

"In Christ"

Many people talk about being "all in." Are you "all in" with Christ? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to examine what it means to be "in" Christ.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're searching the Scriptures for God's will. Because God has spoken in Scripture, we can know what is true. There are so many voices in this world, and not all voices tell the truth. If you want to know the truth about spiritual matters, go to the Word of God. God will never lie to you, He'll never lead you astray, and He'll never take back what He's spoken, He'll always keep His promises. You can trust God to tell you truth in His Word. And so read your Bible, study it, memorize it, and take it to heart. You'll never regret doing the right thing. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

There is a great gulf between being "in" Christ and "out" of Christ. And that difference will affect every aspect of our lives on earth and determine our eternal destiny. The Lord Jesus said in John 14 verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Now Jesus is the only door to the Father; there is no other. The apostle Peter said this about Jesus to the Jewish leaders in Acts 4 and verse 12. He said "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." We must go to Jesus if we want the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven.

The apostle Paul said in Colossians 1, 28 to 29, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." and he said, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy" he says "that he powerfully works within me." We could certainly say the same. And that's why this program exists. We want you to be mature in Christ and to live with Him forever.

Now if you want to study more, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and 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 call our telephone number, it's toll-free. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

Well the Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from Luke 13 verses 24 to 29.

Our reading today comes from Luke 13 verses 24 to 29. "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.

Those are the words of Jesus from the gospel according to Luke. Let's pray together. Father we pray that so live and so love You and serve You that we may eat one day at Your table and have fellowship with You forever and ever. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Of all the blessings I've ever received, nothing compares with the joy, the peace, the hope, and the love found in being in Christ Jesus my Lord. Being in Christ means more to me than anything else. I wouldn't want one day, one hour, one minute, or even one second to pass outside of Christ. I want to belong to Him, and I want Him one day to say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

There are many blessings that belong to the one who is in Christ. Ephesians 1 and verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." We have every spiritual blessing in Christ we could imagine. I think of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5: 22 to 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;" and he says, "against such things there is no law." Each of these things is a blessing in life. And we find them in an abundant life in Christ, free from that misery. And if we don't have it, oh, how miserable we are. Can you imagine how sad our lives would be without any love, without any joy, without peace, without any patience, without kindness, without goodness, without faithfulness, without gentleness, or without self-control?

In Christ we can find the best of life! Even while Paul was in prison, he found reasons to rejoice in the Lord! In Christ we find the secret of contentment. Philippians 4 verses 8 and 9 says, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

In Christ we have a sure hope and a sure promise. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1 verses 19 to 20, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That's why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." God doesn't tease or take back what He promises. You can count on God to keep His word!

In Christ you can count on God to love you. Even in the hardest of times, in Christ we never leave the love of God. The early church went through terrible persecution, and many lost their lives. Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." Then he said, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 8 verses 35 to 39. God's love does not change regardless of what happens to us on earth. In Christ, we have God's love ever with us.

Now in Christ, we have God's forgiveness. Ephesians 1 and verse 7 says that, "In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." We should never think of our forgiveness as cheap. It cost God His Son Jesus, and it cost Jesus a painful death on the cross. Jesus shed His blood for our sins so that we could be forgiven. Paul reminds us of what we were before Christ and what are in Christ in the book of Ephesians chapter 2. Paul told the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:12 to 13, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Then he said, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Because of the cross, we could be free from sin. Because of

the cross we can come close to God. Ephesians 2:19 describes what forgiveness through the blood of Christ does, it says "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens," no, "but you are now fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21, "For our sake he made Him", that is Christ, "to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him" that is in Christ, "we might become the righteousness of God."

The blood of Jesus has delivered us and brought us in the kingdom of God. Colossians 1 verses 13 and 14 says, that "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." When we're in Christ, we're in the church, the kingdom of God. When we're in Christ, we're no longer following darkness and sin but we're following righteousness.

Sin brings spiritual death and separation from God, but Christ brings redemption and grace. Ephesians 2 verses 4 to 7 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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, so that in the coming ages He" that is Christ, "might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Being in Christ means I'm saved by grace; it means I'm raised up with Christ and I'll live with Him in heaven. In Christ I'll enjoy all the immeasurable riches of God's grace and kindness in the ages to come! I tell you that promise alone makes me want to serve Christ all my life!

In Christ, God doesn't look at you like He once did. He doesn't see the old person who was lost in sin and had no hope. No, God now sees the new person who has been forgiven and transformed into the likeness of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." A new creature. "The old has passed away; behold, all things have become new." In Christ, I'm no longer what I used to be. God has caused me to be reborn with a new kind of life. Romans 6 and verse 4 says, that "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." In Christ, we don't think or act as we did before that time we became Christians.

You see, in Christ we have presented ourselves to the Lord as servants of righteousness. And we have stopped the sin and started living holy and loving lives. Ephesians 2 and verse 10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Now instead of living selfish lives, we now give of ourselves to the service of God and to the blessing of others. We've been created in Christ for good works.

The apostle Paul explains in Ephesians 4:17 to 24, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds." He said, "They're darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

As Christians we're not perfect, no, but as time passes we learn to put away the old sinful habits and to start new and godly habits. We've left the old ways to be like Christ. Ephesians 4: 25 to 29 instructs us, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his

neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." The new man can no longer think, talk, or act like he once did. He is indeed a new creature!

The new Christian must also treat other people differently than he once did. He can no longer let his selfish pride get in the way of loving others. Ephesians 4 verses 31 to 32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Because God has forgiven us, Christians forgive one another, love their enemies, and show compassion. To practice forgiveness is no small matter in Christ. One of the real differences between Christianity and many other religions is the ability to forgive. The inability to forgive has caused multiple wars and acts of violence, even in today's world.

For this and many other reasons, Paul could say in Philippians 3 verses 7 to 9, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith." Oh, this, my friend, is why being in Christ matters!

Are you in Christ or on the outside? Will God's favor and love be yours because you belong to Him? The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:24 to 27, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But He'll say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'" Some will miss living with God forever, because they didn't believe in Christ, or they wouldn't repent of their sins, or they wouldn't obey God's instructions found in the Bible. My friend don't be shut out; come to the Lord. Let's pray together. Oh Father we pray that we may all want to serve You and to follow Your son Jesus and to do His will. Father help us each day to love You and to love others and to love what is right. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Even though the church in Laodicea was lukewarm and so distasteful that Jesus wanted to spit it out of His mouth, He still loved the people. And He urged them to repent and said in Revelation 3 and verse 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." Now even when we shut God out, He's knocking on our door, wanting back in our lives, and wanting to have a right relationship with us. God wants us to be with Him forever.

May I ask you, "Do you have a close loving relationship with God? Are you right with God?" The only way to God is through Christ Jesus our Lord. So if you wish to be right with God, you must be "in" Christ! You must be asking then how can we get into Christ. Well the Scriptures, of course, give us the answer. Some folks will tell you that we believe into Christ; and others will say well we pray a little prayer into Christ; but the Bible doesn't teach these things.

God has told us how we get into Christ. Romans 6 and verse 3 says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" Again, Galatians 3 verses 26 to 27 says, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." We come into Christ when by faith and repentance we're baptized into Christ. We put on Christ and become God's child in baptism, and not before and not until!

I hope you will become a Christian and be "in" Christ today. That's where your hope, promise, and eternal life are. You cannot find them anywhere else. Come to Christ today!

And we hope today's study about being in Christ has stirred you to look at yourself. Think about what God says. And if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then 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 call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime, actually, on YouTube! So we ask that you subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you call us don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

So we ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. And 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 keep searching God's Word with us and 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.