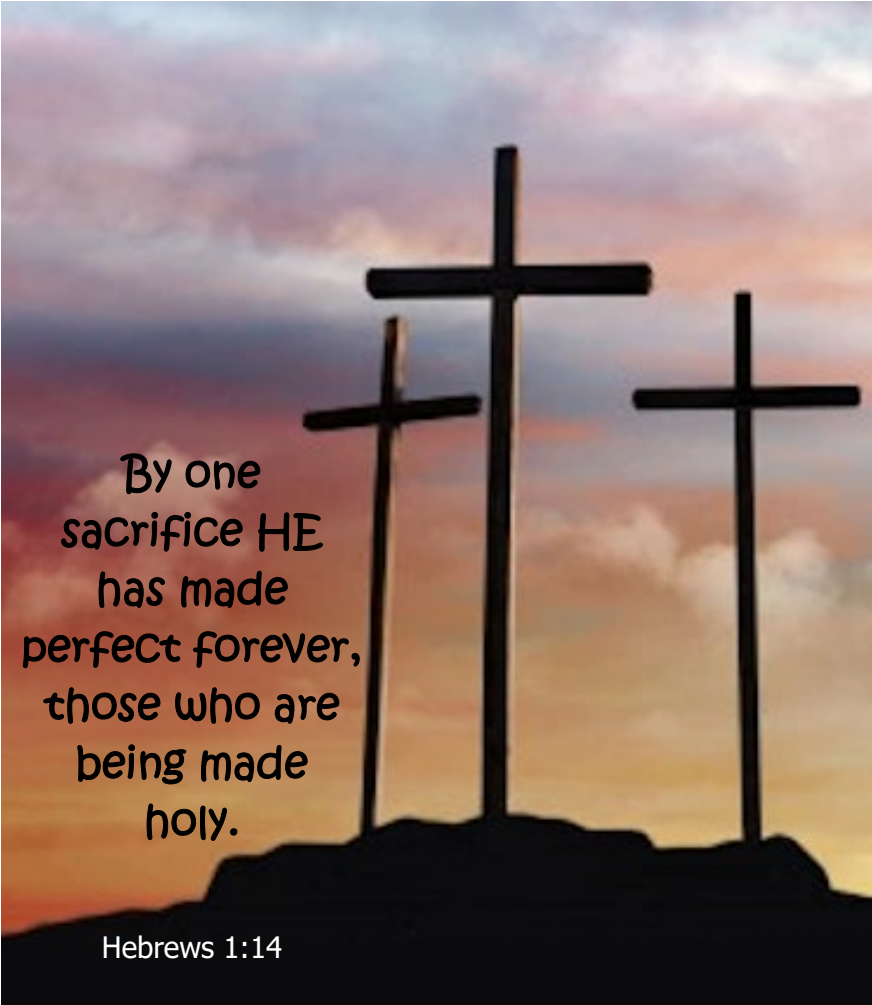


The Christian Life Series—Book 2

Position Versus Experience

A photograph of three wooden crosses standing on a dark, silhouetted hill. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The crosses are of varying heights, with the central one being the tallest.

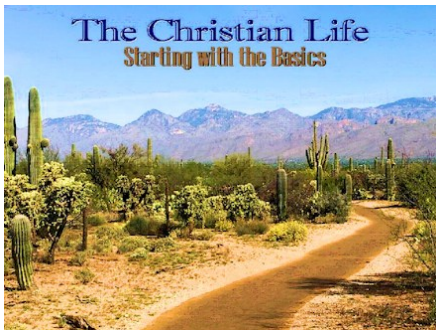
By one
sacrifice HE
has made
perfect forever,
those who are
being made
holy.

Hebrews 1:14

Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

In our first book in this series—*The Christian Life, Starting with the Basics*—we laid the foundation by establishing the Word of God as our source of truth. In this, the second book in the series, I want to look at two things that, for the Christian, always exist simultaneously:



- Our position in Christ
- Our experience at any moment of time

Our *position* and our *experience* are meant to be constantly compared against one other. Further, our position is fundamentally meant to inform and transform our experience and good works to conform with the image and likeness of the Son. May God bless as you pursue this most important of truths.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig', written in a cursive style.

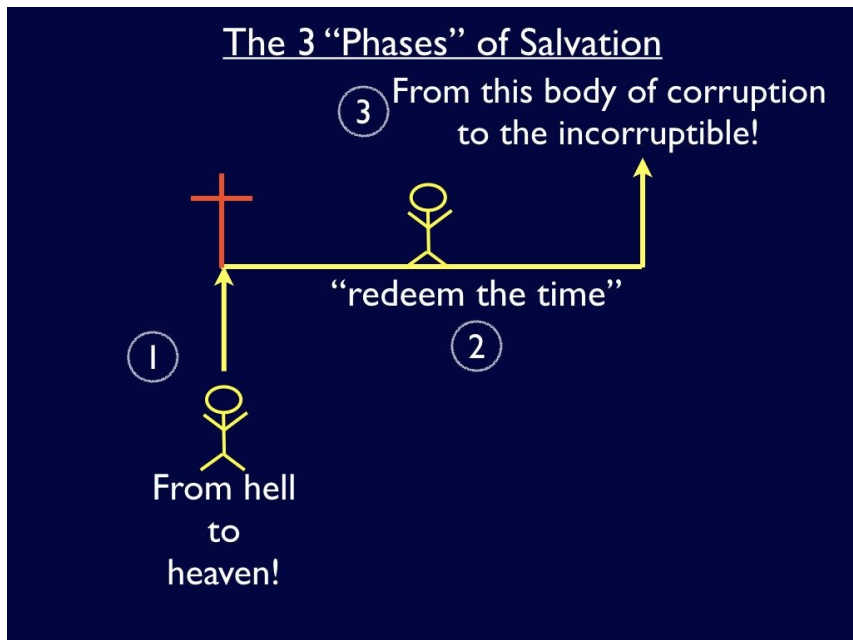
Kevin Redig, pastor-teacher

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).

Introduction

Our topic for this book is established in the title: *Position Versus Experience*. Our *position* in Christ is guaranteed at the time of our salvation. Our *experience* is our daily walk as we try to live up to our position. Our challenge for today is to make sure we understand what God's Word has to say about each of these separately, and then learn how to put them together so that it is clear how unequivocally our experience is to be conformed to our position. So let's break it down one piece at a time.

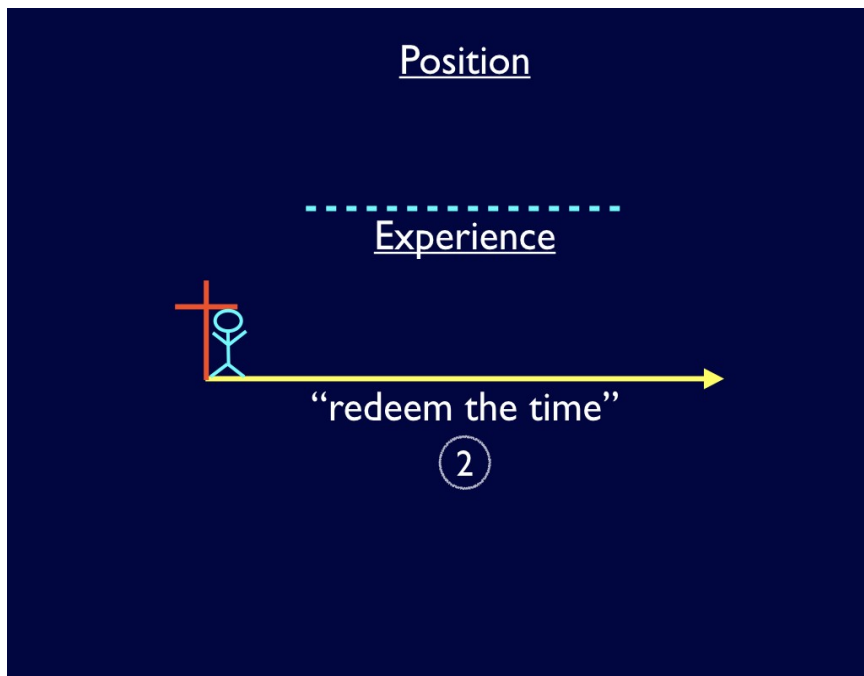
As we open an investigation into our *position* and *experience*, we are going to need to make an adjustment to our diagram depicting the three phases of our salvation shown below. In studying the Christian Life, we are investigating the second phase of our salvation, or how we, as Christians, *save* the number of days God has given us on this earth. For example, God calls us to *redeem the time* in



Ephesians 5:16, to *walk worthy* in Ephesians 4:1, and to *imitate our Savior* in Ephesians 5:1-2. This is, in essence, a call to live for Him. For, just as there is a world of difference between a saved and a lost person with respect to the first phase of our salvation, so too, there is a world of difference between a Christian and one who is daily focused on *walking worthy* before his or her Lord and Savior.

Becoming this kind of Christian is the goal of our investigation of the Christian Life. Focusing on just the second phase of our salvation, you can see that I have made a number of additions in the diagram below. First, a dotted line separates the two aspects of our Christian Life:

- Above the line we are going to discover our *position in Christ*
- Below the line, we will focus on our experience—how we are actually fleshing out the Christian Life on a moment-by-moment basis.



The Source of This Truth

What is the source of this idea of position and experience? There can be only one answer to that question if we are dealing with matters of faith and practice: that source is the Word of God. We are going to be looking at a number of Scriptures which clearly point to our position in Christ, and then to our expected experience. As a reminder from the first book in our series, we turn to the Word of God because it is God-breathed, alive and powerful, providing guidance to both our immediate and our future needs, and a source of absolute and unchanging truth!

The Fact of our *Position in Christ*

Think first about the kind of righteousness described by the following Scripture:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed. . . even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

Romans 3:21-22

The passage is pretty clear—when any member of the human race believes, the very righteousness of God is given to him or her. Now, this righteousness is “*to all and on all*” those who have believed. It is theirs by virtue of faith, not by having done righteous deeds. It is a provision based on standing (position) not on the basis of the life lived. It is pretty easy to see in both the passage above, and the context surrounding this passage, that it is speaking of a personal and legal standing.

The focus of the verse is on the position that the believer has by virtue of faith. It is not that they are righteous because of what they have done. It is that a believer is righteous by virtue of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. That makes it a matter of position in Christ rather than experience. Let’s look at some additional Scripture passages

that further highlight the extent of our standing—our position—as the result of our association with Jesus Christ.

It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

I Corinthians 1:30-31

In the above passage you have what one Greek scholar calls the most important prepositional phrase in the Bible: ***in Christ Jesus!*** Every time you see it, it is very likely the Scripture is speaking of our position in Christ, and that is the case here.

Faith in Christ caused the Father to identify us with Christ. Because of that identification, the righteousness and holiness of Christ has become ours. That’s our position in Christ. It is ours solely by virtue of the intimacy of union that every single believer has with Christ as the result of what God the Father has done following our turning to faith in Christ as Savior. No wonder we should never boast in anything that we might do. It should be all about boasting in what Christ has done!

Let me show you this truth from another angle:

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. . .

Ephesians 2:4-6

After declaring that every member of the human race is born dead in trespasses and sin, Paul goes on to develop what happens as the result of placing our faith in Christ. Notice first, that we are said to be:

- Made alive (spiritually)
- Raised up
- Seated in the heavenlies

Did you note that we are all of those things either *with* or *in* Christ? The Greek preposition translated *with* speaks directly of union. The word translated *in* carries the idea of *in the sphere of*. Both are speaking of the position that every born-again child has by virtue of his or her identification with Christ, including being seated, right now, where He is seated—at the right hand of the Father.

I am sure you realize that none of us can say that we have yet to have the experience of being seated in heaven with Christ, but by the authority of the Word of God it is true positionally. Consider one more passage in order to further develop our understanding:

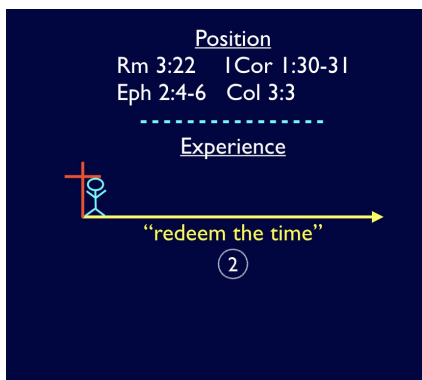
For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3

This passage speaks first of our positional death with Christ—something developed further in Romans Chapter 6, which we will save for another time. For now, note how it also speaks of the new life that is ours in Christ. Specifically notice how that new life is now hidden with Christ—in God.

There are going to be some tremendous applications made of all of this before we are done. For now, we have a sampling of Scripture that clearly speaks of something that cannot be taken as our experience. Instead, it is under the heading of our *position*.

The graphic summarizes what we have learned: as the result of having trusted in Christ for eternal life, we have His righteousness, His holiness, have been redeemed by Him, made alive with Him, raised up with Him, and are currently seated with Him at the right hand of the



Father. In fact, our new life is hidden with Him, in the Father. This is simply a stupendous assortment of truth, a truth with which every child of God should be thoroughly familiar.

The Scriptures Speak of Our Experience

The Scriptures have an even greater volume of guidance regarding our experience than they do our position. For example:

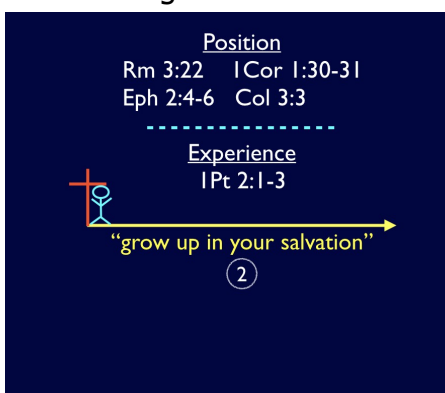
Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. I Peter 2:1-3

The word *therefore* in the scripture above draws your attention to the content of I Peter Chapter 1, which speaks of the individual who was redeemed and born again of imperishable seed. Clearly, this is guidance to the believer. I mention this because you do not rid yourself of these things in order to get saved, but they most certainly need to go after you are! Preserved for us in the text of Scripture is the clear direction to rid ourselves of all manner of sinful behavior that we often have brought with us into the Christian Life.

It should also be clear at this point, given Peter's very specific and strongly-worded guidance, that this could not possibly be automatic for the new believer. It is something we are going to have to work at.

This advice assumes that

this is part of *growing up* in our salvation—an obvious reference to the Christian Life. In fact, it is also quite easy to reflect this in our diagram.



Note that the way to *save* our lives as Christians has been changed from *redeem the time* to *grow up in your salvation*. That's because those phrases are two ways of saying the same thing—two ways of describing God's intent for the Christian Life. Of course, this means that should we choose to hold on to some aspect of envy or practice deceit that we would clearly be in disobedience to the experiential life to which we have been called.

A few more examples to show you the challenging nature of this life that is meant to be our experience as Christians:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. . .

Colossians 3:12-13

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Whereas the passage in I Peter, on the previous page, mentioned things that need to go, the passage in Colossians mentions things that are to become part of our Christian Lives.

After getting a clear statement like this, should our experience not include compassion, kindness, and humility, then we are quite simply out of the will of God! If getting rid of the old and adding the new weren't enough of a challenge, consider the above passage from Ephesians 5. All we need to do is to imitate God and love sacrificially as Christ did. We are to imitate the very Christ whose love took Him to the cross on our behalf. I think it fair to say that the quality of life we are to live as Christians is incredibly high. So high, that at this point I think I can claim it to be the kind of life that can only be attained by supernatural means. In other words, God must enable us to achieve that to which He has called us.

Seeing Both Position and Experience

Less frequently, there are passages in scripture in which we see both our position and experience at the same time. Let me share two of them with you:

. . .because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. Hebrews 10:14

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy. . .

I Corinthians 1:2

Did you realize that when the passage from Hebrews speaks of the believer *made perfect forever*? It is speaking of the believer's position in Christ. Our identification with Christ allows us to have a perfect standing.

But the verse continues on to our experience, which is something that is under construction. Every believer is to be in the process of *being made holy* by being:

. . .conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

Romans 8:29

The passage in I Corinthians is interesting for two reasons:

1. The word translated *sanctified* and the word translated *holy* have the same root. Although different parts of speech, they both carry the idea of being *set apart*. Paul is literally saying: to those who are *set apart* positionally in Christ, you are *now being called* to be *set apart* experientially to God. That sums up the situation for every born again child of God: We have a positional aspect that relates to our standing in Christ and we have the call to manifest a certain kind of life in terms of our moment-by-moment experience.

2. If you are familiar with the Book of Corinthians, then you know there were all kinds of problems in the Corinthian church. In short, there was a great deal of sinful behavior. Yet notice how, right at the start of the book, Paul reminds them of their perfect position. Then he spends most of the next 16 chapters trying to straighten out the experiential aspects of their Christian lives. I mention this because there are those who will try to make the claim that there is no potential for a distinction between our position and our experience. The Bible most certainly paints a different picture!

FOR BY ONE SACRIFICE

he has made perfect

FOREVER

those who are being made
holy.

Hebrews 10:14

A Monumental Distinction

I don't think I can say it too often or too firmly:

Recognizing the distinction between our position and our experience is a hugely overlooked aspect of Christian Doctrine, and an immensely important aspect of God's revelation to us!

So let's work our way toward a more thorough understanding, one point at a time.

Putting It All Together!

First, our position in Christ allows us to know exactly where we stand with God—all the time—even in failure.

- The short answer is that once we have become a child of God through faith in Christ, our position is always one of being in union with Christ!
- Refer once more to our diagram on the next page. You may fail in terms of your experience, but that cannot touch the righteousness you received from God as the result of having faith. Your behavior cannot touch your sanctified status. Also, it cannot touch the fact that you have been made alive in Christ, have been raised with Him, and are seated with Him in the heavenly realms. The life we live most certainly has spiritual consequences, but not in terms of our position. Read the Scriptures again and you will see our position is part of God's gracious salvation to us, apart from our works!
- Every new Christian struggles trying to decide how to deal with failure. Some promise God that they will never do such and such again—and of course they do. Others promise to make it up to God or vow to try harder. Still others wonder if they have lost their salvation over which they recently rejoiced! Listen, God has graciously given us a permanent position in His Son, so

Position

Rm 3:22 I Cor 1:30-31

Eph 2:4-6 Col 3:3

Experience



IPt 2:1-3 I Cor 1:2

Col 3:12-13 Eph 5:1-3

“grow up in your salvation”

②

that when we fail, we know immediately where we stand. Our position is the secure foundation from which we can confess our sin and continue our spiritual growth. Of course, this growth is prompted by the Word of God, which we recently studied, and you will have to continue to work through this series to learn about confession of sin and walking by the Spirit. But, for now, when you fail—and you will—do not listen to the legalists or your own flesh. Instead, know that you remain in union with Christ through thick and thin upon the authority of God’s Word.

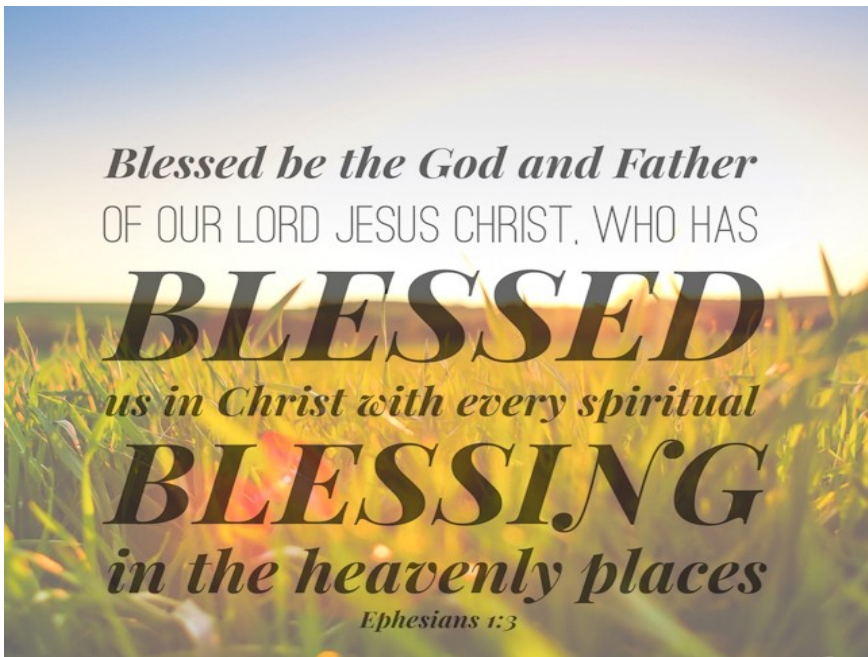
- This truth is so important that I want to reinforce it by introducing you to a marvelous passage of Scripture from Ephesians 1. Beginning in Verse 4, there is a series of marvelous positional blessings, all of which belong to every single born again believer in Jesus Christ. Then, in Verse 6, we run into a truth that should really grab our attention:

. . .to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:6

First, notice that we are accepted—every single one of us who have trusted in Christ for eternal life. Notice especially, that our acceptance is *in the Beloved!* Why is the word beloved capitalized? Because, in context, it is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. You see our acceptance with the Father has never been, and never will be, because of what we have done! It is solely because we are *in the Beloved*—in eternal union with Jesus! When the Father sees us, He sees His Son, and that is all we will ever need to be completely and eternally accepted! That is our position.

Second, understanding the nature of our position allows us to make sense out of the monumental grace that we find in Ephesians 1:3-14. I have already introduced you to this passage, and it begins this way in Verse 3:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. . .



Blessed be the God and Father
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO HAS
BLESSED
us in Christ with every spiritual
BLESSING
in the heavenly places
Ephesians 1:3

Now what follows this fantastic opening verse is a partial listing of those blessings, including our acceptance in the Beloved. We need to let the *weight* of Verse 3 sink in.

- Here we are, at the beginning of a letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus. After a short greeting, and before he addresses anything else, he tells this group of believers that God has blessed them, in Christ, with every spiritual blessing there is! Who would do this right up front? Our gracious God!
- Here is what happens to many believers: they place their faith in the person and work of Christ, and as a result receive God's gift of eternal life. But then, as they attempt to grapple with all of the demands of trying to live a God-pleasing life in their own strength, they undergo many a failure.
- Before you know it, the joy of their salvation has slipped away, for they are unaware of their position in Christ, their acceptance in the Beloved and the host of other spiritual blessings that are theirs. For lack of understanding of the Biblical truth, it is almost as if the struggles of the Christian Life cause the individual to think of what God has given them to be like getting a storage shed in the backyard—useful, but not anything to write home about!
- In reality, when you open the door of that shed, you begin to understand what God has given you. You don't find gold and jewels, but you discover the riches of every spiritual blessing in Christ.



- If, as a new believer, you could name one blessing that God has not yet given you, then you would nullify the Word of God, which cannot be done. If you think you can do anything so that God will provide additional spiritual blessing, that also would nullify this verse, which, again, cannot be done.
- Now to be clear, this is in no way to say that new believers are spiritually mature enough to appropriate everything that God has provided for them. But, every spiritual blessing is there, right at the outset, waiting to be appropriated by faith as new believers grow.

A Simple Test

Here is a simple test that will help you discern whether or not you are understanding the wonderful nature of our position in Christ. Which of these two options most accurately describes the Christian Life as designed by God?

Devotion —> Blessing
Or
Blessing —> Devotion

I am asking you to choose between two options:

- Is God telling us in His Word that, if we are first devoted enough, then He will provide blessing?
- Or, is He providing blessing first, and then calling us to devotion?

Ephesians 1:3 makes it very clear that He has provided blessing first, with the intent that we would grow into devotion. God bestows these blessings knowing full well that, at times, all of us will fail to be as devoted as we should be. Why does He do it this way? Because as the addition below shows, He is a God of grace, and has not placed His Church under Law!

Devotion —> Blessing (Law)
Or
Blessing —> Devotion (Grace)

Does God want us to be devoted in terms of our experience? Absolutely! But, given His indescribably amazing grace, He is prompting us to turn to Him in order to live that devoted life, in the same way we had to turn to Him in order to receive our salvation from hell to heaven! For the Christian Life is *by faith from first to last!* (Romans 1:17)

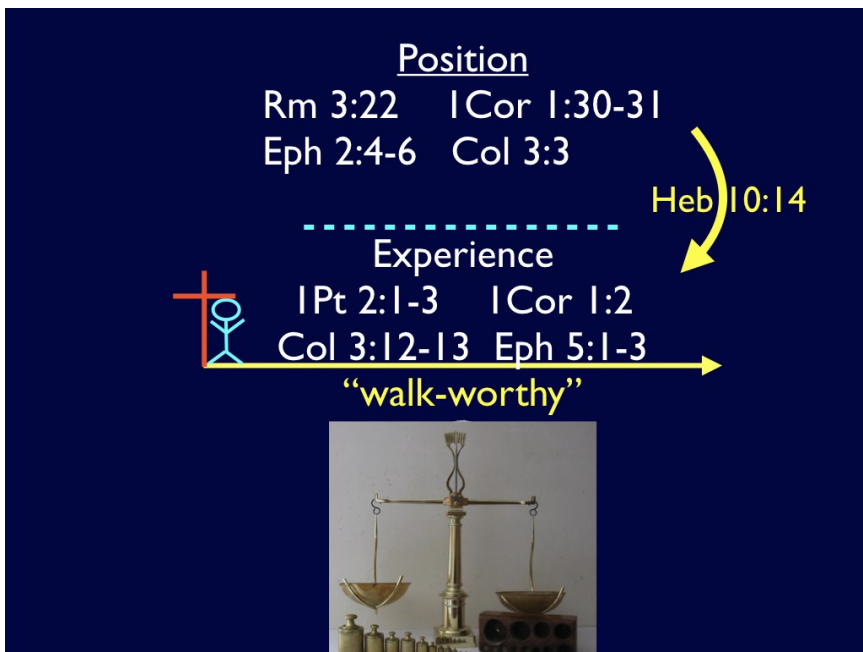
A Supernatural Life

It is only once we understand our position that we can fully understand the supernatural quality of the life to which we have been called.

. . . walk worthy of the calling you have received.

Ephesians 4:1

To understand the ramifications of this verse, you have to understand the flow of the book of Ephesians. The first half of the book focuses on all that the believer has positionally in Christ. It is not until you get to Chapter 4, that Paul begins to lay out specifics about what their experience



as Christians should look like. With that background, see if you can discern what that very first verse in Ephesians 4 is trying to communicate?

It is saying that Christians need to *walk* consistent with their position in Christ. This is even more powerful in the Greek language. The word translated *walk* is literally the steps you take, and in essence refers to the life you live. The word translated *worthy* is a market place term which deals with getting what you pay for. It is making it abundantly clear that the life of the Christian is to balance with his or her glorious position in Christ.

In other words, if the life you are living was put on one side of the balance, and the righteousness, holiness, and new life you have in Christ was put on the other side, would they be in perfect balance with each other? If they are not in balance, you need to appropriate what God provides to change your experience. That's not open to negotiation!

Let me further reinforce this from another passage in Ephesians, just a few verses later.

...put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:24

As Christians, we are to break with who we were in Adam before we were saved, and put on the new self. What is



this new self like? It's like God—truly righteous and truly holy!

Can you imagine what it must be like for a pole vaulter to look at a bar that is over 20 feet up in the air? In truth, jumping that bar is a trivial challenge compared to living a life that has a level of righteousness and holiness that is comparable to God's.



We Need the Grace of God

Far from trying to squeeze out every last drop of effort and sincerity, the above discussion is to cause us to realize we are in the same impossible situation as when we were lost individuals! We need the grace of God to *deliver* us from our hopeless condition. By that, I mean that there is no way we could ever hope to live up to the supernaturally high quality of life to which we have been called by means of our own strength—no matter how hard we try and how committed we might be!

One way to deal with this dilemma is to rationalize: "I've tried my hardest and God will just have to accept it! He can't expect me to be perfect." Yet my Bible says that our lives as Christian are to be lived in such a way that they are in perfect balance, perfect harmony, with who and what we are in Jesus Christ by virtue of our position in Him.

If you ask yourself, "How in the world am I going to live that quality of life?" Then, God has you right where He wants you—turning to Him in dependence for His grace to accomplish that to which He has called you! Although the specifics of that grace are not part of this lesson, they most certainly are going to be taught in future lessons.

Just to show you that God has promised to provide what we need to live a life set-apart (holy) to Him, compare and

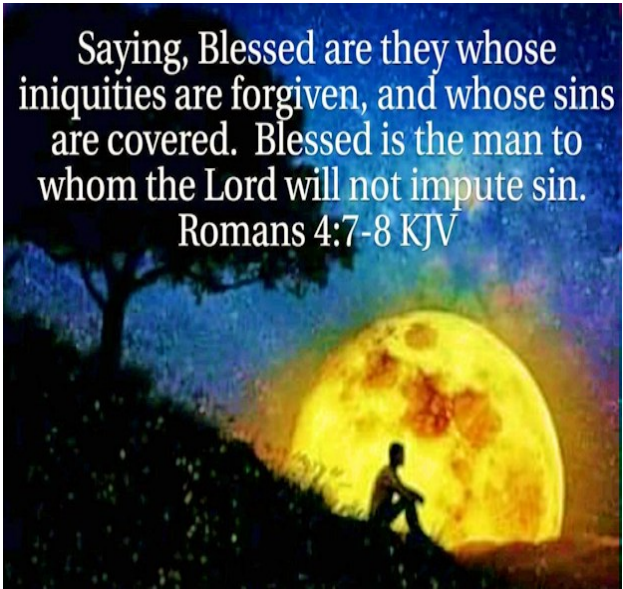
contrast these two verses of Scripture. We are going to choose one or the other.

For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. . . What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?
Romans 7:19, 24

May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.
I Thessalonian 5:23-24

Read the rest of Romans 7 if you would like more detail, but it is quite clear that even the Apostle Paul was not able to live the quality of life to which he felt called, try as he might. On the other hand, God is both capable and desirous of sanctifying us through and through.

It is this simple: should God sanctify us through and through, we will most certainly be *walking worthy* before Him! Just to make sure you don't miss the point: Who will do it? *He will do it!* As you can see, we have many important

A person is silhouetted while sitting on a dark, grassy hill. Behind them is a massive, bright yellow full moon that fills much of the sky. A faint rainbow is visible in the background, arching over the moon. The overall scene is atmospheric and contemplative.

Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.
Romans 4:7-8 KJV

truths to learn in future studies for we need to know what His Word has revealed about how we can cooperate with what God so clearly desires to do.

Summarizing What We Learned

Summarizing what we gleaned above: There is no maturing as a Christian until we reach the point of understanding our position in Christ, our call to balance it in our experience, and the truth that God is going to have to provide in order to achieve such a monumental calling. Until we understand this and grow into it, here are our only other options:

- We can try to rehabilitate the flesh through our own strength and learn over and over again that, upon the authority of God's Word, it cannot be rehabilitated!

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. . .

Roman 7:18

- We can become obsessively subjective while we try to improve self. In contrast, the Scriptures repeatedly call for us to *fix our eyes upon Jesus* (Hebrews 12:2), rather than on self.
- We can become so discouraged with our ongoing failure that we give up ever living a life that is anything like the descriptions of our position in Christ. If we do, it is not because the plan of God for a victorious Christian Life has failed. It is because we have failed to focus on living the Christian Life His way.

We are not going to deal with the *how* of conforming our experience with our position in this book. For now, the goal is to make you aware of the difference between your position and your experience. An understanding of the tension associated with trying to bring our experience into conformity with our position in Christ will whet your appetite for God's answers in future studies. Just so that you recognize it, this is the same kind of hunger for God's answers that occurred when we finally understood that we were sinners who couldn't save ourselves, and, therefore, needed a Savior.

One Final Caution

Be aware that there are those who dismiss the distinction between position and experience. They claim that if you have one then you *automatically* have the other. In other words, if you are in union with Christ, then the life you live will automatically conform to your exalted status. Well, let's see what the Scriptures have to say about this, starting with Abraham receiving the very righteousness of God, and thereby standing justified before Him:

Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6

Abraham certainly had a right standing before God, a standing provided by God Himself. But, let me ask you a few questions:

- Was Abraham experientially righteous when, in the next chapter of Genesis following his justification, he slept with Hagar, who was not his wife? Of course not!
- Was he experientially righteous when, in Genesis 20, he allowed Abimelech to take his wife into his harem by cowardly saying she was his sister? Again, of course not!
- However, during these experiential failures, did Abraham have his positional righteousness before God the entire time? The Scriptures never contradict this understanding. Further, Abraham is used as the standard for New Testament righteousness in Romans Chapter 4.

. . . Abraham is the father of all who believe. . . in order that righteousness might be credited to them.

Romans 4:11

If we have placed our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, it is not an experience of righteousness that is imputed to us, it is a position of righteousness. So then how do we obtain an experiential righteousness to match? Here

is part of the answer:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age. . .

Titus 2:11-12

The grace of God teaches us to live upright, experientially righteous, lives. What is God's grace? Among other things, it is the God-breathed, alive and powerful, Scriptures (the subject of Book 1) and the Holy Spirit (the subject of a future book).

In Closing

As we close, what have we discovered?

- In Christ, we have the most secure and blessed of positions. It is both secure and blessed because it is based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ and the grace of God, not upon what we have done or will do.
- As those in union with Christ, we also have the highest of callings to live as Christ would, to imitate God, to walk worthy of who and what we are in Christ!
- It should not take long for us to see the truth that living this kind of sanctified life is going to be just as much the work of God in our lives as was His justification of a lost sinner who turned to Him in faith. As we will see in future books, we will need the same faith that saved us to perpetuate our walk and that walk will be every bit as much the work of the cross!

Take the Word and drink deeply of the truths of your position in Christ. Marvel at the supernaturally high quality of life to which you and every child of God is called. Rather than being daunted by the challenge, let's continue on in our spiritual growth so that we might learn to appropriate all that God has provided for us as we progressively bring our experience into conformity with the gift of our position.

Frequently Asked Questions

Over the years, several questions have been raised by those seeking to understand Biblical truth on our subject of *Position Versus Experience*. So, I thought it might be a helpful addendum to this booklet to briefly address three of those questions.

1. **Can you give me a simple definition of my position?**

A believer's position is all that is theirs by virtue of their union with Jesus Christ!

Of course a little qualification might help further:

- There is no verse in the Bible that says you have a *position* in Christ. Instead, it says such things as:

God. . .made us alive with Christ. . .and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. . . Ephesians 2:4-6

We use the word *position* to speak of those things that God has given to us at the point of salvation: made us alive, raised us up, and seated us in heaven. We have these gifts solely because of the relationship we have with Christ after we turn to Him in faith. Note how the Scripture often says that we are *with Christ* and *in Christ Jesus*.

- Our union with Christ is the result of having trusted in Christ for eternal life, and God's work to transfer us from one kingdom to another.

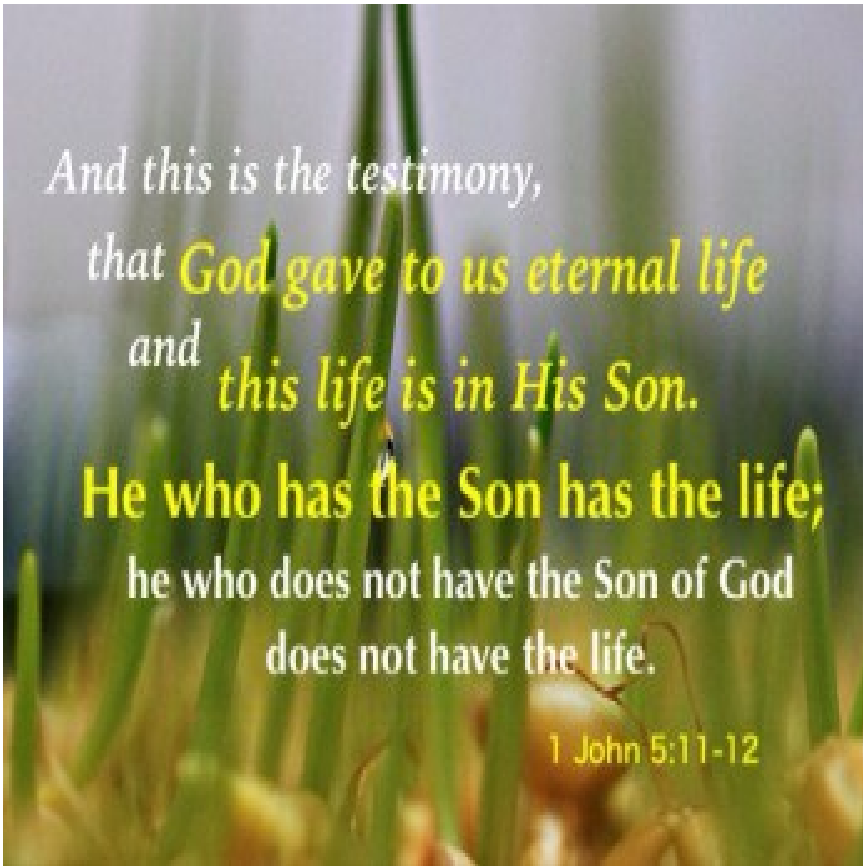
For He (God the Father) has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. . . Colossians 1:13-14

Once in the kingdom of the Son—through faith, we are intimately related to Him, starting with sharing His life:

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

I John 5:11

- Our position in Christ can be thought of as a forensic or legal standing that God has graciously given to us as part of His plan of salvation. Our unchanging position is a solid foundation from which to grow, recover from failure, and confidently look forward to the future. It is God's very, very precious gift to His children.



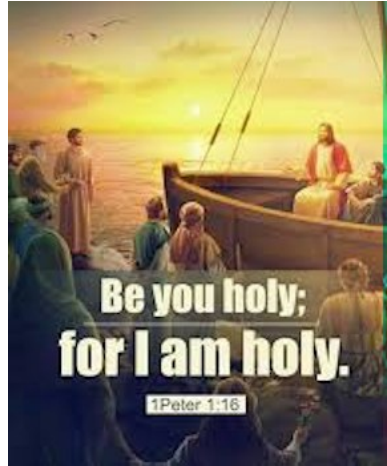
*And this is the testimony,
that **God gave to us eternal life**
and **this life is in His Son.***

He who has the Son has the life;
he who does not have the Son of God
does not have the life.

1 John 5:11-12

2. **Are there any examples of position and experience that might help me to understand this topic?**

We see aspects of position and experience in many other contexts. For example, as a child it was quite common in my home for my Mother to address some area of improper language or behavior on my part by saying, "Members of this family don't do (say) those kinds of things!" Of course this was followed by a more lengthy explanation of right and wrong. My improper behavior at the moment was my *experience*—and it needed improvement. Her appeal was to my standing (position) as a member of the family. By virtue of my position in the family, I was learning all about the standards of behavior that were in keeping with family legacy.



This is not a perfect illustration, but the Bible quite clearly lays out a variety of things that are part of our family standing (position) as the result of having become a child of God. Then the Bible goes to work on teaching us the need to conform our behavior to our standing, as well as showing us that God gives us the means to do so.

Note that our position in Christ is ours at the moment of faith in Christ. Bringing our experience into conformity with our position is a life-long pursuit.

3. **If I am struggling with doing what I know I should be doing (my experience), does that mean something is wrong with my position in Christ?**

It is very straight-forward to address the status of your position. If you have eternal life then you have a perfect position in Christ. You can know that you have eternal life and can be assured your position if you meet the following criteria:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:13

First things first: Have you placed your faith in the person and work of Christ? If you have, then you have a marvelous, unassailable, and permanent position *in Christ!*

But what about your experience? Why are you struggling? Spiritual growth is a challenge—even if we are doing the right things—like spending time studying our Bibles, sitting under teaching, and gathering with other believers for worship and fellowship. We cannot achieve spiritual growth unless we can identify and get rid of areas of sin. Usually our struggles relate to trying to do things our way rather than God's way.

That's what this series is about—teaching us, one step at a time, how to do things God's way. So keep on growing, and trust in the following:

. . .being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you (your salvation) will carry it on (spiritual growth) to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (our final glorification).

Philippians 1:6



Publications written and produced by

Vistoso Community Church

1200 E. Rancho Vistoso Blvd., Oro Valley, AZ 85755 ☎ 520 825-0652

Website: www.vistoso.org