

Joined to the Son

“By His doing you are in Christ Jesus . . .” 1 Corinthians 1:30

I want to speak plainly about a vital truth that has transformed my life. When I first saw this truth, I was working in an evangelistic team in India and had been through several months when I was crying out to God for more reality in my relationship with him. It had seemed to me in those months of darkness that all the other Christians around me (or at least most of them) were enjoying the reality that I was hungry for, so when light eventually dawned I thought I was simply catching up with what everyone else was already enjoying.

The years since then have shown me that I was mistaken. It seems that the majority of us have just not seen the simple truth that, when God says that he has placed us **in Christ**, it means that our life has been joined to Jesus. As we begin to see and believe this, a whole new light shines in and transforms what it means to live as a Christian.

I soon started to discover that the books of the New Testament, and especially Paul’s letters, are **full** of references to the fact that we are ‘in Christ’, and the results that flow from that simple fact.

Perhaps the biggest difference for me has been the growing realisation that I am included; there is nothing to strive for, no test I need to pass in order to gain the Father’s acceptance. Yes, of course I already knew about the love of God and had begun to experience it as I had responded to the message and put my trust in Jesus for forgiveness and a new life. But now it is as if it is all settled and secure.

I am not saying that I never have ‘wobbles’, when I feel uncertain and perhaps insecure. But even then it is normally not long before that glorious realisation floods back in, the quiet reassurance of the Father that **he has placed me in his Son, the Lord Jesus.**

We may need some more evidence to be convinced, so let’s explore just a few of the passages that spell out the facts . . .

1 Corinthians 1:30 Different translations say *“By His doing . . .”*, *“Of Him . . .”* or *“Because of Him . . .”* The original Greek says *“Out from Him . . .”* In other words, God himself is the origin, the source of the fact that we are in Christ. Not my emotions, not events and circumstances, not success or failure, not the strength of my faith – especially not that, fortunately!

Romans 6:3-11 *“Baptised into Christ Jesus . . . buried with Him . . . united with Him . . . dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* Read the whole passage!

2 Corinthians 1:20 & 21 “For as many as are the promises of God, **in Him** they are yes . . . Now He who establishes us with you **in Christ** and anointed us is God, . . . “

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Galatians 3:27 “For all of you who were baptised **into Christ** have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Galatians 3:28 “. . . all one **in Christ Jesus**.”

Ephesians 1:1,3,4,7,13 “. . . faithful **in Christ Jesus** . . . every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ** . . . He chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world . . . **In Him** we have redemption through His blood . . . **In Him**, you also, after listening to the message of truth . . . you were sealed **in Him** with the Holy Spirit of promise . . .” Ephesians has so many more references to our being in Christ that you will just have to read through the whole letter!

Colossians 1:14 “. . . **in whom** we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 2:6,10 “Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk **in Him** . . . and **in Him** you have been made complete.”

I could go on and on. Even just the simple way in which Paul starts several of his letters, writing “to the church of . . . **in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** . . .”

But perhaps the most telling example is the Lord Jesus himself in **John 15:1-11**, where he speaks to his disciples in the upper room (after Judas has left to betray him) and says how he is the vine and they/we are branches in that vine, and tells those who follow him to ‘abide’ (= stay, dwell, make their home) in him. That instruction would be meaningless if we were not already **in him!**

Please read **John 15:1-11** again.

You may also like to read a letter that James Hudson Taylor wrote to his sister in October 1869, about his struggles with this passage and the eventual breakthrough that he experienced. (Hudson Taylor was a pioneering missionary, taking the gospel to the interior of China. He founded the China Inland Mission, later known as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship.) The letter is contained in his biography (by Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor) and is also available under the title *The Exchanged Life*. One sentence which ‘jumps out’ of this letter is this: “All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was how to get it *out*.”

If, like Hudson Taylor and like me, you are already a Christian but have felt that deep frustration, perhaps even desperation, longing for more reality in your relationship with the Father – through his Son – then I pray that you will take this simple truth to heart: your loving Father God has **already** joined your life to the life of his Son.

In my months of desperation, there was at least one caring Christian brother who took me to one side and shared ***Ephesians 1:3*** with me, hoping to help me out of my difficulty: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ . . .”* The intention was really good but it only deepened my despair, because, as far as I could see, I didn’t have those blessings, so he evidently had NOT blessed me with them. When, later, I began to see that the same Father who had given those blessings had also placed me in Christ, then – but only then – I was able to take hold of what he had given.

There are, of course, many Christian books on many aspects of the Christian life but there seem to be very few which clearly show this basic truth. One that has helped me many times is *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee. If you want to explore and discover more, then I thoroughly recommend it.

I have borrowed one of Watchman Nee’s illustrations many times, because it is simple and graphically expresses the reality that we have been joined to Jesus :–

I take a piece of paper and place it in a book. Then I post the book to another town. What happens to the piece of paper? It also goes to the town. If I put the book on my bookshelf, or even if I leave it somewhere by mistake, whatever happens to the book also happens to the piece of paper; it shares the same destiny. Your Father has placed you in his Son so that you share the same destiny with him.

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When we begin to see that we have been placed **in** Christ, that our lives have been joined to his life, being a Christian starts to take on a new dimension – a whole series of new dimensions, in fact! We could spend a very long time trying to list them all, and even longer working them out in practice – the rest of our lives! Here is just one way that our eyes may be opened :–

Most Christian fellowships regularly take the bread and wine together. It is a good and valuable thing to do and, after all, it is one thing that the Lord Jesus has specifically told us to do when we meet together. But do you sometimes find yourself asking questions: ‘What am I really doing this for?’ ‘Am I just following a routine?’ ‘How meaningful is this to me right now?’

We know that we are doing it in remembrance of him but sometimes that remembering seems a little tired, perhaps even contrived or artificial. Perhaps we try to revive our appreciation by attempting to picture the horrors of the crucifixion, hoping to stir up our feelings as we contemplate the depths of God's love for us.

But this is more than a mere remembrance; it is an active participation! When Paul writes *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."* (**1 Corinthians 11:26**), what does he mean? How can our 'remembering' become a 'proclamation'?

A clue lies in the previous chapter. In **1 Corinthians 10:16**, Paul writes *"Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?"* That word 'sharing' is the same word translated 'fellowship' and could just as well be 'participation'. So, when we eat the bread and drink the wine, we are making a statement that we share in the death of Jesus. "By his broken body, my old life is dead and gone; by his blood poured out, the price for my sins, failures and shortcomings has been paid in full. These blessings are mine as I stand in Him." Some statement! Yes, a proclamation indeed!

When we are baptised, we are saying something very similar: "My old life is dead and buried; I have been raised to new life in Christ."

Both of these are strong declarations that we are **in Christ**, because none of the benefits of his death and resurrection are available to us until we put our trust into him.

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In Christ? Yes, by his grace, and heir to all the promises of God! Completely 'arrived' and with it all worked out in practice in every part of my life? Not by a long way! But we have the perfect guide to lead us into all the truth, as Jesus said he would (**John 16:12-15**).

*"Now we have received,
not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit who is from God,
so that we may know the things freely given to us by God . . ."*

1 Corinthians 2:12

Dave Taylor October 2018

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