

Living In Light Of Your Position in Christ

Miscellaneous

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This morning we want to look at living in light of your position in Christ.

It might surprise you to realize that those who champion salvation by grace sometimes subtly or overtly keep sanctification by law or by works. You know, as a result of some 36 years ago coming to put my faith in Jesus Christ at the age of 18, I had the opportunity soon after to sit under the grace oriented Bible teaching, Dispensational ministry of Pastor Leonard Radke. I had salvation by grace truly established I my thinking there, the wonderful truth of eternal security, some positional truth, living by grace, the importance of walking in the Spirit so we won't fulfill the lists of the flesh and many other truths. And it, frankly, surprised me as time went on that there were those who claimed to be saved but denied eternal security. Or it surprised me that there were those who you were saved by faith, but really taught that you lived by law.

And though no one will say that, no one will say, "Listen to me. I am a legalist." I mean, no one does that. And yet, too often, by virtue of the fact that we do have a natural bent towards legalism, that that is communicated or thought by too many Christians.

In fact, the Bible is very clear that the believer in Christ is justified by grace. We are eternally secure by grace. We are then to be sanctified by grace. One day we will be glorified by grace. In the meantime we are to grow in grace. We are to continue in grace. We, then, are to serve by grace. We are to become established with grace. We are to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. We are disciplined by grace. We are to minister our spiritual gifts to others by grace. We are not to abuse the grace of God as a license to sin and we are to realize that in every trial that God's grace is sufficient for us.

Even when it comes to giving, giving is by grace. And we are to yield to the Lord in light of God's grace and not fall from these wonderful truths of grace.

And yet, you know, as I survey or have contact with individuals that believe in free grace in contrast to the false teaching of lordship salvation, I have found—as I listen closely—that there are two missing gems in the free grace movement. Maybe not totally missing, but too often missing. And they are the wonderful truths of positional truth as well as living by grace through faith in Christ as your sufficiency.

Too often the message is: You are saved by grace. You are kept saved by grace and now just start obeying and do these things instead of really learning to live by faith. And that is why a few years ago I sought to define the Christian life as God intended with the following statement. The authentic Christian life is designed to be a daily, personal, vertical fellowship with God based on your identification with Jesus Christ, motivated primarily by his love and provided totally by his grace and power which is enjoyed through repeated responses of faith as one diligently seeks the Lord resulting in spiritual growth in Christ likeness, faithful obedience to God's will and fruitful service to others in love all to the glory of God.

But in this definition we must be careful to distinguish the basis of the Christian life, the means of the Christian life and the results of the Christian life. Again, the Christian life, its basis is our identification with Christ. Its means is by his grace enjoyed through faith and its results are spiritual growth, faithful obedience, fruitful service. And if we put the cart before the horse we come up with some form of legalism or some form of mysticism that is not truly consistent with the grace of God.

Now to think of the Christian life lived by grace we are going to look this morning at several passages in the New Testament as this is not a unique truth found in one place, but we are going to look at an emphasis on our position in Christ and therefore what our practice should be and how it can come to pass in our life.

In John 15 we have part of the upper room discourse given by our Lord on the night in which he was betrayed, very likely making his way to the Garden of Gethsemane where the next day he would be crucified at Calvary. We understand from John 13 that Judas has departed so those that are left are only genuine believers as Judas was never saved. He is seeking, in light of his anticipated death, his then resurrection from the grave, his ascension into glory, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the wonderful position, possession and power that the believer will have a result of the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Spirit of God.

And he says to these believers in verse one, "I," the Lord Jesus Christ, "am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser,"¹ the gardener of the vineyard. "Every branch,"² now please note this, "in me in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."³

So we have the vine, the Lord Jesus, the vine dresser, the gardener and we have branches. And they are defined as branches in me. He is not talking here about people who claim to be saved but are not really saved. He is talking about genuine believers. And he likens them to a branch and he said, "In me." And keep in mind that phrase, "in me," in Christ, in the Lord is found throughout the epistles explaining our identification with or our position in Christ.

¹ John 15:1.

² John 15:2.

³ Ibid.

Now what we see is the work of the vinedresser in verse two. “For every branch in me that does not bear fruit he, the vine dresser, takes away.”⁴

Now is it possible to be a branch in Christ and not bear fruit? This verse clearly says yes. Saved by grace, destiny changed, new nature, new position, new power source, but not living in light of it; a branch in Christ, yes, but not bearing fruit for the Lord in their life.

So what does the vine dresser do when he sees that is the case? Well, our translation says he takes away. But as I have pointed out before, the Greek word ἀίρω (ah'-ee-ro) is used at least six times in the book of John to mean he lifts up. And I believe that is what he does first. He will eventually take you away to heaven to go be with him if he says, in essence, “You will do more good for me in heaven than you are on earth,” as maximum divine discipline is taught in the Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 11, 1 John 5 and other places. That is what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

But when he finds a believer who, like a branch, hugging the ground is not bearing fruit, the first objective is not, “You unfruitful Christian, you are coming home.” No. he would much rather take you and put you on the trellis of his grace and show you the wonderful blessings you have in Christ so as to encourage you to abide in him and be fruitful.

But what does he do with the believer who is bearing fruit? Does he say, “Oh, you are bearing fruit, you are fine. I won't intervene in your life at all”? No.

Verse two says. “And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”⁵

Now let's face it. Who likes pruning? Or I should say: Who likes being pruned? Ok? But that is exactly what God does. If you are in him and you are bearing some fruit the Lord says, “I want to prune you. I am going to prune you.” And he uses his Word to do that. He may use trials to do that. He wants to prune you so that you would bear more fruit. Because what is it he said he prunes? He never prunes the fruit because that doesn't need to be pruned. He prunes out of our life those sucker shoots that are creating problems and obstacles and difficulties in abiding in Christ and being fruitful for him.

Now, in order to bear fruit you, first of all, have to be saved and so verse three says, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”⁶ They were already believers. They had already experienced regeneration. Their sins had been washed away.

So what now is needed in our Christian life?

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John 15:.

Verse four. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”⁷

Now keep in mind these individuals were already in Christ. And before you were saved you are in Adam. You are in what I call the Adam’s family. And as a result you need to be saved from a hell you deserve to a heaven you don’t. And Jesus Christ came and he died on the cross and he paid for your sins so completely lock, stock and barrel, past, present and future, bar none, that he could then provide for you outside of you and in spite of you a salvation you could never earn and never work for, a salvation by grace, a salvation through faith, a salvation that Jesus Christ procured and purchased when he died on the cross in order to save you if you would be willing to simply put your faith in him alone.

And the moment an individual does, the Spirit of God transfers them from the position in Adam to now be in Christ. You are a branch in him. The question is: Are you a fruitful branch or not? In order to be fruitful you need to learn to abide in him. Just imagine for a moment a branch disconnected from the vine laying on the ground saying, “Fruit, fruit, fruit.”

The fact is: It ain’t going to happen.

Now some people say, “Well, you know, this person is unfruitful. What they need is they need some pressure in their life on the branch.”

Is that going to help it bear fruit? No.

Now sometimes pressure in our life causes us to see our needs to abide in the Lord, but that is not really the answer.

Now some say, “What he needs is a kick in the pants. Just kick [?]. And while it is true that at times we do need to get exhorted, yeah, even rebuked, kicking the branch isn’t going to necessarily make it abide. What we need more than anything is we need to be encouraged and taught and exhorted along those lines to abide in him.

Now remember. To be in him is your position. To abide in him is to be your condition. Ok? And we must keep those concepts separate.

Now the word “abide” carries the idea of to remain where you have been placed, to remain in dependence upon Jesus Christ. You are dependent upon him for your salvation. Now in your thinking from day to day as a believer, remain in dependence upon him enjoying fellowship with him. For every believer becomes a child of God the moment they are saved, but as a child of God you can either walk having fellowship with the Lord or not.

⁷ John 15:4.

And we are encouraged here to abide, to fellowship with the Lord, to abide in dependence upon the Lord as our vine, the resource for everything.

“Abide in me,”⁸ the Lord says, “will abide in you.”⁹ I will abide in you by way of being your resource in living the Christian life. For, you see, anything the unsaved can do is not the Christian way of life. The Christian way of life is the supernatural way of life, demanding a supernatural means of execution in which the Spirit of God uses the Word of God in light of our position in Christ to transform us from the inside as we learn to abide in him.

As a result we are told in verse five, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.”¹⁰

And please note again. The believer does not produce fruit. The believer bears the fruit. We are the branches. The vine produces the fruit in you and through you. You bear it. And, you know, there is a wonderful day when you quit trying to produce fruit and quit trying to be so good and, instead, learning to depend upon the Lord, that you walk in fellowship with him so that he produces the good in you and through you and produces the fruit of the Spirit.

And, by the way, it is the fruit of the Spirit because the Spirit has to produce it. That is why verse five ends by saying, “For without Me you can do...”¹¹ What? Nothing. You can do nothing. And that is the key to the horizontal is always the vertical. When there is a lack of fruit in our life, then the issue is not, you know, just pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps and trying harder. No, it is to realize I am broken down in my abiding fellowship of faith with the Lord.

J.D. Stoney years ago said this and I quote, “If you begin with serving, as many do nowadays, you will not sit at his feet. Whereas if you begin with sitting at his feet like Mary—contrast to Martha—you will soon serve well, wisely and acceptably. When the serving quiets the conscience and the sitting is overlooked and neglected, the enemy gains an advantage for it is at the sitting that the conscience is enlightened and the pleasure and mind of the Lord becomes better known.

“I have never met with anyone making his service prominent, first in his life, who knew what it was to sit at the feet of the Lord. But thank God I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting at his feet above any service. And it is clear that those who sit most at his feet must be most competent to serve.”

You see, it is not... it doesn't start with the horizontal in serving Jesus Christ. It is a matter of learning to abide in him, to remain dependent, in fellowship with him, enjoying this wonderful relationship with him because God is not looking for a performance. Nor

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John 15:5.

¹¹ Ibid.

is he seeking for you to produce. He wants you to abide so he can work in you and through you to produce as you bear fruit to bring honor and glory to him.

This is living in light of your position in Christ.

Now go with me to the book of Romans and let's develop this a little more as the epistles do.

Now in Romans chapter five and verse one it says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."¹²

Notice. How do you have peace with God? It is not by going to church and it is not by certain religious rituals and works. It is by being justified by faith, putting your trust in Jesus Christ and what he has done for you. And the moment you put your trust in Christ, that moment God declares you righteous in his eyes. He saves you from hell. He guarantees heaven. He gives you eternal life. He makes you a new creation in Christ.

He goes on in verse two, "Through whom," Jesus Christ, "also we have access by faith into this grace in which we [presently] stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."¹³

Notice we not only have grace to be saved, but we have access, now, into that grace every day. We stand in oceans of oceans in grace. It just needs to be appropriated in our lives and the only thing consistent with grace is always faith, faith.

So when we are willing to take God at his Word, trust the promises of God and live in light of our position in Christ, we are accessing this grace that is needed every day in our Christian life.

Now as we think of grace, look at Romans chapter five and verse 20. "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound."¹⁴

You see, the law—including the 10 Commandments—entered the scene not to prevent sin, but actually to provoke sin that the offense might abound. It is like that overhead that sometimes we use that has a sign that says, "No machete juggling." The guy looks in the picture. He says, "I suddenly feel encouraged to juggle machetes."

Now why is that? Because, as 1 Corinthians 15 tells us, "The strength of sin is the law."¹⁵

The law says, "Don't do it."

Something in our flesh says, "Watch me. Watch me."

¹² Romans 5:1.

¹³ Romans 5:2.

¹⁴ Romans 5:20.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:56.

Verse 20. “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”¹⁶

Where sin abounded, yet grace was in superabundance. You can't out sin the grace of God.

Verse 21. “So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁷

“What shall we say then?”¹⁸

Now Paul anticipates an objection. And he seeks to cut off a biblical imbalance at the pass, because someone might be thinking, well, if where sin abounded grace did much more about, let's just really sin and show off the grace of God.

So we read in verse one, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!”¹⁹ “God forbid,” as the King James says. Perish the thought. Or, as one translation says, “What a ghastly thought.”

“How shall we who died to sin...”²⁰

That is our what? Position.

“...live any longer in it?”²¹

That is to be our condition.

Now immediately you might ask, “Well, when did I die to sin?”

And, by the way, in Romans six with the exception of verse 15 the word sin is a noun in the singular within the Greek, a definite article “the” standing in front of it in reference to the sin nature.

Romans six is not primarily dealing with sin, the fruit, but, instead, the sin nature, the root of the problem.

So when did you die to sin so that you no longer have to live enslaved to it?

¹⁶ Romans 5:20.

¹⁷ Romans 5:21.

¹⁸ Romans 6:1.

¹⁹ Romans 6:1-2.

²⁰ Romans 6:2.

²¹ Ibid.

Verse three. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”²²

Now as I have taught many times, Romans six is as dry as the Sahara. This has nothing to do with water though water baptism, I believe, pictures this reality. In fact, there are seven different baptisms in the Bible. Four are completely dry. Three are wet. And the baptism that is being referred to here is the baptism by the Holy Spirit because notice here baptized into Christ not into water. And therefore you were baptized into his death.

So what does that mean? Again, I have illustrated before. Imagine this Bible being Jesus Christ and this pen being you. Before you were saved you separated from Jesus Christ. You are, again, in Adam’s family. When you got saved the Spirit of God put you into an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ. You were placed in union with Christ and therefore God now sees you clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Furthermore, he sees Christ’s death on the cross as being your death, Christ’s burial being your burial, Christ’s resurrection being your resurrection to a brand new kind of life as a new creation in Christ.

And this is true whether you know it or not. It is just that you won’t enjoy it if you don’t know it. That is why verse three says, “Or do you not know?”²³

Verse six, “Knowing this...”²⁴

Verse nine, “Knowing that...”²⁵

And that is the first key word in Romans chapter six is the word “know.” There are some facts that God wants you to know, some truths from the Word of God.

And, unfortunately, in many churches these truths are not taught. Again, positional truth is one of the missing gems in evangelicalism and, too often, even in the free grace movement.

Verse four. “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism [spirit baptism] into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”²⁶

You see, Christ was raised from the dead through the supernatural power of the Spirit of God and we have that Spirit in us and we are to now walk as a new creation in Christ, enabled by that very Spirit that resurrected Christ from the dead. It’s a brand new kind of life that we had no potential for before we were saved. That is why when I talk to an

²² Romans 6:3.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Romans 6:6.

²⁵ Romans 6:9.

²⁶ Romans 6:4.

unbeliever, I don't try to get them to change their life. What value is it, again, of polishing the shoes on a dead corpse? What they need is they need a life in Christ, a new life in Christ.

So you give them the gospel. That is what they need to hear.

Verse six. "Knowing this, that our old man,"²⁷ all that we were in Adam before we were saved, "was crucified with Him."²⁸

Or, as Galatians 2:20 will say, "I am crucified with Christ."²⁹

"...the body of sin might be done away with."³⁰ The word means rendered powerless, "that we should no longer be slaves of sin."³¹

Now as we think of these truths that we are to know, again, we recognize that you have a body, an external you that at least some of you, most likely the females today, took a little bit of time on this morning. You see the guys on the men's camping trip, you know, the body is in tune for... ok? They don't shave. They don't brush their teeth many times. They don't do... it is the men, you know. We are with the men.

But you have an external you, the body. Inside of that body you have an internal you that consists of a soul where your personality resides. You have mentality, emotion, volition. In that sense you were made in the image of God.

You also have conscience. We know that you have a human spirit as well, for the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord and, therefore, it gives you a God consciousness. Though this human Spirit gets you no relationship with God, for you are born spiritually separated from him under the control of the sin nature. This sin nature, before you were saved, had you in absolute bondage. And, as a result of Jesus Christ and what he did on that cross, you not only have been freed from the penalty of sin when you put your faith in Christ, but he has provided victory over the power of sin.

So your old man was crucified with Christ. You were buried with Christ. You were raised with Christ. So walk in newness of life. This sin nature that you possess from your first birth naturally puts me first. That is why you don't have to teach kids to be selfish.

As I said before, all I have to do is put two kids in one room with one toy and see what happens. They will tear each other's eyes out, pull off three ears if they could, break a leg. They want what they want and they want it now.

²⁷ Romans 6:6.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Galatians 2:20.

³⁰ Romans 6:6.

³¹ Ibid.

I don't know of any kid that says, "Oh, I'll wait an hour."

Wait an hour? Are you kidding me? I want it yesterday.

That is the birth of... that is the kind of nature we have.

Now by virtue of having that sin nature we have two tendencies in our life. One, we have a tendency towards sin, flagrant disobedience. Or we have a tendency towards human good, doing nice things that often times gain the approval of people. Yet we know from Isaiah 64:6 that, "All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."³²

Because of these bents we have a bent towards license, letting it rip, or towards legalism or mysticism which also are unacceptable to God.

So when we hear the gospel and we understand that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead and that he accomplished on that cross what would take us all eternity in hell to pay off and we put our faith in him, not only is our destiny changed and not only is our position changed, but our human spirit is regenerated. We were born again. We receive also a new nature that gives us desires for God that we never had before. That is why it is normal when someone gets saved to now have some desire to learn the Word of God.

We also receive the Holy Spirit as a permanent resident in order to give us the power to now glorify Jesus Christ in our lives. And when we are filled or controlled with the Spirit the Spirit of God produces in our life the fruit of the Spirit, "Love, joy, peace,"³³ that deals with attitudes. As well as he can enable us to do divine good, things that are pleasing to the Lord by way of good works, but not to glorify ourselves, unlike the sin nature, but, instead, to glorify Christ.

And that is why, as a believer, at any given moment you are yielding either to the sin nature or you are yielding to the Spirit of God and to the Lord and his willingness to glorify Jesus Christ in your life.

That is why when you are carnal you may not go lay one on the town. That would be too obvious. Instead, you might just function as a nice little boy. And yet you are not walking with the Lord. You are not depending on him. You are not abiding in him. You are not communing with him. In fact, you may just be really impressed with you and your hustle. And yet it is just all human good yet, still emanating from the flesh and totally unacceptable to God.

On the other hand, when you are controlled by the Spirit, walking with the Lord, the divine good that is produced in your life may look very similar to the human good, but it is totally... it has rotted the Spirit. It is designed to glorify Christ. It is not out of gratitude. It is done out of a yielded dependence on the Lord. And, thus, what is going on in the

³² Isaiah 64:6.

³³ Galatians 5:22.

inside is dramatically different than when human good is produced even in the life of a believer.

Now, verse six makes it clear that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Verse seven. “For he who has died,”³⁴ and you have died with Christ, “has been freed from sin.”³⁵

Verse nine goes on to say:

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him, for [in] that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.³⁶

Now notice. It is one thing to understand that Christ died for your sins, but that is not what verse 10 says. It is more than that. He died to sin. He die in reference to this sin nature. Because at salvation what does God do with your sin? He forgives your sins. But at salvation what does he do with your sin nature? He condemns it. And he condemns its right to rule in your life.

Now it is still there. It still wants to reign as a king. In fact, as [?] said years ago, “If you don’t think you have a sin nature, it will kick you all over the universe. Don’t be deceived into thinking that.”

And that is why as a believer when you yield to the sin nature and you live in carnality—whether it be immoral type of carnality or maybe moral type of carnality—it is nevertheless carnality as you live out of fellowship with the Lord.

That is why, again, my pastor used to say, “Find the worst drunks in town and five of them are believers bucking the Lord.” Because when you buck the Lord often times you have to come up with some means to cope with life and some means of sublimation and therefore you may turn to alcohol or booze or drugs or something else. The only problem with that is in many cases they are very addictive and, as a by product, you just get yourself in more and more jams. And that is why when people come from those backgrounds and they get saved, often times it is a real struggle until they start to learn and understand this truth right here.

It is like the... again, the old illustration of the sea captain who had reign over the ship in a tyrannical way and had taught the sailors that what he says they must do. And one day he is deposed. He is put in the brig and, as a result, his sentence awaits when he arrives at shore. And in the meantime some swabby comes walking by and from the jail cell on the brig he yells out, “Hey get those keys.” And being normally used to obeying the sea captain he immediately reaches for the keys. And then he begins to realize, wait a second

³⁴ Romans 6:7.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Romans 6:8-9.

here. That sea captain is behind the jail door. Something must have changed. And then he finds out, yes, that he is under a new authority. He has separated from the previous authority though the authority—in his life previously, the sin nature in this case—is not dead. Death speaks of separation. He is still very much there and he wants to pull you in the wrong direction.

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish,”³⁷ Galatians 5:17.

And that is why if you think, well, I am not planning to yield to the Lord, but I am not planning to yield to the sin nature either. I am going on a third option.

I want you to know there is no third option. Either you are carnal or you are spiritual. One or the other at any given moment of any given day.

Now, in light of this position in Christ verses 11 says, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”³⁸

Now that word “reckon”—and I am going to put it right here—is the first command relative to the Christian life in the whole book of Romans. He didn’t say, “Now that you are saved go witness.” No. The first thing is that you need to know something.

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”³⁹

That is why when someone gets saved here at Duluth Bible we don’t say, “We got a live one. Let’s get him busy so they can burn out like everybody else.”

No, no. That is how some churches approach it, but no. We just say, “Come on and hear the Word of God. Just enjoy the Lord. Get established in the faith. Learn to walk by faith.”

Because I know that new believer doesn’t know how to do that yet and, as a result, even with what gifts they have the tendency then is what gifts they used before they were saved to glorify themselves, now they want to use for the Lord, but in many cases they don’t know to walk in fellowship with him so they can do it as unto the Lord. And so therefore it becomes a hey look at me scene, but it is now just we are out of the flesh, still, but it is on the Christian side of the [?]. It is still all about me, me, me so often.

And so I just encourage, just come on out and learn and know, get to know the Lord better. Get to know his Word. Get to know your position.

And then the second key word here is reckon, present tense. Keep on reckoning.

³⁷ Galatians 5:17.

³⁸ Romans 6:11.

³⁹ 1 Peter 2:2.

Write this down in your thinking on a daily basis. Go back to it over and over again that I have been co-crucified with Christ, co-buried with Christ, co-raised with Christ. The sin nature's right to rule in my life has been broken. I am under new management. Therefore I need to believe that.

You see, the word "reckon" is the Greek word λογίζομαι (log-id'-zom-ah-ee). In the present tense it carries the idea of write this down in your thinking like an accountant would write down a term in his book. And utilize this over and over again.

And flowing out of that logical faith then yield or present, verse 12. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body,"⁴⁰ which means the sin nature is still there, wanting to reign. But you don't have to let it. "...that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead,"⁴¹ your position. "And your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."⁴²

So here is the third key word. Know this, reckon and now yield or present. You come along say, in essence, "Lord, I am dead to sin and alive to you and I just present myself to... I yield to you." In other words, "We are going to live today on your terms. Well, I just want to do it your way and I am here. I am available. I am just an instrument in your hands. I am not capable, but I am available."

Because, you see, what happens sometimes is believers they are all, "I am just so thankful for what the Lord has done. I am going to serve him."

And then they try to serve him, but they try in their own wisdom or their own strength or on their own terms and they fail and fail and fail. That is Paul in Romans seven. "The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do."

It is failing to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit which is what Romans chapter eight is all about.

So know these things, reckon them to be true, yield yourself to the Lord. Now here is a fourth word we are going to see in a second. Obey.

Now I say that because there is a place to obey. I mean some believers go the other way and say, "Don't even mention the word obey. That is legalism."

No, no. Then Paul is a legalist. He is going to use it a moment. No, the problem is: Don't take that and put it up here. In fact, answer this question in your mind for me. Do you have to obey to be spiritual or do you have to be spiritual to obey?

⁴⁰ Romans 6:12.

⁴¹ Romans 6:12-13.

⁴² Romans 6:13-14.

And if you think it is the first, you don't understand grace because if you have to obey to be spiritual or filled with the Spirit, under what strength are you going to obey so that you can finally get controlled by the Spirit?

That is why we read in verse 15:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?⁴³

Notice, whoever you present yourself to, you end up obeying them.

Now obedience has a place in the Christian life. It is to be the result of this personal, invisible vertical fellowship with the Lord is to abide in Christ and live by faith under the power of the Spirit of God. And, therefore, as you walk with the Lord and you grow, there will be a greater conformity to the will of God by way of obedience in your life.

But, again, that is the byproduct. And I say that because so often you hear, "Obey, obey, obey, obey, obey."

But, again, some others have gone to the other extreme and say, "Don't ever mention obey."

No, no, no. There is a place. And depending on the person's frame of reference, when they say, "Obey, obey, obey," whatever is on their totem pole at the top is what they emphasize.

And I have found some Christians in certain circles who understand salvation by grace. That when it comes to obey, they put at the top of the list witness. Therefore they think this. Now that I am saved I just have got to go out and witness for Christ and if I am not witnessing, I am carnal.

Well, what about if you are in the hospital bed all by yourself? Are you carnal? Witness to the pictures on the wall? What are you doing?

You see, I am all for witnessing. In fact, our church is as evangelistic as any church I know. But I will say this. We do not... and though we... though evangelism is very important to us we understand the key to the horizontal is the vertical. And that is emphasized over and over again. Otherwise we just witness out of the power of your thoughts.

And you can do that. You know, I am a saved and I want this person to be saved. And instead of looking to the Lord, praying about it and proceeding as the Lord leads, you just

⁴³ Romans 6:16-16.

take over and grab the guy by the throat in essence and slam him to the floor, stomp on him five times and say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

And since they feel like they are on the Bataan death march they might even say, "I agree." But it doesn't mean it was wrought of the Spirit at all.

And then some come up with quotas. You know, if you are spiritual you are going to go out five nights a week and witness. What if the Lord wants you to witness six nights a week or what if he wants to do it twice? Or what if he doesn't want you to witness at all this week because you have other concerns? But you can still walk with him and enjoy fellowship with him and keep growing in the Lord and so that you are filled as the Lord leads you.

And as a result this has to be put in its proper place or everything gets out of whack.

But you do spill what you are filled with. So let me ask you a question while you are saying, "Oh, I am no legalist."

What are you spilling lately? If someone came up to you and wanted to fellowship on the Lord, would you have anything to spill that you have been enjoying with the Lord, a verse you have been thinking about. Have you been walking with the Lord, something that the Lord is doing in your life? Do you have anything?

Or it is like some Christians, you know, about 20 years ago... I have got to tell you this story, 20 years ago. And I am out for a 20 year old story, but not 14 times in a row. Do you have anything in the last 10 years? How about five? And he gave me six months ago. How about last week?

And that is the problem. And so, as a result, these are valuable truths we need to know.

Someone has said, and I quote, "Understanding, appropriating the fact of the cross proves to be one of the most difficult and trying of all phases for the growing believer. Our Lord holds his most vital and best things in store for those who mean business, for those who hunger and thirst for his very best if it is in our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer's understanding of the two aspects of Calvary gives the key to both spiritual growth and life service."

He says, "Now as long as the believer does not know this dual aspect of his salvation, the best he can do is seek to handle his sins by a confession, 1 John 1:9, that after the damage has been done. This takes care of the penalty of the product, but not the source. Is it not time we allow the Holy Spirit to get at the source and cut off the stream of sins before they are committed? Is this not infinitely better than the wreckage caused by sin even though confessed?"

When believers get sick and tired of sinning year after year in a spiritual squirrel cage, sinning, confessing, but then sinning again, they will be ready for God's answer to the source of sin which is death to self brought forth from the completed work of Christ."

Now this is not to suggest for a moment there is not a place for 1 John 1:9 in confession. There is. In fact, when we fail to reckon ourselves dead and yield to the Lord and walk by faith we will need to confess. But the key, again, isn't to being the best confessor in town. The key is learning these truths of your position, walking by faith, looking to the Lord, yielding to him so the Spirit of God is free to give you victory over sin and then confessing when you fail to appropriate the grace he has provided for you to live [?].

Now with that in mind go with me to 1 Corinthians chapter six.

Wow. Time flies when you are having fun.

1 Corinthians six. In 1 Corinthians chapter six we begin in verse nine. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?"⁴⁴

Now let me pause for a minute. What does she mean by unrighteous, ok? Now, if you look back at verse one we see what he means.

"Dare any of you,"⁴⁵ he is writing to believers, "having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?"⁴⁶

So the unrighteous refers to who? The unsaved.

Now I say that because there are some, again, even in free grace circles, that try to interpret the unrighteous here to be in reference to unrighteous believers, believers who are living in carnality and that those kind of believers will not inherit the kingdom of God though they will enter the kingdom of God. In fact, some go so far as to say this. That if you are not an overcoming, victorious Christian in your life, though you will go to heaven after the bema seat of Christ, you will be cast into outer darkness and experience wailing and gnashing of teeth. And some even say that this will happen for 1000 years during the kingdom.

I have to laugh as I was thinking about this. Well, wait a second, here now. Let's see. I am in Christ, accepted in him. He has said where he is I will be also. So, Lord, are you going to be in wailing and gnashing of teeth and outer darkness?

And you said you have gone to prepare a place for me. Where is that, the root cellar?

I mean, the godly believers are in the penthouse and I am in the root cellar in darkness, wailing, gnashing of teeth and you give me a little bic click that I can click on once in a

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:9.

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

while and you shove food under the door every so often so I can make it during the kingdom and say, “Boy, I can’t wait to meet you, Lord. What grace.”

No. This is absolutely bogus. But this is taught by some, a protestant purgatory for non victorious believers. Now while it is true that we are abiding in him so that we won’t be ashamed before him at his coming, it is not that we are going to get thrown into outer darkness if we are non victorious. In fact, we are going to reign with him. It is just the difference of reigning with him is a reward concept.

Now verse nine says, again, “Do you not know that the unrighteous,”⁴⁷ unsaved, those who aren’t justified, “will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”⁴⁸

So what does that mean? That means that if you are not saved, God sees you spiritually dead in your sins yet. Or, as Jesus said in John 8:24, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”⁴⁹

He doesn’t say you will die because of your sins, because Christ already paid for them. But you will die in your sins in that though they were paid for, you were never forgiven because you never cashed in by putting your faith in Christ. And therefore, God will see you in light of your dominant sin pattern. And just to show you that that is the correct interpretation, verse 11 says, “And such were some of you. But you were washed.”⁵⁰

Now is the word washed a positional term or a conditional term? It is positional. It is that true of every believer? Has every believer been washed? Yeah, absolutely. We were washed at the point of faith in Christ. Aorist tense in the Greek, a point of time in the past, you were washed.

Going on. “But you were sanctified.”⁵¹ Not are being sanctified in the sense of present tense sanctification. But you were in the sense of positional, set apart unto God in Christ. “But you were justified.”⁵² Is that position or condition? Position, right? “...in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”⁵³

He says, in other words, “Since you have been washed and you have been set apart unto God and you have been justified, why do you continue to live like an unbeliever lives whose destiny is not the kingdom of God and yours is?”

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:9.

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

⁴⁹ John 8:24.

⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:11.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

And that is why he goes on to say in verse 18, “Flee sexual immorality.”⁵⁴

Now he has to tell them to flee sexual immorality because some of them were having trouble with that. You see, when someone gets saved, they get saved just as they are. But God doesn't want to leave them just as they are. And that is why, unfortunately, because the church tends to ape the sins of the world, increasingly in our church age, at this stage in the game believers too often are getting entangled with sexual immorality, though saved.

And he says to flee it just like Joseph did with Mrs. Potiphar. “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”⁵⁵

Now why should you flee it? Is it because God hangs you over hell by a thread and says, “Listen, if you don't flee you are going to hell”?

No. Verse 19. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price,”⁵⁶ the price of the blood of Christ. “Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”⁵⁷

The whole appeal is made in light of the fact that you have been justified, sanctified and washed, in light of the fact that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Is it not reasonable for you now to glorify God in that body and spirit which are God's and therefore flee immorality because that does not glorify God?

That is the appeal.

But notice the practice is to be lived in light of our position which was afforded to us by grace through the work of Calvary.

Now go with me to Galatians chapter two and we will see this again. In Galatians two and verse 16, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”⁵⁸

So notice he makes it very clear. Our justification before God is by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law, not by something we do for God. It is something God has done for us that we receive today.

⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:18.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:20.

⁵⁸ Galatians 2:16.

But then in verse 20 what does he say? “I have been crucified with Christ.”⁵⁹

Now that is your what? Position in him. “It is no longer I who live,”⁶⁰ as I am now raised with Christ, but Christ lives in me.”⁶¹ He is to be my power source for everything divine. “And the life which I now live in the flesh,”⁶² in this context not referring to the sin nature, but referring to a human body and all its limitations, “I live...”⁶³ How do you live now? “By faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”⁶⁴

So how does this believer live in faith to [?] salvation or sanctification, progressive sanctification? He lives by faith in the Son of God as set forth in the Word of God.

And what motivates him to do that? “Who loved me and gave himself for me.”⁶⁵

That is why in chapter five, if you look there for a moment in verse six, he says, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything,”⁶⁶ What matters is faith working through love.

Now notice in Christ Jesus is your what? Position. In light of this position what matters now? That you live by faith with working through love. The love of Christ motivates you and as you walk by faith the love of Christ is the fruit of the Spirit that results in your life.

Now let’s go to one last passage, Colossians chapter two, Colossians chapter two. Now in Colossians chapter two, in this epistle that deals with the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, what is the first command relative to the Christian life in this entire book? It is found in verse six.

“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so,”⁶⁷ here is the command, “walk in Him.”⁶⁸

Now the command reflects the will of God for us. He says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,”⁶⁹ how did you do that? Last few words of verse five. “...faith in Christ.”⁷⁰

⁵⁹ Galatians 2:20.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Galatians 5:6.

⁶⁷ Colossians 2:6.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Colossians 2:5.

So walk in him. How? Faith in Christ.

Rooted, perfect tense, speaking of your position, having been rooted in Christ, presently being built up in him, presently being established in the faith, the truth of the Word of God as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.⁷¹

You see, what will be the overflow of being taught the Word of God and your position in Christ and walking by faith is there is going to be thankfulness and gratitude in your life.

One of the reasons we are not very grateful is too often we don't think we are all that undeserving. And when we realize the wonderful riches of God's grace, we can be very, very thankful.

And remember what the Lord is looking for every day is what? Will you abide in him? Will you walk in dependence upon him in light of your position? Will you realize that he is your sufficiency or realize he is the vine? Will you turn to him in faith? You know, like Scott Johnson has in his studies here at the church. Good morning, this is God. I will be handling all your problems today. I will not require your help.

Is that how you think? That is how you need to think, just like that.

In fact, as situations come your way you are to cast your burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain you. As you live by faith, here is the situation. You turn it over to the Lord. You rely on him.

So walking by faith has various aspects to it including this one. But it is a matter of learning over and over again the very principle we saw when we got saved, that I can't do it. God doesn't ask me to do it. God has provided everything necessary to do it. I will rely on him instead of me. I will look to Jesus Christ. I will rely on him. I will remember his grace is sufficient. I will take him at his Word and believe it and like it.

And, thus, as we look at Colossians three. I said it was the last passage, but it is a big passage.

Verse one. "If then you were raised with Christ."⁷² Notice if is in the first class condition, assuming this reality. Raised with Christ speaks of your position. What now is to be your condition? "Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above."⁷³ And the only way to do that is occupation with the Word of God. "Not on things on the earth. For you died,"⁷⁴ with Christ and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [and] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."⁷⁵

⁷¹ See Colossians 2:7.

⁷² Colossians 3:1.

⁷³ Colossians 3:1-2.

⁷⁴ Colossians 3:2-3.

⁷⁵ Colossians 3:3-4.

Interesting enough, four times in these four verses you find one word, Christ. The Christian life is all about Christ, all about Jesus Christ, abiding in him, being occupied with him, enjoying fellowship with him, learning to trust him, learning, allowing the Spirit of God to take the Word of God, thrill you with the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you so that, if then you be raised with Christ, seek those things that are above, set your mind on things above, not things on the earth. When you set your mind on things above you will become occupied with Jesus Christ not only what he has done for you, not only what he is doing for you, but even what he will do for you when he comes again.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you, again, for your Word, for the Lord Jesus and how you want us in a greater way to plumb the depths of understanding what he accomplished at Calvary not only for our sins, but for our sin nature and how now he is our life, he is our resource for everything, that we are to rely on him every day and that we are to yield to him every day because we live our Christian life moment by moment actively in your grace by faith and learning to live in light of your position or position [?] And, Father, we are so slow to learn this. We are so quick to rely on ourselves. We are so prone to pride. We are so prone to legalistic thinking. Just continue to root us and ground is in the wonderful truths of grace and to impress us with your Son that we might learn to walk by faith day by day and moment by moment and that those days would become weeks and weeks months as we enjoy sweet fellowship with him and as your Word transforms us on the inside and makes us more and more like your Son as well as it enables us as an overflow to be the kind of witness you would have it to be and to be the kind of servant to others that you would have us to be as we are looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

And, Father, if there is anyone here who has never been saved I pray that they would see that they need a Savior and Christ is the only Savior you ever provided and that he died for them and rose again to give them a new life and I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.