

# **We Are Who Believers Are, Can Be, and Shall Be In Jesus Christ**

by J. W. Jepson

Copyright © 2021 by J. W. Jepson. All rights reserved, including the right to grant the following permission and to prohibit the mis-use thereof: The Author hereby grants permission to reproduce the text of this article, without changes or alterations\*, as a ministry, but not for commercial or non-ministry purposes. \*Permission is given for publication of excerpts and condensed versions.

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV) copyright © 1990 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

God is forever true. “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Because God is forever true, His word is forever true. We can trust God; therefore we can trust His word.

Most of us have heard or read the saying: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” That is a faulty statement. Here is how it should go: “God said it. That settles it. I believe it.” If God said it, that settles it whether we believe it or not.

So then, what God says in His word about believers in Jesus Christ is true. *We are who God says we are.*

It is important to understand the difference between future promises and present facts. For example, Romans 8:37 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” *This is not a promise; it is a statement of fact.*

If you are a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, you are who God says you are, whether you know it or not, believe it or not, feel like it or not, act like it or not, or people tell you or not.

As believers in Christ, our faith is founded on fact. God is. God said. God did, does, and shall do.

With this assurance we proceed to explore what the word of God says about us.

## We Are Chosen By God.

Much has been said and written about divine election (predestination), some of it enlightening and some confusing. Many have endeavored (as someone has said) “to delve into the indelible, probe the improbable, and unscrew the inscrutable.”

The fact is certain that from all eternity the *Church* was and is chosen by God by His sovereign election and predestination according to His perfect foreknowledge, wisdom and purpose. “you are a chosen generation” (1 Peter 2:9). God is not the

“Cosmic Guesser.” He did not provide salvation for “whoever will” without knowing “who will” or having any influence on the fact that they “will.”

Believers are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2). Most of the misunderstanding of the relationship of divine sovereignty and human free will results from not recognizing the proper role of God's foreknowledge. Believers are not foreknown according to the *election* of God, but elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God. This is not foreknowledge merely of what *we* will do but of what *He* could and would do with us consistent with His wisdom and character. God acts, not reacts.

Foreknowledge and election are one unit in the eternal mind of God. One does not precede the other. They are simultaneous. God's will, character and works maintain a beautiful and complete consistency throughout. Knowing this prevents us from falsely ascribing to God an arbitrary fatalism.

God's sovereignty is not arbitrary. He did not and does not will capriciously. Because He is sovereign, He has the sovereign right to take His own foreknowledge into account in His sovereign purposes. He has the sovereign right to will according to His perfect wisdom and His perfect character (love, justice, righteousness).

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:28, 29). God predestined not *what* He foreknew, but *whom* He foreknew. God chose the elect according to what He foreknew about *them*. His foreknowledge of what they would *do* attends logically His foreknowledge of who they are.

In Romans 9:13 Paul quotes from Malachi 1:2, 3, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” Why did God love Jacob but hate Esau? God loved Jacob because He foreknew the person He would make out of Jacob in spite of Jacob's faults and blunders, and to do so without violating Jacob's very nature as a person created in the image of God with intellect and free will. God hated Esau because He hated what He foreknew Esau would become—a profane, unholy, godless person (Hebrews 12:16). He hated what Esau would finally and forever make of himself.

So God is neither the “Supreme Guesser” nor the “Supreme Tyrant.” He is not what many people erroneously make Him out to be. God is who and what He is—sovereign, loving, wise, and just. His eternal purposes are in full harmony with His eternal qualities and character.

Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16).

The choosing did not start with us. Our choice was freely made in response to His choice with the providential and persuasive influences that He chose to exert on us

that effectively won our stubborn hearts and turned us from foolish rebels into happy worshipers.

Just before His crucifixion Jesus prayed, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:1 - 3).

The elect are the Father's gift to Christ. He knows His sheep and has authority to give eternal life to all whom the Father has given Him. This eternal life is not a self-contained "package" that we can take, then carry with us if we walk away from Christ. It is a living, experiential and continuous relationship as we abide (remain) in the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit revealed much about our election to the apostles Peter and Paul. We must keep in mind that it is *the Church* that is elect and predestined. *The Church* will not fail. As individual believers we must "be even more diligent to make [our] calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). As we do so in response to God's grace, we can know our "election by God" (1 Thessalonians 1:4).

In Christ "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). In Colossians 3:12 Paul addressed the believers as the "elect of God."

"God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

We note carefully that God has chosen us to salvation through two specific necessary conditions: sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. God wills the end; He also wills the necessary means and conditions, and requires us to be diligent in them. We are not divinely predestined otherwise. We know that we are elect because we have renounced sin and are committed to believing the truth and therefore living the truth. For all of this God provides His all-sufficient grace.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us [or, in love having predestined us] to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:3 - 5). We see here again the purpose of our election: to be holy and without blame before God. Election without the purpose would be meaningless. Election and holiness are inseparable.

Peter was inspired to write the same thing. In 1 Peter 1:2 he said that we are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

You *are* “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

John addressed his second epistle: “To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever” (2 John 1, 2). The Church is “the elect lady.” May all of her “children” know the truth and keep it living in us.

### We Are Called By God.

God's election and calling go together, We remember Romans 8:28 - 30, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Regarding “He also glorified” see John 17:22; Hebrews 2:10.

This is the “effective calling.” Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). The call of the gospel goes out to everyone. “And the Spirit and the bride [the Church] say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). The Spirit is calling. Both the Spirit and the Church are calling by the gospel.

Even though God calls more than He chooses; He calls *all* He chooses. Not all who hear the call respond to the call, yet all who are chosen are also effectively called. They are effectively called; therefore they *will* accept the call. Also, they *will* accept the call; therefore they are effectively called. Both statements are true, each in its own way, the first from the standpoint of divine election, the second from the standpoint of human free will.

Believers are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1). It is also true that “we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (verse 14). That is why we must be diligent to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). We make our calling and election sure as we respond wholeheartedly and steadfastly in faith to the divine calling. Check your election; are you following the calling?

“Through whom [Jesus Christ] we [apostles] have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:5, 6). We are “beloved of God, called to be saints”

(verse 7). Believers are “saints by calling,” called to be holy (1 Corinthians 1:2, 24), “just as you were called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4).

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14).

Some hear the call and respond immediately. Some hear the call for years; to some of *them* the call of the Spirit and the gospel becomes decisive and effective at a propitious moment of His choosing. I once heard a man say that he had sat in church for nearly thirty years without “hearing” what was said. Then one day he *heard* the message. That was the day he “got saved.”

### We Are Saved.

Years ago I watched a PBS program featuring a large evangelical church. In the course of the program the PBS interviewer asked one of the ministers, “what does 'saved' mean?” In his reply the minister seemed to fumble for words, perhaps feeling intimidated by the pressure of the situation. Someone has said, “when I stand up, my mind 'sits down'.” I heard an internationally known evangelist who preaches effectively to many thousands say that he feels self-conscious and awkward when knocking on doors to witness personally.

Whatever our personal temperament might be, it is important that believers know what it means to be saved and be able to tell others, whether on the media or whenever called for by time and occasion.

So, what does “saved” mean? Briefly, it means to repent of sin and be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus put it most succinctly: “Repent, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Although this is the core truth, it does not express the fullness of all that is meant by being saved. Let us look at some key statements in the Scriptures relating to salvation.

Among the reasons the psalmist urges his soul to bless the Lord is that He forgives all of his iniquities (Psalm 103:3). In Isaiah 43:25 God declares, “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My sake; and I will not remember your sins.”

Paul writes, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved [present passive participle] it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). In 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2 he says, “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved [present passive indicative], if you hold fast the word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.”

“By grace you have been saved [perfect passive periphrastic indicative]” (Ephesians 2:5). “For by grace you have been saved through faith” (verse 8).

Believers have been saved from the *guilt* of sin and the *penalty* of sin. We are now being saved from the *power* of sin and the *practice* of sin. When Jesus Christ returns, we will be saved from the *presence* of sin. This is a complete salvation because Jesus is a complete Savior and the only Savior. A “savior” who could save us from the guilt and the penalty of sin but who could not save us from the power and the practice of sin would be no savior at all!

Believers are “vessels” (containers) of God's mercy (Romans 9:23). We were empty. We had no goodness to plead before God. We threw ourselves in faith on God's mercy in Jesus Christ. He filled us with His full, free and abundant mercy. Both grace and mercy are the free gift of God. We received it freely and without merit; we should be willing to share it freely and without merit.

*We are redeemed.*

To redeem means to “buy back,” “ransom,” with emphasis on loosing (releasing) the person from bondage to sin and its penalty. We were “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). We were indebted to the law of God to pay its penalty. Spiritually and morally bankrupt, we could not possibly do so. Christ satisfied the justice of God for whoever would believe. Now we are redeemed, “bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

We have been set free. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” has made us “free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1, 2). We no longer live in Romans 7. We now live in Romans 8.

Many believers in the early church were slaves. Paul assured them and any other believer in a similar situation, “He who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise, he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men” (1 Corinthians 7:22, 23). Peter writes that we are free, “yet not using your liberty as a cloak for vice, but as servants of God” (1 Peter 2:16).

Christ set us free so we would remain free. For that reason we are to stand fast in our freedom and not allow ourselves to be ensnared again and put in a yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1).

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might received the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5).

Jesus Christ “gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).

“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:17 - 19).

The last two scriptures (Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 1:17 - 19) emphasize what it cost God to redeem us to Himself, His purpose in doing so, and what effect that should have on our attitude and behavior.

In Revelation 5:9, 10 the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang a new song to Jesus Christ: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open the seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

On the Mount Zion the 144,000 sang a new song before the throne. They are the “redeemed from the earth ... redeemed from among men” (Revelation 14:1 - 5).

*We are forgiven.*

To forgive is to free someone from the penalty of an offense. It is given either by the person against whom the offense was committed or by an executive authority on behalf of society.

Forgiveness includes more than a pardon. A pardon is granted by a superior who has the right to punish. The superior sets aside the debt or penalty, but reserves the right to reinstate it if the legal or ethical conditions of the pardon are not met. This was probably the case of the unforgiving servant in Jesus' parable (Matthew 18:21 - 35). The king's pardon of the servant who owed him “ten thousand talents” did not change the servant's heart. Instead, he forcefully demanded payment of a paltry amount from his fellow-servant and had him thrown into prison. Mercy in the king did not produce mercy in the servant. The spiritual and moral transformation did not take place in the servant; therefore, justice and moral propriety obligated the king to cancel the legal transaction. Jesus warned, “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses” (Matthew 18:35).

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in also forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

In Romans 4:7, 8 the apostle Paul quoted from Psalm 32:1, 2. “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.” Because Paul is quoting from the Old Testament he uses the term “covered,” even though under the New Covenant the blood of Jesus Christ does not “cover” our sins. It washes them away. Nevertheless, the main point is the blessedness of those who were and are justified by faith under either covenant.

Late in life the apostle John wrote, "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

*We are reconciled.*

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"(Romans 5:8 - 10).

Even when our hearts were still in rebellion against God, God fulfilled *His* condition and provided *His* part in reconciling us to Himself by giving His Son to die for us. Our condition, our part, is to repent of our rebellion and accept by faith God's gracious gift.

Paul writes to the believers, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:21 - 23a).

"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled [get reconciled] to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:18 - 21).

As was stated in Romans 5:8 - 10, God fulfilled and provided *His* part in the reconciliation process in Jesus Christ. Our part is to "get it done" by repentance and faith in what God did in Jesus Christ.

We who are reconciled have both the *ministry* of reconciliation and the *word* of reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation flows through our contacts and relationships. The word of reconciliation is the content, the message itself. To be effective in communicating the message so that reconciliation will happen, we need both the word and the ministry of reconciliation. If we have the relationship connections but do not speak the truth or have no truth to speak, there will be no effective communication and no reconciliation will happen. Likewise, if we have the message, the word, but no "delivery system" through our contacts and relationships, no effective communication and no reconciliation will happen. Ambassadors need both the imperative message and the effective means of communicating it.

We ourselves must first be reconciled. Only the reconciled can effectively communicate and facilitate reconciliation. Believers are the "company of the reconciled." If we have been reconciled to God, we must be reconciled to one

another. Division and alienation among believers destroys the credibility of our message and our witness before a cynical world. "Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

"Reconciliation" is one of the most beautiful words in human language. The world is full of alienation. Our message is the hope it desperately needs. We must live it and proclaim it.

*We are justified.*

To be *forgiven* of our sins is a great part of salvation; to be *justified* from our sins is the even greater part. Believers in Jesus Christ are not merely forgiven sinners; we are justified saints. If God forgave us and went no further, our sins would still be on our record. Although we would escape the penalty, we might still be on probation, always reminded of our past misdeeds, always trying to become worthy, always hoping to be accepted.

Justification has been expressed as "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. To be justified by faith in Jesus Christ means that God treats us just as righteous before Him as if we had never sinned in the first place. So far as God is concerned, we have a new past as well as a new present and future.

And please notice. We are justified *from* sin, not *in* sin. The bumper sticker, "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven," can falsely imply that we are forgiven while sinning. That is called "cheap grace." The Bible does not teach that we are justified before God while knowingly and deliberately sinning. If we do sin we are to stop it, confess it and trust Jesus Christ our High Priest for immediate cleansing.

"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Verse 9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The blood of Christ cleanses "in the light." We cannot be cleansed from sin while we are still hiding it.

This was the lesson Jesus was teaching when He told Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." When Peter replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean" (John 13:6 -10). The washing of the feet signified the cleansing of any sin we might commit in our daily walk. Jesus is saying that we must take care of it by repentance and faith in His blood. If we do not, *we have no part with Him*. At the same time, it does not mean that we must "get saved all over again." Take care of the sin of any given moment, and you are completely clean.

We are not to worry that we might be sinning without knowing it. Sin is an act of the will against light, knowledge. Either there is known sin or there is no sin. We all do things in honest ignorance. God holds us responsible to obey the light we have, and to seek further light. That is what every honest heart must do and sincerely wants to do. That person will grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Satan tries to remind believers of the forgiven sins of the past and “beat them over the head” with false condemnation. Remember, believers are justified from all past sin. It is gone. Yes, we are aware of them. Paul was aware of what he did to the followers of Jesus before he was converted, and the memory must have brought him deep pain at times. Yet he never carried around a load of guilt over it. He had received mercy. He was justified from it. He rested in redeeming grace.

Here is a popular saying: “When Satan tries to remind you of your past, you remind him of his future.”

Peter declared in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia: “By Him [Jesus] everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).

After Paul described some of the glaring sins of the culture of Corinth, he made this positive statement to the believers: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). That is where believers stand. We will come back to that Scripture again.

Justification by faith is a recurring theme of the Epistle To The Romans. Believers are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). God is “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (verse 26).

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (verse 9).

There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, The righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1, 4).

Paul wrote to Titus, “Having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

### *We Are Sanctified.*

No one would knowingly sprinkle, starch, and iron a shirt without first washing it. We wash the shirt first. Many *professed* Christians have been “sprinkled, starched, and ironed” who have never been washed.

Remember 1 Corinthians 6:11, “And such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

To be sanctified means to be set apart—set apart *to* and therefore set apart *from*. To be set apart to God is to be set apart from sin. In worship forms, objects are “sanctified,” set apart from secular uses for sacred uses. These include such things

as: altars, sacrifices, offerings, containers, utensils, locations, buildings, even people (for example, the priests in the Old Testament).

A man finds a dirty, tarnished pan in a garage sale. He thinks, "I can use that to catch the oil when I drain the crankcase." When he brings it home, his wife says, "I'm going to clean it up and use it in the kitchen." She just "sanctified" that old pan. She saw its possibilities and set it apart to a higher use.

That reminds us of 2 Timothy 2:20 - 21. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."

As a spiritual and moral act, sanctification is a part of salvation. It is what salvation does to us and for us. Remember 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." We are sanctified and justified to live a sanctified and justified life.

God sanctified us. He set us apart to Himself and cleaned us up for His holy purpose. We respond by sanctifying ourselves. We gladly obey the command to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). What a relief to let go of all the "crud"!

I have never seen anyone running after a garbage truck pleading, "please, please leave me just a little bit of my garbage!"

We have escaped the corruption that is in the world because of its lust (2 Peter 1:4).

By the will of God "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (verse 14). This is both our standing and our state.

Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). God and His word are able to build us up and give us "an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Believers do not grow *into* sanctification. That is, we did not get saved "on the installment plan." We repented and believed. It was a definite transaction. We went from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God, in a moment of time. We were sanctified by God and to God the moment we were saved. Now we grow *in* sanctification (holiness) as we continue to live up to all the light we have with a perfect (honest) heart and conscience before God. *That is spiritual and moral perfection.* We live in subjective perfection (of heart) as we continue to perfect (mature) holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1). So, if you want to be perfect, *start now.* Honestly obey what you know. Then, keep growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). That is a process, a lifetime journey.

*We are dead to sin and alive to God.*

The apostle Paul made this statement: “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:19, 20). This is expanded to all true believers in The Epistle To The Romans, especially and particularly in chapter 6 and the first part of chapter 7.

First, the apostle poses a rhetorical question: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1). He gives the obvious answer and the reason: “Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (verse 2).

Our “old man” (old self, the person we used to be) was crucified with Christ. That did away with the body we used in our slavery to sin, the one we “buried” in baptism. We are no longer slaves to sin; so the body trained and used to obey its fleshly desires is “dead”—buried (verses 2 and 3). What a relief!

Because we died to sin, we are freed from sin. Now we walk and live in a new life by Christ's resurrection power (verses 4 - 7). We reckon (count) that we are dead to sin and alive to God; therefore we do not allow sin and its desires to rule in our mortal bodies (verses 11, 12). We refuse to present our body parts as tools of unrighteousness to sin; we present them as tools of righteousness to God (verse 13).

Sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law of Moses but under grace (verse 14). Grace keeps us free from sin. The law of Moses could not do that; it was ineffective, So believers do not need the Law; it is now a restraint for the lawless and for sinners (1 Timothy 1:9). We know that we are under grace because we have been freed from sin. The person who is still under the dominion of sin is not under grace.

Now that believers have been set free from sin, we are happy and joyful love-slaves of righteousness and of God. We gladly present our body parts as tools of righteousness for holiness (verses 13, 18, 19). We revel in the liberty and freedom of this joyful “slavery” to righteousness and to God.

Now our lives are fruitful and productive as we look and move toward our destiny. We no longer live in sin and spiritual death, and so we no longer live in fear of the wages of sin—eternal death. Instead, we are alive in Christ and live in the gift of God—eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (verses 20 - 23).

“And you, He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (verses 4 – 6).

*We are born again.*

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13).

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

God is the initiator and prime agent of the new birth. The truth—His word—is His instrument. “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). God sent His Son to redeem us; He gave us the gospel in His word; He sent the Holy Spirit to draw us to Jesus Christ; through faith in Christ we are reconciled to Him to live a new life joyfully in fellowship with Him in the Spirit. *That is the new birth.*

*We are adopted children of God.*

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Galatians 4:6, 7).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:14 - 17).

*We are Abraham's seed.*

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise” (Galatians 4:28). “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free” (verse 31). Ishmael was a child of Abraham by Hagar. Isaac was the child of promise by Sarah. Only the child of the promise was *the covenant seed* of Abraham. Now, under the New Covenant of grace and not the Old Covenant Law, only those who are in Christ are true seed [children] of Abraham.

“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called' [Genesis 21:12].

That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son' [Genesis 18:10, 14]" (Romans 9:6 - 9).

"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7), "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (verse 29).

Abraham became "the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised" (Romans 4:12).

"He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in [by] the Spirit, and not in the letter [of the Law]; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:29). Note: "Judah" means "praise" (Genesis 29:35).

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). By "flesh" the apostle means his physical descent from Abraham and its religious advantages to him as a Jew under the Law of Moses.

Later he wrote, "In Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:9 - 13. See also Ephesians 2:1, 4 - 6, above). We are buried, raised, alive in Christ. We are complete in Christ.

"The circumcision of Christ" means the spiritual "circumcision" of the heart that Christ accomplishes in us at salvation, and that is confessed to God and demonstrated to man by burying in water baptism our old "dead" body that we used in committing the sins of the flesh.

"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

### We Are the Lord's.

Remember, we are redeemed. We belong to God. "You are Christ's" (1 Corinthians 3:23). "You are bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

### *We are in Christ.*

Believers belong to God for His eternal purpose: to live in Him and He in us in a total, personal, completely compatible, intimate, holy love-relationship that fulfills His joy and our joy fully and forever.

We are in Christ and Christ is in us. “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:24).

How can we be in Him and He in us at the same time? This had been illustrated (though not perfectly) by taking a container to a river, filling the container with river water and placing the container in the river. The river is in the container and the container is in the river.

“Of Him you are in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Because of what God did for us *through* Christ, believers are now *in* Christ.

“We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 5:20).

“He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

### *We are one in Christ.*

Because believers are in Christ, we are together. We are one in Him. “You are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30).

### *We are sealed by the Spirit.*

A seal is evidence of ownership. A seal is something outward, visible and/or observable. At salvation God gave us the earnest (*arrabon*, “first installment”) of the Spirit *in our hearts* (*ton arrabona tou pneumatos in tais kardiais hemon*; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22). God “has given us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 5:5 KJV; *ton arrabona tou pneumatos*).

Subsequent to salvation, believers are to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is the seal of the Spirit. “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). “Having believed” is prior to “you were sealed.” It means “after you believed.” This baptism in the Holy Spirit is, in turn, an earnest (*arrabon*) of our future *inheritance*.

### *We are kept by the power of God.*

The apostle Peter assures believers that we are “kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). “Kept” (*phrouroumenous*) is the present passive participle of *phroureo*. The power of God

guards us like an escort of soldiers. That protection is accessed by our faith in His power. There is no room for presumptuous self-confidence and boasting. We are secure as we live by faith.

Jude writes “To those who are called, sanctified [a number of older manuscripts read 'beloved'] by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude 1). “Preserved” (*teteremenois*) is the perfect passive participle of *tereo* (keep, protect).

1 Peter 1:5 emphasizes *how* we are kept. Jude 1 emphasizes *where* we are kept. We are in Jesus Christ Himself, guarded there by faith in the overcoming power of God. Remember, it is faith in the power of God—not faith in our own faith but faith in the *object* of our faith, God Himself.

### Who We Are: A Panorama.

We now look through a “wide angle lens,” as it were, and view a panorama of what else the New Testament declares that we are as believers in Jesus Christ. It is a constellation of inspired and inspiring declarations of our identity and our position in our Lord and Savior. As a truly born-again believer in Christ, each one of us can exclaim with joy: “That is who I am!”

#### *We are Jesus' friends.*

Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13 -15).

#### *We are salt and light.*

In His Sermon On The Mount Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). Let us keep the “savor and flavor” of Christ in our speech, attitude and conduct.

He also said, “You are the light of the world” (verse 14). Believers are the light of the world because Jesus Christ is the Light of the world (John 8:12). If Christ truly lives in us, by our lifestyle His Light shines through us. Each one of us is His “light bulb” wherever we are. That light will shine in spite of the efforts of the “children of darkness” to dim or darken it. Christ cannot be hidden.

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:4, 5).

The Father “has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated (transferred) us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13. See Acts 26:17, 18).

“For you were once darkness, but now are you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

*We are epistles [letters] of Christ.*

Paul writes to the Corinthian church, “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:2, 3).

Believers' lives are an open letter to the world. When we confess that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite the world to “read” our lives. They have the right to do so. It is often said that we are the only “Bible” some people might ever read. For us, that is an awesome opportunity and responsibility. We must be sure that the “message” is true and clear.

*We are Christ's sheep.*

Jesus said that we are His sheep. Much of what He said in this regard is recorded in John, chapter 10. He gave His life for the sheep. He calls us by name. He goes before us. We follow Him. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (verse 27). We are safe, doubly-protected in the hands of Christ and the Father (verses 28, 29). Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd. All of His sheep follow Him, and in so doing they have and enjoy eternal life.

*We are the body of Christ.*

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

God put all things under the feet of Jesus Christ, “and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

*We are the bride of Christ.*

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

When the apostle Paul wrote about the relationship between husband and wife in Ephesians 5:22 - 33, he did so in the context of the greater relationship between Christ and the church. The relationship between husband and wife is the earthly image of that greater relationship. He says, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (verse 32).

Because the “one flesh” concept in marriage speaks of believers' vital and eternal union with Christ as members of His body, “body” and “bride” interrelate when referring to the church. We see this in Ephesians 5:30: “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”

Christ's body is His bride; His church is His wife. The angel said to John, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:9). The angel showed him the New Jerusalem—the bride (church) in her new home.

*We are God's vineyard.*

Jesus' teaching in this regard is recorded in John, chapter 15. The Father is the Vinedresser (Gardener). Jesus is the true Vine. Every believer is a branch. The Father prunes us so that we will bear more fruit (verse 2). We cannot bear fruit unless we abide in the vine. Anyone who does not abide (remain, stay connected) in the Vine is cast out, withers, and is burned (verse 6). "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (verse 8).

*We are fellow citizens, God's family, and the temple of God.*

"You are God's field; you are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9). "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (verses 16, 17).

"What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

"You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

"Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19 - 22).

*We are everything 1 Peter 2:9 - 12 says we are.*

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

*We Are Victorious.*

John said that many false prophets have gone out into the world, spreading error and deceiving many. Then he assured believers: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:1 - 4).

We are victorious because of the new birth. “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4). Believers are victorious because by the new birth *we were born victorious*. The word of God says so. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. Do not tell yourself otherwise. You were born in victory to live in victory. Our faith is the victory that has already overcome all opposition, Faith not only brings the victory; faith *is* the victory. As you are trusting, you are triumphant.

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:14, 15).

The apostle Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Next he quotes Psalm 44:22 as saying that for the Lord’s sake we have already surrendered our lives to death if called upon to do so. Then he makes this powerful statement: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:35 - 37). “More than conquerors” is one word in the original Greek (*hupernikomen*—“superconquerors”).

So by faith in Christ we say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

*We shall be like Him!*

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God [and we are]! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:1 - 3).

Amen!