

SALVATION – POSITIONAL TRUTH “in Christ”

Key question

What is the meaning of the believer’s position in Christ?

Key text

Romans 6:3-4

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Key Definition

Positional Truth

Positional truth is the body of information about a person’s identity in being united with Christ that cannot be experienced but is known only by the revelation of Scripture and received as true by faith.

Introduction

1. **Isa.1:18** “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”
 - a. The promise in this text is not that the sins will disappear but rather that they will be accounted in a different way.
 - b. They will no longer be a barrier separating us from a holy God. This is because the sins will be covered and a righteousness will be **imputed** to the sinner by the act of a gracious God through the blood of Christ.
2. It is this imputed holiness tied to our position in Christ by faith that we call “Positional Truth.”
3. The Levitical Priests were expected to go through a purification ritual involving the sprinkling of water to qualify them for their temple service (Numbers 8). The priest’s personal character was not the issue. The proper purification ritual was the issue. In some ways, Christian baptism serves a similar role in that it is a rite of cleansing tied to the position the believer occupies “in Christ.”
4. The relationship between 1) the forensic or positional (imputed) righteousness and 2) the life style, ethical behavior, which is imparted to the believer by the Holy Spirit is best understood

by appealing to the Levitical Priest's posture under the Old Covenant. Paul's letters give us a clear example of how the two are related.

A. **The pattern of the NT epistles.**

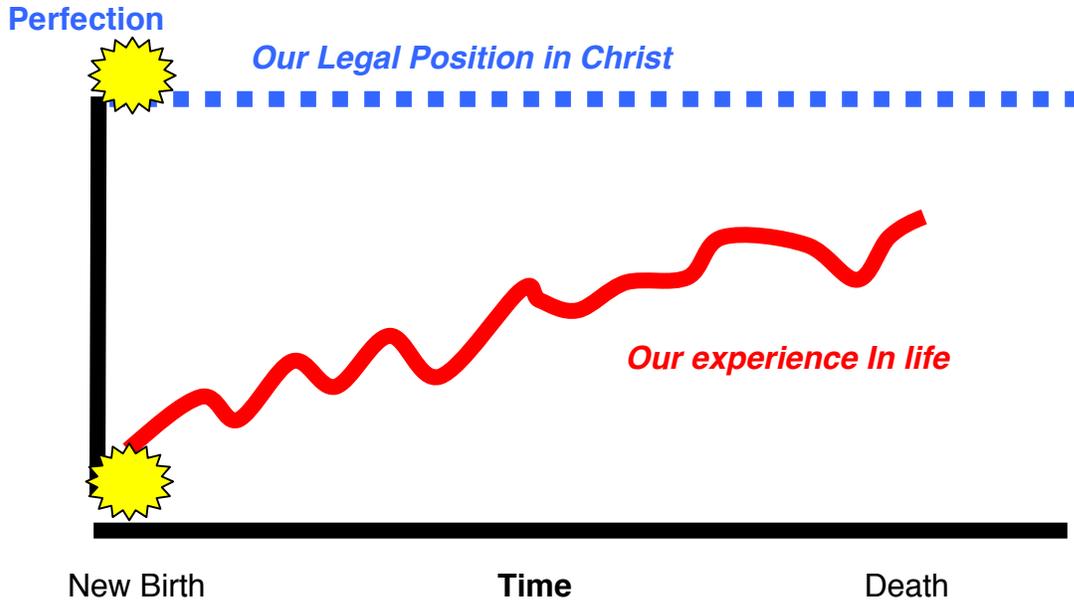
1. Most of the great doctrinal epistles of the New Testament may be divided into a general two-fold division: first, that which represents the work of God already accomplished for the believer, and, second, that which represents the life and work of the believer for God.
2. It is important to note the divine order in presenting these most vital issues. The positions to which the believer is instantly lifted by the power and grace of God are always mentioned first and without reference to any human merit or promises.
3. It is the divine purpose that a Christian's conduct should be inspired by the fact that he is already saved and blessed with all the riches of grace in Christ, rather than by the hope that an attempted imitation of the Christian standard of conduct will result in salvation. (Lewis Sperry Chafer).

The first part of the epistle	The second part of the epistle
Identity	Responsibility
Wealth in Christ	Walk as Christians
Security	Significance
Justification	Sanctification
Indicative	Imperative

B. **Positional truth:**

1. Distinctives of Positional truth.
 - a. It is **non-experiential** - it consists of facts about us that may not be felt by us.
 - b. It is **not progressive** - it is complete and cannot be improved upon.
 - c. It must be **learned** through teaching - it is known through the revelation of Scripture.
 - d. It is **acknowledged through faith** - it is accepted only as we believe what the Bible says.
 - e. It is not related to human merit.
 - f. It **fully satisfies** the demands of a perfectly holy God.
2. The following chart gives a comparison of our position in Christ and our experience as Christians.

Our position in Christ	Our experience in Christ
regeneration	trust
sealing with the Spirit	assurance of salvation
indwelling of the Spirit	filling with the Spirit
justification	freedom from condemnation
member of the body of Christ	fellowship with believers
Children of God	Disciples of Christ
Static	Dynamic
Complete and perfect	Incomplete and imperfect



C. **The “righteousness of God” in the New Testament is used in three ways.**

1. **The just acts of God demonstrating His faithfulness to His promises as governor of the Covenant.**

- **Rom.3:5** “But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the **righteousness of God**, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)”

In verse 3 we read of the “faithfulness of God” and in verse 4 “that Thou might be justified” which, in this context, would have the same meaning.

- **Rom.3:21-26** “²¹ But now apart from the Law {the} **righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even {the} **righteousness of God** through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. {This was} to demonstrate **His righteousness**, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, {I say,} of **His righteousness** at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
- **II Pet.1:1** “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the **righteousness of our God** and Savior, Jesus Christ:”

2. **The imputed moral merit of Christ by grace through faith.**

Imputation is best understood in the context of Christ’s becoming sin for us. He was not guilty of personal misconduct but was nonetheless bearing true guilt as the sins of the world were accounted as a part of his record. In the same way we who are not righteous through our own doing but are righteous because the life of Christ is accounted as a part of our record.

- **Rom.1:16-17** “¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it {the} **righteousness of God** is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*But the righteous {man} shall live by faith.*"”
The quote from Habakkuk 2:4 suggests that the imputation of moral merit is in view.
- **Rom.3:24-28** “²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. {This was} to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, {I say,} of His righteousness at the present time, that **He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.** ²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”
- **Rom.4:3-8** “³ For what does the Scripture say? "*And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as **righteousness.***" ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as **righteousness**, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons **righteousness** apart from works: ⁷ "*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered.* ⁸ "*Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.*"”
- **Rom.10:1-5** “¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for {their} salvation. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about **God’s righteousness**, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the **righteousness of God.** ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for **righteousness** to everyone who believes. ⁵ For Moses writes that the man who practices the **righteousness** which is based on law shall live by that **righteousness.**”
- **I Cor.1:30** “³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and **righteousness** and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ that, just as it is written, "*Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.*"”
- **II Cor.5:21** “He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, that we might become the **righteousness of God** in Him.”
- **Gal.3:6** “⁶ Even so Abraham *believed God, and it was reckoned to him as **righteousness.*** ⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, {saying}, "*All the nations shall be blessed in you.*" ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.*" ¹¹ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "*The **righteous man shall live by faith.***"”
- **Gal.3:21-22** “²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then **righteousness** would

indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

- **Phil.3:9** “and may be found in Him, not having a **righteousness** of my own derived from {the} Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the **righteousness** which {comes} from God on the basis of faith.”

3. The moral living that issues from the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

- **Rom.6:12-14** “¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin {as} instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members {as} instruments of **righteousness to God**. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”
- **Rom.14:17** “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
- **Jas.1:20** “for the anger of man does not achieve the **righteousness of God**.”
- **Jas.2:21-24** “²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “*And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,*” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.”

D. The Justification doctrine of Luther

1. The Reformers responded to two characteristics of 16th cent. Roman Catholic doctrine of justification.
 - a. Rampant Pelagianism expressed in indulgences (the buying of salvation).
 - b. The terrified conscience, which needed a God of GRACE not a God of grace (where the fine print was WORKS).
2. Augustine’s *Sola gratia* (by grace alone) was not enough.
3. Following Paul, Luther also insisted on *sola fide* (by faith alone).
4. Luther believed that it is on the basis of the “**alien**” or “**extrinsic**” righteousness of Christ that God justifies, that is, declares the sinner just. This is what he called *justitia aliena* (the “**strange**” righteousness) of Christ.
5. This justification is not progressive but complete, total, finished, perfect even though the believer is still a sinner. *Simul Justus et peccator* (at the same time justified and a sinner).
6. In 1542 Pope Paul III convoked a council that rejected (by a vote of 32 to 5) the Reformer’s doctrine of justification by faith alone in favor of a transformationist view of justification, where justification is but the first step in sanctification (salvation).

E. The Riches Of Grace In Christ Jesus —(Col. 2:10, Eph. 1:3)

1. “**Sons Of God**” Jn. 1:12
 - a. We Are Related To God.
 1. Children of God (I Jn. 3:3; II Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26)
 2. Adopted (Rom. 8:15)
 3. Of God’s family (Eph. 2:19; 3:15; Gal. 6:10)

4. Made nigh to God (Eph. 2:13)
 5. Qualified to share Christ's inheritance (Col. 1:12)
 6. Reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:10)
 7. Related to God through a propitiation (I Jn. 2:2; Rom. 3:25,26)
 8. Having access to God (Eph. 2:18; Rom. 5:2; Heb. 4:14-16, 10:19-20)
 9. United with God (Jn. 14:20)
 - a. Father (I Thess. 1:1)
 - b. Son (Jn. 15:5; Eph. 2:19-22; Eph. 5:25-27; Jn. 10:27-29)
 - c. Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9)
 10. Objects of His love (Eph. 2:4, 5:2)
 11. Objects of His grace
 - a. Salvation (Eph. 2:8)
 - b. Keeping (Rom. 5:2)
 - c. Service (Eph. 2:7)
 - d. Instruction (Titus 2:12-13)
 12. Objects of His power (Eph. 1:19; Phil. 2:13; I Pet. 1:5)
 13. Objects of His faithfulness (Heb. 13:5; Phil. 1:6)
 14. Objects of His peace (Col. 3:15)
 15. Objects of His consolation (II Thess. 2:16)
 16. Objects of His intercession (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34)
- b. We Are Partakers Of God's Abundant Plan**
1. His salvation plan
 - a. Foreknown (Rom. 8:29; I Pet. 1:2)
 - b. Elect (I Thess. 1:4; I Pet. 1:2; II Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48)
 - c. Predestined (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:5)
 - d. Chosen (Matt. 22:14; I Pet. 2:4)
 - e. Called (I Thess. 5:24)
 - f. Glorified (Rom. 8:30)
 2. A gift to Christ (Jn. 17:6, 10:29)
 3. A peculiar people (I Pet. 2:9; Titus 2:14)
 4. A royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6)
 5. We have an inheritance (I Pet. 1:4; Eph. 1:14; Col. 3:24; Heb. 9:15)
 6. Heavenly citizens (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 12:22; Lk. 10:20)
- 2. "A New Creation" (II Cor. 5:17; Jn. 5:24)**
- a. We Are Separated From Death**
 1. Sins atoned for (I Pet. 2:24; Rom. 4:25)
 2. Redeemed (Col. 1:14; I Pet. 1:18; Rom. 3:24)
 3. Justified (Rom. 5:1, 3:24, 8:30; I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:7)
 4. Free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1; Jn. 5:24, 3:18; I Cor. 11:32)
 5. Free from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13; 2:13-15)

6. Free from the law (Rom. 7:4, 6; 6:14; Gal. 3:25; II Cor. 3:11)
 7. Crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6)
 8. Dead with Christ (Rom. 6:8; I Pet. 2:24)
 9. Buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12)
- b. **We Are Separated Unto New Life**
1. Born again (Jn. 3:7, 1:12; I Pet. 1:23)
 2. Quickened (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13)
 3. A new creation (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10)
 4. Regeneration (Titus 3:5; Jn. 13:10; I Cor. 6:11)
 5. Raised with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1)
 6. On the rock (Christ Jesus) (I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; II Cor. 1:21)
 7. Circumcised in Christ (Col. 2:11; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 2:29)
 8. Sanctified (I Cor. 1:30, 6:11)
 9. Perfect forever (Heb. 10:14)
 10. Made righteous (Rom. 3:22; I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9)
 11. Light (Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:4)
3. **“You In Me And I In You” (Jn. 14:20)**
- a. **We Are Indwelt By God’s Spirit**
1. Born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:6)
 2. Baptized with the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13, 10:17)
 3. Indwelt by the Spirit (I Cor. 6:19, 2:12; Jn. 7:39; Rom. 5:5, 8:9)
 4. Sealed by the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; II Cor. 1:22)
- b. **We Are In The Body Of Christ**
1. Made one with all believers (I Cor. 12:13)
 2. Enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23)
 3. Gifted for service (I Cor. 12:13; I Pet. 4:10)