

# THE BELIEVER'S STANDING AND STATE

Every believer has a wonderful standing in grace: "By whom also we have access by faith into this \_\_\_\_\_ wherein we \_\_\_\_\_, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). As the hymn says, "Born of the Spirit with life from above, into God's family divine; justified fully through Calvary's love, **O WHAT A STANDING IS MINE!**"

A believer's standing has to do with his POSITION, his status as a child of God, how God sees him in Christ. It has to do with all that is true of the believer because he is saved by grace (see our paper entitled *215 THINGS THAT ARE TRUE OF ME NOW THAT I AM SAVED*).

The following needs to be noted about a believer's STANDING in Christ:

- 1) **It is the result of the work of Christ on the cross.**
- 2) **It becomes mine by personal faith in Jesus Christ the moment I am saved.** It is not gained by prayer or diligence in service or by church attendance or by any good work at all. It is all the gift of God received by faith.
- 3) **It is perfect.** My standing will never improve or get better. It is already the best it will ever be. For example, as part of my standing I have complete forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness is a perfect forgiveness. The forgiveness I have will never improve or get better. I cannot improve on perfect forgiveness. I had this perfect forgiveness the day I was saved and I will have this same forgiveness the day I die.
- 4) **My standing is the same as every other child of God.** We share an equal standing, an equal position, an equal status. Find the most carnal believer you can find who lived during the past 2000 years and put him next to the Apostle Paul, one of the godliest saints who ever lived. **Paul's standing is no better than the standing of this carnal believer.** Both share an equal standing. When it comes to the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be great differences between believers with respect to rewards and loss of rewards, but when it comes to our standing in Christ, there is no difference. *"The weakest person, if he be but a true*

*believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, has precisely the same title as the most illustrious saint"*  
(C.I.Scofield, Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth).

5. My standing is wholly based on grace. I do not deserve any of it. I am not worthy of any of it. It is by God's grace that I stand perfect and complete in Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:2).

## The Believer's State

It is important to make a careful distinction between a believer's STANDING and a believer's STATE. What is the believer's STATE?

When we speak of a believer's STATE we are referring to the actual spiritual condition or state that he is in at any given point of time. It has to do with the believer's WALK, the way the believer lives and conducts himself. His state will depend upon many factors, such as whether he trusts the Lord or not, whether he abides in Christ or not, whether he obeys the Word of God or not, etc.

Note the contrast between Hebrews 10:14 and Philippians 3:12 when it comes to Christian perfection. Is Hebrews 10:14 referring to a believer's standing or state? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is Philippians 3:12 referring to a believer's standing or state? \_\_\_\_\_

Please note the following about a believer's state:

1. **My state falls far short of perfection.** "For in \_\_\_\_\_ things we \_\_\_\_\_ all (James 3:2). [In James 3:2 the word "all" is the subject, not the object. The meaning is this: "We all offend."] "If we say that we have no \_\_\_\_\_, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).
2. **My state can improve or it can get worse!**  
Read Galatians 5:7. Did the state of the Galatians improve or get worse?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians to improve in their state and in their walk with God and to please God more and more.
3. **My state is not the same as every other child of God.** Some believers are consistently walking in the Spirit; others are often walking in the flesh. Some are carnal and others are spiritual. Some are trusting in God; others are trusting in SELF.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Questions:** Does Romans 5:1 ("peace with God") refer to STANDING or STATE?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Do all believers have "peace with God"? \_\_\_\_\_ Does Philippians 4:6-7 ("peace of God") refer to STANDING or STATE? \_\_\_\_\_ Do all believers enjoy the "peace of God" (freedom from worry, freedom from anxiety, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

The difference between STANDING and STATE may also be described as the difference between POSITION and PRACTICE. God has baptized the believer into Jesus Christ and thus He has POSITIONED the believer **in His Son**. As to our POSITION we are "IN CHRIST"--"Therefore if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

We are new creatures in Christ [this is **our POSITION**], but do we LIVE as new creatures [this has to do with our **PRACTICE**]? Consider the example of the PRINCE AND THE PAUPER. The prince lived like a pauper (a very poor person). As to his standing he was a prince, the son of the king. As to his state he was a pauper. He was a prince but he did not live like one. He did not live princely!

"A prince, while he is a little child, is presumably as wilful and as ignorant as other little children. Sometimes he may be very obedient and teachable and affectionate, and then he is happy and approved. At other times he may be unruly, self-willed, and disobedient, and then he is unhappy, and perhaps is chastised—but he is just as much a prince on the one day as on the other. It may be hoped that, as time goes on, he will learn to bring himself into willing and affectionate subjection to every right way, and then he will be more princely, but not more really a prince. He was born a prince" (C.I.Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*).

We may also speak of the difference between a believer's CALLING and a believer's WALK. Does 1 Thessalonians 4:1 refer to a holy walk or a holy calling? \_\_\_\_\_ Does 1 Thessalonians 4:7 refer to a holy walk or a holy calling? \_\_\_\_\_ See 2 Timothy 1:9--"Who hath saved us, and called us with an \_\_\_\_\_, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Every believer has been called with a HOLY CALLING. We are called to be SAINTS (holy ones).

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye \_\_\_\_\_ of the VOCATION [CALLING] wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1). We should have a WALK that is **worthy** of our CALLING. A holy walk should match a holy calling! Those who are CALLED to be saints ought to live saintly!

Read 1 Corinthians 1:2,8; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17. How would you describe the STANDING of the Corinthians?

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Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. How would you describe the STATE of the Corinthians?

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Every believer has a glorious standing in the grace of God, has been positioned in God's Son, is a child of God, is a saint of the Most High God, has been seated in heavenly places in Christ and has been called unto holiness. This is our most excellent STANDING and POSITION.

One of the important principles of Christian living is this: **Our walk (state) should be in accord with our standing.** By faith we are to see our standing (see how God sees us IN CHRIST) and WALK ACCORDINGLY!

Consider Ephesians 5:8--"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord: \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_." According to this verse, what was the POSITION of the Ephesians believers? \_\_\_\_\_ How were they to walk? \_\_\_\_\_ Paul was exhorting them in this way: BE WHAT YOU ARE! You are a child of the light! Walk accordingly! See Ephesians 5:3. The Ephesian believers were SAINTS. How then were they to walk? \_\_\_\_\_ Saints are to live saintly!

By faith I need to see myself as God sees me. I need to see my position and standing in Christ, and then live accordingly! Consider Galatians 5:25. Write out the part of this verse that has to do with the believer's STANDING (something true of every believer)? \_\_\_\_\_ Write out the part of the verse has to do with the believer's STATE (something that **ought to be true** of every believer)? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Accepted in the Beloved

Consider the example of our ACCEPTANCE before God. Ephesians 1:6 says: "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us \_\_\_\_\_ in the

beloved [One]." [Note: The word "accepted" actually comes from the word "grace." It means that God has GRACED us in the beloved. In other words, God has highly favored us in Christ. The same word is used of Mary in Luke 1:28--"highly favored."] God has graciously accepted us. He has favored us! He delights in us! He fully and freely accepts us.

We are ACCEPTED "in the beloved." This phrase should remind us of Matthew 3:17 (Christ's baptism) and Matthew 17:5 (Christ's transfiguration)--"This is my BELOVED SON in whom I am well pleased!" God is well pleased with His Son. God delights in His Son. Jesus said, "I do always those things that \_\_\_\_\_ Him" (John 8:29). As I believe, I am IN CHRIST. It is because I am IN THE BELOVED ONE that God is well pleased with me. I have full acceptance with God. For God to disapprove of me He would have to disapprove of His Son. For God to be displeased with me, He would have to be displeased by His Son!

Is Ephesians 1:6 describing the believers STANDING or STATE?

\_\_\_\_\_ Is this something that is true of every believer? \_\_\_\_\_

The believer has full acceptance, complete acceptance, eternal acceptance! God is well pleased with me. Have I accepted this FACT? God delights in me because I am in His beloved Son! Have I claimed that fact by faith? Am I rejoicing in this fact? Do I see myself as one who is the constant delight of the Father's heart? Why is this so? It is not because of who I am or what I have done. It is only because of Jesus Christ and because God in His grace has placed me and positioned me in the Son of His love, the Son in whom He delights.

Near, so very near to God,  
I could not nearer be;  
For in the Person of God's Son  
I am as near as He.

Dear, so very dear to God,  
Dearer I could not be;  
The love with which He loves His Son,  
That is His love to me.

--CATESBY PAGET

# Am I Well-Pleasing to Him?

And yet, there is another side to our acceptance: "Wherefore we labour [we are ambitious], that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of (by) Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). The word "accepted" means well pleasing. In Ephesians 1:6 Paul declared the wonderful FACT that every believer is accepted in the beloved One. In 2 Corinthians 5:9 we read something different because it says that the believer may or may not be accepted or well pleasing to the Lord. Paul says, "It is our ambition, our aim, our desire that we may be well-pleasing to Him!" Is this verse (2 Cor. 5:9) talking about the believer's STANDING or STATE? \_\_\_\_\_ As to his STANDING can a believer fail to be well pleasing to God? \_\_\_\_\_ As to his STATE can a believer fail to be well pleasing to God? \_\_\_\_\_

Someone might say, "I'm in Christ and I am IN THE BELOVED ONE, and therefore I am always well pleasing to God. I always please Him because He always sees me in Christ." There is a sense in which this is true. Positionally this is how God sees the believer, but God also sees the believer's actual state and walk in time which may or may not be pleasing to Him.

We need to let our practice match our position: "Lord, I am accepted in the beloved, well pleasing to You because of Jesus Christ, and as I rejoice in that fact I want to be well pleasing to You in all I do. I need to be what I am! I am well-pleasing to God and I want to be that! I'm a delight to the heart of God and I want to be that in the way I walk and in the way I talk! I have God's smile ever upon me because I'm in His Son, and I want to walk in such a way so as to never see His frown!" Our POSITION should be the basis of our PRACTICE!

We should let the FACT of our full acceptance overwhelm the FEELING of our lack of acceptance. Don't focus upon all the times you have not pleased Christ, but confess your sins (1 John 1:9), leave them at the cross and focus upon the fact that in Christ you are well pleasing to the Father and the delight of His heart. Then operate from that basis. Let the FACTS of your position (your standing) encourage your heart!

The more we by faith claim the FACTS of our position, the more we will reflect our position by our practice. By FAITH I see myself as a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17); I claim this FACT and by FAITH I walk more and more like a new creature. The goal is that my actual STATE will match my STANDING. *"The student cannot fail to notice, also, that the divine order, under grace, is first to give the highest possible standing and then to exhort the believer to maintain a*

*state in accordance therewith. The beggar is lifted up from the dung-hill and set among princes (1 Samuel 2:8), and then exhorted to be princely" (C.I.Scofield, Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth).*

The problem is often that we focus upon our **CONDITION** rather than our **POSITION**. We get very discouraged as we focus upon the way that we have been living and the way we have been walking. We think about our failures to be all that a believer should be. The more we look at our state and our condition, the more discouraged we will be. We will feel like a failure. Instead we need to focus upon **OUR POSITION** in Christ: "I'm a child of God. I'm accepted in the beloved. The Spirit of God lives in me. I've been called unto holiness. I'm a saint. I'm a new creature in Christ. I have complete forgiveness of all sins. I have peace with God. I'm so thankful for all that God has done for me!" **LET THE FACTS OF YOUR POSITION OVERWHELM THE FEELINGS OF YOUR CONDITION.**

The more we focus upon the **FACTS** of our position the more encouraged we will be. We will see ourselves as God sees us **IN CHRIST**. We will rejoice in **WHO WE ARE** in Christ. Before we engage in some activity, we can catch ourselves and say, "Hey, I'm a saint! I am a servant of the Most High God! I am a citizen of heaven! I am a child of the King. I need to live accordingly with God's strength and enabling power."

Someday my standing and state will be equal! Someday my **PRACTICE** will perfectly match my **POSITION**! I will not only be a saint, but I will live saintly. I will not only be a new creature, but I will always live like one. I will have a perfect walk that will match my perfect standing. I will not only be in the heavenlies in position but I will be there in state. Not only will I be a citizen of heaven, but I will be in heaven, living a heavenly life with all of God's saints. **Today let us practice being what we someday shall be!**

## A Personal Illustration by William MacDonald

Please allow me to illustrate how the distinction between standing and state helped me through a difficult period in my life. After I was saved, I used to hear people quote 2 Corinthians 5:17 when they gave their testimony: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

They would tell of the wonderful transformation that had taken place in their lives—how all the old things had passed away and all things had become new. I would sit there and think, "I wish I could say that all the old things had passed away in my life, and that all things had become new." But it wasn't so. I still had some of

the old habits, some evil thoughts, displays of anger, and many other graveclothes from my pre-converted days. At times I doubted my salvation.

Then one day I noticed the phrase “in Christ,” and my heart leaped with joy. I realized that the verse was talking about my position—not my practice. And of course “in Christ,” it was all true. In Him all the old things had indeed passed away—condemnation, the dominion of Satan, the fear of death, and so forth. In Him everything was new—forgiveness, acceptance, justification, sanctification, and a host of other blessings. From that time on, this verse has held no terror for me. I love it. And the knowledge of what I am in Christ makes me want to live for Him as the Lord of my life.

Taken From *Here's the Difference* by William MacDonald, pages 42-43.

For Further Study:

- 1) *Rightly Dividing The Word of Truth* by C.I. Scofield.
- 2) *The Complete Green Letters* by Miles Stanford (Zondervan).
- 3) *Here's the Difference* by William MacDonald (chapter 5).
- 4) *Salvation--A Clear Doctrinal Analysis* by L.S. Chafer.
- 5) What Does It Mean to be IN CHRIST?
- 6) 215 Things That Are True Of Me Now That I Am Saved (these last two documents are available from the address below or from our website).

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# What Does It Mean to be "IN CHRIST"?

1. Mankind can be divided into two groups: 1) those outside of Christ (Col.4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12); 2) those who are "IN CHRIST" (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1).
2. By man's first birth he is "IN ADAM" (1 Cor. 15:22) and he is part of the old creation that was spoiled by the fall. By man's second birth (John 3) he is "IN CHRIST" (1 Cor. 15:22) and part of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
3. Key passages: 1) 2 Corinthians 5:17 (*my new position*); 2) Ephesians 1:3 (*my spiritual blessings*); 3) 1 Corinthians 1:5 (*my abundant wealth*).
4. How did I get to be "IN CHRIST"? How did this happen to me? How did this come about?

MAN'S PART = **FAITH** (GALATIANS 3:26)  
GOD'S PART= **BAPTISM** (GALATIANS 3:27). WHEN I WAS  
SAVED GOD BAPTIZED ME (IMMERSED ME) INTO JESUS CHRIST.

This baptism is not water baptism. It is a real baptism that happened the moment I was saved as God immersed me or placed me into His Son, thus IDENTIFYING me with Christ. This is my POSITION, and my STANDING.

## 5. **WHO AM I? WHAT AM I?**

### IN CHRIST...

I am a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Gal. 5:6; 6:15; Eph. 2:10).  
I am a saint (1 Cor. 1:2).  
I am a part of His Church (Eph. 2:21-22).  
I am a temple for God's Spirit (Eph. 2:22).  
I am in the eternal plan of God (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9).  
I am complete and filled full with the fullness of Christ (Col. 2:9; and compare Col. 1:19).  
I am enriched (1 Cor. 1:5).  
I am accepted because God's favor has been poured out upon me (Eph. 1:6).  
I am light (Eph. 5:8).  
I am secure in the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39).  
I am established, rooted and built up (2 Cor. 1:21; Col. 2:7).  
I am circumcised inwardly (Col. 2:11).  
I am near to the heart of God (Eph. 2:13).

### **MY RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THESE FACTS:**

*By faith I must reckon that it is so! I must see myself as God sees me!*

## 6. WHAT DO I HAVE? WHAT DO I POSSESS?

### IN CHRIST...

- I have every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).
- I have eternal life, an eternal relationship with God (1 John 5:11; 1 Cor. 15:22 and Romans 6:23 where "through" could be translated "in").
- I have a glorious salvation (2 Tim. 2:10).
- I have a rich inheritance (Eph. 1:4; cf. 1 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:17).
- I have a glorious future (Eph. 1:4-5).
- I have a heavenly position—seated with Him! (Eph. 2:6).
- I have a high calling (Phil. 3:14).
- I have the hope of eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10 where "by" = "in").
- I have God's perfect righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11).
- I have sanctification or holiness (1 Cor. 1:2; 1:30; 6:11).
- I have God's wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30; cf. Col. 2:3 and 1 Cor. 2:16).
- I have redemption or freedom from bondage (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- I have security (Rom. 8:1).
- I have complete forgiveness (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Cor. 6:11--"washed").

### **MY RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THESE FACTS:**

*By faith I must possess my possessions and enjoy (claim) my riches!*

## 7. PRACTICAL MATTERS

### IN CHRIST...

- I walk and live (Col. 2:6).
- I stand fast and firm (Phil. 4:1).
- I have constant victory (2 Cor. 2:14).
- I am fruitful (1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 2:10).
- I can do all things (Phil. 4:13).
- I can draw near to God (Eph. 2:13,18).
- I have all that I need; every need is supplied (Phil. 4:19 "by"="in").
- I can rejoice always (Phil. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:8).
- I have a purifying hope (1 John 3:3).
- I am strong (2 Tim. 2:1; Eph. 6:10).
- I am faithful (Eph. 1:1).
- I have faith and love (1 Tim. 1:13).
- I can be mature (Col. 1:28).

### **MY RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THESE THINGS:**

*By faith may I so walk and live (Colossians 2:6)!*