

2. The Believers Position in Christ

If God is For Us Who Can be Against Us? (Romans 8:31)

It was the year 1900, and Patillo Higgins, a one-armed mechanic and self-taught geologist, believed that, in the future, modern industry would switch from coal to oil, but where was all that oil to come from? He believed it lay beneath his feet at Spindletop near Houston in Texas. He had a feeling that drilling a well on top of the salt dome that was there (and others like it) would produce oil, and lots of it. In an attempt to turn his dream into a reality, he turned to Captain Anthony F. Lucas. Captain Lucas had training as an engineer and experience as a salt miner in Louisiana. No one in the area believed that a salt dome structure could produce oil. He picked the spot, and the drilling began on October 27, 1900. After two months drilling, they got to a depth of 880 feet. Discouraged at finding nothing, they stopped for Christmas. After a Christmas break, they continued drilling and got to 1,020 feet. After withdrawing the bit to change something, they got the bit back down to 700 feet when they noticed mud starting to bubble back up the hole. Seconds later, the drill pipe shot out of the ground with great force, and then...nothing happened! This was very confusing. They began wondering what had happened. After several minutes passed they started cleaning up the mess, when all of a sudden, a loud noise like a cannon shot came from the hole. Mud came shooting up out of the ground like a rocket followed by oil to a height of 150 feet in the air. Lucas was hoping that his well would produce five barrels a day, but it produced 100,000 barrels a day, more than all of the combined oil wells in the whole of the United States. At today's prices, the oil find is estimated to be worth \$11 Billion US dollars. Great riches had been lying under the feet of all those in the area and they did not know it.¹

Last week, we talked about dark spiritual forces that inhabit an unseen dimension beyond our senses. They do not like what is being taught you because they hope that it will not enter your consciousness that you stand above great riches, the riches that have been given to you in Christ. They would like you to forget about drilling deep into the Word of God and discovering what Satan is trying to keep you in the dark about. I'm talking about the riches that Christ has given you through His victory over Satan at the cross of Christ. You can fight a spiritual battle when you are armed with the truth of who you are in Christ and who He is making you to be in Him. The more you value and understand what happened at the cross, the greater will be your ability to resist the enemy and have him flee from you (James 4:7). To really explore the topic of knowing our position in Christ Jesus, let's look at a scripture followed by a question.

¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and **the evil spirits left them.**¹³Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits **tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus** over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵One day the evil spirit answered them, **"Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?"** ¹⁶Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped

¹ <https://www.priweb.org/ed/pgws/history/spindletop/spindletop.html>

on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (Acts 19:11-16).

Question 1. The sons of Sceva saw demons being cast out easily (v.12), and thought they could do the same. Why do you think they were unable while Paul had success?

The sons of Sceva thought that speaking the name of Jesus and the authority of the name of Christ was enough, but they didn't realize that the demons in the man could see that they had no authority because the men were not in Christ. They were not yet born-again and regenerated by the Spirit of God. Unseen demonic spirits that have managed to gain access into a person's life can see into the spiritual unseen realm as well as the physical realm. Again and again in the Scriptures, when demons in people saw Jesus coming, they fell on the floor, shrieked, shook the person, foamed at the mouth, cried out, or had some kind of manifestation.

These men in the passage above tried to exert authority over the spirits, but they had no power because Christ was not living in them. The evil spirits in the man knew they had no authority to cast them out. Authority in the spiritual realm depends on your relationship to Jesus. It's not what you know; it's whom you know! Positional authority is given to a person when he or she is born-again of the Spirit and Christ dwells in that person. To exert that authority and increase that anointing of the Spirit, the believer needs to act in faith according to what has been done for him or her at the cross of Christ. I will endeavor to drill below the surface of things to true spiritual riches. We will learn our true state in the past, who the believer is in the present, and who the believer will be in the future.

What We Were in the Past

In writing to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul was passionate that the people of God (i.e. the Church) should know their position in Christ. He starts out by writing about their lives before they were brought into relationship with Christ.

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:1-5).

The Scriptures reveal that there are three parts to our nature, "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). Our soul is invisible and is made up of our mind, will and emotions, conscience etc., but our spirit is that part of our nature that connects with God. Remember the warning that God gave Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, "From any tree of the

garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16b-17). Did Adam fall down dead when he and Eve ate the forbidden fruit? No, so what happened to them both? It was their spiritual connection to God that was broken in the Garden, and when they were disconnected from the author of life, they were spiritually dead. As a result, we were cut off from God because of their obedience in the garden to the serpent, Satan, the prince of darkness (Revelation 12:9). Adam's entire race has inherited the default to sin and, with it, separation from God: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

Paul wrote that, because of our spirit's being dead toward God through our sin, we became servants to Satan and lived in slavery to sin. If you are still living outside of relationship to Christ, guess what, Satan is your master, and he is continually at work trying to pollute you and dominate you more and more through habitual sin: "when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Ephesians 2:2). God needed a champion, one who could conquer him who had the power of death over the human race. But how could that be possible because just one sin would disqualify a man?

The one chosen had to be free of sin that was passed down from Adam to the whole human race. The answer to man's problem was what God had planned in eternity past—to step into humanity Himself and become a man. He had to be born of a virgin and not of man's seed. The Holy Spirit came on Mary and the eternal God Himself, in the person of Jesus, stepped into the human race to take upon Himself the accumulated guilt of sin that and judgment that man deserved. Wonder of wonders! He took on the forces of darkness manifesting through people—His war was not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), but against spiritual forces in the unseen realm that held us fast by unseen spiritual bonds:

¹⁴Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Question 2. In what ways does your life change if you are freed from the fear of death? How does being a slave to fear bring bondage?

What We Are in the Present

When Jesus went to the cross, He was the representative Man, our Substitute, the Righteous One for those of us who are unrighteous (2 Corinthians 5:21). In some mysterious way, that only in eternity will we fully understand, you and I who are believers in Christ hung there on the cross with Jesus. When Christ died, we died with Him. Your release from servitude to Satan took place at the cross when Jesus died for you and as you. Paul the apostle explains by saying, "I am crucified with Christ,

nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). In another place, he writes, “For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5). These two scriptures are written concerning a truth that happened at the cross. If you are a believer, you were placed in Christ Jesus, and His death was your death. You are delivered from Satan’s power by the death of Christ. This is not an experience we have to work hard at trying to be dead; it is a past-completed fact that is to be believed. There is an organic spiritual union between the Christian and Christ, with Jesus saying, “I am the Vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5). In the 13 letters of Paul in the New Testament, the apostle uses the phrase, “*In Christ*” 165 times. I think he’s trying to tell us something! John Piper, the writer and theologian, writes about this truth in explanation of Romans 6:5-6:

Now let's confirm this with a few other verses. Verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him." This is another way of saying that we died (verse 2) or that "we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death" (verse 5). Notice that while verse 6 says the "old self" (=old man) was crucified, verses 2 and 5 say "we died" and "we were united to him in the likeness of his death." I take this to mean that my "old self" is me – but different than I have become. The "old self" is the me that was rebellious against God, and insubordinate to God's law, and blind to God's glory, and unbelieving toward his promises. Verse 6 says the "old me" was crucified with Christ. (See Galatians 2:20.) When Christ died, God counted the old sinful me as dying with him.²

There are other ground riches that are opened up to us when we drill further into the Scriptures:

6And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:6-10).

You may notice that we are told that when Christ was raised up, because of our union with Him, the Church, the called-out of-the-world believers, are raised up, too, and we are seated with Him in the heavenly realms. It is in these unseen realms, what Scripture calls the heavenly realms that the riches below the surface have spurted up to us. In the first chapter of his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul writes that God “**has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ**” (Ephesians 1:3). These truths the enemy does not want you to understand, but they are not idle fabrications. They are spiritual truths that need to seep into your soul and be worked out in your life. You no longer have to live according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, but you are to be led by obedience to the Spirit of Christ. If you are a believer, the gates of hell should shudder when the enemy sees you coming. Certainly, the sons of Sceva should be looking on you

² <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/united-with-christ-in-death-and-life-part-1>

with envy at the authority that lies on you and in you. It has always been God's plan to amaze the angels, both dark and light, as well as every evil ruler and authority in the spiritual realm throughout all time and eternity:

⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, **the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:9-11).

Question 3. Discuss what God uses to display His wisdom, how was that wisdom displayed and accomplished, and to whom?

What We Shall Be in the Future

God has a purpose, and even when the enemy would seek to sabotage and disrupt, God still has the last word. The end of the story has already been determined and written ahead of time to encourage us. God is the author of all things, the Alpha and the Omega, Beginning and End. There is nothing that can happen that He does not anticipate. This is also true in your life. Nothing takes Him by surprise, and He already knows just how to work all things together in your life for good. God sees you already in your completed state. He is not bound by the limits of time as we are. He is the One who has initiated the work in you, He is the One who has begun a good work in you, and He is the One who will finish the work in you. Because of the finished work Christ accomplished on the cross, you are ALREADY seated with Christ. Our reconciliation is complete.

Why is it important that you understand who you are as a believer? It is not only for your own benefit, helping you to overcome in your own day-to-day life, but also in your prayer life. Understanding the spiritual riches you have been given in Christ will radically change the effectiveness of prayers that you pray. If you know that you are praying in accordance to God's will, and you know that the Father will not deny the Son, why would you think that God would withhold anything from you? (Romans 8:32). Our faith, or lack of it, is directly linked to our understanding of who we are in Christ. Some people feel that, to pray with authority, there has to be volume or a certain tone of voice. While the Holy Spirit may lead a believer to pray a certain way, the authority, I believe, comes from the **legal reality** of what happened at the cross and our understanding of it. It is when we understand what Christ has done and we proclaim it, that we can learn how to be overcomers in prayer. Our faith and our prayer life are directly connected to how we see ourselves in the Father's eyes.

Question 4. What keeps you from coming boldly to God's throne of grace? Do you ever find a battle in your mind when you are praying? What types of thoughts hinder your faith?

The Legal Battle and the Legal Truth.

Jesus has been given all authority in the heavenly unseen realm and on earth, and on the basis of our organic union to Him, He has commissioned us to go and make disciples, not just converts, of all nations (Matthew 28:18-19). We are told that He is our High Priest representing us before the Father:

But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12).

He sat down because He completed the work. It is a finished work, so He took His place at the right hand of the Father, and we are told that **we also are** seated in heavenly places with Him (Colossians 2:12) because of the finished work of the cross.

If only we could have seen beyond the veil of the flesh in the Garden of Gethsemane, what would we have seen, I wonder? What delight the enemy forces were in, I feel sure, when the rulers and elites screamed for Barabbas instead of Christ. Can you imagine their satisfaction and squeals of delight at every stripe that fell upon our Champion's back? He endured the shame and spitting by looking forward and seeing us sitting with Him in heavenly places. To most people of this world, what happened at the cross of Christ looked like a defeat for the Kingdom of God. In fact, the enemy, I'm sure, was self-deceived into thinking he was winning, but really he was signing his own death certificate.

Now, if you are like me, you may have wondered at some point, "Why didn't God just take Satan captive and kill him?" Satan actually had a legal claim to this world before the cross. This was due to the fall of man when man chose the knowledge of good and evil over his relationship with God. It was at this point that man abdicated his authority, the authority that was originally given to him in the garden (Genesis 1:26, 28). The fall of man affected man's ruler ship and authority that was rightfully his in the beginning. God would not go over man's head and take the authority of this earth back by force. He has bound Himself to His own divine order. We look at this world, and we do not see order. We see chaos. That is because Satan is not yet bound.

His ultimate end has not yet been realized, but in God's divine order, there is peace. He will not violate His own order or His own person. What the Father did in sending His Son was to legally pay the penalty for sin. You see, when Jesus bowed His head and declared, "It is finished," Satan was overcome. He had become a murderer from the beginning in the Garden of Eden, but now he had taken an innocent life, a life that he did not legally own, since there was no fault found in Jesus. We are told that, before Judas departed from the table at the Last Supper, Satan entered him. Jesus knew what was going to happen. He said to Judas, "**What you do, do quickly**" (John 13:27). Satan's plan was to destroy Jesus, but the death of Jesus actually cancelled all of Satan's claims upon mankind.

Although the war still continues, the outcome is already determined. One day, we will see the final judgment of Satan, but his end has already been decided. When Jesus took His rightful place on the throne next to the right hand of the Father, He proved without a doubt that He had overcome Satan, and we are seated with Him in the heavenly realms.

Not only has Jesus overcome Satan, but in Him and through His power and life, we also are called to overcome and triumph over all the works of the evil one.

They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11).

Now, there are two parts that we see mentioned in the Revelation passage above where it speaks of overcoming or triumphing over this world and demonic forces. One is the Blood of the Lamb, the substitutionary death of Christ. Jesus is that spotless Lamb of God, the sacrifice for our sin. The second part was that they (believers) overcame him by the word of their testimony. We believe in our heart that Jesus is Lord, and that He died for our sins, but we must also confess with our mouths the truth of God's Word that we are crucified with Christ, buried with Him (as symbolized in baptism), raised with Him, and enthroned with Him: "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." (2Timothy 2:11).

Paul E. Billheimer, in his book *Destined for the Throne*, examines the truth of being crucified with Christ. He states:

We are not surprised that He is exalted and enthroned in the heavens. What is difficult for us to comprehend is that we have been exalted with Him. Yet if "he that is joined to the Lord is one with Him in spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17), it cannot be otherwise. We are not surprised that all things have been put under His feet. What we have failed to comprehend is that as part of Him, His Body, all things are also legally beneath our feet. What we do not realize is that He is the "head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22). This means that His headship over all things is assumed and held for the benefit of the Church and is directed toward His purpose for her.³

We have underestimated the supreme importance of the Church in God's economy. She is the motive of all His activity from all eternity. He does nothing solely for His own sake. She (the church) is included as a full partner in all His plans. The Church is His Body, the fullness of Him that fills all things everywhere... This is only true because of God's voluntary self-limitation. In the absolute, God is wholly sufficient. He needs nothing and can be served by no one. Yet He has chosen voluntarily to limit Himself in order that the Church share in His reign. It is true that the Body cannot function without the Head. It is just as true that the Head, by His own choice, will not function without the Body. Both are important to the accomplishment of His plan.⁴

Until Christ comes again, the Bride of Christ, the Church, is in training. The enemy is still fighting a strategy of "guerrilla warfare," but the result will not change. He has been defeated, and the knowledge of Christ's victory over Satan is advancing all over the

³ Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, Published by Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN. 1975. Page 88-89.

⁴ Ibid

world. We must constantly remind ourselves of who we are in Christ if we are to be effective in prayer. How do we fight? It starts in our thought life; this is where the battle starts. Remind yourself of your identity. You are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). You hold the same place in the Father's bosom as Christ does (John 17:22-26). You have His righteousness. It is as good as the righteousness of Christ in the eyes of the Father because it is HIS righteousness. All that God allows the enemy to do is all used to show forth the marvelous grace of God for all eternity.

Doctor Donald Grey Barnhouse once told the story of a certain man who had a beautiful estate upon which were some magnificent trees in which this man took great pride. It was his custom to walk amongst the trees and gaze upon their beauty. This man had an enemy who hated him sorely; this enemy was always seeking ways of annoying the master of the estate. At last the enemy conceived a plan, which he thought would greatly wound the heart of the proprietor. He decided to go to the estate in the dark of the night and cut down one of the most beautiful of the trees. He laid his plans well. He took with him an axe and saw, and he began his work. All night he toiled until his muscles were sore and his hands were blistered. As morning dawned, he saw the proprietor riding with a companion toward the trees where he had been toiling. He redoubled his efforts and with all that he could, he worked as diligently as he was able to do so, and the great tree began to creak and to totter. As it gained momentum in the fall, the enemy began to shout in triumph. One of the branches however came toward him and pinned him to the ground in agony. His hatred, however, was strong, and he jeered at the proprietor who approached him. The owner of the estate called his companion to him and said to the enemy, "You thought to do me a great harm, but I want to show you what you have done. This man with me is the architect of a beautiful home that I intend to build here in the midst of these trees. In order to make room for the house, it was necessary to cut down one of these trees. Look at this plan. The tree upon which you have toiled all night and which is now the cause of your death is the tree, which must be cut down to make room for my house. You have worked for me without knowing it, and your toil is for nothing, and bitterness is your food in death."

Satan thinks he is so smart in his opposition to you, but when we finally get home, we will see that all that the enemy did was used of God to beautify the garden of Christ. If God is for us, who can be against us!

Keith Thomas.

Email: keiththomas7@gmail.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com