

Romans Chapter 6: Position in Christ

Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” many times in his epistles. His use of this term in different contexts gives us an insight into what it is and its benefits for each believer. We have encountered it already in chapter 3. The doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and resultant position in Christ were not dealt with there. Now we must delve into this doctrine. Romans chapter 6 has this squarely in focus. This doctrine provides answers to questions as we journey into the topic of Christian spirituality. There it is again, doctrine provides answers.

Below are Paul’s use of this phrase in the book of Romans.

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

This verse is not about position in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Here we have a statement that position in/association with Jesus Christ is where we find redemption. It is interesting in the Greek. Literally, “... the redemption the in Christ Jesus.” The definite article is used before

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“redemption” and translated “the.” It is used immediately after and translated “which.” Translation is good in this context. It highlights the importance of redemption.

Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Clearly here, we have been baptized, associated with, position in Jesus Christ. The preposition is eis or into.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

I included this verse as well to emphasize that the position in Christ that is resultant from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is the base of operations for the Christian life. It is also a motivation and gives us purpose. “So we too might walk...” Purpose. We are “in Christ” not just for blessing but to serve.

Romans 6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

Romans 6:9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

Romans 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

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Romans 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The domination of the sin nature over our being is broken. It is not eliminated. But now we have a choice. Will we walk by faith in the “light” or continue under the domination of the sin nature in darkness? The choice is yours.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Redemption is in Christ. Romans 3:24. Now, eternal life is “in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8: 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Again, the dominion of the sin nature, the law of sin and of death, has been broken, setting us free to choose. A short comment: Although the concept of walk by faith is simple, its execution is not always easy. The sin nature keeps whispering temptation in our ears. Our human bodies sometimes urge us to make the wrong decision. Yet, knowing from Bible doctrine (the answers) what the correct decision is, the question is will we cling to the filling of the Holy Spirit or will we succumb to sin? The choice is yours. Again and again every day.

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Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

Romans 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now “in Christ” is associated with eternal security. The love of God, in this case, is “in Christ.”

Romans 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

Romans 9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

An early 20th century (in other words in the early 1900's) Greek scholar, Adolf Deissmann understood this phrase “in Christ” in a spatial sense. Below is a picture he used to illustrate “in Christ.”¹

¹ Adolf Deissmann (1972). Paul. p197

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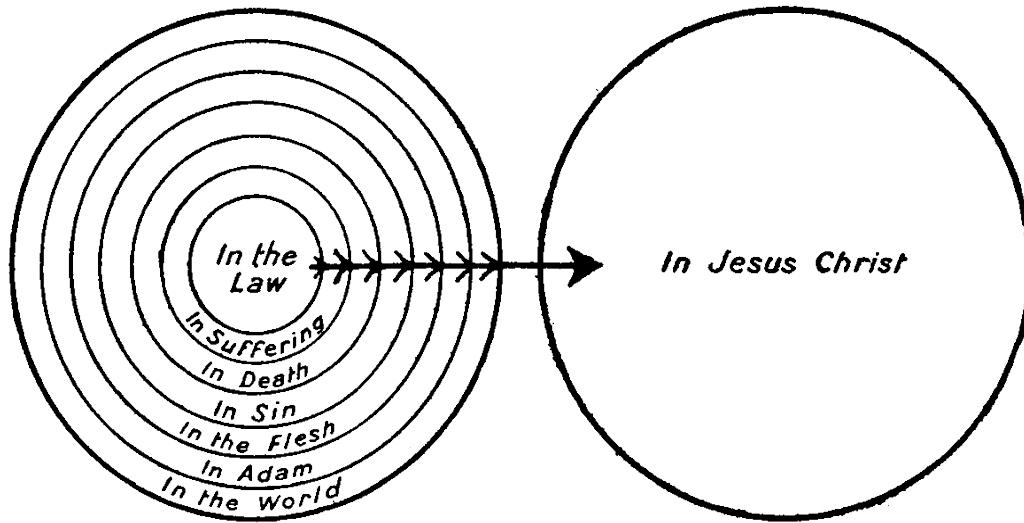


DIAGRAM 4.

The seven spheres of evil apart from salvation in the experience of the 'old' Paul.

DIAGRAM 5.

The one sphere of salvation in the experience of the 'new' Paul.

We observe that Paul used this term throughout his epistles. Others saw this usage and commented on it. Now we need to understand the importance of this term. After all, if he used it often it must be important. And, indeed it is.

Herman taught Positional Truth under the title of "Positioned in Christ."² The following lesson is based upon his lesson in 2019 as well as info from Robby Dean and others. I reformatted it and edited it some with input from other pastors' notes.

Overview

Position in Christ is not something you can experience. You can't see it, or feel it or hear it. Robby Dean says "Positional truth has to do with our legal standing before God. That is why it is called positional."³

² https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Ephesians/notes/2019-11-17Sunday_Morning.pdf

³ <https://www.deanbible.org/completed-studies-menu/new-testament-studies-menu/message/2002-1stcorinthians-003/read>

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1. **Greek construction in 1 Corinthians 12:13.**

“In Christ” is a “dative.” The problem is that the dative, locative and instrumental cases are all represented by the same inflectional form⁴. Often we hear Bible teachers say this is a locative, in the sphere of Christ. But what Robby Dean says about this particular verse makes sense. “One thing we have to understand here in the construction EN plus the dative of association is that we learn a couple of principles. The first is that what God gives or provides for every believer He graciously gives because of association with Christ. These blessings are ours in Christ, that is why they are ours: because of our association with Christ. God does not give them apart from Christ. So the believer has to be in Christ or in association with Christ, which occurs at the instant of salvation, in order to have the manifold blessing. It is not based on who we are or what we do or do not do, it is based on who God is (His essence) and on what Christ did at the cross. The other principle that we have to pay attention to is to be careful when giving thanks what we are giving thanks for is something that is the work of God and not something that is just the normal operation of human experience.⁵” Some passages emphasize the “association” with and others emphasize being baptized “into” Christ. In other words, position in Christ. In order to understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit and position in Christ, we have to glean bits and pieces of information from a variety of verses in the New Testament.

4 Wallace, D.B. (2008). *Greek grammar beyond the basics : an exegetical syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan. p139

5 <https://www.deanbible.org/completed-studies-menu/new-testament-studies-menu/message/2002-1stcorinthians-003/read>

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2. Position in Christ is unique to the Church Age believer.

“In no other dispensation is there such a place as being *in Christ*. The moment one believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, he does not become a member of the race or nation of Israel. God the Holy Spirit enters him into union with Christ forever. You cannot lose your position in Jesus Christ. You did nothing to put yourself into Christ. You can do nothing to take yourself out of union with Christ. It is eternally yours...due to the Faithfulness of God.⁶”

- a. Observe that no where in the Old Testament is this mentioned. The “position” of believers in the dispensation of the Law is “in Moses.”
- b. Logically, position in Christ cannot happen before the cross. The Messiah (Christ) has not yet arrived, so there is no position other than “in Moses.”
- c. Yet, in the Millennium, I suspect there will be another kind of position just as good maybe better than “just” “in Christ.” That has not been revealed. God wouldn’t want us being jealous of Millennial saints.

3. Means of Positioned in Christ: Non-meritorious faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

4. Mechanics of Position in Christ is by means of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5; John 17:21-22; 14:20 and chapter 15; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

⁶ I am not footnoting every quote from Herman. Since this lesson is based upon his lesson, in many places I simply quote the source being understood to be from Herman’s lesson.

https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Ephesians/notes/2019-11-17Sunday_Morning.pdf

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We slow down here. This is a place at which we need to look at several passages to glean details. An important concept here is the parallel between John's baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John by means of water places Old Testament believers into repentance in expectation of the kingdom. Jesus by means of the Holy Spirit places New Testament believers into "in Christ" in expectation of a fruitful Christian life continuing into eternity.

Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

With the Holy Spirit. With is actually "in." However it can be translated as by means of the Holy Spirit. A commentator on Acts (Bock) states that this is an instrumental⁷. By means of the Holy Spirit.

Note that in many of these passages, only a part of the baptism is emphasized. Here we have John baptized by means of water. We are baptized by means of the Holy Spirit. In another passage it is stated that Jesus does the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This is the prophecy of the baptism of the Holy Spirit from Jesus.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

⁷ Bock, D.L. (2007). *Acts*. Grand Rapids (Mich.): Baker Academic. p57

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Listen to Robby Dean. He is an expert in Greek compared to my paltry knowledge. This explanation is a little different than what I remember being taught as a new Christian.

“There is no stated agent in this verse. There is en pneumati [ἐν πνεύματι], "by the Spirit," so that must indicate means just as it does in every other passage. The en clause indicates the means or the instrument used to effect the identification and then the new state is "into one body," eis [εἰς] plus the accusative of soma [σῶμα]. What we see, then, is three things: a performer of the action, the action itself, and the new state.”

“In the water baptism of John the Baptist, John is the agent or the performer of the action. He uses water to identify the person with repentance. In the parallel, Jesus Christ is going to use the Holy Spirit (indicated by en) to identify the person with Himself in His death, burial and resurrection; we are baptized into His body. That clarifies the meaning and significance of the baptism by means of God the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit provides a retro-active identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ which then, according to Romans 6:3ff , is the basis for our victory over the sin nature.⁸”

Let us look at the various passages. Single passages do not include all the information.

8 <https://deanbibleministries.org/new-testament-menuitem/1-corinthians-menuitem/message/2002-1stcorinthians-081/read>

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Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

John baptized with water. John is the agent.

With water. Water is the means. But into what?

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;

John’s baptism is associated with repentance, a change in thinking.

Luke 3:8 Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

John 3:15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,

John 3:16 John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Jesus will perform the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

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Matthew 3:1 Now in those days John the Baptist *came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

Matthew 3:2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

John’s baptism was associated with the kingdom.

John baptized → with water → into repentance → in expectation of the kingdom

Jesus baptized → with the Holy Spirit → into Christ → expectation of good works

According to Bock: “The baptism of John the Baptist was an eschatological, preparatory washing. Participation in it meant that one was ready for God to come. The gift of the Spirit, however, was the sign that the Messiah had come and the new era had begun (Luke 3:1-17, esp. vv. 3-6, 16; Mark 1:8; Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:8; 2:4, 16-39);...”⁹

In actuality, the kingdom was offered but was rejected by Israel during the first advent of Christ. They expected the crown without the cross. And of course, there are many Old Testament prophecies on the Tribulation/Jacob’s Troubles which will occur before the kingdom.

5. Characteristics of Position in Christ:

- a. Not an experience, or emotional, nor ecstasies.
- b. Not progressive. It cannot be improved.
- c. Not related to human merit or works or any performance, it is by grace.

⁹ Bock, D.L. (2007). *Acts*. Grand Rapids (Mich.): Baker Academic. p57

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- d. Eternal in nature; neither God nor angels nor man can change it.
 - e. Obtained in total at the point of belief in Jesus as Savior.
6. “Our Position in Christ explains election and predestination, two doctrines that many believers are so confused about. We will study them in Ephesians chapter 1. Both are defined and understood by the believer’s position in Christ. Believers are elected and predestined *in Christ*. No one is elected or predestined outside of Jesus Christ. Every believer shares the election of Jesus Christ. When you are put in Christ, then you share the election of Christ and share the predestination of Jesus Christ.”
 7. Positioned in Christ also clarifies sanctification. Ephesians 1:3-6.
 8. (One that legalists resent) Every believer—carnal, sinful, or spiritual is positioned in Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 30. Here, in Christ is true equality of all believers.
 9. Our being imputed with perfect Righteousness is from our Position in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30.
 10. Our being in Christ protects every believer from Divine Judgment in eternity: Romans 8:1. No, your sins will not find you out! You are in Christ. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior is imputed with perfect Righteousness which means no believer will be at the Last Judgment.
 11. Being in Christ qualifies every believer to live with God forever. 1 John 5:11-12. Therefore, this guarantees Eternal-Security. Romans 8:38-39.
 12. Because you are in Christ, every believer shares many things with Christ.

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- a. We share the life of Christ: eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12.

1 John 5:11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Note that John uses the terminology “in His Son.” The concept is the same as Paul’s but the terminology is not the exact same but equivalent. So, position in Christ is not a uniquely Pauline concept. Paul, John and Peter all refer to this concept.

- b. We share the perfect righteousness of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21.

2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Note that Paul uses equivalent terminology “in Him” where “Him” is referring to “Christ.”

- c. We share the election of Christ. Ephesians 1:4.

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Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Ephesians 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Again, the term is “in Him” referring to “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Herman taught election using this verse in the past. So we will skip that doctrine for now.

d. We share the destiny of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:5.

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

The verse following Ephesians 1:4 (from the previous point).

e. We have redemption in Christ.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Ephesians 1:8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

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Ephesians chapter 1 is full of benefits we have in Christ. Herman spent considerable time in Ephesians chapter 1. Every lesson in Ephesians chapter 1 has a PDF file to read. I found that when there is textual file associated with a sermon, whether Herman's or other pastor, it is easier to access. It does not require listening through an hour to find the pertinent information. On the other hand, there are many things not stated in the PDF files that make the listening a blessing.

f. We share the heritage of Christ. 1 Peter 1:4-5.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 Peter 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1 Peter 1: who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter uses the term "in heaven" rather than "in Christ."

g. We share the sanctification of Christ 1 Corinthians 1:2; John 17:17-19 and Hebrews 10:14.

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been

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sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

- h. “We share the Priesthood of Jesus Christ—I am so sorry that this is not all that important to believers—that we share the Priesthood of Christ. If you were of Jewish background, this would be a major issue with you, that you are a priest after the order of Jesus Christ which is above the priesthood order of the Levites.”

“There is just so much involved in your sharing the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-9.”

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Hebrews 10:10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;

Hebrews 10:12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,

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Hebrews 10:13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

- i. Christ is the Son of God and being in Christ means we share His Sonship. 2 Timothy 2:1; Galatians 4:4-7

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Galatians 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

- j. Galatians 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. Christ is King and therefore we share His kingdom. 2 Peter 1:11.
13. Many aspects of our lives today here on earth are from our position in Christ.
- a. Our Christian liberty is founded on our being in Christ. Galatians chapter 2.
 - b. Blessings in time are not dependent on our performance but are dependent upon our position in Christ. Ephesians. 1:3.

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14. We are identified with Jesus Christ in His death. Colossians 2:12.
15. We are identified with Christ in His Resurrection. Colossians 2:12.
- “Being identified with Jesus Christ in His death means that in our daily lives we do not have to be under the power and control of our Inherited Sin Nature ...dead to us. Every time we sin, we resurrect this dead sin nature.”
- “Being identified with Jesus Christ in His Resurrection defines our Spiritual life, Spiritual freedom, and Spiritual liberty!”
16. Positional Truth is not known experientially, it is known only through the Word of God.
17. And never forget, all these blessings were prepared by God in Eternity Past and were obtained in total at the moment of salvation.

Summarizing:

“At the point of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, God the Father gave you 34 blessings. One of them is that God the Holy Spirit baptizes or places you *in Christ*. ”

“This means you are a new creation in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17. This establishes Eternal Fellowship with Jesus Christ and God the Father.”

“Your eternal position in Christ establishes eternal fellowship, which is the pattern of your Temporal fellowship with the Godhead and with One Another.”

“Every born-again believer has the same equal spiritual privileges as any other believer. Christ in you and you in Christ. John 14:20.”

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“Add to this that the Holy Spirit indwells every one of you! Every one of you are your own priest. This means you represent yourselves before God the Father—in prayer, worship. And every believer in Christ has the same purpose: to glorify God the Father and His Son Jesus the Christ in the Holy Spirit. To be a witness of Jesus Christ during your time here on earth, to be an Ambassador for Christ.”

Some things to consider:

1. All our permanent possessions are located in Christ.
2. In Christ is our base of operations.
3. Our association with Christ defines our relationship with God the Father.