

The Heavens

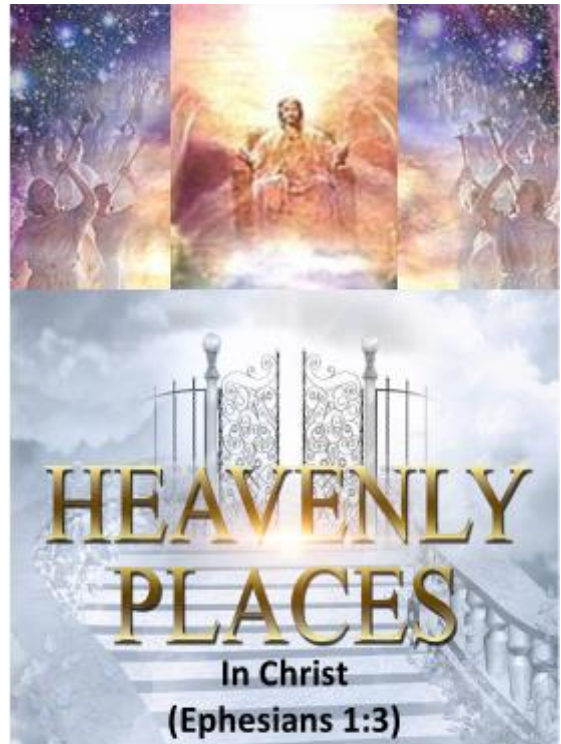
(Reflections on Union and Positional Truth)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

It's time for Christians to reengage their thinking on the Biblical teaching about their union and position in Christ. We need to revive this teaching in our churches today so that Christians have a better understanding and awareness of their saving and victorious position before God's throne and their life-changing union they can experience with Christ here on earth. Union and positional truth is the secret to possessing the assurance of salvation. This truth also gives us the reassurance of Christ's presence which enables us to live victoriously, fruitfully, and intimately with Christ who lives within us. As you begin to understand your position in Christ, you come to know WHO you are, WHERE you are, and WHAT you have in Him. Get ready for a new journey and a fresh start in life!

Ephesians 1:3 declares:

"Blessed (to celebrate with praises) **be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** (God the Father be praised and worshiped – doctrine leads to doxology - when we discover Who God is and what He has accomplished for us in His Son, we cannot help but praise and bless His holy name – Ps. 103:1-2), **who hath blessed us** (presently and perpetually – the Greek aorist tense – a past action with continuing results) **with all spiritual blessings** (all lifesaving and sanctifying treasures that can be defined as nonmaterial, invisible, imperishable, eternal - 2 Cor. 4:18 - and spiritual privileges or resources, which are possessed by every Christian in their present life, and which enables them to live an enriching, victorious and fulfilling life in relation to their spirits, minds, or bodies – “we are complete in him” – Col. 2:10 – “having nothing, and yet possessing all things” - 2 Cor. 6:10) **in heavenly places** (the heavenly or celestial realms as opposed to the earthly realm, a *physical* reference to the literal and local throne room of God's presence where Christ is enthroned and dwells – “and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” or literally “the heavens” - Eph. 1:20, but from our human



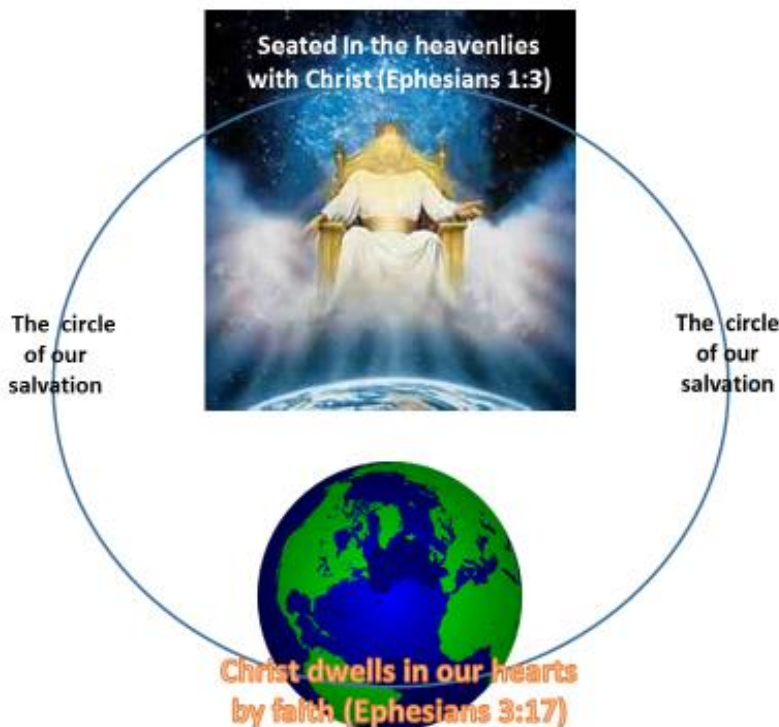
perspective “the heavenlies” is also a *spiritual* reference to an unseen or invisible world of supernatural and spiritual reality, which is occurring right now in Heaven for God hath “seated us with Him in heavenly places” as in Eph. 2:6 – according to God’s spiritual reckoning we are seated with Christ, related to Christ in Heaven, where we share Christ’s PLACE, POSITION, POSSESSIONS, PRIVILEGES, PERFECTIONS, and PROVISIONS for our salvation, sanctification, complete victory, authority, and all spiritual blessings!) **in Christ** (a spiritual location or place where the believer resides as they share Christ’s life in the heavenlies - our unalterable, unchanging, and everlasting position - a position from whence all of our spiritual possessions and riches reside in view of our union or togetherness with Christ in the heavenlies – However, in PRACTICE, being in Christ is also a positional union that we share with Christ and experience on an earthly level, as He lives within us on a moment-by-moment basis to sanctify our lives and share with us all of our heavenly blessings – Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17).

“Moment by moment I’m kept in His love;
Moment by moment I’ve life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.”

In Ephesians 1:3 Paul folds back the spiritual curtain within the “heavenlies” which is normally a place obscured from our view, a curtain that reveals God's behind-the-scenes provisions of His wonderful salvation plan. The term “heavenlies” in a general sense refers to the physical location of Christ within the throne room of Heaven (“set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” - Eph. 1:20) but the term “heavenly” or celestial (denoting the unseen world of spiritual realities) also refers more specifically to a spiritual location for the believer in Christ and the blessings they receive on a spiritual level of existence (“spiritual blessings” – Eph. 1:3) instead of a physical level of earthly existence.

The heavenlies connotes the place of Christ’s completed work (“when he had purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” - Heb. 1:3). It also points to Christ full authority and it’s from this spiritual position and union with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3, 20-21; 1 Pet. 3:22), reckoned to us by God the Father (in accordance with His accounting or records) that we share in all of the spiritual blessings that Christ has provided for us through His death and resurrection. In short, “we are saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10), His resurrected,

ascended, priestly, and shared life within the heavenlies (God’s throne room). In Ephesians 1:3 the expression “the heavenlies” points to the sphere of spiritual blessings in which believers participate with right now through their identification with Christ in Heaven. We must be positioned in the heavenlies before we can be saved and we must reckon ourselves to be in the heavenlies (“he hath blessed us in heavenly places” – Eph. 1:3) in order to experience the full blessings of our salvation which would include the many aspects of sanctification in the Christian life.



Our salvation must pass through the heavenlies before it can find its way into our hearts. This is because the heavenlies is the place where we share in the completed work of Christ (Col. 2:10) or the full spiritual benefits of Christ’s saving and transforming work. We must be spiritually united with Christ in the heavenlies in order for our salvation to take root in our hearts and lives down here on earth. Our new birth and every spiritual blessing is “from above” (John 3:3) and unless we are seated “in heavenly places in Christ”

(Eph. 1:3; 2:5) we cannot be saved. Our salvation is one big circle. We express faith in Christ while living on earth (Acts 16:31) and this sets in motion the transaction of salvation. Our faith takes us into the heavenlies. According to God’s spiritual reckoning, our faith in Christ moves us up to the heavenlies (the throne room of God where we are seated in Christ) and then finds its way back to earth, as Christ enters our heart by faith (Eph. 3:17), transferring His saving benefits and all of His spiritual wealth into our lives (Col. 3:4). As a result, our salvation is rooted in the heavenlies but it is transferred to our human heart and we are “born again” (literally – “born from above” - John 3:7), possessing God’s life, and in today’s dispensational working possessing all of Christ’s salvation and sanctifying blessings

in the heavenlies. Yes, “as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:10). Oh the wonder of it all! And the wonder of this transaction is brought out in this beautiful hymn of “Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul.”

“O what a wonderful, wonderful day, day I will never forget;
After I'd wandered in darkness away, Jesus my Savior I met.
O what a tender, compassionate friend, He met the need of my heart;
Shadows dispelling, with joy I am telling, He made all the darkness depart.

Born of the Spirit with life from above into God's family divine,
Justified fully thru Calvary's love, O what a standing is mine!
And the transaction so quickly was made, when as a sinner I came,
Took of the offer, of grace He did proffer, He saved me, O praise His dear name!

Heaven came down and glory filled my soul,
When at the cross the Savior made me whole;
My sins were washed away and my night was turned to day,
Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!”

In the immediate context, the phrase “all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3) refers to the specific blessings mentioned in Ephesians chapter one (adoption, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, inheritance, sealing). However, by extension, these blessings extend to all the spiritual blessings that Christ gives us because of our union with Him in the heavenlies. Every spiritual blessing that we have originates from the heavenlies which is where Christ is seated, declaring the finality of His finished work, through His death and resurrection, out of which flows all of our spiritual blessings – salvation, security, sanctification, satisfaction, spiritual intimacy with God, and complete spiritual sufficiency for daily living. Believers possess all these blessings in view of their spiritual and heavenly union with Christ. Everything originates from the heavenlies, which is the source of all our spiritual blessings, while everything is experienced on the earthly plain as we share Christ’s life within our hearts by faith (“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” - Eph. 3:17).

Ephesians 2:5-6 brings out this same truth about the heavenlies:

“**Even when we were dead in sins** (spiritually dead, separated from God’s life, a recipient of God’s wrath – Eph. 2:1-3), **hath quickened** (made us alive spiritually,

given us spiritual life, a new birth as in Col. 2:13), **(by grace ye are saved;)** **And hath raised us up together** (has brought us into a living union with the resurrected Christ – Rom. 6:4-5, 8 – bringing us out of spiritual death and unto spiritual life), **and made us sit together** (sharing a spiritual union with Jesus Christ as He sits on the throne – Col. 3:1; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22) **in heavenly places** (literally “the heavenlies” – the location of Christ in the physical throne room of Heaven – Eph. 1:20, but also a sphere of spiritual existence with Christ, a place that exists in the unseen spiritual realm where each believer shares an invisible relationship with Christ and from whence all their spiritual blessings of the Christian life originate – Eph. 1:3) **in Christ Jesus** (the believer’s position before God’s throne which is essentially a spiritual location that involves sharing Christ’s POWER, PRIVILEGES, PERFECTIONS, POSSESSIONS and complete PROVISION for our lives, a position that is actually put into PRACTICE and experienced in our daily union with Christ on earth, who dwells in our hearts - Gal. 2:20).

These verses reveal that the “heavenly places” (celestial places) does refer to the locality of the throne room of Heaven. The Bible teaches that Christ has “passed into the heavens” (Heb. 4:14) which means He passed through the atmospheric and stellar heavens, the heavenly regions where Satan and demons now reside (Eph. 6:12), and completed His ascent (Acts 1:9-11) into the third celestial Heaven where He now dwells in the presence of the Father (Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). The Bible says that God the Father raised Christ from the dead “and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:20). It’s within this very throne room of Heaven (the Holy of Holies of God’s presence – Heb. 10:19-20) where the believer finds full acceptance before God and complete spiritual provision in Christ. This is because we share a living and vital union with Jesus Christ in the heavenlies. From the believer’s vantage point, the heavenlies, although a literal place where Christ dwells, is also an invisible world of spiritual reality that is presently being displayed and played out before God’s throne, where the child of God is seated in Christ (Eph. 2:6). This is the wonder of grace! According to God’s spiritual reckoning, the believer is positioned or seated in the heavenly Christ, sharing His life and nature, and has become the recipient of all the spiritual blessings that He grants to His beloved children.

We often sing “Lord plant my feet on higher ground” but many times we do not go high enough! We forget about our heavenly position in Christ within the very throne room of Heaven, where we possess a shared spiritual union with Christ and have

been granted complete authority and victory over sin and Satan. Psalm 121:1 declares, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.” The temple in Jerusalem was the dwelling place of God on earth and the city of Jerusalem is situated on a mountain and is surrounded by mountains. So when a Jew in other parts of Israel needed divine help, he looked toward the hills. To him this was the same as looking to the Lord. Since the Creator’s dwelling in the temple was in the Jerusalem hills, there was a poetic sense in which all help came from the hills. Today, under the New Covenant blessing of grace, we look much higher and the place we look to is on a much grandeur scale. Today we can look all the way into the throne room of God and see ourselves seated with Christ, sharing His life and receiving all of our heavenly blessings from Him.

When we speak of our union, position, standing, or identification with Christ and in Christ, we are attempting to use manmade words to describe Scriptural truths and spiritual realities. Therefore, various authors when speaking on the Biblical subject of being “in Christ” have used these different words interchangeably. I will also at times interchange these words, while at times emphasize a specific point about one of the words, such as our “standing in Christ” which actually originates from our shared union, identification, and position in Christ. Many times there is an overlapping of these terms as we talk about being “in Christ.” We might speak about our union with Christ while at the same time being positioned in Christ which really convey the same thing about the glorious truth of our shared relationship or togetherness with Christ. In summary, God in some marvelous way reckons us to be living within Heaven, sharing Christ’s life, and being a possessor of all the spiritual wealth that is transferred to us through His Son (Eph. 1:3).

Our salvation can be summed up in the prepositional phrase “in Christ” (Rom. 8:1-2, 39; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1) speaks of our spiritual UNION that we share with Christ and our POSITION or STANDING of legal acquittal and judicial righteousness in the presence of God. Being “in Christ” refers primarily to a spiritual location of existence, where we are IDENTIFIED with Christ in Heaven, sharing Christ’s life and the spiritual blessings that flow from His saving and sanctifying work. Paul said in Philippians 3:9, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”



When we are in Christ we also share His life every day in our Christian experience and walk (Gal. 2:20) but we also share His position of acceptance before the Father's throne. Our union and position in Christ, which is the source of our Christian life, is perfect and never changes (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:1). It is eternally established in the Father's presence in view of our acceptance in Christ's perfections and saving work. Although our *position* never varies, the *condition* of our Christian walk can change. We should never confuse our condition with our position. In fact, we need to stay focused on our Christ-centered position in Christ if we are going to live fruitfully and victoriously in life (Col. 3:1).

The new position of being "in Christ" began on the Day of Pentecost for New Testament believers (Acts 1:5; 2:47; 5:14; 11:15-16), it continues to be experienced by every believer at the time of their conversion (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5), and it is symbolically represented when a believer is baptized in water and represents the Spirit's baptism into Christ (Rom. 6:1-6). Water baptism pictures the believers' union with Christ that takes place at salvation. Water baptism is only a picture of this reality. It symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to a new way of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

It must be understood that the believer's position in Christ is always portrayed as PERFECT and PERMANENT ("this grace wherein we stand" – Rom. 5:2; "he that is dead" – Rom. 6:7; "I have been crucified with Christ" – Gal. 2:20; "accepted in the beloved" – Eph. 1:6) because it rests upon what God has done and continues to provide for each believer. Think of it. Our position is as perfect and permanent as Christ is within the heavenlies! At the very moment we express faith in Christ, we are spiritually united or joined to Christ and we begin to share an unending union with Christ "who is our life" (Col. 3:4). We come into a relationship with Christ (Rom. 7:4) where we are joined together forever. Yes, together forever! Legalism or human effort does not get us into Christ nor does it keep us in Christ. Nothing we do will ever cause us to create this "in Christ" position. It is solely based upon grace (Rom. 5:2). The words such as "unblameable (faultless and without blame) and unproveable (unaccused) in his sight" (Col. 1:22) and "faultless" before the throne of God (Jude 24) speak of being judicially perfect as to our position before God. In Christ we have a perfect and eternal position of acceptance within the very throne room of God.

We also have God's unconditional love and acceptance because we are "in Christ" sharing His life and receiving the spiritual benefits that He has graciously bestowed upon us. The Bible says that no physical or spiritual entity, not anything "shall be able to separate us from the love God, which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:39). God forgives, accepts, and loves us unconditionally as His child because we have a legal position of forgiveness and acceptance before God in the saving merits of Jesus Christ. This blessed positional truth should be very practical and precious to our hearts. God loves me even when I sin and break fellowship with Him. God loves me in spite of my failures and imperfections even as a Father loves his own child in spite of his imperfections. In fact, God loves us even when He must chasten us (Heb. 12:6). God will never stop loving us as His child for we will always be His child because of our position in Christ, His beloved Son. As His Son is beloved (Eph. 1:6), so we are beloved!

"The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.
O love of God, how rich and pure,
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song! "

When the believing sinner is "in Christ" he receives a POSITIONAL STANDING OF ACCEPTANCE and a PEACEFUL relationship before the throne of God in Heaven (Romans 5:1-2) and this occurs because the believer has been brought into a vital and spiritual UNION with Christ (sharing in His death, resurrection life, and ascended victory – Romans 6:1-15; Eph. 1:19-23).

Colossians 3:1-4 shares this similar truth of our union with Christ in Heaven:

"If ye then be risen with Christ (resurrection presupposes ascension with Christ – this is our union with Christ's resurrection as in Rom. 6:8, which takes us into the very throne room of God – "the heavnlies" – the place of our POSITION and SOURCE of all our spiritual blessings – Eph. 1:3), **seek those things which are above** (this is explained by the next phrase – "where Christ sitteth" – and suggests that we are to actively seek after, stay mentally focused, meditate, and desire those things related to Christ – His character, His victory and authority over all evil forces, His will, ways, purposes, insights, and ambitions for our life, and in general we

should inquire and learn of the spiritual POSITION, POWER, POSSESSIONS, PRIVILEGES, and PROVISIONS that we share with Christ in the heavenlies and actively apply them to our personal lives), **where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God** (God the Father – 1 Pet. 3:22). **Set your affection** (your mind, focus, interests) **on things above** (the “above things” would again relate to focusing our attention on our positional, provisional and privileged spiritual blessings that we have through Christ, tapping in to all of Christ’s accomplishments for us, and reflecting on His heavenly character presence, authority, victories, and ways for our life instead of giving attention to earthly things which distract us from our spiritual riches and living). **For** (the reason is now stated for focusing on the heavenly things related to Christ) **ye are dead** (our union with Christ’s death to our old way of living under sin’s power – Rom. 6:6-8, 11; Gal. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:11 - in view of our heavenly union with Christ, we have died with Christ, and have been given a positional victory over self, sin, and the sinful disposition – Rom. 6:6-7, 8 - there has been a drastic and decisive end to our old life), **and your life** (our union in Christ’s resurrection and ascension to a new way of life – Rom. 6:4, 8, 11; Col. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:11) **is hid** (indicating *safety* from self, sin, and Satan in Christ’s complete provision of victory for our life, but it also points to *secrecy* or concealment which is a life that is unseen, not known, or understood by the unsaved world) **with Christ in God** (our union “with Christ” also means that we have been raised and united to the living Christ, who Himself is in union with God the Father, sharing the Trinitarian Oneness of God, and it is in Christ that we are sharing His life and nature, so we can live victoriously by His transferred authority and power). **When Christ, who is our life** (our new life comes after our death - the believer shares Christ’s life because of his living union with Christ’s resurrection life and we have received His implanted divine nature - Gal. 2:20; 2 Pet. 1:4 - and as a result Christ has now become our SALVATION, SOURCE, SUSTENANCE, SANCTIFICATION, and SUFFICIENCY for our Christian life – the focus of our aspirations and reason for our existence, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, the Fairest of Ten Thousand to our souls!), **shall appear** (the Rapture of the Church), **then shall ye also appear with him in glory** (our new life in God is for the time being, hidden, just as Christ is hidden for now from our eyes, but some day we will experience the outward display of God’s moral and visible glory in our newly redeemed bodies - Phil. 3:20-21 - when we are made in the image of God and possess a body like the Lord Jesus Christ – 1 John 3:2).

"Christ, who is our life" (Col. 4:4) does not mean that Christ and Christians are of the same in essence, as are the Father and the Son (John 10:30). As mentioned

above, it means that the life of Christ is the SALVATION, SOURCE, SUSTAINER, and SANCTIFICATION and total SPIRITUAL SUFFICIENCY for our life. Union “with Christ” (Col. 3:1) produces a moral and spiritual change in the believer that can be likened only to death, burial, and resurrection. Paul repeats this over and over again in his writings (Rom. 6:1-8; Col. 1:1-3; 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:11; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). Our old unregenerate person has died and been buried but a new regenerate person has emerged which lives in union with the risen Lord. We have passed through this life-transforming transaction because of our union “with Christ” (sharing in Christ’s death and life within the heavenlies before the throne room of God), where today our “life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). The Greek word for “hid” indicates that God has accomplished this in the past so that it is a present reality. The term “hid” (hidden) implies shelter, safety, security and sanctification in relation to our complete deliverance from self, sin, and Satan. A life hidden in Christ who is seated at the right hand of God is completely secure. This means that no spiritual entities or powers can ever bring the Christian ultimate harm. The Christian has no need to surrender to any spiritual power that is against Christ since they are secure and given complete victory in Christ.



The eminent Greek scholar, Dr. A.T. Robertson, comments on this: “So here we are in Christ who is in God, and no burglar, not even Satan himself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:31–39).” This phrase “hid with Christ in God” denotes the safety and victory of God’s children, being out of the reach of any enemy, sin, Satan, and the world, since we share Christ’s saving, risen, victorious, and exalted life in Heaven. In a more general way, being hidden “with Christ” in the heavenlies would reflect on all the spiritual riches we have in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Possessing this unalterable union with Christ, who is God, means that we receive all the spiritual blessings that Christ provides for us through His sacrificial death and resurrection, which not only results in complete and eternal acceptance before God’s throne but a victorious position over sin and Satan.

We're spiritually united with Christ in the heavenlies, which means our thoughts and attitudes should be constantly drawn upward, not downward (Col. 3:2). Colossians 3:1-3 instructs us to concentrate on the spiritual realities taking place in

Heaven, where we share Christ's life, and not to become focused on temporal things on earth. Our heavenly union with Christ means that we should concentrate on His character, His holiness, and seek to honor and glorify God in whom we hide. Our minds should be focused on honorable, right, and excellent things (Phil. 1:10; 4:8) which are related to Christ, who is exalted at God's right hand, above all others (Phil. 2:9-11).

The Greek verb for "set" emphasizes an ongoing decision. Christians must continually discipline themselves to focus on the eternal importance of their shared life with Christ in the heavenlies, instead of the temporary things of this world which are passing away (1 John 2:17). A Christian's life should no longer be dictated by this world (Rom. 12:2). Since our life is hidden with Christ in God in the heavenlies, we should revolve our life around Christ's character, the spiritual blessings He has provided for us, such as victory and transformed living, and follow His purpose and will for our life.

As we will repeatedly note in this study, it must be understood that our heavenly union is experienced and realized on a daily basis, through our earthly union with Christ, who lives within each child of God to share His life and spiritual blessings with us (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5). Our union with Christ is a place of POSITION, PROVISION, PRIVILEGE, POWER, PERFECTION, PROTECTION, and PERSONAL fellowship. Every spiritual blessing that we have originates from our union with Christ. Our union with Christ is the source or spring from which every spiritual blessing flows into our life (Phil. 1:26; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 13; Col. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:1) so that we can personally conclude "That in every thing ye are enriched my him" (1 Cor. 1:2). The Biblical concept and teaching of our heavenly position in Christ (Eph. 1:3) and union or togetherness with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6) overlap in many ways and essentially are referencing the same spiritual truth and transaction that occurred at our salvation. Actually, our position flows out of our union with Christ but both as inseparably bound together within the heavenlies.

Being “in Christ” speaks of a union with Christ and new positioning in Him. It might be compared to a baby living inside the womb of a mother. When a person is in Christ they share the life of Christ and everything that Christ offers to them, even as a mother would provide the life-giving nutrients to her baby that lives inside her womb. As the mother provides for all the needs of the baby, so Christ provides for every one of our needs when we share this new union and position in Christ. Jesus spoke of this union and position in John 14:20 when He said, “ye in me, and I in you.” In John 6:56 Jesus also said that His children “dwelleth in me, and I in him” and John repeated what Jesus taught in 1 John 3:24 when he said: “And he that keepth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.” Later he writes that “we are in him” (1 John 5:20). The familiar passage of John 15:5 echoes the same truth of our “in Christ” position and union: “He that abideth (lives) in me, and I in him, the same shall bring forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” In John 17:23 He again states: “I in them.”



Romans 3:24 confirms our justified position in Christ:

“Being justified (God’s reckoning, accounting, and declaring the believer legally righteous instead of guilty as in Rom. 3:19) **freely** (without law, works, or legalism) **by his grace** (God’s benevolence or kindness) **through the redemption** (ransoming and releasing us from sin’s penalty or judgment – Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14 which stems from the retribution of God’s righteous wrath) **that is in Christ Jesus”** (our position in Christ results in the believer receiving the spiritual blessings of justification and redemption which are transferred to us in view of our saving union with God’s Son).

Romans 5:1-2 adds:

“Therefore being justified (having been declared judicially acquitted and righteous in the presence of God) **by faith** (in Jesus Christ), **we have peace with God** (a peaceful standing of acceptance before God – not a feeling of peace but a state of peace - God’s wrath is appeased and we are no longer His enemy – Col. 1:21, God has nothing against me, the Father is satisfied with Christ’s sacrifice, God is therefore at rest about us forever) **through our Lord Jesus Christ** (His saving work): **By whom also we have access** (acceptance into God’s presence – “into the holiest” - Heb. 10:19) **by faith** (placing our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior) **into this grace** (not law) **wherein we stand** (our position of acceptance

before God in Christ, a position given to us by God’s grace and which allows us to stand in God’s favor), **and rejoice in hope of the glory of God**” (not merely the hope of witnessing God’s glory someday in Heaven but actually entering into our glorified state, glorified together with Christ, as is stated in Romans 8:17, Col. 3:4 and John 17:22).

The phrase “this grace in which we stand” is portraying our position “in Christ.” It speaks of our spiritual realm of existence in the heavenlies, where we are seen in all of the perfections of Christ. When we are saved, we are transferred to the heavenlies, and God the Father sees us seated or positioned in God the Son which is likened to existing in

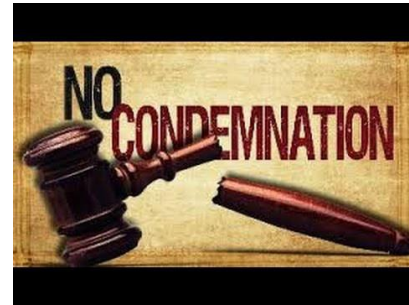


a state of God’s grace. Our present position in relation to God “in Christ” is based on His continual working of grace. When a sinner believes on Christ to be his Savior, this individual is placed or positioned in Christ and the Father sees this person as perfect and permanent as Christ is in Heaven. In short, we have full access and acceptance in God’s presence forever. This is because we are in Christ, united to Him, which means we have been given His righteousness and all the spiritual blessings related to salvation (Eph. 1:3). This is the wonder of grace. As Charles Spurgeon used to say, “It’s all of grace.” As a result of our standing of justification, our legal declaration of righteousness in Christ before the Father’s presence, we have a peaceful relationship restored with God (Rom. 5:1). The war is over! God accepts us fully, finally, and forever. We are at peace before God. God is no longer angry at us.

“I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood;
I see the mighty Sacrifice,
And I have peace with God.
“‘Tis everlasting peace,
Sure as Jehovah’s name;
’Tis stable as His stedfast throne,
For evermore the same.
“My love is oftentimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same,
No change Jehovah know.”

Romans 8:1 deals with our salvation in Christ:

“There is therefore now (right now and forever) no condemnation (no judicial sentence by God that we must experience His wrath and judgment for our sin as an unsaved person) **to them which are in Christ Jesus** (the *position* of saved people – a position of judicial pardon and acquittal in God’s presence because of our salvation), **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”** (the *practice* of saved people who are walking in accordance with their position of their complete salvation from sin’s penalty and power – the full spectrum of their salvation or deliverance found in Christ).



In this verse, the practice flows out of the position (one’s salvation from the penalty and power of sin); the practice does not create the position (one’s salvation). This is an amazing revelation of God’s grace! When we are placed or positioned in Christ, God looks at us and says, “I have no record that anything has gone wrong!” God sees us justified, or as someone once said, “Just as if we have never sinned.” No condemnation in Christ! Ever! Furthermore, as one of His children, I begin to practice my position of deliverance and salvation from a state of condemnation. As a sinner once bound to the penalty and power of sin in my unregenerate state, I am now being delivered from sin’s power and living a transformed life by the Spirit’s transforming work. Paul moves from position to practice. We see this many times in Pauline writings (Eph. 4:24-30; Col. 3:10).

2 Timothy 2:10 also speaks of our salvation in Christ:

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

Ephesians 2:13 adds:

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off (from God) are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (brought into a positional nearness to God).

To be saved means to be “in Christ” for it’s our position in Christ (being identified with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection life - Rom. 6:1-8; Gal. 2:20; 3:27; 5:24; Col. 2:20; 3:1-32, 2 Timothy 2:11-13) which results in every believer receiving all of His saving benefits and possessing full and final acceptance in God’s presence forever (“are made nigh” or near to God – possess a peaceful relationship with God

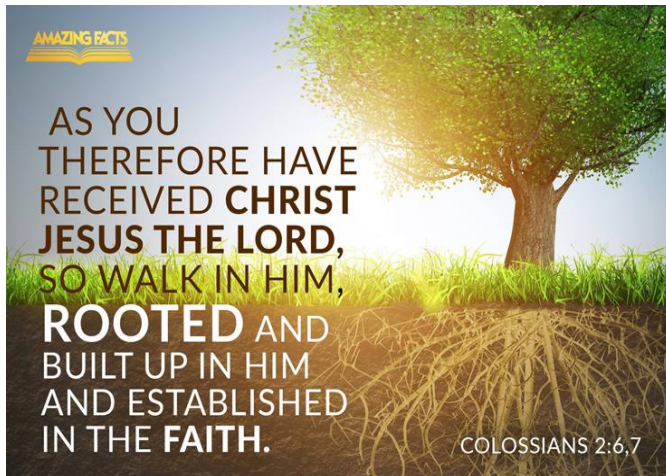
and access into His presence). Salvation comes into our life when we are united to Christ and receive all the spiritual benefits provided for us through His death, resurrection, and ascension. Many Christians view Christ as a Savior outside of them but Christ is actually a Savior who dwells inside of every Christian (“Christ in you, the hope of glory” – Col. 1:27). You cannot be “in Christ” without having “Christ in you” (Phil. 1:27). Union truth means that we dwell in Christ and Christ dwells in us. This is a permanent position based upon grace.

Because of our union and position we have in Christ, we not only receive everything that we need for salvation and acceptance before God, we also enjoy Christ’s complete provision for living a sanctified, victorious, and fruitful life that is pleasing to God. This study will reveal that our heavenly union and position in Christ is experienced and enjoyed by our earthly union with Christ as He lives within our hearts (“Christ liveth in me” – Gal. 2:20). Christ in the heavenlies is one thing but Christ in our hearts (“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” – Eph. 3:17) is another dimension of our position in Christ and union with Him.

The *heavenlies* (our union with Christ before God’s throne) is the basis and security of everything we have in Christ but the *earthlies* (our union with Christ in our daily living on earth) is how we get to enjoy and experience the full blessings of our heavenly position. Of course, all of our wonderful and spiritual blessings are derived from our exalted position in Heaven “in Christ” (Eph. 2:6) but they are experienced during a lifetime on earth. This means that the heavenlies must get down to the earthlies. Being “in Christ” should not be merely some religious experience that is divorced from the rest of our life and living. Being “in Christ” is used with virtually every aspect of our Christian living. This is especially true as it relates to our fruitfulness and fellowship with Christ.

Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4). The abiding relationship with Christ is speaking about our sanctifying union with Christ. It’s only as we experience this “in me” and “I in you” relationship with Christ that we can grow and mature in our Christian life (2 Pet. 3:18).





Miles Stanford has written: “We have been in this risen position ever since our new birth. As we come to realize this truth and to ‘stand in our standing’ in Him, we begin to experience the daily benefits of our life that is hid with Christ in God. Our attitude becomes, ‘I see my position in the Lord Jesus, and I abide there; I rest in Him, not only as my Savior, but as my life.’ Faith in our position

will bring growth in our condition.” In other words, as we realize our victorious position in the heavenlies in Christ and live in reliance upon the indwelling Christ, our union with Him down here on earth, we will cultivate Christlikeness and fruit and become “rooted and build up in him” (Col. 2:7) and “until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19), or as we become more like Christ, as a result of our lifelong and ongoing relationship with His indwelling presence.

Living “together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5-6) in the heavenlies (sharing His resurrection life in the throne room of God) and being “in Christ” portray the same truth. The word “together” and the *doctrine of togetherness* repeatedly reminds us how each believer enjoys our spiritual and heavenly blessings because of our union with Christ. The word “partakers” also indicates how the believer shares the life of Christ and experiences all of the saving and sanctifying benefits that flows from our position (Col. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 12:10). It is not always easy to distinguish between the believer’s togetherness with Christ in the heavenlies (our standing before God’s throne) and his togetherness and experience with Christ as He lives within the believer (our state on earth).

However, both are important. Our heavenly union and position can only be enjoyed and experienced as a result of Christ’s life within (“Christ liveth in men” - Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). The one compliments the other.

We actually are to live in two worlds – our union and standing with the heavenly

Standing Before God
“In heavenly places in Christ”
 (Ephesians 1:3)



State on Earth
“Christ liveth in me”
 (Galatians 2:20)

Christ (Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:1-2) and our union and state on earth with the indwelling Christ (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27). Based upon our “in Christ” relationship with Him in the heavenlies (our standing before God’s throne) we have full salvation, authority, and victory, but based upon our “in Christ” relationship with Him on earth (our state) we can experience the blessings of our salvation and sanctification in Christ, and also have a deepening fellowship with Christ. There is a bridge between the believer’s association or position in Christ within the heavenlies and living in Christ here on earth. To state it simply, we not only have a heavenly position in Christ but also an earthly Companion in Christ!



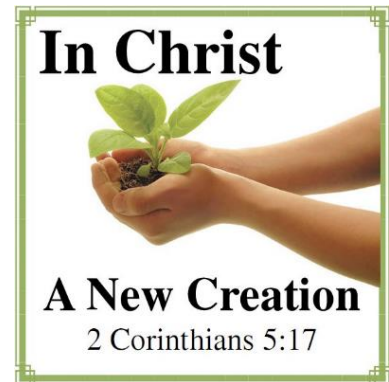
“I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.
And He walks with me,
and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.”

Union with Christ is the foundation of communion with Christ (John 15:1-4; Phil. 3:10). The deeper life is possible. It is based on a believer’s life-changing union with Christ and the fellowship derived and experienced from this union. Each New Testament believer shares a spiritual union with Christ which has a profound impact on their Christian life but they also possess a position of legal acceptance in Heaven because they are linked to Christ’s life. The phrase “In Christ” is repeated many times and is always attributed to New Testament saints (Rom. 3:24; 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30-31; 2 Cor. 2:14; 5:17; Gal. 1:22; 2:4; 3:28; 5:1; Eph. 1:1, 3, 6; 2:6, 10, 13; 2:13; Phil. 1:1; 3:1, 9; 4:1, 4, 21; Col. 1:2, 8, 23, 28; 2:6-7; 11; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14; 4:16; 2 Tim. 1:1, 19; 2 Tim. 2:1; 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:14; 1 John 5:20; Jude 1).

When we believe on Christ (Acts 16:31), we are united to Christ and positioned in Christ by the sovereign and saving work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). In short, being seated in the “heavenlies” or heavenly places is speaking of the believer’s exalted spiritual position in Christ, his daily association or identification with the risen Christ in Heaven, as a result of his being united to Christ by the baptism of the Spirit (Romans 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). The Holy Spirit joins us to the living Christ and we

immediately become a new creation by sharing Christ's life, nature, and victory not only in the heavenlies but within our own human spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17 speaks about the believer becoming a new creature in Christ: "Therefore if any man be in Christ (this means we actually share Christ's life and nature through a living and dynamic union with Him) he is a new creature (a new and fantastic creation of God because we now possess new life, a new nature, new drives, and a new determination to live a holy life): old things are passed away (we have been severed from our past position in Adam and slavery to sin with all of its dominating and empowering effects in our life); behold, all things are become new" (our present union with Christ with all of the newfound spiritual blessings of freedom, liberty, victory, a new nature, and new desires, which we now possess as a result of our new life with Christ).



a. WHAT WE ARE = a new creature (creation)

This is talking about our new union we share with Christ. It is speaking of an instant positional change from what we used to be in Adam (an unregenerate person who possessed a position of spiritual death and bondage to sin). This is not talking about an automatic change and departure from every area of our sinful life. The gradual change (progressive sanctification) happens over many years (2 Cor. 3:18). However, we are a "new creature" (creation) or "a new creature" (Gal. 6:15) as a result of the new birth, which comes about when we begin to share Christ's new life at the time of our new birth (John 3:3). In the new birth, we are immediately given Christ's life and nature and therefore are removed from the spiritual realm of existence in Adam as an unregenerate person (the old man), living under sin's power and separated from God, to being a regenerated new person (the new man) who in Christ has been transferred into a new spiritual realm of existence, possessing Christ's risen life.

Colossians 2:13 explains the glorious transaction in this way:

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together (make alive) with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

The story of our life is that we were born again or made alive spiritually when we were united “with him” which occurred when we placed faith in Christ and began to share in His resurrection life. At the moment we are regenerated, we receive the divine or Godlike nature (2 Peter 1:4) which also brings us into a new position of freedom from sin (“that ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”). All of this occurs instantaneously when we are joined to the living Christ and born again and possess forever as a result of our union with Christ. The Bible says we are “a new creature.” We become a brand new person in view of our union with the risen Christ since His very own life, nature, and power are transferred to us and we now “live with Him” (Rom. 6:8).

b. WHAT HAPPENED = “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”

When we become a new creation (a new regenerate person linked to the living Christ) the Bible says “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). This is speaking of a change from our old position “in Adam” (1 Cor. 15:22) under sin’s power to a new transforming and victorious union with Christ. We are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Yes, we become a new creation. We are not reformed but regenerated and totally remade into a new person. We were given new life, a new nature, and a new outlook on life because we were transferred from our past position as a slave in Adam to a new position of freedom and transformation in Christ.

Upon believing in Christ to be our Savior, we immediately were brought into a spiritual union with Christ and began to share His resurrection life. In this moment of glorious transaction, we were transferred from our position of slavery in Adam to our new victorious union with the living Christ. This is actually an instantaneous transaction that occurs at the moment of salvation and is something that is progressively realized and experienced the rest of our lives through the process of sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). We used to sing:

“Tis done, the great transaction’s done
I am my Lord’s and He is mine.
He drew me and I followed on
Charmed to confess His voice divine.”

You are familiar with the expression, “Out with the old and in with the new!” This is the story of our salvation (Col. 3:9). It’s the story of what took place when we saved and became a Christian.

1. Out with the old – “old things are passed away”

What are the old things that passed away when we began to share Christ’s life and were born again? The Bible is talking about our old position in Adam immediately passing away when we are born again, along with our enslavement to the many dominating and empowering effects of sin which once kept us in bondage. The old person we used to be in our unregenerate state and under the power of sin, with all of the previous, old enslavements to sin, was in one sense “crucified” (Rom. 6:6) or taken out of the way, rendered inactive, when we became a new person “in Christ” (possessing a new spiritual union with Him). We were taken out of our old unregenerate position and state and released from our previous position under sin’s power. Romans 6:6 states: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Colossians 3:9 proclaims, “That you have put off the old man with his deeds.” This is something that happened at our conversion. It’s a done deal! It’s finished!

2. In with the new – “all things become new”

This is something that occurs at the moment we were saved. It’s not something that happens progressively throughout our lives. The very moment we are saved “all things become new.” In other words, we are forever removed from the old position of slavery to sin and are now given a new victorious position in Christ and receive all of His spiritual blessings (“with all spiritual blessings” - Eph. 1:3). Through faith in Christ, we have been completely severed from our previous position of separation from God (in Adam) and from the old person we used to be under the old dominating effects of sin.

This deliverance occurs when we are placed “in Christ” which is a reference to our new spiritual union with Christ, whereby we receive His new life and new nature, which includes new holy ambitions, goals, incentives, and an entirely new belief system, which flows forth from Christ’s life within. All of this is implanted within us at the moment of our new birth (1 John 3:9). Of course, it’s this new life and nature

that we must yield to and experience within our daily lives as Christians, so we might live victoriously and differently (Romans 6:12-14).

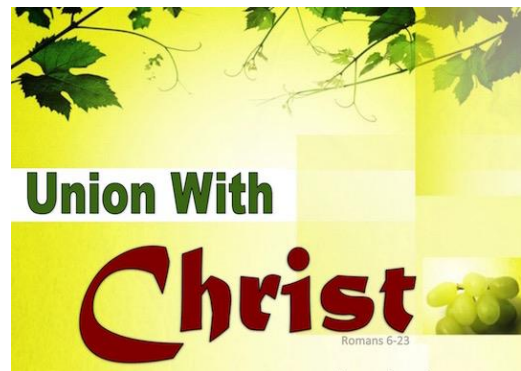
“New life in Christ, Abundant and free!
What glories shine, What joys are mine,
What wondrous blessings I see.
My past with its sin, The searching and strife,
Forever gone there’s a bright new dawn
For in Christ I have found new life.”

When evangelist D.L. Moody described his conversion experience, he said: “I was in a new world. The next morning the sun shone brighter and the birds sang sweeter ... the old elms waved their branches for joy, and all nature was at peace.” Life in Christ is abundant life (John 10:10).



When we are placed in Christ within the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3) and experience this new spiritual union with Him, all of Christ’s *saving* (Rom. 3:24; 8:1-2, 39; 1 Cor. 1:30; 12:13; Phil. 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:10; 3:12, 15; 1 John 5:20; Jude 1) and *sanctifying* spiritual blessings (Romans 6:1-15) are transferred to us – salvation, redemption, forgiveness, justification, reconciliation before God, sanctification, and victory. Our POSITIONAL acceptance before God in Christ is referred to as standing in grace (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:12) for it is based solely upon God’s gracious work.

Our shared UNION with Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension is specifically referred to as living “under grace” (Rom. 6:14-15) which enables us to live in victory and deliverance from the old person we used to be under sin’s power and mastery. Our position in Christ’s death and resurrection and living in union with Christ to experience daily sanctification is also an expression of God’s



grace and kindness toward the believing sinner. Because the Christian possesses this new union and position “in Christ” we are delivered from the old way of life

("Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness" - Col. 1:13 & "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world – Gal. 1:4).

Here is one way to view our spiritual union and togetherness with Christ.

- (1) "With Christ"— ye died from the rudiments of the world – Col. 2:20
- (2) "With Him"— buried in baptism – Col. 2:12
- (3) "With Him"— risen through faith of the operation of God – Col. 2:12
- (4) "With Him"— quickened, having received forgiveness – Col. 2:13
- (5) "With Christ"— ye were raised – Col. 3:1
- (6) "With Christ"— your life is hid in God – Col. 3:3
- (7) "With Christ"— ye shall be made manifest in glory – Col. 3:4

We must understand that our deliverance from sin and the world is an accomplished fact because we have become a co-sharer of God's very own death, life, and nature ("partakers of the divine nature" - 2 Pet. 1:4) through our togetherness and spiritual union with Christ. The Bible teaches that Christ is in us (Col. 1:27) and we are in Christ (Col. 1:28). These indwelling statements speak of union and positional truth. We not only share the life of Christ ("ye in me, and I in you" – John 14:20) on a daily basis to receive our spiritual benefits from Christ, who is our Vine (John 15:5), as He dwells within us ("Christ liveth in me" - Gal. 2:20), we also enjoy our position of nearness and acceptance before the Father's throne (Heb. 10:19-20) because we are in Christ (Eph. 1:6). We share Christ's life in a practical way down here on earth, as He dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17), but we also share His life in the heavenlies (the throne room of God) where we are fully and forever accepted in His saving merits and perfection (Rom. 8:1; Jude 1).

As a result of being in Christ, we have access, nearness to the heavenly Father in a *positional* way (Eph. 2:12-13) which refers to acceptance in God's presence forever (Heb. 10:19-20). However, another result of being "in Christ" is that we also have nearness to God the Father in a *relational* way in our daily walk, fellowship, prayer, and worship



before God (“let us draw near” - Heb. 10:22). In fact, with this new awareness of the Father’s presence and intimacy we cry “Abba Father” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). In view of our UNION with Christ in Heaven and our POSITIONAL STANDING of legal or judicial acceptance before the Father’s throne in Christ, His beloved Son (“wherein he hath made accepted in the beloved” - Eph. 1:6), we are as near to the throne and dear to the heart of the Father as the Son Himself!

“Nearer, nearer, nearer to God I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He.
Dearer, dearer, dearer to God I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son, I am as dear as He.”

1 John 5:10-12 declares:

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

When we are placed “in his Son” (sharing His very own life) all of Christ’s saving benefits are transferred to us, eternal life being the ultimate spiritual blessing that we receive for possessing this unalterable and indissoluble union with Christ and exalted position in Heaven. “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). In short, we have eternal life as long as Christ does since we are sharing His life (“Christ, who is our life” – Col. 3:4). Later John explains this further by saying, “and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 5:20). Our spiritual life and eternal life “is in his son” and this refers to the life that we share with Christ which has been communicated to us at the moment of the new birth. Now we can sing:

“Christ liveth in me,
Christ liveth in me,
Oh! what a salvation this,
That Christ liveth in me.”

Both union and positional truth teach about our standing or acceptance before God through our identification with Christ (Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Eph. 1:3; 2:5-6) and also our relationship with Christ (John 14:20; 15:1-3; Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 1:27-28; Col. 3:11, 16; 1 John 5:20). Union and positional truth explain what it means to be in Christ. We have historically passed through death with Christ and now live with the resurrected and ascended Christ (Rom. 6:5; Col. 3:1) in “heavenly places” (before

the Father's throne) and at this very moment and throughout the eons of time we will have a standing of acceptance in God's presence. This is because we have been united to Christ and have received by way of imputation His perfect righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

Philippians 3:9 once again declares:

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”



To “be found in him” (Christ) means that we share His risen life in the heavenlies and all the spiritual and saving blessings and benefits that He has transferred to us via our spiritual link and togetherness with Christ. Being “in Christ” is both the foundation and certainty of our

spiritual blessings. The Father accepts us fully, finally, and forever in His Son's saving merits and perfections before the throne and we are “complete in him” (Col. 2:10). This means we are in Christ and reminds us that we share a living union with Christ and position of acceptance before God's throne. The word “complete” literally means “to fill up, fill to the full, fill to the brim, fill measure, supply liberally.” This phrase “complete in him” expresses the sufficiency of Christ in providing us with redemptive salvation, pardon, acquittal, and a perfect righteous standing in God's presence forever in view of our union with Him (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Cor. 1:30).

“Complete in Thee! no work of mine
May take, dear Lord, the place of Thine;
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
And I am now complete in Thee.”

This phrase also expresses the complete sufficiency of Christ for every area of our Christian life. This particular word was used of a ship, totally fitted and ready for a voyage. In other words, for the voyage of our lives, we have Christ's sufficiency and completeness and can find ever provision we need in Christ who is our Vine (John 15:1-3). The truth that God's saints are “complete in him” means that we possess and find everything that we need in Jesus Christ for salvation, sanctification,

service, and satisfaction. We lack nothing for this life or the next life! We have everything from A-Z in Jesus Christ. Nothing is missing. Nothing is lacking. Nothing needs improvement.

Christ is sufficient and enough for our salvation, our trials, our hurts, and our needs! Believers have in Christ everything they will ever need to meet any trial, any craving, any difficulty they might ever encounter in this life. Even the newest convert possesses sufficient resources for every spiritual need. From the moment of salvation each believer is in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and Christ is in the believer (Col. 1:27). We have a new union, position, life and intimate relationship with Christ that fulfills us and meets our every need. Christ within us is the secret to living abundantly, differently, and victoriously (Gal. 2:20).

“On the victory side. On the victory side!
No foe can daunt me,
No fear can haunt me on the victory side.
On the victory side, On the victory side!
With Christ within,
The fight we’ll win,
On the victory side!”

I remember walking with my wife on a cold January morning. Of course, we were both wearing gloves but my hands were still cold. My wife taught me a secret. She told me to take my fingers out of the finger section of the gloves and curl my fingers together to create warmth. Fingers wrapped together create warmth and get you through the cold. In a similar way, when we understand that we are wrapped together with Christ (spiritually united together with Him), we can get through anything that life brings before us.

I am deeply concerned with the current erosion of confidence that is in the church today which is taking Christians away from looking to the sufficiency of Christ and His spiritual resources for everyday victory and living. The Bible teaches that “our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5) and that “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8). The failure of modern Christians to understand and appropriate the riches of Christ has opened the door to all kinds of influences. Bad doctrine, legalism, libertinism, humanism, psychology, and secularization are

eroding the foundations of the Christian faith and the sufficiency Christians have in Christ.

If you visit your local Christian bookstore you can note the many so-called “Christian” recovery books. Virtually everywhere you look in the evangelical culture, you can find evidence that Christians are becoming more and more dependent on therapists, support groups and other phony props to get them through life. The Lord said to Paul that “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). The average Christian in our culture cynically views that kind of counsel as simplistic, unsophisticated, and naive. However, our completeness in Christ is the secret to living victoriously, abundantly (John 10:10) and

Charles Spurgeon gives a good definition of our completeness or sufficiency in Christ (Col. 2:10). He says we are: (1) complete without the aid of Jewish ceremony, (2) complete without the help of philosophy, (3) complete without the inventions of superstition, (4) complete without human merit. We might add that we are complete without psychology, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and pop-psychology. We are complete without legalism and asceticism. We are complete without rock music, pragmatism, and the church growth movement. We are complete without Christendom, the cults, and the carnal inventions of man. We are complete without human strength, will power, and determination. We are complete without secular humanism, self-esteem, self-love, self-concept, self-worth, self-image, self-acceptance, self-actualization, self-belief, self-potential, self-confidence, self-help, self-improvement, self-fulfillment, self-development, self-enrichment, self-discovery, self-enhancement, self-identification, self-advancement, self-expression, self-importance, self-realization, self-affirmation, and self-celebration. We are complete in Him! Jesus is all I need!

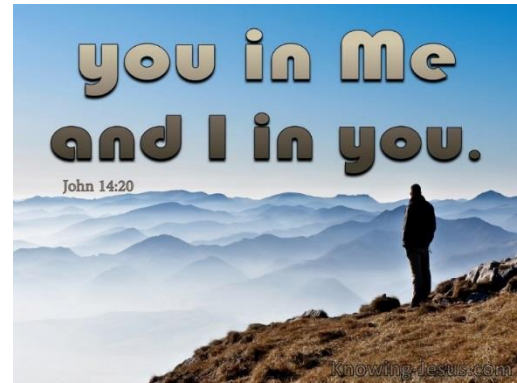
“Jesus, only Jesus,
He is all I need;
Thru this world of sorrow
His hand will lead.”

Salvation means that we share Christ’s life. We are born again because Christ’s very own life and nature have been communicated to our human spirit and we begin a new union, spiritual togetherness with Christ, which allows us to know Christ intimately, relationally, and powerfully and even sacrificially.

Philippians 3:10

“That I may know him (intimately), and the power of his resurrection (powerfully), and the fellowship of his sufferings (sacrificially), being made conformable unto his death.”

Jesus spoke of this intimate and sanctifying union when He stated these words: “ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20) and “I in them” (John 17:23). We possess a spiritual UNION and therefore intimate relationship with Christ. There are three Pauline illustrations of our union with Christ. Paul explains the relationship between believer’s and Christ as a building and its foundation (Eph. 2:20-22), the members of the body and its head (1 Cor. 6:15; 12:12; Eph. 1:22-23), and to the relationship between a husband and wife (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:31-32).



The last illustration speaks of intimacy with Christ for it states that we are married to another (“married to him” - Rom. 7:4) who is Christ. A marriage speaks of the union of two people together who share one another’s lives. It is the merging of personalities and the sharing of a oneness together. It is an intimate, close, and sharing relationship where both enjoy each other’s presence. In a marriage union there is to be mutual interaction, communion, fellowship, help, and assistance. This is how the Bible portrays our union with Jesus Christ. What a beautiful picture and living reality this can be in our lives today! Think of it this way. We become a Christian because we are spiritually united to our Savior (married to Jesus!), and we begin a new journey of spiritual intimacy together which will last forever!



My son-in-law wrote a song. The song was for my daughter when he proposed to her. After their marriage he rearranged the ending of the song to reflect their new marriage. I think several lines of this song align with our spiritual union and marriage to Christ. They go like this:

“I just trusted God, and He gave me You.
Together Forever,
Hand-in-hand across the road of life.
Together, Forever,
With you, Is where I want to be.
Together, Forever,
I’m so glad you married me!”

Our new relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is a “together” relationship. We were married to Christ, spiritually joined to Him at conversion, and today we share His risen life. Hand-in-hand across the road of life we walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and experience our love relationship with Him. Let us be careful that we do not lose our “first love” (Rev. 2:4). An old tract called "The Seven Togethers" summarizes the completeness of our union with Christ. It says we are:

- (1) crucified together with Christ (Gal. 2:20);
- (2) dead together with Christ (Col. 2:20);
- (3) buried together with Christ (Rom. 6:4);
- (4) made alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5);
- (5) raised together with Christ (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1);
- (6) sufferers together with Christ (Rom. 8:17);
- (7) glorified together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).



In view of our union with Christ, our life with Christ it to be one of communion, fellowship, intimate oneness and togetherness forever. This is because we have been joined to Christ, which creates a saving union with Him, but also a new intimate union or relationship with Christ which is expressed in the words “that I may know him” (Phil. 3:10) and “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). This new spiritual marriage and intimate partnership is captured in the beloved words of the hymn, “I am His and He is Mine.”

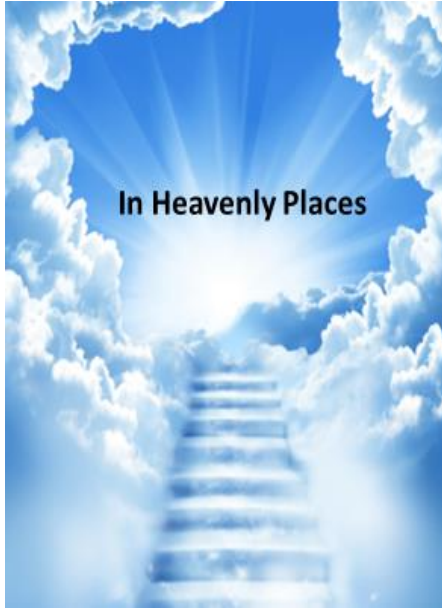
“Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know;
Gracious Spirit from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so!

Oh, this full and perfect peace!
Oh, this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine;
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.

Heav'n above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flow'rs with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine;
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.

Things that once were wild alarms
Cannot now disturb my rest,
Closed in everlasting arms,
Pillowed on His loving breast;
Oh, to lie forever here,
Doubt and care and self-resign,
While He whispers in my ear
I am His, and He is mine;
While He whispers in my ear
I am His, and He is mine.

His forever, only His;
Who the Lord and me shall part?
Ah, with what a rest of bliss
Christ can fill the loving heart!
Heav'n and earth may fade and flee,
Firstborn light in gloom decline,
But while God and I shall be,
I am His, and He is mine;
But while God and I shall be,
I am His, and He is mine."



Let's revisit the heavenlies once again. Where we are (our union with Christ in the heavenlies – the throne room of Heaven) is the secret to knowing the abundance of our spiritual riches and blessings. Everything from salvation to our daily sanctification comes to us because of the spiritual togetherness we possess with Christ before the Father's throne (a permanent position), which is ultimately translated into our daily living (practicing our position) as Christ lives within us (Gal. 2:20).

Ephesians 1:3

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."

There is a simple outline we can follow for this wonderful text of Scripture.

1. **The praise of our wealth** – "Blessed be the God and Father"

This phrase actually means a eulogy. The adjective translated "blessed" means "to celebrate with praises." Beloved, we have something to praise God for every day of our lives. We have been given a countless number of spiritual blessings in Christ.

"Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee, I will ever give to Thee!"

2. **The bestower of our wealth** – "God and Father"

It was God the Father who planned and provided these spiritual blessings before the foundation of the world and they are all found in His beloved Son (Eph. 1:6 – "accepted in the beloved"). When it comes to God's grand saving plan of the ages, we can conclude that the Father planned it (Eph. 1:3), the Son supplied it (Eph. 1:7), and the Spirit applied it (Eph. 1:13-14).

3. The statement of our wealth – “hath blessed us”

This is not talking about something that we will have in the future or some great blessing we get if we pass through some charismatic experience. We have been fully and forever blessed right now with all of Christ’s spiritual blessings of salvation and sanctification and everything that we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

4. The designation of our wealth – “spiritual”

These blessings refer to our innumerable and unending spiritual blessings of salvation and sanctification that we have in Christ and share with Him before the throne of God as we stand in all of His saving merits and supplied victory through His resurrection and ascension (Eph. 1:20-23).

5. The measure of our wealth – “all spiritual blessings”

Every spiritual blessing that we have comes to us through Jesus Christ – what He has done for us and is doing for us today in Heaven. The measure of our spiritual wealth in Christ is so great that Paul called them “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). A Christian wrote a song long which this title: “A Rich Man Am I”

“I found something that money can't buy
I found a goldmine beyond the blue sky
I found the land where I'll look when I die
I found the Lord rich man am I.”

Tom Constable remarks:

“Spiritual blessings are benefits that relate to our spiritual life in contrast to our physical life. In Israel God’s promised blessings were mainly physical, but in the church they are mainly spiritual.”

This is a good observation. They are spiritual blessings. However, even spiritual blessings can bring about physical blessings in our life as we yield our bodies to God and allow them to be freed from enslavement to sin and the various physical effects that can be experienced in our bodies as a result of sin (Rom. 6:12-13). Let us never forget that the Holy Spirit has united us with Jesus Christ, so we are in a spiritual sense living with Him right now in Heaven. We share His life in Heaven and all of

the past, present, and future blessings that flow from this position and union with Him. This means that our blessings are spiritual and not material, heavenly and not earthly, and eternal not temporal. New Testament saints are a heavenly people – not an earthly people (Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1). Just as Israel's blessings were found in Canaan, so ours are found in the heavenlies. This marks a difference in God's dispensational program.

The blessings that we have received through our union and position in Christ are innumerable. Johnson Oatman's hymn reminds of our countless blessings in Christ.

“Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God hath done;
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”

One man asked me if I had the second blessing. Second blessing? I have blessings (thousands of them) in the heavenlies! The Bible says I am already rich in Jesus Christ. I have been already blessed beyond measure!

6. The place of our wealth – “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”

As previously discussed, this is a spiritual location that we possess before the throne of God and one that is experienced in our daily living on earth. Each believer has a spiritual union with Christ whereby he shares all of Christ's spiritual blessings that flow forth from His saving and sanctifying work.

Yes, we reside in our physical bodies here on the earth, but spiritually we are already with Christ in the heavens (Eph. 1:3, 2:6). God has united us with Jesus Christ, so we are in that sense with Him right now, where He now resides in the Father's presence (Eph. 1:20). When we die, our immaterial part (human spirit) will go into Christ's presence (2 Cor. 5:6-8). However, when God resurrects our bodies they will also enter into His presence when they are united with our immaterial part (1 Thess. 4:13-16). Nevertheless, presently our lives are already with the Lord in the heavenly realms through our present spiritual identification and union with Christ. There is a spiritual sense and reality to believer's living in the heavenlies. God in some marvelous way reckons us to be living within Heaven, sharing Christ's life,

and being a possessor of all the spiritual wealth and blessings that He has given to us through His Son.

Below is another simple way to understand Ephesians 1:3.

- The *source* of your blessings is GOD THE FATHER ... *“Blessed be the God and Father...”*
- The *means* of God’s blessings is the LORD JESUS CHRIST... *“of our Lord Jesus Christ”*
- The *reality* of God’s blessings is that God *“HATH BLESSED”*
- The *timing* of God’s blessings is in the PAST ... *“has blessed”* (for all believers to have been blessed requires that it must occur at salvation, otherwise, there would be believers who have not yet been blessed)
- The *recipients* of God’s blessings are ALL BELIEVERS ... *“us”*
- The *extent* of God’s blessings is *“WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS”*
- The *nature* of God’s blessings is *“SPIRITUAL.”*
- The *location* of God’s blessings is *“IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES*
- The way of God’s blessings is *“IN CHRIST”*
- The *response* to God’s blessings is to PRAISE GOD ... *“Blessed.”*

To be positioned and living in union with Christ in the heavenlies (a sphere of spiritual existence with Christ) means that:

- Christ’s riches are our riches,
- Christ’s resources are our resources,
- Christ’s power and authority is our power and authority,
- Christ’s righteousness is our righteousness.

The chart reveals another way to understand the believer’s position in Christ within the throne room of Heaven. The failure of many Christians today is that they do not understand and appropriate the riches of Christ to their lives. As a result, they open the door to all kinds of strange influences. Bad doctrine, legalism, libertinism, humanism,

In Heavenly Places In Christ

Denotes our POSITION (Where Christ is, we are)
Defines our PRIVILEGES (What Christ is, we are)
Describes our POSSESSIONS (What Christ has, we have)
Dispenses our spiritual PROSPERITY (What Christ has done for us, we claim)
Determines our PRACTICE (What Christ does, we do)

psychology, pseudo-experiences, and secularization of all kinds are eroding the foundations of the believer's sufficiency in Christ.

There is a true story about William Randolph Hearst the late newspaper publisher. Hearst invested a fortune in collecting great works of art. One day he read about some valuable pieces of art and decided that he must add them to his collection. He sent his agent abroad to locate and purchase them. Months went by before the agent returned and reported to Hearst that the items had at last been found—they were already stored in his own warehouse. Hearst had purchased them years before! He never knew that he possessed the rich paintings!

Many Christians are like this as well. They don't know about their riches in Christ or that Christ is sufficient to meet all of their needs in life through His saving work on their behalf and the sanctifying and loving relationship they can possess with Him (Phil. 1:21; 3:10; Rom. 7:4). We need to reengage our thinking and living to the heavenlies. The heavenlies is a *physical* location for Christ but it is a *spiritual* location for God's saints who are united with Him, sharing in the spiritual blessings that flow forth from His risen and ascended life. These two words ("in Christ") describe the believer's spiritual union or togetherness with Christ. When a person possesses the spiritual location of being "in Christ" they have all the spiritual riches they need for living.

Our union with Christ emphasizes WHERE we are ("in heavenly places in Christ" – Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:3) and WHAT we have ("all spiritual blessings" – Eph. 1:3) and WHO we are (a new creation in Christ – 2 Cor. 5:17). As God's children, we have all the vast resources of spiritual wealth at our disposal. We don't have to work for spiritual wealth for it has already been deposited for us "in Christ." Just one little word "in" has made all the difference to our lives! Only two letters (in) joined with the word "Christ" reveals our privileged position.

These two words are the master key to Christian living that give access to all the spiritual blessings that are available to us. Outside of Jesus Christ we are spiritually dead and have no spiritual life or assistance for victorious living (Eph. 2:1-2). But "in Christ" we have spiritual life and are linked to the resurrected Lord and all of the spiritual blessings and resources that He provides for our lives (salvation, righteousness, redemption, forgiveness, power, peace, strength, joy, satisfaction, victory etc.). In Christ we share His life and Christ becomes everything to us and for

us. All of Christ's resources are made available to us, but we must take possession of them by faith and appropriate them into our lives. We must avail ourselves to the vast storehouse of riches that Christ has for us.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said:

"To be in Christ means to be a partaker of all that Christ has done, all that He is, and all that He will ever be."

In other words, in some amazing way, we share in Christ's resurrected, ascended and victorious life in Heaven. Our life is actually linked to Christ in the throne room of Heaven and everything that Christ has done for us and is doing for us today is dispensed to us on a daily basis – salvation, victory, peace, joy, strength, sanctification. Of course, the realization and application of our lofty position in Christ in the heavenlies (before God's throne) is recognized as we experience our spiritual union with Christ in our hearts (Gal. 2:20). In other words, our position in the heavenlies is put into practice on earth as Christ's indwells His saints and they respond to His promises, promptings, presence, and power.

Ephesians 1:19-23 is speaking about something that we should know regarding our place and provision of victory in the heavenlies: "**And what is the exceeding** (surpassing) **greatness** (the magnitude, immeasurable, and inexhaustible nature) **of his power** (God's inherent, energetic and spiritual power) **to us-ward who believe** (who embrace Christ by faith), **according to the working of his mighty power** (according to the divine, dynamic, and eternal energy of God's operational might or strength, which is a sufficient power that works on the inside of us, enabling us to have victory over temptations, overcome sinful habits, and which enables us to live a transformed way of life), **Which he wrought** (which God energetically displayed and made effective and operative) **in Christ, when he raised him from the dead** (the resurrection of Christ from the dead was the expression of God's miraculous and mighty power), **and set him at his own right hand** (Christ's ascension and a position at the Father's right hand which is a place of privilege, power, and dominion (Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 1 Pet. 3:22) **in the heavenly places** (the heavenlies – the throne room of God – Eph. 1:3; 2:5 – the same place where God reckons His children to be as they share a spiritual union with Christ), **Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion**, (all created spiritual or angelic beings in the universe – Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15) **and every name that is named** (all created beings no matter who they might be and what position or status

they hold), **not only in this world** (the present pre-messianic age on earth as Christ sits on the heavenly throne), **but also in that which is to come** (the dispensational age of the Millennial Kingdom when Christ as the Messiah will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem and physically rule over planet earth – 1 Cor. 15:23-28): **And hath put all things under his feet** (Christ in the heavenlies, before the Father's throne, possessing full authority over all created beings – “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” – 1 Pet. 3:22 and “thou has put all things in subjection under his feet” – Heb. 2:8), **and gave him to be the head over all things to the church , Which is his body** (the spiritual union of New Testament saints who are pictured as Christ's body and having Christ as their Head – Col. 1:18, Eph. 5:13; 4:15 – a shared union of victory and authority over all spiritual forces and enemies which incredibly are also under the feet of the Church because of union with Christ!), **the fulness of him** (the Church as Christ's body in union with the Head, which can mean that Christ does all the filling from His own fullness as in Col. 2:9-10, or in some sense the Church fills up or completes Christ as the Head, when properly representing Him and bringing honor and glory to Him through *sanctified* living – in a similar way, the Church also glorifies Christ by experiencing *suffering* as Christ did while He was on earth, and in His absence the Church [God's children] continue to add to Christ's sufferings in view of their spiritual union with Him as members of His body – “and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ” - Col. 1:24) **that filleth all** (Christ lavishly fills or overflows the Church with blessings by dispensing to the Church His mighty power and all spiritual privileges from the heavenly places which is the POSITION and SOURCE of the victory and authority that we share with Christ in the throne room - Eph. 1:3) **in all**” (Christ's abiding presence in the believer while living on earth is the PRACTICE and SANCTIFICATION that we experience as the church is filled with Christ's presence and animated with His life – Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17).

Since we have a spiritual union with the living Christ and possess this new position in the Lord we can claim our victory. This is because we actually share His resurrection life and power which is called “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. 1:19). Christ's sufficient



life and power is lavishly supplied for each believer to meet every one of our needs, including our need to live victoriously over our enemies. Christ's sufficiency for our life is compared to being filled up in this text and various other texts of Scripture: "the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23), "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19), "the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), "And of his fullness have all we received" (John 1:16), "And ye are complete in him" (Col. 2:10). These words speak of more than adequate provision for His saints. We are filled to overflowing! We are complete in Christ. Have you been acting like it, living like it, depending on it? What kind of life have you been living? Do you doubt your salvation? Has the devil been working you over? What are you doing with your life?

I can't be saved without Him, I can't be sanctified without Him, I can't be satisfied without Him, I can't serve effectively without Him, and I can't be spiritual without Him. I need His fulness and completeness operating in my life. Paul prayed that the saints would be living according to their fullness and completeness in Christ ("That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" - Col. 3:19), that they would know, believe, and practice what they possess in Christ. He wanted them to claim their spiritual riches in Christ and realize, not only theologically, but experientially, what Christ has done for them and means to them (Phil. 3:10).

"Christ means more to me than you'll ever know
Christ means more to me than I could possibly show.
More, more, so much more,
He's more than you'll ever know."

Is this your heart's testimony today? Everett F. Harrison observed that "in the Savior all the potential of the redeemed life lies accessible and can be communicated, as faith draws upon Him."



Jesus promised in John 4:14:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Christ's supply is likened to an eternal fountain of water that is bubbling up which is being constantly generated from a deep water source within the earth. In other words, eternal life, which not only refers to *quantity* of life, but also a new *quality* of life (John 10:10) is portrayed as being completely fulfilling and life-sustaining. This is especially experienced by New Testament saints who receive eternal life through their union with Christ's resurrection life. When we are joined to Christ, we enter a new way of life that gives us the promise of not only going to Heaven someday since Christ indwells us (Col. 1:27), but also experiencing Heaven in our hearts and lives, as we share our wonderful union with the indwelling Christ (Phil. 1:21).

The chorus written by Alfred B. Smith spells out the wonder of this fullness or complete provision we have in Jesus Christ ("the fulness of him that filleth all in all") which includes the daily victory that we can experience in our living. Smith wrote these words:

"Filled to overflowing,
Hearts a-glow and showing
Christ to those who do not know Him;
Sanctified and holy, Yielded to Him only,
Vessels for the Master's use."

Yes, we are filled to overflowing when we realize the spiritual riches we have in Christ. In other words, since we are "seated in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:5-6) we share in Christ's victory over all created beings in the universe, including all demons and the devil himself, and therefore can claim our authority and victory over them. In fact,



instead of "looking up" to claim our victory we must remember to "look down" to claim our victory! This is because we are positioned (seated) in the great Victor (Jesus Christ) and should therefore claim our full authority over every evil force because of our heavenly union and position in Christ in the very throne room of Heaven. Hebrews 2:8 declares: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him ..." This is true in regard to Christ's present exalted position who today

is “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. 2:9) in the heavenlies. The cross led to the crown! He is the great Victor! His crowning took place at His ascension as did His receiving authority over all creation.

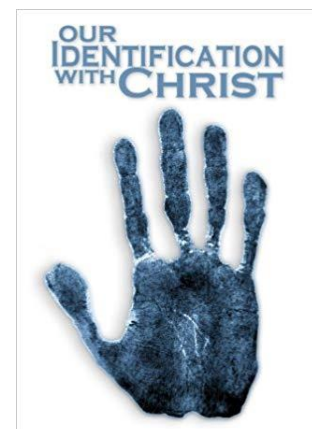
In Philippians 2:9-14 Christ is seen to be above all and His name stands for the highest authority figure in the entire universe. You can't get any higher than this! Jesus Christ has complete authority over the hordes of hell and every evil force in the world. He has defeated every foe upon the cross and then rose again to prove that He was and always will be the Mighty Victor. Therefore, the believer's spiritual union, position, and standing that he has with Jesus Christ in Heaven guarantees that he too has authority and victory over the devil and this evil world. Beloved, we must not only keep looking up (Luke 21:28), we must also keep looking down! This is because we are seated in the heavenlies (the throne room of God's presence) in Christ. We are in Christ and receive the same authority He possesses over the created order of angelic beings who war against our soul. Our union with Christ in the heavenlies guarantees us full authority and victory over the Evil One.



I once observed a container floating in the vastness of the open sea. At one point the water entered the container and it began to sink. I thought to myself how a little container was being filled up and surrounded by such a massive and immeasurable supply of water.

The believer's position “in Christ” and union with Christ can be described in a similar way. This spiritual union each believer has in Christ is comparable to a container that is filled with ocean water. The container is in the water and the water is in the container. Furthermore, as the container was filled with the unending supply of ocean water so each believer who is “in Christ” or in union with Christ has an endless supply of power and victory for living.

The primary word associated with this spiritual union with Christ is IDENTIFICATION. The believer should not only recognize that Christ died for him (substitution) but that he died, was buried, and rose again with Christ (identification). We are identified with Christ's Person and His work of salvation and victory. The doctrine of identification with Christ becomes the basis for the doctrines of sanctification



and eternal security. If we stand in the perfections of Christ before the Father, based solely upon His matchless grace (Eph. 1:6-7; 2:7-9), then we can never be lost. When we remember that we are united to the resurrected and ascended Christ who lives within us (Gal. 2:20), we no longer must live in defeat and spiritual slavery to sin (Romans 6:13-18). This is because we share His resurrection life and power (Phil. 3:10).

Identification Truths APPLIED by FAITH

Identification Truths	Scripture
Baptized into Christ	Romans 6.3; 1 Corinthians 12.13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Colossians 2.12; 3.3; Titus 3.5-7
Buried with Christ through baptism	Romans 6.4
Crucified with Christ & Dead to Sin	Romans 6.2, 5-6, 8; Galatians 2.20; 5:24; Col. 2:20; 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:11
Risen with Christ	Romans 6:5, 8; Colossians 2.12; Philippians 3.10; 2 Tim. 2:11
No longer a slave to sin	Romans 6.6-7, 18, 22
Possessor of eternal life	Romans 6.22-23; 1 John 5:12-13
Dead to the Law & Married to Christ	Romans 7.4
Released from the Law	Romans 7.6
Not under Law but under Grace	Romans 6.14; 7.4, 6; Galatians 5.18; Colossians 2.20
No condemnation, No separation	Romans 8.1, 37-39
Complete in Christ	Colossians 2.10
Seated with Christ in Heaven	Ephesians 1:3; 2.6; Philippians 3.20

2 Timothy 2:11-13 references our positional/union/identification truth which gives us many spiritual blessings and promises: **“It is a faithful saying: For if we** (the elect – 2 Tim. 2:10) **be dead with him**, (POSITION = our union and identification with Christ’s death – Rom. 6:5a, 6-7) **we shall also live with him** (POSITION = our union and identification with Christ’s resurrection – Rom. 6:5b, 8): **If we suffer** (PRESENT suffering for Christ in this life – 2 Tim. 3:12), **we shall also reign with him** (PRIVILEGE in our future life – Millennial Kingdom – Rev. 3:21): **if we deny him** (PATTERN of apostasy – fully and finally disowning Christ – Heb. 10:39-39; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 John 9), **he also will deny us** (PERMANENT rejection of an unsaved person - Matt. 10:33 - deny that we are His children - Matt. 7:23): **If we believe not** (PERMANENT choice to reject Christ – John 5:40 – a lack of saving faith and not merely a weak or temporary lapse in faith), **yet he abideth faithful** (PROMISING to judge the apostate who rejects Him – 2 Pet. 2:17 – and therefore maintain His integrity and justice by bringing judgment against both sin and sinners – Rev. 16:7; 19:11): **he cannot deny himself”** (PERJER Himself – speak untruthfully about His true nature and be inconsistent with His character – Malachi 3:6; Heb. 13:8 - by failing to bring righteous judgment against the unsaved – John 3:18; Rev. 20:12)

Edmond Hiebert summarizes the meaning of these verses:

“The central truth of these pithy statements is that faith in Christ identifies the believer with Him in everything while unbelief just as surely separates men from Him.”

Romans 8:17 explains more about our union and spiritual blessings with Christ:

“And if children, then heirs (Gal. 4:7); **heirs of God, and joint-heirs** (co-heirs) **with Christ** (our POSITIONAL & spiritual privileges we have today – Eph. 1:3 and in the future – 1 Cor. 3:21-23 through our identification with Christ); **if so be that we suffer with him** (our PRACTICE in identifying and following Christ’s example – John 15:20; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:12), **that we may be also glorified together”** (PROPHETIC – our future glorified body that will be sinless, perfect, and reflect or radiate Christ’s moral glory – Rom. 8:18-25; John 17:22-24; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:10).

Paul's doctrine of our union and identification with Christ in the heavenlies gives to every believer a perfect standing of legal acquittal and righteousness in the presence of God. The believer is identified with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and ultimately His ascension, within the presence of God, at the Father's right hand. The practical implications of this truth are tremendous. In Christ we share and receive all the saving and sanctifying benefits that He provides for us through His death and resurrection. Union with Christ produces a moral and spiritual change because the believer is spiritually joined or united to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:1-3). True victory over sin in the daily life can come only from an understanding and appropriation of this truth to one's life by faith ("I live by the faith of the Son of God" – Gal. 2:20).

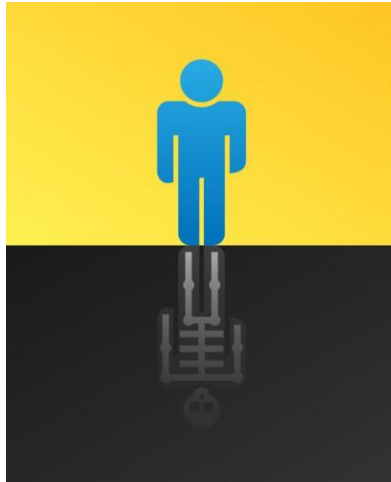
As previously mentioned, union and therefore identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This is termed as being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) which is the symbol of what water baptism by immersion portrays. Spirit baptism portrays water baptism. In Romans 6 Paul is teaching the doctrine of Spirit baptism but at the same time gives us a picture of what water baptism represents. The ordinance of Christian baptism beautifully portrays what happened in Spirit baptism.

Pastor Steven Cole concludes:

"So what Paul refers to in Romans 6 is not water baptism itself, but what it pictures, namely, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At the instant we believed, we became totally identified with Christ. His death became our death, His burial our burial, His resurrection our resurrection. Going under the water symbolizes death to our old way of life; coming up out of the water pictures the beginning of a new life, lived unto God, in the power of Christ's resurrection."

Our union or identifying relationship to Christ's death is the BASIS for our salvation and acceptance before God (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:1). It's also the basis for our victory (Rom. 6:6). However, our union with the resurrection of Christ gives us the PROMISE of Christ's saving benefits (Rom. 3:24; 5:10) and also provides the actual POWER for victory (Rom. 6:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). Furthermore, our union with the ascension of Jesus Christ provides us with the ASSURANCE that God has accepted us within the throne room of His impeccable holiness and flawless righteousness (Heb. 10:19-20) but also grants us the AUTHORITY over every spiritual entity and force (Eph. 1:19-23). This allows each believer to possess

personal authority and victory over Satan in his daily experience. In order to get into the heavenlies we must first die and this is exactly what occurred when we were united with Christ's death which utterly destroyed, defeated and deactivated the "old man" (Rom. 6:6) or the unregenerate person we used to be under the power and enslavement to sin.



Romans 6:6 explains it like this:

“Knowing this, that our old man (the old unregenerate person we used to be under sin’s power and slavery while positioned in Adam with all of our old habits and appetites) **is crucified** (has been crucified or put to death) **with him** (our union in Christ’s death), **that the body of sin** (the enslaving relationship that sin had with the body during our unregenerate state) **might be destroyed** (rendered inactive – put out of business), **that henceforth we should not serve sin”** (no longer be a slave to sin).

The old man is a reference to our old self, the unsaved person we were in our unregenerate state with his sinful nature, disposition, evil passions, lusts, and enslaved to sin. It references our pre-conversion days while we were still positioned in Adam and not in Christ.

Colossians 3:9 teaches the same truth:

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”

The word “put off” means to strip off and discard like a filthy, worn-out garment, tossed on the rubbish heap. The old man is a reference to our old self living under the power of sin, the lost and unregenerate person we once were before we were crucified or died with Christ (Gal. 2:20). The new man (“And that ye have put on the new man” – Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:22) is essentially the regenerated man, the new person that is created in Christ Jesus who now possesses a new nature and the life of God (Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Galatians 6:15

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

Something must be understood at this point. The crucifixion of the old man in Romans 6:6 is not a present, daily experience, but is rather a past event, expressed by the aorist tense in Greek (an event that occurred in the past). Some make the hermeneutical mistake of appealing to 1 Corinthians 15:31 as proof that we must "die daily." But this is a serious interpretive mistake. First Corinthians 15 was written by Paul in the context of physical and not spiritual death. Our old man is not constantly being crucified, day by day, but has been crucified at the cross of Calvary! The Bible says we are already dead ("we, that are dead to sin" – Rom. 6:2; "he that is dead" – Rom. 6:7; "We be dead with Christ" – Rom. 6:8; "dead to the law" – Rom. 7:4; "being dead" – Rom. 7:6; "ye be dead with Christ" – Col. 2:20; "if we be dead with him" – 2 Tim. 2:11).

Someone has said, "Life is what you are alive to." A child may come alive when you talk about a baseball game or an ice-cream cone. A teenager may come alive when you mention cars or dates. Paul wrote, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Christ was Paul's life and he was alive to anything that related to Christ. So should it be with every believer. Years ago there were two sisters who enjoyed attending dances and wild parties. Then they were converted and found new life in Christ. They received an invitation to a party and sent their RSVP in these words: "We regret that we cannot attend because we recently died."

What they meant is that when they became a Christian, in Christ they positionally died to the power of sin and no longer were bound to live a rebellious lifestyle against their new Master! Here is the point. We are not asked to die to sin in our Christian life, since we have already died to sin when sharing our victorious union with Christ's death, who defeated the power of sin over our lives. The proper interpretation of all these Biblical texts is that if you are a Christian, you have already died. Crucifixion is the believer's present position, possession, power and potential to live as more than a conqueror over sin, the flesh and the devil. Crucifixion is something God does, not us.

There are other crucifixion passages which speak of the same thing. In every passage, the word "crucified" is simply a vivid and dramatic way to say that the old person we used to be, enslaved to sin and the sin nature, was killed or executed when we were identified with Christ's death ("we have been planted together in the likeness of his death" – Rom. 6:5).

Galatians 6:14

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

This expression has a similar idea taught in Romans 6:6. Paul is teaching that at salvation his old, sinful, unregenerate self was executed and he was born a new man in Christ Jesus. In some sense, the world system that is against God has been executed and is now dead to him, so that it is no longer his master, holding him in bondage. This does not mean the world has no more influence over the believer, but that its dominion is broken and we are no longer to live in total bondage and domination to it.

Galatians 2:20 also states:

“I am (have been) crucified with Christ (togetherness crucifixion): nevertheless I live...”

This co-crucifixion with Christ’s death brought a death blow to the old man or person we used to be under sin’s power and enslavement and from this death emerged a new man who was born again, regenerated, created miraculously by God, and given a brand new life and nature that consists of “good works” (Eph. 2:10) and “righteousness” (Eph. 4:24). This is not our old self renovated or reformed but a completely new person has been created (2 Cor. 5:17) as a result of the believer’s union with the risen Christ.

Obviously, in none of these passages does Paul mean to imply that the crucifixion analogy with Christ carries the idea of total death, in which all influence ceases. Sin was still a reality in his life (Rom. 7:14-25), and so was the temptation of the world. But there was a sense in which the power of the old self and of the world was broken. Those influences no longer dominated him.

It must also be emphasized that in none of the crucifixion passages that deal with our new birth (the death of the old man and the recreation of a new man) imply that we must die to ourselves, or crucify ourselves, and somehow create our own death through surrender to God. These crucifixion verses are not talking about bringing about a death to ourselves through human surrender in the Christian life but God bringing a death to our former self through the infusion of the new birth experience.

John Phillips wrote:

“A man can put himself to death in a variety of ways. He can hang himself, drink poison, cut his throat, or drown himself, but he cannot crucify himself. The figure of crucifixion implies that someone else does the putting to death. God crucifies the flesh with its passions and lusts. By identifying us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, God has put us to death, buried us, and raised us again in newness of life. The moment we receive Christ as Savior, we enter positionally into the good of that deed. Paul anticipates here that we now enter experientially into the good of it.”

When it comes to our new birth, there is no human involvement in the dying. This means that Romans 6:6 is not talking about a lifelong process of agonizing over sin and trying to kick old sinful habits. Paul does not exhort us “to consider ourselves to be dying to sin” but “reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. 6:11).

Some of the so-called “deeper life” Christians are always trying to die to self (sin) and never experience the abundance of their new life (John 15:1-3) by acting on the position they already possess with Christ in His death and resurrection. Many Christians today want to turn a past NON-EXPERIENTIAL truth (our death with Christ) into a present and daily experience. It’s our responsibility to bring our earthly life in conformity to our position in Christ. However, many Christians feel they must crucify the “old man” or the old self before a new man can give them the abundant life.

E.M. Bounds seems to espouse this view, among some other deeper life teachers. He talks about “crucifying preaching” and the need to put to death and sever our relationship with sin after we are saved. A. W. Tozer also emphasizes the post-conversion crucifixion. However, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that crucifixion is a CONVERSION-RELATED experience or something that has already occurred at the time of our new birth (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). All we must do is claim this supernatural transaction by faith as other deeper life teachers emphasize such as L. E. Maxwell and Watchman Nee who states: “So also in historical fact we can say, reverently but with equal accuracy, ‘I was crucified when Christ was crucified’ or ‘Christ was crucified when I was crucified.’ My crucifixion was with Him.”

This crucifixion is something that is accomplished by God in the past which brings about a completely new man or person in Christ Jesus. Of course, this does not

mean there is not a practical side to seeking to mortify or put to death the sins which seek to overtake our bodies and Christian lives.

Romans 8:13

“For if ye live after the flesh (if you continually serve the flesh your entire life, you are characterized by a state of spiritual death and demonstrate that you are not alive in Christ Jesus), **ye shall die** (in the sense that he will die without Christ and eventually go to hell): **but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body** (put to death the sinful inclinations which seek to rule over your body), **ye shall live** (you will experience the kind of life that brings liberty, freedom from sin, and true satisfaction in life and by so doing demonstrate born-again behavior, proving you are a Christian).



There is a practical side to mortifying or putting sin to death in our lives. However, you will notice that Romans 8:13 does not refer to the death of the “old man” as in Romans 6:6 or the actual death of the old unregenerate person that was already crucified with Christ as in Galatians 2:20. Instead, it refers to mortifying “the deeds of the body” which is the practical outworking of our position in Christ, explained in Romans 6:6 (“that the body of sin might be destroyed”). This means that our human body was once a sin-possessed body dominated by sin, but this relationship of our body with sin was rendered inactive or put out of business because of our identification with Christ’s death. Since this is true, we can now yield to the Spirit’s power, whose ministry is to reveal Christ’s life to us (“the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” – Phil. 1:19), so we might experience daily victory.

In daily practice, to “mortify the deeds of our body” means that we actively and aggressively apply Christ’s victory to our personal lives when we “reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. 6:11a) which means that we count this to be true, not merely understanding about it, but actually believing that it’s true! We must also reckon that we are “alive unto God” (we have been made spiritually alive to enjoy a freeing and newfound relationship with God as our Master) “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11b) which points to our risen union with Christ. Although we have already died to sin’s power in view of our union with Christ and risen with Him, there is a daily reckoning of these truths that

is necessary and this is done in conjunction with yielding to the Spirit's power (Eph. 5:18). As we yield the members of our body to the Spirit, He applies to us and in us the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result, in a practical way, we can put to death the things of the flesh and reproduce the things of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit empowers us to practice our position in Christ. But we must always remember that the believer's daily experience of victory is made possible because of our death and living union with Christ.

Colossians 3:5 also speaks about the practical reckoning of the positional truth: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Christ has already crucified the old person that we used to be by defeating the power of the sin nature over your body and life (Romans 6:6). You cannot do the actual spiritual work of crucifying the old self and sin nature. However, by faith, you can and must reckon this crucifixion to be true (Rom. 6:11) and in a practical way put to death those sinful deeds, which haunt your life. This is accomplished by saying "no" to sin as you accept by faith what Christ has already done for you on the cross and in His resurrection life, freeing you from your old slave relationship to sin. You must by faith claim what Christ has already accomplished for you and make Christ's death and life real in your actual experience ("I am crucified with Christ;" Christ liveth in me;" and "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" – Gal. 2:20). Faith is the victory ("the shield of faith" - Eph. 6:16). Victory is not found in our legalistic attempts to crucify our flesh, subdue the powers of darkness, repeatedly pass through crisis experiences to gain victory, coming forward in church services to surrender and possess victory, or experiencing agony and hardship in life as we try to overcome the power of the sin nature.

Here is my point. None of the identification verses (our union with Christ's death and emergence as a new man) refer to self-crucifixion or self-mortification (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 6:14). Rather, they refer to positional crucifixion. This means that through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), Christians were identified with Christ in His death and resurrection and therefore have ceased to be an unregenerate person under the power and slavery of sin.

Many Christians will talk about Christ's statements regarding bearing a cross and relate them to what Paul taught in Romans chapter six. However, they fail to see that what Jesus said about the cross related to practical discipleship and what Paul taught about the cross was positional truth. The statements that Jesus made about denying oneself of selfish ambitions and desires and bearing a cross (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) were given in the context of discipleship. A person must surrender by denying themselves of those things that would keep them from being a committed disciples of Jesus Christ. They must also be willing to take up the cross of sacrifice for the cause of Christ. This might involve sacrificing one's time, talents, treasures, and their very own lives. However, the cross concept that Jesus taught should not be placed in the context of New Testament grace teaching regarding one's crucifixion with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20).

Although there is a definite surrender and yielding to God that is related to Christian living under grace (Rom. 6:13, 19; 12:1), the cross and grace teaching of New Testament theology is primarily positional in nature, meaning that we were already crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). We have already died in Christ and the old person we once were under the evil passions of sin and the power of the sin nature has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). This means we don't fight to obtain victory; we claim the victory we already possess in Christ. This victorious new position began at the time of our salvation, since it was at our conversion when we were positionally delivered from the power of sin and darkness (Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13), as a result of placing our initial faith in Christ.

1 John 5:4-5 triumphantly declares:

"For whatsoever (our human spirit) is born of God (the new birth which results from the believer sharing the risen life of Christ) overcometh the world (in a positional way through our union with the living Christ): and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (our initial faith we placed in Christ to become our Savior as explained in the final part of the verse). Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

This is talking about our positional victory over sin. Our faith in Christ, by which we were regenerated, constitutes a decisive victory over the world system that is against God. In a moment's transaction, we were delivered from our old man position under the power and dominance of sin and were given a new man position

of victory when we were born again and began to share the life and nature of God Himself (2 Pet. 1:4). We are not victims; we are victors!

Reginald Wallis said:

“The triumphant Christian does not fight for victory; he celebrates a victory already won. The victorious life is Christ's business, not yours.”

John affirms that a believer is a world-conqueror by means of his faith in Christ. When we place faith in Christ to save us we are transferred into the realm of victory over sin and Satan by virtue of our new birth which is essentially our sanctifying union and identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. We died to the past and are brought into new life in Christ.

“New life in Christ, Abundant and free
What glories shine, What joys are mine
What wondrous blessings I see.
My past with its sin
The searching and strife forever gone
There's a bright new dawn
For in Christ I have found new life!”

Galatians 5:24 is another reference that speaks about our identifying or positional crucifixion as well: “And they that are Christ's (purchased by Christ's sacrifice on the cross) have crucified the flesh (put to death the flesh when placing faith in Christ) with the affections and lusts” (a reference to the unregenerate person, which was once enslaved by the sinful flesh with all of its evil desires and passions).

Many commentators interpret this verse in terms of Paul's earlier testimony of having been crucified with Christ and made alive through faith (Gal. 2:20). The language in these two passages is strikingly similar. Nevertheless, expositors have a difference of opinion on what Paul is teaching in this verse since he explains that “they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.” In other words, in this verse it seems that the individual is doing the crucifying while in the other instance (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20) it's God doing the crucifying. So which is it? Self-crucifixion or God-crucifixion? Let's consider the first view and then the second.

John R. Stott looks at Galatians 5:24 as self-crucifixion at the time of salvation: “We must crucify the flesh...This verse is frequently misunderstood. Please notice that the ‘crucifixion’ of the flesh described here is something that is done not to us but by us. It is we ourselves who are said to ‘have crucified the flesh’. Perhaps I can best expose the popular misconception by saying that Galatians 5:24 does not teach the same truth as Galatians 2:20 or Romans 6:6. In those verses we are told that by faith-union with Christ we have been crucified with Him. But here it is we who have taken action. We ‘have crucified’ our old nature. It is not now a ‘dying’ which we have experienced through union with Christ; it is rather a deliberate ‘putting to death’. The Greek verb is in the aorist tense, indicating that this is something we did decisively at the moment of conversion. When we came to Jesus Christ, we repented. We ‘crucified’ everything we knew to be wrong. We took our old self-centered nature, with all its sinful passions and desires, and nailed it to the cross. And this repentance of ours was decisive, as decisive as a crucifixion.”

As seen above, some expositors suggest that Paul uses the word “crucifixion” with the “the flesh” in a slightly different manner from the way he used it in Romans 6:6 or Galatians 2:20. In these other instances, the verb “crucified” was in the passive voice (“was crucified,” “have been crucified”) and the reference is to what has been done for the believer as a result of Christ’s death. But in Galatians 5:24 the verb is in the active voice (“have crucified”) and points rather to what the believer has himself done and must continue to regard as being done. The proper term to describe this act of “crucifixion” is repentance. In other words, Paul is teaching that each believer in Christ has already repented of his former way of living and has in some sense executed the old nature through his repentance at the time of salvation. Of course, this does not mean that the battle is over with sin. However, the believer is to regard the decisive act as having been done when he came to repentance and faith in Christ.

In this instance, some would suggest that the reference to “crucifixion” refers to what occurred in the initial repentance of the believing sinner at the time of their conversion. When they came to Christ, they repented fully of the sinful works of their flesh (1 Thess. 1:9-10) and in some sense crucified the flesh in their act of repentance, recognizing their sinfulness before God and hopeless state without God (Acts 20:21). This is the same act they must sustain in their Christian life – the attitude of not allowing their sin nature to dominate or control their life. In speaking of this radical repentance, Paul uses the vivid image of crucifixion.

This view seems unlikely for several reasons. First, it seems very plausible that Paul would have used the term repentance if he wanted to convey the thought of individual repentance at the time of one's conversion. Also, crucifixion or putting to death the flesh or sin nature is not the Biblical understanding of the word repentance. No person could ever do this in repenting of their sins. Second, Paul never used the term "crucifixion" elsewhere without referring to our positional crucifixion with Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 6:14).

The second view is to see this verse in the same frame of reference as our identification in Christ's death (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 6:14). The crucifixion is not self-crucifixion but our positional crucifixion in Christ. In other words, believers have been crucified (past tense) with Christ and are in union with and identified with Christ. The verb is once again in the aorist tense, suggesting the action took place in the past at conversion. Robert Gromacki states: "The verb 'crucified' (estaurōsan) shows that this event was a past, historical reality in all of their lives." Again, the aorist indicates our participation in Christ's historical crucifixion. It seems better to understand the expression of "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" as referring to a crucifying union with Christ as a result of people expressing faith in Christ.

Essentially, a person shares in the crucifixion of Christ as a result of placing simple faith in Christ. When one puts his trust in Christ, he receives the actual benefits of identification with Christ, resulting in breaking the power of cancelled sin and in setting the prisoner free. The Christian is to daily give outward expression of his inward experience and in order to do this, he must constantly reckon himself "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:11). However, in Galatians 5:24, all believing sinners have crucified the flesh in the sense that when they trusted Christ as their Savior, they were united with His death, which broke the domination of their sinful nature.

Kenneth Wuest explains it in this way:

"Christians crucified the evil nature with its affections and lusts, in the sense that when they put their faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, they received the actual benefits of their identification with Christ in His death on the Cross, which benefits were only potential at the time He was crucified. The Christian's identification with Christ in His death, resulted in the breaking of the power of the sinful nature over the life. This victory over sin which the Lord Jesus procured for us at the Cross, is

made actual and operative in our lives as we yield to the Holy Spirit and trust Him for that victory. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry that applies the salvation from the power of the sinful nature which God the Son procured at the Cross for us."

Galatians 5:24 is talking about our identification with Christ's death – not our daily dying to sin in our Christian experience. There is a natural flow from Galatians 5:22-23 (practical sanctification by the Holy Spirit) to Galatians 5:24 (positional sanctification – death of the old unregenerate person). The way we express fruit is to let the Holy Spirit work in our hearts and lives and this gives evidence that we are applying to our daily lives the death or crucifixion which we have already experienced with Christ. Also, our position in Christ (Gal. 5:24) is followed immediately by a verse that speaks of our experience in Christ and exhorts us to live out that experience by keeping in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), something that would not be possible if we had not been crucified with Christ.

When Paul said earlier that he was crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), he meant that the cross of Christ severed his relation to the condemning and enslaving relationship to the law as in Romans 7:4 ("ye also are become dead to the law"). In Galatians 5:24 Paul says that the cross of Christ also severs the believer's relation to the "flesh" (Gal. 5:24). For Paul, both the law and the flesh belong to the same pre-Christian days, prior to his salvation. These legal relationships with the law and the flesh have been completely severed in view of our union in Christ's death and resurrection which has broken our legal, condemning, and enslaving relationship with both the law and sin (Rom. 7:1-4; 8:1-4).

This brings up another question. Does Galatians 5:24 teach that our "flesh" or sin nature has been crucified? It's interesting that in the previous crucifixion verses, which speak of our identification with Christ's death, we do not specifically read of our sin nature being crucified at the time of our conversion. In the crucifixion verses, Paul talks about our



previous life, while we were positioned in Adam, as being put to death – not our sin nature. It's people who have been crucified ("we, that are dead to sin" – Rom. 6:2; "Now if we be dead with Christ" - Rom. 8:8; "our old man is crucified" – Rom. 6:6; "he that is dead" – Rom. 6:7; "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the

world” – Gal. 6:14; “I am crucified with Christ” – Gal. 2:20). None of these references directly speak of our sin nature being crucified or put to death.

The Bible teaches that we have died in the sense that we are no longer an unregenerate person controlled by sin. In the crucifixion verses, it’s the death of the old Adamic person under the enslavement of sin that is in view and not specifically the death of the sin nature. However, Galatians 5:24 suggests that Paul also had in mind the execution of our “flesh” (the sin nature) when it states: “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” This is a *perfect positional victory* that is made applicable to our lives as we yield to God on a daily and moment-by-moment basis (Rom. 6:13-14). The Christian has crucified the flesh in the sense that when he trusted Christ God broke the domination of his sinful nature.

Our positional death in Christ is certainly not talking about the total death of our old nature in our daily practice of living. It is quite certain that our sin nature is still alive and well inside each Christian. Galatians 5:9-21 talks about the works of the sinful disposition or old nature which still reside within the believer. We can all attest to this fact! A man once told me that he was not aware that he had sinned in the past six months of his life. I asked him if his wife could verify this!



Some of the so-called deeper life teaching of today makes the false claims that a person can eradicate their sinful nature completely and they base this on a misinterpretation of Romans 6:6 and the crucifixion of the old man. Instead of viewing Romans 6 as positional truth (“our old man is crucified” and “he that is dead” – Rom. 6:6-7), some Christians view this as experiential truth and declare that putting to death the old man is an ongoing process in the Christian life, where one must kill the sin nature through vigorous battle with evil passions and lusts. Various groups claim that an individual can pass through “a second work of grace” (a post-conversion experience) that takes place within their hearts, which results in them no longer sinning for extended periods of time, and in some cases, allows the sin nature to be totally eradicated from their life, bringing them to the place where they lose their desire to sin.

How can people come to believe this about themselves? First, they may simply be deceiving or lying to themselves and living in a fool's paradise. They may become blinded to their own sinful natures. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Second, some Christians may be ignorant of the definition of sin and create their own understanding about sin as being only a major trespass against God. However, the Bible says that "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). Some people think they are perfect but only understand half of the Biblical expectations for Christians! Paul said no person can claim sinless perfection ("not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" - Phil. 3:11). Those who actually think they have arrived to a state of perfection have become hypocritical and eventually become frustrated.

Elmer Towns shares his experience early on his Christian life:

"I was converted on July 25, 1950. From then I spent almost every succeeding night attending a revival meeting at some church. I was swept along in the enthusiasm of my new relationship with Christ. Six weeks after my conversion, I went to Columbia Bible College. There I was caught up in the Christian environment. I did not go back on my old ways, nor did my old habits plague me. I could almost see myself growing in Christ.

"After approximately six months, I confided to my roommate, 'I haven't sinner since I've been saved.' I was dead serious when I said it. I had evaluated my actions and couldn't remember committing an outward sin. Actually I was naïve and childish. But just as some children are not aware of their actions and words, as an immature Christian, I had remained unaware of my sins.

"My roommate laughed at me. He went next door to the two boys who shared our bathroom. When he told them I said I hadn't sinned, they laughed. Then they began to rehearse my actions. They pointed out the dorm rules I had broken, such as not going to be on time, eating in the room, visiting in other rooms during study hours, and so on. I didn't consider these infractions sin, but they did. Next they pointed out other things I did wrong. They chewed on me about my faults until I got mad. Then I wanted to fight them. The angrier I got, the more they laughed.

"A few minutes earlier I had claimed to live for six months without sin. Now I was angry and wanted to hurt brothers in the Lord. They were horsing around and wrestled me to the floor so I couldn't fight. They continued to laugh as only boys

can do when teasing a naive youngster. I don't remember all the details of the wrestling match, but I was broken. I began to cry under the conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit opened my blind eyes to see that I was guilty of the worst sin of all – pride. In my ignorance I thought I was sinless, when actually I was, like Paul, the chief of sinner.

“As a young Christian I struggles with standards of sinless perfection. I would try to quit anything I knew was sin. Then I would get frustrated when I saw my imperfections, and I would please the blood of Jesus Christ.”

The Wesleyan view of sanctification is sometimes referred to as “perfectionism” or “entire sanctification” and is commonly associated with John Wesley and later with Charles Finney. Simply stated, perfectionism is the conviction that it is possible to eradicate totally the sin nature within a believer's lifetime and therefore become perfect, resulting in a lifestyle without sin. The Keswick (the “w” is silent) Movement (Higher Life movement of England in the early 19th century) with its teaching, like Wesleyan theology, looks at sanctification (victorious living) as a separate, crisis experience, distinct from our salvation or justification.

According to this teaching, sanctification begins in real earnest after one is saved and it occurs through an experience called the “second blessing” or a “second work of grace” where a person in a time of “crisis faith” places everything on the altar in full surrender to God. At this point, according to Keswick theology, a person possesses sanctification as a special gift from the Holy Spirit which allows them to crucify their flesh and live victoriously without sinning. However, many Keswick teachers, unlike Wesleyanism, denies that sin can be totally eradicated. However, some Keswick teachers would even say that sinless perfection is possible after one receives what is called the “second blessing.”



According to Keswickian theology, after salvation one must have another encounter with the Spirit; otherwise, he or she will not progress into holiness or the “deeper” things of God. This second encounter with the Spirit, in Keswick terminology, is called “entire sanctification,” “the second blessing,” or “the second

touch.” This emphasis on a second, post-salvation experience corresponds with the Pentecostal idea of the “baptism” of the Spirit. It is claimed that this crisis experience is necessary so one can crucify their flesh or sin nature, overcome self and sin, and really start living a victorious Christian life. Many believe that in an act of self-crucifixion a new relationship to God is formed. However, the Bible declares that we are made into a new creation the moment we are placed in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and from this point onward we begin to grow and experience progressive sanctification.

One author summarizes the self-crucifixion movement of Keswick like this:

“Sanctification is a long, gradual, and sometimes tortuous process, and it is something that all believers will experience, not just those who have a “second touch” of the Spirit. The Keswick movement has some commendable points—an emphasis on the lordship of Christ and personal holiness, discipleship, and a promotion of missionary activity. And some historic evangelistic efforts have begun at Keswick Conventions. However, Keswick theology’s insistence on a “second blessing,” its hierarchy of “sanctified” Christians vs. those who are “only justified,” and its bent toward the unbiblical doctrine of entire sanctification are causes of concern” (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Keswick-movement.html>).

Here is the point. Many Christians believe they should continue the finished sanctifying work of Calvary by seeking to crucify the old nature which is called the self-life. However, union with Christ and our crucifixion and death to sin’s power occurs at our conversion when we are placed in Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 5:24) and is NON-EXPERIENTIAL. Our crucifixion to sin’s power is accomplished by God apart from any human involvement. However, sanctification within the Christian life is progressive for “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). We are called upon throughout our entire lives to possess the vessel of our body “in sanctification and honour” (1 Thess. 4:4) and are gradually and progressively conformed to the image of Christ (“changed into the same image from glory to glory” - 2 Cor. 3:18).

Sanctification is not to be viewed as a “crisis” point in one’s life or a series of crises but a once-for-all decision and dedication. This type of teaching does not align with the plaguing nature of one’s sinfulness and need for confession (1 John 1:9). When it comes to sin, decisions need to be repeated, no matter how dramatic they may

be. The sin nature is simply too persistent. I will admit that some people have had experiences that have profoundly changed their lives, whether it's throwing a stick in the fire at a Christian camp meeting or surrendering themselves for a lifetime of service to God.

D. L. Moody did. He rarely spoke of his experience because it was too sacred, but it is recorded in his biography. He had been walking the streets of New York City, oblivious to the crowds and traffic, wrestling with God about a claim God was making on his life. Suddenly he gave in and felt an overwhelming sense of God's presence sweep over him like waves. He went to a friend's house, declined the offer of a meal, and asked for a room where he could be alone. Time passed. He was alone with God in a way he had never known before; he was filled with the fullness of God. At last Moody cried out to God to stay His hand, for he could take no more. After that experience his ministry was never the same. An anointing on him surpassed all that had gone before.

Of course, living the normal Christian life does not require this type of experience. Moody evidently agreed with this and this is why he never spoke about it. Living the normal Christian life requires continuous yielding and surrender to God throughout one's entire life (Rom. 6:13, 19; 12:1-2). It involves "walking in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25) on a daily basis as the Spirit reveals within us the life of Jesus Christ and we communicate with Him (Gal. 2:20).

One thing is certain, no crisis experience will ever root out the old flesh or sin nature from our lives. We need to remember that the Christian is no longer "in the flesh" *positionally* (Rom. 8:9) but the flesh is still in the Christian in a *practical* sense, and until our death or the Rapture, when we receive a new and sinless body, we can never claim to be sinless and perfect.

Romans 8:9-10 reveals this truth to us:

"But ye are not in the flesh (positionally as an unsaved and unregenerate person that does not possess God's life and nature), **but in the Spirit** (living in the realm of the Spirit's life-transforming power – no longer enslaved to sin), **if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you** (if the Holy Spirit truly indwells you as a Christian - 1 Cor. 6:19-20). **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his** (you are not one of God's children but children of disobedience - Eph. 2:2; 5:6). **And if Christ be in you** (as in Colossians 1:27 and Galatians 2:20 – the Holy Spirit reveals and

unleashes Christ's life to us as promised at Pentecost – “I will come to you” - John 14:18), **the body is dead** (the sentence of physical death is still in our human body – Rom. 8:23) **because of sin** (the Genesis curse – Gen. 20:7); **but the Spirit is life** (the Holy Spirit brings spiritual life into our human spirit) **because of righteousness**” (because of the imputed righteousness of God's Son has been credited to our heavenly and legal account before the throne of God).

These verses once again remind us that we are no longer a slave to the sin nature. We have through union with Christ been delivered from the flesh and no longer are positionally tied to the old slave relationship we once had with our sinful disposition.

What is the flesh? The “flesh” (Gal. 5:24) or old nature refers to our sinful human nature or disposition that every human being possesses as long as he or she lives (Gal. 5:19-21). The old nature is the same as the flesh (Rom. 7:5). Even though the old man has positionally died, along with his old life and sinful disposition, the old nature still lives on within all of us (Rom. 7:14-25). Eradication will not occur until our death or the Rapture! We have died positionally (in Christ's death) to the old man and his sinful disposition but this does not mean it cannot repeatedly resurface in our Christian lives. The old nature is like a chicken with its head cut off. The flesh has been dealt a death blow in view of our position in Christ. However, in our daily practice, it continues to flop around the barnyard until the last nerve is stilled, and this won't happen until we are released from our bodies.

One author has an interesting way of explaining crucifixion of the flesh:

“Picture your flesh—that old ego with the mentality of merit and craving for power and reputation and self-reliance—picture it as a dragon living in some cave of your soul. Then you hear the gospel, and in it Jesus Christ comes to you and says, ‘I will make you mine and take possession of the cave and slay the dragon.’”

This was true in a positional sense. Christ did slay the dragon when we were crucified with Him for Galatians 5:24 says: “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” through our union with Christ's death. However, in our daily living the dragon (sin nature) is still much alive and can do us spiritual harm. However, we should treat our “flesh” as dead and seal the cave where the dragon lives, even as we



would a tomb. We seal the cave by following the command of Romans 6:11: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Most expositors agree that the old man or unregenerate person (Rom. 6:6), along with his sinful disposition or nature (Gal. 5:24), has also been positionally executed or put to death in the saving and sanctifying transaction that occurred with one’s identification with Christ’s death. The “old man” according to Romans 6:6 and Galatians 5:24, includes everything that we were in our unsaved state prior to salvation. Our entire life, sinful nature, evil passions and desires were crucified since all of these things were part of our “old man” existence. By contrast, everything became new (Eph. 5:17) when we were born again as a “new man” for we received a new life, a new nature, and new desires or drives to live a godly life. We have become someone that we never were prior to salvation.

Romans 8:1-4 should also be viewed in this same light of positional sanctification: “*There is* therefore now no condemnation (the PROMISE: no sentence of judgment upon the Christian – they are not condemned and doomed to live in the realm of spiritual death and slavery to sin) to them which are in Christ Jesus (the POSITION: our saving and sanctifying union with Christ – how we share in His death, life, and nature), who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (the PROOF and pattern of those who are saved). For the law of the Spirit of life (the PRINCIPLE upon which the Holy Spirit operates, governs, or works to bring about newness of life - spiritual, sanctifying, and fulfilling life – Rom. 7:6) in Christ Jesus (by bringing us into a shared union with Christ) hath made me free from the law of sin and death (set us free at the time of conversion from the principle and prison-house of sin controlling us which is rooted in the realm of spiritual death and separation from God – Eph. 2:1-2).

“For what the law could not do (sanctify us or make us into a new creation – 2 Cor. 5:17 – by executing judgment upon the sinful disposition – Rom. 7:5), in that it was weak through the flesh (man’s legalistic efforts – Rom. 7:14-25 – human effort cannot produce sanctification), God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (not *in sinful flesh* but in the likeness of a man - humanity), and for sin (to deal with the sin problem in the human race), condemned sin in the flesh” (executed judgment on our sinful disposition). That the righteousness of the law (the righteous character of the law – the moral law of God) might be fulfilled in us (the

New Covenant promise – Ezekiel 36:26-27; Heb. 8:10; 10:16), who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (PERSONAL APPROPRIATION and PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION: who rely upon the Spirit’s transforming power to free us from the sinful disposition or old nature).

The concept of condemning sin in the flesh means that Christ died on the cross not only to save us from a spiritual death but also to save us from our sin nature or a life dominated or controlled by sin. Christ executed a judgment against our sinful disposition. In essence, it would seem that the death or crucifixion of the “old man” (Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:22) has reference to everything that we were prior to our salvation. This would mean that in a positional and union sense, Christ also crucified the flesh (the sin nature), nullifying its power over our lives, and it was His work on the cross that did this (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:3). This means Christ’s crucifixion is our crucifixion. We do not try to do what is already done; we do not crucify ourselves. We believe that Christ crucified us and everything that pertained to our previous unsaved state.

This means we do not have to pray about being crucified; we are crucified with Christ. This is the crux of how we get victory in the Christian life. If we do not know our position in Christ, we do not know how to live the Christian life. Many sincere Christians try to crucify themselves but they always end in frustration. Our crucifixion and death to sin is an accomplished fact that we must simply reckon by faith to be true (Rom. 6:11). The Bible is not teaching by the crucifixion verses (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 6:14) that we must strive to crucify our sin nature on a daily basis in order to possess victory in the Christian life. Paul does not tell us to crucify ourselves because this is impossible. Crucifixion is one death that a man cannot inflict on himself!

Paul tells us that the old unregenerate person (the old man), with our old, rebellious, unbelieving, self-centered person we were apart from Christ, which included our sinful nature and evil passions has been crucified and we have emerged as a newly born-again person (a new man) that now possesses a completely new life and nature. In dying with Jesus (Rom. 6:6), we cease to be an unregenerate person and are freed from the sinful disposition. In living with Jesus, we have become a new man (a new creation of God). It is our responsibility to believe this and act on it. What we are by *position* must be put into *practice* on a daily basis (Phil. 2:13). Again, Paul calls this “reckoning” in Romans 6:11. Christians are no longer debtors to the flesh, but to the Spirit (Rom. 8:12–14). We must accept

what God says about ourselves and the old nature and not make “provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14) by feeding it the things that it enjoys.

The death of our previous unregenerate person under the dominance of sin occurred on the cross (Rom. 6:6) but the effects of this victorious death are seen in our everyday living as we dwell within our body. Our bodies must no longer be ruled by sin. The terminology “body of sin” (Rom. 6:6) and “body of sins” (Col. 2:11) is an expression, which portrays the human body being used as an instrument or vehicle for the sin nature. Within this context it points to our own human body (Rom. 6:12-13; 8:11) which is possessed and controlled by our sin nature. As a result of the death of our “old man” (our old unregenerate self) with the death of Jesus Christ, the old slave relationship that our body once possessed with the sin nature has been severed or dissolved. No longer must we, while living in our human body, remain in bondage to the dictates and drives of the old nature. Our physical body terminated its slave relationship to the sin nature through our union in Christ’s death upon the cross.

Our body in some sense ceases to be a “body of sin” (Rom. 6:6) as a result of the crucifixion of the “old man.” Again, this is referring to a physical body that was used as an instrument of sin, prior to salvation, a body that was dominated and controlled by the old nature. It was the body in its natural condition when it was a servant or slave to sin (a sin-possessed body) as in Colossians 2:11 – “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” When we experience our positional death with Christ, the physical body severs and terminates its relationship with the sinful disposition. As a result of the death of our old self, we are freed from sin’s mastery and can now use our body for God’s holy purposes and glory. We do this by applying the position of crucifixion we already possess with Christ and in our daily Christian experience “mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13) by saying “no” to sin (2 Cor. 7:1).

Through our union with Christ’s death on the cross, the sin nature has lost its position of rule over our body and therefore sin no longer needs to conquer our lives. Our body is no longer obligated to function as the instrument of sin (“that henceforth we should not serve sin” – Rom. 6:6). So, the “old man is crucified” (we cease to be an unregenerate person) because we share in Christ’s death “that the body of sin might be destroyed” (so the relationship that our body once possessed

with sin can be terminated in our daily living). As a result, Paul now instructs us to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1).

Martin Luther was often very graphic in his description of the activities of the devil. Asked one time how he overcame the devil, he replied, “Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks ‘Who lives here?’ the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, ‘Martin Luther used to live here but he has moved out. Now I live here.’ The devil, seeing the nail-prints in the hands, and the pierced sides, takes flight immediately.” We remember by the nail prints in the hands of Jesus, that He won a victory over sin and our enslaving relationship to that sin nature, through His death upon the cross. Jesus defeated our old slave relationship we had with sin and made us into a new freeman (1 Cor. 7:22), so that in our everyday Christian living we can now use our body that was once enslaved to sin (“the body of sin”) as a vehicle that can submit to God and His holy purposes.

The Bible teaches that our position has changed from being “in Adam” (1 Cor. 15:22) to now being “in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17). The old lost and unregenerate person which is described as “having no hope” (Eph. 2:12), who was “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), who “walked according to the course of this works, according to the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), and who was enslaved to “the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph. 2:3) has been put to death (“seeing that ye have put off the old man with his evil deeds” - Col. 3:9). Again, our old “I” (“I am crucified with Christ” – Gal. 2:20), or the unregenerate person we used to be under the power and enslavement of sin was defeated and brought to its demise, when we were identified with Christ’s death. The “old man” we used to be in Adam was “crucified” (Rom. 6:6) or put to death in the death of Christ, and we emerged as a “new man” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) in Christ, which is a person that has been born again and received a new liberating and life-transforming way of life, which extends to using our body for sanctification (1 Thess. 4:4).

How can it be that we have been crucified with Christ when He died some 2,000 years ago? How can we claim this identification with Christ? We must remember that this is a trans–historical fact and that the effects of Jesus’ crucifixion are not bound by space and time. The Christ–event (His death on the cross) can touch and involve each one of us at anytime and anywhere. This is because our crucifixion occurred *potentially* at the cross and it was made *effective* in each believer at the

time of their conversion, since the effects of His death are constantly available for every believer. When placing faith in Christ, our faith brings us into a relationship with this Christ–event (His death on the cross), so in reality every believer has actually died and then risen with Christ (His resurrection from the dead). This is the teaching of Romans 6:6-8). It's not that Christ's historical death and resurrection are recreated. What the Bible teaches is that in the mind and program of God, Christ's death and resurrection is constantly fresh and new, so much so, when people believe on Christ, they are joined to Christ's historical death and resurrection (placed in Christ) and therefore receive all the saving and sanctifying benefits that Christ has provided for each one of them.

L.E. Maxwell comments on Romans 6:

“Believers in Christ were joined to Him at the cross, united to Him in death and resurrection. We died with Christ. He died for us, and we died with Him. This is a great fact, true of all believers”

James R. McConkey also states:

“Our ‘reckoning’ ourselves dead to sin in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11) does not make it a fact—it is already a fact through our union with Him. Our reckoning it to be true only makes us begin to realize the fact in experience”

Reginald Wallis adds:

“God says in effect, ‘My child, as you reckoned on the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation, now go a step farther and reckon on His representative work for your victory day by day.’ You believe the Lord Jesus died for your sins because God said so. Now take the next step. Accept by faith the further fact that you died with Him, i.e., that your ‘old man was crucified with Him’”

Romans 6:8 goes on to say:

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”

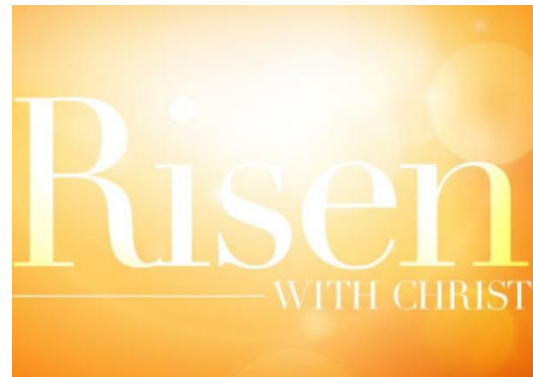
Colossians 3:1

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

It is possible to be alive and still live in the grave. A story will remind us of this. During World War II, several Jewish refugees hid in a cemetery, and a baby was

actually born in one of the graves in the cemetery. When we apply this story to the realm of spiritual truth, we must remember that Christ does not want us to only dwell or mediate upon our death and burial with Him. He also wants to remind us of our resurrection with Him to new life! Christians are not only dead and buried with Christ, they are alive in Christ! Jesus gave us His life and lifted us out of the grave and set us on the very throne in Heaven! This is because Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3; 8:1), and we are seated there “in Christ.”

However, we also experience this risen life with Christ in our daily Christian lives. This is what Romans 6 speaks about. Christians are really the “living dead.” By this I mean that we not only died with Christ and ceased to be an unregenerate person, we also “live with him” which speaks of our union with the risen Christ, which results in our new birth (Col. 3:4). “If ye then be risen with Christ” (Col. 3:1) and “we shall also live with him” (2 Tim. 2:11). Yes, we are the living dead. We have died in Christ but we have also been risen with Christ to a new way of life. We died to the old person we used to be and must now reckon ourselves to have died to the old self and way of living (Rom. 6:6, 11).



This fact must be appropriated and acted upon in the time of temptation. But it does not stop here. We must also reckon ourselves “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). This means we must by faith count it to be true, on a daily and moment-by-moment basis, that we have been raised with Christ and share in His victory over sin and Satan within the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). But more than this, we must live in union with Him and depend fully upon His resurrection life and power operating in our lives to grant us victory in the trenches of our daily spiritual battle. The old hymn captures this death to life union with Christ.

“Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine;
Living with Jesus, a new life divine;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine,
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.”

From the Divine viewpoint, God sees us as having participated in all of Christ's victorious work over sin and the devil (Rom. 6:1-15). When applying these glorious truths to our lives by faith we can effectively resist the devil (James 4:7). Our spiritual union with Christ, this spiritual tie and living relationship we have with Him, is the key to overcoming Satan and experiencing daily victory in our lives. Union with Christ is the key that unlocks the door to victory. We must think position and not condition. Position is where our victory lies! Only as we rest in our position and identification with Christ can we experience victory.

Pauline identification theology is also stressed in Ephesians 3:16-19:

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory (as in Philippians 4:19 - out of the abundance of God's spiritual riches of grace, mercy, and love – Eph. 2:4, 7), **to be strengthened with might by his Spirit** (through the agency and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives) **in the inner man** (man's human spirit – the place of decision, affection, desire, and human personality); **That Christ may dwell** (be at home – deeply rooted in one's life since “Jesus Christ is in you” - 2 Cor. 13:5 and “Christ be in you” – Rom. 8:10) **in your hearts by faith** (since the Holy Spirit is revealing Christ to us progressively and transforming us into His image, as a result of expressing faith in the Son of God for salvation and then sanctification within the Christian life, as in Gal. 2:20); **that ye, being rooted** (spiritually rooted like a plant) **and grounded** (firmly established like a building) **in love** (the basis of our relationship with God is experiencing His love in relation to our life – Rom. 5:5), **May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ** (experientially in our daily living – the love He has expressed for us on Calvary's cross and in our daily lives – “who loved me, and gave himself for me” – Gal. 2:20), **which passeth knowledge** (human comprehension), **that ye might be filled** (overflowing) **with all the fulness of God”** (the total provision of God – sharing His complete spiritual provision and sufficiency, as in Ephesians 1:23 and Colossians 2:19, which is experienced on a daily basis through the presence of the indwelling Christ).

The idea of Christ dwelling in our hearts (Eph. 3:17) was taken up Robert Munger. In his booklet *My Heart Christ's Home*, Munger pictures the Christian life as a house, through which Jesus goes from room to room. In the library, which is the mind, Jesus finds trash and all sorts of worthless things, which He proceeds to throw out and replace with His Word. In the dining room of appetite He finds many sinful desires listed on a worldly menu. In the place of such things as prestige,

materialism, and lust He puts humility, meekness, love, and all the other virtues for which believers are to hunger and thirst. He goes through the living room of fellowship, where He finds many worldly companions and activities, through the workshop, where only toys are being made, into the closet, where hidden sins are kept, and so on through the entire house. Only when He had cleaned every room, closet, and corner of sin and foolishness could Christ settle down and be at home.

Also, the truth about experiencing Christ's love for us in our hearts ("and to know the love of Christ" – Eph. 3:19) is very touching. When someone asked the famed jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong to explain jazz, he replied, "Man, if I've got to explain it, you ain't got it." In some ways that simplistic idea applies to experiencing Christ's love (Calvary love) in your heart. It will never be fully understood and comprehended but it can be experienced in our own hearts and lives on a daily basis when I remember that "he loved me and gave himself for me" (Gl. 2:20).

Years ago in Britain D. L. Moody met a young man named Henry Morehouse. Fascinated by the great evangelist, Morehouse begged a favor. "Mr. Moody," he said, "if I come to Chicago, will you let me speak in your church?" Not thinking it likely that this youth would ever come to Chicago, Moody carelessly agreed. Sometime later the young man knocked on Moody's door in Chicago. "Hello, Mr. Moody. Remember me? I'm Henry Morehouse. I've come to speak in your church." Reluctantly, Moody made the arrangements. "Never mind," he assured his deacons. "It will only be for one service. He can't do much harm in half an hour. In any case, I'll get up afterward and put things right."

That night Morehouse preached on John 3:16 and spoke of God's love with Holy Spirit power. Moody was deeply moved. The church leaders asked Morehouse to preach again and again. He preached every night for an entire week on John 3:16. Moody had never heard preaching so powerful. Indeed, Morehouse became known as the man who moved the man who moved the multitudes.

The last night came. Again the young visitor announced his usual text and said: "I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you. Suppose I could borrow Jacob's ladder and could climb that shining staircase until at last I stood on the sapphire pavements of the city of God. Suppose I were to seek out Gabriel the herald angel and were to say to him, 'Gabriel, you stand in the presence of God. Tell me, how much does God love the world?' I know exactly what he would say.

He would say, 'Henry Morehouse, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. That's how much God loves the world.'"

We can get a taste of God's love and be overcome by it, but paradoxically it passes all human knowledge and comprehension.

When it comes to experiencing the "fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19) or the "fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), which speaks of experiencing all the spiritual blessings that He wants to give to us is best illustrated by J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman often told of the testimony given by a certain man in one of his meetings: I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, "Hey, mister, can you give me a dime?" As soon as I saw his face I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said, "Father, Father, do you know me?" Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Oh my son, at last I've found you! I've found you. You want a dime? Everything I have is yours." Think of it. I was a tramp. I stood begging my own father for ten cents, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he had.

This is exactly what many Christians need to learn today. Jesus Christ has already given us "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3) and therefore we should stop searching for significance, sanctification, and satisfaction outside of Him. He supplies everything (all the spiritual riches) that we need to live the Christian life. Our union with Christ in His death and resurrection is the key to living victoriously, triumphantly, and consistently in the Christian life.

At this point, we need to speak directly of the importance our union with the heavenly Christ has in relation to our daily victory over sin. The heavenlies is a place or residency where Christ dwells before God's throne but it is also a spiritual position from where God's people derive their spiritual authority over Satan. Our spiritual identity with Christ's authority gives us, as children of God, the authority to repel the enemy's attacks. God's people are seated with Christ in the



heavenly sphere and share in His present victory and authority over Satan (Eph. 1:3; 2:6; Col. 2:10). Because of our ascension with Christ Satan is a defeated foe under Christ's feet and our feet as well since we are spiritually united with Christ. Ephesians 1:22 once again states: "And hath put all things under his feet." This means we can deal with Satan and his demons on the basis of Christ's delegated authority which we have in Christ within the heavenlies. If Satan is under Christ's feet, then, by virtue of our spiritual union with the heavenly Christ, we too can claim that Satan is under our feet! This expression speaks of our victory that we share with Christ over the spirit world.

The epistle of 1 Peter 3:22 echoes the same truth when speaking about Christ: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." Did you catch that? All spiritual authorities (including Satan) are made subject to Christ. Christ has full authority over the entire spirit world and this delegated authority is proven by His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. But lest we forget we must remember that we are there with Christ sharing in His present victory and authority over the entire spirit world. This means that Satan has no power, no rights, and no authority over the believer in Christ!

We must stand firmly on the territory that Christ has already conquered (Eph. 6:14). Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension brought total defeat to Satan. Satan and his cohorts have no choice but to retreat when we insist upon our rights as God's children. Our responsibility is to confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and keep our accounts current with God. We must stand on the promises of the Word (2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20) and wear the armor of God (Eph. 6:13-20). As we do this, we must prayerfully exercise our victorious authority over the enemy. Michael the archangel realized the Lord's authority over Satan when saying, "The Lord rebuke you" (Jude 9).

It's true that believers in Christ are "far above" all created beings (Eph. 1:21). This means we do possess authority over the enemy. Nevertheless, how we exercise this God-given authority is important. Like Michael the archangel we must remember that Satan is a powerful being that cannot be shoved around with some kind of magical words. We must remember that our authority is based upon our position in Christ and we can act boldly only as we are dependent upon Christ and pray in the authority of His name. In other words, we experience our victory and authority that we have in Christ by claiming Christ's power and provision through

prayer (Eph. 6:18; Matt. 26:41). Our authority over Satan is maintained on earth only as we experience our union with Jesus Christ within our hearts and claim our victory in Christ through aggressive and confident prayer.

We must recall 1 John 4:4 which states:

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

“Satan cannot touch my heart
While I’m living in the glory;
This disarms each fiery dart,
Living in the glory of the Lord.
Yes, I’m living in the glory
As He promised in His word;
I am dwelling in the heavenlies,
Living in the glory of the Lord.”

In his great spiritual allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan paints a word picture of a man "who looked no way but downward." This poor creature was groveling on his knees in the dirt and filth, working constantly with a rake, trying to unearth some choice jewel that would enrich his life. All the while a bright diadem of great worth was in reach just above him. The tragedy of it all is summarized by Bunyan in these words, "There stood One over his head with a celestial crown in His hand, and proffered him (offered him) that crown for his muck rake; but the man never looked up as he continued gathering to himself the straw, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor!"



In a similar way, Christians can look downward as they seek earthly solutions for their temptations, troubles, and inner turmoil in life instead of looking upward and remembering where their true victory lies. The victorious crown is ours in our great Victor Christ. We don't have to remain stuck in the mud of worldly defeat and despair. This is because we are "complete in him" (Col. 2:10) or fully supplied with everything we need to live a victorious life because we live in constant union with Jesus Christ.

“Complete in Thee—no more shall sin,
Thy grace hath conquered, reign within;
Thy voice shall bid the tempter flee,
And I shall stand complete in Thee.”

Colossians 2:11-12 explains your identification or union with the victorious Lord as a spiritual operation or supernatural work of God that took place in your life at conversion when the Spirit unites you to Christ (1 Cor. 12:13): “**In whom** (union with Christ) **also ye are circumcised** (the non-physical but



spiritual operation – circumcision or death to the flesh, the fallen sinful nature, which God performs within us by first positionally identifying us with Christ’s crucifixion or death – Rom. 6:3, 6-7) **with the circumcision made without hands** (not physical but spiritual in nature - without man’s physical and legalistic efforts), **in putting off** (laying aside - severing our relationship - breaking us away from) **the body of the sins of the flesh** (as in Romans 6:6 - being positionally released from a slave relationship with a sin-possessed body that was ruled by the sin nature - what you were in Adam - sinful, fallen, depraved, corrupt, and enslaved to the sinful nature through the vehicle of the human body) **by the circumcision of Christ** (the spiritual operation begins with our co-union or sharing in the victory of Christ’s death – Romans 6:6-7): **Buried with him in baptism** (the spiritual operation extends to your co-union or sharing in Christ’s burial where the old life is buried and gone - Romans 6:4a), **wherein also ye are risen with him** (the spiritual operation ends with your co-union or sharing in Christ’s resurrection which results in your new birth, being made alive spiritually and now possessing newness of life - Romans 6:4b-5) **through the faith of the operation** (effectual working) **of God** (faith in the supernatural work of God), **who hath raised him from the dead** (Christ’s resurrection).”

Circumcision with Christ is speaking of believers being set free from their sinful nature through union with Christ. Because of your union with Christ’s circumcision or death, you have died to the old man and its relationship with Adam and sin. This has freed you from the power of sin. The flesh, while still with you, has been

stripped of its legal power over you, and you may enjoy deliverance as you believe the liberating message of union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection life.

Charles Baker summarizes:

"It thus appears from the Divine viewpoint that God saw every believer hanging upon Calvary's cross with Christ; that He saw every believer buried with Christ in Joseph's tomb; that He saw every believer being raised from the dead to live jointly with Christ in a new creation; that He looks upon every believer today as being seated with Christ at His own right hand; and that He will some day glorify every believer with Christ when He is manifested in glory."

Colossians 2:11-13 aligns with Romans 6:1-15 and explains how we came to share a spiritual union with Christ. The spiritual circumcision or operation that occurs at the time of our salvation is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) whereby we become united or spiritually tied to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The analogy of this baptizing union with Christ is that He becomes the Head of the Church (Col. 1:18) and His body consists of those people who are spiritually linked to the Head (Eph.5:23). The baptism of the Holy Spirit which places the believing sinner in union with Christ is what saves us and then enables us to live a sanctified or holy life. "In whom" (Col. 2:11) or "in Christ" means that we have gone through a spiritual operation whereby the old person that we once were under slavery to sin has been put to death and rendered inactive. As a result, we have become a new person by being united to the risen Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). As a result, we can now possess victory over sin through our union and identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection life (Rom. 6:6-8).

This spiritual "circumcision" or operation was "made without hands" (Col. 2:11) meaning it was not accomplished by the legalism related to man. Rather, it was accomplished by the



**SPIRITUAL
CIRCUMCISION**

operation of God (Col. 2:12). God did it all! And God continues to do it all as we live in reliance upon Christ for daily victory ("yet not I" – Gal. 2:20). We cannot possess salvation or victory through legalism, which is man's personal effort to gain salvation (Acts 15:1) and sanctification (Rom. 7:11-25) through his own strength and ability. Because believers are "in Christ" they possess everything that they need for salvation and victory. This is because he has already passed through the spiritual

operation that caused us to share in Christ's victorious death, burial, and resurrection life.

The Holy Spirit baptizes us or immerses us in the death, burial and resurrection life of Jesus Christ so that we have complete fullness in Him (John 1:16; Eph. 1:23; Col. 2:10), or have everything that we need for salvation and victory over sin or Satan. We have already shared in Christ's victory and we can claim this truth by faith and walk in the daily power of the risen Christ, or as Paul said, "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). The result of our saving and regenerating operation with Christ is expressed in the words of Colossians 2:13 when it states how we were "quickened together with him" or made alive together with Christ! To be made alive speaks of the new birth. We not only experience a togetherness in Christ's death but also a togetherness in Christ's resurrection life (Rom. 6:6, 8; Gal. 2:20). We are identified with Christ's death and resurrection so that a born again person can be created by the supernatural working of God's grace.

Someone expressed the new birth in this way:

"To be born again or regenerated means that the circuit breakers are repaired and we are put back into contact with God."

This is the secret of living! We are made alive with Jesus Christ when we were raised with Him in new life. In other words, we were given a new birth that consists of sharing Christ's life and nature (2 Pet. 1:4). With Christ, I possess life and victory and out of Him, I can only experience death and defeat (Eph. 2:1-2). The new birth and new life we possess today is the direct result of sharing the resurrection life of Jesus. Our risen life with Jesus Christ is the secret to living victoriously (Phil. 1:21; 3:10). Christianity is Christ. The Christian life is Christ living His life in and through the believer. For this reason, I don't need psychology, psychoanalyses, psychotherapy, and all the other quack remedies being peddled and promoted today within the ranks of Christendom. Nothing else works (Rom. 7:7-25) and nothing else matters but Christ (Phil. 1:21). I have Christ, what want I more!

"By various maxims, forms, and rules,
That pass for wisdom in the schools,
I sought my passions to restrain;
But all my efforts proved in vain.
But since my Saviour I have known

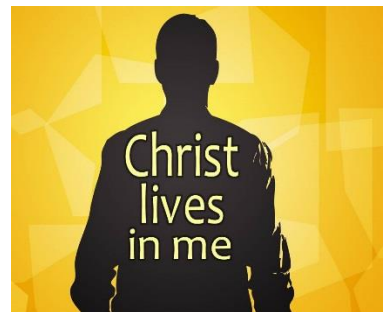
My rules are all reduced to one,
To keep my Lord by faith in view,
This strength supplies and motive too.”

The Bible teaches that the believer is spiritually united with the crucifixion of Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), the burial of Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:5; Col. 3:1) and the ascension of Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:5). As we have repeatedly shared in this study, the term “heavenlies” (Eph. 1:3; 2:5) refers not only to the place where the glorified Jesus resides but also that sphere of spiritual existence in Christ that believers share. The idea of “heavenlies” points to the spiritual union that believers share with Christ in Heaven which is a victorious position from which we receive salvation, safety, and sanctification.

Our “in Christ” union results in a new position of acceptance before God, peace before God, pardon, provision, privilege, power, perfection, protection, and personal fellowship with Christ and the Father. Yes, the moment we receive Christ as our Savior (John 1:12) is the moment that we begin to share Christ’s life and from this point and forward we are “together forever.” We must recognize our union with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3) before the Father’s throne (our position) and claim our riches. At the same time, we should also realize our relational union with Christ in our hearts, as we walk by faith down here on earth (our practice), claiming Christ’s power and sufficiency in our daily lives to meet our every need (Rom. 6:1-15; Phil. 3:10). There must be a constant and daily awareness of Christ’s life within us, a spiritual togetherness and fellowship, a dependency upon Christ



for strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. The secret is “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27) and “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20).



“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and He talks with me
Along life's narrow way.
He lives, He live, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives:
He lives within my heart.”

Christ takes up residency in our lives spiritually while we dwell here on earth (Gal. 2:20) in order to impress upon our hearts the union and position we share with Him in Heaven, who at this very moment is physically alive in the heavenlies before the Father's throne. We are to live on resurrection ground, ascension ground, and claim our spiritual wealth or riches that we possess in Christ. We are to experience this shared union we have with Christ in both Heaven (Eph. 2:6) and also in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). Allowing Christ's power and provision to meet our spiritual needs on this earth, as Christ lives within us and we yield to Him (Rom. 6:12-14), can only occur when we realize our exalted and victorious position we have in Christ within heavenly places. The sufficiency of Christ's power (2 Cor. 3:5) in relation to our earthly existence is experienced as we understand and apply our exalted union and position in Christ within the heavenly places to our daily lives. Christ's work "in us" is based upon His position "above us." This is why we must stay focused on Christ's heavenly position, authority, and victory.



We have mentioned Colossians 3:1-3 earlier in our study, but I will give you a brief closing summary of these verses with some added discussion on our heavenly position in Christ. Our heart is to be in the heavenlies – not in the earthlies! **“If ye then be risen with Christ** (to the heavenly places – God’s presence - where we share a spiritual union with Christ – Eph. 1:3; 2:5), **seek** (stay mentally focused, meditate, and desire) **those things which are above** (the “heavenly” character traits of Christ Himself - His righteousness, love, holiness, purity, mercy, grace, gentleness, patience, etc. but also the heavenly victory and authority He possesses over sin and Satan as the resurrected Lord), **where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God** (within the throne room of Heaven – Heb. 1:3; 8:1). **Set your affection on things above** (your mind, focus and interests on those things that relate in general to the POSITION, POWER, POSSESSIONS, PRIVILEGES, PROVISIONS, and PERFECTIONS that we share with Christ in the heavenlies and more specifically reflecting on Christ’s character, presence, authority, victories, and ways, so we can implement all of these “above things” in our daily lives), **not on things on the earth** (worldly and worthless things such as self, sinful pleasures and perverted priorities – 1 John 2:15-17). **For ye are dead** (our union with Christ’s death to our old way of living under sin’s power – Rom. 6:6-8, 11; 2 Tim. 2:11), **and our life** (our union in Christ’s

resurrection and ascension to a new way of life – Rom. 6:4, 8, 11; Col. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:11) **is hid with Christ in God**” (our life is hidden and therefore protected from sin and Satan in the heavenly places, the very throne room of God, where Christ, who is God, is living today and where we share a spiritual union with Him).

The call to the heavenly life is not an escape, but an engagement to a new way of living!

A.T. Pierson said:

“From the moment of faith in Christ, being thus bound to Him and identified with Him, there should be an absolute cessation of all known sin – nay, more, the level of earth should be left below and behind for a new level of an essentially heavenly life – lived in Christ.”

The secret to victory is our union with Jesus Christ (“where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” – Col. 3:1). Where is our victory? It’s “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Again, we must know WHERE we are if we want to experience victory! We must go to the throne room if we want victory! We must enter confidently and with assurance that we are there with Jesus Christ who is the great Victor and divine helper of our souls (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16). Each believer is seated with Christ in heavenly places. He stands as a victor in Christ’s victory and possesses His daily power to overcome sin. Our mind must be fixed upon Jesus Christ and His victory, power, and person. It is in the throne room where we find daily help and assistance.

“O Lord, remove whate’er divides
Our longing souls from Thee;
‘Tis fit that where the Head resides
The members’ hearts should be.”

Roy Laurin said:

“Everything has what we call a center of gravity, for gravity tends to draw all things to a common center. Owing to gravitation all bodies on the earth are drawn toward its center. In the spiritual realm of our position every Christian has a center of gravity. It is Jesus Christ. Since He is risen and seated with Christ, the spiritual center of gravity is ‘where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.’”

The words “set your affection” in Colossians 3:1 means “to seek or strive for something earnestly.” It centers more on the mind than it does the feelings. A person’s actions are the result of his thinking (Phil. 4:8). Therefore, the believer is to engage in heavenly thinking by changing his earthly point of view. This is good advice! We are to think on those things that are above. We need an upward attraction!

John Phillips said:

“The psychologist says to all such, ‘Look within.’ The opportunist says, ‘Look around.’ The optimist says, ‘Look ahead.’ The pessimist says, ‘Look out!’ God says, ‘Look up!’ We are to set our affection on things above.”

“Rise my soul, behold ‘tis Jesus!
Jesus fills thy wondering eyes:
See him now in glory seated,
Where thy sins no more can rise.”



Seeking things above means we must focus on Christ’s character or His life of joy, peace, holiness, and righteousness instead of our own earthly and selfish living. In seeking things above we learn to actively meditate on Christ’s virtues and victory instead of our own self and sins. We begin to bind ourselves to His ways and values. Each believer should keep his mind on the heavenly Christ for it’s through Christ we discover a heavenly pattern for life, a heavenly power for life, a heavenly program for life, and a heavenly prospect for life.

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of his glory and grace.”

Here are a few explanations of what it means to seek things above.

Curtis Vaughan said: “To seek the things that are above is to desire, to strive for the things above. It is to see to it that our interests are centered in Christ, that our

attitudes, our ambitions, and our whole outlook on life are molded by our relation to Him.”

Homer Kent has also stated it well:

“The apostle is referring to those thoughts which find their source and their direction in the new life which believers share with Christ above. These are the concepts which are wholesome and edifying because the regenerated life which Christ bestows has provided new goals, new insights, and a new mindset whose object is holiness.”

When we “Set your affection on things above, not on earthly things,” we will live for eternal things and not the temporary and fleshly things of this present world. The “things above” are contrasted to the “things on earth” (Col. 3:2) which are manmade, carnal, philosophical, and non-eternal things (Col. 2:20-23; 3:5-9). The believer’s response to their position in Christ and union with Him should be one of continually seeking the “above things” of Colossians 3:10-15 instead of the below things of this life (Matt. 6:19-21). God wants us to live above the world. We are *in* the world but not *of* the world. Earthliness or worldliness can become a detrimental problem to each one of us.



Someone said,

“We are not only bogged down in it, but we help to create the swamp.”

We need to set our minds on things above. In other words, we should constantly possess a new way of thinking and continually be forming new goals that are in line with the character and life of Jesus Christ. Our affections, desires, longings, and wills should be directed toward Jesus Christ since we have a living union with Him in Heaven.

Why should the believer set his attention on heavenly things (Christ's character and ways) and no longer live for earthy things? It's because the old person we used to be with its interests, affections and desires has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). The concept that we have died with Christ ("For ye are dead" – Col. 3:3) refers to the believer's identification with Christ's death and the victory achieved over sin and Satan through His death on the cross (Rom. 6:6). We have died in Jesus Christ to all that we once were as children of Adam and now we have a new spiritual tie with the risen life of Jesus Christ in Heaven ("If ye then be risen with Christ" – Col. 1:3). The things that are on earth such as material wealth, worldly honor, power, pleasures, personal sins, and selfish living should not overtake our heavenly thinking and living. When we set our mind on the heavenly Christ, His person, power, and program for our lives, it's then that we will no longer live as if this world was all that mattered.

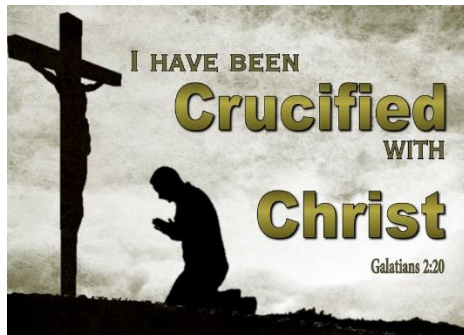
Living "the above life" (focusing our attention and affections on our victorious union with Christ in the heavenlies) is what is most important in life and we can live victoriously when we are experiencing our risen life with Christ! We have a new set of values and standards that comes from another world, which is Heaven, the place where we share our union with Jesus Christ. We are now one with Jesus Christ ("Christ, who is our life" – vs. 4) and share His life and nature. As a result, we should now live and act according to His person and experience His power in our lives. Never forget that the Christian life is a shared life! Because of this we should think like Christ and live, as He wants us to live, since we are sharing His life. The underlying thought of our heavenly union with Christ is this. We should allow His life to work itself out and express itself in every thought we think, deed we do, or decision we make (Phil. 2:12 – "work out your salvation").



Galatians 2:20 explains it like this:

"I am (have been) **crucified with Christ** (our union with Christ's death, which renders us dead to our old condemning relationship to God's Law, as in Galatians 2:19, the time when we lived in defeat and were ruled by the power of sin, as in Gal. 5:24 = MORTIFICATION): **nevertheless I live** (through our union with Christ's resurrection life = REGENERATION and new life); **yet not I** (I do not live by my own power and strength = LEGALISM), **but Christ liveth in me** (to grant me power and victory = LIBERTY): **and the life which I now live in the flesh** (my earthly body and

existence) **I live by the faith of the Son of God, (RELIANCE on Christ's resurrection life and power within me) who loved me, and gave himself for me" (MOTIVATION that keeps me going in the right direction).**



In one sense, we were “born crucified” as L.E. Maxwell stated. Think about this. We were crucified with Christ (our union and identification in Christ’s death) in order to bring us out of our state of condemnation, despair, and defeat under the Law (our old unsaved and enslaving position of condemnation). However, at the same time we born again spiritually by being united to Christ’s life which resulted in the infusion of Christ’s resurrection life within our spirit (John 3:6-8). We were “born crucified” because in our new birth experience we died to the old person that we used to be under sin’s bondage and power (Rom. 6:6 - “our old man is crucified with him” and Rom. 6:8 – “we be dead with Christ”). Yes, I have been crucified! Nevertheless, I live! We are born again but born already dead to the power of sin over our lives! The new birth transaction brought death and life to us at the same time through our incredible identification with Christ’s death and resurrection. Born crucified! This is the wonder of the ages!

We can’t live the Christian life! It’s Christ living through us that makes all the difference. There is no legalism (self-effort) in this new relationship with Christ. I can’t justify myself before God nor can I sanctify myself in order to live for God. Paul is saying that the ‘I’ of Galatians 2:19 (“I through the law”), which related to the old person, is no longer in control of his life. The old man (Rom. 6:6) or person we used to be under sin’s power (the old “I”) has been “crucified” or put to death. We are no longer that person by virtue of our union in Christ’s death which defeated the power of sin over our lives. Instead, I am now a “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). We are no longer the old “I” or person that we used to be under sin’s power and slavery. That’s what Paul means when he states, “Yet not I” (Gal. 2:20). We have been delivered from our old “I” and have become a totally new, born again, and victorious person emancipated from sin’s bondage.

Paul is teaching that it can’t be “I” (the old person I used to be) for the old “I” has been put to death with Christ. The old relationship we had with legalism (the “I” relationship), when we trusted in our own power and performance to sanctify us

and send us to Heaven, that old relationship with sin and self is gone forever. There was no “I” left in Paul’s vocabulary! The “I” was removed from his life. The old person he used to be was gone (had died) and a new person has emerged in Christ. The old self-righteous, self-centered Saul died, and the new Christ-centered Paul lives! The same is true for all of us and this should become practical in our Christian walk and experience.

Augustine was in Milan when God touched his heart and changed his life. He then left his former life of license (he even had an illegitimate son). When he returned home, his former girlfriend called to him: “Augustine, Augustine, it is I.” He turned and said: “Yes, but it is not I.” My friend, has the old “I” been ruling your life as a Christian? Do you have an “I” problem? You don’t need to see an optometrist; you need to remember what Christ has done for you once again! We have been transformed by God’s grace. We have been freed from the old “I” relationship under sin’s power and slavery because of our union in Christ’s death and resurrection. To God be the glory!

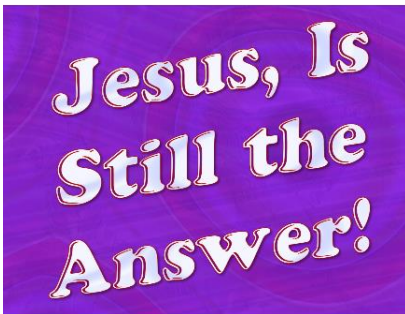
“How can I say thanks for the things
You have done for me?
Things so undeserved yet You gave
To prove Your love for me.
The voices of a million angels
Could not express my gratitude
All that I am, and ever hope to be
I owe it all to Thee.”

Our new life is really Christ living His life in us and through us (“Christ liveth in me”). Yes, Christ lives within me! He brings into my life true meaning, fulfillment, and victory. He gives me everything I need to go in my Christian life. He meets my spiritual and emotional needs in life and enables me to live life on a higher plain.

“I’m pressing on the upward way,
New heights I’m gaining every day;
Still praying as I’m onward bound,
“Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

One Christian woman shared this. "Before the lunch hour rush at the restaurant where I waitress, I recited a memory verse to myself--Galatians 2:20, 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' To my surprise, the words that came out as I greeted my first table weren't the usual 'Hello, are you ready to order?' but instead, 'Hello, are you ready to live?' The couple had a sense of humor and I even had the opportunity to share the verse with them." What is Galatians 2:20 saying in a nutshell? Jesus is still the answer!



"Jesus is still the answer
And though time and ages roll
Jesus is still the answer
He's the answer for your soul.
And though some may say
That He doesn't fit with their philosophy
I know Jesus is still the answer
He's always been and always will be."

Some of you are just existing in life but you are not really living. The Christ life is an amazing life of transformation and fulfillment. Stop existing and start living! "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). The true Christian life is not so much a believer's living for Christ as it is Christ living through the believer. I am to live "by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20) which suggests that the indwelling Christ is to be the object of our faith. We are to live by a constant faith in the Son of God's power, provision, and personal presence for victory.

We can live by faith on a daily basis just as we became Christians by faith (Gal. 2:16). "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col. 2:6). Faith in both cases means trust in Christ. My entire life is to be one of complete dependence upon Christ. This is because we cannot advance in our Christian walk without faith. This is a daily faith that rests in Christ not only for salvation before God (justification) but also sanctification in the Christian life (victory). The Christian

lives by continual dependence on Christ! All my trust, confidence, and faith must be directed to Him for both my salvation and victory.

J. Hudson Taylor once said:

“Since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I am dead and buried with Christ—ay, and risen too! And now Christ lives in me, and ‘the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me’ [Gal. 2:20]. Nor should we look upon this experience, these truths, as for the few. They are the birthright of every child of God, and no one can dispense with them without dishonoring our Lord”

As a pastor, I have often stood beside a person, one of my parishioners, who had recently died. All that was left was a corpse. I am aware that he or she was now dead to my voice or touch. I could have no more influence in that person’s life. The same is true about my old manner of life or the “old man” (Rom. 6:6) I used to be. The old man should no longer have any more influence or control over my life. The old person under the power of sin no longer has to surface in my life since I have moved out of the sphere of the old ways into the new life with Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The old life no longer must control us or appeal to us since we are raised with Christ and are seated with Him in the heavenlies. If we can put what happened to us in the lingo of the 70’s, “The old things just don’t turn us on anymore.”

Recently while reading J. Sidlow Baxter, I came across this statement.

"Far too many Christians live their life on the battery system." He went on to explain that as a boy he had ridden on battery driven street cars. When the battery was charged all was well; but when it went dead, so was the street car. Baxter goes on to make this comparison: “There are Christian believers who seem to run their spiritual life and service on that system. They go to a convention on the deeper life and when they return they are altogether different, for three weeks. Or they read some powerful Christian biography and as they close the book they say, "Now my life will never be the same." Nor is it, for three weeks. Some Christians go from crisis to crisis, convention to convention, seminar to seminar, book to book, but have a lot of dead spots in between. They seem to rely on these experiences rather than on Christ.”

Our union with Christ means that God places us in a spiritual oneness with Christ’s person and work. As a result, we receive a new position and power with the living

Christ whereby the old bondage to Satan and the fear of Satan has been broken in our lives (Luke 11:21-22; Heb. 2:14-15). Satan wants us to think that we are defenseless in light of his awesome power. But we must know the Biblical basis for our invincible position that we have in Christ. We must claim our victory through our union with the resurrected Christ. Christ's victory over sin and Satan has become ours in Christ for "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Since we are in Christ we can communicate with His life on a daily basis (Rom. 6:8), experience our living union with Him, and claim our position of victory in Him – the risen Christ.

Philippians 4:13 promises:

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Do you really believe this today? Have you been in touch and tune with Jesus Christ, relying on Him for your every need? Have you been experiencing Christ's power through His life-giving and life-sustaining union that He has with you?

Miles Stanford again writes:

"We must always remember the power that we have because we have a union with the Victor, Jesus Christ, who defeated Satan and now we now share in His powerful life on a daily and moment-by-moment basis (Gal. 2:20). We should not have an inadequate concept of our Biblical union with Christ and position in Christ. We must know that "we are in him" (1 John 5:20) and claim the victory we have through our union with Christ."



We are on the victory side and Satan is on the losing side! We are the victors and Satan is the loser! 2 Corinthians 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."

It's also worth repeating: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). What is more, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).



“We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us so.
The Christ who dwells within us is the greatest power we know,
He will fight beside us though the enemy be great.
Who can stand against us?
He's the Captain of our fate.
Then we conquer never fear, So let the battle rage.
He has promised to be near until the end of the age.
We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us so.
The Christ who dwells within us is the greatest power we know.”

Dear friend, our lives are many times too earthbound. Our lives need to become heavenly oriented as we think and act on Christ's glorious power, victory, character, and ways before the Father's throne (“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” - Col. 3:2). The old adage which says, “You are too heavenly minded to be any earthly good” is simply not true. The believer needs to be heavenly minded or he will become earth bound to the pressures of sin, self, and Satan. Spurgeon said that the third chapter of Colossians begins in Heaven (Col. 3:1-4) and ends in the kitchen (Col. 3:5-25) or in the everyday norm of living. This is because our heavenly union with Christ is to have a positive earthly effect on our lives. It should lead us to put off the old person and put on the new person that we are in the risen Christ (Col. 3:8-14). By realizing our identification with Christ and acting upon it, our *condition* should be made to agree with our *position*. Remember once again that our positional union with Christ in Heaven (Eph. 1:3) is made applicable to our lives only as we experience our practical union with Christ who lives within us (Gal. 2:20).

Someone wrote these words concerning the believer experiencing daily victory in his life when applying the risen union and position that we possess with Christ in the heavenlies.

“There is no glory halo
Round his devoted head,
No luster, marks of sacred path
In which his footsteps tread.
But holiness is graven
Upon his thoughtful brow,
And all his steps are ordered
In the light of heaven e'en now.

For he doth live in touch with heaven
A life of faith and prayer;
His hope, his purposes and his all,
His life is centered there.”



A man stopped me in the mall during the Christmas season and told me that he had something amazing to show my life. It had something to do with creating better nails. Well, it wasn't what I was looking for at the Christmas season and it wasn't so amazing! But I have something amazing to share with you today. A hell-bound sinner can be raised with Christ (“raised together with him” – Col. 2:13) into the

heavenlies (the throne room of God within Heaven), be forgiven of all his sins (Col. 2:13 – “forgiven you all trespasses”), which results in him gaining full and final acceptance before God and victory over the power of sin and Satan. Now this is truly amazing! Yes, it's amazing grace! It is what Paul termed as “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).

In summary, because of our union and position we have in Christ, we have everything we need for both salvation and living a sanctified and victorious life that is pleasing to God. Since the saints are in Christ, seated or positioned within the heavenlies (before God's throne), having been reckoned by God to be dead, buried, resurrected and ascended with Christ, we have been given every spiritual blessing imaginable. In the Old Testament way of thinking, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you...” (Joshua 1:3). Have you been experiencing the riches that you possess in Christ? Have you been walking in the complete provision that your position in Christ provided for you? Grace says, “I have given unto you” and this is what Christ does for us in the spiritual realms of both salvation and sanctification in the Christian life. He has given everything to us! Now claim it, live it, and experience the wonder of Christ's sufficiency in your life.

Through our union and identification with Christ we have been and always will be “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3). We are to keep our minds on the heavenlies, staying focused on Christ and His life, setting our affection on those things above (Col. 3:2) – Christ's PERSON, POWER, PROVISION,

PROTECTION and PRIVILEGES. As we have seen in this study, Jesus Christ is our SALVATION, SOURCE, SUSTAINER, SANCTIFICATION, and total SUFFICIENCY for our life. We apply this heavenly position to our daily life while living on earth as we experiencing the wonder and glory of our spiritual union with Jesus Christ, who lives within us (Gal. 2:20). “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). In our daily union with Christ we experience COMMUNION, COMPANIONSHIP, and COMPLETENESS in Him (Col. 2:10). Griffith Thomas said: “Christianity is Christ.” Jesus is enough! He is enough for my salvation, sanctification, and satisfaction in life.

“Jesus is all the world to me,
My life, my joy, my all;
He is my strength from day to day,
Without Him I would fall.

When I am sad, to Him I go,
No other one can cheer me so;
When I am sad, He makes me glad,
He’s my Friend.

Jesus is all the world to me,
I want no better Friend;
I trust Him now, I’ll trust Him when
Life’s fleeting days shall end.
Beautiful life with such a Friend,
Beautiful life that has no end;
Eternal life, eternal joy,
He’s my Friend.”

This is the Christ life! The deeper life is actually the life of Christ living in and through the believer. It’s living in accord with our position in Christ. To those Christians who understand union and positional truth and apply this doctrine to their daily lives, they can live and experience what many call today “a deeper life.” However, if we want to go deeper in our Christian experience and walk we must actually go higher, by remembering our heavenly union with Christ and then applying our heavenly position to our hearts and lives while we live out our lives on earth.

In summary, living in the heavenlies defines WHERE we are (spiritually united with Christ in God’s throne room – Eph. 2:5-6), WHO we are (a recipient of Christ’s full

and complete spiritual provisions – Col. 2:10), and WHAT we are (a new creature in Christ – 2 Cor. 5:17) and possess (all spiritual riches and blessings associated with salvation and sanctification – Eph. 1:3). Our position in the heavenlies is the foundation or basis for all of our spiritual blessings.

As I finish this study about reflecting upon our position with Christ, the old chorus that we used to sing in my college days comes to my mind. It went like this:

“I’m in the heavenlies in Christ,
I’m in the heavenlies in Christ,
The place of power and prayer
In Christ I’m seated there,
I’m in the heavenlies in Christ.”

