Our Identity in Christ

A 6-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

This six-lesson series by Keith Blades examines the doctrine of positional truth — our identification in the Lord Jesus Christ. Beginning with a synopsis of our former offensive identification in Adam (condemnation, abomination, and alienation), Keith contrasts it with the glorious new identification every believer receives the moment they trust Christ as Savior. Through the Spirit's baptism into Christ, we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ (justification), the holiness of God in Christ (sanctification), and the glory of God in Christ (exaltation). The series concludes by surveying key exhortation passages from Romans through Philemon, demonstrating that the key to successfully living the Christian life is knowing who God has made us to be in Christ and responding to the details of life accordingly.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 1	Introducing positional truth: what it means to be "in Christ" and why it is the key to living the Christian life
Lesson 2	Completing our former identity in Adam (abomination & alienation) and the Spirit's baptism that puts us into Christ
Lesson 3	Our new identification in Christ: justification and its three components — forgiveness, imputed righteousness, and permanent reconciliation
Lesson 4	Sanctification (dead to sin, alive unto God, sonship) and exaltation (one new man, citizenship in Christ's heavenly kingdom) with a heavenly vocation
Lesson 5	Grace vs. law: why the law cannot produce the Christian life and how walking after the Spirit works
Lesson 6	Key exhortation passages: how the doctrine of who we are in Christ is the power to produce a God-honoring walk

Lesson Summaries

L1

Introducing Our Identification in Christ *Laying the Foundations of Positional Truth*

- "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" — being in Christ is possessing an identification in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28)
- The key to living the Christian life: knowing who God has made you to be in Christ and responding to the details of life accordingly
- The expression "in Christ" permeates Paul's epistles — justification, sanctification, and exaltation are all positional realities grounded in this identification
- Survey of key "in Christ" passages: Romans 6; 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; Ephesians 1:3, 6-7; 2:10; 5:8; Colossians 2:8-12
- Our former identification in Adam provides the essential backdrop that magnifies the grandeur of our new identity in Christ

Three major components of our former offensive identification in Adam:

  - Condemnation — under sin, no righteousness, enemies of God (Romans 1:18–32; 2:1–3:20; 5:10)
  - Abomination — named here; its three components follow in Lesson 2
  - Alienation — named here; its three components follow in Lesson 2

- Understanding condemnation: we were sinners by nature with no righteousness to offer and enemies of God

L2

Completing the Picture — Our Former Identity in Adam

Abomination, Alienation, and the Baptism That Puts Us into Christ

- Review: three aspects of Condemnation — under sin, no righteousness, enemies of God

Three aspects of Abomination in Adam (Romans 6:20; Ephesians 2:1-3):

  - Servants of sin — not just under sin; there was abomination to the things we did
  - Dead to righteousness — like what was said to Israel, "all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64; Philippians 3)
  - Following the course of this world — laboring to the honor and glory of the Adversary

Three aspects of Alienation in Adam (Ephesians 2:11-12; Colossians 1:13):

  - Dead as Gentiles in the flesh — twice dead: dead in sins as sons of Adam and dead as Gentiles (Colossians 2:13)
  - Belonging to Satan — the nations were delivered over to him (Luke 4:5-6, in God's program with Israel)
  - Good citizens of his kingdom — following the course he charted, bringing him glory

- The mechanical means of our new identification: the Holy Spirit baptizing us into Christ — not water baptism (Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12)
- A baptism is always a purification unto sanctification and a new identification; the Spirit's baptism washes us from all former offensive identity in Adam

The three corresponding contrasts:

  - Condemnation → Justification (made the righteousness of God in Christ)

- Abomination → Sanctification (made the holiness of God in Christ)
- Alienation → Exaltation (made the glory of God in Christ)

L3

Our Glorious New Identity — Justification in Christ *Made the Righteousness of God in Christ*

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 summarizes: the monikers of unrighteousness are past tense; "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"
- The moniker of unrighteousness: God's justice could designate each sinner in Adam by the dominant affection of their sin nature (fornicator, drunkard, thief, etc.) — all past tense at salvation
- Three major components to our new identity in Christ: Justification (J), Sanctification (S), and Exaltation (EX) — all are "in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Why the Corinthians had not yet been taught exaltation: they were still "babes in Christ" and could only receive milk, not the meat of the wisdom of God in the mystery (1 Corinthians 2:6-7; 3:1-2)

Three aspects of Justification — made the righteousness of God in Christ:

- Forgiveness of ALL sins — past, present, and future; no repeated forgiveness needed (Colossians 2:13; Titus 2:14)
- Imputation of Christ's righteousness — God's justice counts us as righteous in him (Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Permanent reconciliation — we are permanently at-one with God; no longer enemies but in peace (Romans 5:1, 10-11)

- Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" — condemnation is completely gone

L4

Sanctification and Exaltation in Christ *Made the Holiness and the Glory of God in Christ*

- Sanctification = made the holiness of God in Christ; we can now bring forth fruit unto holiness that God's justice fully accepts (Romans 6:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:7)
- God did not only justify us — he sanctified us; the reason to live a lifestyle that honors and pleases the Lord is NOT to maintain justification but because God sanctified us

Three aspects of Sanctification — made the holiness of God in Christ:

- Dead to sin — freed from sin's mastership and dominion; an emancipation from its reign (Romans 6:2, 6-7, 11)
- Alive unto God — can now yield members as instruments of righteousness; fruit unto holiness (Romans 6:11-13, 22)
- Sonship status — God treats us as sons led by his Spirit; the privilege of laboring with him (Romans 8:14-15; Galatians 4)

- The "but now" formula: Romans 3:21 (condemnation → justification); Romans 6:22 (abomination → sanctification); "but God," Ephesians 2:4 (alienation → exaltation)
- Exaltation = made the glory of God in Christ; raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-6)

Exaltation — made the glory of God in Christ:

- First: part of the one new man — a new species of humanity fit for heavenly

places, no longer dead Gentiles (Ephesians 2:13-15)
  - Second: delivered from the power of darkness; citizenship in Christ's heavenly kingdom — all spiritual blessings (Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 1:3)
  - In connection with our exaltation: a heavenly vocation — making an impact on principalities and powers (Ephesians 3:9-10; 4:1)

L5

Grace, Law, and Walking After the Spirit *The Power Source for Living the Christian Life*

- "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" — the basis of our walk is our position in Christ under grace, not personal performance (Romans 6:14)
- The law, as set forth to Israel, is an IF/THEN performance system: it manifests that justification, sanctification, and exaltation are humanly impossible to attain (Deuteronomy 6:24-25; Leviticus 18:5; Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 28)
- The law was designed to put sin in motion so that condemnation, abomination, and alienation were shown to be the naturalness of our position — Israel had to learn the hard way not to want that performance system
- God made us dead to the law so we can serve "in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6)
- The stupidest thing a Christian can do is try to live the Christian life on a performance system — whether one of his own making or the law — you end up the "wretched man" of Romans 7
- Walking after the Spirit = being mindful of what the Holy Spirit has made you to be in Christ (Romans 8:1-6)
  - To be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6)
  - "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16)
- The doctrine of our identity in Christ is alive and powerful; as we believe it and are mindful of it, it effectually works within us to put our position into practice
- Grace gave us perfect justification, sanctification, and exaltation as a gift at salvation — grace says "you've got it; now walk worthy of it"

L6

Living Consistent With Who We Are in Christ *Exhortation Passages: Walking Worthy of Our Identity*

- Romans 12:1-2 — "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God": present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable — that is your "reasonable service" in light of justification, sanctification, and exaltation
- The exhortations of Romans through Philemon are not law-based commands but appeals grounded in what God has already made us to be in Christ
- Romans 13:14 — "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ": the power to make no provision for the flesh is clothing yourself with your identity in Christ, not gritting your teeth under a performance system
- 1 Corinthians 6:11 — "such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified": Paul confronts inconsistent conduct by reminding saints of who they now are
- 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 — Godly sorrow worked repentance: when the Corinthians saw their conduct through the eyes of their identity in Christ, they

were made sorry after a godly manner

- Galatians 5:13-18 — "ye have been called unto liberty": walking in the Spirit produces what the law never could — freedom from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh
- Ephesians 4:17-24; 5:1-11 — Put off the old man; put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness; "ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord"
- Colossians 2:20 ff. — Set your affection on things above; "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved" — put on what is consistent with who we are
- Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-8 — Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness; Christ gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity and purify a peculiar people zealous of good works
- The doctrine of who we are in Christ will effectually produce the Christian life — affirm it constantly (Titus 3:8)

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

In Adam vs. In Christ

As sons of Adam we possessed by nature condemnation (under sin, no righteousness, enemies of God), abomination (servants of sin, dead to righteousness, following the course of this world), and — as Gentiles — alienation (Gentiles in the flesh, belonging to Satan, good citizens of his kingdom). The moment a person trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes them out of that offensive identification and into Christ, giving them justification (the righteousness of God in Christ), sanctification (the holiness of God in Christ), and exaltation (the glory of God in Christ). These three are our position — every believer possesses all three from the moment of salvation; you don't walk to get the position.

Dead IN Sin vs. Dead TO Sin

Being dead "in" trespasses and sins describes our former hopeless condition as sons of Adam — positionally dead, hopelessly guilty before the bar of God's justice (Ephesians 2:1). Being dead "to" sin describes our sanctified position in Christ — the Holy Spirit's baptism into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection has freed us from sin's dominion so that we no longer must obey its lusts (Romans 6:2, 11).

The Law System vs. Grace

The law is an IF/THEN performance system designed to manifest that justification, sanctification, and exaltation are humanly unattainable. It was never designed to provide these things but to demonstrate that it is humanly impossible to obtain them. Grace, by contrast, freely gives all three to the believer at the moment of faith in Christ. A Christian who attempts to live the Christian life through a performance system — whether the Mosaic law or one of his own making — is walking after the flesh and will end

up, as Paul says, a wretched man. The power to live the Christian life is the doctrine of who we are in Christ under grace.

Walking After the Flesh vs. Walking After the Spirit

Walking "after the flesh" means operating on a performance system — whether the Mosaic law or a self-made equivalent. Walking "after the Spirit" means being mindful of what the Holy Spirit has made us to be in Christ: dead to sin, alive unto God, and sons. As Paul writes in Romans 8:5, "they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." This mindfulness — reckoning ourselves to be who God says we are in Christ — is the key to not fulfilling the lust of the flesh and to bringing forth fruit unto holiness.

Justification, Sanctification, and Exaltation: Three Major Components

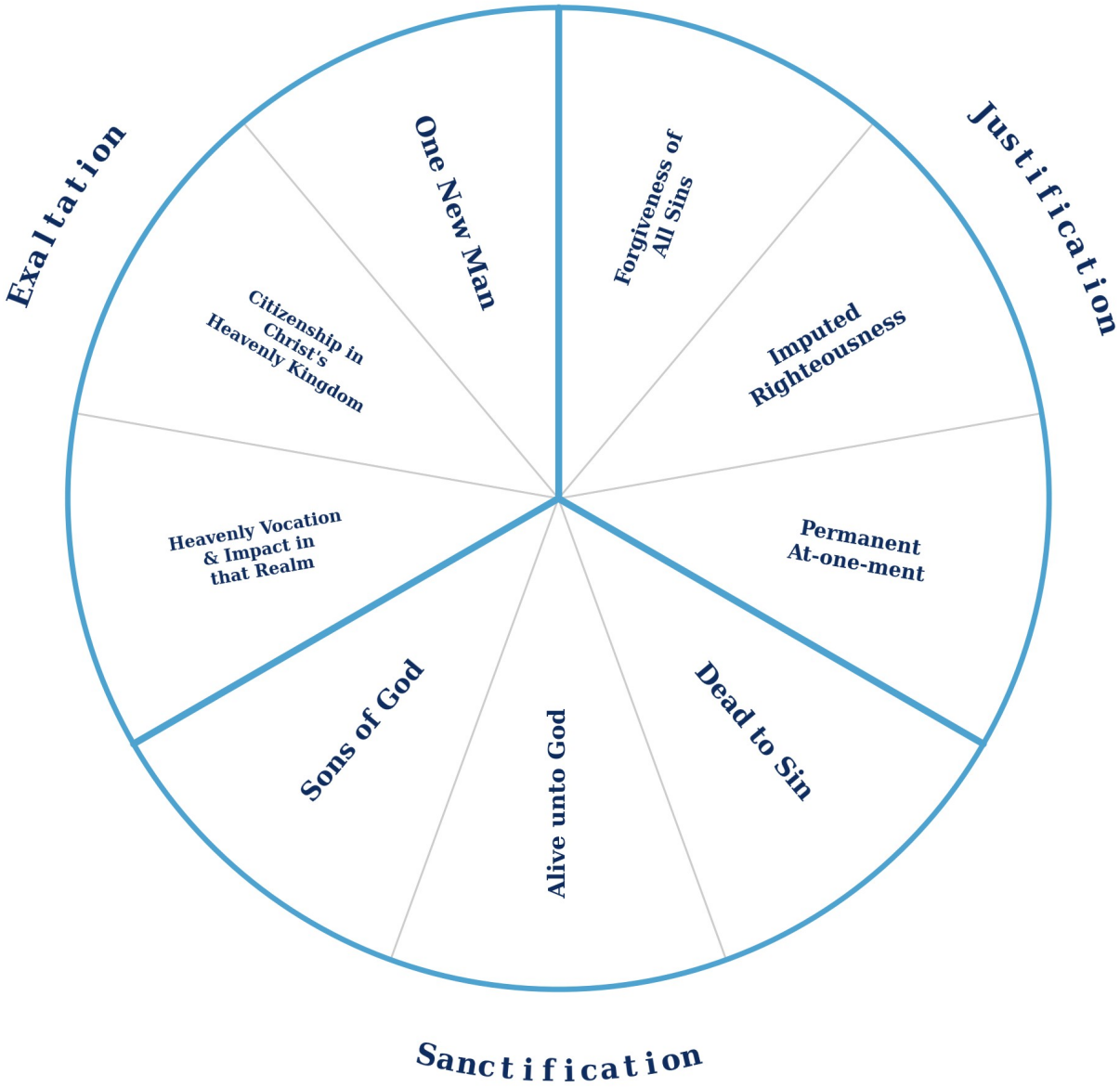
These three form the complete picture of our identity in Christ. Justification makes us the righteousness of God in Christ — we will live forever with God. Sanctification makes us the holiness of God in Christ — we can live unto God now, bringing forth fruit he accepts. Exaltation makes us the glory of God in Christ — we can live for God's honor and glory right now, making an impact in connection with his heavenly purposes. The whole package — justification, sanctification, exaltation — effectually works within us to make us zealous of good works.

Key Scripture References

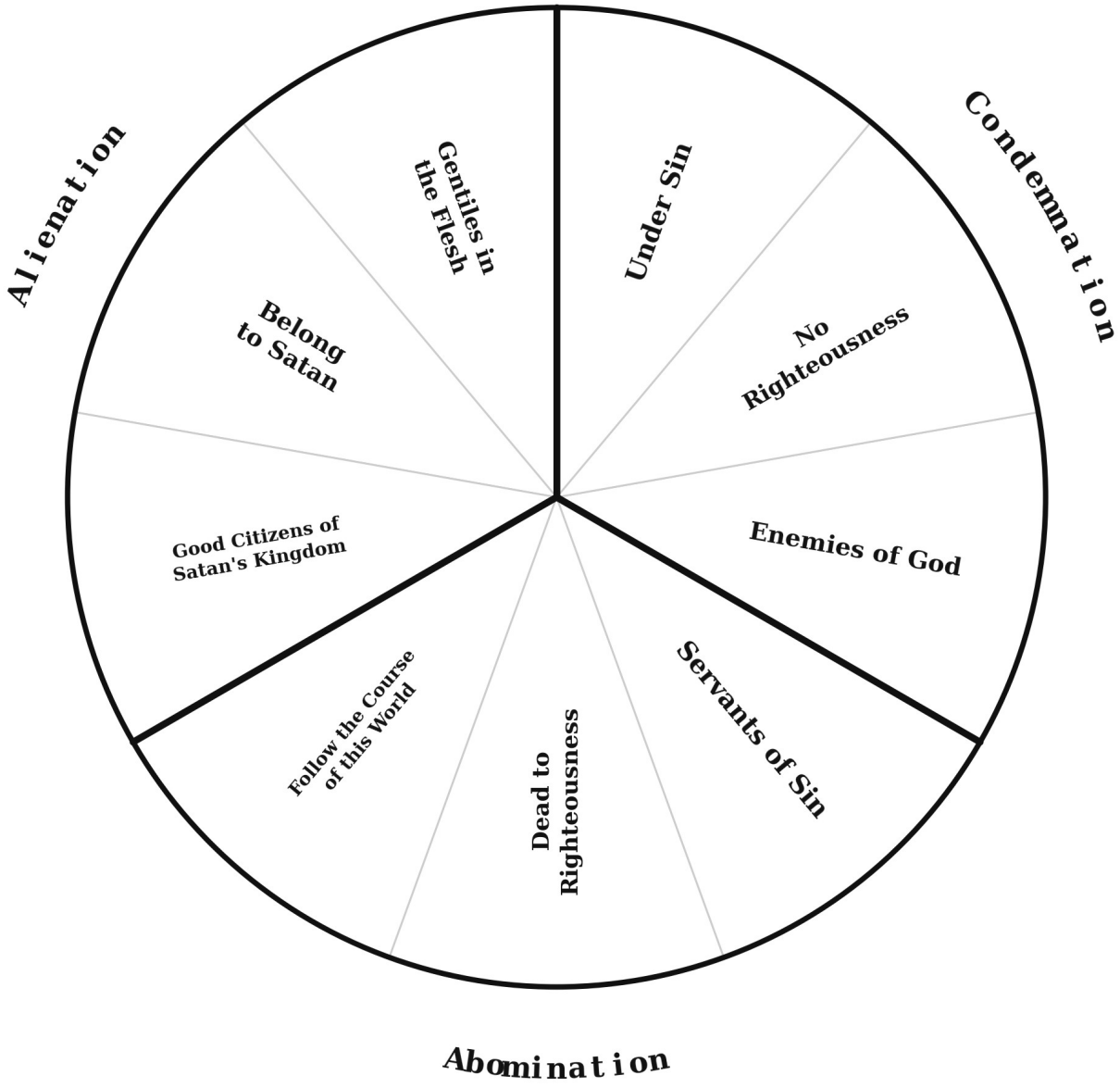
Galatians 3:26-28	Baptized into Christ; "have put on Christ" — the new identification supplants all former fleshly identities
Romans 3:21-26	The righteousness of God by faith, freely offered to all who believe; God is just and the justifier
Romans 5:1, 10-11	Justified by faith; peace with God; permanent reconciliation — no longer enemies but at-one with God
Romans 6:2-14	Dead to sin; alive unto God; not under law but under grace — the doctrine of sanctification
Romans 8:1-6	No condemnation to those in Christ; walking after the Spirit vs. after the flesh
1 Corinthians 6:9-11	The monikers of unrighteousness are past tense; "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified"
2 Corinthians 5:21	"For he hath made him *to be* sin for us… that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"
Ephesians 2:4-6	Quickened, raised up together, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus
Colossians 1:12-13	Delivered from the power of darkness; translated into the kingdom of his dear Son

Titus 2:11-14	Grace teaches; Christ redeemed us from all iniquity; purified a peculiar people, zealous of good works

"in Christ"


Exaltation
One New Man
Citizenship in Christ's Heavenly Kingdom
Justification
Forgiveness of All Sins
Imputed Righteousness
Heavenly Vocation & Impact in that Realm
Permanent At-one-ment
Sons of God
Alive unto God
Dead to Sin
Sanctification

"in Adam"


Alienation
Condemnation
Abomination
Gentiles in the Flesh
Under Sin
Belong to Satan
No Righteousness
Good Citizens of Satan's Kingdom
Enemies of God
Follow the Course of this World
Dead to Righteousness
Servants of Sin