

The Believer's Standing vs. the Believer's State

Any relationship between God and man is a complex thing to explain. For example, it is very common to hear a person say, 'God loves you!' That is a Biblical truth but that statement alone does not tell the whole story. Yes, the Bible says God is love (1 Jn 4:8). Yes, the Bible says God is good to the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). And yes, the death of Christ could have potentially saved everyone that ever lived. But what is often left unsaid is that God is also holy (Isa 6:3), that He is angry with the wicked ('*God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*' — Ps 7:11) and hates all workers of iniquity ('*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. the foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*' — Ps 5:4,5). Therefore one cannot express the relationship between an unsaved person and God in a simplistic manner. ***In like manner, the relationship between a saved person and God is not something that may be expressed in a simplistic manner.*** That relationship is what I would like to direct our thoughts on this morning.

In one sense God speaks of us as being freely forgiven in Christ, while in other verses God deals with us according to our sins. These two different senses in which God deals with the believers are expressed theologically as the believer's ***standing*** (*that moment when we trusted Christ*) and the believer's ***state*** (*our every day living for the Lord*). ***Being saved and safe in Christ is called our STANDING. The continual working of the Holy Spirit in our lives is our present STATE before God. In Christ, the believer's STANDING is one of perfection and forgiveness; in our daily lives our STATE fluctuates as we submit to the will of God in our lives, pray, ask forgiveness for sins, etc. It is vitally important to our growth in Christ to understand both of these truths and to keep them in their proper balance.*** As the hymn says, '*Born of the Spirit with life from above, into God's family divine; justified fully through Calvary's love, O WHAT A STANDING IS MINE!*'

[Note there have been other names used to describe this truth such as the believer's ***position*** (*perfect in Christ*) and the believer's ***condition*** (*our present condition*); or our ***past salvation*** (*saved from the penalty of sin*) and our ***present salvation*** (*being saved from the power of sin*).]

Illustration: a damaged ship goes into dry dock for repairs (e.g. USS Forrestal). Once in port the ship is *safe* but not *sound*. In the dry dock the ship is worked upon to make her seaworthy again. That is like our salvation: once we are saved we are *safe* in Christ and the ***penalty of our sins*** are paid. But we are still damaged (we still sin). ***The Lord spends the rest of our lives working with us to make us in His image!***



'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [our standing] For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, [our state] that he might be the firstborn among many brothers' — Rom 8:28,29

'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! [our standing] And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been

made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” [our state] — 1 John 3:1-3.

‘Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever [out standing] those who are being made holy.’ [our state] — Heb 10:14



The Prince and the Pauper Truth)

Illustration: the old story of ‘The Prince and The Pauper’ where the prince exchanges places and lived as a pauper. His **standing** was that of a prince, the son of the king, but his **state** was that of a pauper. “A prince, while he is a little child, is presumably as wilful 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.” (C.I.Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of*

Illustration: John 13:1-11 Jesus used the difference between a *full bath* and the simple *washing of our hands*: ‘Jesus answered, A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean.’ — John 13:10 In this example, a person may take a bath once a day; but while going throughout the day when their hands are dirty, no one takes another full bath just to eat lunch! In similar fashion we are saved once when we trust Christ, but daily we come to Him in prayer, confessing our sins which accumulate. As to our **standing** we’ve had a ‘bath,’ fully cleansed from our sins; but as to our **state** we get ‘dirty’ and must ‘wash up.’

<i>The Believer’s STANDING</i>	<i>The Believer’s STATE</i>
how God sees us in Christ	our actual condition at the present time
Jesus <i>did</i> a work for us, our justification	Jesus <i>is doing</i> a work in us, our sanctification
regeneration (the new birth, ‘born again’) happens instantaneous	sanctification takes a lifetime
we are perfect, complete in Christ, 100% without sin	we are fallible, imperfect, sinful
unchanging and secure	changes daily, either positively or negatively
all believers are equal, ‘the ground at the cross is level’	all believers are at different points in their maturity in Christ

The Believer’s STANDING

A key teaching in regards to this is called the “**doctrine of imputation.**” To “*impute*” something is to charge something to another person’s account. It’s a word used in accounting when someone owes a debt but another person comes in and pays on that account. Spiritually we owed a debt we could not pay: our sin debt to God. We all have sinned and the wages of sin is death (both physical and spiritual). Jesus took upon Himself our sin on the cross and paid for the sin-debt. When we trust Christ His righteousness is “imputed” or “charged” to our account. ***That’s another reason why the***

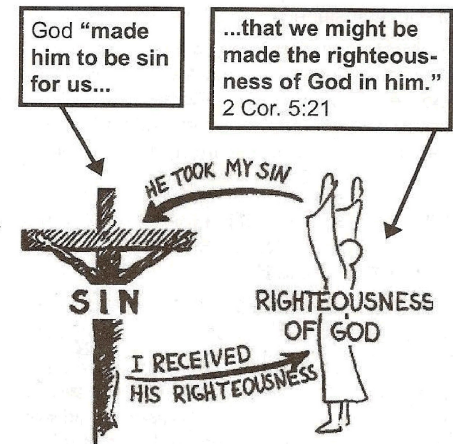
believer is safe in Jesus and assured of heaven because it doesn't depend upon him. If salvation to any degree depended upon the believer, no one would make it because we all disobey.

'Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.'
— Rom 4:4-8

'For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous.' — Rom 5:19

'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.' — Rom 8:1

'What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.' — Rom 8:31-34



The Believer's STATE

Although we are forgiven in Christ, we daily either submit to the will of God or we harden our hearts as to what the Lord would have for us. This daily relationship with the Lord fluctuates. Some verses regarding our daily walk with the Lord:

we grow in Christ by the reading and studying of His word: 'Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.' — John 17:17; 'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby' — 1 Peter 2:2

our sins result in a break in fellowship with our Heavenly Father: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' — 1 John 1:8; 'Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.' — Isaiah 59:1,2; 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' — Prov 28:13

our life in Christ requires growth: 'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' — 1 Peter 3:18; 'Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.' — Phil 3:12; 'Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.' — 1 Thes 4:1. Here Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians to improve in their walk with God and to please God more and more.

our growth in Christ may be hindered: ‘Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?’ — Gal 5:7; ‘Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?’ — 1 Cor 3:1-3

we may live in such a manner that the Lord cannot use our lives in His service: ‘But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.’ — 1 Cor 9:27

a disobedient lifestyle and a hardened heart to the things of God brings the Lord’s discipline to bring us about: ‘And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.’ — Heb 12:5-11



Application

<i>The Believer’s STANDING</i>	<i>The Believer’s STATE</i>
<i>freely forgiven</i> — “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” — Psalms 103:11,12 It is this confidence which prompts the believer not to give up, knowing God has accepted us in Christ.	<i>accountability for our daily actions</i> — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” — 2 Cor 5:10 Some doctrines of grace teachers deny heavenly rewards. I believe that’s an error.
<i>peace and joy of forgiveness in Christ</i> — “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” — Rom 8:37-39. By faith we rest and trust God for our growth.	<i>full consciousness of our sins</i> — “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!” — Rom 7:24,25a. We wrestle daily with our thoughts, our motives, things we do we should not do and things we omit which we should do. When we rest in God, we rest in who He is and not who we are!

ERROR — many unsaved read the multitude of verses which speak of the manner of lives we are to live as a Christian and believe *‘If I live up to these conditions then I’m a Christian.’* This minimizes sin and how a holy God must deal with sin. **Basically it’s taking verses relating to a believer’s state and applying them to our standing before God.** *‘And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.’* — Rom 11:6

ERROR — there’s presently a Christian movement which **over-emphasizes the truth that God loves us ‘unconditionally’** and is basically saying we are free to sin since *‘He loves us anyway!’* This removes responsibility and reduces sin to something inconsequential. *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”* — Gal 6:7. Yes, God loves us unconditionally (our *standing*) but we can so live as to mess up our lives forever (our *state*). **While freely forgiven, our actions do have eternal ramifications!**