

"Being With Christ"

Being with Christ is so much better than being without Him. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring the value and joy of having a positive relationship with Christ.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We make it our aim to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We know the way to love the Lord is by knowing and by doing what He instructs us to do. We have the obligation of listening to Jesus, if we wish to know and show our love for Him. The more we study His words, the more we'll know what He desires from us. We want to be with Him in this life so that we may spend an eternity with Him in the ages to come. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The Lord Jesus said in John 12:24 to 26, "Truly, truly, I say to you, (that) unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

I tell you if we wish to be with Jesus, we must give up the idea of doing everything "my way" and turn our hearts to following Him and doing things His way. John 6 tells of some disciples who withdrew from Him and were not walking with Him anymore. When He asked the twelve if they would leave, Peter said in John 6:68 to 69, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

We offer this study on being with Christ free! If you'd like a printed copy 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 can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from John 14:1 to 3, and examine all the blessings and responsibilities of what it means to be with Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from John chapter 14 verses 1 to 3. And in that passage Jesus is giving a promise to His disciples on the night before He was to die the next day.

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Oh what a wonderful promise to be with Jesus. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we can have a place, a dwelling place with You in heaven one day. We're thankful that we can be with Jesus and Father we pray that He will always be with us and help us to love Him and serve Him with all our hearts and soul and mind and strength. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Being with Jesus is, of course, an act of faith. Jesus lived on earth many, many, years ago, but He is eternal. He is alive in heaven and able to be close to those who love and follow Him. He knows us and He knows all about us. He wants us to draw close to Him and serve Him. He wants us to be by His side at all times. Just as Jesus walked among His churches in the book of Revelation, so Jesus still knows all about His people today. He knows when we love Him and He knows when we fail to love Him. He

knows our hearts and sees our behavior. He wants us close to Him, but we must want to follow and serve Him.

Following Him takes faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Following Jesus takes a change of heart a change of ways when it comes to sin. We must repent. The Lord still said Luke 13:3, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Following Him also means confessing Him. The Lord said in Matthew 10:32 to 33, "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." You know loving Him means that we'll confess Him in the presence of others.

We won't, fully be with Christ until we are baptized into Christ. Romans 6 and verse 3 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" When we're baptized into His death, we're crucified with Christ. Romans 6:6 to 7 says, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

Now in baptism we're buried and raised with Christ. Romans 6 and verse 4 says, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." When we're baptized into Christ we're clothed with Christ. Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Romans 6 and verse 5 reminds us, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, (that is we were baptized) we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." You see baptism unites us with Christ and gives us newness of life. And we grow together with Christ. Colossians 2:12 to 13 says, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions." You see baptism is when God makes us alive together with Christ and God forgives our sins.

Now if we are in Christ, we must consider how we live. Colossians 3:1 to 4 says, 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. And when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who is our live. We must look to what is ahead in heaven, not what is here on earth. Our lives are hidden with Christ in God.

And we're fellow heirs with Christ. Romans 8:16 to 18 says that, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." One day we will live forever with Christ in heaven as heirs with Christ.

Now the Lord promised in John 14:2 to 3 that, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Now the Lord Jesus wants to spend eternity with us. He wants to dwell with us in this life and in the life to come. The Lord said in John 14:23 that, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love

him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." If you want the Father and the Lord Jesus to make their home with you, you must love them enough to keep their word.

1 Peter 1:3 to 5 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (you) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Ah, heaven is truly a wonderful place, where God dwells. It has no disease or death. Nothing will cause it to perish, or to be defiled, or to fade away. It's the perfect place of peace and love.

Ephesians 2:19 to 21 says that "when we are in and with Christ, we are in His family and a temple." Paul wrote, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, (His family) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord." Folks, Christians don't need a temple building in Jerusalem, no; we Christians in the church, in His church are ourselves the holy temple in the Lord. Wherever the people of God live, they are His temple. By the way, the word for temple here refers to the most holy place. The church, the people, is the most holy place today.

The apostle Peter makes it even clearer that we Christians are priests in His temple today. 1 Peter 2 and verse 5 says to us, "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Now he emphasizes our place in verses 9 and 10, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people (the people of God); once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

I tell you, Christians have hope. One day they will depart and be with Christ. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:6 to 8, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." When we pass from this life, we will go to "be at home with the Lord."

Romans 14:7 to 9 reminds us, "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." I tell you if we remain faithful, we'll never stop belonging to the Lord.

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21 to 23, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that (being with Christ) is very much better."

Now when Jesus comes again our bodies will be changed, so that we will be like Him. Yes like Him. Philippians 3:20 to 21 remind us, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform (that is change) the body of our humble state (that is the body we have right now. He'll do it) into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." I tell you this, this lowly, earthly body that you possess now was not made to survive forever. We can live on the earth but we're going to one day

going to die. And when Jesus comes again and He raises you and me from the dead, one of the things He's going to do is transform your body to become like the body of His glory.

1 Corinthians 15:50 to 54 says, "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (that is this body that's perishable) inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; (that) we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal (a mortal is something that can die) must put on immortality (something that cannot die). But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." And we have that in Jesus Christ.

Yes, with Christ, we can live eternally. And death is no longer a master over us. Look at Romans 6 verses 8 to 11 which says, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him." Now when we are made alive with Christ in the resurrection, we will never die again. We will live eternally in heaven with the Lord. Romans 8 and verse 11 says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, (then) He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Now in heaven, we'll be seated with Christ. Oh I love this idea. Ephesians 2 verses 4 to 7 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (and then he says by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, (not only did He raise us up but) and seated us with Him in the heavenly places (seated us with Him in the heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." I look forward to God's promise.

Wouldn't you hate to miss out on God's blessing of being with Christ in this life and in the ages to come? If you miss being with Christ in this life, you will have lost everything in the ages to come. That's why we all need to come to Christ. To come to the Lord! To love Him, to serve Him, to be close to Him. To care about what He cares about and to serve Him every way that we can. To take His word seriously. Loving Christ means keeping His word. Do you keep His word? Do you love Him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your love and we're thankful for the day. We pray that we may always serve You and love You from our hearts. That we would keep Your word so that we may live with You forever. In Jesus name, Amen.

Colossians 2:20 to 23 says, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? (Why?) These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but (they) are of no value against fleshly indulgence."

Much of religion today comes from human traditions and people's imaginations rather than the Word of God. If we have died with Christ, let's recognize Jesus as Lord and follow His teaching found in the New Testament. Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus alone is the One who has the words of eternal life. God proclaimed from heaven about Jesus on the mountain in Matthew 17:5, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

Since the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all the truth in the first century, we don't need church traditions or people's imaginations. To know God's will, we must go to Scripture given to us in the first century. The Scriptures teach the need to believe and obey the Lord by repenting of our sins, confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and by being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Acts 2:38 and 22:16 teach that we're forgiven and washed of our sins when we're baptized into Christ. Baptism into Christ and into His death is an immersion in water of a person old enough to believe and to repent. That's when His blood causes our forgiveness and gives us newness of life according to Romans 6:3 to 7.

Well we hope that today's study on the blessings and responsibilities of being with Christ has encouraged you. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send 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 there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can see us on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us. Tell a friend about this program. And as always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.