

The Incredible Blessings Of Being in Christ



David Wilkerson September 12, 2011

The church today lives in a time of great light. With so much teaching available to us, the Holy Ghost has revealed to us the incredible blessings of Jesus' work on the cross.

Yet there was a time when Christ's wonderful work was obscured from the world. That period was the Dark Ages, when the meaning of the cross was veiled from humanity's eyes.

Most sermons during that time focused on God's wrath and on damnation. Popes and priests preached a gospel of works, and the people performed a variety of acts to try to find peace with God. They traveled for miles to shrines, knelt in worship before stone icons and repeated long prayers. Yet these things only increased people's bondage and darkened the understanding of many.

Even today, with all the teaching available, many Christians still don't understand important aspects of Christ's work for us. I'd like to address one of those aspects — namely, what it means to be "in Christ."

Being in Christ is the only foundation on which a holy life can be built. Without this foundation, we turn to our flesh to try to produce holiness in ourselves. But true holiness is obtained only through knowing the riches of God in Christ Jesus.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11–12).

Only God's grace can teach us how to be holy. Works can never produce that. Only as we grasp the blessings that are ours by being in Christ will we build on a firm foundation: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

God spoke to Isaiah about a certain servant who delighted his heart.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42:1). Who is this precious one whom God sustains, guarding his every step?

Matthew answers us: "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16–17).

The Hebrew word for "I am well pleased" here is "delight." God was saying, in essence, "My soul delights in my Son, Jesus Christ."

We know that throughout the Old Testament untold numbers of livestock were offered to the Lord as sacrifices. Yet none of these brought the Lord any pleasure: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.... In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure" (Hebrews 10:4, 6).

Yet in the very next verse we read these wonderful words from Jesus: "Then said I, Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God" (10:7). Christ came to earth to do what no animal sacrifice could do: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (10:5).

God had prepared a physical body for Jesus here on earth that would provide the perfect sin sacrifice for all time. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

From the foundation of the world God had only one plan to reconcile fallen, sinful humankind.

God's plan for salvation was simple. He said, "I'm going to send forth my own Son as a deliverer. And after he has died, risen and stands before me in glory, I will recognize only him."

Only Christ, who is the very essence of God, could ever stand before the Father. God the Father would recognize only Christ, the servant who perfectly pleased and delighted him. The Lord said, "My Son is the only worthy sacrificial lamb. He'll gather up in himself all who have been severed from me by sin and will reconcile them to me."

Now, when Jesus said, "A body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5), he meant not only a human body but a spiritual body as well. This body consists of all who believe in him: "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4) — and all who are "in Christ" by faith are born into this spiritual body: "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (5:30).

Yes, there is a physical man in heaven. Jesus, the Son, is seated at the right hand of the Father. But he is not seen physically in this world. The fact is, we who make up Christ's body are the only Jesus the world will ever see.

In Micah 6 a backslidden Israel asked, "How can we stand before a holy God?"

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:6–7).

The Israelites were asking a good question: "How can any human being approach a holy God? How can we ever please him and be accepted by him? What kind of sacrifice does he want from us? Our blood, our bodies, our children?"

We know that even our good works, kind nature and generosity are as filthy rags in God's sight. So, how are we accepted by God? Paul writes, "He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). We are accepted only as we are "in the beloved" — that is, in Christ, a part of his body.

"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even in him*" (1:10, my italics). "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (2:18). Simply put, we don't have any access to God other than by being in Christ.

If you've given your heart fully to Jesus, you've probably voiced the same questions Israel asked: "Lord, how can I possibly please you? I'm unable to stand before you with all my failures and faults. Every time I think I'm making progress, I take two steps back. Should I read more of the Bible, spend more time in prayer? Lord, what do you want from me?"

God answers us as he did Israel: "I don't want any of your sacrifices or good works. I recognize only the work of my Son, who delights and pleases me. Yet I have selected you as my Son's beloved bride."

"You see, I chose you from before the foundation of the world to be wed to him. I wooed and convicted you, and through my Spirit I brought you into him. How could I not delight in my Son's bride, the bride of my own choosing? I can't hate my own flesh."

Jesus prayed to the Father: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them" (John 17:10). "The love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (17:26). Christ makes it clear: When we are one in him, we enjoy the same love of the Father he enjoys. God delights in us as much as he does in his own Son! He says, "I love all who are in my Son, for all who are his are mine."

The Bible also tells us God is our Father just as he is Christ's father. Jesus testified: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17).

Are you striving hard to please God? Do you go through seasons when you feel you're delighting him and others when you think you're displeasing him? Beloved, we have to put facts ahead of our feelings. And the fact is God's pleasure in us has nothing to do with our strivings, intensity or good intentions. It all has to do with our *faith*.

The writer of Hebrews speaks about this very issue. He tells us when we move away from the foundational doctrine of being accepted by God by being in Christ, we "depart" from the Lord and turn back to the bondage of the law and flesh. "We which have believed do enter into rest...for he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:3, 10). Scripture makes it clear: The evidence of faith is *rest*.

Simply put, the only way to bring our striving, sweating, troubled soul into peace is to be convinced, "I am in Christ — and in him I am accepted by God and pleasing to him. He delights in me, regardless of whether I'm up or down. No matter how I feel, I know my position in Christ — that I'm seated with him in heavenly places."

How can we have assurance we are truly "in Christ"?

There are many evidences of being "in Christ." Let me give you three of the clearest evidences from Scripture. (Please note these are contingent on the following: That you have repented of sin, forsaken wickedness, trusted in Christ for eternal salvation and allowed him to translate you out of darkness and into his kingdom of light.)

1. *You are in Christ if you are continually in the process of being renewed.* Those who are "in Christ" don't rest on a one-time conversion experience. Rather, they constantly cry out to be changed and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Their daily prayer is, "Lord, remove from me everything unlike you. Remake me in the image of your Son."

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5–6).

"Regeneration" here means "making anew" or "reviving and producing something new." Paul is saying, "The Holy Ghost is at work in you, giving you a makeover." Christ has the Holy Ghost without measure — and because we're part of his body, his Spirit flows down to each of us. Even as we are in Christ, we are being nourished by his Spirit, made over into the image of Jesus himself.

2. *You are in Christ if you govern your life by the Scriptures.* Do you revere and fear God's Word? Do you go daily to the mirror of the Bible to be changed by it?

"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:5). Scripture makes it clear: We know we're in Christ if we love and obey his word. And according to John, this is also how we know God's love is perfected in us.

Paul wrote, "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1). The phrase "free course" means "meeting no opposition in you." Paul was saying, "As you read or hear God's Word, let it govern you. Honor it and make it the rule of your life."

Christians often quote the following verse: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). But this promise hinges on the preceding verse: "If ye *continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed" (8:31).

The phrase "if you continue in my word" means "if you live in and keep my commandments." In other words: "As you are in me, I will reveal my truth to you. But I won't reveal it to you if you don't intend to live by it. You'll know the truth only after you've committed to obey it."

3. *You are in Christ if your faith is mixed with charity.* Scripture says if you don't have charity, or unconditional love, you cannot be in Christ.

"Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith,

so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2).

You can be a gifted preacher or a powerful evangelist...you can heal others by your faith...you can move mountains by speaking a single word...you can teach God's Word with power and anointing...but if you don't have love for others, it all counts for nothing.

However, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:12–13).

Paul lists a number of the "fruits of charity," but I want to focus on just one.

If you possess the following fruit, then you have the clearest evidence that Christ resides in you. It is this: "Charity...is not easily provoked" (1 Corinthians 13:4–5).

The Greek word for "provoked" is paraxuno. It comes from a root word meaning "acid" and "quick or sudden." It has an additional root meaning of "one close by." Put together, these meanings become clear: To be provoked is to fly off the handle with acid remarks, to have a temper tantrum — and to aim it all at someone close to you.

The Bible is telling us, in effect, "If you are in Christ, then you are loving unconditionally — and you'll no longer be easily provoked."

I believe our greatest tests of this fruit come from those closest to us — our spouse, our children, our friends. So, do you have a short fuse? How easily does your temper flare? If you are in Christ, a voice will rise up in you whenever you grow angry. It will cry out, "Lord, help me. Holy Spirit, calm me down!"

You may not be perfect. But if you are in Christ, then you're continually dealing with these issues in your life through the power of the Holy Ghost. And by faith you can be totally accepted by the Father no matter what your struggle — because of Christ in you.

It is time for you to rejoice over your blessed position in Christ. You are the heavenly Father's beloved child — his delightful servant who is forever being changed into his Son's image — all because Christ is in you. Thank him for this incredible gift to you — and allow yourself to be transformed by his Word and Spirit. Hallelujah!

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