The Transforming Power of Knowing Who You Are in Christ

I. KNOWING WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

A. Paul’s dramatic declaration that we have become a new creation in Christ, with all things becoming new, has vast implications. The “he” that is a new creation is our born-again spirit. All things pertaining to our spirit have become new. Our spirit was instantly made righteous.

17If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away…all things have become new…21that we [our spirit] might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:17, 21)

B. Old things have passed away: We were under condemnation before God and powerless with regard to sin (at the heart level). We were under darkness, lacking ability to understand God and His Word, etc. We were destitute, without a relevant or lasting purpose in God.

C. All things have become new: We are accepted and enjoyed by God. Our former powerlessness and darkness have passed—we have the authority of Jesus’ name and the indwelling Spirit, which enable us to resist sin, sickness, and Satan. Now we have a significant destiny in God.

D. Transformation in our lives begins by knowing who we are in Christ or seeing ourselves in the way God sees us in Christ. We are transformed by changing how we think. As our mind is renewed, our emotions are transformed, and thus our behavior changes. Our emotions are not transformed by trying harder, but by seeing more clearly as we fill our mind with the Word.

2…but be transformed by the renewing of your mind… (Rom. 12:2)

E. Analogy: Imagine a homeless beggar who suddenly inherited great wealth. The announcement of his new inheritance doesn’t stop him from living in poverty. He must take the simple step of withdrawing the money. It only takes a few moments, but it is essential to accessing the wealth.

F. There are two important aspects in relationship with God—legal position and living condition.

G. Legal position: This speaks of how God sees us and relates to us in Christ, and of the benefits that He has given us because of what Jesus did for us on the cross and what the Spirit did in our spirit. At the new birth, our spirit is joined to the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). We have the fullness of grace in our spirit and full access to God’s presence.

17But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

H. Living condition: This speaks of how we live—how much grace we experience, as our mind and emotions are renewed by interacting with the Spirit. We can have the fullness of grace in our legal position (our spirit), and yet live in defeat in our living condition (our mind and emotions).

I. What Jesus freely and instantly worked for us on the cross is what He progressively works in us as we relate to the Spirit’s leadership in our life—referred to as “abiding in Christ” (Jn. 15:4-5).
J. To understand the glory of the new creation, we must first understand that God created humans with three parts—spirit, soul, and body. Man is a spirit, he has a soul, and he lives in a body.

\[\text{23 May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless} \ldots \text{(1 Thes. 5:23)}\]

K. Our spirit is the place where God dwells—He lives in us. Our soul speaks of our personality, consisting of our mind, emotions, and will. Our body has five senses, which enable us to receive from the physical world. Many believers do not know who they are in their spirit. As we receive training for our body and soul, so we must receive training related to our spirit.

L. The challenge of faith is that we do not feel our spirit. Our spirit is spirit, and is indiscernible, even hidden from our five senses. We cannot measure it by our emotions or our five senses. Paul referred to our true life, or our spirit man in this age, as being “hidden” in Christ.

\[\text{3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. \text{(Col. 3:3-4)}}\]

M. The gospel is the good news of salvation, of receiving God’s righteousness (in three tenses). Much of the misunderstanding about grace can be traced back to misunderstanding these truths.

1. **Justification:** our legal position—past tense, focused on my spirit (I have been saved.)
2. **Sanctification:** our living condition—present tense, focused on my soul (I am being saved.)
3. **Glorification:** our eternal exaltation—future tense, focused on my body (I will be saved.)

II. OUR LEGAL POSITION IN CHRIST (ROM. 5:21-6:10)

A. Paul described our legal position before God in Romans 5:12-21. He developed a foundational principle for understanding salvation and how God views the human race. God sees all humans as being in one of two legal positions before Him—either as being “in Adam” or “in Christ.”

1. Whatever was true of Adam’s standing before God is true of all who are “in Adam.”
2. Whatever is true of Jesus’ standing before God, as a man, is true of all “in Christ.”

B. Paul’s theme in Romans 5 reaches a conclusion in verse 21: we are under the reign of grace. This is one of the most important verses in Romans; it sets the context for understanding Romans 6.

\[\text{21 \ldots as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through} \ldots \text{Jesus Christ} \ldots \text{(Rom. 5:21)}\]

C. **The reign of sin:** We were under condemnation before God, powerless before sin and satanic attacks, and were in darkness, lacking the ability to understand God and His Word, etc. All who are “in Adam” are under the “reign of sin” in their legal position before God.

D. **The reign of grace:** We received a new position, power, nature, insights, and destiny. We are now enjoyed, indwelt, empowered, and commissioned by God, with a relevant purpose. All who are “in Christ” are under the “reign of grace” in their legal position before God.

For **FREE resources** on this subject, see mikebickle.org for a 10-part teaching series with notes, titled *The Gospel of Grace,* and free e-books *7 Longings of the Human Heart* and *The Rewards of Fasting.*
III. MORE ON THE REIGN OF GRACE

A. **Acceptance by God, with affection:** The result of receiving this new position is that God enjoys and delights in relating to us both as the sons of God and the Bride of Christ.

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

B. **Indwelling Spirit:** We have received power to resist sin effectively in our life. The indwelling Spirit’s love and peace, etc., is in our spirit (Gal. 5:22). We access the Spirit’s power simply by acknowledging His presence in our spirit and thanking Him for it; this is how faith works. The simple act of thanking the Spirit for His peace in our spirit releases it to our soul (emotions).

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23)

C. **Authority:** We were given the authority to use Jesus’ name to release the works of God and hinder the works of Satan, and to release or host the presence of the Spirit wherever we go.

D. **Divine destiny:** We have a relevant and lasting purpose in God. Every day is relevant as we do God’s will. Our small deeds so move Him that He eternally rewards us for them.

IV. ROMANS 6: THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

A. Romans 6 is the main chapter in the Scripture that teaches us about personal transformation. It tells us how to access (experience) the power, favor, and blessings of God, which are freely available to us in our legal position because of what Jesus did on the cross.

B. Note the three main sections in Romans 6:
   1. Romans 6:1-10: Our legal position (what we freely and fully received at our new birth)
   2. Romans 6:11-13: How to cooperate with grace (three principles to access God’s power)
   3. Romans 6:14-23: Our living condition (what we experience as we cooperate with grace)

C. Paul declared that we are now under the reign of grace in the same way that we were once under the reign of sin. The key to understanding Romans 6 is found in Romans 5:21.

21…as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through…Jesus Christ…62 How shall we who died to sin [freed from the reign of sin] live any longer in it? (Rom. 5:21, 6:2)

1. We are in a new legal position under the reign of grace with its privileges in Christ. We are now dead to the reign of sin (6:2). We are dead—finished; thus we are freed from our former position of condemnation and the mandatory power of sin over our emotions.

2. We are now under the reign of grace, and dead to the reign of sin (v. 2). Dying to the reign of sin is synonymous with the “old things passing away” (2 Cor. 5:17).

3. In declaring that we “died to sin” (v. 2), Paul was not exhorting us to do something for God, but to believe in something He did for us. Paul was not saying that “sin died in us” in the sense of sinful desires dying in us, but that we died to the reign of sin (Rom. 5:21).
V. SEEING OURSELVES AS ALIVE TO GOD

A. We are to reckon ourselves “alive to God,” or to see ourselves in the way that God sees us in Christ or under the reign of grace (Rom. 5:21)—as accepted and empowered by the indwelling Spirit and more. Reckoning is an accounting term. Romans 6:1-10 is our spiritual bank account. Jesus put great wealth in our spiritual “account,” but we have to make withdrawals to access it.

Reckon [see] yourselves to be…alive to God in Christ… (Rom. 6:11)

B. See yourself alive to God: We see ourselves as living in the realm of God. We see ourselves as enjoyed, indwelt, and empowered by God. We apply new creation truths to our identity by seeing ourselves as sons of God and the Bride of Christ, functioning as kings and priests (Rev. 5:10).

C. See yourself dead to sin: Here, Paul refers back to verse 2. We are dead to the reign of sin, 100 percent finished with it, and thus freed from our former position under the reign of sin, where we were condemned by sin and powerless to challenge sinful promptings that arose in our emotions.

How shall we who died to sin [freed from the reign of sin] live any longer in it? (Rom. 6:2)

D. The temptation to sin is not removed, but we now have the power to challenge sinful impulses effectively, because the power of the Spirit dwells in our spirit (Gal. 5:22).

VI. MORE ON WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST AS DESCRIBED IN ROMANS 6

A. Paul gives details about our legal position with Jesus and our born-again spirit (Rom 6:1-10).

B. Whatever is true of Jesus’ standing before God, as a man, is true of all who are “in Christ.” We are to relate to God on the basis of what happened to Jesus in His death and resurrection.

C. Being baptized into Christ means being “immersed,” or “placed,” in Christ. We were “placed in” the benefit of His death (v. 3). We were placed in the benefit of His burial (v. 4). His burial refers to the permanence of His death; thus our death to the reign of sin is permanent.

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-4)

1. By an act of God we were placed into Christ—the benefit of what He did (1 Cor. 1:30).

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption… (1 Cor. 1:30, NAS)

2. We were raised with Christ—we received the benefit of His resurrection (Col. 2:12).

In Him you were…buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God… (Col. 2:11-12)
D. We were united to the benefit of His death and to the benefit of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5-7).

If we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. (Rom. 6:5-7)

VII. APPLYING THE PROMISES OF GOD

A. We are transformed by changing our thinking. We are set free by the knowledge of the truth. Experiencing the benefits of our legal position begins by knowing (Rom. 6:3, 6, 9, 11, 16).

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind… (Rom. 12:2)

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (Jn. 8:32)

B. The renewing of our mind involves more than gaining information about biblical truths. It includes confessing the Word, interacting with the Spirit as we speak the Word to Him.

C. Our confession is what we say to the indwelling Spirit about who we are in Christ. Confession engages our heart with God and His truth. Truth changes us as it gets into our conversation with God. We can know truths intellectually without applying them to our heart by confessing them.

The word is near you, in your mouth…that is, the word of faith… that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart…you will be saved [delivered from the penalty and power of sin]. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [complete deliverance]. (Rom. 10:8-10)

D. The word is near you: The word that contains God’s promises and releases His power in our life is so near to us—it is as close to us as speaking it. The power is accessed in our life by faith.

E. When condemnation, shame, fear, hopelessness, or lust, etc. rise up in us to challenge what God promised in His Word about loving, forgiving, empowering, directing, or providing for us, then we must apply the promise of the Word to our heart, by confessing the truth and resisting lies.

F. When we present ourselves to God to love Him, we must present ourselves according to who we are in Christ. We present ourselves to God based on what Jesus did for us, not based on our own spiritual attainments, good or bad. Presenting ourselves with sincerity is not enough; we must have confidence in the truth of Jesus’ work on the cross.

…but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead… (Rom. 6:13)

VIII. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Which point in this session would you like more understanding of?
2. Which point most inspired or challenged you? Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
3. Which point do you want to impart to a younger believer? Why? How will you elaborate on it?
4. What is one point in this session that needs to be emphasized to the larger Body of Christ? Why?