

In Christ Jesus

by Thomas Bradbury

This sermon emphasizes the believer's identity and security in Christ through God's covenant of grace.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 23:5, Psalm 25:14, Psalm 89:19, John 6:37, John 6:45, Romans 8:1, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 2:12, Philippians 3:9

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Sanctification Process"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the believers' union with Christ, emphasizing that all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption come from God through Christ Jesus. He highlights the covenant relationship between God and His chosen ones, where God reveals His covenant to those who fear Him. Bradbury explains that those in Christ are secure, saved, and blessed, and that their salvation is solely based on Christ's work and not on human efforts. He delves into the struggles of the flesh versus the spirit, the ongoing sanctification process, and the ultimate glorification of believers in Christ.

Transcript

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30,31)

To understand such a portion as this intelligently and experimentally, is to glory indeed in a Covenant JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is the alone glory of all those whom He in love pitched upon before all worlds, whom He has redeemed to Himself by the precious blood of the Son of His love, whom He brings to Himself by the grace and power of His Indwelling Spirit. These are brought into the loving enjoyment of Himself by the testimony of grace which He has made sure to all the seed-royal of heaven. This is opened up in that precious Scripture: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and His covenant to make them know it." (Ps. 25:14) You will see that I have quoted this, not as you read it in your Bible; but as the honest translators have rendered it in the margin. Because His heart is ever with His elect and redeemed people, and according to His purpose of eternal love, and His secret of unchanging mercy in Christ Jesus, "He will show them His covenant." These were precious words flowing from the exercised heart of David as he was nearing the end of his strange, eventful life, "Although my house be not so with God, yet He that made with me everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow." (2 Sam. 23:5)

This covenant is so designed that all interested in it shall be blessedly made to know it. Previous to this they are all strangers to the covenant, ignorant of God, and without hope in the world. (Eph. 2:12) But He would not, could not, leave them in such a destitute condition. Though they were bent on having nothing to do with Him, He would have everything to do with them, and for them. This is beautifully set forth in John Newton's sweet lines:

"Determin'd to save, He watch'd o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death.
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

On my mother's breast He kept me in perfect safety. Amid all the uncertainties of childhood and youth He preserved me to the spot where He made Himself known to me as my Covenant God and Father in the Son of His love. Aye, and something better than that, for He revealed His Son in me, in the depths of my heart's anxieties and exercises by the power of the Holy Ghost. He did not ask me would I like to know His covenant, or enjoy His care. Oh no! He sweetly compelled me without doing violence to the will of His own creating. A will led and taught to say:

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me."

The work of my salvation is all in His own hands, and having saved me and helped me thus far, He is daily proving to me that in salvation matters He will be Master. But, mark you, He does it not in a masterful spirit, but always in a fatherly spirit, a spirit of love, pity, and compassion.

Concerning His elect and redeemed children He has caused it to be written: "They shall be all taught of God." (John 6:45) This the Covenant Surety claims as His own charge, and glories in carrying out His responsibility. As the Sponsor of His people He promised and vowed, not three things, but everything, and confirmed the same by an oath, and has declared for their encouragement, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) How do they come? Come of themselves they cannot. It is not in them to take a single step heavenward, Godward. If they come they must be brought, they must be carried. So He, in the riches of His grace, seeing their helplessness, carries them in His bosom of everlasting love, and brings them in His arms of infinite power, to His Father's house, to His Father's heart, to His home of eternal love. "They shall come," is the decree of the Father, the delight of the Son, the doing of the Holy Ghost. "They shall come," sinful to be saved, helpless to be helped, poor to be enriched, ignorant to be taught, hungry to be fed, condemned to be justified, disgraced to be honoured, burdened to be blessed. Because He says, "I will bring them" "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first born." (Jer. 31:8,9) In bringing His own to Himself and to glory He will see to it that His glory shines in every step. Time would fail me to set forth the beauty and blessedness of this bringing and carrying grace.

I will, therefore, in humble dependence upon the guidance of God the Holy Ghost, seek to direct your attention and rouse your interest in the prominent features of the text. Look at them. We will consider them in the order in which they appear:

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." The first word attracts our attention, and demands our prayerful consideration. "But." This is a glorious "but." There are all kinds of buts in the world. Many which find no lodging here. The Arminian is every ready with his "but" against the sovereign right of God to elect and save whom He will. The Freewillier's but calls into question the inability of the natural man to perform spiritual acts, and the necessity for the Spirit's work in regeneration or restoration. In the Epistle to the Romans these spirits are clearly described and exposed. At every step of his argument the Apostle anticipates, discovers, and silences objector after objector. "What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?" (Rom. 3:1) "What shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh hath found?" (Rom. 4:1) "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1) "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" (Rom. 7:7) Buts, ifs, perhapses, and peradventures abound whenever the pure gospel of the grace of God flows forth from a heart in living and loving oneness with the Christ of God. For every one of these God has His answer and perfect refutation in the Scriptures of truth. We will dismiss all consideration of man's objections, and seek for instruction and encouragement in God's own "Buts." These are most precious, and differ altogether from vain man's fleshly questionings. A "but" from the mouth of God is ever the forerunner of some gracious revelation. He first portrays man's depravity and inability. O the pangs felt at the discovery of distance from God, destitution of His mercy and truth, and deserved damnation. Here He proves to me that He has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and that the clouds which frighten me are the dust of His feet. In the midst of all this I see mercy remembered in the midst of wrath revealed. In the midst of the surging waves of Divine fury against sin, God's glorious "But" appears as an immovable breakwater over which the billows of eternal vengeance can never roll. Grace makes and reveals a way into the haven of covenant security, and delights in sweeping away every obstacle from the pathway of righteous grace and gracious righteousness.

What a mercy it is to see, know, and enjoy Jesus Himself on the ground of His accomplished righteousness, as the only standing for poor sinners before God. But even here I learn afresh the old truth of the preacher's inability, though he may be deeply taught, though he may appear with a full weight gospel meeting all the wants and necessities of God's poor and needy people, the preacher cannot convey a single blessing to their hungering and thirsting souls. My felt inability impels me to cry frequently for Jesus to make a place for Himself in the hearts of His people before me. The silvery eloquence of an Apollos can never captivate a heart bowed down with a sense of sin and shame, yet, it may be that the Voice of the Beloved is heard in the midst of glowing eloquence which is but tame talk without Him. But our Most Glorious Christ is not limited, nor confined to one class of ministers for the spread of His gospel and the advancement of His Kingdom in the earth. When He wants any of His people to be near unto Him He will have them brought there, it may be through the rugged ministry of a Cephas, or the elegant utterances of an Apollos, or the logical arguments of a Paul. If we are blessed with a God-given minister, be he rugged or refined, may God compel us to hold him close with thankful hearts. If a preacher preaches himself, God is not glorified, Christ is not exalted, the Spirit is not honoured, the flock is starved. Let a preacher preach Christ under the anointing, however homely his language may be, he must leave covenant blessings behind him.

Let us now notice the instrumentality God employs, foolish, weak, base, contemptible. But not in His esteem. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. 1:26-29) Notice those characters "things which are not." Saved sinners whom the world acknowledges not. honoured ministers despised by many in the church. Mourners in Zion who are "sick of self and fond of Him." These are the very persons most likely to bring Christ to the forefront of their teaching and to "Crown Him Lord of all." Look at the text "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." Not of Paul not of Apollos not of Cephas, nor of all the apostles put together; no, nor by "the unanimous content of the fathers," nor by the whole church of the Living God. In this stupendous act of sovereign grace the bench of bishops has no place, religious associations and conferences and unions are excluded. Oh no, the God of truth declares, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." This is fearfully humbling to poor, proud human nature, whether in the pulpit or in the pew. The more religion a man has without grace the more he will chafe and fret under the declarations of human inability and divine sovereignty. But how blessed it is to know that the choice of ministers and the ministry of the word are in competent hands, even the hands of our Almighty and All-wise King and God. Here we can sing, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." (Ps. 115:1) The true minister of Christ can honestly say with Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. 3:5) And this sufficiency is simply to preach the glorious gospel of God in which is revealed the power and wisdom of God in the Person of His Christ. God's will, God's work, and God's way in salvation verities are all set forth in His gospel of pure grace. Look at those three words:

"In Christ Jesus." Here human thought is confounded, reason bows down and adores, revelation reigns alone. This is not simply revelation in God's Book, we thank God for that, but it is the revelation of the Father in the Son. We laud and magnify His Holy Name for the revelation of Himself in the Book, but we thank Him a thousand times for the revelation of His Son in us by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This we have supported by Paul in Eph. 1:17; "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." When God testifies to our heart concerning our relationship to Him in the Son of His love, and the testimony is sealed home by the Blessed Spirit, then lordly reason ceases its rebellion, and barren intellectuality proves nothing worth. No elaborate dissertation can satisfy the soul that longs for forgiving mercy, justifying grace and accepting love. What is it that truly satisfies the longing soul in the land of the living? It is God's revelation of Christ in the covenant we are one with Christ, and Christ hesitates not to acknowledge His oneness with us.

"In union with the Lamb,

From condemnation free,

The Saints from everlasting were,

And shall for ever be."

"In Christ Jesus." See how clearly this is set forth in that first chapter of Ephesians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN CHRIST: according as He hath chosen us IN HIM before the foundation of the world, that we should be

holy and without blame before Him." (Eph. 1:3,4) Have you ever been carried up there? Certainly you have, if the Father's Christ is precious to your heart, as your Saviour from sin, your Redeemer from wrath, your Deliverer from death, and your Sustainer in every temptation. See how sweetly Paul describes this in Eph. 2:4-6: "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places IN CHRIST JESUS." This is not according to our faith, repentance, or our shortsighted grasp of the truth of God's salvation; but according to His purpose of love IN CHRIST JESUS. Only IN HIM can we read, or understand God's choice of us. IN HIM God hath graced and accepted us. "IN HIM we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:7) IN HIM the Father's "grace hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." IN HIM we are gathered together as children of the same family, sheep of the same flock, members of the same body, to enjoy the same glory to eternal ages. (Eph. 1:10) IN HIM we have obtained an inheritance of grace and glory, enjoyed by the working of the Father's mighty power, wrought in Him when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:11,19,20) "IN THE LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. 45:25)

See how this is brought before us in that glorious eighth of Romans: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS." When is there no condemnation? This question can only be understood and answered rightly by the teaching of the ever blessed Spirit. The division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses sometimes obscures the line of argument and train of truth. The Apostle's experience expressed in the seventh chapter sets forth the burden and bondage of a soul under the law and its deliverance from it. But it is a deliverance to the experience of the burden and annoyance of the flesh. Here Paul groaned and sighed because of his inability to do the things that he would. Are you troubled in the same way? I am. Though He does bless me with the sweet enjoyment of His forgiving love through the blood and righteousness of my Covenant Surety. Poor old self will intrude into the most sacred exercises. Righteous self will contend with sinful self. Experimental self asserts its superiority over every other phase of the flesh, and troubles the child of God in a variety of ways until he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" O how wretched I am at times, because of my fleshly surroundings, because of the devices of Satan, because of my seasons of deadness. Paul could say, "I die daily, In deaths oft." David cried, "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth." (Ps. 71:20) Notice the exact words of Paul in the yearnings of his spirit for full emancipation from the burden of the flesh: "Who shall deliver me?" He does not say who hath delivered me? He was not delivered from the body of death which He carried about with him whithersoever he went. Yet he knew full well that Zion's Redeemer would one day come and deliver him and all the redeemed from all that is earthly, sensual and devilish. He gloried in the fact that the natural must give way to the spiritual, the earthly must flee before the heavenly, that all things shall be subdued under the reign of his gracious Lord and King, and God be All in all.

While we are here the same continuing conflict which raged in the godly of past ages will be ours. The flesh will lust against the Spirit, the world will rage against the Father, the devil will plot against God's Christ. Here my confession is "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Here we see the trial of faith as portrayed in Songs 6:13: "What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies." This was Paul's experience and knowledge. See Romans 7:18,19: "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to

perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." With all the opposition of the flesh, baneful surroundings and evil surmisings, he mourned over his felt distance from the Lord he loved. He was no Antinomian, and could not live as he liked, either in the lusts of the flesh, or the love of the Spirit. Look at Gal. 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." While I live in the flesh, I live in Christ, and though I live in Christ and Christ lives in me I am still in the flesh and the flesh is a worry to the life of God in me. This is the struggle, my flesh serving the law of sin is ever hostile to my spiritual mind delighting in the sovereignty of grace. Yet in this spot of Spirit-wrought experience I am told,

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS." (Rom. 8:1) Now I know my inability to produce anything acceptable to God, I rejoice in the fact that God in Christ provides everything that is profitable for me. Do I stand accepted before God? It is wholly in Christ. Look at that glorious array of truth

In Christ, no condemnation.

From Christ no separation.

In Him we are saved, safe, and secure for ever. Look at the opposite. Out of Christ the sinner is under condemnation, and not only an enemy of God but enmity against God. Notice well the saints' eternal safety

"What from Christ that soul shall sever

Bound by everlasting bands?

Once in Him, in Him for ever;

Thus th' eternal covenant stands;

None shall pluck thee

From the Strength of Israel's Hands."

The enjoyment of this warms the heart and causes the waters of eternal truth to boil and bubble up, so that however weak, weary, or footsore a child of God may be, he can stare the devil out of countenance and rejoice in the God of his salvation.

"In Christ Jesus." Many illustrations we have of this glorious truth in Holy Scripture. Noah and the elect few with him in the ark while the waters of judgment raged without, is very significant. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." (Gen. 7:1) The Lord did not say Go, for the Lord took him in, the Lord shut him in, the Lord kept him in until all danger was past and gone. The Lord went in with Noah and Noah was shut in with the Lord. The Lord being shut out of His own world, nothing but judgment and death was found there. Noah shut in with the Lord was blessedly secure. It has been asked, what became of Noah's carpenters? These were very useful people in their way. They wrought for God's servant, "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came and took them all away." (Matt. 24:38) They had no part in Noah's salvation or security. They

worked for him yet they were all destroyed. Look at Lot. When the fire of eternal vengeance would descend to destroy the cities of the plain, the fire of eternal love was quick to defend and secure from danger the object of its choice. Magnified mercy carried Lot safely to little Zoara city of refuge, a house of defence. All this is secured to those who are in Christ Jesus, where condemnation cannot be found, where the sword of vengeance can never be unsheathed. Security in Christ is beautifully typified by Israel in Goshen. There the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon the lintel and side posts was the sign of Israel's immunity from the sword of the destroying Angel. All in the blood-sprinkled house were securely preserved and surely cared for.

But all these fail to set forth the vast significance of the words before us. As the stone is in the building so every elect vessel of mercy shall be seen in the building of eternal grace. Christ is the everlasting and sole foundation of the Church, He is the Precious Corner Stone, He is the First and the Last of the elect sinner's salvation. Look at Peter's view of this "To Whom coming, as unto a Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." A Stone lively, quick and powerful, vivifying everything with which it comes into spiritual contact, according to the sequence of the apostle, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:4,5) As the stone is part of the building, so every living child of God is in Christ and as Christ. This indicates stability and durability. Listen to the words of the Master to His disciples, "I am the True Vine, ye are the branches." (John 15:1) These words were spoken to the eleven after Judas had gone out to do his devilish work. All those then with Jesus were real, true, loving and fruitful branches of the heavenly vine. Not branches grafted, but growing up in Him, deriving all their vitality and nourishment from Him. The truth taught in this parable is not union, which is fully set forth all through the fourteenth chapter; but communion, fellowship, fruit-bearing, the mutual love and sympathy existing between Christ and His members.

Turn with me to Ps. 139:15,16: "My substance, or body, was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Here we see Christ mystical, Head and members, one glorious whole. See how Paul describes this in 1 Cor. 12:12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is CHRIST." See also Eph. 5:30: "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Listen to His own words in Old Testament vision and prophecy, "All My bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee, Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him." (Ps. 35:10) As my arm is a limb of my body, as the stone is part of the building in which it is built, as the branch is in the tree, so is every member of the election of grace is part of the Christ of God. But all these metaphors fail to discover the fullness of grace and of glory entailed upon those in union with the Lamb. This discovery was reserved for the overflowings of the heart of the Covenant Surety to the Father of His love as recorded in John 17:21-23: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." What world will believe and know? All the world of His love will know and believe to its eternal joy. All the world at enmity with Him will believe and know to its eternal disgrace.

At the last grand assize the Covenant Surety will manifest His love to those for whom He shed His most precious blood, and for whom He spent His life to work their robe of righteousness. But we often fall far short in our judgment of the full provision God has in His Christ for the salvation, preservation and glorification of the objects of His love. The fullest enjoyment we can have of this down here is but the earnest of the full possession. Turn with me to Rom. 8:30: "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." You see that our God does not act by fits and starts. He leaves nothing unfinished. According to His eternal purpose all is perfect, and all is accomplished. He wills, He works, He speaks, He does. He sees all according to His own good pleasure, and He will have all His children enjoy the same in some measure here below. "I in them, and Thou in Me," is a marvellous revelation. Few desire to know it. I cannot enjoy too much of it. Knowing this, I know that I am in Christ

In Christ, saved everlastingly.

In Christ, called graciously.

In Christ, justified freely.

In Christ, sheltered securely.

In Christ, nourished unceasingly.

In Christ, glorified eternally.

"But of Him are ye IN CHRIST JESUS." In Him we receive the anointing which breaks and removes every yoke of legal bondage. Blessed be God, He knew what a Saviour we should need, and therefore laid help upon One that is mighty. (Ps. 89:19) God's Anointed is Jesus as well as Christ. See Matt. 1:21: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Has He saved you? If He has, you will never rest satisfied without the full enjoyment thereof. Are you in Christ Jesus? Then your daily desire will be breathed to the Majesty on high, to "be found in Him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. 3:9) Many think they are in Christ Jesus first at the font. This is simple blasphemy, sheer folly. Deluded souls, whose religion is all in dreamland, seek their salvation there, but only to sport with their own deceivings. In Christ by baptism, never. In Christ by human priests, never. In Christ by stirring eloquence, never. Oh no! In Christ by sovereign choice. In Christ by the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost. In Christ by the testimony of truth concerning Him, and in no other way for the enjoyment of the same. "Of God." Not of Paul, not of Apollos, not of Cephas, not of anything short of God Himself, are we IN CHRIST JESUS, and He will see to it, that all we need in the way of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we shall and must possess and enjoy IN CHRIST JESUS. May God Almighty bless us, and make our oneness with Christ increasingly manifest, from Whom there can be no separation, and to Whom be all honour and glory ascribed, now and for ever. Amen.

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