



Spirit of Grace Herald

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"IN CHRIST"

There is a simple two or three word phrase that is used again and again in the epistles of the New Testament – "in Christ," or "in Christ Jesus." One particularly popular verse which includes this phrase is from Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians: "Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). One clear inference from this verse is that not everyone is in Christ. Many people must be outside of Christ. But if anyone is in Christ, he or she lives in an entirely new dimension. Old things pass away; everything becomes new.

Many benefits are promised to those who are in Christ. In Ephesians we are told that God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ**" (Ephesians 1:3). All the blessings and goodness the Father longs to lavish upon His creation is for those who are in Christ. Forgiveness, justification, adoption,

eternal life, and access to God in prayer are all granted those who are in Christ. Imagine trudging through the forest at night during a snowstorm. The temperature is well below zero, the snow stings your cheeks and the cold chills your bones. Your strength is nearly gone, and your body is shivering uncontrollably. You know you will soon die if you cannot find shelter. Suddenly in the midst of the forest you discover a huge house, well lit with smoke coming from the chimney. As you peer through the window you find all kinds of people inside, comprising nearly every race and culture from every nation. They are warm and in their shirtsleeves. There is a feast laid out on massive tables, and all sorts of warm drinks available throughout the large hall. Beautiful music is being



played and some are dancing, while others talk and laugh. As you shiver violently from the cold that has penetrated you to the bone, you can think of only one thing – how can I get in there?

This illustration doesn't even do justice to the goodness and riches of grace that God has made available to the human race through Jesus Christ. And it is Christ who is both the house and the door to the house. We enter into Christ through faith in Christ. And once we have made

it inside, all is well. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

There are standards of behavior for those who would live in Christ. Paul speaks of "**my ways in Christ**." He tells Timothy that all who desire **to live godly in Christ Jesus** will suffer persecution." And Peter uses the phrase "your **good conduct in Christ**." In this special family, our conduct and behavior are radically different from those outside our family. In American culture it is almost a given that all young people will have sex before marriage, for example.

The Amazing Blessing of Being "IN CHRIST"

Yet for those deeply committed to Christ, purity until marriage is the norm. The reason is simple. We read, believe, and take seriously the morality of the Bible. The Scriptures make it plain that for those who are in Christ, there is complete equality. In Galatians we read: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus**" (Galatians 3:28). Snobbery, racism, and genocide have been a blight on the human race almost from the beginning. In America there have been movements for civil rights for blacks and equal rights for women which have attempted to remedy injustice and legal inequalities. God has his own "equal rights" program, and it is found in Christ.

In Christ there are all sorts and types of people. Some believers are brilliant, with razor-sharp minds, while others are slow and simple. There are Christians who love to laugh and those who almost never laugh, believers who drive luxury cars and those who drive junkers, those who live in 10-bedroom mansions and those who live in rusty trailers. There are Christians ladies who think it a sin to wear lipstick and those who think it a sin when your lipstick doesn't match your fingernail polish. God has quite a large family and it is very diverse!

And amazingly God tells us that we are all one in Christ! And the reason we are equal is that we are all justified. Paul writes, "**being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**" (Romans 3:24). You cannot rise any higher than justification. To be justified is to be blameless in the sight of our holy Creator. The cross of Jesus Christ is the great leveler of mankind. Here the strong are no more valuable than the weak, the stunning beauty no more significant than the hideous, the articulate no more important than those who stumble to put a single sentence together. There are no cool kids or nerds in the family of God, no superstars or little people. In Christ we are all valuable, we are all loved, and we are all accepted.

Next Month: African Youth Mission



We are planning and preparing a Youth Meeting for teens in Kenya in June of this year. We will be holding a soccer tournament, along with Bible studies and evangelistic efforts to win young men and women to Christ and teach them the ways of God.

We appreciate your prayers for this outreach. God loves His African children and we want to be involved in the harvest of souls on this great continent. We cannot win all of Africa, or feed all of Africa, or teach all of Africa, but we want to do our part and join other like-minded believers in blessing our African brothers and sisters.

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