

Identification with Christ

In John chapter 20 we have the scene at the empty tomb on the first day of the week after the crucifixion (Sunday). Mary Magdalene is sitting beside the tomb, weeping over the loss of the body of Jesus. When He appears, she at first thinks he is a caretaker and asks if he knows where the body has been taken. But when He softly says her name she knows it is Jesus she is speaking with. Verse 17 has profound implications for our study of eternal security.

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.

He tells her, “go to my brethren.” The term “brethren” is not to be taken lightly. Jesus is not using it as just a term of endearment; He means it quite literally that the disciples are His brothers. Remember our study on regeneration? They (and we) are His brothers by virtue of regeneration.

Then He says. “And say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.”

Both Jesus and the disciples, being brothers, have the same Father—God the Father. And He is, of course, also their God, both of the disciples and Jesus. Jesus is clearly identifying with the disciples who are regenerate believers and recognizing and embracing that family relationship. We call this “identification with Christ.” That is we are so intimately associated with Jesus that we are “identified” with Him. As we have seen, believers are quite literally the brothers (and sisters) of Christ. And God is quite literally our father by virtue of the generation of a human spirit in us by the Holy Spirit.

Heb 2:11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

We see this elsewhere in Scripture. In the salutations of numerous epistles, Paul and even Peter refer to believers as “in Christ”. It shows up in other

places too numerous to list them all, but here are a few of the most interesting.

Ro 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus....

If you are identified with Christ Jesus (*In* Christ Jesus) you are no longer under condemnation. I do not see a qualifying “except...” in that no condemnation statement.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Here we are told the purpose of this identification is for “good works”. That word “good” is agathos *ag-ath-os'*, which is good of intrinsic value—value that goes beyond the sum of its parts. This is divine production of the Spirit of God working in the believer.

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Here we see that we were “far off,” but since we are “in Christ” we are now “made nigh” by the blood of Christ. The word translated “in” is the Greek *en*, which is a primary preposition denoting fixed position in place, time or state. It implies a position that is closely associated with Christ. While believers have this association or position after salvation, there was a time they were identified with Adam.

1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

As fallen mankind, we are identified with Adam at birth. We are born a sinner with a sin nature and under condemnation because of Adam’s sin and the fact that we are sinners. We are “in Adam” and identified with him and his sin. As a result we are born spiritually dead. But as regenerate believers we are identified with Christ and receive eternal life. That leaves us with a question.

Rom 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷

This passage is often misunderstood by some who claim if we were crucified with Christ, our sin nature is dead and has no more control over us. I wish! If your sin nature is dead then you should be completely free of sin—but you aren't, are you? It isn't dead then, but we should **count** it as dead. That our sin nature has no control over us is true only to the extent that, as believers using the power of the Spirit of God, we **deny** the sin nature control. You still sin, so what is going on in this passage? Identification.

To be “buried” with Him is another way of saying identified with Christ. “Buried” is *sumphutos soom'-foo-tos*, which means literally “to grow along with” or “bury with” or figuratively to be closely united. As believers we are closely united with the death of Christ. That is on two levels. First, though it was Jesus who went to the Cross, it should have been us! He went in our stead. In that sense we were on the Cross with Him. Secondly, it was our sins that were judged there, not His.

What Paul is saying in these verses is that since our sins were dealt with and we trusted in that, we are now identified with Christ and have the power through the indwelling Holy Spirit to have victory over sin, assuming we use it.

Our sin nature has only as much power over us as we are WILLING to grant it. Unfortunately, rather than counting our very much alive sin natures as dead and trusting in the power to resist sin from the Spirit of God, we often willingly grant our sin nature as much power as it wishes. The result is sin.

This identification with Christ, as His brother, is closely related to the doctrine of regeneration. It further enforces that concept by establishing a very clear and powerful bond with Him. Where before we had an identification with Adam as sinners, now we are identified with Jesus as His brothers and sisters.

In no place in Scripture do we find any references to reversing this process or reversing this identification.

Eternal Life

Beginning with some review from our earlier look at this subject:

All of God's creations live forever, but there is a difference between living forever (life everlasting) and eternal life. Some will experience this "living forever" in hell, but believers will experience the "eternal life" version of living forever in Heaven in the presence of God. Eternal life is imputed to the "born from above" human spirit at salvation (Jo 3:16).

Jo 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Jo 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Believe! Does John add anything to that? Hear the Gospel and believe, and you are given eternal life, and note the present tense in the Greek indicates a present possession with ongoing future results. That means eternal life is even more than living forever in heaven in the presence of God. It is not just something that gets activated when the believer dies. It is something he has and can experience right now.

1 Jo 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Note “this life is in his Son” and “whoever has the Son has life”. If you are a believer and “have the Son” then you have eternal life, but it is way more than simply a possession; it is a possession to be used now.

Jo 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Eternal life, as defined here by Jesus, involves the experience of knowing the only true God through His Son. This isn't just knowing about someone. This is intimate knowledge. It is a personal relationship of intimacy which is continuous and dynamic. The word know (*ginōskōsin*) here in the present tense, is often used in the Septuagint and sometimes in the Greek New Testament to describe the intimacy of a sexual relationship. Thus, a person who knows God has an intimate personal relationship with Him. What we see in Galatians 5:22-23 is a picture of what eternal life will look like in eternity AND what it looks like right now for those who walk in faith (Gal 5:16).

We saw all this in our earlier look at eternal life in this study. But here we will focus on the imputation of eternal life to the born again believer at salvation (past tense).

When our Lord rose from the dead He rose into an entirely new kind of life, a life that in Him had never existed before. He was then not only God, but He was also man in glorious resurrection form. This is the form believers will eventually experience, because He has the power to impart that life to us and does.

John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent

John 6:47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life

The Holy Spirit is the deity of God working in the lives of believers. It is a supernatural lifestyle lived by faith and is the very power of God returned to that faith. Remember? – Faith **outflow** toward Christ in Heaven results in the life of Christ **inflowing** the believer. Since it is the very life of Christ, the real meaning of eternal life is it is a life that can face anything without wavering, just as He faced everything without wavering.

It should be noted that the Greek in John 6:47 implies the receiving of eternal life is at the moment of belief with future results. You get it when you are born again and experience it then and in the future. Eternal life isn't just a future promise to be realized at death; it is the Christ-life formed in the believer and lived in the here and now. We get a picture of what it looks like in Galatians 5:22-23, the Fruit of the Spirit. THAT is a vitally alive eternal life in action. That is experiencing the Spiritual Kingdom. Eternal life is the life of Christ given to us who access its power through the Holy Spirit—right now—today!

Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

Jesus said he gives them eternal life. The “them” are born again Christians. And they shall never perish. It is in the present tense, which means it is a present possession. Since it is the very life of Christ, it is intended to be used right here and right now. The word for “perish” is *apollumi ap-ol'-loo-mee*, which means destroy, kill or be lost. This imputed eternal life can never be killed or lost. That is why it is called “eternal”.

I have given them eternal life (and they have it now) and they will never die (or lose this life). Interesting, is it not?

And “...neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.” Jesus says those, with eternal life, are in His hand—that is He has a hold on them—

and none shall take them away from Him. It would be hard to stretch the meaning to say that “any man” is everyone else *but* “you”. That is to say, “you,” by your spiritual failings and sinfulness or any act, could pluck yourself out of His hand. The word does not allow for that interpretation. So, little old sinful you cannot so fail that you could be removed from the grasp that Jesus has on you.

Ro 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Ro 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul was persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor demons, nor things here now or in the future could ever separate him from the love of God, which is realized with this identity we have with Christ. Paul put no conditions on that—no “exceptions”.

Are you persuaded? Or do you think something can separate you from Jesus. It is said that if you can lose your eternal life, then it is badly misnamed. But here we are with Christians that are not “persuaded” and believe you can forfeit your eternal life. If so, to them, it isn’t eternal, is it?

John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me **I will in no wise cast out**

Those given to Jesus by the Father, He will “not in any way” cast them out. The word translated “cast out” is *ekballo ek-bal’-lo*, which means to eject or expel. You “came to Christ” when you were saved, and this passage says the Father will “in no way cast out” such a person. The passage offers zero exceptions to this promise.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

That word translated “perish” is rightly translated as perish, or destroy, lose or be lost. And “no one” will snatch them out of my hand. It doesn’t say “no one *except...*” or “no one, *however you can snatch yourself...*”. Nothing in this passage even suggests there is an exception. If there was an exception, wouldn’t you think such would be mentioned here?

It says no one can snatch...”. That word translated ‘snatch’ is *harpazo har·pad·zo* and means take or seize by force, catch away, pluck, or pull away.

In reviewing these passages on eternal life it is very difficult to stretch the meaning of “eternal” as anything but forever. Nowhere in Scripture is there a suggestion that eternal life is anything but what the name suggests. If Jesus gave it to you and then says no one can take you away from Him, then how is it you can even suggest it is possible to lose your salvation?

Salvation is described as a gift in Ephesians 2:8-9. But some argue that the gift can be taken back when the recipient proves himself unworthy somehow. Just how “unworthy” is unworthy? Because ALL of us are unworthy on a regular basis. We call that sin. Where is that line in the sand where God says, “TOO much unworthiness!”

Some charge the believer can “give back” what was given to him by God, but nowhere in Scripture does it say this. If it were possible to do that, then I would think such would be made clear in God’s Word as a warning. This “gift” is something God has done in response to something the believer did — faith, and that produced a gift from God that was received.

What exactly is that gift? It isn’t just the simple fact that he “saved you from hell”. It is everything that God did for you at the moment of salvation. Some say that list is forty items long and includes all we have been looking at in this series, including eternal life. All of that would have to be reversed, and no place in Scripture is such a process described or even implied.

The argument that you cannot earn your salvation through works, but through works you can lose it after you have it is to suggest that God’s only recourse in dealing with a rebellious Christian is to take away his salvation,

and that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the very essence of God and places human limitations on His omnipotence. It also is saying that salvation is by works.

Eternal life is eternal. If it is eternal, then it cannot be removed. A life given to you by Christ that lasts forever! That is eternal security!

I know what some of you are thinking. “What about all the passages concerning perseverance?” “What about Hebrews 6 and ‘falling away’?” We will get to that.

Removal of Condemnation

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Paul described the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God who is the source of divine power for sanctification and the secret for spiritual victory in daily living. The believer has been removed from the dominion of sin. It has no more power over the believer UNLESS he should grant it power. But first Paul reminded his readers that since deliverance is “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:25)—no condemnation (*katakrima*, “punishment”) awaits those who are in Christ Jesus, as a result of their faith and identification with Him.

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

They are justified, declared righteous, and therefore stand in His grace (Rom. 5:2) and not under His wrath (1:18), and possess eternal life (Rom 5:17–18, 21). Christ is the sphere of safety for all who are identified with Him by faith. (In the better Greek manuscripts, 8:1 ends here. The words “who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit” were probably transcribed from verse 4.)

If you are a believer identified with Christ Jesus (in Christ), then you have been removed from a condition of condemnation to the fires of hell for eternity and will *never* face judgment for your sins. That “second death” sentence is removed. That would be saved in the past tense or positional sanctification. The passage is quite clear and does not allow for any exceptions.

Redemption

1 Peter 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot

“Redeemed” is the Greek word *lutroo loo-tro'-o*, which means to release on the payment of a ransom. The ESV translates it as “ransomed,” which is a pretty good translation. Then idea is the person ransomed (redeemed) was held prisoner in some way.

Gal 3:13 Christ hath **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree

This “redeemed” is *exagorazo ex-ag-or-ad'-zo* is a compound word made up of *ek ek*, which means out from, and *agorazo ag-or-ad'-zo*, which means to purchase property as in a marketplace.

Both words carry the idea that something or someone has been bought and paid for. The someone is every single believer who expresses faith in Christ. The person doing the buying is God, and the medium of exchange is the blood of His Son.

The believer has been purchased from the slave market of sin, redeemed from the curse of the Law. Yes, the Law was a curse because it was a terrible burden on Israel, and they were never able to meet its standard.

And that was exactly God's point. The Law was designed to demonstrate our inability to make ourselves righteous. The Law accomplished nothing by way of our salvation (Rom 3:19-20; 28; 8:3-4; Gal 2:16; 3:11; 24; Ja 2:10). It merely demonstrated our utter depravity (made us aware of our sinfulness) and pointed to the only possible solution – Christ.

In the New Testament we see that all of us are slaves sold under sin (Ro 7:14; 1 Cor 12:2; Eph 2:2) and we were hopelessly condemned to die (Ezek 18:4; John 3:18; Ro 3:19; Gal 3:10). This fallen and depraved state brings us to a point of despair where all we can see is our failures and no hope within ourselves.

The price for deliverance from this condition calls for a payment in blood. This blood-shedding as a means of deliverance from sin is pictured as far back as Genesis 3:21 when God made skins from animals for Adam and Eve to wear when they were tossed out of the Garden after the fall.

It is seen again in Genesis 4:4 in the offering of Abel, a “firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof,” which God found acceptable. Cain offered fruit from his fields—products of his own efforts. Instead of fruits of his own labor, Abel offered an animal, which God found acceptable. It was a perfect picture of God providing the offering in His son Jesus.

It all eventually came to an organized and systematized process in the Levitical offerings of the Law of Moses. The animal sacrifices of the Law demonstrate this need for a blood sacrifice, and the sacrifice must be “perfect” and completely “innocent”. All this was pointing to what Christ, as the Lamb without spot or blemish, would do on the Cross (Mat 14:24; 26:28; Heb 9:22-27; 10:4-14).

It should be noted that the redeemer will not ever sell a redeemed slave He has purchased. The redeemed are loosed from bondage and set free. They are not even bound to the Redeemer except voluntarily (Ro 8:19-21; Gal 4:31; 5:13). They *choose* to be a slave to the Redeemer. Exodus 21:5-6 is a perfect Old Testament picture of this.

Ex 21:5-6 But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶ then his master shall bring him to

God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

When a slave had served out his period of slavery he could voluntarily choose to remain in bondage. That choice was symbolized by having his earlobe pierced as is seen in the above passage. This principle of voluntary servitude to the Master is also seen in the following verses: Psalm 40:6-8; 1 Corinthians 9:18-19; and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. The believer does not serve Christ because he is compelled to out of fear we might somehow “fall away” and lose our salvation; we serve because we want to, and that is the way God wants it to be.

There is one other beautiful example of this idea of redemption. It is the entire Book of Ruth in the Old Testament. I suggest you read it. Not only is it a beautiful love story but it is also a picture of redemption with Boaz representing Christ as the “kinsman redeemer”.

Ruth represents all believers but is most symbolic of the future Church. Boaz takes her for his wife much like Christ takes the Church as His bride. The principle is that the redeemer must be a kinsman, related to the one being redeemed. Boaz was related to Ruth. As a man, Christ is related to fallen mankind.

Redemption is only possible with the shedding of blood. Faith must be applied to that shedding. The believer is redeemed or purchased from the slave market of sin by the blood of Christ on the Cross and set free from his slavery. Out of gratitude and love for the Redeemer the former slave commits himself to his former Master and becomes His willing and devoted slave. The Master never sells his redeemed slave back into slavery; he is set free! This renders the relationship eternal.