

# THE BELIEVER'S PLACE IN CHRIST

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*A collection of articles and writings by J.N. Darby from *The Believer's Place in Christ*, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

3 Chapters

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## The Believer's Place in Christ

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## The Believer's Place in Christ: Part 1

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The great thing in these ways and works of God in the gospel is to bring us to Himself. Groaning, burdened, if you like, still we are brought to Himself through infinite grace—grace reigning through righteousness—brought into the presence of God with a full sense of divine favor resting upon us. We are “reconciled to God,” and that is a large word. Being reconciled to God in all that He is in the full revelation of Himself through Christ, our hearts at ease with Himself, else we surely are not reconciled. We are going through the wilderness as regards these bodies, with all the government of God over His children; but there is no question of our place with Him, that in which the perfect revelation of His grace has set us with Himself. Christianity brings us into a new life—makes us partakers of a divine nature.

In Israel it was all an outward deliverance, but all written “for our admonition.” They were brought out of Egypt, their whole state and condition changed; they were brought into the wilderness, but brought to God there. And we have been brought out of the flesh and our place in the world as Adam's children, and are now sitting in heavenly places brought to God, with a nature capable of enjoying God.

It is not at all now whether a man is a righteous man according to the law: that is not the question now. The law was of course all right, and what is more, a perfect rule for a child of Adam; for it took up all the relationships, in which we stand, forbidding every breach of any in which God has set us. But Christianity, while putting its seal upon what man ought to be, and giving its highest sanction to the law, comes in behind all that and is another thing altogether; it shows that the law was just man's righteousness, which never could be wrought out, and brings in a distinct testimony as to the condition of man, proving “both Jews and Gentiles that they are both under sin.” “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Then comes in the dealing of God with men when they were proved to be such, and this very dealing of God demonstrates fully what man was.

When God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, the world would not have Him: “He sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” Man has been fully proved, as He says: “What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” They rejected His mercy when He came into the world in goodness, and with the manifestation of a power which was sufficient to heal man of all his diseases: all the effects of what sin and Satan had brought in, a single word from Christ was sufficient to set aside. But “for my love” says the Lord, “I had hatred.” “Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” They had not merely sinned against God, but when God was there in full manifestation of goodness, they rejected Him. Therefore “now is the judgment of this world.”

If you would walk with God in the comfort of His love, you must get it distinctly before you that you are lost as well as guilty— “dead in trespasses and sins.” It is a question of the state we are in by nature as well as the guilt that we have incurred. But when I see that the old man is hopelessly bad

and condemned, when I understand that my whole history as a man in Adam is closed, then I get Christ instead of myself before God.

Guilt is brought out by the cross of the blessed Lord: "He hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin." But besides that, there is a new place and condition brought in for the believer; a new creation, in the midst of weakness and infirmity, yet in which we walk with God fully reconciled. God is fully revealed; nothing so revealed Him in His righteousness and in His love as the cross. There it is that all that I need He has met. But He has done more, though I have the treasure in the poor earthen vessel. It is an entirely new thing that He has brought me into. I am redeemed out of the condition of the fallen first Adam into the condition of the glorified last Adam; I am brought into the condition in which Christ stands before God as man; I am "made the righteousness of God in him." All that He is thus is mine. And this is how Christ says He gives—not as the world gives. When the world gives, it gives away—it has no more the thing that it has given; but when Christ gives, He gives nothing away, He brings us into everything that He has Himself. The peace that He gives us is "my peace;" the words that He has given us are "the words which thou gavest me;" the joy is "my joy;" the glory is "the glory which thou gavest me;" and the love is "the love wherewith thou hast loved me." He brings us into the enjoyment of all that He enjoys Himself. It is a wonderful thing this; it is set before us as the object of hope.

There are two ways in which happy thoughts and feelings are wrought out. One is by living in the midst of happy relationships, as in a family. The other thing that gives energy and joy is having an object before us that we are pursuing in hope. Now God would use both of these means to produce the happiness of the Christian state in us. As to the place of relationship He has brought us into, we have in it "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." God has given us the same place with His Son. As the actual glory, of course we have not got it yet; but we have got the place and relationship now, and the joy also, and the object, and the hope of knowing that we shall be with Him and like Him in the glory.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is all quite settled. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven." It supposes that my heart is with Him. He had said "not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;" so he goes on, "we know." It is quite a technical expression in scripture. "We know that the law is spiritual." "We know that we are of God." "We know that the Son of God is come."

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." I do not want to die as if weary of conflicts, and wishing to get out of the world. But I see in this world of death the power of life come in in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has destroyed the power of him that had the power of death in such sort, that I can look, if the time were come, to not dying at all, that "mortality should be swallowed up of life." The power of life has come in which can change the living saints into glory without anything more. And so it will be in fact, for those who are alive when Christ comes: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," so that not a trace of mortality remains. Ruin and death have come in; but the power of life of the last Adam has come in, and so completely set aside the power of death and Satan, that, if the moment were come, it would be all swallowed up in a moment. It does not make any difference if we do die, for we shall be raised. But

one has come in who has gone into death, and spoiled it completely, and who has the keys of death and hell in His hands. The first Adam plunged me in death and ruin; the last Adam has come in and gone into the ruin, and destroyed the power of it. If He were to come now, and close this scene, and the long-suffering of God were to cease we should pass into glory without death at all.

But we have also our present state. Not only the redemption work is accomplished, but we are God's workmanship now for the glory. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." He has wrought us for it; "We are his workmanship." God wrought us for that self-same thing, the unseen glory in which Christ is. He predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Here we are in these poor dying bodies, but He has wrought us for this; it is a new creation. It is not a question of my responsibility as a child of Adam, but of God's intention—what He is going to do with us; He is bringing us into the same place in glory as His Son. It is not the clearing away my sins, though this was needed, and it is done; but it is God has wrought us for it.

Then comes another question for the believer's soul: "Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." We have not got the glory yet, but we are sealed for it, and we get the knowledge of it. The great and distinguishing characteristic of the believer is that he has the earnest of the Spirit—he is "sealed with the holy Spirit of promise." It is most important to see that a believer may not as yet be brought into the Christian's place. But when he is sealed, the Holy Ghost gives him the consciousness of that place. The effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the believer is to give him the consciousness that he is in Christ, and Christ in him. His place is settled before God, and settled before the world. What he has to do consequently in the world, is to show forth in it the life of Jesus. As Christ represents us before God, so we represent Him before the world. Here is where we are seen, and this is what is so blessed, and what indeed you should not be satisfied without possessing—the knowledge of this relationship. The babes should cry, Abba, Father.

And mark this, that if we have not got the consciousness of the relationship, we cannot have the affections that belong to it. The consciousness of it is that upon which all holy affections are grounded. I might say, If only such an one were my father, what affection I should have for him, for he is such a good kind father! But if conscious of the relationship, the feelings come out at once. We must know the Father as such, and this is not great growth. It is the babes that know this—the fathers are characterized by being well acquainted with Christ. With Christ in us, we cry, Abba, Father: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." I insist upon it, not as a special growth, but as the place of the Christian. My responsibility as a Christian is the consequence of my being a child. I am to be a follower of God—"imitators of God as dear children." Peaceful, blessed, I am now to manifest the life of Jesus in everything—my life showing (out of the reality of the work) the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in me.

Now God has wrought us for the glory. This is the very thing that proves that we never can be perfect here. A Christian is a man who is walking with God now in full consciousness of his relationship, and who is wrought to be like Christ when He shall appear. Well, can I be like Christ in glory, when I am down here? Impossible! But whilst he cannot be like Him here, there is only

one object before the Christian, and that is to win Christ, and to be raised to glory—changed into it, if he be alive. But there is no other object: Christ is the object. The only thing that is set before us to attain is a thing that is unattainable in this world, and this is to be like Christ in glory. We cannot have what is set before us until we are there. I am going to be like Him in glory, and I long to be like Him, and I am trying to walk as like Him as ever I can. “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them dung that I may win Christ and be found in him.” ( To be continued).

## The Believer's Place in Christ: Part 2

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My relationship with God and the Father is all settled and settled forever. I am a child, and my relations with God flow from that. It is important for us all to get hold of this, that we are not in flesh at all. Then where are we? In Christ; put into this totally new place, where Adam innocent was not, as to our life and course here. "The calling above," this is the one thing; the pressing forward, the pursuing; but the very pursuit gives a consciousness that it is not attained. I am a son with Christ, but I am not yet glorified with Christ, this is clear; but I am wrought for it, and I "look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." We try to be more like Him every day; we are chastened for it, if need be, in our course; but we are wrought for it, and we shall be it when He appears. The moment my mind descends below what Christ in glory is now, that moment my mind descends below what is my proper object as a Christian. If you look for perfection down here, you have lowered your standard.

You say, But am I not to be like Christ? Yes, but not down here. He was a perfectly sinless being; so born into this world, as it is said, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." But we are born sinful, "By nature children of wrath." And if I say, How can I have a ground for such a wondrous hope as that I should be made like to Christ? the answer is at once, I know the blessed Son of God has been made sin for me. "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The moment I really believe this, I can believe anything as the result; nothing is too great for Him to do for me. He is to receive the fruit of the travail of His soul; what is the fruit? That He shall have sons with Him in glory. If I am "made the righteousness of God in him," may I not expect anything? We have got these two great parts of the intervention of God for us: God in Christ in this world in grace to reconcile it, and our being made the righteousness of God.

I will say one word here on "the righteousness of God," as many find great difficulty in understanding what it is. The question is, How can a righteous God justify sinners? Well, the proof and testimony of God's righteousness is, that He has set Christ at His own right hand. When Christ had perfectly glorified God, and that as made sin on the cross, God places Him at His own right hand in heaven: there only do I see righteousness. But this work, though perfectly to God's glory, was done for us, so that it is God's righteousness to give us a place with Him. In Christ we are thus made God's righteousness. So it is said "He is righteous and just to forgive." But Christ is gone there as man, and I am united to Him, and with this righteousness I get Christ my life in which I am capable of enjoying all the blessedness of that which I am brought into. I have power to enjoy it, because Christ is my life.

The apostle, having considered the purpose of God, now turns to the side of man's responsibility. That place, as sinners, is death and judgment; where is the Christian as to these? If I die, he says, I am absent from the body, and present with the Lord. In dying for us He has made death, which closed our path in darkness, the way (as with Israel at the Red Sea and Jordan) of getting out of all

the ruin here, and the way of getting into blessedness with Christ. When I take up, not the purpose of God, but that which lies on me in my responsibility as a child of Adam, death becomes a positive gain. I have done with trial, temptation, sin, the world; and I have begun with Christ in heaven: “present with the Lord.”

But judgment must be considered also. We cannot say this is gain, nor that it is ours, as we can of death; but we see here the way it works upon the Christian. All will be manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ: “That every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” We must all give an account of ourselves; nor does the apostle seek to conceal the solemnity of this: he calls it the terror of the Lord. But does he tremble? He does not think of himself in any such aspect. The love of Christ constraining him, he persuades other people, the unconverted, who have reason to tremble at the thought of judgment. This is the effect it has upon Paul; he presses upon others that, if their sins are not gone, they cannot carry them to heaven.

But it has also another effect upon the Christian—a sanctifying effect upon the conscience: and this is, that we “are” manifest now, not merely shall be. “We are made manifest unto God.” This is a present thing for the heart and conscience. The effect of the judgment in this way is most useful; there is no fear as to the result of the judgment, but the sense of that judgment acts in sanctifying power on the heart. Whilst Christ has put away our sins once and forever, yet I am manifest to God now; and I am before God estimating things that I do and say as they will be manifest before Him in the day of judgment. How many things would be judged and done with if we were now truly before God as we shall be in the day of judgment!

These two things are quite distinct: the purpose of God in putting us into the glory of God; and, that He has wrought us for it and has given us the earnest of the Spirit. I know that many think it is only presumption in such as on earth profess to know that they are saved; but it is not presumption to know God's thoughts when He has revealed them. It is real presumption to call in question what God has said. There is no such thing in the New Testament, after the day of Pentecost, as a Christian being uncertain about his salvation. Not that there is not exercise in getting into such a place, but there is no such thing as uncertainty as to our standing when in it. If I see that His blood cleanses from all sin, and that the salvation wrought through that bloodshedding belongs to the believer, it is no good saying, I do not know whether it is for me. If you believe in that work, God seals you with His Spirit; and if you have got the Holy Ghost, you will know it is yours. The Lord expressly declares “at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” Nothing else is owned as the Christian place. How can I doubt, if the Spirit of God dwelling in me makes me know? and this Christ has positively declared. How can I doubt with the earnest of glory and seal in my own heart? “We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” and I know God is my Father.

And now let me add another word in connection with this which comes farther on in the chapter. “If one died for all, then were all dead.” It does not say “guilty” here; it is “dead,” “dead in trespasses and sins.” Death and judgment came in by sin. We read, the dead shall be judged “according to their works;” and Christ came down into this place of judgment that our sins might be purged and put away. But there is another aspect of man here; one in which he is looked at as “dead” —dead as regards God; not a movement in his heart towards God. Now if dead, can you as such awaken

any feelings in him? When I discover that not only I have sinned, but that in nature I am a sinner, I find that I am dead in sins. I am lost as well as guilty.

What is my state before God? It is “enmity against God.” There is not another thing which man will not bear and put up with in one way or another, but he will not bear to have Christ brought in. From the lowest and the grossest society up to the most elegant and refined, Christ cannot be brought in; it spoils everything. It is not so in false religions: men who have a false religion are not ashamed of their religion; it is only Christians who are ashamed of theirs. As a matter of courtesy I will listen to anything any man says; but by nature I cannot listen to him speaking about Christ: conscience cannot bear it. If I look at man as we all are naturally, I find nothing but “enmity against God.”

But now in Christ we find the end of man's history. I read “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Why does He say this, when the end is not come yet? It is because the breach is total at the cross between God and the world. As to the full history of man's probation, the end is come; it was the end before God when once man had rejected God's own Son. I look at myself as man, and am a sinner without law. No less have I broken the law if I take that as my rule. But when all this was already true, God came into the world in grace, and the world rejected Him. And now, if Christ be presented to me—I mean as a natural man—I cannot stand it at all. My moral history is closed; I am a lost sinner. But in Christ I get brought out of this state altogether. “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” The sins are not only cleared away forever and always through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I stand forever perfect before God through this work, but I am in a perfectly new state.

Where are sins for the believer? Gone in the cross of Christ. Where is righteousness? He is my righteousness at God's right hand. I have got a totally new place; not only are my sins put away, but I am brought into the place of Christ the Second man. Therefore you find it said, not There is no condemnation to those whose sins Christ has borne, true as it may be; but There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” How can you condemn what is in Christ in glory? It is a new creation. The life of God is in us; the righteousness of God ours, and we standing before God in this entirely new place. “It is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

“And all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” A blessed word! It is the very ground of blessing. Here God fully reveals all His holiness, all His hatred of sin. If His own Son go to the cross, He must bear the consequences. All is righteousness. We are now “after God created in righteousness and true holiness;” our sins forever gone, entirely gone, and we brought to God in the full revelation of Him as He is— “in righteousness and holiness of truth” —knowing Him as thus revealed in Christ. We, as in Christ, are brought to God now according to what God is as perfectly revealed. He will “reconcile all things unto himself—whether things in earth, or things in heaven;” the whole state of things will be reconciled to Him. “And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.” “He hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” Can you say that there, where there was a full revelation of what God is, you see Him as one who has given His Son for you, so that you might be brought back to Himself without a single doubt, without a single question left to settle between your soul and Himself?

“Who reconciled us to himself!” O beloved friends, are you reconciled to God? We have not got the glory now, clearly; but we have the work done, so that Christ is sitting down at the right hand of God, the question of righteousness settled, nothing more to do but all finished. It says of the Jewish priests, that they stood “daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.” He has no more to do for this. He has not merely borne my sins; but “when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” And then the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven, that I may know it and my part in it.

What I am in Christ is a new creation. It is not what Adam was. He was an innocent creature, just as God made him. But now we have got Christ substituted for what we are, and we are here with the Holy Ghost in us. And if you have not got this, and just think of the day of judgment, you are not at ease, though you may have hope through the cross. But if I know that “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified;” and if I set myself before the judgment-seat of Christ, it is to have a settled place there. There is no place where the Christian has such a settled peace as standing before the judgment-seat of Christ; for when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. We are raised in glory. What fear can I have if I am like the Judge? God has come in to save, and now sees a totally new thing before Him—the Second man. And though we are here tempted and tried, our place is in Him where He is; we are now in Him and know it by the Holy Ghost.

Israel were not put to pass through the desert till they were clean out of Egypt. We are first reconciled to God. The soul has peace with Him; and then it seeks to glorify Him in everything it does. You are called upon to have no object at all in your life down here but Christ. Of course there are necessary duties in which we serve Him, but no object. The Christian recognizes where God has set him as to things here, but I have no object but Christ in all that I do upon earth. He is the one thing that I am running after—no other object whatever. If I eat, or drink, or do anything, it is to be “to the glory of God,” and “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” A man is characterized by his object; if money, he is avaricious; if power, he is ambitious; and so on; the Christian is a man who has Christ as his object.

Surely he will find temptations here, and snares, and he will have to overcome; all that is true. We have to learn and unlearn a great deal that is humbling to ourselves; but we have got our place, and our duties flow from the place we are in. No duty ever was the means of obtaining a place; if you are my servants, you have your duties because such. But you first get into your place, and then come the duties of it. One first gets into the place, and then comes service for Christ in that place. In these days it is all-important that Christians should understand that they are Christians. You have got your own place and your own relationships, and you are to walk according to them.

J. N. D.

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