

# Joined to the Source

Many Christians find it impossible to live the Christian life. We hear many talks and read all the best books, go to the right meetings and pray very genuine prayers, pleading with the Lord to make our lives real and effective for him. When it doesn't seem to work, we do one of three things: We 'give up Christianity', pretend or persist.

Giving up is rather dramatic. Pretending might mean that I have actually given up any hope of reality but I am keeping up appearances because I am afraid of what others will think. Maybe it means I still do believe that it is possible to find reality in Jesus but I haven't found it yet, so I'll just keep 'ticking over' for the time being. If and when it all 'comes right' I shall be able to carry on as if nothing has happened – really?

If we are living this way, we have made up little routines for ourselves, ways of doing things that seem to fit with the Christian 'front' we are keeping up. So many people are doing it that it is very easy for no-one to experience reality but for each to expect the others to fit in with the generally accepted pattern.

Our Father has much better plans in store for us. When the Lord Jesus says "*I am the way and the truth and the life*", the word 'truth' means 'reality', what actually is. **We are designed to live in Jesus**, in this reality. "Yes", you say, "that's fine, but saying it is easy. If I cannot experience it, I shall be just back to faking it again. How can I begin to actually live this way?"

We need some solid information to start with. "Am I in Christ?" is a basic question which needs to be answered. Can we answer "yes"? Was there a time in our lives when we responded in faith to the message of the gospel? Then we can move on.

The next piece of information is simple and amazing. Read **1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 1:13**. There are many more, but these will do for a start. It is because of God himself that we are in Jesus. He has done it, he has transferred us from darkness to Jesus's kingdom. Paul puts it another way in **Romans 11:17** : "... you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree ..." We have

been joined to the Lord Jesus in a way that we may find hard to appreciate; there is a flow of his life into us and in us, just as there is in a branch that has been grafted into what the gardeners call a 'rootstock', a root and stem prepared to support the life of the branch.

Living from the source of the tree of life is not a difficult thing when we discover that we have already been grafted into it! Jesus's own instruction to "*Abide in me*" seems rather less impossible when we see that he has made us part of the vine!

So, here I am, joined to the vine; how am I going to make sure that I go on living this way? Jesus's command was to abide. The word used here means 'stay, remain, continue', and is most commonly used in the New Testament for people 'staying' with other people in their homes. We all live in homes of some sort and we probably all know what it is like to stay in someone else's home, if only for a short while, or move into a new house of our own. We explore a new house (ours or our friends') and find out about it. What are the things we like and don't like? How will we adapt to living there? We do the same with new cars, too, discovering and enjoying all the features. Wouldn't it be strange if we just accepted it all without any interest or excitement? Even stranger if we had been given an enormous house, a 'stately home' perhaps, and we showed no interest in exploring it all, maybe just camping in the entrance hall! People would say we weren't really living in it at all. Do you see the picture?

There are very many things that our Father has given us in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these are so vital that we need to take hold of them straight away; they are the very basics of our life in him! Others will become apparent to us later on and will add to our appreciation and worship. These will deepen and enrich us if we have discovered the basics, but will be useless and theoretical otherwise.

So, how do we start to live this life of reality? What are the vital basics we need to survive? Let us look at our most urgent and repeated needs:-

**Forgiveness and the Presence of God.** Much is said about a "sense of the presence of God" in meetings and especially in times of prayer and worship. Those times can be really great, very encouraging and refreshing, but the only way I can stand in

the presence of God is because the blood of Jesus has been shed for me, paying the price for the sin that would otherwise shut me off from him completely. It really is only by his grace that we can enter the presence of the Creator of the Universe. It is not a cheap thing to be able to talk to God and call him 'Father'; it is the most amazing privilege, purchased at great cost, and it is **ours in the Lord Jesus Christ!** See **Hebrews 10:19-22, 9:14, Romans 3:23-26, 5:9, Ephesians 1:7**. These verses emphasise freedom to enter God's presence, a clear conscience, forgiveness and redemption. **1 John 1:6-10** takes these and begins to apply them to our relationships with each other – how much more there is to discover!

**Freedom and the End of the Old Life.** How often we struggle to try to please God! Even though we know we are saved by grace, we still seem to think that we should make strenuous efforts to 'live a good life'. Like us, Paul tried it and failed, and recorded some of his battle in **Romans 6,7 & 8**. He made the liberating discoveries that he couldn't please God in his natural ability and that his old life of slavery to sin was really done away with through the death of Jesus. (See **Romans 7:18, 8:8** and **Romans 6:6, 6:12-14**) Again, this is **our inheritance in Jesus** – ours because we are 'in him' – joined to him, grafted to his life.

The other side of the coin is even better. Just as baptism speaks of the death of the old life (a death that is accomplished for us in Jesus), it also speaks of resurrection, which again is **ours in him!** What does this mean? That there is **a really new sort of life** in me, the life of the Holy Spirit, gradually changing me and making me more like Jesus! This is not self-effort but allowing the resurrection life of Jesus to live in me by the Holy Spirit. How can we do this? See **Romans 6:1-11**. Paul knows that he is joined to Jesus in death, burial and resurrection and exhorts the believers in Rome to know it first and then count on it! In **Romans 8:1-17**, he gives a glorious picture of the freedom, the new quality of life that is **ours in Jesus!** Praise God!

Do you see how these basics have followed the details of what is often called "the finished work of Christ"? All are vital parts of our walk with God and each other, and there is one more. **Hebrews 1:3** says that when Jesus "*had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*". His shed blood, broken body and resurrection all result in something real for

me – what does his sitting down at the Father’s right hand do? Jesus made it very clear – if he did not go away, he could not send the Holy Spirit (**John 16:7**). **The gift of the poured-out Holy Spirit** is closely linked with the glorification of Jesus. See **John 7:37-39** and **Acts 2:33**, where again the close connection is made. Jesus **is** seated at the Father’s right hand – I am an heir of that gift as well, by his grace, **because my life has been joined to his!**

Isn’t it exciting? This is real, God has really done it, and it is our inheritance in the Lord Jesus! There is more to discover and the Holy Spirit longs to lead us on. Jesus says *“But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall disclose it to you.”* (**John 16:13-14**) Paul describes the Holy Spirit’s work in revealing God’s mind to us in **1 Corinthians 2:6-13**, and in all his letters does not tire of telling believers as much as he can of what God has done for them in Christ, giving them (and us!) a rich store of treasure for the Holy Spirit to show us. Just as it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the scriptures, so it is only by his working that we can expect to receive anything from reading them! (See **2 Peter 1:20-21**.)

Let us start by responding to the revelation we have already received. After saying “Oh, I see!”, our next response must surely be to say “thank you” – that is the most certain proof of really having received a gift! The absence of thanksgiving, praise and heartfelt worship are usually markers of our lack of real appreciation of our riches in Christ!

***“What shall I render to the Lord  
for all his benefits toward me?  
I shall lift up the cup of salvation,  
and call upon the name of the Lord.”***

(Psalm 116:12-13)

Dave Taylor May 1997

Further copies can be downloaded from [www.justonecandle.uk](http://www.justonecandle.uk)