

The Transformed You

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Well, having our hearts being refreshed by the Lord's Table, it's a wonderful opportunity for us to consider the consequences of salvation and what it means for the reality of who we are now in Christ.

In due time, we'll move into another series based on a specific text of Scripture, but there's a little bit of window here of a transition that I wanted to take advantage of, and I wanted to do a brief little series that has far more significance than the actual time that we will spend on it. I am indebted to a largely forgotten book by Anthony Hoekema for the things that I'm going to say this Sunday and next. It's a book title "The Christian Looks at Himself," and I don't endorse it to you, I would not encourage you to go out and buy it because there is a lot of chaff mixed in with the considerable wheat in that book, but as I read that book, I realized that he had insights that I wanted to adapt and adopt and share with you because I think they'll be a great encouragement to you and are essential for us in understanding and living the Christian life.

The question is this: how should you as a Christian think about yourself? What is your perspective on life and who you are, you might say? And Hoekema asks this question, "Should a Christian in thinking about himself lay primary stress on his continued sinfulness, or should his primary emphasis be on his newness in Christ?" In other words, we all understand that we continue to be sinful even after our redemption; our sins are forgiven but we struggle with the flesh, there is a carnal aspect to our continued existence that pulls us away, so much so that Paul could say in Romans 7, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Scripture and sad experience teach us the truth of James 3:2, "we all stumble in many ways." And so the question becomes is that reality the way that we look at all of our existence going forward in Christ? To state it differently, is guilt and discouragement – I'll say it again because I want you to get the significance of what we're talking about here, this really does go everywhere in life – is guilt and discouragement to be our expected state of mind? Is that what God has called us to in Christ, is to think about our existence like that here on earth? To state the question a different way, is God still angry with his people? Are we doomed to a miserable existence on earth because we do not meet God's standards of perfection? This is a serious question. Or, or in the midst of our spiritual weakness, is there a true basis for us to live with joy? And if so, how are we to piece all of these things together?

I'm going to give you three aspects of our Christian condition here for us to consider, our life condition may be a better way to state it because of we're bridging pre-conversion with post-conversion realities here. The first thing that we have to come to grips with is, first of all, the reality of guilt. The reality of guilt. If you are going to think rightly as a Christian, you must start by thinking rightly about sin and guilt. You see, the message of the gospel does not simply pass over your prior sin and your prior guilt, the message of Scripture is not to comfort you by telling you that you are a basically good person and always have been, and that everything will be fine for you in the end. That's not the gospel. To come to an unconverted sinner and say that you're basically good and that everything will be well for you in the end, that is not what the gospel tells us.

You know, men and women, boys and girls, have guilty feelings because they have a real guilt before God. A real law has been violated from a real God, and that violation of God's law brings real genuine guilt before a holy God, and we have to consider that and to take that into account and we cannot minimize it, we cannot deny it and be Christians. It's that simple. The gospel is about having sin forgiven. Well, if you deny the reality of sin, you've denied the possibility of the gospel having any redeeming hope for you. Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And so the ones who think that they are righteous, the ones who assert that they are not so bad after all are excusing themselves from the hope of the gospel, and what we need to understand is this, we tend to think about the wrong things that we do on a horizontal level, how it affected a spouse or a child, or how it affected a boss or an employee, things like that. We think about these things on a horizontal level and, you know, what's So-and-so going to think about me now and, you know, that kind of human dimension to it, but that is an entirely wrong and inadequate way of thinking about it all. If we are going to get to the reality of how we are to think as Christians about ourselves, we must understand that our spiritual guilt is first and foremost primarily vertical in nature, and the horizontal human aspect of it is secondary compared to the surpassing reality of having sinned against a holy God.

You remember from Psalm 51, I won't have you turn there, but in that Psalm of confession where David is confessing his sin to God after having committed adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrating the death of her rightful husband, Uriah, what did David confess? What did he say in his prayer to God after sin like that, of such momentous human consequence? He said this and he prayed, "Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge." He said, "God, given Your transcendent excellence, given Your eternal nature, given the fact that it is Your law and Your holiness that I have violated by my actions and by my heart sins here, God, my guilt is against You and against You alone."

And that has a significant consequence for us, it has a significant consequence for you here today, and when I say "you," I'm going to say this once and not repeat it here, I'm including myself in it. I am under the word as much as you are as I preach it here, but this is what we must understand, is that your guilt in your sin is much worse than you thought. It's not just that you have hurt men by your actions. It's not just that you've hurt those that you love by your actions. Far worse than that is the reality that you have

offended God and broken his law in what you have done. Scripture says there's none righteous, that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We're all under the sentence of condemnation that Scripture brings to bear upon us and upon our conscience, and what sin does to you is this, it separates you from God and it makes you liable to his judgment. It means that you have earned his judgment and, in a sense, his judgment is simply waiting for you at the judgment seat of God. The judgment, the penalty is waiting for you to enter into it in your unsaved condition.

And here's what many many people don't understand, here's what decades of moralistic therapeutic deistic teaching has taught people and we need to refute it here, being sorry for your sins, simply being sorry for your sins does not solve the problem. It does not take away your guilt. A murderer could stand before a human judge and be genuinely sorry for his crime but the punishment still must be executed. A vindication of judgment must take place and it doesn't matter if you simply regret what you have done, the law still throbs demanding satisfaction of justice. The criminal still has to pay for his crime. A boatload of tears doesn't wash away a single sin from the human heart. There is none righteous, Romans 3:10 says, and we have to deal with that. We have to start there with our understanding of the Christian position. That is how bad our guilt is and the reality of our guilt.

You know, the reality of your guilt isn't changed by denying it. It doesn't go away by minimizing it. And friends, it certainly doesn't go away simply by ignoring it and saying, "Well, this is just too hard and difficult to think about." I'm continually astonished by the number of people who approach life that way. There's a real problem and the answer to it is to just ignore it. Well, here's the problem with that when it comes to talking about sin and guilt, my friends, God is not going to ignore it. You can deny it for a period of time and you can evade and hide and justify and deflect all you want, but at the end of the day when your head lies on your pillow to go to sleep, the guilt is still there and we must deal with that. You must deal with that. You cannot ignore it. So there is this reality of guilt that must factor into our perspective on all of life.

Now the presumption here, the assumption in what I'm saying and the point here is to help us as Christians understand how to think about ourselves and how does God see us, and how do we think about ourselves in response to that. Well, that brings us to our second point for this morning and that's the reality of forgiveness. The reality of forgiveness. In the uncompromised holiness of God, Scripture tells us that he is nevertheless a God who is willing to forgive, willing to forgive on his terms, you might say.

Look at Psalm 86:5. This has been a verse that has been meaningful to me for many many decades. Well, not that many decades, a few decades. Psalm 86:5, a fundamental, a really truly fundamental text about the nature of God and his disposition and his attitude toward sinners. Psalm 86:5 says, "You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You." You see, you cannot deal with guilt by avoiding it. You have to face it and we face our guilt in order to resolve it. We face it in order to have it put away, if that is somehow possible in the hands of a holy God. You

can't ignore your guilt. You have to come to grips with it, and you have to realize that it is not your prerogative to forgive your own sins. Can I say that again? It is not your prerogative to forgive your own sins. You do not have the power to say, "Well, God needs to forgive me and I'm not so bad." That's not the way that it works. Your sin has broken you. Your sin has forfeited any claim against God that you might otherwise have had. And so if we are going to deal with our guilt and find any hope of forgiveness, we have to come as those who are utterly bankrupt, poor in spirit, in the language of the Beatitudes, and come as those who are looking for grace rather than those who are entitled to something from the God that we have offended.

Well, what we see in Psalm 86:5 is this, is that there is something in the perfections of God that incline him to have a forgiving disposition to repentant sinners. God has provided a way – watch this – he has provided a way to be delivered not only from feeling guilty but from guilt itself. The gospel is a means by which God addresses your guilt and forgives it and removes it from your account and then the feelings of guilt are dealt with as a consequence of the reality of guilt being addressed. And what we need to understand is this, Scripture says that God will by no means clear the guilty, in other words, he doesn't wink at it and just wish it away. God does not overlook guilt. He's done something different. He's done something better. He's provided a substitute. He's provided a substitute. We remembered it at the Table earlier this morning.

1 John 1:7 says, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There has to be a humble approach to God by which you acknowledge as the tax-gatherer in Luke 18 said, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." Not protesting your innocence to God will save you, or find mercy from his hand. Not simply being sorry without an appeal will grant you forgiveness. There has to be a coming to God by faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ if your guilt is going to be removed from you, and in Christ the problem of your guilt is addressed, and in Christ the problem of your guilt is solved.

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:21, and we're going to be in this chapter for a few moments now. The problem is, as we saw, the reality of your guilt and how is that guilt to be taken away? How is that dealt with? How is it resolved? Well, it's resolved only in Christ. There is no other sacrifice that God accepts for sin, but in Christ there is a perfect, complete sacrifice that God utterly accepts, completely accepts, and deals with the guilt of sin forever. Chapter 5, verse 21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." At the cross, God took, as it were, the sins of his people and imputed them to Christ. He counted them against Christ and punished him for them, and in exchange for those who believe in Christ, that perfect righteousness of Christ, that perfect life of obedience that he lived, that complete satisfaction of all the demands of the law is credited to the account of those who believe. Christ, in other words, my Christian friend, Christ identified with your sin at the cross. He paid for its guilt.

Hoekema says this and I quote, listen carefully, these words are so pregnant with significance. "Christ did this so that we might now be able to identify ourselves with the righteousness of God, that is, so that we might now stand before God as perfectly righteous because we are one with Christ." Your identification with Christ as a believer in him changes the equation of sin and guilt. To believe in Christ is to have your guilt transferred to him where it was paid, or by whom it was paid for at the cross, and that solves the problem of guilt so that there is no longer a barrier between you and knowing God, of you and having your sins forgiven.

Look up at verse 17. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 5:17, and remember that we're discussing today how we as Christians are to think about ourselves in light of the work of Christ on our behalf, so that in 2 Corinthians 5:17, it says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." In other words, the old aspect of your life of guilt and sin and unforgiven transgressions has been addressed, it has been dealt with, and in Christ it has been put away, and now something new has come into your life as the Holy Spirit applied redemption to your heart. And what is that? What has happened?

Look at verse 18, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ." God reconciled you and he did it not in a bare confession of your regret, he did it because Christ genuinely paid for your sin at the cross. Your guilt was placed on Christ and punished in full so that Jesus could say, "It is finished," when he hung on the cross. It wasn't simply that the time element of his suffering was over, it was that everything necessary to effectuate the redemption of his people had been accomplished in his death on the cross so that – here's the thing that you need to understand and this is the way that you are to think – you have to think God's thoughts after him. If God in Christ has reconciled you and forgiven all of your transgressions, then that is the way that you are to think if you are in Christ, that my sins are forgiven and they are held against me no more.

Now look, there's this really bad way of thinking that people fall into and people claiming to be being Christians, even, part of teaching Scripture is to correct bad thinking, and some of you have said, some of you have thought, some of you live by this motto, "God has forgiven me but I can't forgive myself." Now beloved, that is a wrong and sinful way of thinking and you need to forsake it. God is the ultimate judge and if you are in Christ and God has forgiven your sins in Christ, then you have no right to continue to carry it on as though it hadn't been dealt with. Do you not understand, my Christian friend, that the whole point of salvation is to take away your guilt, to pay for your guilt so that you do not have to continue living under the weight of it and to continue to be an accuser of yourself, or an accuser of your own soul when God has laid it aside and God is not doing that anymore with you in Christ?

Look at it there again with me in verse 18. What does it say? God reconciled us to himself. We were separated but God has brought us near. How has he done that? He has done it through Christ. Not through anything that we have done but what Christ did on our behalf as our substitute. And the reality of what we remembered at the Table tells us

that sin has been paid for by his blood, and therefore it is not a barrier to fellowship with God and joy in Christ at all.

Look at verse 19. This is the ministry of reconciliation. This is the message that we preach, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," and what does that mean for us as believers in Christ? It means that he is "not counting their trespasses against them." God does not count your sin against you in Christ. If you are in Christ, the problem of guilt and sin has been resolved, it has been taken away, and this is how you are to think about your position before God going forward. It is no longer defined by the reality of your prior guilt, it is defined by your union with Christ, your union with his righteousness, your union with his death and resurrection, your union with the fact that God the Father accepts his Son and if you are in his Son, and you are in Christ if you're a Christian, than that means that because God accepts his Son, he accepts you. Christ died to make you a part of his people and you are to think in those terms.

Now Scripture makes it plain, let me say a word to those of you that are not in Christ here today, that this is a gift that is received by faith, not by works. You can't do anything to earn this, you have to come humbly and receive Christ by faith. What does that mean, to receive him by faith? It means that in your guilt, you see in Christ the one sacrifice, the one means of reconciliation that God has provided to the world, and you receive Christ, you come to him as a sinner in need of his work of redemption, and you submit to him, you receive him by faith and you receive all that he has done and say, "You alone are my hope of salvation. You alone are my help of forgiveness." And in that reception of Christ, there is a resting in him and this is what we're talking about here today. You receive Christ and you rest in him. It means that you are confident that Christ has done everything that is necessary to pay for all of your guilt and reconcile you perfectly to a holy God. That's what faith is, you recognize Christ supreme. You recognize Christ the sacrifice, and you receive him as your own and you rest there and you stop there, stop in the sense that you look for help nowhere else. Not in what you do, not in what someone else does, certainly not in praying to Mary or saints or martyrs or anything like that, you forsake all of that and recognize that Christ as he said himself, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." And in that you rest.

Now my friends, that brief summary of the gospel and what it means for you going forward as a Christian, the consequences of that are immeasurable, they are infinite, they are vast. It means that in Christ God sees you differently now than he did before. Before, yes, before you were an object of his wrath and rightly so. But now in Christ, everything has changed, everything has become new. The old things have passed away, the old things of guilt and separation are done away with in Christ and in Christ there are new things by which you are to consider yourself.

Listen to some of these verses here. In Hebrews 10:17, God speaking of his people says this, he says, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." In other words, he will not hold them against you. He does not count them against you. You say, "Well, how can He do that?" Well, what have we been talking about all morning long? "How can He do that and still uphold the justice of His law? If I have broken His law,

how can He do that?" Well, he can do that because he assigned your guilt to Christ and punished Christ. The justice of the law has been upheld in Christ. The penalty has been paid. And because Christ paid it in full and faith brings you into union with him, you have the benefit of all that he has done. You have the benefit credited to your account of all of his righteousness and all of the redemptive significance of his shed blood is laid upon your account. You say, "Well, that's too wonderful to contemplate! That's far greater than I ever thought!" And the answer is, yes, that's exactly right. This is magnificent truth. This is what the gospel is all about, is that your God has graciously dealt with your guilt in Christ who willingly laid himself down and voluntarily gave himself up for you. To be in Christ means that you are now in a position where God does not hold your sins against you any longer.

You're in 2 Corinthians, look back at 1 Corinthians 6 and I want you to see some past tense passages here that have great significance for the matter that we're talking about here. 1 Corinthians 6:9 says, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." That list is a summary that represents other kinds of sins and sinners that could have been included, but the expansive list gives us a sense that sinners are excluded from the kingdom of God and cannot enter into it in that condition.

But notice what he goes on to say to the church at Corinth as he speaks to them. Verse 11, and notice the verb tense here. Verb tenses matter in Scripture. In verse 11 he says, "Such were some of you." You used to be like that but something has changed. "But you were washed." Going further back, there was your condition in sin but Christ did a work in you, the Spirit brought Christ to you and you were changed, you were converted to Christ, is what Paul is saying in shorthand here. You were like that but, by contrast, you were washed, "you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God." Yes, you were once like that, he says, but now that you've been converted, now that Christ has saved you, you think differently about it all. Your sins have been washed away. You've been sanctified, which means you've been set apart for God here. You've been justified, meaning you have been declared righteous, God has declared you righteous, said all of the demands of the law are satisfied on your behalf. "Before Me, you stand legally just," not simply forgiven but declared righteous in the sight of a holy God, and this is what Christ has done for us. That's the reality by which God looks at us in Christ, our sins are washed away, we are set apart for God, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that, beloved, that is to be at the cornerstone of your understanding of your existence now if you are in Christ. You are not defined by your prior sins, you are defined by Christ and what he has done on your behalf, and that he is with you, and that he has made you his own. This changes everything.

One more passage. There are so many we could look at but for the sake of time we won't. In Colossians, go past Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians and you'll come to the book of Colossians 2 and you see this past tense effect again. Colossians 2:13-14, "When you

were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh," you were dead, you were like this, you were spiritually lifeless, but in that condition Christ did something for you, "He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions," he has forgiven us of all our transgressions. Look at every word there in the clause. Your sin is forgiven, not just some, not in part but the whole, all of it is forgiven. And what Christ has done for us is this, this is all about how good Christ is, not about how good we are, this is about what Christ has done, not what we have done, this is what was done on our behalf, not what we did for ourselves, and so what Christ has done for us you see in verse 14, he has "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us." It's canceled. Done away. Silenced. "Which was hostile to us; and Christ has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

What wonderful words. Look at that there and let it burn deep into your heart. He has taken it out of the way. All of the prior hostility has been removed and reconciled to favor with God. The debt has been paid and now there is an abundance in your spiritual account in Christ. All that separated us from God before has been nailed to the cross. "My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin not in part but the whole has been nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!" There's a reason why we sing those hymns and there's a reason why those hymnwriters had those spiritual attitudes and those spiritual feelings that they wanted to express, it's because this is the reality of the effect of Christ on the human soul, and the result of that is a mindset that is not mired in prior guilt because the guilt is forgiven, it is a mindset that is rooted in, devoted to, submitted to the love and the perfection of Christ, and because I am in him by faith, my entire existence is now defined differently, it is defined by Christ, not by who I used to be. And for the profane, sometimes drunken man that I used to be that now speaks to you today, I'm really glad for that. I'm really thankful for that. The blasphemer exists no more. He's been made new.

Scripture says you were this but now you are something else and so, my friends, you think of yourself in Christ rather than defining yourself by your former life of sin. That brings us to our third and final point here this morning: the reality of change. The reality of change, and just to, you know, there's a sequence to the thought here, there was your prior guilt, there was forgiveness, and now the consequences of forgiveness, the reality of change. You know, Scripture speaks about salvation in other terms, speaks about it as a new birth, as new life, you know, as something new. Well, there's been a change and that means that you think about yourself in new ways. Your position in Christ means you think differently about who you are. This is utterly liberating. This is the most wonderful relief that could come to a guilt-laden mind that there could ever be.

Look at Romans 6. Romans 6:8. Your present condition has changed, your future destination has changed. Everything is new. This is so wonderful. Romans 6:8, and listen, there should be a prevailing sense in the atmosphere of this room that we have been elevated to heights that are far beyond human comprehension, and that there is a wonderful liberty that is descending upon the minds of the people of God in light of the truths that we're discussing here. We're not talking about how to live a better life. We're not talking about being better moral people. We're talking about the remarkable eternal

consequences of what Christ has done in love for his people, and how we are to think in response to that, so that in Romans 6:8 it says, "Now if we have died with Christ," the old man is dead, now we are alive in Christ, what happens? Verse 8, "we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." Verse 11. How are we to think about ourselves in light of that? "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

You are to think of yourself as being dead to sin. The penalty of sin no longer threatens you because the penalty was paid at the cross. The power of sin has been broken in your life. Yes, you still sometimes stumble but that is not what preeminently defines you. What preeminently defines you is that the power of Christ dwells in you through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and because the Spirit is greater than the one who is in the world, then there is a greater power over sin that defines your existence rather than the nature of your besetting sin. The penalty of sin, you are to think about this, if you are in Christ you say, "The penalty of my sin has been paid. I have no fear of judgment anymore." You say, "The power of sin has been broken because Christ entered into death which is the penalty of sin and He came out safe on the other side, and now Christ is with me. I'm identified with Him and therefore I have a new power that allows me to put sin to death in my life. And one day," you say, you think this to yourself, "one day I am going to be freed from the very presence of sin when I am with Christ in heaven. I will be made perfect in Him. One day He will give me a glorified body and sin and temptation will no longer be any part of my existence. I'm free from the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin." That's what it means to be in Christ. That's how you are to think about yourself in him.

Hoekema says this, he says, "We who have been united with Christ through faith are no longer old men. Our old man has been put to death with Christ." And so, my Christian friends, what this means is whether you are a new Christian of just a few months' duration or if you've been in Christ for many many years, you are to consider yourself a new man in Christ compared to what you were before your conversion. There is, I like to put it this way, there is a transformed you. You have been transformed by the grace and choice and power of God, and that is how you are to think about yourself. Sin is no longer the defining aspect of your essence and your existence. It's part of it while we finish our earthly journey. It's part of it but it's not the cornerstone. It is not the core of the essence of who you are. Christ now, your union with Christ now is the defining aspect of who you are. Christ is our life and you think of yourself first and foremost of being in him.

Look at Romans 8:9 and you see this present aspect of the existence of the believer. Yes, Paul walked through his struggles in Romans 7 but he didn't stop there and you are not to stop in Romans 7 either if you are in Christ. You are to go on to Romans 8 where it says in verse 9, "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of

righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Beloved, all of this has massive consequences for your spiritual life going forward. It's only for those who are in Christ, but if you're in Christ it's amazing. Do you know what this means? It means that Jesus Christ and his righteousness, his death, his resurrection, his glory, Christ, not your besetting sin, but Christ defines who you are. Christ, not your besetting adversary, defines who you are. My friends, do you have friends, perhaps family members who have belittled you to the point of despair and you feel the weight of accusation against them and the discouragement and it seems like the whole world is arrayed against you, people that you love aren't returning it? Understand this, whatever else is the reality of that horizontal situation, Christian friend, God sees you in Christ. God sees you in his beloved Son, not through the hostile paradigm of your earthly adversary. To bring it full circle to Psalm 86:5, he's good. He's ready to forgive and if you're in Christ, he has already forgiven you and he is full of lovingkindness toward you. His gracious purpose, God's gracious purpose is to one day make you perfect in his sight when you see Jesus Christ face-to-face, 1 John 3:2. God's purpose in you, for you, is that he who began a good work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:6.

And so, as it were, we take the spiritual Windex to our souls and we clean away all of the grime and we look in the mirror conscious of the gospel, conscious of Christ, conscious of the promises and truth in his word, and we look in the mirror and we say, "There's been a transformation that's taken place here." My friend, you are not striving to win the favor of a reluctant God if you are in Christ. You are not under condemnation but under grace. Look at Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What does this mean? It means that a willing God has given favor to you in Christ so that you may rest in Christ and have a soul that is defined by joy and peace and eternal comfort in him, not because we've ignored your guilt, not because we've told you you're somebody that you're not, but because of what Christ has done for you to rescue you, to deliver you, to save you to the uttermost.

You have been transformed in Christ. God sees you in his beloved Son. You are to identify yourself with him and understand that great exalted position that God has blessed you with and think in those terms going forward. Not afraid of the judgment of God because you will one day be in heaven forever. Not viewing yourself as a permanent victim enslaved to sin because in Christ the power of sin has been broken. Not afraid of facing hell and death or purgatory or anything like that because the penalty of sin was paid in full at the cross. This, beloved, is how a Christian is to begin his thinking as he moves forward in life. It's a glorious position given to us by a glorious Christ with a glorious outcome for your soul.

Let's pray together.

Father, may Your great Son be greatly exalted in our souls. May You help us appropriate these things and understand the reality that what You have done changes the way that we

look at all of life. Help Your people enter fully into the rest that You have already purchased for us. Father, we pray for those that are not in Christ perhaps seeing these things dimly and striving to understand them and finding it just a little bit beyond their grasp. We pray for the help of Your Spirit to them. We pray for those who, loosely speaking, have slidden back from Christ, slidden into dark ways of thinking, dark ways of living. Father, we pray that Your Spirit would reach down into their hearts and bring them back, bring them back from where they have gone, bring them back to this wonderful grace that is ours, wonderful grace of Jesus reaching the most defiled by its transforming power making Him God's dear child. Father, may the words of that wonderful hymn abound and resound in each heart and may You help us live in the light of the wonders of redemption, the wonders of redemptive love, so great, so wonderful, so full, so complete, so free. Truly You are a good God, ready to forgive and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You in the name of Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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