

"Life in Christ"

What does it mean to be alive? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to explore what it means to be alive in Christ, to truly live. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's Word is rich in wisdom and truth. It provides the guidance and promises that we need to have eternal life. God's word leads us to faith, hope, and love. That's why we turn to this great resource; it has no equal. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

John Lennon in his song, "Imagine," asked us to imagine there's no heaven or hell and he painted a picture of people living only for today and not having any accountability to a higher power. That was Lennon's fantasy, but it's only a fantasy. Our physical lives in this world are not all that there is to life; we're more than flesh and blood. We have a spirit that will live long after our bodies are buried in the grave. Real life has to take the soul, the spirit, also into account.

In a time of temptation, the Lord Jesus knew that He was more than just a body that has physical needs. You'll remember the tempter challenged Him, saying, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But the Lord Jesus answered the tempter in Matthew 4 and verse 4, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" We are God's creatures: body, soul, and spirit. We are made in His image. "And in Him we live and move and have our very being." Let's not fool ourselves. We cannot live without responsibility or accountability to the God who gave us life. We must listen to every word that comes from the mouth of God. Only in Jesus Christ can we have true life.

Now if you want to study more about life in Christ, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our message and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free online at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 3 verses 1 through 4, and then we'll explore our spiritual life in Christ.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 1 through 4. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we look forward to the day when Christ is revealed and that we can live with You in glory. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

We only have one life, so we must not waste it with the things that do not matter and will not last. Many people invest their lives in the here and now, never giving a thought to the future. Moses wrote in Psalm 90 and verse 12, "So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom." We must be wise. Wisdom to God means taking God's teaching into our hearts and lives so that we never stray from His word.

A man once came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." Well Jesus warned the man, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12 and verse 15). Life is not about possessing; it's about loving and serving others. When our hearts grow selfish and our desires take control, we may be cutting ourselves off from the true life. When we take our eyes off of God and turn it to fleshly pleasure, we separate ourselves from God. God said in 1 Timothy 5 and verse 6, "but she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives." Oh, she may be physically alive, but she is spiritually dead. She has no future with God. The difference between being dead in sin and being alive in Christ is astounding! And so let's explore today what it means to have a life in Christ.

Well first, in Christ we have a new life. Have you ever had the desire to start over again fresh? Have you ever wished that you had a reset button for your life? Sin stains our hearts and it defiles our consciences. Past errors haunt us and shame us. How we wish that we could start over! You remember when Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, that the Lord Jesus told him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Well Nicodemus said to him, "Well, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" And Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

Well why would we need to be born again? Well we need a new birth because sin has caused us to die spiritually. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 says that the Lord Jesus "bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." We needed saving and we needed healing. The only way this could happen is if we die to the old man and we're born again to a new and different kind of life.

Now conversion to Christ is a transforming experience that leads us away from the sin that destroys us to a life that is free from sin. When by faith and in repentance we unite ourselves with Christ in baptism, God transforms our lives. Romans 6 verses 3 to 7 says, "Do you not know that all of us who've been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, then we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin."

The Lord set us free from sin and its enslavement, so that we could live a life filled with good things. Ephesians 2 verses 8 to 10 says, "For by grace you've been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (listen to this: Created in Christ Jesus) for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." God doesn't leave us where He found us but transforms us into people who love to do what is good and what blesses everyone. That is new life!

Second, in Christ we have an abundant life. Jesus said in John 10 and verse 10, "I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly." The word "abundant" refers to that which is plentiful, to the point of filling every need and more. Jesus promised in Luke 6 and verse 38, "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." When we give ourselves to live for Christ, we get more in return than we can imagine.

In Christ we have faith. To trust in One who loves you and has been a constant blessing in your life isn't something to be taken lightly, oh no. Nobody loves you like Jesus. And no one has died upon the cross to give you a new life but Jesus. And for this reason you can trust Him as no other. Paul said in Galatians 2 and verse 20 "I have been crucified with Christ. And it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." When Christ by faith lives within you, you'll walk by faith and not by sight, you'll think and act as the Lord wills. And this will bless everyone.

The hope that we share because of our life in Christ is more than abundant. To know that we have a home in heaven, to know that He has daily cared for us, and we have our heavenly Father to hear us, gives us an assurance that cannot be measured. To know that His ears are always open to our prayers and that He wants to hear us gives us strength when we're weary, comfort in our sorrow, and a reminder that He truly loves us.

In Christ we have forgiveness of our past sins. We all live with the guilt of our past. And though some don't want to admit that there is such a thing as sin, our consciences bear witness to it. And no matter who we are or what we've been taught, the pain of guilt touches every life. The only true answer to that guilt is found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and His blood can wash away that painful sin and free the conscience. God's forgiveness opens the door for us to see ourselves in a new light. And we can see the old man of sin die, while that new man can live in righteousness. We don't have to be trapped in sin. The Lord Jesus promised in John 8 and verse 36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." And when we are free from sin, we're also able to be free from the guilt and the shame that goes with it. God forgives us so that we can move past our old lives of sin.

We can never see God's love displayed more strongly than on the cross, and yet we shouldn't think that God's love ended at the cross. Romans 8 and verse 32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" God's love touches us in every aspect of our lives, and He does it every day. He is our Father, concerned about every detail of our lives. And when we hurt, we can turn to Him. When we are tempted, we can turn to Him for strength. When life is filled with stress, we can take our worries to the Lord. 1 Peter 5 and verse 7 says, "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." He truly cares about every aspect of our lives. God's love is endless.

And because we can cast our anxieties on Him, we have true peace of heart and mind. And it's this kind of relationship that causes us to have confidence in God's promises, that He's with us and near us every single minute of our lives. Philippians 4 verses 4 through 7 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be made known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." We can truly have the peace that passes all understanding, because our God is near us when we most need Him. And He's going to place a guard around our hearts and our minds that give us peace and safety that we can overcome whatever challenges us.

Now all of these spiritual blessings in Christ bring us an incredible joy. There is joy in forgiveness, there is joy in peace, there's joy in love, joy in hope, and joy in God's abiding care. Being a Christian provides us with the greatest blessings. And nothing else compares. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 13 verses 44 to 46, that "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. And then in his joy he goes and he sells all that he has and he buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great

value, went and sold all that he had and he bought it." Being in God's family, the church, being a child of God, is just such a treasure, just such a pearl of great price. Now this treasure outshines them all, because it has no limit and no end. It's the complete treasure of a relationship with God who loves us beyond all that we can imagine.

Third, in Christ we have eternal life. The word "eternal" means that it has no end. The Lord Jesus said in John 17 and verse 3, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Now eternal life is not merely endless; it's a life filled with the love and the fellowship of God. Psalm 16 and verse 11 promises, that "You will make known to me the path of life; And in Your presence is the fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." Oh, it's God, it's God Himself that makes heaven so sweet and so beautiful! When someone says imagine there's no heaven, I ask why? Because we have a life in Christ, heaven, heaven is our hope, heaven is our joy, and heaven is our goal! I don't want one minute of my life here on earth to be outside the love of God. Why would I forfeit my life in Christ and the hope of heaven for anything? I can't imagine doing that.

Now because of Christ I can have confidence in my eternal salvation. 1 John 5 verses 11 to 13 says, "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (He said) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life." Now we have this written promise from God in Scripture to give us assurance.

So why does this matter? It matters because you matter, it matters because your future matters. You are deciding in this life where you will spend eternity. Spend it with God, that's the only right choice to make. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we're grateful for Your love and for Your Word, that gives us eternal life through the blood of Jesus. Father help us to do Your will always. In His name we pray, Amen!

Take a look at the life that you're now living, the words you speak, the choices you make, and your behavior. Now some of you are living for the Lord and love Him with all your heart. Some are living with a half-hearted devotion with one hand grabbing at the world and the other hand holding to the Lord. Millions haven't been to church in years except for weddings and funerals. And some who used to call themselves Christians are now saying they have no faith, and many have never even known a life in Christ. My friend, are you dead spiritually, while you live physically? If you have no life in Christ, you're missing out on new life, abundant life, and eternal life, and the only life that can get you to heaven. You're cheating yourself out of a wonderful, loving relationship with the God who made you and gave you life and breath and all things. Why?

How are you treating God? If having a close loving relationship with God is eternal life, how are you getting along with God? Hebrews 6 verses 7 to 8 was written to some Christians whose hearts had grown dull. It says, "For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful for those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it (that is the land) bears thorns and thistles, it's worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned." Now how we treat God today, it's like that land, and it's going to lead to how we will end up in eternity. Please, please, don't lose your soul. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

To become a Christian, place your faith in the Lord Jesus and in the gospel, turn from sin in repentance, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. And when you're baptized in water, you're baptized into His death, His blood will cleanse you from sin and will give you

that newness of life (as we noted in Romans 6 verses 3 and 4). Now if you've fallen away from the cross, come home to the Lord and come home to His church.

We hope that today's study about eternal life has stirred you to consider your soul. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons at www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map of churches of Christ in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Well, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you to get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So that we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and please tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.