

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING IN CHRIST

Message by Pastor Joe Keenan – Sunday, March 18, 2007

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” Colossians 2:6

When we receive Jesus Christ into our life, we are born again. Just going to a church, may change us on the outside, but only Christ can change us on the inside, and this change can only occur when we are born again.

When we invite Jesus Christ into our life to be our Savior, He does! He forgives us, cleanses us with His love, and comes to live inside of us. He is faithful to respond to that invitation. But then something else begins to happen after that— this same Jesus, who came into our life at our invitation to Him, now gives us an awesome invitation to come into His life! This is altogether a completely different experience!

It is one thing for us to have Jesus in our life, but it is quite another thing for us to come into Jesus’s life and to be rooted and built up and established and to walk and abide in our Savior. To exemplify this, we can say that it is one thing to have fish for lunch and say that we have a fish inside of us, but it is quite another experience for us to be inside the fish! Jonah literally experienced being inside the belly of a fish! When Jonah was inside the fish, he could not go where he wanted to go, he could not do what he wanted to do. He literally had to do what the fish wanted him to do!

Being in Christ means that we are willing to lay our life down and surrender ourselves to God in order to do His will and not our own. We have probably all seen this many times: a person has sincerely invited Christ to come into their life, but they never took God up on His invitation to them to come into His life, and soon they may even lose the life that God had initially given them! There’s more to God’s plan and purpose in our lives than simply asking Jesus into our life.

In order to come into Jesus’ life, we must be willing to fully abide in Him, crucifying the flesh, and acknowledging Jesus, not just as Savior, but as King of kings and Lord of Lords!

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)

No long and drawn out “cowboy deaths” are allowed! We must die and surrender our life completely to Jesus so that the character of Christ would be manifested in our life right here and now. When this happens, people will no longer see us, but they will see Christ manifested in us!

Also, when we are truly “dead” and our life is hid in Christ, temptation no longer has power over us! Simply put, temptation simply cannot attract a dead person. The Bible says in Romans 6 that we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to righteousness.

Being hid in Christ, dead to sin, and alive to righteousness has great benefits! There are many great and precious promises that become ours when we are in Christ. The greatest of these benefits is the Rapture as it continues on saying in verse four of Colossians 3: *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”*

Although this may seem controversial to some Christians, it is clear in Scripture that the Rapture is called a “reward”. When we come to Christ and He washes us in His Blood and saves us by His grace, this is His mercy and love, but the Rapture is a **reward**, as Jesus explains: *“Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12)*. This reward is **not** for people who have merely been born again and have not yet come into Christ. To win this “reward” we have to be in Christ and living right! The Bible says that it is the **“dead in Christ”** that will be raptured when Christ comes (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*).

All of the abundance that the Bible promises is only found “in Christ”. Colossians 2:9-10 talks more about this: *“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power.”* Regardless of what our need may be, it can always be found in Christ! We must value this relationship of being in Christ. As Jesus said in John 15, a branch can only bear fruit as long as it abides in the vine.

There are so much more that God wants us to experience in Christ. *“In Whom are hid **all the treasures** of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3)*. Even just one small nugget of revelation that we receive by being in Christ can change our entire life for all eternity! Treasure is something that we have to search out! People have sacrificed their lives simply because they have heard about some kind of earthly treasure here or there, how much more we should give ourselves to find that treasure in Christ! Rather than just sitting in a pew and being religious, we must long to search for these hid treasures with a passion! Mere “head knowledge” can do nothing for us in the spiritual realm. When we have a tangible experience in Christ, it transforms our very life.

“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20) Sometimes people wonder why the promises just don't seem to work. In Acts 19:13-17, we read of seven men that tried to imitate Paul by using the Name of Jesus to cast out demons. They ended up getting beaten up and they all ran out of the house naked! What happened? Why didn't the “promise” work? Because these men had no relationship with God! If we want to see the promises of God explode in our lives, we must enter into a relationship with Him!

The Bible tells us how David loved God passionately. He was almost like a New Testament saint living in the Old Testament times! David did things for God that normally would have brought down the judgment of God on any normal person, but because David's heart was right with God, God was pleased with him. David knew this and he was ever so careful to watch over his life in God. This can clearly be seen in the fact that even though David had to live like a fugitive, running and hiding from King Saul, he never allowed any of these unfavorable and miserable conditions to get “inside of him.” He was careful so that his life with God could remain pure and without contamination. Junk was all around him, no doubt, but David never allowed it to get on the inside.

What secret did David have to enable him to live in such a way? The story found in 1 Samuel 25 is one which reveals a little bit of David's secret . . .

Samuel, who was like a spiritual father to David, had just died (verse 1) and David was surely feeling lonely and getting weary of all these problems with King Saul. At that time, David's men had been watching the ranch of a man named Nabal. David decided to ask Nabal for some food for his men. Nabal answered back so disrespectfully that David put on his sword and was ready to march all his men out to attack and destroy Nabal and all he owned. When Abigail, Nabal's wife, heard this, she quickly ran out and humbly advised David not to do this. She said, *“This shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself.” (verse 31).* Because of David's relationship to the Lord, he was sensitive enough to recognize and respect the anointing upon this woman. He realized that it was God speaking through her (we, too, should recognize when God sends people to warn us!). It is in this speech of Abigail's that we find her revealing where David's real secret was:

*“Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: **but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life** with the Lord thy God and the souls of thine enemies, them shall He sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.” (1 Samuel 25:29).*

Abigail was saying that even though there were enemies all around David, she knew that since he was abiding in the Lord, none of those things would ever harm him. In fact, God was going to put those enemies in a sling-shot and sling them far away from David.

We, too, can have this confidence when we abide in this *“bundle of life with the Lord”*. The Living Bible translates verse 29 in this way: *“You are safe in God's **treasure pouch.**”* It doesn't matter how much trash and negative things people may try to speak into our lives, when we are hidden in God's *“treasure bag,”* we are safe and secure!

There is a place in God where the devil can't harm us! There is a refuge in God. There is a secret place where the enemy can't touch us. David himself made this same proclamation about this protection he had in the Lord his God:

“For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.” (Psalm 27:5).

We need to understand something about the love of God. Regardless of how we may have been living, the love of God reached out and touched us. Perhaps we may have resisted at first, but that love, like a rope around us just began tugging and pulling on us until we finally surrendered. It's the love of God that draws us into a relationship with Jesus. In the Old Testament, they would tie a rope around the animal that was to be sacrificed. *“Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar” (Psalm 118:27).* That rope represents God's love! When God's love begins working, we become His “prisoners of love”! Even though we have total freedom of choice, it is out of this love that we choose to say “no” to sin, and “yes” to living for God. As we choose to hold on to that love, God will wrap us up securely in this “bundle of His love”, He will hide us in His “treasure bag” and our life will begin to explode with God's abundance!

It is His love that can bundle us up just like did for King David! Let's not rebel against that love! Let's surrender to the Lord and give our life to Him. Let's allow Jesus to wrap us up tighter and tighter in His wonderful love! What an abundance there is in Christ! Let's not miss out on it! Amen.