

## IN CHRIST ...

By

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***“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).***

God’s people are not distinguished by race, nationality, social position, degree of worldly knowledge, men’s esteem nor by wealth. There is a little two-word phrase that sets God’s people apart from all others in the world. That phrase is, “In Christ.”

Either a person is in Christ or he is alienated from Him in the world and void of the saving grace which God bestows in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). It would seem that the foremost question to be settled by any serious-minded person is the question of whether or not he is in Christ.

There need be no doubt here. Certainly the one who does not believe in Christ cannot be “in” Him, and isn’t concerned about such a relationship. To believe in Him necessarily requires that we believe all He claimed about Himself, and if we believe this then we believe that all His commandments are to be kept and that all His promises He will fulfill. Not that commandment-keeping is the means of entering “in”. Merely keeping commands does not erase sins nor bring us into God’s family. But belief in Christ must be such as to compel the believer to act in good faith to enter into all the relationship, to the point that he is assured of his own forgiveness of sin and acceptance into God’s family according to God’s own terms.

Scripture has not left us without instruction here, but expressly states that “all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death” (Rom. 6:3). Paul’s discussion of sin and grace in the Roman letter (Rom. 6:1-11) focuses on baptism as the turning point, concluding that after baptism we are “dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ” (Verse 11). Obviously a form of baptism without true repentance and faith would avail nothing. True baptism is the result of a “faith that works through love” (Gal. 5:6) and the “answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21), leaving the believer relying upon Christ’s promise that sins are forgiven. We enter into Christ, not by our own works of righteousness, but by His grace, through faith in the working of God: Christ died for our sin, and we enter into His death in baptism, so that sins are henceforth imputed to Him, and not to us. “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... for by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews. 10:10, 14).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Having explained the meaning of Christ’s death for sin (Rom. 5), the entrance into that death through baptism (Rom. 6), and the continuing conflict between natural desires and the spiritual goal (Rom. 7), Paul enthusiastically bursts forth the expression in chapter 8

that “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” There it is again: “In Christ.” At the close of history — and whether the evolutionists like it or not, God, who started the whole thing, will bring it all to a crashing halt — there will be two classes of people: those condemned to death because of sin, and those who are free from condemnation who are given eternal life. The difference will be not in those attainments, or lack of them, which are generally held in focus by the world, but simply that the first groups are in the world and the second are in Christ.

How far the modern church has drifted from the revealed intent of Christ may be indicated by the common use of such terms as “decisions”, “came into the church”, “join the church”, “church member”, etc., rather than the meaningful language of scripture which speaks of our being IN Christ. We often hear the flippant remark that one is a member of a certain denomination but seldom in ordinary conversation do we hear people simply state that they are in Christ.

Much confusion is generated by the spurious doctrines which perpetually try to test us by what is “in us”; whether there are tongues or gifts or some miraculous power within us. But Scripture teaches that when we are in Him His spirit abides in us. It will be manifest by the fruit of the spirit; that is, by the kind of character and disposition that it produces in us. Let no one test you as to some peculiar operation of the Spirit, as to whether you can speak in another “tongue” or predict the future or raise the dead. Christ puts you to no such test. Rather, we are to “examine ourselves” to see if we are bearing the proper fruit. One who is in Christ seeks to obey Christ. “Whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ has not God: he that abides in the teaching. The same has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9) “And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3).

But what if one sins after coming into Christ? Is he then expelled from the privileged position and thrown back under the condemnation of sin? Were this the case then all would be lost, for John writes to Christians that “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Furthermore, “sin” is not only an overt act, that is, a specific sin that one does: it is a state or condition. We are all far from the perfect image of God; sin remains a part of the human nature. As Paul said, “sin dwells in me” (Rom. 7:20). We are not “In Christ” because we have attained the image of God and totally conquered all sin and inclination to sin. We are in Christ by faith. Therefore, when we recognize that we have sinned, we heed the scripture: “If we confess our sins. He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The cleansing is ours because we are in Christ. Oh, the grace and love of God to give us such a privilege and assurance.

There is a deadly tradition that teaches that when a Christian sins he automatically falls from grace until he repents and asks forgiveness, Under such a system one would be in and out of grace a dozen times a week. And would never know where he stood with God, whether he was in Christ, or alienated from God and doomed to death. One poor traditionalist stated it this way: “You are hanging in the balance every moment,” Such a concept is devoid of faith in the actual work of God in Christ. When He “made Him to be

sin on our behalf.” Such a system is due to the everlasting conceit of man that compels him to be his own Savior; he refuses to humbly acknowledge that Christ met the penalty for ALL his sin, and that without Him he is totally lost. He would make his salvation depend upon how wisely he identified the least offense to God and how thoroughly he repented and how completely he kept the law of confession. What a poor substitute for the Gospel of Christ, by which we live in grace because of our faith in Him, and in which we are encouraged to “press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” because “He chose us in Him”, because “we have our redemption” in Christ, because “we were made a heritage” in Christ and because we “hoped in Christ” (Eph. 1:4, 7, 11, 12).

No, one does not cease to be “in Christ” each time he thinks of the fact that he is not as sinless as Jesus. But by the very fact of recognizing sin he clings all the more firmly to Christ, with faith that in Him there is no condemnation.

“In Him was life” (John 1:4). In spite of the mad frenzy for research which characterizes this generation, man has found no hope for eternal life except in Jesus Christ. “God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His son. He that has the Son has the life; he that has not the Son of God has not the life” (1 John 5:11-12). Paul writes of Christ that He is the ONLY one who has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). The whole pagan world rages against this truth, insisting that there is life for man on some other plane, and in some other realm apart from Christ. But there stands this one great fact — the resurrection of Jesus, against which the anti-Christ’s furiously lash out in vain. Christ is alive, and has the power to give life like His own to those who are in Him. But to all who have refused Him there awaits a certain “fierceness of fire that shall devour the adversaries” (Heb.10:27) in the Day of Judgment. Not only does Christ not promise life to those who reject Him, but He clearly promises the punishment of death which is eternal, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

Apart from Christ there is no evidence in all the universe that the dead can live again. And in all of the Scriptures there is not ONE promise of immortality to anyone who is NOT in Christ. There is life in Christ, and none to be hoped for apart from Him.

Immortality is something we look for and expect at Christ’s coming. But in the meantime there is a great work of human reconstruction going on. “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). We saw above, in Romans 6, that we come into Christ by being baptized into His death. This scripture goes on to say that “we were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Rom.6:4). In baptism we are buried, but we are also raised, else we would drown in the water; hence, we read “If then we were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above ...” (Col. 3:1). This is the meaning of Revelations 20:5, which speaks of those who have a part in the first resurrection not being subject to the second death. As redeemed persons, we are resurrected from the deadly state of sin to a new kind of life, with Christ taking a part in shaping us and molding us until we “are transformed into the same image” (2 Cor. 3:18). It isn’t an easy process. It requires perseverance and patience.

But if we are in Christ we should expect Him to be dissatisfied with anything less than the image of God, so we yield to His commands praying for His will to be done confident that the ultimate goal of God will be accomplished in each one who is in Christ.

*“Thanks be unto God, who always Leads us in triumph in Christ”* (2 Cor. 2:14).

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