

Finding New Life "IN CHRIST"

**A Work-text
for adult
Bible students**

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NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

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LESSON 1

Introduction

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:3-4).

The phrase "in Christ" is exceedingly common in the writings of Paul. Even though it is found in passages of critical theological importance, Paul never explains its exact meaning. It would seem, then, that we, his readers, must understand the phrase from the context in which it is found. Of this we can be certain; it is essential that we be "in Christ." It is "in Him" that the benefits of the Christian faith are made available.

Read each of the following passages and write the benefit granted to the one who is "in Christ."

- Rom. 6:23 _____

Rom. 8:1 _____

Rom. 12:5 _____

1 Cor. 5:22 _____

2 Cor. 5:17 _____

Eph. 2:10 _____

1 Thess. 4:16 _____

If it is "in Christ" that believers find their justification and their righteous; if it is "in Christ" that they are made alive, that they become new creatures, and are united with other believers; if it is "in Christ" that they receive a heavenward call; then a clear understanding of the phrase is crucial.

It might be noted that the "in Christ" construction, though common in the writings of Paul, is not common in the rest of the New Testament. It is never used in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and only rarely elsewhere (See 1 Pet. 3:16, 5:10, 5:14; 1 Jn. 2:5-6; Rev. 14:13).

Paul often writes "in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord," or simply "in him" in situations that parallel his use of "in Christ." There is no difference in the way that these phrases are used. They are often interchanged within single verses (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:15 and Gal. 2:16) or are found in combination (e.g., Rom 8:39 and 2 Thess. 3:12). The key to understanding Paul's use of "in Christ" does not lie in our understanding of the titles or names for the Lord Jesus Christ. Our understanding must not center on the object of the preposition, but on the preposition "in" itself.

Even though it may be a bit technical, it is important to look at the way that the little word "in" is used in the New Testament. It usually expresses a spatial concept of some sort; that is to say, it is used to define the place or position of something. The word "in," however, can also express instrumentality or means. When this is the case, most English Bibles use "by" or "through" to translate the Greek word "in" (en). Examples can be found in 1 Cor. 7:14, (where "by" is used in the KJV and "through" is used in the NIV), and Heb. 11:18, (where "in" is used in the KJV but "through" is used in the NIV). Sometimes both ideas are present. Mk. 1:2 says, "It is written in Isaiah the prophet . . ." "In Isaiah" clearly means, "in the book written by Isaiah." In this case, "in" has the spatial sense of "within." At the same time, though, it is understood that what is written there has come to us "by means of" or "through" Isaiah.

It would seem that, if Paul wished to express a complex idea through the "in Christ" construction, that he would have explained himself. Since he did not, I believe that we should draw the most obvious understanding. The simple fact is, where there is an "in" there must be a corresponding "out." If it is possible to be "in Christ," then it is equally possible to be "outside of Christ." When Paul writes, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), does he not also imply that anyone outside of Christ remains part of the old creation? **The preposition "in," then, serves as an indicator of separation or exclusivity.** This idea, I believe, is substantiated in Paul's use of the "in Christ" formula, and similar constructions, to draw contrasts and to define opposites.

Read the following examples where Paul uses the "in Christ" formula in this manner:

Eph. 2:12-13 -- An individual is either "in Christ" or "in the world "

Rom. 8:9 KJV -- One is either "in the Spirit" or "in the flesh"

1 Cor. 15:22 -- A person is either "in Christ" or "in Adam"

Clearly one can no more be in Christ and in the world than one can be both inside and, at the same time, outside of a building. An individual is no more able to be both in the Spirit and in the flesh than he is able to be both in Boston and in Cleveland. These examples poorly illustrate the idea. However, the concept is one of inclusion or exclusion with no middle ground.

**By using the preposition "in" Paul has drawn a clear line;
a line with cosmic implications!**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Why is it essential to be in Christ?
- 2) What happens to those who are outside of Christ?
- 3) How is one's position in Christ secured?
- 4) Can one be a "part-time" Christian? Why or why not?

NOTES:

LESSON 2

Paul: his heritage and Christian experience

*"God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace,
was pleased to reveal his Son in me
so that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal. 1:15-16 NIV).*

PAUL'S JEWISH HERITAGE

It was Paul's Judaism that provided the basis for who he was and what he did before his life-changing trip to Damascus. In spite of his Roman citizenship and in spite of the Hellenistic culture in which he lived, Paul viewed himself as a Jew, and above that, as a Pharisee! Prior to his conversion, the Law was the ruling principle of his life. **Read Acts 22:3-5; Phil. 3:4-6.** How does Paul describe himself in these passages? _____

Read Gal. 1:14. What was the focus of Paul's zeal? _____ Paul was never so much a hater of Christians as he was a champion of his Jewish heritage.

In addition to Paul's zeal for the Law, it is important to recognize his thorough knowledge and use of the Old Testament Scripture. In the letter to the Romans alone we find sixty-two different Old Testament quotes. There are thirty more quotes in his correspondence with the Corinthian church. This is significant in that it clearly demonstrates the authority that Paul attributed to Scripture.

How much did Paul's understanding of the Scripture contribute to his Christology and his understanding of Jesus as Messiah? Is it the "anointed one" of the Old Testament who becomes Paul's "Christ"? The evidence would indicate that this is the case. **Read Acts 9:20, 22.** What did Paul begin to do immediately after his conversion? _____

THE INFLUENCE OF HELLINISM

Hellenism (i.e., Greek culture) in the era of Paul cannot be simply described. It was a collage of religious and philosophical ideologies, all competing for the attention and devotion of men. In Paul's case, the response to Hellenization was resistance and rejection, rather than the usual conformity. His

Jewish heritage outweighed his Hellenistic heritage as an influence. There was in that age, as there has been through their long history, a resistance in the Jewish community to absorption by other cultures. Paul seemed to exist as part of a culture within a culture, tenaciously clinging to his own Jewishness in the world of the Greeks.

While Paul's experience with Greek and Roman culture had little influence on his theology, it had great impact on his ministry. Even though he was sent to proclaim a new message of hope "in Christ Jesus," he already knew the people, the language and the territory!

THE DAMASCUS ROAD EXPERIENCE

Read Acts 9, 22, 26; Gal. 1:15-16, Eph. 3:2-3. Why was Paul on the road that day? _____

_____ What happened to Paul? _____

Paul was a "religious" man before and after his encounter with the Lord. What was the difference in his faith? (Compare Php. 3:4-6 and Rom. 3:20-22).

The fact of Paul's conversion is well attested in the New Testament. The question is not so much what happened, but how it occurred. What could have changed Saul, the persecutor of believers, into Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles? What forces came together to produce such radical changes, not only in doctrine, but in devotion; not only in thought, but in action?

Paul was not endued with new information concerning the person of Jesus on the road that day. He already knew the particulars of the gospel message. The significance of the experience on the Damascus road lies in its function as a pivot between skepticism and faith for Paul.

All that Paul knew about Messiah and his coming kingdom; all that Paul had heard of the claims about Jesus (i.e., his works, his teaching, his death, his resurrection); all that Paul had seen and heard about the believers within the early Church (the miracles worked through the man Peter, the dignity in the dying face of Stephen); all this, in a moment, crystallized into one unshakable truth: JESUS IS THE CHRIST! This one great truth is not the whole of Paul's theology, but it is the foundation, the cornerstone if you will, upon which it is built.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) What qualifications did Paul have to be the “apostle to the Gentiles?”
- 2) How did the Damascus Road experience change Paul’s religion?
- 3) Are there Damascus Road-like conversions today? Explain why you think so or think not.

NOTES:

LESSON 3

"In Christ" or "In Adam"

*"Since death came through a man,
the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.
For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."
(1 Cor. 15:21-22 NIV).*

Read 1 Cor. 15:12-19. This passage deals with the reality of the bodily resurrection. It would seem that there were those among the Corinthian church that, while accepting the gospel – which centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus – still did not look toward a physical resurrection of believers. What is the logical conclusion to which Paul draws his readers? (vv. 17-18) _____

Read 1 Cor. 15:20. Praise the Lord! Paul doesn't leave us with that incorrect conclusion. He then draws a picture of the glorious future for those who are "in Christ." Jesus is presented as the "firstfruits" of those who have fallen asleep. This is to say that Jesus' resurrection is but the first of many yet to come. He is, as it were, a representative of the whole harvest. Even as death entered the world through a representative, so has resurrection entered the world. **Read Ex. 23:16; 2 Chron. 31:1-5; Prov. 3:9-10.** What is meant by the term "firstfruit"? _____

_____ In what way is Christ the "firstfruit from the dead"? **Read and consider 1 Cor. 15:52-54; 1 Thess. 4:16-18; Matt. 24:30-31.** _____

Read 1 Cor. 15:21-23. Here we see the clear division of humanity into those who are "in Adam" and those who are "in Christ." All who are "in Adam" are dying. All who are "in Christ" will be made alive. The connection between being "in Christ" in vs. 22 and "those who are Christ's" in vs. 23 should not be missed. The being "made alive" of vs. 22 is for those who are identified with Him as opposed to those whose identity remains "in Adam." As to the timing, Christ is first and at his coming, those who are Christ's.

Read 1 Cor. 15:35-50. Paul's discussion of the resurrection body yields even more light concerning the differences between the future those "in Adam" and those "in Christ." While Paul uses examples of different kinds of bodies (men, birds, fish, sun, moon, stars) to illustrate his point, the focus of his argument is on the "natural body," which is destined for death, and the "spiritual body," which is fashioned for life (vs. 44). The natural body is sown in corruption,

dishonor, and weakness. The spiritual body is raised in incorruption, glory, and power.

- **The first Adam received life but, through *disobedience*, instituted the pattern for death.**
- **The last Adam, Christ, received death, but because of His *obedience*, instituted the pattern of life.**

Read Rom. 5:17-19. What did Adam's trespass bring about? _____
_____ What did Christ's righteousness make possible? _____

The following chart shows the contrast drawn here between Adam, the "earthly man" and Christ, the "man from heaven."

ADAM	CHRIST
Represents a dying race	Represents a living race
Sown in corruption	Raised in incorruption
Sown in dishonor	Raised in glory
Sown in weakness	Raised in power
Earthly	Heavenly
Given live	Life-giver

In Paul's view, Adam and Jesus were clearly more than men. He sees them as representatives of two different branches of humanity; one branch destined for death and the other for life. Adam is the representative of that branch of humanity ruled by sin disobedience and self-exaltation. Christ, on the other hand, represents that branch of humanity ruled by righteous obedience and humility.

It is made clear, however, in Rom. 5:12, that all men, by nature, belong to the race of Adam. Through Adam came sin, through sin death, and all men are sinners. How then does one of Adam's race establish his place "In Christ"? And if Adam's sin brought death for *all* does Jesus' righteous obedience bring life to *all*? Potentially, the answer is yes. Paul points out two distinctions, though, between the effects of Adam's trespass and the results of Christ's obedience.

The first is an obvious contrast. Sin and death became the ruling principle in the world because of man's *self-will* which resulted in *condemnation*. The gift of life, on the other hand, has its basis in God's *grace* and resulted in *justification* (vv. 15-16). Men are "in Adam" because of sin; men are "in Christ" because of grace. The causes and the effects are in opposition to one another. They are not equivalent opposites, however, because *grace overcomes sin*.

The second distinction is less obvious but equally significant. Verse 17 reiterates that, because of the trespass of the *one*, death reigned over *all*. In

contrast, the reign of life is available to “the *ones receiving*” the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness through Christ. A man is “in Adam” by *nature* while a man is “in Christ” only by *receiving* His gracious gift.

To sum up: each and every person has but one destiny; that which is found “in Adam” or that which is found “in Christ.” There is not alternative and no middle ground.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) How are the gifts of God received? **Consider Rom. 3:21-22; Eph. 2:8; Php. 3:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5.**
- 2) Why is Christ called the “second Adam”? In what ways are Adam and Christ similar?
- 3) Why is the “second Adam” superior to the first?

NOTES:

LESSON 4

"In the Spirit" or "In the Flesh"

"Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the flesh but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:8-9).

The Christian life might seem to some to be like that of a boy with a new bike under his Christmas tree. He knows the bike is his but, in spite of that knowledge, he is still walking. What he has is a promise that is, in his own experience, yet to be fulfilled. Is the resurrection life a gift like the bike--ours now, but yet to be unwrapped and put to use--or is some aspect of the resurrection life manifested in the life of the believer this side of the grave? What benefits does being "in Christ" have in the here and now? The answer is to be found in the relationship between being "in Christ" and being "in the Spirit".

Read Rom. 8:9. What is the apparent relationship between those who are "in Christ" and those who have the "Spirit of Christ"? _____

THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK

THE SPIRIT IS A DEPOSIT GUARANTEEING OUR INHERITANCE

Read Eph. 1:13b-14 and Rom. 8:11. Though we do not have the experience of resurrection in the here and now, God has placed within those who are "in Christ" the power of resurrection in the person of His Spirit.

THE SPIRIT ENABLES US TO OVERCOME SIN

Read Rom. 8:1, 5-9. The Spirit of Christ has provided a new life principle; the law of the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death.

Paul draws a contrast, in Rom. 8:5-9, between the one who is "in the Spirit" and the one who is "in the flesh," (i.e., ruled by this sinful nature). What results does the fleshly existence yield? _____

_____ What results does life in the Spirit yield? _____

So contrary to one another are "flesh" and "spirit" that they must be seen as mutually exclusive.

No Christian can be "in the flesh" and every Christian must be "in the Spirit"!! (Rom. 8:9).

Read each of the following passages and list the works of the Holy Spirit:

- Jn. 15:26 _____
- Jn. 16:8 _____
- Jn. 3:5 _____
- Acts 1:8 _____
- Acts 9:30 _____
- Rom. 8:14-16 _____
- Rom. 8:26 _____
- Rom. 14:17 _____
- Rom. 15:13 _____
- Gal. 5:22 _____
- Heb. 6:4-6 _____
- Jude 1:20-21 _____

CHRIST AND HIS SPIRIT

How close is the connection between Christ and the Spirit? Are they simply two terms for the same thing? This much we have established: anyone who is "in Christ" must, at the same time, be "in the Spirit." While we accept that truth, we must be careful that we don't make Christ and Spirit so closely connected that they become identical.

The most basic confession of the Christian faith, "Jesus is Lord" comes to mind. If Jesus is Lord, how are we to understand 2 Cor. 3:17-18 where Paul writes, "Now the Lord is the Spirit . . ." (NIV)? **Read Eph. 3:16-17.** A possible answer is that the lordship of Jesus Christ is mediated to the man "in Christ" through the indwelling Spirit. It is through the Spirit's activity in one's life that Christ's redemptive presence is made known.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Read and discuss 1 Cor. 2:14, 12:3; 1 Jn. 4:2-3; Jude 1:19. How important is it for the church to make a distinction between those who are "in the Spirit" from those who are "in the flesh"?
- 2) Is there a difference between having the Spirit and yielding to the Spirit?

LESSON 5

"In Him" or "In the World"

"Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ"
(Eph. 2:12-13).

The community of all individuals who are "in Christ" is called the church. Read 1 Cor. 1:2. How does Paul describe the Corinthians in this verse?

_____ The Greek word for church, is a compound word formed from two shorter words, one meaning "out of" and the other "to call."

The church consists of those persons who have been called out of the world and into a relationship with Christ and one another.

THE WORLD

The world and everything in it is God's creation. Sin, however, has brought corruption into creation. That which was pure and good in God's sight has become impure and unrighteous. God still loves His creation and His creatures. Read the following passages and write down what each teaches us about this present world.

Jn. 3:16-18

Jn. 12:46

Jn. 14:17

1 Cor. 2:12

1 Tim. 1:15

James 4:4

1 Jn. 2:15-17

1 Jn. 5:5

THE CHURCH

Read Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:23. What phrase does Paul use to describe the church in each of these verses? _____
How closely should we identify the Christian community--a community that might be either local or universal--with the person of Christ himself? The "body of Christ" should not be thought of as a body which constitutes Christ himself, but rather as that portion of humanity that *belongs to Christ* over against the rest of humanity that remains in and of the world. In Paul's words, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price." (1 Cor. 6:19b-20 NIV) this idea of ownership and belonging comes forth quite clearly.

Read Matt. 16:13-18. Following Peter's confession, Jesus said, "I will build My church." Here we see a very clear sense of the possessive. This particular assembly, apart from all other assemblies, is Christ's. There is an element of separation here, an element of exclusivity. Unlike a political assembly, a civic organization or a social gathering, the primary characteristic of the "church" is a belonging to Christ.

See 1 Cor. 5:12. Here again we find Paul writing about those "inside" the church over against those who are "outside." **Read Gal. 1:2-4; Eph. 2:19-22, 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9.** In these passages we can see the exclusivity of being "in Christ" reflected in association with the believing community. There is a clear distinction between those who have been set apart from the mundane, the evil, the darkness of this present age and those who remain in it.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Are there "worldly" Christians? Why or why not? (**Consider 1 Cor. 3:1-3 and 1 Jn. 2:15**).
- 2) In what ways does the church function as the "body of Christ"?
- 4) Does God love the world or hate the world?

NOTES:

LESSON 6

A Foretaste of Glory Divine

*"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our Lord"*

Rom. 6:23.

Read 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15. What do you think that Paul means by the phrase, "a new creation"? _____

_____ For Paul, to be "in Christ" is to have entered into a new reality. Believers are not only rescued from bondage to sin and death, they are transferred into the domain of light and life. **Read Col. 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Eph. 5:8; Jn 5:24.** The man who is "in Christ" is *already* a participant in the Messianic kingdom. Although the full expression of this existence awaits the consummation of the "age to come," the believer has already moved from death to life. **Consider 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16-17.**

Read Eph. 1:3-13. In this passage Paul lays out the eschatological position of the man who is "in Christ." Here we plainly see the spiritual benefits both from the heavenly and the earthly perspective.

Consider carefully vv. 3-4. "In Christ," we see, believers have been blessed with every spiritual blessing "in the heavenlies." **Compare Eph. 2:6.** What, according to this verse, is our position "in Christ"? _____

Paul refers to "a man" in 2 Cor. 12:2-4 who was taken up into paradise. It would seem that he is writing about himself. John was also called up to heaven (Rev. 4:1-2). Clearly, however, such manifestations are not the common experience of believers. It is reasonable, therefore, to understand the statement about blessing in the heavenlies as positional; while every spiritual blessing *is* ours "in Christ," we have yet to *experience* them all. **Read Col. 3:1-5.** Where is our life "hidden"? _____

Please understand, the fact that we have yet to experience these blessings does not make them any the less real. From God's point of view they are already ours. That we are seeing these truths from God's perspective is made even more clear in vs. 4 where Paul writes, "just as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world," a point of view that is certainly beyond the scope of man!

In vs. 7 Paul begins to deal with the aspects of spiritual blessing that are evidenced in the *experience* of the man who is "in Christ," but which have their complete fulfillment in that future age. The believer's blessings "in Him" are: redemption through his blood (vs. 7), being made heirs (vs. 11), sealing with the Holy Spirit (vs. 13).

Our redemption (vs. 7) is an accomplished fact in the present. Even though we still live in a sinful world, we are no longer bound by sin. **Read Col. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Matt. 26:28; Isa. 53:12.** How was our redemption secured? _____

An heir (vs. 11) is one who receives the benefits that another has earned due to the other person's death. There is no personal merit involved; inheritance is based on relationship. Is this not the way that believers receive spiritual benefits "in Christ"? **See Eph. 2:8.** Grace, not merit, is the grounds for blessing; our inheritance is based solely upon our relationship to the one who has died.

The final blessing provides the link between that which is and that which is to come. The Holy Spirit is a deposit that guarantees our future inheritance (vs. 13). At the same time, He is active in our lives here and now.

Summing up the relationship between Christ, Spirit, and believer we should first recall that one who is "in Christ" has been removed once and for all from the sphere of Adam. No longer can he be held captive by the "law of sin and death," for there is a new principle at work in his life, the "law of the Spirit." It is through the working of the Spirit that the presence and the lordship of Christ are mediated to the believer. All who are "in Christ" are likewise "in the Spirit." The Spirit is furthermore the believer's guarantee of his place in the coming age of redemption. In each of these blessings there remains an element of unfulfillment. Though the believer is set free from the bondage of the flesh, he yet awaits his spiritual body. Though every believer is sealed with the presence of the Holy Spirit, he yet awaits the full revelation of the presence of God. "Come quickly, Lord!"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) In what ways is the new life in Christ different from a life apart from Christ?
- 2) Read Rom. 10:10; 1 Cor. 1:18; Matt. 24:12-13. The Scripture says that we "are saved," that we are "being saved," and that we "shall be saved." How can all these be true at the same time?
- 3) Why is there a difference between our position in Christ and our Christian experience?

LESSON 7

Identified with Christ in Life

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Cor. 5:17

Read Php. 3:1-11. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi about the way he viewed his life before and after his conversion. Anything he had considered profit (i.e., to his credit with regard to God's righteous demands) in his former life appeared as loss when viewed from his new perspective. Even though his life had been radically changed, he had given up nothing of real value. He then goes on to say: *"I consider them rubbish, 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 is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith"* (3:8b-9 NIV).

Paul gives his view of righteousness, first as a man outside of Christ and then as a man "in Christ." What, from the worldly point of view, seemed righteous to Paul? _____

How does Paul describe those things when compared to having a relationship with Christ? _____

It is clear that, at best, Paul considered his former life a waste when compared to his new life "in Christ." More importantly though, Paul expresses a new understanding of righteousness. No longer is he depending on self-produced righteousness, but on the righteousness which is through faith in Christ.

Read Rom. 3:22 and Gal. 2:16. Is new life in Christ a thing that God gives away or is there a cost to be considered? Discuss and record your answer.

Looking further into Paul's writings, we see that, the only cost--the only thing one is required to give over--is striving. Why is this true? Because no

amount of effort is adequate to please God's righteous demands. The man who is "in Christ" does not--and can not--produce an acceptable life of his own. He must trust Christ's righteous provision. A wise person has made the following observation: "faith is not an alternative way of earning God's favor; it is an admission that I cannot earn God's favor!" All I can do is accept his free offer of forgiveness, grace and love. **Read Rom. 3:21-22.** Here Paul writes of a righteousness which is "from God" and yet "apart from the law." To whom does this righteousness come and how is it made available? _____

Read Rom. 5:19. What is the cause of man's sinful condition? _____
_____ What is the source of righteousness for believers?

When we think of Jesus' atoning acts we must not forget that before his death, his burial, his resurrection, and his ascension--before all of that--there was a life of perfect obedience. To identify with Christ is to participate in the life as well as the death, to partake of the fruit of Christ's obedience as well as the atoning benefit of His death.

Read Rom. 10:4; Isa., 53:5; Jer. 33:16; Eph. 2:8-9. Does God ease His righteous demands for the benefit of His people? _____ How are those demands met? _____

_____ One theologian teaches the "paradox of grace." He writes, "The God in whom Christians believe . . . is the One who gives us what he demands of us, provides the obedience that he requires."

Look up the word "justification" in a Bible dictionary and write the definition. _____

Read Rom. 3:28. How is a person justified before God? _____

***"Therefore, there is now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus" Rom. 8:1.***

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Does putting one's trust in Christ have any effect on what does or doesn't seem important in life? What changes and why does this change occur?
- 2) God requires his people to be "righteous." What does this word mean and how does a person become "righteous"? Consider whether righteousness is passive, active or both?
- 3) What is the role of faith in a persons justification?

LESSON 8

Identified with Christ in Death

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Rom. 6:11

Read Rom. 6:3-4. "Don't you know," Paul wrote, "that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" How do you understand Paul's meaning? _____

It is certain that a person does not die physically in the act of baptism. What does it mean, then, for one to be identified with Christ in his death? Perhaps the answer once again lies in the exclusivity of being "in Christ." To identify with Christ's death is to die to the old era, to leave all that is not "in Christ"--identification with Adam's race, bondage to sin and fleshly lusts, and allegiance to the world--behind.

Read Gal. 2:20. On what is the union between Christ and Paul based?

Does baptism have any validity apart from faith? Explain your answer. _____

There is a close connection between circumcision under the Old Covenant and baptism under the New Covenant. How do you understand the relationship between the two? _____

Read Col. 2:11-12. Paul draws a comparison between circumcision, baptism, and the putting off of the sinful nature (literally, "body of the flesh" or "body of sins"). The act of circumcision is a cutting away, a once and for all removal of a portion of the body. Once the cut is made, it can never be undone. This act served as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. **Read Deut. 30:6; Jer. 9:25-26; Rom. 2:29; Gal. 5:6.** God makes it clear that what he desires is a "circumcision of the heart." What is in view in Col. 2:11 is not the removal of a piece of flesh, but a removal of the whole "body of flesh."

The significance of baptism as a symbol increases when we recognize that the word used for water baptism is also used for baptism in the Spirit. In the

natural realm the identification is symbolic, but in the realm of the Spirit it is life-giving. **Read Acts 11:15-18; 1 Cor. 12:13; Titus 3:5b-7.** Who is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit? _____ Can you think of any way that the "circumcision of the heart" and being "baptized in the Spirit" might relate to one another? **Consider Jn. 3:6; Rom. 8:5, 13-14; Gal. 5:16.** _____

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Read and discuss Col. 3:5-10. How, if at all, do we participate in the death of "the old man"?
- 2) What is circumcision of the heart? Consider Ez. 11:19-20, 36:26; Jer. 31:33.
- 4) What does Paul mean when he talks about the "flesh"? Is there a difference between that which is fleshly and that which is worldly?

NOTES:

LESSON 9

Identified with Christ in His Resurrection

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,
set your hearts on things above,
where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Col. 3:1*

Read Rom. 6:5. According to this verse, our unity with Christ in death gives us what additional hope? _____

_____ You might wonder what it means for one to be identified with Christ in his resurrection? To identify with Christ's resurrection is to embrace all that is "in Christ": identification with Christ's race, a righteous Spirit-led life, and the hope of a future existence in the presence of God the Father. Evangelical theologian F.F. Bruce writes of those who have been raised with Christ:

If their death with Christ severed the links that bound them to the old world order, which was trying to impose its dominion on them again, their resurrection with Christ established new links--links with a new and heavenly order, with that spiritual kingdom in which Christ their Lord was sovereign, ruling from the place of supremacy to which He had been raised at God's right hand.

Read Rom. 6:12-14, 23, 8:10. We, as believers, have been promised eternal life. The resurrection of Jesus serves as a "down payment" on that promise and a tangible evidence of its truth. Does this mean that the man "in Christ," is free from physical death because he is identified with Christ who has already died in his behalf on the cross? _____

The body of the believer, though no longer in bondage to sin, still carries in it the effects of sin. Even though we have put our faith in Christ and have been made partakers of His righteousness, we are still sinners and must, eventually, submit to the wages of sin. The presence of the life-giving Spirit, however, is our guarantee that we are joined to the one who defeated death! Even from death we will be raised to live eternally with our Lord.

Our identification with the resurrected Christ opens the door to a completely new kind of life! There is a new principle at work now in the believer's life. To be identified with Christ in His resurrection is to start life again, not as a child of Adam's race, blind to the things of God, but "in Christ." Jesus declared to

Nicodemus, *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again"* (Jn. 3:3). It is to this point that Paul writes, *"so from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view"* (2 Cor. 5:16a). To change one's focus from self to Christ is to go from darkness into the light, from blindness to sight!

The man whose life is hidden in Christ, who has been raised with Him, now sees everything from a new vantage point. Read 1 Cor. 1:18. How does the believers new perspective change the way he views the cross? _____

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Read 1 Cor. 15:13-14. How can we know that Jesus was, in fact, raised from the dead? What evidence is there for the empty tomb?
- 2) Is sin something that a believer needs to be concerned about?
- 3) When does eternal life begin, now or after I die and get to heaven?

NOTES:

LESSON 10

Putting on Christ

"Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Rom. 13:14

Read Col. 3:1-3, 5, 9-10. What, according to this passage, should be the focus of your heart and mind? _____ What are we instructed to "put to death"? _____ What are we told to "put on"? _____

In a fashion so typical of Paul we have, first, the declarations of the believer's position "in Christ;" "we died with him," "we were buried with him," "we are raised with him." Then the instruction based on that truth, "set your hearts on things above."

The difficulty for the believer is that at the same time that he is dead with regard to the flesh, he is yet living in the flesh. Paul provides a solution; recognize that you have "put off" the *old nature* and "put on" *Christ*. One Bible teacher suggests that the old nature should be taken off and discarded in the same way that one would discard old clothes that no longer fit. Do you think this is a good analogy? Why or why not? _____

Do you think that "dying with Christ" is a daily process of self-denial and cross bearing or an absolute, final, and unconditional event? Explain your answer. _____

Paul presents both the putting off of the old self and the putting on of the new self as an accomplished fact. As F.F. Bruce correctly states, "to 'put on' Christ is the necessary corollary of being 'in Christ.'" This new nature, though, should be followed by new behaviors. Paul is quick, therefore, to move on to the arena of Christian behavior.

Read the following passages and comment on each:

Rom. 6:6-7,12-13 _____

Rom. 13:13-14 _____

Eph. 4:22-32 _____

Col. 3:8-9, 12-14 _____

Read Rom. 7:5-6. Paul says here what the believer is "in Christ." He follows that by instructing us to, "be what you are!"

Summarizing the lessons:

One further word on the relationship between baptism, the Christian life, and our earlier discussion of the church. It would be wrong to think that one is baptized into the church and, because one is then "in the church" he is also "in Christ." While these relationships are right, their order is wrong. The physical rite of baptism is not the starting point. One is "in Christ" because he has identified himself through faith with Christ's life (the righteousness of Christ), death (dead with regard to bondage to sin), burial (separation from an identity with this present age) and resurrection (raised to new life under the law of the Spirit). All this is symbolized (though not actually realized) in the act of baptism. Because one is "in Christ" he has been set apart, along with others who are "in Him," from the rest of humanity and identified as His body, the church. It is the being "in Christ" (not the being in church) which brings the benefits of the "new creation."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Before we can put on Christ we take something off. What sorts of things must we discard and how do we go about doing it?
- 2) Why do you think that Paul goes to such lengths to explain our position "in Christ" before he gives instructions about proper Christian behavior?
- 3) Is baptism a necessary part of "putting on Christ"? Why or why not?

LESSON 11

Experiencing the Spiritual Union

*"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?
He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit"*
(1 Cor. 6:15, 17)

The idea of "being one with Christ in spirit" is a concept that is difficult to grasp. Even though we would like to keep our relationship with the Lord on a totally rational and practical basis, this idea has a mystical quality. How can one know about that which is "spiritual"?

Read Jn. 3:8. In this verse Jesus compares the working of the Holy Spirit to the wind. One can experience the effects of the wind's passing, but he can't perceive the wind itself. We know the wind is there because we experience its effects. Most Christian believers claim a knowledge of God based on experiences, i.e., because of what He has done in their lives, changes that have been wrought through the exercise of His divine power. How have you experienced the presence and power of God in your own life? _____

Do you think that Jesus' analogy of the wind is a good one? Why or why not?

It is interesting to think about the fact that, while we are "in Christ," He is, at the same time in us. It is by this inner confirmation that we know that we are His (See Rom. 8:16). How do you understand this relationship? What does it have to do with your Christian experience? _____

Read Php. 3:8. Paul is expressing the great value of "knowing" Christ. We must be careful, in understanding such passages, to make a distinction between knowing God in the sense of relationship--I "know" a person with whom I talk and spend time--and receiving supernatural knowledge (i.e., revelation) from God. It is the first "knowing" that is in view as Paul writes to the Philippians. It is this kind of "knowledge" that is addressed by the prophet Jeremiah as well: *"This is what the LORD says: let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me"* (Jer. 9:23-24).

Read 1 Cor. 12:7-8. Paul does address "knowledge" in the sense of spiritual understanding in 1 Cor. 12. This is not an understanding born of human wisdom, but one that flows from God's revelation (vv. 6-7). Do you see any application of these gifts in the present day? Explain your answer as clearly as possible. _____

However we may view the operation of these spiritual gifts in the church today, it is obvious that what is in view here is a level of spiritual understanding that is not available apart from a communion with the Holy Spirit. It is for this very purpose--to know and share the things of God--that the Spirit is received (vs. 12). **Read 1 Cor. 2:13-15, 12:7, 13.** Such communion (interaction) with the Spirit of Christ is presented by Paul, not as the extraordinary, but as *normative* for those who are "in Christ"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer?
- 2) Both Paul and Peter refer to the indwelling Spirit as "the Spirit of Christ." Why do they describe the Holy Spirit in this way?
- 3) How is the Spirit of God involved in ministry?

LESSON 12

Conclusions

*"In him and through faith in him
we may approach God with
freedom and confidence." Eph. 3:12*

We must consider Paul's "in Christ" phrase from the point of view of a man whose experience with Christ was dramatic. For Paul the line between belonging to the world and belonging to Christ was a tangible one. He could have pointed out the very spot on the road where he encountered Christ. He remembered the exact words the Lord had spoken. That experience changed Paul to the core of his being. All that he had previously prayed for, worked for, hoped for, and lived for he now found "in Christ Jesus."

In the course of these lessons, we have examined the range of ways that Paul applies the phrase "in Christ." In the final analysis, the use of "in Christ" can be reduced to these four distinct, yet related, categories: eschatological, experiential, ecclesiastical, and representational. Though unique in definition, each of these categories contains two common elements, newness and exclusivity. In your own words explain each term (Consider 2 Cor. 5:17):

Newness _____

Exclusivity _____

Eschatological:

"In Christ" is an eschatological phrase because it applies to the believer's position "in Christ" in this present age and in the age to come. For Paul, the last days are, in a sense, present. **Read Eph. 1:7-13.** The Messiah has come, He was made the perfect atoning sacrifice, He was buried, and He was raised from the dead. With that resurrection the new age began! "In Him" there is redemption from bondage to sin, there is the promise of a future inheritance from God, there is the seal of the Holy Spirit. "In Christ" there is not only the hope but the realization of newness of life.

Consider Rom. 5:17. Will all men be found "in Christ"? Why or why not?

We have seen that every man is either "in Christ" or he is "in the world."
Read 1 Cor. 11:32, Rom. 3:19 and Jn. 3:18. What is the condition of the world

and those in the world? _____
_____ **Compare Rom. 3:24, 8:1-2.**
What is the position of those who are "in Christ"? _____

It is important to note that, for Paul, with regard to the believer's position and the gifts of God, there is little distinction between the future "age of righteousness" and this "present age" for those who are "in Christ." The man who has accepted God's gracious gift (Rom. 6:23) has already moved from the reign of sin and death to the era of righteousness and life, from the bondage of flesh to the Spirit of liberty, from the hopelessness of condemnation to the promise of justification.

Experiential:

"In Christ" is experiential in that it is applied to the way that a man who is "in Christ" experiences his relationship with Christ, knows His will, and serves Him in this present world. **Read 1 Cor. 12:3; Eph. 3:16-19.** It is "in the Spirit" that Christ is experienced and His lordship made known. It is through the Spirit that the believer is enabled to live as part of the "new creation" while still in this present world

Read Rom. 8:5; Gal 5:16, 25. How is the believer supposed to live his life, moment by moment, day by day? _____ It is abundantly clear that being "in Christ" should produce tangible results in the experience of the believer. There should not only be new life, but a new way of living! It is not because of good works that one is found "in Christ." It is because one is "in Christ" that he becomes capable of doing good works.

The lordship of Christ, mediated through the indwelling Spirit, provides the new ruling principle in the believers life. The man "in Christ" can walk rightly before God, not by keeping a law written on stone, but by keeping a new law of the heart. The "law of sin and death" is surely the ruling principle in the life of one who is not "in Christ." It is a principle replaced by the "law of the Spirit" in the believer's life.

Ecclesiastical:

"in Christ" is ecclesiastical because it applies to the relationship of believers "in Christ" to the church, which is seen as distinct from the world in which it presently exists. No person can be part of the true church and not first be "in Christ." Also, since the church is comprised of that portion of humanity that is Christ's (i.e., that belongs to Christ), the church is, in actuality, one body "in Christ" (See Rom. 12:5).

Read Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:17-18. What is Christ's position with regard to the church as a whole? _____

Representational:

"In Christ" is representational because it applies to the believer's movement from a position of condemnation and death to a position of justification and life "in Christ" who is his representative.

To be "in Christ" is to be identified with Christ in life, in death, in burial, and in resurrection. If this is not the case, then every man is in a hopeless condition. Sin earns men only death and "there are none righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10). Since all men but Christ are sinners there would be but one destiny for all but Christ. Lacking a righteousness of their own, all of Adam's race would be doomed to perish. **Read 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 13:14 and Col. 3:3.** What is the "good news"? _____

Does this mean that God is unjust, that there is sin without penalty, that there is forgiveness without atonement? No! Even as Christ took the place of unrighteous men by living a righteous and obedient life in their behalf, He also paid the penalty for sin in place of unrighteous men through His death on the cross (Rom. 5:19). The man who is "in Christ," then, has already died with respect to payment for sin through his representative. The bond to Adam's race, to the "law of sin and death," to "this world which is passing away" is broken. There is no longer any condemnation for those who are "in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

The man who is "in Christ" is raised to new life with his representative (Rom. 6:5, 8; 2 Tim. 2:11). No longer bound to this present world, the man who is raised with Christ (and is found "in Him") can live for Christ!

Read Rom. 3:22, 5:1; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 3:17. How are the great benefits of our identification with Christ received? _____