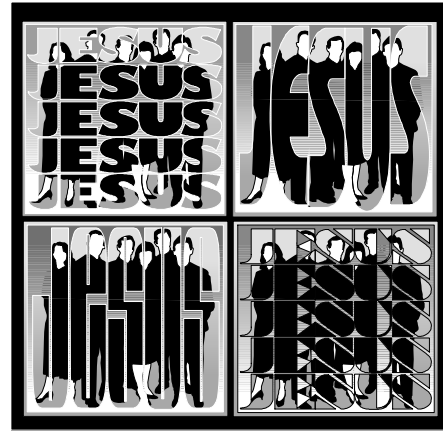

CHAPTER 5

THE MYSTERY OF OUR POSITION “IN CHRIST”

Earlier in our study we discovered two kinds of blood covenants, the equal covenant and the unequal covenant. The most common type is the equal covenant, where liabilities and assets are looked at closely by both parties so that the greatest benefit could be received from the union. If one side had a serious weakness, the other side possessed the strengths to offset this weakness. The idea is that deficiencies on both sides are canceled out by the assets of the other. In this way, the covenant produces a new man that is strong and well supplied.



The second type, or the **unequal** covenant, is far more rare. In this covenant, there is no examination of liabilities and assets so that some kind of “balance” or “equality” can be negotiated. In an unequal covenant, it is understood from the start that one party is bankrupt and that the other party has all the assets. The Greek word for the unequal covenant is “**diatheke**” (pronounced dye-a-thee-kee) In a diatheke, it is understood that one person will be in the position of giving—and the other person will always be in the position of receiving. We listened to Jesus’ words in Luke 22:20 when He said, “This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.” The Greek word translated “covenant” in this verse is **diatheke**—an unequal covenant where God does all the giving and we do all the receiving.

In the diatheke the identity of the person who has nothing is completely absorbed into the identity of the one who has all the assets. The old identity is completely destroyed (the old self dies). This leaves two persons who have been joined together as one new man where the identity of one is completely canceled out and has its expression in the other. The blood covenant literally purchases and positions you “**in**” the one who has the abundant assets. In the diatheke, you no longer belong to yourself. Listen to I Corinthians 6:19-20...

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“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”

Some may think this is unfair. Yet, just the opposite is true. Since you have the identity of your blood covenant partner, you are now treated as he would be treated. You now have ownership of all his assets and enjoy his authority as if it were your own. Additionally, all your debts and liabilities are paid off. Everything you once represented is canceled out by the abundant life of your covenant partner. The other side of the coin is that you now live for someone else. You don’t live for yourself anymore. Your whole desire is to identify and represent your “redeemer.”

This is what it means to be “In Christ.” Christ “redeemed” us through the diatheke. We lose our old identity and gain Christ’s identity and the name of Jesus (Galatians 2:20). We lose our unrighteousness and gain Christ’s righteousness (II Corinthians 5:21). We aren’t bankrupt any longer—we have “riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). We aren’t separated by our sins from the Heavenly Father any longer—we have direct access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). We aren’t in need any longer—we are joint-heirs with Christ! (Romans 8:17) Being a joint-heir means that you have the same access to Jesus’ inheritance as Jesus does. Joint-heir means joint-access. As far as God the Father is concerned, you are completely identified with Christ. Sin is no longer an issue because it was totally paid for by the blood of Jesus. When the Father sees you, He sees His Son.

“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.” (I Peter 1:18-19)

Our new identity puts us in a very special position with God. Now, when God sees us, He sees Himself. Another name for this is covenant oneness. It guarantees that God will never leave you or forsake you. It is impossible for God to forsake Himself! God cannot and will not “walk away” from this covenant. If we should somehow fall away from fellowship

with God, He will still remain faithful because of our identity with Him. We can clearly see this in II Timothy 2:11-13...

*“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; **He cannot deny Himself.**”*

OUR POSITION “IN CHRIST”

One of the central themes of the New Testament is the revelation God gave to Saint Paul. Bible theologians call it “The Pauline Revelation.” It begins in the book of Romans and is unveiled throughout all of Paul’s epistles. The core of the Pauline Revelation is the doctrine of justification by faith. It was the discovery of this revelation that inspired the teachings of Martin Luther at the beginning of the Reformation. At that time, the doctrine of justification by faith was a radical belief. Today, Luther would be called names such as “fanatic” and “religious extremist”. People were burned at the stake for preaching his message. The religious beliefs at the time of the reformation were largely a salvation based on works. To say that a person only had to have faith in Jesus Christ to be saved was considered heresy and proved to be too much for the religious leaders of the time. Today, many of us embrace Luther’s rediscovered Pauline teaching of justification by faith as the central truth in Christ’s salvation. Yet, there’s more to this story.

There is another central truth that, in my opinion, is more important than justification by faith and which is usually ignored by modern theology. This truth is our “identification with Christ.” It is more important because it includes justification by faith and much more. The reason we can be justified by faith is that God the Father considers us “in Christ,” or identified entirely with Christ through the new covenant in his blood. It’s a position where the Christian and Christ are considered one and the past life of the Christian is erased. When someone is “in Christ,” God does not deal with him according to his sin, failures and weaknesses but according to the life of Christ. When you are “in Christ,” the life of Christ is imputed to your account. We are justified (just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned) because Christ was without sin—and his sinlessness is freely imputed to us by blood covenant law. The sinless condition of Jesus Christ is imputed to our account because we are fully identified with Him—and not because we live perfect,

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obedient lives. Righteousness and justification are never based on our life—or our performance. Righteousness and justification are characteristics of the life of Jesus Christ. This is a hard truth for Christians to understand. Seeing ourselves “in Christ” is very difficult when our own life with its failures, weaknesses and sin is always in plain view. Having Satan as “the accuser of the brethren” condemning us every time we fail also doesn’t help. The only solution is to open God’s Word and discover the scriptures that tell us “who we are in Christ.” You will find that your position “in Christ” will not agree with what your natural thinking tells you about yourself.

In the New Testament there are over 120 Bible references declaring who the believer is “in Christ,” either directly or indirectly through similar phrases. Nearly all of them are found in the Pauline epistles to the churches. Some references use terms like; in Christ, in Him, in Whom, by Him and with Christ to convey this important place of our identification with the Son of God. It is not the scope of this study to go into the actual verses since time will not allow. However, we will give you a few key references to get started. If you make a commitment to do a Bible study and create a list of these scriptures, it can totally revolutionize your walk with the Lord.

Remember, as Christians we are never to focus on who we are outside of Christ. We will never be “outside” Christ or without Christ again, even though we may fail to live up to God’s standards from time to time. The Bible says that a righteous man may fall seven times, but he keeps getting up (Proverbs 24:16). Our focus should be on our position “in Christ.” When we sin and fail in our Christian life, our response is to keep getting up and moving forward because the sin and failure never represents who we are in God’s eyes. Just remember that Satan **always** approaches you on the basis of who you are **in yourself** to accuse and condemn you before God. **Satan’s goal is to change your focus from your position “in Christ” to yourself.** It’s the easiest thing in the world to side with his accusations because the evidence is very convincing. It **appears** to be the truth **about you** (and probably is). But, the Bible says that **you** have been crucified with Christ. Satan’s accusations are directed toward someone who has died in God’s eyes. If your position in Christ is not more real to you than what your senses say, you will lose every battle to Satan’s accusations. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he talked about “fighting the good fight of faith” (I Timothy 6:12). The battle begins when our senses and mental reasoning disagree with what God has said.

HERE ARE A FEW “IN CHRIST” SCRIPTURES AS AN EXAMPLE:

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

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God **in Him**.” (II Corinthians 5:21)*

*“...that I may gain Christ and be found **in Him**, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.” (Philippians 3:9)*

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

*“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.” (II Corinthians 2:14)*

*“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is **in Christ Jesus our Lord**.” (Romans 8:38-39)*

The subject of the believer’s identification with Christ is a crucial New Testament truth. Most churches fail to teach it to their congregations. In the traditional Bible teaching I hear, Christ and the believer are always separated. New Christians are taught from the first day to look at themselves instead of looking at Christ. Many Christians are conditioned by religion to be “self conscious” instead of “Christ conscious.” For the Christian, this translates into a “sin consciousness” (always aware of their sin and shortcomings) instead of a “righteousness consciousness” (always aware that they possess God’s righteousness as a result of the new covenant in Christ’s blood). American Christianity is full of this false religious way

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of thinking. Let's look at more of the things Jesus said about our identification with Him...

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” (Matthew 10:38-40)

In this reference, the Bible speaks of losing one's life for Jesus' sake. It is not necessarily talking about physical death. This is diatheke covenant language. If we learn that our life does not belong to us anymore—if we cast off our own life and stop demanding things on our own terms—if we **lose** our life for Jesus' sake, we find our true life, a life of identification with Christ. We must lose **our** life in order to gain Christ's life. This is one meaning behind the phrase “crucifying the flesh” in Galatians 5:24. Crucifying the flesh “with its passions and desires” speaks of a death to “self” and is part of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. One of the most important works of the Holy Spirit, sometimes understood as “a baptism of fire,” is to bring you to this place of death. If we find **our** life—if we cling to our life as if it belongs to us—if we demand things on our own terms, then we can't gain the benefits of Christ's life. This is one of the conditions of the diatheke. Notice Jesus' words of identification, “**He who receives you receives Me.**” The next Scriptural reference tells us even more...

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You

a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (Matthew 25: 31-40)

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL ASPECTS OF COVENANT

You and I are Christ’s brethren. Jesus is our “kinsman/redeemer.” Jesus did not just redeem (or purchase) us in the diatheke. Through the crucifixion, Jesus became our “kinsman,” meaning that we are all members of His immediate family. This makes Christ’s salvation a “family issue.” Every person who places faith and trust in the cross of Christ is a brother and a sister to Jesus. We are God’s family. Jesus is our older brother, the “first born among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). God is our Father. Whatever we do, even to the least of the brethren of Jesus Christ, we do it to Jesus. We are joined in covenant oneness. This should give you a different perspective on your relationship with other Christians. If we truly believe this truth, slander will stop and we will treat each other with a new respect...a respect for the covenant that identifies us with Christ. It is the truth of identification with Jesus that makes us “the body of Christ.” This view of the body of Christ is important. The apostle Paul writes about this subject when warning about the improper way to approach the Lord’s Supper (the New Covenant meal) in I Corinthians 11:29-30...

*“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, **not discerning the Lord’s body.** For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”*

I believe that the truth of identification and the failure to treat fellow believers as we would Jesus Christ Himself carries serious consequences. Paul calls it a failure to “discern the Lord’s body.” He continues to discuss this important subject in I Corinthians chapter 12:1-27. It is here that Paul addressed the conduct of the believers in Corinth coming to the Lord’s Supper early and beginning to eat before everyone had arrived. Some came drunk to this holy covenant meal. This is Paul’s point: Would you invite Jesus to dinner and begin to eat before He had arrived? If you were having dinner with Jesus tonight, would you come drunk? This disrespect toward

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Christ's covenant caused Paul to accuse them of not discerning the Lord's body. Additionally, these actions against the new covenant in Christ's blood caused sickness and death to flourish in the church at Corinth. We need to give some serious thought concerning Paul's words. It is one reason we see so much sickness and death in Christian churches today.

When discussing the cross of Jesus Christ and its effect on our relationship with God—this is what I call the **vertical** aspect of covenant. I believe the vertical aspect of the new covenant in Christ's blood to be the most important because everything else flows from it. Yet, as we discussed earlier, covenant not only joins the two covenant heads but also joins their families. In the same way, the new covenant of Jesus Christ brings every believer into union—something I call the **horizontal** aspect of covenant. This horizontal aspect is directly related to our discussion on “discerning the Lord's body.” It is recognizing your covenant union with every other believer and your brother's and sister's union and identification with Jesus Christ. Understanding the horizontal aspect of covenant causes you to treat other believers as you would the Lord Himself. When you partake of the covenant meal, you acknowledge not only your covenant with God but also your covenant with each other. This is a “Holy Communion.” It is a celebration of covenant oneness. (Also read I Corinthians 6:15-20)

WHY SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS A GRIEVOUS SIN

In I Corinthians 6:15-20, it's important to understand what Paul is saying about the sin of sexual immorality in light of being identified with Christ. Paul starts out by saying, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” Paul continues to explain how two people who commit sexual immorality are joined together as one. When a relationship (outside of marriage) is established in this fashion, it brings two people together as “one flesh.” The sin can be understood in this way: when a believer who is identified with Christ through His covenant commits sexual immorality, it causes Christ (and all those who believe in Him) to involuntarily participate in the sin. The thought of Christ in union with a harlot is unthinkable to those who love Him, yet that is what happens when a believer is involved in immorality. Immorality is not only a sin against Jesus, but is also a sin against all those who believe on Him. It is not a “private” sin as some claim. It's for this reason immorality is singled out in

the scriptures as a sin Christians need to diligently avoid. If, as a young Christian, you are tempted by a sexual relationship outside of marriage just remember that Christ (and all believers) will be right in the middle of this act with you as a result of blood covenant law. Remember that covenant participants share all things in common. If you are someone who has fallen in this area, grace and forgiveness is freely available. Immorality is not the unpardonable sin. The blood of Jesus purchased this abundant grace for you. Contrary to some popular teaching, immorality never has the power to cancel your salvation. Know that God completely forgives and will restore you just as if the sin never happened. This is what the New Testament calls “being justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

UNDERSTANDING THE ACTS CHAPTER 2 EXPERIENCE

In Acts 2 we see the birth of the New Testament Church and the special kind of life they shared. In verses 42 through 47, we read about this unique relationship they shared...

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Notice several things here. The breaking of bread was the center of early church activity. The breaking of bread is the covenant meal, the Lord’s Supper. Scripture says that they had **all things in common** and they continued daily **with one accord**. In these statements, we see a covenant oneness among the early believers. Some in the church today have tried to re-establish this pattern and experience. However, early church life cannot be duplicated without a Biblical understanding of blood covenant principles, which is lacking in the modern church. Covenant causes us to die to our independence and, without this death, we can never experience

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what the early church had. First century Christians had a radical belief in the New Covenant. This belief was part of their culture. They did not try to “hold on” to what they thought belonged to them. I don’t see modern day Christians embrace the first century church’s understanding of covenant. In America, we love our **independence**; and without dying to “our rights” and “our way,” we can never repeat what they had. Today, what some congregations call “covenant commitment” is actually nothing more than the error of legalism that is redefined—and results in spiritual bondage.

In Acts 2:45 the early Christians sold possessions and goods and divided them among all so that every need was met. Do you know what was driving this action? It was the believer’s identification with Christ that occurred through the diatheke (the New Covenant). The early church understood that if a fellow Christian was in need, Jesus was in need (read Matthew 25:31-40). If Jesus Christ knocked on your door tonight and said that He had a need, what steps would you take to help him? Would you sell all you had if it were necessary? This is the motivation behind New Testament covenant love. It’s a love that gives. The Bible calls it “the love of the brethren” or “brotherly love.” It is an intense love for Jesus that is manifested and directed toward our brothers and sisters in Christ—even the least of them.

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...” (I Peter 1:22-23)

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (I John 3:14-16)

These truths should radically change the way we see our brothers and sisters in Christ—and we should seriously consider Saint Paul’s covenant admonition to rightly discern the body of Christ.

