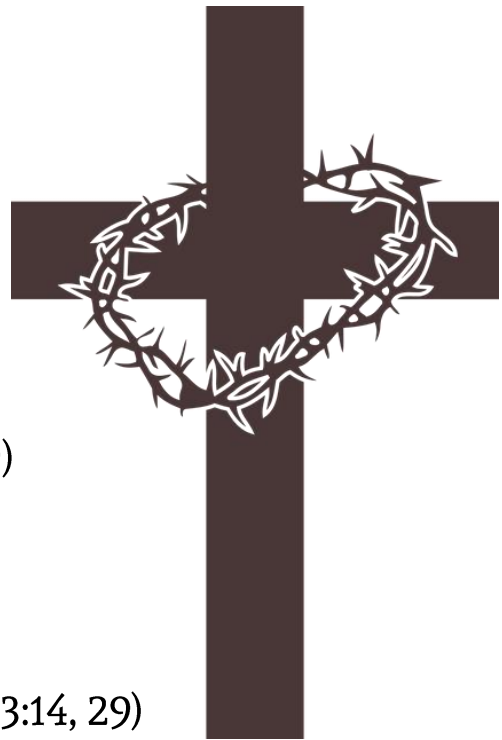

*Benefits
of being
in Christ*

By Lydia Quillin

In Christ we have...

1. Redemption (Romans 3:23-24)
2. Life (Romans 6:11; 23)
3. Pardon (Romans 8:1-2)
4. Love (Romans 8:38-39)
5. Unity (Romans 12:4-5)
6. Sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:2)
7. Grace (1 Corinthians 1:4)
8. Wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30)
9. Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
10. Freedom (Galatians 2:4-5)
11. Justification (Galatians 2:16)
12. The blessing of Abraham (Galatians 3:14, 29)
13. Adoption (Galatians 3:26, Ephesians 1:5)
14. Blessing (Ephesians 1:3)
15. Hope (Ephesians 1:12-13)



Introduction

Jesus came to die for many reasons, and His resurrection accomplished many things. One of the results of Jesus' work on the cross is that we as believers are now united with Him. We are now "in Christ."

We read in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." In this verse we see the union that takes place when we become Christians. Christ lives in us, and we now live for Him. Following are fifteen devotionals covering different benefits of being in Christ.

Day One

In Christ we have redemption.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... (Romans 3:23-24)

The word “redemption” is not one that we are very familiar with in our culture. However, Paul’s readers would have understood clearly what he was trying to say, because slavery was a common practice in those days. Redemption means to pay a price or a ransom to buy someone’s freedom. Slaves could be redeemed, or freed, if someone was willing to pay the price.

Slavery may have been abolished many years ago in America, but the truth is that we were all once slaves. We were born into slavery because of our sin nature. By sinning, we chose to make Satan our master, and as a result, we failed to meet God’s standards. We failed to be who God created us to be.

We could not free ourselves. Our only hope was that someone would come along and pay the price for our freedom. We needed a Redeemer. Then along came One who said, “I will pay the price with my own blood. I will die in their place. I will redeem them” (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Let us remember the price that Jesus paid. Let us remember the blood that He shed to free us from slavery to sin so that we might in turn serve Him willingly. Let us be thankful for the redemption that we have in Him.

Day Two

In Christ we have life.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus...For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:11, 23)

One of my favorite movies is *The Princess Bride*. At one point, the main character, Westley, has the life sucked out of him. His friends take him to a miracle man, hoping that he can bring Westley back to life. The miracle man says that Westley is only mostly dead, not all dead. He then says, "There's a big difference between mostly dead and all dead. Mostly dead is slightly alive. With all dead, well, with all dead there's usually only one thing you can do...Go through his pockets and look for loose change."

Unlike Westley, without Christ, we were not just "mostly dead," we were "all dead" in a spiritual sense. We followed Satan, and we lived for our flesh. As a result, we were facing the wrath of God (Ephesians 2:1-3). And there was nothing we could do about it.

Like Westley, however, we needed a Miracle Man to bring us back to life. The miracle man in *The Princess Bride* was a fraud. He knew it would take a real miracle to bring Westley back to life. Our Miracle Man, though, is the real deal. One reason He came was to provide life for those who were dead.

Romans 6 explains that we were united with Christ in His death, and we will also be united with Him in His resurrection. When we are saved, our old self dies and we are raised to new life in Christ (Romans 6:4, 8). We have died to sin and can now live for God.

Let us remember that we will be "united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:5). We have already been raised to new life here on Earth. One day, we will be raised to new life in heaven, one that is free from death, where sin will no longer tempt us. Let us thank God for the life we have in Christ.

Day Three

In Christ we have pardon.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)

When a person is convicted of breaking the law, he stands condemned and must face the sentence handed out by the judge. Unfortunately, we have all been convicted of breaking God's law. We are condemned, and the sentence issued by the Judge is death.

At least, we *were* condemned. When we receive Christ, we also receive a pardon. There is no longer any condemnation for those in Christ. We have been forgiven, and no longer face the penalty of death.

How can a just God offer a pardon to those of us who are obviously guilty? Because we had a Substitute, someone to serve our sentence for us. Jesus died in our place, the just for the unjust, in order to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). Our sins were placed on Him, and we received His righteousness. So, God no longer sees us as guilty when He looks at us. He only sees the righteousness of Christ.

Let's not forget what we have been saved from...condemnation and death. Let's remember the sacrifice that Christ made for us as He took our sin upon Himself. Let's be thankful for the pardon that we have in Christ.

Day Four

In Christ we have love.

For I am 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. (Romans 8:39-39)

We as women are wired to crave unconditional love. That's why little girls are so drawn to fairy stories, where the beautiful princess and the handsome prince live happily ever after. Unfortunately, reality seldom looks like a fairy story. Either we never find our Prince Charming, or our prince ends up being not so charming. Even those of us in good marriages aren't living happily all the time.

However, there is a Prince who loves His bride unconditionally. A Prince who died to save His bride. A Prince who came back from the grave to be united with His bride forever. According to Nancy Guthrie, "The Bible is a love story from beginning to end. It's the story of God choosing, gathering, and beautifying a bride for his Son." We are that bride, and we can have a happily-ever-after ending.

As we see in today's verses, God's love is truly unconditional. God loved us and chose us even when we were totally unlovable, and NOTHING will cause God to stop loving us.

Let us remember our Prince, and the happy ending He has promised us, to be with Him forever in Heaven. Let us thank God for the love we have in Christ.

Day Five

In Christ we have unity.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Romans 12:4-5)

Throughout the New Testament, the Church is described in many different ways—as a building, as a family, as the bride of Christ, and, in today’s passage, as a body. All of these metaphors reflect the unity that exists among those who are in Christ.

When you think about the way a body works, it’s actually incredibly amazing. Each part of the body has a different function, but all the parts work together in harmony to keep the body functioning as it should. In the same way, all the members of the Church have different gifts and callings, but they all work together to keep the Church functioning.

Being members of the same body should affect how we interact with one another. You don’t see parts of the body fighting against each other or competing for control. Neither should we fight or compete within the Church. Instead, we should use the gifts that God has given us to serve one another. We should support and encourage those with different gifts.

The unity within the body of Christ can be a beautiful thing. Our Church family can be a great source of love and friendship. Let us reach out to each other and support each other. Let’s thank God for the unity that we have in Christ.

Day Six

In Christ we have sanctification.

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours... (1 Corinthians 1:2)

My husband's grandmother just passed away. When she had to move into a nursing home a couple of years ago, she couldn't take many of her possessions with her, so we received her china cabinet and her set of china. We've never actually used the china, though. All this time, the dishes have been on display in the cabinet, set apart for a special occasion, but, so far, we've not had an occasion special enough to use them.

I'm sure we all have items that we have set apart for a special use, things that are valuable or important to us. In a sense, that's what our verse today is about. We have been set apart by God for His special use, which is one of the meanings of the word "sanctified." We are consecrated or dedicated to God, and therefore should avoid anything that might keep us from being useful to Him.

Another use of the word "sanctify" is to purify or cleanse. We see in our verse that we are called to be saints, or holy ones, and we are made holy through the process of sanctification. We are sanctified (set apart) at the time of our salvation, and then we spend the rest of our lives being sanctified (purified). That means that we must attempt to root out any sin in our lives and replace it with holy, Christ-like behavior, worthy of those set apart by God.

Let's be thankful for who we are in Him. In Christ we were chosen and set apart by God for a special purpose. In Christ we are being purified to prepare us for our eternal life in His presence. Let us be thankful for the sanctification we have in Christ.

Day Seven

In Christ we have grace.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus... (1 Corinthians 1:4)

Growing up, I learned the meaning of the word “grace” by the acronym “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” I never really thought about what that means, though. What are God’s riches? Everything! Everything belongs to God, and anything good we have, we’ve received because of God’s grace. Why has God chosen to give us these good things? Because of Christ. Because we are united with Christ, we are heirs with Him, and we will receive every spiritual blessing (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 1:3, 11).

Another definition of grace is receiving what you don’t deserve. When I think about what I DO deserve, it’s death and judgment and damnation. So, then, anything good thing I have is because God has graciously given it to me. All of the benefits we have in Christ—life, pardon, redemption, etc.—are all the result of God’s grace.

God’s grace also gives us what we need to live out the life He has called us to. Paul writes that God’s grace was sufficient for him in his weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). When we’re on fumes and don’t know where we’ll get the strength to carry on, we can pray for God’s grace to see us through. When we’re facing a tough decision or situation and we don’t know what to do, we can pray for God’s grace to give us the wisdom we need to make the right choice. I think so many of us struggle so in our Christian lives because we don’t rely enough on God’s grace.

We have so many blessings to be thankful for. Let’s not forget all the good things that God has lavished on us. Let’s be thankful for the grace we have in Christ.

Day Eight

In Christ we have wisdom.

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption... (1 Corinthians 1:30)

When I looked up the definition of wisdom online, the first result said that wisdom is “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment; the quality of being wise.” According to that definition, you gain wisdom in part by doing and learning, and in part by good old common sense, which is what the world teaches.

The world will try to pawn its wisdom off on you. However, the best the world has to offer is foolishness compared to the wisdom of God. Our knowledge, experience, and good judgement will only get us so far because our mind and reason have been affected by the Fall. We can't know or experience everything, and our judgement can be clouded by our biases or misconceptions, those things that we think are true but are not really.

The Bible says that true wisdom comes from the mouth of God, which would be through His Word (Proverbs 2:6). The Word of God comes in two forms: His written Word, which is the Bible, and the Word Incarnate (or in human form), which is Christ. If we want to be wise, we must go right to the source. James writes that if we lack wisdom all we need to do is ask, and God will give it to us generously (James 1:5).

In fact, He already has given us what we need to be wise. We can gain wisdom by reading and studying the Bible and by imitating Christ, who displayed perfect wisdom in all that He did. Although we live in a foolish world, we can be thankful for the wisdom we have in Christ.

Day Nine

In Christ we have reconciliation.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

(2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

My great-aunt was divorced from her husband for many years, but recently they got remarried. Their damaged relationship was restored, and their differences were resolved. They were reconciled. That's kind of the idea behind our being reconciled with God.

As sinners, our relationship with God was damaged, and we were separated from Him, just as my great-aunt was from her husband. We chose to commit spiritual adultery by loving the world more than we loved God (James 4:4). We made ourselves enemies of God, but the Bible says that we were reconciled to Him by the death of Christ (Romans 5:10). When we trust in the atoning death of Christ to save us from our sin, our damaged relationship with God is restored.

Not only have we been reconciled to God, but we've been given the task of bringing others to reconciliation as well. Think about a marriage counselor working with a couple to reconcile their differences and restore their marriage. Our job is to show people how they can be reconciled to God. Our job is to point people to Christ.

Let's be grateful that our relationship with God has been restored. Let's be grateful that He no longer holds our sin against us. Let's be thankful for the reconciliation that we have in Christ.

Day Ten

In Christ we have freedom.

Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

(Galatians 2:4-5)

I'm sure we've all been around that person, the one who has very strong convictions about what's right and wrong, and who expects everyone else to live by them. Whether or not those convictions are actually biblical doesn't always seem to matter. They judge everyone according to their own standards, not according to Scripture.

This is kind of what Paul is referring to in today's passage. There were "false brothers" within the church who were saying that converted Gentiles needed to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses in order to truly be saved. These Judaizers would sneak into the church and attempt to corrupt the true gospel, which says that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, apart from any works.

Paul contradicts this erroneous teaching by pointing out the freedom that we have in Christ. According to John MacArthur, "Christians are free from the law as a means of salvation, from its external ceremonial regulations as a way of living, and from its curse for disobedience to the law—a curse that Christ bore for all believers." Christ's death set us free from the regulations of the Old Testament. He also redeemed us from slavery to sin. Let's be thankful for the freedom that we have in Christ.

Day Eleven

In Christ we have justification.

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

Christianity is unique in that it is the only religion in the world that does not require a people to work for their salvation. Many people feel like they should do something to earn their salvation. That it should be a free gift from God goes against our natural instinct.

However, as unbelievers, we were found guilty of sinning against God, and we were sentenced to an eternity in hell. Our sin was so great that even eternity would not be long enough to pay the penalty. We could do nothing to change that. So, if we had to work to earn our salvation, we would all be lost.

However, as we stood condemned before God, Someone stepped up and offered to take our punishment upon Himself. He offered to pay the penalty for our sins. He suffered the death that we deserved, and He gave us the righteousness that He had earned. Jesus took our guilt and gave us His innocence so that we might be justified before God.

Let's be thankful that He took our place and bore our punishment. Let's be thankful that, when God looks at us, He sees Christ's righteousness, not our sinfulness. Let's be thankful for the justification that we have in Christ.

Day Twelve

In Christ we have the blessing of Abraham.

So that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith...And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:14, 29)

I'm sure we're all familiar with the story of Abraham. God made a covenant with him, promising to make him a great nation and to bless all nations through him (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham believed God's promises, and that belief was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). The rest of the Bible is the story of God fulfilling those promises.

In the New Testament, we see that the fulfillment is actually achieved through Christ. The nation that God promises Abraham is not just comprised of his physical descendants. It includes his spiritual children (Romans 4:16, 9:8).

Abraham was justified by his faith. This was before the law was given. No mention is made of any works that Abraham performed. His faith alone is what saved him. All those who also have faith are his children. His faith was in God fulfilling His promises through the coming Messiah. Our faith is in God having already fulfilled His promises through the Messiah.

Let's be thankful that our faith will also be credited to us as righteousness. Let's be thankful that, in Christ, we are heirs to the blessings promised to Abraham.

Day Thirteen

In Christ we have adoption.

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (Galatians 3:26)

He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will... (Ephesians 1:5)

Yesterday we read that all those who place their faith in Christ are spiritual offspring of Abraham. As believers, we become part of Abraham's family. Even more than that, though, when we have faith in Jesus, we become part of God's family.

Adoption, of course, is a legal process. When a child is adopted, he becomes the legal child and heir of his adopted parents. He shares in all the rights and privileges of any biological children that the couple may have. For all intents and purposes, he is their own child, and that can't be undone.

In the same way, once we are adopted into God's family, we become his children, and that can't be undone. He's given us the Holy Spirit as a promise that we will always be His and that we will receive our inheritance when we finally go Home to be with Him forever (Ephesians 1:11-14).

These words from the song "Family of God," written by Gloria Gaither, sum it up nicely:

From the door of an orphanage
To the house of the King-
No longer an outcast,
A new song I sing;
From rags unto riches,
From the weak to the strong,
I'm not worthy to be here,
But, praise God, I belong!

Praise God for the adoption that we have in Christ!

Day Fourteen

In Christ we have blessing.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places... (Ephesians 1:3)

My husband and I were talking recently about how blessed we are. When we look at the financial or relational struggles of some of those around us, it makes our life together seem pretty good. I know, though, that the only reason we have it so good is because God has chosen to bless us.

God has chosen to bless all of us in numerous ways. Sometimes that blessing is material, such as financial freedom or a good marriage. Many of our blessings, though, are the type that can't be seen, only experienced. In Ephesians 1, Paul lists many blessings that come from God, such as adoption, redemption, forgiveness, an eternal inheritance, and the seal of the Holy Spirit. No matter how bad things seem, we can always focus on these blessings, and that should cause us to rejoice.

Often, we take these blessings for granted, or maybe we fail to realize just how significant they are. It's easy to forget about them because they aren't tangible—they can't be seen or touched. When we think about blessing, our focus is often on material things.

Let's take time each day to remember all the unseen blessings that God has given us. We are loved. We are forgiven. We are saved. We can look forward to an eternity in heaven with God. We have so much to be thankful for!

Day Fifteen

In Christ we have hope.

So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit... (Ephesians 1:12-13)

I have family members that are not believers, as I'm sure you do. I've wondered recently, with the death of my husband's grandmother, how can they cope without faith to see them through? How can they deal with losing someone without the hope that they will see her again? How can they face death without the hope of spending eternity with God?

When I use the word hope, I'm not referring to the hope that people have that their team will win the game, or the hope that a girl has that she will get married someday. That kind of hope is just wishful thinking. We'd like for something to happen, but we really have no guarantee that it will.

When we hope in Christ, it's an assurance that what we hope for will come to pass, because it's based on the promises of Christ. I can hope to see my loved one again, and I can hope to spend eternity with God, because He has promised that I will, assuming that I've believed in Him. He's even given us the Holy Spirit to seal us, or protect us, until we reach the ultimate fulfillment of His promises in Heaven.

When life gets hard, when it seems like everything is falling apart, that's when we need to cling to our hope. That's when we must look to the promises of God, and rest in His faithfulness. Thank God for the hope we have in Christ!