

FOUNDATIONS
The New Has Come! (Part 2)
 2 Corinthians 5:17

Last week we learned that when we placed our personal trust in Jesus Christ, God gave us two amazing gifts. He regenerated us with new spiritual life within, giving us a new heart and indwelling us permanently with his Holy Spirit. He also justified us, crediting us by grace with Christ's own righteousness, giving us a right standing before him in heaven. These two amazing gifts guarantee our full acceptance before God, based entirely on the merit of Christ's sinless life, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection from the dead. *We are new creations in Christ—the old has passed away; behold, the new has come!*

Our Adoption into God's Family

But God's gift of salvation goes beyond this. The Scriptures teach us that he also adopted us into his family. He gave us the right to be called his children—his very own sons and daughters with all the benefits and privileges inherent in that special relationship. With adoption, God is not only our Creator and Savior, he is our heavenly Father, who redeems us in order to make us his own children by way of formal adoption. *"See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and so we are."* **1 John 3:1**

1. Our Adoption by God

- Our Past Planned Adoption (**Ephesians 1:3-5**)
- Our Present Adoption (**Galatians 4:4-6**; cf. **John 1:12**; **Romans 8:15**)
- Our Future Adoption (**Romans 8:23-25**)

2. The Privileges of Our Adoption

- The Way God Relates to Us
 - He loves us. (1 John 3:1)*
 - He understands and empathizes with us. (Psalm 103:13, 14)*
 - He provides us an internal witness. (Romans 8:15, 16)*
 - He grants us ongoing access to him through prayer. (Matthew 6:9; Galatians 4:7)*
 - He cares for our needs. (Matthew 6:32, 33; Luke 18:1-8)*
 - He exalts us to the status of royalty and gives us a foretaste of this great honor by sending angels to minister to us and serve us. (Revelation 2:26, 27; 3:21; Hebrews 1:14)*
 - He faithfully forgives our daily sins to maintain our intimacy with him. (Matthew 6:9-12; 1 John 1:9; 3:19-22)*
 - He leads us. (Romans 8:14; cf. John 16:13)*
 - He lovingly disciplines us. (Hebrews 12:5-7)*
 - He allows us to partner in Christ's sufferings so we can share in his glory. (Luke 24:46; Romans 8:17; Acts 5:41)*
 - He gives us good gifts (Matthew 7:11) including a great inheritance reserved in heaven for us. (1 Peter 1:4)*
 - He gives us the ULTIMATE gift of the Holy Spirit to comfort and empower us. (Luke 11:13)*
- The Way We Relate to God
 - As God's children, we are to imitate our heavenly Father in all our conduct. (Ephesians 5:1; 1 Peter 1:14-19)*
 - As God's children, we are to honor our heavenly Father and bring glory to him. (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 3:10)*

- The Way We Relate to One Another (the Church)

*As God's children, we are members of one large family of brothers and sisters (**Matthew 12:48-50; Romans 1:13; 8:12; 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 6:8; 7:15; Philemon 1:1,2; James 1:2; 2:15**)*

*As God's children, we have a new perspective on the value of diversity in the church family. We are members one of another (interdependent with each one doing a vital part in the life and health of the church family). **2 Corinthians 5:16, 17; Romans 12:1-10; Ephesians 4:11-16; Note: all the "one-anothers" in the NT.***

*We are members of a new humanity under a new family head—Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, which calls us to the hard work of maintaining the Spirit's unity and peace where there was once division and prejudice. (**John 17:20-23; Ephesians 2:15, 16; 4:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Revelation 13:7; 14:6**)*

Our Union with Christ ("in Christ")

Every aspect of God's relationship to us as believers is in some way connected to our relationship with Jesus Christ. From God's counsels in eternity past before the world was created, to our fellowship with God in the new heavens and earth in eternity future, and including every aspect of our relationship with God in this present life—ALL occur in union with Christ.

Our union with Christ has its *source* in our election by God the Father before the foundation of the world and has as its *goal* our glorification in heaven. That is the perspective we must have of our salvation—stretching from eternity past to eternity future. We were desired, designed, and destined by God for a special purpose—to know, love, and glorify him forever "in Christ." With that vast perspective, spanning all of time and eternity, our present experiences begin to take on new purpose and we gain the wherewithal to respond to all of life, whether hard or happy moments, as God's beloved children. And, again, it all comes back to our being "in Christ". It was "in Christ" that our salvation was conceived. It was "in Christ" that our salvation was actualized. It is "in Christ" that our salvation is lived out and enjoyed, and it is "in Christ" that our eternal destiny rests.

1. "In Christ" in God's Eternal Plan

*God chose us "in Christ" before the foundation of the world. (**Ephesians 1:4**) God, looking into the future and knowing that we would exist in space and time, thought of us, then, being in a special relationship with Jesus Christ. His choice at that time to save us was inseparably linked to us belonging to Christ in a special way, as being "in Christ." In other words, from before time, God thought about us as eventually having the right to share in the blessings of Christ's work, because he planned our salvation "in Christ."*

2. "In Christ" during Christ's Earthly Life

Throughout Christ entire life on earth, from the time of his birth to the time of his ascension into heaven, God thought of us as being "in Christ." That is, whatever Christ did as our representative, God considered it as being something we did, too! Of course, we were not consciously present in Christ, nor were we present in Christ in some mystical, spiritual way. Rather, we were present "in Christ" only in God's thoughts. God thought of us as going through everything that Christ went through, because he was our representative.

3. "In Christ" during our Present Life

Once we were born and exist as real people in the world, our union with Christ can no longer be something just in God's mind. We also must be brought into an actual relationship with Christ through faith in him. Then the benefits of our planned salvation are applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit in a real-time conversion.

*Being "in Christ", his death and resurrection have a real effect on our daily lives (**Colossians 2:20-3:17**). The Apostle Paul sees our present death and resurrection with Christ as a way of describing and explaining the change the Holy Spirit brings about in our character and personality as followers of Christ. It is as if the Holy Spirit reproduces Jesus' death and resurrection in our lives when we believe in Christ. Therefore, we are to put to death the deeds of our fallen nature (**Colossians 3:5-11; cf. Romans 7:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14**) and put on the character of Jesus (**Colossians 3:12-17; cf. Romans 6:4, 11, 1 Peter 1:3; 2:24**).*

4. "In Christ" Forever

*Jesus prayed in **John 17:21** that we be one even as he and the Father are one—Jesus in the Father, the Father in Jesus, and we in them! Our union in Christ will never swallow up our individual personalities, even as the Persons of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—remain distinct in their infinite oneness. So, even though we will one day attain perfect unity with other believers throughout all of time and with Christ himself, we will forever remain distinct persons, with our own individual gifts, abilities, interests, responsibilities, circles of personal relationships, preferences, and desires.*