

# In Christ

by Keith Malcomson

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*To be in Christ means to be in a vital experience of dwelling in Him, enjoying a reality of being in Him, and having all things flow from it.*

**Scripture:** John 15:16, Romans 5:14, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:26

**Topics:** "Union With Christ", "Justification By Faith"

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## Description

Keith Malcomson emphasizes the profound significance of being 'in Christ,' highlighting that all blessings, justification, and righteousness come from being in Him. He contrasts being 'in Adam' with being 'in Christ,' illustrating how our state of condemnation and death in Adam is transformed into life and righteousness in Christ. Malcomson stresses that being in Christ is not just a theological concept but a miraculous act of God at the new birth, resulting in a changed life marked by a new heart and spirit.

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## Transcript

One of the most remarkable statements of the Bible is the term "in Christ." Never has so much been said, inferred and contained in so brief a statement as this. While many emphasise the "imitation" of Christ the Bible emphasises the reality of being in, or dwelling in, or abiding in, Christ out of which all other things flow--even our obedience. All efforts to imitate Christ would be utterly futile if we were not enjoying a vital experience of dwelling in Him.

In Christ or in Adam?

Every man or woman is either in Adam or in Christ: I Cor.5:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Every one of us was a child of Adam's race. It was by the act of Adam's sin that many were made sinners, by his offence that many are dead, and because of that one act death has reigned over the whole race and judgement has come upon all to condemnation (Rom.5:14-19). In our natural family, Adam was the head or representative for us all. If he had walked perfect we would have been blessed but when as our representative and our family head he sinned then all fell. Our blessing depended upon him. To be in Adam is to be in a state of condemnation, guilt, sin and death. This is every man's experience outside of Christ no matter how religious they are. Adam's religious nature and blood runs in their veins and they stand under a broken covenant of works.

But we also find a wonderful parallel truth in Romans that all those in Christ receive the free gift of justification and righteousness and so reign in life through God's grace. Christ is now their head and

representative. His obedience is the basis of their every blessing, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom.5:14-19). Their righteousness depends upon His obedience, not theirs. In the Book of Romans we read that there are two pathways to perfect righteousness before God, either keep the whole law perfectly without a shadow of fault, or put faith in Christ's provision and His perfect righteousness. So we see that to make Christ your only representative, to trust in Him alone, and to put all confidence and hope in Him as the only means of salvation puts you in Him as the benefactor of all His wonderful provisions.

Gal.3:26-27, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The experience of becoming a child of God comes through faith in Christ. Saving faith puts you in Christ and makes you a child of God. Faith in Christ baptizes you into Christ. Your whole life is immersed, lost sight of, and covered by the life of Christ. To be baptized into Christ is to literally put on Christ and to be adorned in the fullness of His provision. Whoever has the Son has everything.

To be placed in Christ is accomplished and performed at the new birth. No man gets into Christ without a miraculous inward change of the heart. It is not a mere intellectual decision or the saying of a prayer that puts you in Christ. Neither is it merely a theological concept, a truth to be reckoned, or a mystical legal concept. It is a miraculous act of God. We are told in I Cor.1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" Only by the miraculous work of God do we find ourselves in Christ and heirs of all things as we repentant and believe.

But be assured the great outward mark of being in Christ is a changed life. II Cor.5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." To be in Christ means you are a new person, a changed person. Your old life is gone. An inward change has been wrought in the heart. In Christ you have a new heart, a new spirit, a new name, a new start and you step out into a new life. If your life does not change then you are not in Christ you are still in Adam, in your sin and still under judgement and condemnation.

### Every Blessing in Christ

The expression "in Christ" occurs 174 times in the New Testament. Paul speaks 21 times in the first two chapters of Ephesians concerning what is "in Christ." We are told that we are blessed in Christ, chosen in Him, predestinated, adopted, accepted, redeemed and forgiven. In Him we have obtained an inheritance, been called, and in Him we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. This vision of provision is expanded, expounded and proclaimed throughout the New Testament scriptures. We are justified, sanctified and loved in Christ. We are one body in Christ, helpers in Christ, we triumph in Christ, have liberty in Christ, are perfect in Christ, we fall asleep in Christ (die), and we receive the promise of eternal life in Christ.

Christ is the treasure-house of God the Father. He has placed every spiritual blessing in His Son which can only be experienced and enjoyed in His son. To be found in Him, living in Him, dwelling in Him and abiding in Him is the most glorious and wonderful of places. But many profess that they are in Christ and that they are enjoying all these blessing yet their walk and talk does not line up with the Word of God. They want all the blessing of Christ but do not walk as Christ. They plead justification but shun, ignore and neglect sanctification. They want the promise of blessing but they reject the command unto obedience. They say they are blessed in Christ but one look at their lives reveals that they wilfully live daily in Adam.

### Abiding in Christ

Rom.8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." A man in Christ walking after the flesh is a contradiction. No true believer in Christ can ever be happy to walk in the flesh. To walk in the flesh is to walk in Adam. Being in Christ must lead to a walk in Christ. Gal.5:25, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Those in Christ are marked by a walk in the Spirit. The greatest of blessings in Christ is a walk in the Spirit; to be led by Him, in step with Him, with an utter reliance upon His enabling power.

In John 15 Christ gives the parable of the vine: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (v1). This was part of Christ's last message to His disciples before His crucifixion. Eleven disciples sat with Him listening closely. One had already left the room--Judas--to go and betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. The word "abide" is used eleven times in the first eleven verses of this chapter: "If ye abide in me...abide in my love" (v4, 7 v10, etc). This word "abide" means to remain, dwell, continue, tarry and endure. It refers to staying in a certain place and not moving out of it. It means to be kept continually in a certain set place. Christ is teaching here about a certain spiritual aspect of a believer's present state and condition. To abide in Christ is to live your in Him.

He states clearly that we are the branches (v1). A branch is simply a bit of wood, brought forth by the vine with the purpose of bearing fruit. The branch is yielded and given over to the task of bearing fruit. The vine provides the sap. Life and strength flow into the branch from the vine. The branch waits, rests, draws, receives then bears fruit. It cannot do this of itself. It is utterly reliant and dependent moment by moment upon its life source in the vine. The branches have nothing and are nothing apart from what the vine provides. All of the life, strength, beauty, buds, blossoms and fruit of the branches have their source in the vine. The sap from the vine is the secret of the life in the branch.

This speaks of a life of entire dependence upon Christ. Spiritual union and communion with Christ is the secret of all life and fruitfulness in the Christian's life. Their life, power and strength come from Him. A Christian can only stand, walk and run because they are in Christ. It is not weak Christians who stumble and falter. It is those who are strong in themselves.

Christ speaks of certain branches which He "...taketh away...cast forth...withered...burned" (v2, 6). These branches appeared to be joined to the vine, to the source of life and yet they produced no fruit. This actually reveals that they were not abiding in the vine though they gave the appearance that they were. The union was outward not inward. They were not drawing from the life of the vine. Judas was such a branch. The only real evidence of our union with Christ is spiritual fruit. No fruit reveals that we have no real union with Christ. It is impossible to be joined to Christ yet not produce fruit. The consequence of not abiding in Christ is a casting forth to be burnt.

But He finishes His parable with one last lesson concerning the fruit bearing branches: "he purgeth it" (v2). He prunes it, or cleans it up, by cutting it back. The natural tendency with the branches on the vine is to run wild and hinder the growth of its own fruit. So the pruner annually cuts off the long shoots from the previous year. The branches which can be eight to ten feet long are cut right back to the stem. Only one or two inches are left. The pruning knife that cleans us up is the Word of God (v3). A genuine fruit-bearing believer under the dealings of God's Word will be cut right back at regular intervals just like in the parable in order that they might bear more fruit in the following season. The Word of God may cut down or back our activity, habits, abilities, wisdom, confidence, strength and pride in order to allow genuine spiritual fruit and activity to grow.

The word "fruit" occurs eight times in this chapter: "...fruit...more fruit...much fruit" (v2, 5, 8). All of the Lord's dealings in our lives will bring us forth with more fruit than previously even if at times we go through a pruning season which seems to leave us with nothing. The purpose in this is to reveal that Christ alone is everything to our life and that the fruit is alone the product of such abiding and communion in Christ. At all times we must abandon ourselves to a life in Christ alone. To abide in Him, cling to Him, dwell in Him, live in Him, walk in Him, trust in Him, rely upon Him and lean on Him is the real Christian life.

Jn.15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:"

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