

Podcast 286 Who We are in Christ

Scott: Welcome to the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme! I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today! Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: Oh, I'm trying to get the old engine going. I had the puppies out for an early-morning walk, and I had breakfast, and I worked on my notes, and I still want to just go crawl back in between the sheets.

Scott: Good! I've had a lot of days like that, except without the puppies.

Steve: Are you a fan of Lauren Daigle? Well, you might know this song she sings. I don't know it well enough to sing it for you, but it's called "You Say." The other day, somebody posted a Facebook video of a little girl – I'm going to say she was three, four years old – signing this song. And it was powerful, and I watched it, and then I watched it again. And it resonated with my heart that there's something about sign language that makes words take on a different dimension. So it's one thing to say "heaven" and another thing to see the sign for "heaven."

Steve: There's a place where, "You say I am strong." She takes her little arms and flexes them. Her rendition really touched my heart. I think this song illustrates who we are in Christ. We're working on our identity, basing it on Matthew 3, where God tells His Son, "You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."

We've covered beloved, we've covered son, and, as somebody recently told me, "Every boy needs an 'atta boy.'" Well, at the baptism, those words were God's "atta boy" to His Son. "You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased," or, as the NLT renders it, "This is My dearly loved Son, Who brings Me great joy." This morning is part three or part four in our series.

Let's pray:

Father, thank You for those wonderful "atta boy" words that You gave to Your Son. And this is something that we all need to hear, I need to hear. And I thank You that Your Word provides a great "atta boy" to each one of us. And so we draw near today, regardless of whether we're awake or asleep or we're perky, we know that You haven't changed one bit. You are love, You are good, and You are God, and thank You that Jesus is still praying for us, and the Spirit is still with us. Help me today, help us all to have ears to hear what You're saying to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Steve: Here are the lyrics to "You Say":

"I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough, every single lie that tells me I will never measure up. Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low?"

Remind me once again just who I am because I need to know. The only thing that matters now is everything You think of me. In You I find my worth, in You I find my identity. You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing. You say I am strong when I think I am weak. You say I am held when I am falling short. When I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours, and I believe, oh, I believe what You say of me." Isn't that beautiful?

Scott: I believe I have heard that, actually, now that you say the words.

Steve: I thought you would. Here is the chorus, "Oh, I believe, yes I believe what You say of me. Oh, I believe." This is the battle for each one of us, to operate in the faith realm, not the sight realm. As believers, we walk by faith and not by sight. Faith takes work, and faith needs to be rooted and grounded in the eternal Word of God. As Paul writes in Romans 10, Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.

Let's begin at the beginning. God is holy. Isaiah 6: "Holy, holy, holy." Book of Leviticus emphasizes God is holy. 1 Peter says, "I am holy, therefore ye shall be holy." And if God is holy, how are we going to be well-pleasing in His sight? That's what we're working on today. How are we going to bring Him great joy? If He is holy and we are sinners, how do we become holy? Joshua emphasizes God is a holy God. Hannah, in her prayer in 1 Samuel 2:2, said, "There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides You; there is no Rock like our God."

I've been studying the tabernacle lately, and you'll notice that you have the Holy Place, and then you have the Holy of Holies, or, as 1 Chronicles 6 says, the Most Holy Place, where God dwells. So, how do we approach a holy God? I'm going to back up just a fuzz, because I could jump right into Hebrews, where we find access to the Holy of Holies and to our Most Holy God through Christ. We probably all know that that's where I'm heading.

However what touches me as I'm putting these thoughts together is that in Hebrews chapter 11, the Hall of Faith as we talked about it last time - everybody mentioned in there is before Christ. Everybody in there was pleasing to God. God somehow saw their faith, and it was reckoned to them for righteousness. Abraham is the father of all who believe. Abraham was several millennia before Christ. How could these people have witness borne to them that, through faith, they were pleasing to God? It's a mystery.

Let's just look at David, because David is pre-Christ. David sins grievously. There's nobody that questions that. Sadly, many people look at him and they just roll their eyes. "Oh, David. He committed adultery. He committed murder." And they just leave it there. And in one sense, yes. That was heinous. That was awful. But yet, Psalm 51 says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment.” Let’s go down to the seventh verse. “Purge my with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

Amazingly, God did just that, and David did not spend the rest of his life walking around in sackcloth and ashes. He was forgiven. He stepped up to the plate and continued his reign as king, and he was one of the rare kings to watch his son be set apart as king with his own eyes and not after his death. David lived a long, full life, for David was forgiven from his sin with Bathsheba and murdering her husband. When we sin, we do have to repent, and we do have to acknowledge our sin, and we do have to take ownership of it. David clearly does that. Then we have to ask God to forgive us from our sin.

Now, let’s move forward into Jesus. Hebrews 10:11–14: “Every high priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time” – this is powerful stuff. We need to read this almost every morning. “When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

A part of me gulps at that last statement. “By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” That’s us. Several years ago, I asked Jesus to forgive my sins. I asked for and accepted His offer of eternal life. I confessed my sins. He tells me that He, by offering Himself, has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, it’s the conviction of things not seen. That’s why we walk by faith. That’s why we walk in the assurance of these things that we hope for.

There are times when we struggle, and then we cry out with that father in the Gospels, “I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!” We reach out and grab ahold of what Jesus is offering here, but there’s a part of us that’s still shaky – and we need Jesus to help us.

I really believe God wants His Word to dwell in us richly, and He wants our minds to be transformed, and He wants us to just simply say “amen” to what Jesus has done for each of us. Consider Peter who denied Christ, wept bitterly, and yet, Jesus forgave

him. And Peter, again, could have spent the rest of his life moaning, walking around in sackcloth and ashes, “Woe is me! Look what I did,” all the focus on himself. Instead, he accepted that forgiveness. He ended up leading the church, and in his epistles – 1 and 2 Peter, he exhorts us to grow in the knowledge. He exhorts us to grow in grace. Accept it, and then move on.

I sense a call from God to my heart to not just move on and do the work that God has created me to do, but also to move closer, and that’s one reason I’ve been studying the tabernacle. Jesus is the way to the Father. Jesus is the way into the Holy of Holies, Hebrews 10:19–22 has powerful words: “Therefore, brothers” – and we are brothers in Christ – “since we have confidence” – that’s faith talk – “since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh” – so you have to have this imagery of the original tabernacle. We’re entering into the holy places by the blood of Jesus. He is our sacrifice. He gets us from the courtyard into the Holy Place. Then He gets us through the veil, that curtain, through His flesh. “Since we have a great High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

I think, if I’m not mistaken, Scott, you have been a Navigator.

Scott: Yep.

Steve: Okay. When I think of Navigators, I think of two words. I think of “discipleship,” and I think of “memorization.” Now, I have not been a Navigator, but I have always appreciated Navigators for those two things – one-on-one discipleship, mentoring, and Scripture memorization. That’s just my impression, but you tell me. Is that close?

Scott: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I’ve got a D– in the memorization part. They don’t actually grade you, but yes, that’s what they’re known for, and you could easily be an honorary Navigator.

Steve: We attended some seminars years ago – we, our church that I was pastoring – and were encouraged to memorize chapters of Scripture, like the Sermon on the Mount, and Romans 6, 7, and 8. There is so much power in Romans 6 that it would be worth memorizing. I’m going to read you the first fourteen verses: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know” – this is where faith starts coming into practice here – “that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” So there is a mystery there. But when we were

baptized into Christ, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we were baptized into Christ, we identified with Him in His death. We were buried with Him. And He died for three days. And then the Spirit of God raised Him. “For if we have been united with Him in a death like His” – see, united! Wow! I’ll stop commenting – “we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ” – these are all past-tense – “we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also” – here it is, here’s our challenge – “must consider” – I like, I think it’s the King James and maybe the New American Standard, it says, “you must reckon” – “yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

May God help us to every day reckon ourselves, consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

There is so much truth packed in there, and I believe one of the key words is that word “consider” or “reckon ourselves.” We have to just move on in faith, reckoning – you might say “dead reckoning,” as the old sailors would tell you – and just keep moving in the direction that we believe God’s called us to move. And we’re going to reckon ourselves dead to sin, we’re going to reckon ourselves alive to God, and that’s going to be our posture. I believe that’s what David did, I believe that’s what Peter did, is they accepted their forgiveness, they reckoned that part of their lives to be dead, and they moved on.

Let’s jump back into Isaiah for a glorious passage. One of the smallest chapters in Isaiah, chapter 12: “You will say in that day: ‘I will give thanks to You, O LORD, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away, that You might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.’” And that’s something that we all do. When we ask Christ to forgive our sins and come into our heart, make us His child, then He has become our strength, our song, and our salvation. “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for He has done

gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Since we have had our sins forgiven, we can sing. We can be in the company of the Holy One of Israel. We can press into the Holy of Holies, because there’s no shadow. There’s no unforgiveness. All of our sin has been covered perfectly by our perfect Savior. I think Hebrews 10:35 should be coupled with the first two verses in chapter 11. Remember, verses were not in the Bible when it was written. Anyway, I think this should be one thought. “Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, ‘Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.”

Steve: I just think that this is so vital that we grab ahold of it. I believe that God has set the table for us. He has provided all that we have needed. As the song says, “All that I needed [His] hand has provided.” He’s perfectly forgiven us. He’s perfectly broken the power of hell, and He’s given us all we need to live well in His Word. And we need to mix what He has provided with faith, and not shrink back, but have faith and preserve our souls. Amen.

Scott: Well, even in that last part you said there, we need to not shrink back. I can almost hear my brothers and sisters who are singing along with me, “Oh, yeah. I shrink back.” And we’re tempted to just sink back into that and be like, “Yeah, I failed. Am I still covered?” And that’s when you loop back around to everything else you just said for the last 24 minutes is that we are reckoned dead to sin and alive to God. This is, it’s done. And that’s the most amazing part of salvation to me, that, if I can just get it through the heads and hearts of those friends of mine who don’t know Christ yet, they, some of them think they’re not good enough to go to church. And it’s like, well, of course you’re not! None of us are.

Steve: Amen.

Scott: Jesus did it all, and even when we fall again, His righteousness is credited to us because we’ve trusted in Him.

Steve: Amen. And that’s the next podcast!

Scott: Okay, well, there’s your preview.

Steve: Well, no! I was hoping it was going to be this podcast, but I just felt this burning in my heart that we need to keep going over this, that we have been forgiven completely, that His sacrifice is more amazing – it is so amazing that we’re going to spend a good bit of eternity singing about it! We receive these glimpses or foretastes in Revelation of what it’s like around the throne, where they are worshipping the Lamb that was slain.

I’m not sure that we’re able with our finite minds to grasp how powerful His death was on the cross and the implications, not only for ourselves and our own walk with God, but for this world. “Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” That’s what John the Baptist saw. It was inspired by the Spirit of God, and he was absolutely right. And all creation is groaning, it says, waiting for the final redemption, waiting for men of God like us to step up to the plate, the revealing of the sons of God. But we’re not going to be doing anything on our own. We’re just simply going to be believing in what He has done. We’re going to be magnifying the Lamb, believing in the Lamb, and amen. What more can we say than to you He has said?

Father, thank You for these inspired words. Thank You for the impact of them on our hearts, and I pray that they’ll find soft soil today. I pray that they’ll find places to lodge in our hearts so that we can rise up in faith and declare with Paul that we have died to sin, we have been united with Christ, and the writer of Hebrews – “He has perfected for all time those of us.” And give us the kind of faith that those people of faith had, even before they saw Jesus. They only saw Him from afar. They greeted these promises from afar, and yet we have seen. We know that Jesus died, physically, historically, on that cross. And so give us the commensurate faith that we should have on this side of the cross. Help us to have more faith than those in the book of Hebrews because we have greater access with what we know. Deliver us from evil, deliver us from condemnation, deliver us from beating ourselves up in the accusations of the enemy, and give us fresh faith and fresh courage today. In Jesus’ name, amen.