should not be satisfied crawling through every earthly gutter. Security gives him a foundation from which to fight, not a feather bed upon which to avoid the battle. Grace comforts the wounded soldier; it does not award medals for desertion.

3. The Christian Has a Heavenly Citizenship and an Earthly Assignment

Philippians 3:20 says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The believer's citizenship, manner of life, and governing association are heavenly. He is an ambassador on foreign soil, not a permanent resident trying to renovate the present evil world into the kingdom of God. Second Corinthians 5:20 says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." An ambassador represents the authority and interests of another country. He does not take his instructions from the host nation's idols, fashions, philosophies, or moral revolutions. The Church's headquarters is not Washington, Rome, Brussels, Hollywood, or the headquarters of the latest religious corporation. Its Head is seated in heaven.

Colossians 3:1–2 gives the practical command arising from that position: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." The believer is told to seek heavenly things because he has been raised with Christ. Once again, position comes before practice. God does not say, "Set your affection above so that you may become risen." He says, "Ye are risen; therefore, direct your affection toward the place where your life belongs." The world works desperately to make the Christian forget his address by filling his mailbox with earthly advertisements.

A heavenly citizenship does not excuse neglect of earthly responsibility. Paul commanded Christians to work, provide for their households, honor authorities, love their spouses, train their children, serve one another, and maintain honest conduct before unbelievers. The believer is not so heavenly minded that he becomes useless on earth; properly understood, heavenly mindedness makes him dependable because he answers to a higher throne. A Christian who claims to be seated in heaven while refusing to pay his debts, keep his

promises, control his tongue, or care for his family is not displaying heavenly spirituality. He is using doctrine as camouflage for laziness. Heaven's citizenship should produce earth's most trustworthy pilgrims.

4. Israel Was Redeemed Before Entering the Wilderness

Israel's deliverance from Egypt began with the blood of the Passover lamb. Exodus 12:13 records God's promise: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Safety depended upon the blood applied to the door, not upon the moral excellence, emotional confidence, or travel experience of the people inside. The firstborn did not survive because he maintained a peaceful feeling throughout the night. God saw the blood. That redemption preceded Israel's wilderness testing. The nation did not enter the desert to earn deliverance from Pharaoh; it entered because God had already brought it out.

The Red Sea further separated Israel from its former bondage. Exodus 14 records God opening the waters, bringing His people through, and drowning Pharaoh's army. Israel stood on the far shore because the Lord had accomplished a deliverance human power could never achieve. Exodus 14:30 says, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians." Yet within days, the redeemed nation began murmuring about bitter water, empty stomachs, and uncertain travel. Their complaints did not rebuild Pharaoh's chariots or transport the nation back through the sea. They were delivered people acting as though Egypt still owned them.

First Corinthians 10 applies these events as warnings without erasing the distinction between Israel and the Church. Verse 1 calls them "our fathers" in the historical context of Israel, and verse 2 says they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." The Christian is baptized by the Spirit into Christ's body, not baptized unto Moses. Israel's covenant, promises, priesthood, earthly inheritance, and national calling remain distinct. Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost says their failures were written "for our admonition." God did not make the Church Israel, but He made Israel's wilderness history a mirror. The faces change; the flesh does not.

5. A Redeemed People Can Wander Through Unbelief

Numbers 13 records twelve spies examining Canaan. All twelve saw the same land, fruit, cities, and giants, but ten measured God by the giants while Joshua and Caleb measured the giants by God. The majority report admitted the land flowed with milk and honey, then buried the promise beneath a catalogue of difficulties. "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." That is unbelief dressed as military analysis. It gathers accurate facts and arranges them to exclude God. The giants were real, but so was the One who drowned Pharaoh.

Israel accepted the evil report and began longing for Egypt. Numbers 14:4 says, “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” Egypt had enslaved them, beaten them, murdered their sons, and worked them under cruel taskmasters, but unbelief has a remarkable ability to airbrush yesterday’s bondage. The flesh remembers Egypt’s onions and forgets Egypt’s whips. Christians do the same when the walk becomes difficult. They remember the pleasures of sin and forget the guilt, emptiness, fear, bondage, and judgment attached to them. The devil edits old footage before replaying it.

Hebrews 3:19 says of Israel, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Their failure did not mean God lacked power or the land lacked provision. Unbelief prevented them from enjoying the rest set before them. Canaan should not be treated as a picture of heaven, because Canaan contained giants, battles, failures, and the possibility of expulsion. Heaven will contain none of those. Canaan better illustrates the place of obedient possession and victorious usefulness. A believer may possess a heavenly standing while spending much of his earthly life circling the same mountain because he refuses to believe and obey what God has said.

6. God Supplies the Wilderness, but He Does Not Approve the Murmuring

Israel’s failures never exhausted God’s provision. He gave manna from heaven, water from the rock, guidance through the cloud and fire, preservation of clothing, and victory over enemies. Deuteronomy 8:4 says, “Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.” The wilderness exposed Israel’s weakness while displaying God’s faithfulness. They complained about food, and God fed them. They complained about water, and God supplied it. They feared enemies, and God defeated them. Their state was unstable, but the covenant-keeping God remained steady.

First Corinthians 10:3–4 says Israel “did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” Christ was the true source behind the wilderness provision. Yet verse 5 says, “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” Provision did not equal approval. God could feed them while rebuking them, guide them while correcting them, and preserve the nation while judging individual rebels. The carnal Christian makes the same mistake whenever he interprets continued provision as divine endorsement. A full refrigerator is not a certificate of holiness.

Paul identifies their wilderness sins: lust, idolatry, fornication, tempting Christ, and murmuring. He then warns in verse 12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The believer is seated in Christ, but he must take heed in his walk. His standing cannot fall out of heaven, but his state can fall into carnality, defeat, chastening,

and loss. Scripture does not contradict itself by telling seated saints to beware of falling. The heavenly seat concerns union with Christ; the earthly fall concerns practical conduct. A man can hold a secure title deed while falling down the stairs because he refused to watch his step.

7. Ephesians Teaches the Believer to Sit, Walk, and Stand

The structure of Ephesians gives the Christian life in three great movements. In the opening chapters, the believer is seated. Ephesians 2:6 says God has made us “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Sitting speaks of completed position and rest in Christ’s finished work. The believer begins by learning what God has done, not by presenting God with a list of human accomplishments. He is blessed, chosen, accepted, redeemed, sealed, quickened, raised, and seated. Before Paul tells him to take one step, he establishes where grace has placed him.

Beginning in Ephesians 4, the believer is told to walk. “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” “Walk not as other Gentiles walk.” “Walk in love.” “Walk as children of light.” “Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” The heavenly seat becomes the foundation for the earthly walk. Paul does not tell the Christian to walk toward acceptance; he tells him to walk because he has been accepted. He does not walk to obtain a position but to display it. Every earthly step should increasingly agree with the heavenly calling.

In Ephesians 6, the believer is commanded to stand. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” He sits in Christ, walks before men, and stands against the enemy. Reverse that order, and the Christian will attempt to fight before learning his position, work before resting in grace, and walk in order to earn what God already gave him. He will swing the sword while wondering whether he belongs in the army. God settles the identity, commands the walk, and equips the warfare. The saint who knows where he is seated can stand without begging the battlefield to confirm who he is.

Conclusion

The Christian lives in two realms at once. His standing is in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; his state unfolds through an earthly pilgrimage marked by temptation, weakness, conflict, growth, failure, correction, and renewed obedience. Heaven has recorded him complete, accepted, raised, and seated because his position belongs to Christ. Earth watches him learn to walk according to that position. The heavenly record does not change when the earthly path becomes difficult, but the security of the record gives no permission to wander carelessly. Grace anchors the seat and then addresses the shoes.

Israel's wilderness history warns every redeemed believer against unbelief, murmuring, lust, idolatry, and spiritual forgetfulness. Israel is not the Church, the wilderness is not a system for earning salvation, and Canaan is not a simple picture of heaven. Nevertheless, their experiences were written for our admonition. A redeemed people can live beneath its privileges, despise divine provision, exaggerate giants, remember Egypt selectively, and spend years circling ground that faith should have crossed. Redemption settles ownership; obedience determines enjoyment, fruitfulness, and forward progress.

When the wilderness feels long, do not measure your heavenly standing by the dust on your shoes. Look to the word of God and believe what He has declared concerning you in Christ. Then do not use that declaration to excuse sitting down in the sand. Rise, walk worthy, resist the enemy, and follow the light God has provided. Your feet may stumble, but confession and obedience can place them back upon the path. Your strength may fail, but Christ's strength does not. Your earthly experience remains unfinished, but your heavenly position is already settled. Heaven has recorded where you belong; now let your footprints testify that you know the address.

8 of 10: Standing and State – Growing Toward Maturity Without Growing Into Salvation

Key Passage: Ephesians 4:11–15

Introduction

A Christian is born into the family of God in a moment, but he does not become spiritually mature in a moment. The new birth is instantaneous; growth is gradual. Eternal life is received when the sinner believes on Jesus Christ, but spiritual maturity develops as the saved man feeds upon the word, submits to correction, exercises discernment, endures hardship, and obeys the truth he has learned. John 5:24 says the believer “hath everlasting life,” not that he has enrolled in a lifelong program through which everlasting life may eventually be manufactured. Colossians 2:10 says, “And ye are complete in him,” not that he becomes increasingly complete as his Bible knowledge expands. Salvation is not a seed that may grow into eternal life if the weather remains favorable. It is eternal life already possessed because the believer has received the Son. Growth does not improve the life Christ gives; it develops the believer's ability to walk in it.

A newborn Christian possesses the same standing before God as a mature saint who has walked faithfully for fifty years. Both are justified by the same blood, clothed in the same righteousness, sealed by the same Spirit, joined to the same body, and accepted in the

same Beloved. The older saint is not more redeemed, more justified, or more eternally secure. Christ did not shed stronger blood for experienced Christians and a diluted version for beginners. Yet their states may be as different as an infant in a crib and a soldier standing on a battlefield. The newborn believer may possess little knowledge, weak discernment, unstable habits, confused priorities, and limited usefulness. He belongs entirely to God but has not learned to behave consistently like God's possession. He has the whole inheritance in Christ while still requiring instruction on how to walk across the living room without falling over the furniture.

That is where many churches manufacture confusion. Some turn maturity into a condition for salvation, keeping honest believers uncertain because they have not grown enough to satisfy the inspector behind the pulpit. Others treat growth as an optional hobby for unusually enthusiastic Christians, leaving congregations filled with spiritual infants who have worn out several cribs but never learned to stand. One error makes the saint grow into salvation; the other allows him to remain a baby indefinitely because salvation is secure. The Bible rejects both. Growth changes the believer's state, not his standing. It deepens his knowledge, steadies his walk, sharpens his discernment, strengthens his resistance, disciplines his appetites, and increases his usefulness. Maturity does not improve Christ's finished work; it enables the saint to stop disgracing it with unfinished thinking.

1. The New Birth Gives Complete Life at Once

Jesus said in John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Birth is an event, not a lifelong construction project. A child may spend years growing, but he does not spend years becoming born. The moment of birth establishes life and relationship; everything afterward concerns growth within that life. Likewise, the sinner who believes the gospel is born of the Spirit and enters God's family. First John 5:12 says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." There is no middle category for people who possess twenty percent of the Son and are slowly accumulating the remainder through religious development. Either a man has the Son and life, or he does not.

Ephesians 1:13 describes the moment clearly: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Paul continues, "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." The sinner hears the gospel, trusts Christ, believes, and is sealed. The verse does not insert years of discipleship between believing and sealing. Growth follows salvation because only a living man can grow. The corpse does not require education; it requires resurrection. Religion reverses the order by trying to train dead sinners into acceptable behavior and then calling the improved corpse a Christian.

Justification is likewise complete at the moment of faith. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Justification is God’s judicial declaration concerning the believer’s standing, not His weekly evaluation of spiritual progress. A Christian does not become more justified after memorizing Romans, surviving a trial, teaching a class, or winning a soul. Christ is his righteousness from the beginning. Growth may make the believer more knowledgeable about justification and more confident in its promises, but it cannot make the verdict more final. God does not place new Christians in a lower grade of righteousness until they have accumulated enough spiritual credit to move upstairs.

2. A Spiritual Babe Possesses the Whole Inheritance

Paul called the Corinthians “babes in Christ” in 1 Corinthians 3:1. That description is both comforting and humiliating. It is comforting because they were “in Christ.” Their carnality had not removed them from the Saviour, canceled their justification, or reversed the Spirit’s operation. It is humiliating because they should not have remained babies. Paul says, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” Their inability was not evidence that they lacked life. It was evidence that their living condition remained immature.

A natural baby is fully human from birth. He possesses the same human nature as his father, though he lacks his father’s strength, knowledge, judgment, and experience. The child does not become more human by learning to walk. He becomes a more developed human being. In the same way, the newest believer possesses every spiritual blessing necessary for his standing. Ephesians 1:3 says God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” The verse does not reserve the better blessings for Christians with thirty years of attendance certificates. The baby saint has the full Christ, the full Holy Spirit, full redemption, full forgiveness, and a full place in Christ’s body.

Nevertheless, possessing an inheritance and knowing how to use it are different matters. Galatians 4:1 says, “The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.” In its context Paul is contrasting Israel’s former position under the law with sonship and liberty in Christ, but the principle illustrates the practical limitation of immaturity. A child may legally possess great wealth while lacking the judgment to manage five dollars. The immature Christian possesses riches in Christ but may live as though spiritually bankrupt because he neither knows nor applies what belongs to him. His poverty is experiential, not positional. Heaven has filled his account, but ignorance keeps him begging for what God already deposited.

3. Milk Is Necessary at Birth but Shameful as a Permanent Diet

First Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Milk is not an insult to a newborn believer; it is exactly what he needs. The basic truths of sin, judgment, Christ’s deity, the blood atonement, the resurrection, salvation by grace, assurance, prayer, Scripture, and Christian conduct establish strength for later development. Nobody places a steak before a three-day-old infant and rebukes him for lacking teeth. The new believer requires plain teaching, patient instruction, and repeated grounding in foundational truth. A church that mocks new converts for not knowing what nobody has taught them is blaming the nursery for the nurse’s laziness.

The problem begins when milk becomes the permanent menu. Hebrews 5:12 says, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” Time had passed, but growth had not followed. These people should have been instructing others, yet they required another trip through the first lessons. The calendar had advanced while their understanding remained parked. Age is not maturity. A man may have been saved for decades and still react to correction like a toddler whose spoon was removed. Wrinkles do not prove spiritual growth; sometimes they merely prove that the baby has been in the nursery a long time.

Hebrews 5:13 says, “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” The mark of infancy is not ignorance of religious slang but unskillfulness in the word. A babe cannot handle Scripture accurately, compare passages carefully, distinguish dispensations, test teaching, or apply doctrine with sound judgment. He may compensate with noise, emotion, loyalty to personalities, and strong opinions borrowed from somebody else. Spiritual babies often mistake volume for authority because rattles make noise long before children learn language. God’s goal is not to confiscate the milk but to develop the believer until he can handle meat without choking or throwing it at everyone else.

4. The Word of God Is the Food That Produces Growth

Peter identifies the food plainly: “the sincere milk of the word.” Spiritual growth does not come through religious excitement, inspirational slogans, private impressions, or a steady diet of stories about the preacher’s childhood. It comes through the word of God. Jeremiah 15:16 says, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them.” Job declared, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” The inward man requires nourishment as certainly as the body does, but many Christians feed the flesh three times a day and toss the spirit a verse on Sunday morning like a cracker through the bars.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The order is sharp.

Doctrine tells the believer what is right. Reproof exposes where he is wrong. Correction shows how to get right. Instruction teaches him how to stay right. The purpose is “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Scripture does not merely add information to the mind; it furnishes the entire man for usefulness. A Bible that never reproofs or corrects is being admired, not obeyed.

Growth requires rightly dividing what is read. Second Timothy 2:15 commands, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God...rightly dividing the word of truth.” Every verse is inspired and profitable, but every verse is not addressed doctrinally to the same people under the same arrangement. Noah was commanded to build an ark, Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath as a covenant sign, the apostles preached the kingdom to Israel, and Paul received the revelation concerning Christ’s body and the present dispensation of grace. Maturity learns to distinguish these things without discarding any Scripture. The immature reader either mixes every passage into doctrinal soup or cuts out everything he cannot fit onto his denominational saucer.

5. Mature Senses Are Exercised to Discern Good and Evil

Hebrews 5:14 says, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.” The verse does not define maturity by academic degrees, ecclesiastical titles, or the number of conferences a man has attended. It says mature believers are those “who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Knowledge must be used. Truth obeyed develops discernment; truth merely collected can inflate pride. First Corinthians 8:1 warns that “knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” A head filled with facts and a heart unsubmitted to God can produce a theological balloon—large, impressive, and mostly air.

Discernment is the ability to distinguish things that resemble one another. A child can often recognize the difference between obvious good and obvious evil, but maturity detects the poison hidden beneath religious sugar. Satan does not conduct his most successful business wearing red pajamas and carrying a pitchfork. Second Corinthians 11 says he transforms himself “into an angel of light,” and his ministers appear “as the ministers of righteousness.” False doctrine quotes Scripture, speaks warmly about Jesus, borrows Christian vocabulary, and places enough truth around the hook to keep the bait from looking suspicious. The spiritually immature judge a teacher by charisma, confidence, popularity, miracles, emotion, and apparent sincerity. None of those is the biblical test.

Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans because “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” They examined even Paul’s preaching by the written word. They did not reject teaching merely because it

was unfamiliar, and they did not accept it merely because an apostle delivered it forcefully. They received and searched. Mature discernment combines an open Bible with a guarded mind. It is neither gullibility nor permanent suspicion. The believer who refuses all instruction becomes proud; the believer who tests nothing becomes prey. A mature saint listens with his ears open and his Bible wider.

6. Maturity Produces Stability Amid Winds of Doctrine

Ephesians 4:11 says Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These gifts were given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The apostles and prophets provided foundational revelation, while evangelists, pastors, and teachers continue serving through the word. God did not design the local church as a weekly entertainment venue where a crowd watches one religious performer. Biblical ministry equips saints so that they themselves become capable of serving, edifying, and handling truth. A ministry that keeps everyone permanently dependent upon the personality at the microphone has built a fan club, not a mature church.

The goal appears in verse 13: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.” “Perfect” here speaks of maturity and completeness in development, not sinless flesh. Verse 14 explains the contrast: “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” The immature Christian is moved by whatever blows hardest. One month he follows a prophecy salesman, the next a healing celebrity, then a Hebrew-roots law keeper, a charismatic dream merchant, a YouTube conspirator, or a doctrinal contortionist who discovered what nobody in Church history knew until last Tuesday.

Paul says those winds arrive “by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” “Sleight” is the language of manipulation, like a gambler handling loaded dice. False teachers do not always sound ignorant; many are skillful, polished, strategic, and professionally packaged. They know how to isolate verses, manipulate fear, flatter pride, manufacture urgency, and turn curiosity into dependency. A believer who refuses to grow remains easy prey for every doctrinal carnival barker with a microphone and a mailing list. He mistakes confidence for conviction, novelty for revelation, and an expensive backdrop for apostolic authority.

7. Mature Saints Become Useful Rather Than Merely Impressive

Ephesians 4:15 says believers should be “speaking the truth in love” and “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Maturity is Christ-centered, not self-advertising. The mature saint does not merely know more; he increasingly thinks, speaks,

serves, and responds under the government of Christ the Head. Truth without love can become a club in the hands of pride, while love without truth becomes a pillow held over the face of discernment. Paul joins them. Mature believers speak truth because error destroys, and they speak it in love because people are not targets at a shooting range.

Growth should lead to service and spiritual reproduction. Second Timothy 2:2 says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Paul taught Timothy, Timothy was to teach faithful men, and those men were to teach others. That is maturity multiplying itself. A believer who has received sound doctrine for years should eventually become capable of strengthening somebody else. He may never occupy a pulpit, but he should be able to explain the gospel, defend basic doctrine, encourage a struggling saint, correct error from Scripture, and guide a younger believer.

Maturity also appears in endurance. Spiritual children demand immediate comfort, visible results, constant recognition, and explanations for every trial. Mature saints learn to continue when feelings disappear, prayers seem delayed, service goes unnoticed, and circumstances remain hard. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The steadfast believer does not require a weekly emotional parade to remain faithful. His roots have reached truth deeper than the weather. Anybody can shout while the Red Sea is opening; maturity keeps walking when the wilderness is quiet.

Conclusion

Spiritual growth is necessary, but it does not manufacture salvation. The Christian receives eternal life completely through faith in Jesus Christ. His standing is settled by the blood, righteousness, resurrection, and promises of the Saviour. A newborn believer and a mature saint are equally accepted in the Beloved, equally sealed by the Spirit, and equally complete in Christ. Growth cannot make justification more justified or eternal life more eternal. It changes the believer's state by developing understanding, discernment, discipline, stability, usefulness, and visible conformity to Christ.

The tragedy is not that a newborn Christian requires milk; the tragedy is that believers who ought to be teachers still demand bottles. Years in church do not guarantee maturity. Activity does not guarantee growth. Noise does not guarantee strength, and confidence does not guarantee understanding. Maturity comes as the believer feeds upon the King James Bible, rightly divides its truth, obeys what he learns, submits to biblical correction, exercises his senses, endures trials, and serves others. The infant asks what everyone can do for him; the mature saint asks how he can build somebody else.

Do not try to grow into a salvation Christ already finished, and do not use finished salvation as permission to stop growing. Desire the word, move from milk to meat, test the voices, strengthen your walk, and become capable of helping others stand. God did not save you to remain a permanent nursery resident wearing an adult-sized bib. Your standing supplies everything necessary for growth; your state reveals whether you are using what grace supplied. Maturity adds nothing to Christ's work, but it removes many of the childish contradictions that keep men from seeing Christ's work in you.

9 of 10: Standing and State – Secure at the Cross, Accountable at the Judgment Seat

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 3:11–15

Introduction

The Christian's sin was judged at Calvary, but the Christian's service will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those are two different judgments involving different questions, different subjects, different standards, and different possible outcomes. At Calvary, Jesus Christ stood in the sinner's place and bore the full condemnation demanded by God's holiness. At the Judgment Seat, the saved man will stand before the Saviour and give account of what he did with the life Christ purchased. The cross determines the believer's standing; the Judgment Seat evaluates his stewardship. The cross concerns salvation from sin's penalty; the Judgment Seat concerns reward or loss arising from Christian service. Confuse the two, and assurance disappears into a religious fog. Separate them properly, and eternal security becomes the strongest possible reason to live faithfully rather than the weakest excuse for wasting grace.

First Corinthians 3:15 presents a result that destroys both legalism and lawlessness in one inspired sentence: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The man's work burns, but the man remains saved. His standing survives because it rests upon Jesus Christ, the only foundation. His state and service, however, have produced combustible materials that cannot survive the inspection of fire. He reaches the correct destination, but he arrives carrying the smoke of a wasted opportunity. The verse does not say that every believer will receive the same reward because grace has erased all distinctions in faithfulness. It says a saved man can "suffer loss." Grace guarantees heaven; it does not guarantee a crown.

This coming review should neither terrify the believer with the possibility of hell nor soothe him with the false idea that nothing serious can be lost. Christ will examine works, motives,

stewardship, faithfulness, opportunities, influence, sacrifice, and the use of everything entrusted to the saint. Hidden counsels will be exposed, religious performances will be stripped of their stage lighting, and human applause will count for less than smoke. Some obscure act performed for Christ may shine like gold, while an impressive ministry constructed for self-glory may disappear like hay in a furnace. Salvation cannot be burned because Christ is its foundation, but a lifetime of Christian activity may burn if it was built from the wrong material for the wrong reason.

1. The Judgment of Sin Was Finished at the Cross

Isaiah 53:5 says of Christ, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” Verse 6 adds, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Calvary was the judicial settlement of sin through substitution. Jesus Christ did not die merely to demonstrate love, encourage sacrifice, or provide a religious symbol for church architecture. He bore the believer’s sins in His own body on the tree. The wrath fell, the debt was paid, and divine justice was satisfied. God did not overlook sin; He punished it in the Substitute.

Second Corinthians 5:21 states the exchange: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Christ, who knew no sin, took the believer’s place under judgment. The believing sinner receives a standing in the righteousness of God “in him.” The transaction does not remain unfinished until the believer’s service record has been examined. Justification is complete the moment faith receives Christ because the righteousness supplied is Christ’s righteousness. If the believer’s eternal destiny still depended upon the quality of his future works, then Calvary would be a down payment and human conduct the remaining balance.

Hebrews 10:14 says, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Christ offered Himself once and perfected the believer’s standing “for ever.” John 5:24 says the believer “shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Therefore, the Judgment Seat cannot be another trial to determine whether the blood was sufficient. God will not judge the believer’s sins at Calvary, declare the account paid, and then charge the same eternal debt again at Christ’s tribunal. Double jeopardy may confuse an earthly court, but divine justice does not collect twice on one settled account.

2. The Judgment Seat Is Not the Great White Throne

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Paul writes “we,” identifying himself with the believers who will appear there. This judgment concerns those who belong to Christ, not the unsaved dead summoned before the Great

White Throne in Revelation 20. The Judgment Seat follows the gathering of the Church to Christ and concerns the evaluation of Christian service. The Great White Throne occurs after the millennial reign, when the unsaved dead are judged and cast into the lake of fire. Mixing those judgments is like confusing a military awards review with the sentencing of convicted traitors.

At the Great White Throne, Revelation 20:12 says, “the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Verse 15 concludes, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Nothing in First Corinthians 3 says a believer at Christ’s Judgment Seat may be cast into the lake of fire. Instead, it explicitly says, “he himself shall be saved.” One tribunal deals with reward and loss among the saved; the other reveals the righteous condemnation of the lost. The same Lord presides, but the people, time, purpose, and outcome differ.

Romans 14:10 asks, “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?” Paul answers, “for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” The prospect of Christ’s judgment should cure Christians of their appetite for occupying His chair. Verse 12 says, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Each believer will give account of himself, not provide a closing argument concerning everybody else. At that tribunal, the professional fault-finder will discover that Christ did not summon him as assistant judge. The Lord can inspect His own servants without borrowing our magnifying glass.

3. Christ Is the Secure Foundation Beneath Every Believer

First Corinthians 3:11 says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The foundation is not the believer’s performance, denomination, baptism, sincerity, doctrinal résumé, or record of service. It is Jesus Christ. A man becomes part of God’s building by receiving the gospel of grace, not by presenting a pile of religious lumber and asking heaven for a construction permit. The foundation was laid through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, and no human contribution can strengthen it. Concrete does not become firmer because a workman compliments it.

Every believer at the Judgment Seat stands upon that same foundation. The faithful missionary, the unknown praying widow, the struggling new convert, and the carnal saint whose works burn all stand upon Christ if they have truly trusted His gospel. Their structures differ, but their foundation is one. That is why the burning of the works does not consume the man’s salvation. Fire reaches the building materials, not the Rock beneath them. Christ is not wood, hay, or stubble, and no flame from God’s inspection can damage the Son’s righteousness.

This removes boasting from salvation while preserving responsibility in service. First Corinthians 3:10 says, “But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” The foundation is settled, but the building demands attention. Grace provides the ground upon which Christian labor takes place, yet the builder remains accountable for what he places there. Eternal security does not mean God is indifferent to the structure. It means the structure can be examined without pretending that the foundation rises and falls with every crooked board.

4. Every Christian Is Building with One of Six Materials

First Corinthians 3:12 names six materials: “gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.” The first three are costly, durable, and able to endure fire. The latter three are common, cheap, and combustible. The contrast is not merely between visible success and visible failure. Men can build an impressive mountain of hay much faster than a small structure of gold. Human religion admires the size of the pile, counts the attendance, photographs the platform, prints the totals, and mails the report. Christ applies fire.

Gold in Scripture commonly points toward deity, glory, and that which belongs to God. Silver is associated with redemption. Precious stones suggest lasting value formed under pressure and suitable for royal construction. Without forcing every detail into a rigid formula, these materials represent service produced according to God’s truth, for Christ’s glory, through dependence upon His Spirit. Wood, hay, and stubble represent what the flesh can produce—religious activity originating in self-interest, human wisdom, pride, competition, compromise, or careless stewardship. The flesh can build churches, preach sermons, publish books, sing specials, organize campaigns, and collect applause. It simply cannot manufacture anything fireproof.

Verse 13 says, “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it.” The day will reveal what the present age conceals. Here, polished wood may resemble something valuable; there, the fire identifies its nature. Here, a small act of obedience may remain unseen; there, its gold will endure. The Judgment Seat will not be impressed by advertising, reputation, religious celebrity, institutional pedigree, or the number of people who clicked approval. Christ does not grade the brochure. He tests the building.

5. The Fire Will Test Quality, Motive, and Faithfulness

First Corinthians 3:13 says, “the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” The verse does not say merely “how much” work exists, but “what sort it is.” Christ examines quality and character. One believer may perform a small task with faithfulness, sacrifice, sound doctrine, and a sincere desire for Christ’s glory. Another may produce a large visible work

fueled by vanity, rivalry, covetousness, and a hunger for recognition. Men naturally reward scale; Christ tests sort. Heaven's scales do not lean toward the larger mailing list.

First Corinthians 4:5 says the Lord "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Motives matter because God sees the heart behind the hand. A man may preach Christ from envy and strife, give money to be seen, serve to control others, or defend truth chiefly because he enjoys winning arguments. The outward act may be correct while the inward counsel contaminates the service. God is not fooled because selfishness memorized a Bible verse before entering the room.

Faithfulness will matter more than fame. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." God does not require every steward to possess the same gifts, opportunities, health, resources, audience, or visible results. He requires faithfulness with what was entrusted. The servant with limited strength who obeyed God may receive approval while a celebrated figure watches a religious empire dissolve into ash. Men compare the size of ministries; Christ compares stewardship with opportunity.

6. Reward and Loss Are Both Genuine Possibilities

First Corinthians 3:14 says, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." Reward is not salvation because the man already stands upon Christ. It is Christ's approval and recompense for faithful service. The New Testament speaks of crowns connected with faithful endurance, righteous anticipation, soul-winning joy, disciplined service, and shepherding God's flock. These crowns do not enable the believer to boast independently of grace. They display what the grace of God accomplished through a yielded life.

Verse 15 presents the opposite outcome: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss." Loss must mean something or the Holy Ghost chose an empty word. The believer does not lose eternal life, but he can lose reward, honor, approval, and opportunities for responsibility in Christ's coming reign. Second Timothy 2:12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." The following verse preserves the believer's security: "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Christ will not deny a member of His own body eternal salvation, but He can deny an unfaithful servant the privilege of reigning.

The phrase "saved; yet so as by fire" ought to sober every careless saint. Imagine reaching Christ with nothing from a lifetime able to survive His inspection. The man is safe, but empty. He has Christ's righteousness but no reward for service; an eternal home but little evidence that he used his earthly life wisely. Grace rescues him from hell, but grace does

not call the ashes gold. The destination is secure, yet the reception may be painfully untriumphant.

7. The Judgment Seat Should Govern the Present Walk

Second Corinthians 5:9 says, “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” The believer is already accepted “in the beloved” regarding salvation, but he labors to be well pleasing to Christ regarding service. Verse 10 immediately introduces the Judgment Seat, showing that Paul desired his work to receive the Lord’s approval. He did not work because he feared losing justification. He worked because grace had purchased him and Christ would evaluate how he used the purchased life. Security did not make Paul lazy; it made his service intelligent.

Verse 11 says, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” Paul did not replace reverence with the modern idea that Jesus exists chiefly to affirm every comfortable choice. The Christ who died as the Lamb will judge His servants with eyes “as a flame of fire.” The Judgment Seat is not hell, but neither is it a casual conversation over refreshments. The One evaluating the Christian is the One whose wounds declare what redemption cost. Every wasted hour, compromised testimony, neglected opportunity, selfish ambition, and carnal work will meet the gaze of the Saviour who bought the life in which it occurred.

Therefore, the believer should redeem the time, judge his motives, obey known truth, and build carefully. Ephesians 5:15–16 says, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Time cannot be stored, recovered, or purchased after it is spent. Each day supplies material for the coming fire. The wise Christian asks whether he is building what Christ commanded, in the manner Christ appointed, for the glory Christ deserves. A lifetime is too expensive to spend constructing kindling.

Conclusion

The cross and the Judgment Seat must remain distinct. At Calvary, Christ bore the believer’s sins and exhausted their eternal condemnation. At the Judgment Seat, Christ will examine the believer’s service and determine reward or loss. The first establishes standing; the second evaluates state and stewardship. The first rests entirely upon the Substitute; the second reveals how the saved man responded to the grace he received. Salvation is not at stake, but a lifetime certainly is.

Eternal security does not eliminate accountability. It supplies the only proper foundation for it. The Christian does not serve under the terror that every failure may cast him out of Christ. He serves knowing that he belongs to Christ, has been bought with a price, and

must give account to the One who bought him. Grace frees the believer from working for salvation and binds him to working from salvation. It removes hell from the future without removing Christ's examination from the calendar.

Build with the fire in mind. Let the word of God determine the blueprint, the Holy Spirit supply the power, the glory of Christ govern the motive, and faithfulness control the labor. Do not be satisfied merely to reach heaven when God has provided a life capable of producing something that will honor His Son forever. A poor state cannot erase a perfect standing, but it can turn decades into ashes. The cross guarantees that the believer will stand before Christ; the life lived after the cross determines what will still be standing when the fire is finished.

10 of 10: Standing and State – When Our Condition Finally Matches Our Position

Key Passage: Philippians 3:20–21

Introduction

Every saved Christian presently lives with a holy contradiction between what God has already made him in Christ and what he still experiences in a body connected with Adam. His standing is perfect, but his state remains unfinished. He is complete in Christ, accepted in the Beloved, seated in heavenly places, justified freely, sanctified positionally, and sealed unto the day of redemption. Yet he can become weary, stumble in his walk, grieve the Spirit, lose fellowship, misunderstand Scripture, yield to the flesh, require correction, and fail to display consistently what heaven has declared him to be. The believer possesses a flawless position inside a failing body. He carries eternal treasure in an earthen vessel, and the vessel has enough cracks to keep pride from applying for a patent.

That contradiction will not continue forever. Philippians 3:20–21 says, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” The passage does not say Christ will persuade, rehabilitate, educate, or gradually civilize the vile body. He will change it. The same divine power “whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” will reach every member of Christ's body, living or dead, and complete the physical side of redemption. The body now subject to weakness, corruption, sickness, temptation, pain, aging, and death will be fashioned like Christ's glorious body. Adam's final piece of damaged property will come under the transforming hand of the last Adam.

This is the promised end of the conflict between standing and state. At the Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise, living believers will be changed, mortality will put on immortality, corruption will put on incorruption, and the presence of sin will be removed forever. The believer will not merely be restrained from sin; he will be beyond its inward reach. There will be no old man to resist, no law of sin in the members, no deceitful lust whispering from the flesh, and no unclean world pressing against the senses. What the Christian already is positionally in Christ will then be displayed completely in his whole condition. Grace began with a condemned sinner and will finish with a glorified saint.

1. Salvation Has a Finished Beginning and a Guaranteed Completion

The Bible speaks of salvation in past, present, and future aspects without dividing it into three uncertain attempts. The believer has been saved from sin's penalty through justification. He is being delivered practically from sin's dominion as he walks in the Spirit. He will be saved physically from sin's presence when Christ redeems the body. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith," presenting salvation as a settled possession. First Corinthians 1:18 describes believers as those who "are saved," while Romans 5:9 says, "we shall be saved from wrath through him." These expressions do not contradict one another. They show the breadth of the salvation Christ purchased.

The believer's standing was settled when he trusted the gospel. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Colossians 2:10 says, "And ye are complete in him." Nothing awaiting the Rapture will make that justification more complete. Glorification does not repair a defective verdict; it brings the believer's physical condition into complete agreement with the verdict already rendered. The soul is saved, the spirit is made alive unto God, but the mortal body still awaits its promised transformation. Heaven has settled the title while redemption waits to take full possession of the remaining property.

Romans 8:23 says believers "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Paul does not say they are waiting to discover whether God will adopt them. Romans 8:15 already says they have received "the Spirit of adoption." The inward relationship is present, but the public and physical completion of adoption awaits the redemption of the body. That is why Christians groan. The groaning is not unbelief when it longs for what God promised. It is the sound of redeemed life trapped temporarily inside unredeemed mortality.

2. God Predestinated Every Believer to Conformity with His Son

Romans 8:29 says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Biblical predestination is not God creating one sinner for heaven

and another for hell before either one takes a breath, then pretending the gospel offer is sincere. The passage concerns those whom God foreknew in connection with His saving purpose and declares their predetermined destination: conformity to Jesus Christ. God has not predestinated the Christian to endless warfare with the flesh. He has predestinated him to finish looking like the Son.

Verse 30 continues, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified.” Then Paul adds, “and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” “Glorified” appears in the past tense even though the bodily glorification of believers remains future. God speaks of the coming event as completed because nothing can prevent it. The promise is so certain that heaven records tomorrow’s transformation with yesterday’s grammar. God is not guessing at the outcome, waiting to see whether the Church survives the trip, or taking reservations for glorification subject to future availability.

The chain has no broken link. The justified are the glorified. Paul does not say that God justified a large group and will glorify the exceptionally dedicated members within it. Every person truly justified in Christ will reach the appointed conformity. Rewards may differ, crowns may be won or lost, and faithfulness will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat, but glorification is not a trophy for superior Christian performance. It is the completion of salvation for everyone joined to Jesus Christ. The weakest member of Christ’s body will not be left on earth because the Head misplaced a finger.

3. The Rapture Is the Appointed Moment of Transformation

First Corinthians 15:51 announces, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Death is described as sleep for the Christian’s body because Christ will awaken it. Paul also reveals that one generation of believers will not pass through physical death at all. They will be alive when Christ calls His Church upward, but they cannot enter heaven in mortal flesh. Therefore, whether sleeping in the grave or living upon the earth, “we shall all be changed.” The cemetery and the city will yield their believers at the same divine summons.

Verse 52 gives the speed: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” This is not the seventh trumpet of Revelation, blown during God’s dealings in the Tribulation. Paul revealed the mystery of the Church’s transformation before John recorded those judgments, and the Church is caught up to meet Christ before the outpouring of divine wrath. First Thessalonians 4:16 says, “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” The trumpet belongs to God’s call to His Church, not an angel’s announcement of Tribulation judgment.

First Thessalonians 4:17 says living believers “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Christ does not require His Church to conquer the world, convert every nation, rebuild society, or crawl through Daniel’s seventieth week before He receives His body. The Rapture is an act of divine power, not the final achievement of Christian civilization. The Head calls, the body rises, and gravity loses an argument it was never going to win. The Church’s hope is not that the world will improve enough for Christ to feel welcome. It is that Christ will descend and remove His purchased possession from the wrath to come.

4. The Vile Body Will Be Fashioned Like Christ’s Glorious Body

Philippians 3:21 calls the present body “our vile body.” That description offends modern worship of the human form, but the Bible is not writing an advertisement for a fitness center. “Vile” does not mean the body has no value, for it was purchased by Christ and presently serves as the temple of the Holy Ghost. It means the body exists in humiliation, corruption, weakness, and mortality. It gets hungry, tired, sick, injured, old, and dead. It carries the law of sin in its members and requires continual discipline. Even the strongest body is a well-maintained tent waiting for weather.

First Corinthians 15:42–44 describes the contrast: “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.” It is “sown in dishonour” and “raised in glory.” It is “sown in weakness” and “raised in power.” It is “sown a natural body” and “raised a spiritual body.” The funeral plants a corruptible seed, but resurrection does not merely dig up the same decaying condition and restart its pulse. Christ raises the body transformed, fitted for heavenly life, beyond disease, decay, and death. The undertaker handles the seed; the Lord of glory reveals the harvest.

The pattern is Christ’s own glorified body. After His resurrection, Jesus could be seen, heard, and touched. He ate with His disciples and showed them His hands and feet, yet He entered rooms despite closed doors and ascended bodily into heaven. The believer will not become an invisible spirit, float as a religious vapor, or spend eternity as a disembodied memory. Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Christianity’s future is not escape from embodiment but redemption of the body.

5. Corruption and Mortality Will Be Swallowed Up Forever

First Corinthians 15:53 says, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Corruption concerns the body’s tendency toward decay; mortality concerns its liability to death. Both must be replaced. Medical science may slow decay, transplant parts, regulate symptoms, and congratulate itself beside a grave, but it

cannot place incorruption into Adam's flesh. The final answer to mortality does not wear a laboratory coat. It descends from heaven with a shout.

Verse 54 declares, "Death is swallowed up in victory." At present, death swallows cities, families, generations, empires, and cemeteries full of human ambition. It interrupts plans, empties chairs, silences voices, and turns the strongest flesh back into dust. At the Rapture and resurrection, Christ reverses the meal. Death itself is swallowed by victory. Every grave containing a member of Christ's body must surrender its claim because the price of resurrection was secured when Christ walked out of His own tomb.

Paul therefore cries, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The believer may pass through death before the Rapture, but death cannot retain him. First Corinthians 15:57 says, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory is given, not earned. The saint does not rise because he developed superior spiritual muscles while alive. He rises because he belongs to the risen Christ. Resurrection is the Head refusing to leave His members in the dust.

6. The Warfare with Sin Will Finally End

First John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." The believer's relationship is present: "now are we the sons of God." His final condition remains unrevealed in daily experience: "it doth not yet appear." The Christian still sees weakness in the mirror, feels conflict in the flesh, and recognizes how far his state falls short of his standing. But John continues, "we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Faith knows what eyesight cannot yet display.

When Christ appears, the old conflict described in Galatians 5 will cease. The flesh will no longer lust against the Spirit because the vile body will have been changed. Romans 7's "law of sin" in the members will no longer drag against the inward man. There will be no divided desire, hidden corruption, wandering thought, deceitful lust, sudden temptation, or spiritual fatigue. The believer will not require a command to reckon the old man dead because the old man will be gone. Sin will not merely be placed behind stronger prison bars; its presence will be removed from the property.

Ephesians 5:27 says Christ will present the Church to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." No spot of defilement, no wrinkle of decay, and no remaining defect will mar His completed work. Christ will not present a partly redeemed Church requiring further purification in some invented religious waiting room. His blood cleanses, His Spirit seals, His word sanctifies, and His power glorifies. The Saviour does

not begin with grace, continue with uncertainty, and finish by outsourcing perfection to human merit.

7. The Certain Future Should Govern the Present Walk

First John 3:3 says, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” The certainty of future conformity produces present purification. John does not say the believer purifies himself to earn the hope; he purifies himself because he “hath this hope.” Once again, standing becomes the foundation of state. The promise of glorification is not a sleeping pill for the flesh. It is a summons to live now in the light of what Christ will soon complete.

Paul expressed the same balance in Philippians 3. He acknowledged, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” then declared, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul was perfect in standing but unfinished in state. He did not press to keep himself in Christ; he pressed because Christ had apprehended him. Verse 12 says, “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Grace had seized him, secured him, and given his life a heavenly direction. He ran from acceptance, not toward it.

First Corinthians 15 concludes its revelation of resurrection with practical force:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” “Therefore” connects future transformation with present service.

Because resurrection is certain, labor is not vain. Because the body will be glorified, the body should now be presented to God. Because Christ is coming, the believer should not spend his remaining days collecting the world’s dust. The trumpet may sound before the flesh finishes its next excuse.

Conclusion

The entire distinction between standing and state points toward a promised conclusion. The believer’s standing is already perfect because it rests in Christ. His state remains unfinished because he continues living in mortal flesh amid a sinful world. He is accepted yet still learning to live acceptably, sanctified yet pursuing practical sanctification, secure in the family yet capable of broken fellowship, seated in heavenly places yet walking through earthly dust. These are not contradictions in God’s salvation. They are the present realities of a redemption already complete in title and awaiting completion in the body.

At the Rapture, that gap will close forever. The dead in Christ will rise, the living saints will be changed, corruption will put on incorruption, mortality will put on immortality, and every justified believer will be glorified. No member of Christ’s body will be forgotten, misplaced, or rejected for failing to reach an imaginary level of spiritual development. Rewards will

differ at the Judgment Seat, but every true believer will bear the image of the heavenly. Christ does not promise to attempt our glorification. He promises to perform it.

Until that moment, press toward the mark. Do not work to secure a standing that Christ has already secured, and do not dishonor that standing with a state surrendered to the flesh. Walk in the Spirit, confess sin, receive correction, grow in the word, serve faithfully, and keep looking for the Saviour. One day there will be no more crooked steps, divided desires, unfinished lessons, weary prayers, or warfare with the old man. What God sees in Christ will then be visible in everything the Christian is. The standing is already perfect; the state is going home to match it.

Standing and State – Perfect in Christ, Still Growing on Earth

Conclusion to the Series

We end where we began—with Paul declaring in Philippians 3 that he was both perfect and not yet perfect. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” he said in verse 12; then in verse 15 he wrote, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” Paul possessed a perfect standing while living in an unfinished state. He was complete in Christ but had not completed his course. He had been justified, sanctified, accepted, redeemed, sealed, raised, and seated, yet he was still pressing, fighting, learning, serving, suffering, and waiting for the redemption of his body. That is not a contradiction needing correction. It is the Christian life described without the usual religious fog sprayed across it.

Standing is what God has made the believer in Christ. State is the present condition of the believer’s earthly walk. Standing rests upon Christ’s finished work; state reflects the Christian’s daily response to that work. Standing is perfect, settled, heavenly, and eternal. State may be strong or weak, obedient or rebellious, spiritual or carnal, fruitful or barren. Standing cannot be improved because Colossians 2:10 says, “And ye are complete in him.” State must improve because 2 Peter 3:18 commands, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The believer does not grow toward completeness; he grows from completeness. He is not climbing toward an uncertain position. He is learning to walk according to a position grace has already secured.

The Christian is “accepted in the beloved,” not accepted according to his latest performance report. Ephesians 1 does not say God gradually accepts believers as they prove themselves useful. It says He “hath made us accepted in the beloved.” The believer

stands before God in Jesus Christ, clothed in a righteousness Adam's flesh could never manufacture and hell itself cannot stain. His sins were laid upon Christ; Christ's righteousness was placed to his account. God does not pretend the believer's earthly conduct is flawless. He sees the entire mess. But He sees that mess through the blood, sacrifice, resurrection, and intercession of His Son. The Christian's standing is not God admiring the sinner. It is God honoring the Saviour.

This truth leaves the legalist without a ladder. If salvation depends upon the believer's changing state, nobody remains saved because nobody maintains a flawless state. The fellow who thinks he does has merely added deception and pride to the sins he has failed to count. Paul confessed the conflict of Romans 7, Peter denied the Lord, Barnabas was carried away with dissimulation, and the Corinthians supplied enough carnality to keep an apostle writing for sixteen chapters. If perfect behavior maintains salvation, the New Testament contains several letters addressed to people who should have been lost before Paul finished the greeting. The legalist trusts Christ to begin salvation and Adam's flesh to preserve it. Galatians 3 calls that foolishness, and the description fits like a custom-made suit.

Yet the same truth leaves the libertine without a mattress. Eternal security does not make sin safe. The believer's standing cannot be ruined, but his state can become a spiritual disaster. Sin can grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt fellowship, harden conscience, corrupt testimony, wound weaker saints, divide a church, destroy a marriage, waste a ministry, consume rewards, invite chastening, and shorten earthly life. Grace does not remove consequences; sometimes it guarantees the Father will administer them. The blood keeps the saint out of hell, but it does not keep the Father's rod in the cupboard when the saint insists upon living like hell. Security is not God's permission to rebel. It is God's refusal to let rebellion have the final word.

Sanctification made the distinction unmistakable. The believer has been sanctified once for all through the offering of Jesus Christ, is commanded to pursue sanctification in daily conduct, and will be sanctified wholly when Christ returns. Positional sanctification establishes ownership. Practical sanctification teaches God's possession how to live. Final sanctification removes every remaining trace of Adam's corruption. The saint is not cleaning himself in the hope that God might purchase him. First Corinthians 6:20 says, "For ye are bought with a price." The transaction is complete. Practical holiness is purchased property coming under the rightful government of its Owner.

The conflict between the old man and the new man explained why the believer can possess holy desires while encountering corrupt impulses. The new man is created "in righteousness and true holiness." The old man remains "corrupt according to the deceitful

lusts.” God does not save the sinner by repairing Adam’s nature. The carnal mind “is enmity against God,” is not subject to His law, “neither indeed can be.” God’s solution is crucifixion and new creation, not religious rehabilitation. The flesh can wear a suit, carry a Bible, join a committee, and learn to say “Amen” at the correct volume, but it remains flesh. A vulture perched on a church steeple still prefers dead meat.

The presence of that warfare does not prove salvation is absent. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” The conflict exists because the indwelling Spirit opposes the old nature. The defeated Christian should not conclude that every temptation erases the new birth, but neither should he provide the old man with ammunition and complain that the battle is difficult. Romans 6 commands the believer not to yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness. The old king has been deposed; the Christian gets into trouble when he keeps carrying the crown back to the prison cell.

Relationship and fellowship gave the doctrine its household setting. The believer enters God’s family by the new birth, not by maintaining an unbroken record of good behavior. A rebellious son remains a son, although his enjoyment of home may disappear beneath the weight of his rebellion. First John 1 concerns fellowship with the Father and the Son. When the Christian walks in darkness, he cannot honestly claim present communion with the God who is light. When he confesses his sin, God is “faithful and just” to forgive and cleanse. Confession restores family fellowship; it does not manufacture another spiritual birth.

Christ pictured this in John 13 when He washed the disciples’ feet. “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” The complete washing does not need repeating, but the feet gather dirt from the road. The believer does not require another bath of regeneration every time his walk becomes defiled. He needs the basin of confession and the washing of water by the word. Religion either ignores the dirty feet or throws the whole Christian back into the bathtub. The Lord knows the difference between a lost Judas who was never clean and a saved Peter whose feet needed washing.

Chastening proved that God deals with sin in His children without placing them back under condemnation. Romans 8:1 announces no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, while Hebrews 12 says, “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” Condemnation belongs to the courtroom; chastening belongs to the household. The criminal faces a sentence for guilt; the son receives correction for conduct. Christ bore the believer’s condemnation at Calvary, but the Father retains complete authority over the child’s earthly life. The cross settled the eternal penalty; it did not turn God into an indulgent grandfather who smiles while His children set fire to the house.

First Corinthians 11 showed how severe that correction can become. Some believers were weak, some were sickly, and some slept under divine discipline. Yet Paul said they were chastened “that we should not be condemned with the world.” Their temporal judgment distinguished them from the condemned world; it did not return them to it. A Christian may be eternally secure and temporally buried. That is not a pleasant slogan for a church sign, but it is considerably safer than pretending grace makes rebellion harmless. God loves His children too much to abandon them to hell and too much to abandon them to unchecked ruin.

The wilderness showed how a redeemed people can live beneath divine privilege. Israel was not the Church, and Canaan was not heaven. Israel possessed a national, earthly calling under covenant; the Church is Christ’s spiritual body with a heavenly calling. Nevertheless, Israel’s wilderness failures were written for our admonition. They were redeemed from Egypt, brought through the sea, fed with manna, supplied with water, and guided by God, yet they murmured, lusted, doubted, tempted Christ, and longed to return. Their standing as God’s redeemed nation did not guarantee an obedient state. The blood brought them out of Egypt; unbelief kept a generation from enjoying Canaan.

The Christian occupies an even more astonishing position. Ephesians 2 says he is seated “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” though his earthly shoes still stumble through dust. His spiritual address is heaven while his present assignment remains on earth. That security should not produce carelessness; it should produce steadiness. Ephesians first teaches the believer to sit in Christ, then to walk worthy, and finally to stand against the devil. Reverse that order, and the Christian fights without knowing his position, works without resting in grace, and tries to walk in order to earn what God has already given. God settles the seat, commands the walk, and supplies the armor for the stand.

Spiritual growth develops the walk without changing the seat. A newborn Christian possesses complete salvation but lacks mature discernment, stability, knowledge, discipline, and usefulness. Milk is proper at birth, but milk becomes embarrassing when the nursery resident has grown old enough to shave. Hebrews 5 rebukes believers who “for the time” ought to have been teachers but remained “unskilful in the word of righteousness.” Time had passed while maturity remained parked. A Christian does not grow merely because another birthday appears on the church calendar. Growth requires feeding upon Scripture, rightly dividing the word, obeying known truth, enduring correction, exercising discernment, and serving others.

Ephesians 4 says maturity prevents believers from being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” The immature saint becomes merchandise for every religious salesman who arrives with a dramatic story, a private revelation, and a donation

link. He mistakes charisma for character, confidence for authority, popularity for truth, and novelty for revelation. The mature saint searches the Scriptures, tests the spirits, compares passages, watches the fruit, and refuses to let a polished personality perform card tricks with isolated verses. A guarded mind is not a closed mind. It is an open Bible standing watch at the gate.

The Judgment Seat demonstrated that eternal security establishes accountability rather than eliminating it. Jesus Christ is the only foundation, and no fire can consume Him. But every believer is building upon that foundation with “gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.” The fire will try every man’s work “of what sort it is.” The Lord will expose motives, test faithfulness, examine stewardship, and reveal whether Christian activity originated in the Spirit or the flesh. Heaven will not be impressed by advertising, applause, titles, platforms, statistics, or the size of the mailing list. Christ does not judge the brochure. He burns the building materials.

A believer whose works burn will “suffer loss,” yet “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” That sentence buries both errors. “He himself shall be saved” answers the legalist. “He shall suffer loss” answers the libertine. Salvation is secure, but reward is not automatic. Grace guarantees the believer’s destination; it does not guarantee an incorruptible crown, an inheritance of responsibility, an unashamed appearance, or Christ’s approval of wasted service. A Christian can enter eternity safely while carrying the smell of smoke from a life built largely from kindling.

The series finally looked toward the hour when state will match standing forever. Philippians 3:21 says Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” First Corinthians 15 says, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” The dead in Christ will rise, living believers will be caught up, corruption will put on incorruption, and mortality will put on immortality. The Church will be removed before the wrath to come and gathered to its Head. The devil will not keep one member, the grave will not retain one bone, and Adam’s corruption will not survive one twinkling of an eye beyond God’s appointed moment.

Then the warfare will be over. No old man will claw at the throne, no deceitful lust will whisper from the flesh, no corrupt world will press against the senses, and no devil will cast fiery darts into the mind. There will be no broken fellowship, interrupted prayer, unfinished growth, confused doctrine, crooked step, idle word, or wasted opportunity. First John 3:2 says, “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” What God already sees in Christ will be visible in everything the believer is. The legal declaration and the lived condition will stand together without a shadow between them.

Until then, the duty is plain. Do not try to improve your standing, because Christ has already made it complete. Improve your state because that complete standing demands a worthy walk. Do not serve to become accepted; serve because you are accepted. Do not pursue holiness to keep eternal life alive; pursue holiness because eternal life already lives within you. Do not confess sin to persuade God to become your Father again; confess because He is your Father and fellowship with Him is too precious to trade for darkness. Do not fear that every stumble sends you back to hell; fear wasting the life that the Son of God purchased with His own blood.

The Christian life is not an attempt to become what grace may someday decide to make us. It is the daily business of walking according to what grace has already made us in Christ. Standing is the root; state is the fruit. Standing is the title deed; state is the condition of the property. Standing is the heavenly address; state is the trail of earthly footprints leading home. Standing is Christ's finished work for the believer; state is Christ's continuing work within the believer. The root cannot be improved, the title cannot be canceled, and the address cannot be changed—but the fruit, property, footprints, and daily workmanship ought to declare who owns them.

So let the legalist put down his ladder, and let the libertine get out of his hammock. Let the anxious saint look away from his trembling hands and behold the hands that were pierced for him. Let the carnal believer stop using security as a pillow and start using it as a foundation. Let the immature Christian leave the nursery, the wandering Christian leave the wilderness, the defiled Christian come to the basin, the chastened Christian learn from the rod, and the weary Christian lift his head toward the trumpet. Christ has not lost one thing entrusted to Him, and He will not begin with you.

You are perfect in Christ, yet still growing on earth. You are accepted in the Beloved, yet responsible to live acceptably. You are sanctified once for all, yet commanded to pursue holiness daily. You are seated in heaven, yet accountable for every earthly step. You are secure at the cross, yet answerable at the Judgment Seat. You carry a vile body, yet await a glorious one. Your standing is settled, your state is developing, your service will be tested, and your glorification is guaranteed. Grace began the work, grace sustains the work, and grace will finish the work when your condition finally matches your position forever.

