

The Believer's Standing and State

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"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18).

"Rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15) is more than just an issue of basic dispensations. It is learning to make a difference, *anywhere* that God Himself makes a difference.

A distinction of great importance to the believer is between that of his *standing* and *state*. It is essential that believers recognize this basic distinction. A proper understanding of the difference between a believer's *standing* and his *state* is a genuine step toward his proper grasp of the doctrine of our apostle, Paul, as well as a realization of his true relationship to God.

DEFINITION OF WORDS

Noah Webster uses the following words in his definition of *standing*: "settled, established, fixed, not movable." His definition of *state* is: "condition; the circumstances of a being or thing at any given time."

DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCTRINE

Standing

Our *standing* is who we are "*in Christ*." This is the way that God sees us; it is the divine viewpoint. It is a result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has to do with our identity and union with the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 1:30) in His death, burial and resurrection (Galatians 2:20). We are accepted (Ephesians 1:6), sealed (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30) and destined for glory (Romans 8:18; 30). Our standing is thus established, settled, fixed, sure, perfect, unmovable and unchangeable.

Our *standing* is made no better or worse by our actions or lack of actions; as this *standing* is not gained by prayer, service, “church”-going, giving, living a clean life, etc. It was gained for us by another – the Lord Jesus Christ.

State

Our *state* is the actual circumstances, conditions and situations of our earthly life. It has to do with our daily *walk*. Thus, our state can be unestablished, unsettled, unfixed, unsure, imperfect, movable and changing.

PAUL’S TEACHING PATTERN

Our apostle Paul always deals with standing, *then* state; doctrine, *then* deportment; belief, *then* behavior; position, *then* practice. This teaching pattern of Paul can be seen in the natural divisions of Romans and Ephesians:

Romans

Doctrinal (1-8)
Dispensational (9-11)
Deportmental (12-16)

Ephesians

Standing (1-3)
State (4-6)

USAGE OF THE WORDS

Now we will look at specific examples of the use of the words “*standing*” and “*state*” in the Scriptures.

Standing

*“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we **stand**, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”* (Romans 5:1-2).

*“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye **stand**”* (I Corinthians 15:1).

State

*“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your **state**. For I have no man likeminded, who will natu-*

rally care for your **state**” (Philippians 2:19-20).

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever **state** I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

“All my **state** shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord” (Colossians 4:7).

Spiritual growth starts with spiritual realization. We must be able to distinguish between the spiritual and the physical, who we really are “in Christ” from the multifaceted circumstances of our earthly life. Paul gives us the divine viewpoint when he writes:

“While we look not at the things which are seen [our state], but at the things which are not seen [our standing]: for the things which are seen [our state] are temporal; but the things which are not seen [our standing] are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:18).

In our *state* we may “suffer need” (Philippians 4:12), but the reality of our *standing* is that we are “rich” through Christ (II Corinthians 8:9) regardless of our circumstances.

All true spiritual growth begins with a “reality check.”

Never confuse the shadow (I Chronicles 29:15; Psalm 102:11) and the vapor (James 4:14) of this illusionary life with the divine reality of Life “in Christ”!

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