

The Believer's Standing and State

by C.I. Scofield

C.I. Scofield's sermon emphasizes the distinction between a believer's perfect standing in Christ and their often imperfect state, urging alignment through spiritual growth.

Scripture: John 1:12, John 3:16, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:17, Ephesians 1:11, Colossians 2:10, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Justification", "Sanctification"

Description

C.I. Scofield emphasizes the distinction between the believer's standing or position, which is solely based on faith in Christ and remains perfect and secure, and the believer's state or walk, which may not immediately reflect their exalted standing. The Scriptures highlight that through faith, believers become children of God, joint heirs with Christ, and are kept by God's power for an eternal inheritance. While believers are instantly justified, have peace with God, and access to His grace, their actual state may require growth and transformation to align with their standing in Christ.

Transcript

A distinction of vast importance to the right understanding of the Scriptures, especially of the Epistles, is that which concerns the standing or position of the believer, and his state, or walk. The first is the result of the work of Christ and is perfect and entire from the very moment that Christ is received by faith. Nothing in the afterlife of the believer adds in the smallest degree to his title of favor with God, nor to his perfect security. Through faith alone this standing before God is conferred, and before Him 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.

What that title or standing is, may be briefly seen from the following Scriptures: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (I John 5:1).

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:4-5).

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph. 1: 11).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear,

we shall be like him" (I John 3:2).

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (I Pet. 2:9).

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:5-6).

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2: 10).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (I John 5:13).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10: 19).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all- spiritual blessings" (Eph. 1:3).

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6).

"But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1: 13).

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13).

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (I Cor. 6:19).

Every one of these marvelous things is true of every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. Not one item in this glorious inventory is said to be gained by prayer, or diligence in service, or churchgoing, or alms- giving, or self-denial, or holiness of life, or by any other description of good works. All are gifts of God through Christ and therefore belong equally to all believers. When the jailor of Philippi believed on the Lord Jesus Christ he became at once a child of God, a joint heir with Christ, a king and priest, and had the title to the

incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance. In the instant that he believed with his heart and confessed with his mouth that Jesus was his Lord, he was justified from all things, had peace with God, a standing in His grace, and a sure hope of glory. He received the gift of eternal life, was made accepted in the full measure of Christ's own acceptance, was indwelt by, and sealed with the Holy Spirit, by whom also he was baptized into the mystical body of Christ- the church of God. Instantly he was clothed with the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:22), quickened with Christ, raised with Him, and in Him seated in the heavenlies.

What his actual state may have been is quite another mattercertainly it was far, far below his exalted standing in the sight of God. It was not all at once that he became as royal, priestly, and heavenly in walk as he was at once in standing. The following passages will indicate the way one's standing and one's state are constantly discriminated in the Scriptures.

STANDING

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus . . . I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:2-9).

"But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11).

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (I Cor. 6:15).

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1: 12-13).

STATE

"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you" (I Cor. 1:11).

"And 1, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal . . . For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (I Cor. 3:1-3).

"Now some are puffed up" (I Cor. 4:18).

"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (I Cor. 5:2).

"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another" (I Cor. 6:7).

"Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot?" (I Cor. 6:15).

"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23).

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:8-9).

The student cannot fail to notice 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 (I Sam. 2:8), and then exhorted to be princely. As examples, see the following verses.

STANDING

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. 6:6).

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8).

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Thess. 5:5).

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (I Thess. 5:9-10).

"By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . sanctification" (I Cor. 1:30).

"For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Phil. 3:15).

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17).

STATE

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" (Col. 2:20).

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). (Let it be observed, in reading this much-abused text, that the salvation spoken of here is not that of the soul, but salvation out of the snares which would hinder the Christian from doing the will of God.)

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3: 1).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5).

"Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thess. 5:6).

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (I Thess. 5:11).

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (I Thess. 5:23).

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phil. 3:12).

"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6: 1).

"He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6).

The student will be able to add largely to this list of comparative passages showing that the Scripture makes a clear distinction between the standing and state of the believer. It will be seen that he is not under probation to see if he is worthy of an inconceivably exalted position, but, beginning with the confession of his utter unworthiness, receives the position wholly as the result of Christ's work. Positionally he is "perfected forever" (Heb. 10: 14), but looking within, at his state, he must say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phil. 3:12).

It may be said that all the afterwork of God in his behalf, the application of the Word to his walk and conscience (John 17:17; Eph. 5:26), the chastisements of the Father's hand (Heb. 12:10; 1 Cor. 11:32), the ministry of the Spirit (Eph. 4:11-12), all the difficulties and trials of the wilderness way (I Pet. 4:12-14), and the final transformation when He shall appear (I John 3:2), all are intended simply to bring the believer's character into perfect conformity to the position which is his in the instant of his conversion. He grows in grace, indeed, but not into grace.

A prince, while he is a little child, is presumably as willful 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.

In the case of every true son of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, this growth into kingliness is assured. In the end, standing and state, character and position, will be equal. But the position is not the reward of the perfected character-the character is developed from the position.

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