

Union with Christ

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Part 1: “In Christ”

Preview

- “Reflex Check” pop quiz! (See next page)

Watch video

The Apostle Paul most often referred to himself and to other believers as those who are “in Christ.” (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:26 etc.)

- There are over 80 occasions when Paul uses this language! It is presupposed in everything he says about living the Christian life.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul outlines his thrilling cosmic understanding of what it means for us to be “in Christ”

- In chapter 1 he emphasizes the privileges and blessings that are ours. In fact, there are no spiritual benefits available to us except those that come to us in Christ (Eph 1:3-14)

“These blessings seem to pour out upon Christian believers, but the conduit and the source of all these blessings is exclusively our Lord Jesus Christ.” – Dr. Sinclair Ferguson

- In chapter 2, we who were dead in our trespasses and sins were raised up in and with Jesus Christ, being regenerated and prepared to participate in His resurrection (Eph 2:4-7)
- In chapter 3, our eyes are being opened to the wonder of the blessings that we are involved in as those who are being united to Jesus (Eph 3:4-6)
- In chapters 4 - 6, he describes how being united with Jesus means we are also united with other believers, and how this union with Christ effects all our relationships (Eph 4:15-16. 32).
- At the end of chapter 6, he speaks of the warfare we face as believers, urging us to be strong because we are “in the Lord” (Eph 6:10)

“Those who are in Christ live life out of the resources that are ours because from eternity to eternity we are united to our Lord Jesus Christ.” – Dr. Sinclair Ferguson

Reflex Check

As a follower of Jesus, how do I respond to various opportunities and challenges? And what do those responses reveal about my understanding of my union with Christ?

1. After a blowup at home, my first step is...

- A. Set strict rules and double devotions to get back on track.
- B. Keep my distance until I feel worthy to approach again.
- C. Go to God immediately for mercy and help, then apologize.
- D. It wasn't serious; just move on and forget about it.

2. Why practice Scripture and prayer?

- A. So God will bless and protect my week more reliably.
- B. To enjoy communion that reshapes desires and choices over time.
- C. They're optional; I'm fine without regular practices.
- D. To manage stress and feel more in control of life.

3. I hit a hard season. My first interpretation is...

- A. Not punishment; God can grow me through this. Seek wise help.
- B. Probably payback; I must do better so it stops happening.
- C. It proves spiritual things don't matter; withdraw and protect myself.
- D. A sign I've lost favor; keep my head down for a while.

4. Someone wrongs me deeply. My instinct is...

- A. Forgive quickly so God will reward me for obedience.
- B. Wait for real change; they must earn another chance first.
- C. Say it's fine and drop boundaries; that's what forgiveness means.
- D. Move toward wise forgiveness because I live from received mercy.

5. Thinking about ministry "results," I conclude...

- A. Good results prove I'm accepted; poor ones mean I'm not.
- B. To avoid failing, I should serve less and stay safe.
- C. My call is faithfulness; outcomes belong to the Lord.
- D. Success shows I'm ahead of others; that's encouraging.

6. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are mainly...

- A. They work automatically if performed; grace is transmitted by doing.
- B. Visible promises that strengthen trust; not currency to buy favor.
- C. Just memorials; meaningful but spiritually empty symbols.
- D. Extra credits; frequent participation raises my standing.

7. Battling a recurring sin, I will...

- A. Add stricter rules and punish myself when I fail again.
- B. Stop trying—grace covers it, so stressing is pointless.
- C. Make a bold vow to gain strength and impress God.
- D. Rely on a new identity, seek help, take concrete steps.

8. After a strong week spiritually, I tend to...

- A. Give thanks and keep walking dependently, not trusting momentum.
- B. Get nervous and sabotage progress to stay humble.
- C. Expect a smoother week now; I've earned it.
- D. I'm clearly doing better than most; nice to see.

9. Why give generously?

- A. So God will prosper me; generosity brings returns.
- B. To quiet guilt about spending and reset my habits.
- C. As grateful participation in God's work with open hands.
- D. Giving isn't needed; that sounds legalistic to me.

10. When I must confront someone's sin, I...

- A. Confront strongly so God notices my zeal for truth.
- B. Speak truth in love, aiming for the person's restoration.
- C. Avoid the issue; conflict threatens relationships and reputation.
- D. Vent; they need to feel how wrong they were.