

Believers Are in Christ

by Tim Conway

Christians are saints and believers, and it is crucial to understand and proclaim true Christianity to counteract the ignorance and false teachings in the world.

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Scripture: John 17:21, Romans 5:17, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 6:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 1:1-13, Colossians 3:4

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon delves into the profound truths of being a saint, a believer, and being in Christ as highlighted in Ephesians 1. It emphasizes the positional reality, the surrounding nature, the spiritual union, and the representation union with Christ. The sermon encourages believers to grasp the depth of their union with Christ, the life, representation, and dynamic growth that comes from being in Him.

Transcript

Ephesians 1, verse 1, Paul addresses the church at Ephesus with these words, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I've heard preachers say, and I'm sure that this is very common for anybody who preaches through an entire book of the Bible. I remember hearing John Piper say it, that when he got to the end of preaching through a book, he began to recognize more fully what was being talked about at the beginning of the book.

And that's true. I've found the same thing. I remember preaching through Romans.

You get to the end of Romans and I recognize realities at the beginning of Romans that I didn't really grasp because I really didn't have a good feel for the whole book of Romans. And so, what I've sought to do in preaching through whole books is read the entire book through over and over and over and over and over and over and over again. When I would preach through Hebrews, I got it down to where I could read the book through in 35 minutes.

And I tried every week to be going through the book beginning to end because I wanted the whole book fresh. I wanted a feel for the whole thing. Not only am I seeking to read Ephesians from end to end, I'm actually trying to... I worked on memorizing it in the past.

I'm trying to memorize the whole thing again. I've got it first three chapters down. I'll be working on 4, 5, and 6 in the days ahead.

But what's happening is this, something is becoming clear that even here in the beginning, this introduction when Paul says to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, he brings forth three realities. Saints, faithful, in Christ Jesus. And it's interesting to me, especially in just thinking through the first chapter as a whole, that these are three very prominent realities that come out in this first chapter.

And what I'm recognizing here is these three realities about the Christian are very much in concise form. That which he is going to go on and deal with in much more detail in these verses ahead. These are three realities that we don't want to pass over.

Because they're not just realities about the Christian life that Paul randomly pulled out of the air. What he's doing here is he's setting the direction. He's setting the course for where he wants to take us.

When Paul went to write, he didn't just start writing not knowing where he wanted to go. He knew the things that he wanted to say. And even in the introduction here, he's drawing out realities that pertain to the very things that he wants to deal with.

And we looked last week at this reality. To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus. We looked at saints.

We really focused in on that. Saints. What's the idea? Just very quickly in review.

Where does saint come from? Well, as we looked at, the term is actually very closely related to holy and to sanctified. You know where it comes from? Saint comes from the idea of sanctified. In fact, William Tyndale, he translated his translation about 500 years ago.

Listen to how he... Did I even put the whole thing down here? Oh, yes, I do. Here's the William Tyndale translation. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the sanctities.

Now, I'm not exactly sure how he would have said that, but it's S-A-Y-N-C-T-E-S. Sancts or sancties. It comes from the word sanctification.

You see the obvious connection there. But that's 500 years ago. They didn't call each other saints.

In fact, I looked up a page of the William Tyndale and actually the first page of the Gospel of John and it says the Gospel of Saint John. And it's got a C in there. Well, at some point, they dropped the C out.

But that's the idea. That's where saint comes from. What does that mean? That means not first and foremost does it mean a holy people in the sense of morally pure.

In the first sense, it means a people set apart and reserved for God. And listen, one of the things we want to recognize is we're not talking about any kind of special higher order of Christians who tower above all the normal Christians. We're talking about anybody who is a Christian is a saint.

They're a sanctity. But I want you to know something. Back 2,000 years ago, the Jews... You know, typically when Paul went into cities, pagan cities, you know what he would find? He would find a population of Jews.

You've got the pagans over here, the Gentiles, and you've got the Jews. Typically, he'd go to the Jews first and go into those synagogues. But I can tell you this, the very idea to those of a Jewish upbringing that that term saint would be applied to a pagan Gentile, they considered it a rape of the sanctified language of Scripture.

Because you know what? The Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, they knew that term saint was applied to Old Testament Israel. It was applied to God's people of the Jewish lineage in the Old Testament. And they considered that a rape of sacred language that such terminology would be ripped out and applied to these pagan Gentiles.

They hated it. And yet, that is the term that God has chose to give to us. Saint.

But, there's something else here. Christians are in the second place faithful. I'll tell you, many of you remember maybe back four months, five months ago, I preached from that very word on the faithfulness of Christians.

And you know what? That whole message stands. Don't believe that anything I say today undoes that message. Because obviously, there is a faithfulness about Christians and it can be proved from many different texts.

I'm just not so convinced anymore that this is the text that I would have wanted to prove it from. And I'll show you in a second what I mean. The term faithful in the original is the term pistos.

P-I-S-T-O-S. And it carries two very distinct meanings. Two.

The first meaning is, here you are in Ephesians, you can go over to chapter 6. I'll show it to you. Chapter 6, verse 21. Paul says, so that you may know how I am and what I am doing, Titchikus, the beloved brother and faithful minister.

See, there's the exact same word. Faithful minister. Basically, what does it mean? You know, you talk about a faithful dog.

What are you talking about? What do you mean? You're talking about you're loyal. Yes. Trustworthy.

Reliable. Loyalty. That is one definite meaning to the word faithful.

But there is a second meaning. And it comes from really the old meaning of faithful. Faithful or full of faith.

Let me show it to you used this other way. Look over at John 20 with me. Basically, it refers in the second usage to someone who is a believer.

Someone who exercises faith or is full of faith. Faithful in that way. Faithful.

And you see it. Paul uses it both ways. And the only way you can really tell how he's using it is by the context.

But I'll show it to you here. This isn't Paul's usage of it. It's our Lord's usage of it.

John 20, verse 26. Verse 26. Eight days later, his disciples were inside again.

You remember, he showed up. He appeared to his disciples the day that he had rose from the dead. Thomas wasn't there.

Thomas said that he wasn't going to believe unless he was able to actually see the Lord Himself and put his fingers in the wounds. Eight days later, his disciples were inside again. And Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. Then He said to Thomas, put your fingers here and see My hands. Put out your hand.

Place it in My side. Now notice this. Do not apistas, the A that negates, don't disbelieve, but believe.

See, here's our term again. This is the same term that's translated faithful in Ephesians 1. Believe. Be a believer.

Jesus isn't telling Thomas to be reliable and trustworthy and loyal. He's telling him, you need to believe, Thomas. Exercise faith.

Quit with the unbelief. Look, there's not the slightest debate among scholars that there's two entirely separate meanings to this word. Everybody agrees.

It's very plain. It's very obvious in Scripture that it's got two meanings. Faithful as in reliable, loyal, trustworthy, and it also means a believer.

It means somebody who has faith. They're full of faith. They exercise faith.

I tell you that because if we're going to properly interpret Scripture, we need to understand this. And then when we look at Ephesians 1.1, and we're looking at, here's Paul, and he's addressing these Christians. And this is God-inspired language.

What's he saying about them? What is it that we ought to see as real of Christians? We looked at it before. Christians are saints. But Christians are also faithful.

Does that mean loyal? Yes, it does. And we could definitely prove that. And we could look at that reality in various places.

But listen, again, I want to quote Tyndale. Listen to how Tyndale translates this. I like to look at Tyndale often because all of our English translations owe so much to his work.

And because he was the first one who translated the Scriptures from the Greek into the English. Now, he'd been translated from the Latin into the English. Anybody know who did that? Wycliffe, yeah.

But Tyndale did it from the Greek into the English. Now listen to how he translated. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the sanctities which are at Ephesus and to them which believe on Jesus Christ.

He took that term to mean believer, not loyal. I looked at 17 commentaries. Sixteen of the 17 commentators were quite convinced this should be translated believer.

That it means believer. Listen to Alexander McLaren. My wife just discovered this guy.

Scottish Baptist. Actually, a contemporary of Charles Spurgeon. Listen to how he says it.

Faithful here, of course, does not mean as it usually does in our ordinary language, true, trusty, reliable, keeping our word, but it means simply believing, having faith. Lloyd-Jones says faithful is a somewhat unfortunate translation because we tend to give not a primary meaning to this term, but once more a secondary meaning. And he means we tend to give it the meaning of reliable and trustworthy.

He says essentially this word faithful means exercising faith. Now you see, McLaren says, of course it means that. So many of the commentators said that.

They said it like that. Well, of course, it's clear. And I'm looking and I'm thinking, but they never say why it's so clear.

And brethren, I'll tell you, you know what I think actually makes it kind of clear? It's the first chapter of Ephesians itself. You say, how so? Just notice. Look with me at Ephesians 1. First, when we're told about all the spiritual blessings that are ours, notice the first one that's gone to.

Saints. Notice it in v. 4. You say, the word saint's not there. No, but listen.

If we remember what saint is, it's a people set apart as holy to God. Notice this. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.

You know what's very interesting? He doesn't run right to faith. He doesn't run right to believing. He runs first to the fact that God chose us to be saints.

God chose us to be holy. Does He get to talking about faith? Yes. And when He does, it's not reliability.

It's us believing. You say, where does that happen? Well, go to v. 12. We who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

And then in v. 13, in Him you also, when you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, you're sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance. Notice v. 15, for this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What's very interesting is this, the idea of being chosen by God to be a saint or to be holy unto God, the idea of us believing and all the time just swimming in the language of being in Christ, in Him, in the Beloved, that permeates this first chapter.

Nothing is said about reliability when it comes to faith or faithful. Not reliability. Not trustworthy.

It's the fact that we as Christians are believers. Now look, I'm belaboring this for a reason. Because as I said last week, if there's anything that's important in our day, it is that we understand who Christians are.

We live in a country where our President says he's a Christian. He brags on Allah and the Qur'an and yet he's a Christian. We live in a country where multitudes profess to be Christians.

And you know what? Those of us that go door to door, you know what we're finding out? We are finding out that people do not know the Gospel. Just recently, Glenn, Crystal and I, we were in somebody's apartment and I asked, after we told them the Gospel, have you ever heard anything like this before? And one of them shook their head, no, never heard anything like this. I was downtown with Kevin Williams and I remember we talked to somebody down there by the Alamo.

And same thing, after we got done with the Gospel, I asked them, have you ever heard anything like this before? Nope, never heard anything like this before. We've got people running around all over the place claiming to be Christians and yet it is amazing. There's an ignorance.

We heard in the first hour about the former ignorance. Brethren, sometimes we have this idea because we were formerly ignorant, we've come into the truth. We've got this idea that people should know.

But you know what we're hearing about? John Seitzman can come back from Nepal and say that he's hearing about whole villages where they don't know the name of Christ. But I'll tell you this, we live in a day when people do not know the Gospel and they do not know what true Christianity looks like. We've got people deceived and the ignorance is not just their former ignorance, it's their present ignorance.

And we need to blow that away. What is true Christianity? Well, on the first place, on the first footing, the first foundation, Christians are saints. They are a people set aside by God.

And in the second place, they are believers. They believe something different from what the rest of the world believes. Listen, the whole world believes something.

But what Scripture talks about is the former ignorance. In other words, what we formerly believed isn't what we believe now. Formerly, we did believe a whole bunch of things, but it's called deception and it's called ignorance.

Why? Because what we believed was a lie. And there was a whole lot that we didn't believe, that we needed to believe, that we were ignorant of. Brethren, this is where our evangelism comes in just as well as our own self-examination.

Are we the real deal? Are we saying the real thing? Are we proclaiming what true Christianity is to the world? We need to blow the ignorance away. Why? Because ignorance kills. You know what? Ignorance is not harmless.

Ignorance is not bliss. Ignorance is deadly. Ignorance takes people to hell.

The former ignorance we heard about from Peter in the first hour is an ignorance you die in. You will die in your sins. True Christians are saints.

And if there is Christianity, and it's all over the place that's being proclaimed that is not holy, there is a form of godliness, but it denies the power of... Brethren, it is a deadly religion. All that says it's Christianity is not Christianity. And you know what you would have found if you would have viewed these saints who are in Ephesus? You would have found they believe things that they didn't believe formerly.

Oh, you've got people running all around Ephesus and what did they believe? They believed in Artemis. Diana. The temple was there.

They believed in the stone, the sacred stone, that was thrown down from heaven by Jupiter. They believed in those things. But I'll tell you what, Christians believe something the rest of the world doesn't believe.

And if you would ask these Christians, they were a group of people and they believed something. What did they believe? They didn't believe that it was a sacred stone that got thrown down from heaven. They believed that the Son of God came down from heaven.

And not from Jupiter, that God Almighty, the living God, sent His Son into this world. Brethren, I'll tell you this, they believed in the incarnation. They believed that God came from the halls of heaven and He came here.

They believed that. They believed that Jesus of Nazareth was not just like you and me. He was not just like every other human being on the face of this earth.

They believed that was Immanuel. That was God with us. This is the Son of God, the Word of God.

And He's come down. And as I heard Piper say last night out drifting off to sleep, my wife had a message on it. He took upon Himself humanity.

He took upon Himself a body. He had to have a forehead. Why? To have something for the thorns to pierce.

And He had to have a broad back. Why? For the sake of the scourge. And He had to have a brain and a spinal cord with all the nerves.

Why? So that He could feel the fullness of the pain with no vinegar, with no sour wine, with no gall. He endured it. He felt it.

He would not numb Himself. He went to that cross and He was determined to bear our punishment and bear our guilt. And He took it there in a body.

He became like us so that He could become a mediator between God and man. Somebody who could satisfy God as a man being righteous, as a man dying the death of a man, in our place. See, they believed that.

They believed that. The rest of them, they didn't believe. Well, they believed Artemis and you've got to fertility and we've got to appease and placate.

And these people recognized, no, none of that! We cannot placate with our offerings and with our produce and with anything that we do in our lives. They recognized, one came into this world to save sinners and it's not Artemis and it's not Jupiter. It is the Son of God Himself rejected by those pagans, rejected by the Jews that were there.

They believed that. And I'll tell you what else they believed. They believed that He died, but He didn't stay dead.

He came out of the grave. They believed that. What? Resurrection? Yeah, you better believe.

They believed that. They believed that after many infallible proofs, 40 days, He showed Himself to above 500 people. They knew it! Those Christians knew it! The testimony went all over through the churches.

And this day, probably some of those people were still alive. Maybe some of them have even migrated over to Ephesus. People who had seen Him resurrected.

Can you imagine seeing somebody who saw Christ resurrected? I mean, a guy come like that, and I don't know what you would do, but I would swell the guy. I would grab him and pull him aside. You tell me everything.

Tell me! Tell me! Tell me! Why? Don't you want to know more? Don't you always want to know more? Even more than what the Bible tells you? Isn't that the longing of your heart? That's not a bad desire. Here are these people, and you know, they stood out. Why? Because they had holy lives and because they believed something like the rest of the people did not believe.

And they were telling the people what they believed. I mean, Paul says when he went to Ephesus, he fought with beasts at Ephesus. There were people there.

Isn't that the same place where Demetrius the coppersmith was at? They were taking their trade away. These people are saying that these gods that we're making with our hands, they're all a deception. This is having an impact on my ability to put bread on the supper table for my family.

And so you better believe they recognized it. You better believe they knew it. Paul, he was over there at that hall of Tyrannus for what? Above a number of years.

He was preaching and teaching and the Word was going everywhere. They believed. They were believers.

But that's not all. Saints believe certain things. But, brethren, I want you to notice this.

Notice the order of these terms. And again, I don't think this is random because it's not random in the first chapter of Ephesus. Nor is it random in other places in our Bibles.

Saints first. Believers second. And I think we need to look at this because I think most of us have this idea about Christianity.

Justification, then sanctification. We're justified by faith, so we would have the idea of believing and being justified, and then sanctification. And that's the idea of progressively becoming more and more holy, more and more Christlike.

And yet, isn't it interesting? Saint is first. Believer is second. And you say, well, maybe that's random or maybe just standard protocol demands.

I mean, if you're going to address somebody, maybe it just came off the tongue easier to say saint first. I don't believe that. I believe there is doctrinal significance to the order here and I'll show you why.

Turn over to 2 Thessalonians 2.13. This is not a random reality when we begin to study very closely. We will see that the idea of sanctification is more than once, it's often put before our faith and obedience to Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2.13 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, beloved by the Lord.

Now notice this, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved. Now this is very interesting because this is similar language to Ephesians 1, 3, and 4 where you've got this idea that God chose them to be holy and blameless. They were chosen in Christ.

Notice this. God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. But again, it's interesting the sanctification is first.

Faith, belief, is second. Okay, go back to Ephesians again. I want to draw this reality again out of Ephesians 1 for you.

In Ephesians 1, notice v. 4. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Again, you get that idea. And then faith, like I showed you before, the hope in Christ is found in v. 12.

The believing in Christ is found in v. 13. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is found in v. 15. And so it's interesting that in His initial salutation, saint first, believer second.

Full of faith. Faithful. Second.

That's what we find in 2 Thessalonians. That's what we find as He opens up these realities in Ephesians 1. Listen, what you have to recognize is this. What He is going to begin talking to us about is all the spiritual blessings that have been heaped upon us being in Christ.

And as He goes through and He begins to elaborate what those blessings are, the very first thing that He goes to is the fact that God chose you. And He didn't choose you just to be saved. He chose you to be holy.

He chose you to be a people for Himself. He didn't just choose you to miss out on hell. He chose you to be holy and blameless before Him.

And then it's verses later before you get to the fact that there's faith involved in this. You get to chapter 2 before you find out that we're saved by grace through faith. It's a gift of God.

But He starts on the note of sanctification. If you don't see it, that's the idea of holy. Being chosen to holiness.

Being chosen to sanctity. To sanctification. Being chosen as sanctified ones.

Being chosen as saints. That's the idea. It's the same thing.

Even though you don't see the word saint there, it's the same idea. There's a sequence. Now, why do I emphasize this? I emphasize this for this fact.

That you cannot be a believer unless you're a saint. And that's critical. That's critical to what Christians are.

Are you a person who's been set aside for God? Holy, blameless. Is that the reality about your life? Is there evidence? Obvious evidence? Listen, we need to recognize, we become new creations in Christ Jesus. Old things pass away.

All things become new. There is such a thing as being born again. True Christianity is supernatural.

There is a non-supernatural form of Christianity that's pumped in this world. Oh, I believe. I believe in God.

I believe this. Craig's been helping James out with some of the emails. And Craig's been telling me about, and I come across this too, it's amazing how often we see emails where people start the email, oh, I know I'm saved.

Oh, I know I'm born again. But I live in sin. I'm a slave to sin.

Would you please explain to me how this can be? That doesn't require a long answer. It can't be. You basically are describing something that the Bible says does not exist.

Unholy believers. And what Scripture is saying is, listen, this is supernatural. God chooses.

God is active. God sets people aside. And that's first, before we even look at being a believer.

Yes, believers believe. Believers believe what Christians believe. They believe the Scriptures.

They believe the Gospel. They believe the realities about Jesus Christ. But first and foremost, there are people set aside.

And I would just say this, has that happened to you? I mean, is there evidence in your life that you are a holy vessel put aside by God? Has something like that really happened in your life? I don't mean did you just decide one day, oh, I think I'm going to become a believer and I think I'm going to do this and I'm going to start going to church and I'm going to try to get my life right. You see, that's not the picture that we get in Scripture. It's the picture that God chooses to set a people aside.

And that's first. And then, believer. He's not talking about then how reliable we become.

He's not saying then you become reliable, though that's true. The idea is you're a saint first. And then you're a believer.

And that's the direction He goes in in this first chapter. Brethren, here's the question. Why is it that we so often think of believing first and then we go through a process of sanctification? Well, I know why that is.

Because most of the time when we think about sanctification, we're thinking about the progressive reality. Moving to more and more Christ-likeness. But the truth is that the idea of being a saint and the idea of sanctification and the idea of holiness is very often in Scripture set forth as a positional reality, not a progressive reality.

It's God placing us aside for Himself. And it's real. This isn't artificial.

This really happens. It's not make-believe. Do you know something about that in your life where God has set you aside? How does it happen? Well, it happens in the mind.

It happens in what you believe. It happens in the desires that you have. It happens in the love that you have.

It happens there, brethren. We heard in the first hour about these passions of our former ignorance. That's where it happens.

We have new desires. We hunger and thirst for righteousness. The old has passed away in what sense? That we see things.

We recognize things. We believe things. It's like the light's been turned on.

We see the glory of Christ. We have a love for Him and we see Him in ways we did not see before. And we want to live our life for Him now.

That is the indication of being set aside. We recognize we're not like the world anymore. Well, I'm like the world, but I just plastered religion on it.

Look, it happens different with different people. Some people, it is dramatic. It is something that the moment, the day, can be identified with other people, it's more gradual.

But whichever way it happens, the truth is you are a new creation in Christ. You are one of these people that have been put aside by God. And then the faith follows that.

No man is a believer who is not first a saint. One of these people that clearly have been set aside for God. Clearly have been chosen by Him.

A people chosen to be holy unto Himself. And then according to the gift of God, we believe. We become believers.

And then there's a third reality here. And it's in Christ Jesus. Now, I don't look at this like necessarily three different separate identifications or characteristics of the Christian.

Although, I want to look at them that way. But it's more like you have two qualities that are being modified by the third. In other words, when Paul addresses these people, he's not saying that their faith is in Jesus Christ.

He is saying they are in Jesus Christ. He is saying that as saints, they are saints in Christ. As believers, they are believers in Christ.

I'm not even sure as a young believer, as I started reading Scripture, that I probably didn't even recognize. You know, when you're a young Christian, you're looking for the bigger thoughts and the bigger ideas. And there's a lot of language in Scripture that you can pass over when you're a young believer.

It's just there's words there, but you're not really, you know, in Christ, in Christ, okay, whatever. You know, you read past those because they're everywhere. It's almost like, well, it's religious language.

You know, it kind of gets plugged in there. I want you to get a feel for how prominent this idea of being in Christ actually is. Look with me at chapter 1. Verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us... notice this, in Christ.

I'm sure as a young believer, would have read right over that. In Christ. Notice verse 4. Even as He chose us in Him.

Notice verse 5. He predestinated us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. Notice 6. He has blessed us in the Beloved. 7. In Him, we have redemption through His blood.

You see how this... I don't know that this in Christ terminology is found anywhere else in the Bible in just such repetition as it is found here in this first chapter of Ephesians. And we keep reading. 9. According to His purpose which He set forth in Christ.

Notice 10. As a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him. 11.

In Him, we have obtained an inheritance. 12. First to hope in Christ.

13. In Him, you also, when you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him. You see, the idea here is we see that us being chosen as a people holy and us having faith, being believers, we see that there's kind of an order in Scripture where us being sanctified or being saints is set forth before being a believer.

And yet, both of them are swimming in the reality of being in Christ. It's like that is the chief characteristic. It's kind of like the holiness of God when you go to describing God's attributes.

Holiness cannot be separated from any of God's attributes. If He's merciful, it is a holy mercifulness. If God is angry, it is a holy anger.

You see, it describes everything about God. And that's what we find with this characteristic. To be in Christ covers everything.

If we're adopted, it's in Christ. If we're chosen to holiness, it's in Christ. If we're believers, it's in Christ.

If there's a plan, it's in Christ. If there's any good for us, it's all in Christ. We could keep going on here, but here's what I want us to do.

I want us to think about what this means. Because you can hear the terminology. See, if I talked about being in a sleeping bag or in this room or in this pulpit, you have a very physical, positional idea.

You form a picture in your mind. But we're talking about a spiritual reality here. What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? Because this is life and death.

In Christ Jesus. To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, here's the first thing I want you to feel about this. It is a positional reality.

In is a preposition. And in the Greek, that's basically what you have. You have the word in.

More akin to en. But it's a preposition. And what do prepositions do? Can anybody shoot off some of the prepositions? In, out, above, on.

What do prepositions do? They basically identify the relationship of one person or object to another. That's basically what they do. If I am in Christ, what that is doing is describing my relationship to Him.

Physically, where are these people? To the saints who are in Ephesus. Physically, they're in Ephesus. Spiritually, they're in Christ.

One thing we have to recognize about physical realities is in many ways, I'm in a lot of different places. I'm in this shirt. I'm in this pulpit.

I'm in this room. I'm in this city. I'm in this state.

And I could be in many different cities. But you know, spiritually, there's only two cities. And you're in one or the other.

There's the city of destruction. Or there's the city of God. You're in Christ or you're in Adam.

Lots of choices in the physical realm of where we are. But there's only one of two places. That's true of everybody here.

You're either in Christ or you're out of Christ. And I'm not saying whether you're religious or whether you're at church today or whether you hold a Bible in your hand. I'm not talking about whether you grew up in a Christian family.

I'm not talking about whether other people called you Christians or called you brother and sister. I'm talking this is a reality. You are in Christ or you are out of Christ.

And though we may not recognize the reality of it, though we may not be able to see it with our physical eyes, it's true. And it's just as true as the fact that we're in this room. And it is a greater reality because it has to do with your everlasting state.

It is a positional reality. That's the first thing. The second thing is that the idea of being in something... Think about this.

We talked about baptism yesterday. And the fact that biblical baptism is by immersion, not sprinkling. If I'm immersed, I'm in the water.

You see, to be inside something means it surrounds me. Oh, this is a sweet picture. If I'm in Christ, I'm surrounded by Christ.

If I'm in water, I'm surrounded by that water. If I'm in a sleeping bag, I'm surrounded by that sleeping bag. If I'm in this pulpit, I'm surrounded by this.

If a child is in its father's arms, it means they are surrounded by those arms. To be in Christ means I'm surrounded by Christ. That's a good thought.

He embraces the believer in his own life, in the embrace of his everlasting arms. The saint. That's who we find are in Christ.

Saints, believers in Christ. They all go together. It's not possible that one of these characteristics fits you and the others don't.

They all go together. All or none. How about a third? This is a spiritual union.

Now, I know I said it before, but I want you to see this in greater reality. Turn to 1 Corinthians 6. This is a truth you don't want to forget. If this truth has never grabbed you before, I hope it might grab you right now.

1 Corinthians 6.15 Paul is seeking to use argumentation meant to convince these Corinthians that having sex with prostitutes is not a good thing. You might think, wow, that's amazing that he would even have to try to convince Christians that that's not a good thing. But let's be glad that he did have to because in doing so, he shares with us some precious truths about what it means to be in Christ.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Your bodies are members of Christ. That's one thing. To be in Christ means you're in His body.

You're a part of the body. You're connected to Him. He's the head.

You are the body. You are a member of His. You are a part of His body.

Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? You see, there is a realness, a trueness about the fact that a Christian is a member of Christ. It's so real, it ought to impact

what we do with ourselves. Because we are holy vessels.

You didn't just go and use holy vessels in the Old Testament for any use. God would kill you. You would be cut off from your people.

We are holy vessels. There are certain things that are appropriate to do with a holy vessel and certain things that are not appropriate. But notice, do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For as it is written, the two will become one flesh.

And notice this, but he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. If you are a Christian, if you're in Christ, if you're joined to the Lord, you are one spirit with Him. Just think here.

Let's think of a man and a woman because marriage is a picture of the union that we have with Christ. But just think. Imagine with me.

Imagine a man and a woman who are married that achieve the highest degree. They experience the greatest extents, the farthest reaches of the biblical ideal of the married life. The two become one.

Their love for one another, their esteem for one another, their intimacy with one another, their communication with one another reach the highest of the biblical ideal of what marriage should look like. Their wishes, their desires blend together. Their lives blend together.

What affects each of them affects the other. Their lives are swallowed up in one another. You see, as you begin to think about that, where your thoughts become... you almost know what the other person is thinking.

You know them so well. Think about the highest reaches. Intimacy gets deeper and deeper and deeper.

The intimate association, what does it do? It tends to create conformity. They actually become like one another the more you get close to the other. So the true Christian in their conformity to Christ, in their unity to Christ, in their intimacy with Christ, in their association with Christ, in their purposes, in their desires, in their thinking.

Have you ever read in Scripture, we have the mind of Christ? Have you ever just stand back and say, that's not just because we have Scripture. It's because what is in Scripture that Christ has given to us, our minds have been opened to it. And we grasp it.

And we have a heart like His. And our desires are made like His. And our loves are made like His.

Our passions are like His. Our conformity from one degree of glory to another, we become like Him, which means what we are, who we are, how we think, the mind, what goes on in our minds. It's becoming more and more like Him.

There's a spiritual inness. Listen, J.C. Philpott, one of these old, some of you probably have not heard of him, but an old strict Baptist or particular Baptist. Listen to what he says.

He says, the Spirit of Christ in Christ's glorious person and the Spirit of Christ in a believing heart meet together. This is what it is to be in Christ. And he says meeting together.

And you know what he pictures? And we've all seen this. He's imagining rain that falls on a window. And you've been there in a car or you've been looking out a window and the rain is coming.

And you've seen the drops as they start dripping down the window. And have you ever seen two and there are two drops and they're coming down and they come together? Or you see one coming down and there's another drop on the window that's not moving and you watch it. And you know when it hits it, it's just going to take off because Philpott sees us being in Christ like those two drops of rain running down a pane of glass kiss into each other and are no longer two but one.

Now if you've been ever blessed with a manifestation of Christ, your spirit has melted into His. And you have felt the sweet union and communion with Him that you saw as with His eyes, heard as with His ears, felt as with His heart, and spoke as with His tongue. We're one spirit with Him.

And again, this is not imaginary. This is real. You see, sometimes we get so taken up with this wretched man syndrome that we forget we do have the mind of Christ which means we really do love the same things and we desire the same things and we really are becoming like Him.

And we're melding together with Him and who He is in Christ. Here's a fourth reality. It is a union like that which the Father has with the Son and the Son has with the Father.

John 17.21 Listen to this. You don't have to turn there. But listen to these words.

Just as... This is our Lord speaking. This intercessory prayer in John 17. Just as... Lock on to those two words.

Just as You, Father, are in me, just like that, and I in You, just as, Father, You are in me, the Son, and I am in You, the Father, that they, that's us, Christians, the saints, the believers, also may be in us. Just as You are in me and I am in You, may they be in us. Just... And you see, a lot of people start imagining the Father is God and the Son is God, and it just becomes incomprehensible.

I don't think that's where you want to go. I think what you want to picture is the Father's relationship to the Son as the Mediator, as our Representative, and as our Head. And we are in His body.

And being in His body... Brethren, you know what Scripture says? In Christ, you are seated in the heavenly places. In Christ, we are part and parcel with Christ. In Christ, there becomes realities that are true between the Father and the Son that you and I have full access to.

The same things. Brethren, the thing is to be in Christ. We don't think about this enough.

We don't go here enough. But the realities behind this... Brethren, I'll just tell you, repeatedly studying the Scriptures, you get blown away to recognize, to be a Christian. Brethren, what it is to be a Christian is so out of this world.

It is so phenomenal. It is so much a privilege. It is such a treasure.

It is so valuable. Brethren, if we could just grasp it, if you were to find out as a Christian, well, there's no hell, but there's annihilation. Or there's no hell, but you don't get what's promised in Scripture.

You get what the Jehovah's Witnesses promise, and you can have this world for the rest of your life and just stay here and basically live like this. Or you can be like the Mormons where you get your own planet

somewhere. Brethren, if you know what true Christianity is and any of those things you ended up finding out were a reality, there would be reason to just weep buckets of tears even if you were going to escape hell.

Because this thing is so great. We can't really... Paul could just say eternal weight of glory. Because these things surpass words.

Just as. Something about the same essential nature of the relationship Father has with Son that's true of us being in Christ. Another thing, this in Christ, it's a union of life.

Just listen to these. In Him was life. You see, you're either in Him or you're out of Him.

And to be in Him, remember what He said about He's the vine, we're the branches? You've got to be connected to Him if you would have life. Abide in Me and I in you. He says, I am the vine, you are the branches.

We're told this, in Christ shall all be made alive. We're told this, I've been crucified with Christ who is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Our life is tied up in Him.

Our life is His. His life is ours. Here in Ephesians 2, verses 4 and 5, we recognize that we are raised together with Him.

We are raised to life with Christ, in Christ. We're raised together. Or you have this, in Colossians.

What a truth. We find this in 1 John. Whoever has the Son has life.

But in Colossians, what a glorious statement in 3, verse 4. When Christ who is your life appears to be in Christ is to be connected with life. Or this, it's a union of representation. As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

We know this. This is the great truth that is taught in Romans 5. To be in Christ means Christ is my federal head. He's my representative.

To be in Him means that all that happens to Him happens to me. All that is His is mine. Did He come and earn a righteousness? That righteousness is mine.

I'm made the righteousness of God. Remember? Remember those little two words that are attached there in the last verse of 2 Corinthians 5. What is it? In Him. In Him, I become the righteousness of God.

He who knew no sin became sin. But it's in Him. Not outside of Him.

It's in Him. In Him. And in Him, I'm represented.

In Him. Notice what Scripture says. If I'm in Him, did He die? Yes, I died.

Was He buried? Yes, then I'm buried. Was He crucified? Then I'm crucified with Christ. Did He rise from the dead? Then I rose from the dead.

Does He have a righteousness? Then that righteousness is mine. Brethren, is He seated at the right hand of the Father? Yes, then so am I. Brethren, He's got His eye on you. You are betrothed to Him.

He knows who His own are. And He's watching them. And He is jealously protective.

And He means to bring you there holy and blameless before Him. He means to gather you. You are in Him.

You are His. You are connected to Him. Your life is in Him.

There is a union of representation. It's a head to the rest of the body. That shows up here.

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head into Christ. What this tells me, this is a dynamic union. In other words, I'm growing into Him more and more.

This is speaking the truth in love. We are to grow up in every way. We are to grow out of self into Him.

Into love. Out of self-indulgence and self-exaltation and self-growing into that which is only to be found in Him. It's like fertile soil.

I'm thinking of places in my own lawn where I dumped really rich soil. And you know, the smart plants send roots over there. That's what we're doing.

We're sending roots deeper and deeper and deeper into Christ. Drawing the nutrients up out of Him. Brethren, this union, I can't see it, but you can sense it.

I can't see it, but I'll tell you this, God makes it happen. God knows it happened. God keeps it permanently from ever coming apart.

One of the things that we find in Scripture, these people that believe you can lose your salvation don't understand what it means to be in Christ. Because Scripture says that if you're in Christ, it is an indissoluble union. Paul says this, I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I'm going to wrap up by saying this. One of the reasons that we have pity parties, one of the reasons that we fall into the depression that we do or the despair that we do, you start grasping truths like this, what it should tell us is we need to repent of our complaining, our lethargy, our depression, our lack of joy, our envying what the world has out there. They don't have anything on us.

We're in Christ. In Christ. These folks, they were saints.

They were full of faith. They were in Christ. And all the while, they lived in Ephesus.

The pagans knew these folks were there. I'll tell you, when this characterizes your life and you live in the reality of these truths, the world out there recognizes there's something different about these people. Brethren, we're saints of God.

We believe that Jesus Christ shed His blood for us. We believe, brethren, we're in Christ. God has put us in a position where we are so intimately connected with Christ and it's never going to go away.

God is never going to let us out. You're connected to Christ. He never lets you go.

He takes care of you. He protects you. He surrounds you.

Surrounded by Christ. Brethren, if these things are true of us, the world's going to sit up and take notice. They may be like the beasts at Ephesus.

They may persecute us. They may seek to stone us. They may seek to kill us.

They may hate it. They may want to stay as far away from here as possible, but they will sit up and take notice. But brethren, I wanted to focus on these things just as we get going.

I know this is only introductory, but this is key. Paul doesn't randomly use these. Paul is going to develop these three concepts throughout chapter 1. Saints, believers, in Christ.

We're going to see this a lot. But oh, what truths come out of this first chapter. It's going to be exciting.

Father, we marvel at the realities of what's true, what's really true about those who are Your people. I marvel. Lord, help us to see, help us to know, help us to remember.

Bring us in remembrance of all these things in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation in the midst of which You've put us. Just like Ephesus of old. Those people were able to be saints and believers and in Christ in Ephesus in the very capital of the Artemis worship and the temple and the sacred stone that came down from the sky.

And Lord, in the midst of all the magic books and the demonic and the darkness and the enemies of the cross, and they were able to be saints, believers in Christ, and so should we by the grace of God. And I pray that it would be said of these, Lord, that we may have the same testimony as true believers I ask in Christ's name, Amen.

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