


In Christ

*A series of lessons
by
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In Christ

This booklet contains a series of lessons on one of the Apostle Paul's favorite phrases. Paul, like most preachers, had certain words and phrases that he used over and over and that characterized his teaching. The phrase that we are going to consider in this series is, "in Christ." The phrase, "in Christ," is more than just a prepositional phrase. It's a doctrinal truth. Paul uses this phrase more than 80 times in his writings. We won't look at all of these occurrences, but in the course of the study we want to be able to find the answers to some important questions. 1) What does Paul mean by the phrase, "in Christ?" 2) How do we get "in Christ?" 3) What are the benefits of being, "in Christ?" 4) What are our responsibilities, "in Christ?"

1) What does Paul mean by the phrase, "in Christ?" *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* **II Corinthians 5:17.** The phrase, "in Christ" refers to a provisional and spiritual position. To be in Christ means that your existence before God is seen as being under the protective umbrella of the realm or kingdom of Christ. **I Corinthians 3:23** tells us that we are Christ's or we belong to Christ. To be in Christ is to fall under His authority, jurisdiction, power, protection and care.

Man is made up of body, soul and spirit. This body is temporal. The spirit and soul are eternal. We generally know where we are physically. Where we are physically can have a great impact on our life. For example if you are born and live "in" the USA you fall under the laws of our government and enjoy certain

rights and privileges afforded to its citizens. If you are born and live “in” Paraguay, SA, you fall under a whole different set of laws. If you live “in” Paraguay, it won’t do you any good to claim the rights of one who lives “in” the USA or visa versa, because they just do not apply to you.

Even in the USA laws vary from state to state. For example, let’s say you are traveling on a highway in Kansas where the speed limit is 70 mph. Suddenly you cross over the state line to Missouri where the speed limit is 65 mph on that particular highway, but you continue to travel at the 70 mph that Kansas law allows. Consequently you get pulled over. You may whine, “but officer, in Kansas it was 70 mph.” And the officer may retort, “you’re not in Kansas anymore, Totto.”

Obviously, it’s important to know where we are physically, but it’s essential that we know where we are spiritually because our spiritual position has eternal consequences. Every man, woman and child is born into and lives in the realm that our father, Adam, chose for himself and his race. Adam chose sin and disobedience. Spiritually, we are in Adam, which means we fall under the laws of sin, darkness and death. The result of being in Adam is to experience spiritual and eternal death, separation from God and all His blessings. (*Ephesians 2:1 – 3, I Corinthians 15:22, Romans 6:23, Colossians 1:12, 13.*) Those that are in Christ have experienced a spiritual translation. All things are made new. God acknowledges that we live in a different realm. He now deals with those in Christ according to the laws that govern His Son’s kingdom. God will never deal with those in Christ according to the laws of sin and death. Paul says those in Christ are new creatures. They are made completely new, with a new nature, new citizenship, new rights, hopes,

blessings, new occupations and new destinies. We want to look at some of those new things that are found in Christ, but first we need to know the answer to our second question.

2) How do we get “in Christ?” *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* **Ephesians 2:1 - 10.** The first thing we must understand is that this translation that takes place from one realm to another is God’s work from beginning to end. In the natural sometimes we decide that living in a different place would be more advantageous for us and so we make all the necessary arrangements and then make the move. Spiritually, those in Adam are too poor to better their position before God. Even those who may have a desire to be close to God have no means to make it happen. They are stuck in the endless cycle of the poverty of sin.

But God made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Those in Christ are made new. They are made new by God and His grace and not by their own doing. We are His workmanship or product. This move or translation was a gift of God's grace. Our part was to simply accept it by faith. Picture in your mind a homeless person living in a box doing his best just to survive. Wish as he may, he is unable to better his position in life. One day a rich man comes up to him and says I have purchased a large house for you in a nice neighborhood. All your bills will be paid every month. I have placed an inexhaustible amount of money in a bank account for you. Here is the key. Do you want it? Will you accept it? Our salvation, our translation into Christ really is that simple. *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."* **II Corinthians 8:9**. Believe that God, through the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, has made all the arrangements necessary for you to enjoy all the benefits of being in Christ. Say yes to the Key of eternal life. Say yes to Jesus.

You don't get in Christ by joining the church. You don't get in Christ by trying to be good or by trying to clean up your life. You cannot make the move from being in Adam to being in Christ by your own efforts. God does it by His own power and grace when you accept Jesus as your personal Savior. You must be born again to see and live in God's kingdom. **(John 3:3, 16)** *"That no man should boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."* (NAS) **I Corinthians 1:29 - 31**.

All that we have and are in Christ we owe

completely to God's grace. We did nothing to merit this privileged place. We simply believed and received. A part of believing is repentance. Before we can accept what God's grace has provided for us we must acknowledge our hopelessness in Adam, in sin. (***II Peter 3:9***)

Once you're in Christ, can you move back to your old place in Adam? To best answer that question we need to understand the depth of God's provision. Some think that you can move back and forth from being saved and not being saved based on the daily whim of the flesh. First of all no man can be saved but by a revelation and work of the Holy Spirit. (***I Corinthians 12:3.***) Once there is a genuine repentance and trust in Christ, that individual is ushered into the kingdom of God. That is the experience of all who are in Christ. However, being in Christ goes beyond the personal experience of the individual and certainly way beyond the daily whim of the flesh. It has to do with God's foreknowledge and eternal purposes. "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*" ***II Timothy 1:9, 10.*** Before the world began God purposed to save us by His grace. In God's foreknowledge and purpose we have been in Christ from before the world began. He knew what our decision would be concerning His Son and made plans for us according to that decision. God called us or chose us with a holy calling and separated us unto Himself from past eternity. Our day-to-day faithfulness or lack thereof cannot enhance or annul God's faithfulness to His own

eternal purpose to deal with us as those that are in Christ. We were saved apart from our works and we are maintained in that blessed position apart from our works. *“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”* **II Corinthians 1:21, 22.** God establishes us in Christ. We do not establish ourselves. **Ephesians 1:13 & 14** tell us that the believer in Christ is sealed until the redemption of the purchased possession.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.” **John 10:27 – 30.** The Bible clearly teaches that God has made all the provisions for us to be in Christ, but it also teaches us that once you've been established in Christ you cannot be taken out of Christ. Thank God for His grace that has made it possible for us to move from the poverty of sin to the riches that are in Christ. Thank God for His power and faithfulness that keep us in Christ.

In Adam we were separated from benefiting from God's promises, mercy and grace, but now in Christ we are brought into the presence of God. (**Ephesians 2:11 – 22.**) In the kingdom of God's dear Son, grace, love and promise are the laws that govern us. God will always deal with us according to these laws. It's where we live. They are what pertain to us. God doesn't deal with us according to the broken Law of Moses, which calls for our condemnation, because Christ died to satisfy that law and usher in the law of Grace. *“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by*

Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:16, 17

3) What are the benefits of being, “in Christ?”

Now that we are found in Christ, what are the benefits of such a position before God? What are our rights and blessing? They are many and they are wonderful. They are all ours because God by His grace has placed us in Christ. He will eternally deal with us as those that are in His beloved Son. Learn to rest in who and what you are and what you have in Christ.

Oneness - In Christ everyone is brought to a level plane. With God there is none of the prejudice or favoritism that there is in the world. *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Galatians 6:15.* In this realm the only thing that carries any weight with God is the fact that you have been made new by God’s grace through the merit of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. *(Deuteronomy 10:17.)* Scripture teaches us that there are different ranks in glory and different degrees of inheritance, but those who will be rewarded the highest place in glory will be those that have learned to submit to the new creation in them. God acknowledges and rewards only what’s done by the new creation.

In Adam, how far you go depends on who you are and what you have. In the world success is obtained and measured by what family you belong to, how much money you have and what your heritage, talents and abilities are. Not so in Christ. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28.* Everyone has the same opportunity to enjoy the fullness of God’s blessings in Christ. We are made one with God and with each other. We belong to the same

family with the same Father. He has the divine capacity to love each of His children equally and fully. Though not all of His children avail themselves to that love, it is available to all. We do not compete for His love or blessings, therefore we can enjoy that love for ourselves while encouraging our brother and sister in Christ to seek after it as well. (*Romans 12:5.*) What a joy to know that we belong to God and to one another! How comforting to be part of a body that lovingly cares for each of its members! This unity, oneness and equality is one of the benefits that come with being “in Christ.”

Life - “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.*” *II Timothy 1:1.* This is the most basic and essential part of being in Christ. The word translated “promise” means “announcement or assurance.” This is something that everyone in Christ possesses. It is the promise of spiritual, eternal and abundant life.

In the USA we celebrate our independence as a nation every year on the 4th of July. Remember, where we are physically affects our whole life. We are in the USA. That means we enjoy certain rights. The Declaration of Independence declares, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” The Laws that govern us guarantee that we have a right to live. We have a right to exist and the liberty to pursue the things that will bring us happiness in this temporal, earthly life. No one, not even the King of England, has the right to take away that life of liberty and the pursuit of happiness without just cause.

Our promise of life in Christ is far better than the right to natural life because it is eternal. When we were in

Adam, we were dead to God and had no promise of life. (*Ephesians 2:1 – 6.*) Those in Adam, though they possess natural life and may enjoy all that it affords, to God they are dead. In other words, they have no relationship or fellowship with God and are useless to Him. A sad, but accurate analogy may be that of one who is brain dead, but kept alive artificially. They may be breathing. They may be pitied, but we can have no relationship or interaction with them. There is already a degree of separation from them, though we may still be in the same room. They are alive, but it's not living. They are unable to pursue the things that make life worth living. They are condemned to certain death. It is only a matter of time till the plug will be pulled and the final separation is made when we put them in the ground.

All those who are not in Christ are like that spiritually. They may be living and breathing, but they are dead to God. We are made up of body, soul and spirit. There is more to us than just physical life. Without spiritual life man is like the one who is brain dead; he's breathing, but not living. There is a separation between him and God. There is no interaction between the two. It is that relationship and fellowship with God that makes life worth living. Without it, it is only a matter of time before the final separation takes place. (*Revelation 20:11 – 15.*) The day is coming when the "plug will be pulled" on those in Adam.

Oh, but thank God, in Christ we've been made alive. God took pity on us. Through our identification with the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf we are now dead to our old condition in sin, but born into the realm of His love and grace. "*Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*" (*NAU Romans 6:11.*) Those that are in Christ enjoy a relationship and fellowship with God that those in Adam

do not. Our fellowship is with the Word and Source of Life. (**1 John 1:1 – 3.**) We received life from our Heavenly Father. We are in His family, all because of His love and grace.

Abundant life – Because we have life in Christ we enjoy liberty and the pursuit of happiness found in abundant life. (**John 10:10.**) Our life in Christ is not a mere existence, but is absolute liberty to pursue the things that lead to true and lasting joy. No matter in which country or under which government the believer lives, he or she is able to enjoy the abundance of the fullness of life in Christ. *“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I Timothy 6:11, 12.* In Christ we have been given the liberty and ability to seek after these things that bring God’s blessing in our life today and His eternal reward tomorrow. The abundance of this life in Christ is to know that you walk with God and, more importantly, He walks with you to comfort, instruct, guide and strengthen. *“If God be for me, who can be against me?” (Romans 8:31.)* The Creator of and the Source of life is my Helper. (**Hebrews 13:5, 6.**) What could be greater than that? *“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (NAS) Philippians 4:19.* Everything I need, in body, soul or spirit to enjoy the fullness of God in this life and in eternity, I will have because I’m in Christ.

What is the span of this life? To have eternal life is to live eternally. (**John 17:1 – 4, John 10:27 – 30.**) Those in Christ will never be separated from God. These physical bodies may die, but remember we are more than

just flesh and blood. Our relationship with God does not change when physical death comes it only enters a new and glorious phase. *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” II Corinthians 5:8.*

The hope of the resurrection is a reality for all those in Christ. *(John 11:25, 26, I Corinthians 15:22.)* We are made alive in Christ. I don't wonder if I'll make it. I rest in the promise of God. Because Christ is our life, we will appear with Him in glory. *(Colossians 3:3, 4.)* I'm looking forward to living in the presence of God forever. *(I Thessalonians 4:14 – 18, Revelation 21:1 – 8.)* What's my assurance? I'm in Christ. Thank God for the life that is in Christ Jesus.

All Spiritual Blessings - *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3.* What a wonderful, comforting statement made about all those who are in Christ. From the moment you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, by crying out in repentance for your sin, you can know that you are born again and that God now sees you in Christ. When you by faith believe that Jesus died to pay the full price of your sins, thus making peace between you and God, you should rest in the wonderful truth that you now belong to Christ. Those in Christ have been blessed. The verb “blessed” is in the past tense. The list of blessings that we are considering are things that you don't have to earn or maintain, but are already yours by virtue of being in Christ.

The word translated “blessed” means “to speak well of” or “fine speaking.” We get our English word eulogy from this Greek word. God has said some fine things about us. Occasionally, I will attend the funeral of

someone I knew and hear a eulogy of them that makes me want to get up to look at the body in the casket to make sure I'm at the right funeral. Things can be a little exaggerated when men eulogize other men. But God doesn't exaggerate. He has said these fine things about us because He has made them true. Our part is to simply rest in what God has said to be true about us.

God has blessed us with **spiritual** blessings. That means that they are eternal and go beyond this temporal, physical and material life and minister to the depth of our being. Spiritual blessings are far better than material blessings because the condition of our spiritual life affects every area of our being, spirit, soul and body. Material blessings only provide temporal ease for these bodies. It is possible and prevalent for man to enjoy every possible material blessing and yet be miserable and disillusioned with life. While on the other hand those who rest in their spiritual blessings may have precious little of this world's material blessings, yet they are content, fulfilled and joyful. In Christ we have been given all spiritual blessings. We are truly blessed! We are rich!

From the phrase, "in heavenly places" we understand that they come from Heaven. Their source is Heaven. They draw us to Heaven. Though we are presently living on earth, by faith we enjoy the reality of these blessings now. To paraphrase the well known commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, "our citizenship (Greek) is in heaven" - ***Philippians 3:20***. Our High Priest is ever 'blessing' us from that vantage point - ***Hebrews 4:14***. Our "treasures" are there - ***Matthew 6:20-21***. Our aims and affections - ***Colossians 3:1-2***. Our hope - ***Colossians 1:5; Titus 2:13***. Our inheritance - ***I Peter 1:4***. The gift of the Spirit, the source of "spiritual blessings," is by virtue of Jesus having ascended there -

Ephesians 4:8. A revelation of these blessings will cause you to look up, beyond the trials and blessings of this temporal, earthly and material life and to look to the coming of the Lord who will escort us to our home in Heaven.

That doesn't mean that you won't be any earthly good. To live by faith in your blessings in heavenly places is to know the hope, peace, joy and strength in your day to day life that will make you an example and encouragement to others. It will enable you to do and be all things (citizen, employee, employer, student, husband, wife, ect..) without murmuring and complaining because you will do them as unto the Lord. Even in the most hopeless of earthly situations, you'll not be overwhelmed because you know that there does not exist any earthly situation that is able to annul the spiritual blessings you have in heavenly places in Christ.

The Bible uses many different terms to describe for us what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross. They all are connected and describe the same wonderful provision, but each stresses a certain aspect of that provision. If I would set before a group of people, a very large and beautiful precious jewel some would be struck by it's size, others by its shape and still others by its color. If they would look closer, each person would probably see even more unique and interesting things that would stand out to them and fascinate them personally. They are all aspects of that one precious jewel. So let's look at a few of the blessings that we have in Christ and understand that they are all connected to each other and simply stress different aspects of the same precious provision that was provided for us on the cross of Jesus Christ.

Salvation - *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee*

wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” **II Timothy 3:15.** Our faith and salvation come from being in Christ Jesus. Salvation means “deliverance from danger or loss.” The word salvation paints us a picture of the rescue of one who is in peril. A failed rescue results in the loss of the person’s life. The person is either saved and given the opportunity to prosper in life or lost and separated from all the pleasures of life and from the joys of fellowship with the living. In Adam we were in eminent peril of perishing. We had fallen into a pit of quicksand. The more we struggled to get out the more we sank. We were in danger of being eternally separated from God and His blessings. God is the source of life. To exist apart from God could not be called life. But God intervened and saved us from such a hopeless peril. He lifted us up out of the horrible pit of sin and set our feet on the solid Rock Christ Jesus.

“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I’m found.” (**John 3:16, 17.**) I’m saved and I know it. How? I’m in Christ! I am eternally safe in Christ. “*The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*” **Proverbs 18:10.** We have been lifted above all danger and are inaccessibly high. I don’t worry about the unknown at the end of this life. I am saved from any of its dangers. I am safe.

Redemption - “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” **Romans 3:23, 24.** God not only saved me from the consequences of sin, but He bought me and made me His own. The thought of redemption has to do with being freed from bondage by the paying of a price. We were slaves to sin and to Satan, both of which are cruel task

masters. All that are bound in chains of slavery are doomed to be used and abused until they are dead. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (NAU) **Romans 6:23**. I now have life and hope because I belong to God. Neither sin nor Satan have any right or claim on me. Our faith and hope are now in God because we belong to Him. (**I Peter 1:18 – 21**.) He is able to keep His possessions. **John 17:9 & 10** teach us that we are God’s and we are Christ’s. I do not fear the penalty of sin. The price has been fully paid. I do not fear the cunning or cruelty of Satan. He has no claim to my life. My eternal destiny is in the hands of my Redeemer. (**Job 19:25 – 27**)

No Condemnation - Justification – *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* (NIV) **Romans 8:1** This blessing has to do with the judicial issues of our sin and guilt before a Righteous Judge. All who are in Christ are declared to be free from guilt based on the merit of the One who bore our sins on the cross. We are made right with God. (**II Corinthians 5:21, John 3:18, 19 / 5:24**.) How do I know I’m right with God? I am in Christ. In Christ I’m hid from the just wrath of God. *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”* **Romans 5:9**. We are saved from the wrath to come by His blood. The word “by” can also be translated “in” His blood.

Sanctification – *“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”* **I Corinthians 1:2, 3**. The emphasis of sanctification is that of our having been set apart for God and having been made useful to God. In Adam we are described as being

unprofitable which is translated from a word that the Greeks used to describe useless, rotten fruit. (**Romans 3:11, 12.**) God not only has saved us, redeemed us and justified us, He also made us useful to Himself. Every Christian will one day bring glory to His grace. “*Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly {places} in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” (NAS) **Ephesians 2:5 – 7.** So it doesn’t matter to me what others say or what Satan tries to convince me of, I know that I can and will bring glory to God. The degree of my usefulness to God depends on my day to day yieldedness to Him, but the ability to be useful to God is mine by virtue of my being in Christ.

Grace – “*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*” **II Timothy 2:1.** Grace is the favor of God. It is unmerited by us who were deserving of wrath, but in Christ we find that we have a standing of grace before God. (**Romans 5:1, 2; II Timothy 1:9 & 10.**) Too many live their life in fear that God is out to get them some how, but I know that because I’m in Christ, He seeks to bestow upon me His abundant favor. God accepts me in His beloved Son to the glory of His grace. (**Ephesians 1:6 & 7.**) In Christ He favors us with everything we need to flourish and prosper in this new life that we have been given. (**I Corinthians 1:4 – 9.**) His grace is unlimited and is able to take us to the throne of Christ. (**I Corinthians 15:10.**)

Love – “*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*” **I Timothy 1:14.** Not only does He show me unmerited

favor, but the Eternal God loves me in Christ. He diligently seeks what is in my best interest. It just gets better and better. Once you understand that you have been placed in Christ by accepting Him as your Savior, you begin to realize all the wonderful blessings that are poured out on you there. The Almighty God is ever watching over me and seeking my eternal well-being. (**Romans 8:28 – 39.**) Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Triumph - “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*” **II Corinthians 2:14.** We have victory in Christ. Jesus has overcome the world. (**John 16:3.3**) And we have overcome the world in Him. (**I John 4:3, 4 / 5:4, 5.**) That spirit of antichrist that is in the world and that would deceive and drag men to the lake of fire has been forever overcome by those who are in Christ. Ongoing victory over anything and everything that would hinder us from obtaining God’s best is found in Christ. “*I can do all things in him who strengthens me.*” (RSV) **Philippians 4:13.** How wonderful to know that there is nothing that can overcome me and remove me from my place of blessing in Christ Jesus. (**Psalms 125:1, 2.**)

4) What are our responsibilities “in Christ?”

So far we have discovered in our series of lessons on the prepositional phrase “in Christ,” so often used by the Apostle Paul, that all those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior have been blessed with all spiritual blessings. Some of those blessings include eternal life, unity and equality, salvation, redemption, justification, sanctification, grace, love and triumph. These blessings are not earned or merited, but are ours by virtue of being in Christ. They cannot be lost or stolen.

God gave them to us and God keeps us and them. They are not based on our faithfulness, but God's. Until we get settled on this truth we will never be able to go on and grow up into Christ. We will constantly spend our time and energy trying to hold on to blessings that God has already said are eternally ours. Sadly, that is exactly the experience of many Christians today.

Equally sad are those who do have an understanding of our security in Christ, but who never go on to grow and mature in the Lord. *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* **Ephesians 4:14.** The word "grow" means to "increase or augment." All those in Christ possess certain blessings, but as we learn more of truth and apply it to our lives, there is an augmenting or increasing of our blessings, both now and in eternity. *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever."* **II Peter 3:18.** The Bible tells us that all God's children are heirs of God, but certain ones will be joint heirs with Christ who is the heir of all things. (**Romans 8:16, 17.**) The Bible also talks about some being saved yet so as by fire and others who have an abundant entrance into heaven. (**I Corinthians 3:15, II Peter 1:11.**) Those who will enjoy increased blessings in Christ are those who have learned that together with the wonderful, unmerited blessings that we have in Christ, we also have certain responsibilities in Christ. These added privileges are obtained by our day to day faithfulness in these responsibilities. The motive that will stimulate such faithfulness is a love for Jesus Christ and all that He has given us in Himself. The more we grow the more glory we bring to His grace. The more we grow the greater our closeness and fellowship with Jesus Christ now and in

eternity.

When we start to talk about “our” faithfulness, we have to be careful to make it clear the source of “our” faithfulness. *I Corinthians 15:9 & 10* tell us that we are what we are only by the grace of God. He favors us with the ability to do what is pleasing in His sight. (*Philippians 2:13.*) None of us have within ourselves the ability to be pleasing to God. But every believer has the opportunity to yield to the Christ-life in them that will always cause us to do what is right in God’s sight. (*II Corinthians 3:5 & 6.*) God is our sufficiency. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Our faithfulness is simply a reliance on His faithfulness. It is to surrender our will to His and then to rest in His ability to enable us to be pleasing to Himself. For us to be faithful to God and enjoy the added blessings that are found in Christ we must daily make the choice to want to be pleasing to God and then look to Him to enable us to do so. Dependence leads to faithfulness. Independence is rebellion and unfaithfulness. All in Christ have the opportunity and ability to enjoy God’s best, but the unfaithfulness of some will result in the loss of the fullness of God in Christ. (*I Corinthians 3:11 – 15.*)

Let’s look at a few specific things that Paul tells us were his and our responsibilities in Christ.

Ways in Christ - *“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.” I Corinthians 4:16, 17.* Paul declares that his “ways” or “course of conduct” were in Christ. We should daily conduct ourselves as those who are in Christ. We’ve been redeemed in Christ, so we should conduct

ourselves as those who are freed from sin's dominion. (**Romans 6:6 - 13.**) Sadly many who are in Christ do not have their "ways" in Christ.

In Christ we have been made new Creatures and therefore that newness should be seen in our hopes, desires, likes and dislikes, our activities and actions. "*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife (discord), jealousy, outbursts of anger (fits of rage), disputes (selfish ambition), dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.*" (NAS) **Galatians 5:19 – 26.** The works of the flesh are of the Old Nature. The fruit of the Spirit is a product of the New Nature. Which attributes characterize our ways, our daily course of conduct? No man, in his right mind, who's been set free from prison would go down to the prison everyday, put on his old prison uniform, sit around in the prison courtyard with his old buddies, and eat the same prison food. Why should we, who've been set free from the destruction of the habit of sin, return to its misery when we have been given new things in Christ? We have the liberty and ability to live righteously and to enjoy its wonderful benefits.

Give thanks - In the following verse, Paul mentions a specific "way" that is found in Christ. "*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*" **I Thessalonians 5:18.**

Gratitude should be one of the most notable attitudes in the lives of those who are in Christ. Who should be thankful? Those who have been given something. What group has been given more than those who are in Christ? Even if God had never given us one material blessing, we should be eternally grateful for the enormous spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. Sadly, many of God's people's lives are characterized by murmuring and complaining. They complain about their trials, needs, family, work, church, preacher and anything that doesn't seem to measure up to their critical standard. I'm not talking about pretending that everything is perfect, because it's not, but to focus on those things and to be obsessed with those things is a sign of ungratefulness. To be unthankful is a conduct that pertains to those who are in the world and who are part of the false Church. (***II Timothy 3:1 – 5***) It is not a way that is in Christ. We are to do all things without murmuring and complaining. (***Philippians 2:14 – 16.***) The ways in Christ are ways of thankfulness not murmuring and complaining. May others be able to see that we are in Christ.

The next time you catch yourself complaining about your need, circumstance or about another person, stop and take time to give thanks to God for His generosity to you. You can begin with things that have nothing to do with your immediate complaint, but before long, because of His abundant generosity to you, you'll be able to thank God for the present problem and what He is going to do in your life through that very thing. A person whose life is characterized with complaining is a person that is unthankful, miserable and bitter and who is going to miss out on God's best. One who is thankful is content and peaceful and who will be found worthy of the fullness of God. *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by*

*prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. **Philippians 4:6 – 9.***

Speak in Christ - “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” **II Corinthians 2:17.** We are to speak in Christ. Our speech should betray us as being of those who are identified with Jesus Christ. In the immediate context of the verse we know that Paul is referring to our doctrine and what we believe, proclaim and support. In Paul’s day, and in our day, there are those who will preach and teach anything that will draw a crowd and make money. Paul said he did not “corrupt” the Word of God. The word corrupt means to “peddle.” He spoke the Word in “sincerity” which means it was “clear, pure, judged by the sun’s light.” Paul believed what he believed and taught what he taught, not because it was always what people wanted to hear, but because it was “of God” and from God. Paul knew that he lived and spoke in the presence of God and he knew that he was abundantly and eternally blessed because he was in Christ and that knowledge prompted him to say the things that would please the Trinity.

Not everyone will be thrilled when you speak the truth that is found in Christ. (**Acts 4:1 – 14.**) When you

declare that God declares certain things right and certain things wrong, the world and even some of God's people will be offended. The Word many times offends the intellect or opinion of people. Many times it offends people because it contradicts their practice of either sin or religion or sometimes both. But, nonetheless, we are to speak in Christ. Say what Christ has said and is saying by His Holy Spirit. In Christ's stead we speak His gospel and His doctrine. (**II Corinthians 5:20.**) We are not all preachers, but we all are to speak in Christ. (**Romans 1:15, 16.**) Make a stand for the truth of the Gospel without fear or compromise.

I don't believe that speaking in Christ is limited to only the doctrine that we believe, proclaim and support, but rather encompasses all our speech and conversations. Our words need to reflect that we understand that we speak in the presence of God as those who are in Christ and therefore they should be words that are pleasing to Him. (**Psalm 19:7 – 14.**) David knew what it was to speak in Christ even before Christ was manifest in the flesh. He knew he had been abundantly blessed by his faith in the One who was promised to come. His grateful response to that was a desire to live righteously and to speak words that were pleasing to God.

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” **I Timothy 4:12 – 16.** We are to be examples of the believer in the words that we say. It's important that our words, even in everyday conversation, reveal that we belong to Christ. If our speech is harsh, coarse, crude and vulgar it is going to steer our listeners away from Christ and towards the things that are in the world and in the flesh. In **Ephesians 4:29 – 32** we are warned against corrupt communications

which can be translated rotten and worthless communications. We are also told to put off evil speaking which means injurious speech. Let us speak that which will build up and direct people to the favor of God. *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Colossians 3:17.* If we choose to obey this verse, we will speak in Christ.

Pressing towards the mark for the prize in Christ - *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:14.* Now we will consider one of our greatest responsibilities as well as one of our greatest opportunities that we have in Christ. We are to be imitators of Paul. We are to press - pursue, run swiftly after or toward - the mark or goal. Obtaining the goal will result in receiving the prize of the upward call that is in Christ. That statement immediately brings up three questions. a) What is the goal? b) What is the prize? c) How do we press?

a) What is the goal or mark? To know Him - *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” Philippians 3:10.* Paul’s goal was to know Christ. We know that Paul already knew Christ as his Savior, so we must understand him to mean he had a desire to know Christ in a more profound and personal way. It was Paul’s goal to enter into a profound fellowship and partnership with Christ that he had not yet enter into fully.

Perhaps an example of a natural relationship might help us to begin to understand this far superior spiritual relationship of which Paul speaks. My wife Kristi and I had a choir class together in High School. I knew of her, but had not made her acquaintance in those first few days

of class. Later, through a mutual friend I met her and got to know her as part of the group of friends. There came a point in our relationship that I became hopelessly attracted to her and wanted to know everything about her and wanted to share with her everything about my life, the good and the bad. I wanted her to be a part of everything about my life. When I wasn't with her, I thought about her. When I wasn't on the phone with her, I was at her house. The joy of being with her, pleasing her and sharing my life with her and her with me occupied my thoughts, attitude and actions. And though the puppy love has since faded it didn't lead to a dog's life. After 20 years the joy of our partnership is stronger and more satisfying than ever. That's the kind of closeness and partnership that Paul wanted to have with Jesus, but on a much higher spiritual plane.

Power of His resurrection - The word translated "power" means "miraculous power or ability." Paul is not talking about enjoying that power just some day at our physical resurrection, but right now in our everyday life. *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* **Romans 6:4.** We are to walk in the newness of life today. We are free from sin's power and dominion and are to walk in that liberty. Do you know Jesus as the One who is in you and that will daily give you power to resist the temptation to sin and who will enable you to do and say what is pleasing to God? Do you want to know Him in that way? You can know and experience the same power that raised Christ from the dead in your daily life. That power that conquered death can enable you to conquer any temptation.

Fellowship of His suffering - To know someone

personally and be close to them you have to be identified with them. To be identified with Christ in this world means to suffer persecution at the hands of Satan and the world. It's part of our responsibility in Christ to be willing to remain faithful to the Lord and honor Him no matter what difficulties or hardships come our way. (*Philippians 1:29.*) *"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."* **II Timothy 2:12.** When you focus on the suffering only, it doesn't sound very desirable, but when you focus on being identified with Christ, it puts the suffering in perspective. He will never leave me nor forsake me. He will supply all my need. All things work together for my good. The sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in me. If we suffer, we are told that we will be joint heirs with Christ and made to rule with Him as His co-regent. Paul wanted to know that aspect of Christ in a greater way. Most never get to know Christ in this way because the moment a difficult time arises, they run off in self-pity or self-indulgence and they stop honoring God with their life.

Conformed to His death - Paul was not saying that he wanted to be martyred, which he eventually was, but that he wanted to become so like Christ that he learned to surrender every aspect of his life to God in obedience. His goal was not to live or die, but to render unconditional obedience. (*Philippians 2:5 – 8, Romans 12:1, 2, II Corinthians 5:9.*)

b) What is the Prize? *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ... If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of (out from among) the dead."*

Philippians 3:8, 11. The prize that we are to desire is Christ Himself and a place in the out resurrection from among the righteous dead. We have already established that we do not win Christ as Savior. Nor do we work to be found worthy to be in the resurrection unto life. Those are free gifts that are received by faith apart from works. Again we must conclude that Paul is talking about something deeper and more profound than merely being saved.

In this passage in the third chapter of Philippians Paul uses phrases like, “if by any means” and “not yet attained, not yet perfect.” Paul had no doubt where he would spend eternity. That is made clear by his statements in verses 20 and 21 of this very same chapter. Paul did not question where he would spend eternity, but in what capacity and how close He would be to the Lord in His government. The Bible clearly teaches that there will be ranks in the resurrection of those who will be raised unto eternal life. We have already mentioned the reward of joint-heirship and co-regency for those who are willing to suffering with Christ. **I Corinthians 15:22, 23** tells us that all believers will be made alive, but each in their own order or rank. The prize for achieving the goal of knowing Christ in His fullness in this life is to be granted a place in the highest rank in the resurrection.

c) How do we press on towards the goal? With this goal in mind and with this prize set before us, we press forward in our service and obedience to the Lord. How? *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* **II Corinthians 11:2, 3.** All those in Christ have the same opportunity to win Christ,

but some will lose it because they are being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. To press on towards the goal and prize is to live in the simplicity that is in Christ. The word translated “simplicity” means “singleness of mind.” Those of us in Christ need to understand that our sole purpose for living is to submit our will to God’s and let Him transform us into the image of Jesus Christ in order that we might glorify Him.

When we become so distracted by the complexity of our life that it is no longer our supreme desire to be found pleasing to the Lord, we have been deceived. We have left the simplicity that is in Christ. We are no longer pressing on towards the goal and prize. What are your goals for your life, family and job? Let’s return to simplicity. May we daily cry out to the God, “I want to please you in all that I say and do.” “I want You to have control of my life and cause me to think, talk and act according to the Christ life within me.”

The world laughs and mocks at such simplicity, but the Lord will one day reward it with the greatest prize of time and eternity. *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (righteous acts) of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”* **Revelation 19:7 – 9.** All that are in Christ will be at that wedding, but only those who have made themselves ready will be counted worthy to be adorned with the wedding dress that represents the righteous acts or godly living of faithful saints. So let us press on with the patience, temperance and endurance of an athlete. Let us press on with the commitment, obedience and training

of a soldier. Let us press on with the love and zeal of an espoused bride for her bridegroom. It's our responsibility. It's our privilege in Christ.

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