“Rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15) is more than just an issue of basic dispensations. It is learning to make a difference, anywhere that God Himself makes a difference.

A distinction of great importance to the believer is between that of his standing and state. It is essential that believers recognize this basic distinction. A proper understanding of the difference between a believer’s standing and his state is a genuine step toward his proper grasp of the doctrine of our apostle, Paul, as well as a realization of his true relationship to God.

**Definition of Words**

Noah Webster uses the following words in his definition of standing: “settled, established, fixed, not movable.” His definition of state is: “condition; the circumstances of a being or thing at any given time.”

**Description of the Doctrine**

**Standing**

Our standing is who we are “in Christ.” This is the way that God sees us; it is the divine viewpoint. It is a result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has to do with our identity and union with the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 1:30) in His death, burial and resurrection (Galatians 2:20). We are accepted (Ephesians 1:6), sealed (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30) and destined for glory (Romans 8:18; 30). Our standing is thus established, settled, fixed, sure, perfect, unmovable and unchangeable.
Our standing is made no better or worse by our actions or lack of actions; as this standing is not gained by prayer, service, “church”-going, giving, living a clean life, etc. It was gained for us by another – the Lord Jesus Christ.

**State**

Our state is the actual circumstances, conditions and situations of our earthly life. It has to do with our daily walk. Thus, our state can be unestablished, unsettled, unfixed, unsure, imperfect, movable and changing.

**PAUL’S TEACHING PATTERN**

Our apostle Paul always deals with standing, then state; doctrine, then deportment; belief, then behavior; position, then practice. This teaching pattern of Paul can be seen in the natural divisions of Romans and Ephesians:

**Romans**

Doctrinal (1-8)
Dispensational (9-11)
Deportmental (12-16)

**Ephesians**

Standing (1-3)
State (4-6)

**USAGE OF THE WORDS**

Now we will look at specific examples of the use of the words “standing” and “state” in the Scriptures.

**Standing**

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand” (1 Corinthians 15:1).

**State**

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will natu-
rally care for your state” (Philippians 2:19-20).

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord” (Colossians 4:7).

Spiritual growth starts with spiritual realization. We must be able to distinguish between the spiritual and the physical, who we really are “in Christ” from the multifaceted circumstances of our earthly life. Paul gives us the divine viewpoint when he writes:

“While we look not at the things which are seen [our state], but at the things which are not seen [our standing]: for the things which are seen [our state] are temporal; but the things which are not seen [our standing] are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:18).

In our state we may “suffer need” (Philippians 4:12), but the reality of our standing is that we are “rich” through Christ (II Corinthians 8:9) regardless of our circumstances.

All true spiritual growth begins with a “reality check.”

Never confuse the shadow (I Chronicles 29:15; Psalm 102:11) and the vapor (James 4:14) of this illusionary life with the divine reality of Life “in Christ”!

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