President’s Column
by Dr. Mark L. Bailey

When my son Joshua enrolled as a student at Dallas Theological Seminary, I told him, “The other students will help you choose what courses to take. But one of the profs you need to take is Dr. Pentecost.”

I’m glad to say Josh did have the privilege of sitting under the Bible teaching of the man we affectionately call Dr. P. He is truly a living legend on our campus, still teaching and mentoring students in his 95th year of life.

Dr. Pentecost’s specialty over the years has been the life of Christ, so it is altogether fitting that we present his message on the importance of our being “in Christ,” where all treasure of wisdom and knowledge and blessing of God are found. “In Christ” is the apostle Paul’s two-word summary of the Christian life, and Dr. Pentecost does a masterful job of fleshing out that truth.

I count myself among the thousands of students and even colleagues whom Dr. Pentecost has mentored and encouraged. In my own ministry of teaching at the Seminary and Bible studies each week for area businessmen, I have drawn on his teaching and his example many times.

That’s why one of the great joys for me in providing DTS students with Bible-centered training is the privilege it affords them to sit under the teaching and influence of godly instructors and mentors like Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost.

I am also delighted for the opportunity to share his biblical wisdom with you by means of the message in this issue of Veritas. It comes to you with my very heartfelt appreciation for your faithful support of Dallas Theological Seminary.

It is our desire to help you grow “in Christ” as you share with us from your heart. We continue to thank God for you daily.

Dr. Mark L. Bailey, President
Dallas Theological Seminary

“In Christ”

Two Words That Describe the Basis and the Joy of the Christian Life

by Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost

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VERITAS
Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.

Dallas Theological Seminary
Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, where he has taught since 1955.

“Dr. P.,” as he is affectionately known on campus, graduated *magna cum laude* from Hampden-Sydney College and from Dallas Theological Seminary, where he holds both the Th.M. and Th.D. degrees. He is also the author of numerous books, including his ground-breaking work on the subject of eschatology (future things) titled *Things to Come*.

Dr. Pentecost also served as a pastor for many years, including pastorates at Saint John’s Presbyterian Church in Devon, Pennsylvania, from 1946–1951, and Grace Bible Church of Dallas from 1958–1976. He and his late wife, Dorothy, have two married daughters and two grandchildren.

This message is taken from a chapel address that Dr. Pentecost delivered to the Dallas Theological Seminary faculty and student body.

According to Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, “If you were to evaluate theologians, you would find something upon which their entire system is based. If you read the theology of John Calvin, you would say his theme is divine sovereignty. For Jacob Arminius, it would be the freedom of the will. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, based his theology on the unbounded grace of God. If you were to look at the apostle Paul, I think you would find his theology based on just two words: ‘in Christ.’ ” In this message, delivered to the Seminary’s faculty and students in a recent chapel service, Dr. Pentecost explores the riches of all that we have “in Christ.”
When we read the New Testament, we discover that phrases such as “in Christ,” “in Him,” or “in the beloved” are found more than 200 times. For the apostle Paul, the essence of the Christian life is the profound truth that we are “in Christ.”

**We Are as Near as Christ**
I can remember Dr. Chafer quoting an old hymn that was a favorite to him: “So dear to God, dearer I could not be; for the love in which He loved His Son; such was His love for me. So nearer to God, nearer I could not be. For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He.” Paul affirms in Ephesians 1:6 that we are accepted “in the One he loves.”

This means that by divine reckoning, you and I were participants in every experience that the Lord Jesus had. We were crucified with Christ. We were resurrected with Christ. We ascended with Christ and were seated with Him at the right hand of the Father in glory.

**We Were Crucified with Christ**
Paul affirms so clearly in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ.” I like to expand the tense of this great declaration and say that I have been, and consequently I now am, one who was crucified with Christ. That does not mean my co-crucifixion with Christ had anything to do with payment for sin, for the death of one under the curse could not satisfy the demands of God’s holiness. But because I was identified with Christ in His death, all of the righteousness that His sacrifice brought about is credited to my account and becomes my present possession. God never sees me apart from His Son.

F.B. Meyer, one of the great British preachers of a past generation, put it this way in one of his daily homilies:

“All things that pertain to life and godliness await our appropriation in Christ Jesus. There is no conceivable grace or virtue, no fabric of the divine looms for the soul’s dress, no ornament of heavenly jewelry for the soul’s adorning, no weapons of celestial temper for the soul’s equipment, no salve or balm of divine comfort for the soul’s healing, which is not ours in Jesus.” All things are ours in Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul speaks of that work of the Holy Spirit by which we are baptized into the body of Christ. Paul does not go into detail there as to what it means to be baptized into Christ. But as Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 6, he gives us the details of what this truth involves. Christ promised His disciples in John 14:17 that the Holy Spirit who had been with them would now be in them. Christ promised again in verse 20 that He would be in His disciples, and then He promised in verse 23 that God the Father Himself would take up residence in the believer.

This is not something to set out to prove. It is a special revelation to be accepted and responded to. We are indwelled by the triune God, and all that the Son has done is set down to our account. In Romans 6:3, Paul says we have been joined to Christ by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit in the death of Jesus. His act was an act
of obedience to the Father. From the time of the cradle, Christ the Son was under a constant death threat. Though attempts were made on His life, it was noted that His hour had not yet come. As Jesus observed the Passover on the day before His crucifixion and realized that He was the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, He embraced that role as a sacrificial lamb with joy because He was obedient to the Father.

We Are Justified in Christ
Now that we are joined to Christ in His death, the obedience of Christ that gained God’s approval of His Son’s righteousness can be attributed or imputed to us. It’s the basis of our justification—which does not mean God makes us righteous, but that He declares us to be righteous. A strong emphasis in Dr. Chafer’s theology was his emphasis on imputation. If you read the classic theologians of past years, you will find only scant, if any, reference to the doctrine of imputation.

Imputation is a sovereign act of God in which He attributes to us the righteousness that belonged to Christ, based on the work of Christ on the cross, so that His righteousness becomes our righteousness. Therefore, as a just and holy God looks at us, He can declare, “Justified.”

Identification with Christ in His death liberates us from slavery to the world, slavery to sin, and slavery to Satan. We were born into this world as enslaved. It was our nature to sin, and we sinned. There’s only one way a slave in Egypt, whose life consisted of making bricks for Pharaoh, could escape that bondage, and that was through death. Death would liberate him.

In the same way, there is only one way that you and I can be redeemed and set free from slavery to the world, the flesh, and the devil—and that is to die. God does not ask us to crucify ourselves. That would be impossible. Self-crucifixion is a physical impossibility. It’s something that has to be done to the one who is nailed to the cross. You cannot crucify yourself, but you can consent to the fact that you died with Christ. You have that on the authority of God Himself. We were baptized into His death.

As a just and holy God looks at us, He can declare, “Justified.”

In 1930, hymn writer Civilla Martin penned these lyrics that Wendell Loveless then joined to a melody: “In the Beloved accepted am I, risen, ascended, and seated on high; saved from all sin thro’ His infinite grace, with the redeemed ones accorded a place. In the Beloved—how safe my retreat, in the Beloved accounted complete; who can condemn me? In Him I am free, Savior and Keeper forever is He. In the Beloved I went to the tree, there, in His Person, by faith I may see, infinite wrath rolling over His head, infinite grace, for He died in my stead.”

Because we are in Christ, His righteousness is credited to our account. God does not ask us to explain it or understand it, only to believe it as an accomplished fact.

We Were Resurrected with Christ
Paul also teaches us in Romans 6:5 that not only were we crucified with Christ, but when Christ was resurrected, we
were in Him and resurrected with Him. As Christ by resurrection was not limited to the physical sphere but entered into a new sphere, so you and I by co-resurrection can enter a new sphere in which life is to be lived. It is not I who lives; it is Christ who lives in me. He is living His life through me. The Christian life is the life of Christ lived out in the believer by the indwelling Christ and by the Holy Spirit who also dwells within.

would I know; I am smallest of Thy vessels, yet I much can overflow.”

This is Christ, the Resurrected One, living His life through me because I have been resurrected with Him.

**We Were Enthroned with Christ**

Once again, as Paul writes in Ephesians he presents the glorious truth that we not only were crucified and resurrected with Christ; but when He ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father, we also were in Him and thus enthroned with Him. God sees us as already having reached our destination—enthroned with Christ in glory!

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:4–6: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” We are co-crucified, co-resurrected, and co-enthroned with Christ. At the Father’s right hand, while we labor through the maze that surrounds us in this cosmos, our destiny has already been accomplished.

**We Will Be with Christ**

We are one with Christ. The riches that belong to Christ are yours and mine. Jesus promised us, “I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be with me where I am.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, Paul describes that glorious transformation at the rapture. Paul says that Christ is coming to take us to Himself.

The Bible never teaches that Christ is coming to take
us to heaven. Christ is not coming back to take us to a place. I am certainly not suggesting that heaven is not real; my point is that Christ is coming to take us to Himself. That is why Paul refers to believers as those who will complete Christ. We can’t conceive anything other than total completeness, but as the bridegroom is incomplete without His bride, so Christ’s heart is yearning for the day when all that we have in Him will be realized and we will be with Him in glory.

In Colossians 3:4, Paul writes, “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” This suggests that glory is a place, and I’m suggesting that Paul is telling us not where we will be, but the state in which we will be found. We are awaiting that moment when we stand in the presence of the glorified One by sharing His glory. Our position “in Christ” is not something to wrestle with and try to explain in natural terms, but a fact to be believed. We are to count it as true because that is how God sees us and how we will be transformed when Christ comes to claim His own.

None of us deserves God’s grace, but He graciously offers it to us anyway! A life free from sin and hope for a glorious future are ours because of God’s grace: the unmerited favor, the lavish love and kindness He pours out on us and has poured out on sinful human beings since creation.

But if God’s grace is available, then Dallas Theological Seminary graduate, author, and pastor Andy Stanley has some questions. In his new book The Grace of God, Pastor Stanley asks, Why do many believers live graceless lives? Why are our churches filled with disillusioned Christians, weary of religion’s demands, struggling with personal defeat because of issues or behaviors?

Join Pastor Stanley as he traces grace through the Old and New Testaments, observing God’s grace at work in the lives of some of the best, and worst, of the Bible’s characters. He also shares personal insights—and together, these stories unravel the mystery of grace and tell of its transforming power to set us free. Be sure to order your copy of The Grace of God today!

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