

Accepted in the Beloved

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So you've seen your sin as heinous before a holy God, and in deep mourning you've agreed with the Lord over it- that you are wicked and deserving of judgment. You are struck with horror over the gravity of it and the consequences of your rebellion- eternal condemnation in the lake of fire. Then a ray of hope burst through the darkness as you saw the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who paid the ultimate price for your sin as He hung on that cross, bearing God's wrath in your place. Your heart is filled with overwhelming gratitude as you cast sin from you as you would cast a lit stick of dynamite from you, knowing it would have destroyed you if you held onto it. You've put on the Lord Jesus Christ as one would put on a parachute before jumping out of an airplane- trusting Him completely to save your life.

A whole new life lies ahead of you- and you know it won't be smooth sailing. Your friends, family and co-workers who are still in unrepentant darkness don't embrace this new life of yours. Some are curious, some mock, some are angry and persecute you- they feel you've let them down. Some smell the aroma of your new life and it is a stench to them- it's as if you had shone a flashlight into their eyes. To others, your life in Christ is the aroma of life and they want to know more about Jesus and how He has forgiven you. Life will never be the same- that is for sure. Dark clouds loom on the horizon, but beyond them is an enduring, eternal city- you know it, but the dark clouds loom ominously.

Jesus said that if anyone would come after Him, they must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. It was one thing to say, "Yes, Lord!" and to commit to following Him regardless of the price. It's another thing to face the daily challenges of that decision and walk out that faith- now the dark clouds come tumbling in. There are the tornadoes of relationships that have been painfully severed- they had to be for you to escape sin. There are the thunderstorms of sorrow over loved ones who warn you not to go overboard, or just to play church on Sunday and be the old girl/guy they knew so well the rest of the week. There's the howling wind of temptation whispering insistently for you to turn back and play, "sin really isn't dynamite, it's just a harmless sparkler- a little indulgence won't hurt." Your conscience knows better- there's a war and you're weary of fighting it sometimes. Then there are also the hail storms of the effects of past sin in your life that still have their consequences today- the sin has been forgiven, but a man reaps what he sows. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of your faith. Follow your good Shepherd- He will never lead you astray. As a newly budding branch, drink deeply of Jesus your Vine. He is Sovereign over all the storms in your life. He is the Anchor of your soul and your safe harbor. Let down the Anchor and be patient in the storm. He will never leave you nor forsake you. *You are Accepted in the Beloved.* You are a new man/woman in Christ- you are a new creation. The old life is gone, the new has come (*2 Cor 5:17*). Each storm cloud for you has a silver lining. God has a purpose and a design in all of it for your growth in Him in holiness. See yourself as God sees you- though the world hates you, *you are Accepted in the Beloved.* You've found a

home among believers- the family of God- but let me warn you from the words of Jesus- there are even some wolves among the sheep and bad fruit among the good. You'll recognize them by their lives.

You've got a new identity- guard it well. Satan likes to pull off identity theft. He comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but *you are Accepted in the Beloved*. *Ephesians 1:2-14* is your new identity. Remind yourself of it frequently. When you hear whisperings in your heart that are contrary to these words, you know they are the lies of the devil. Combat them with the truth of God's word and with prayer- asking God for help, for Jesus always lives to intercede for us (*Heb 7:25*). He tells us to "come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (*Heb 4:16*). He "sympathizes with our weaknesses." (*Heb 4:15*)

Ephesians 1:2 "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace is God's favor in your life, bestowed upon you when you repented and trusted Him with your life and every day afterwards as you continue in the faith. Grace is not deserved, can't be earned and can't be repaid- it is the never-ending flooding river of God's blessings. You're now at peace with God- what a wonder. You were at war with Him (*Col 1:19-23*), but you laid down your weapons (your sin) and surrendered and changed sides. Now you've become an enemy of the world and Satan and those who are still bound up in sin- but take courage, you are at peace with your Creator, Lord and Redeemer. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (*Rom 8:31*) *You are Accepted in the Beloved*.

1:3 Our Father has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." As thunder clouds of doubt, temptation and rejection from the world assail you, remember, you are not bankrupt. You have every spiritual blessing you need to live a victorious life in Jesus Christ. He's given you power from above (*2 Pet 1:2-4*) and awesome promises- believe them- they are weighty and they won't fail you. *You are Accepted in the Beloved*.

1:4 "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...having predestined us." Your salvation is secure- it began in God's heart before time began. He pursued you and He will never let you go. You're secure in this relationship because of His faithfulness. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (*1 Cor 1:9*). It's not because of your faithfulness- this is hard to grasp, since relationships with other people can so easily be severed; yet God is able to keep you- He just challenges you to continue trusting and believing in Him (*Col 1:23*). "He chose us...to be holy and without blame before Him in love." You were unrighteous, sinful and condemned, but in Jesus Christ you've been given the eyes of a holy God. There is no finger pointing at you and no frown on God's face- this is love!

1:5 He "predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." You're adopted into God's family- you now have all the rights of a son/daughter. He adopts us not as some bastard child who is begrudgingly taken in, but rather He adopts us and miraculously gives us His own spiritual DNA, granting us His nature in the image of Jesus Christ. All this is done with the Lord's great

pleasure- He has longed for this in your life (that decision to repent and surrender your life to Him) to embrace you as son/daughter, from the beginning.

1:6 He has made you “Accepted in the Beloved” Just as the Father said of Jesus, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (*Matt 3:17*), so He says of you because you are in Christ.

1:7-8 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us.” Jesus paid all your sin debt. Your sin required both spiritual and physical death to be paid (*Rom 6:23*) and Jesus paid it in full (*John 19:30*). The vast river of His grace overflows the worst of all sins- there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (*Rom 8:1*).

1:11-12 “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” Your inheritance is so incredible and so sure, that it is spoken of as if all of it has already been obtained. Paul later prayed for us that we’d have our spiritual eyes opened to all “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Pray now for yourself to more fully grasp all your riches in Christ, in the midst of the storm- and pray this every time you read God’s word. *You are Accepted in the Beloved.* With this truth we can trust that God “works all things according to the counsel of His will.” And His purpose for us is fixed for eternity, “that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” (*Eph 1:12*) Your life is now to be focused on bringing glory to God.

1:13-14 Remember who all these treasure are guaranteed for: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, that gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is a guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” You repented and trusted in Christ for salvation and were born of the Spirit. The Spirit dwelling in you is the evidence of God’s guarantee to you that Jesus is coming back to redeem you and give you a resurrected body to take you to be with Him forever.
You are Accepted in the Beloved.

In Christ’s Love,
Mike Porter