

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **GREAT BIBLE LESSONS “Benefits of Being ‘in Christ’ ”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

In the world in which we live today, there are certain benefits to being in the right group or right association. For example, if I am in the credit union, I might get cheaper rates on a loan. If I am a member of Sam’s Club, I might get my groceries a little cheaper. If I am in AAA, I might get a better rate on a motel or on roadside services for my car. However, today I would like to discuss with you the benefits of being in the greatest group you can imagine. Being “in Christ” is by far the most wonderful association you could ever have. The benefits of being in Christ far outweigh any benefits you could ever imagine. Welcome to our study of the benefits of being “in Christ.”

When it comes to benefits of being in Christ, Paul summed it up in Ephesians 1:3 when he wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” What a wonderful passage to illustrate the benefits of being a child of God. Every spiritual blessing in Christ is ours if we are in the body (the church) and if we love the Lord. Today I want us to think about some of the benefits and blessings that come to us as a result of our being in the body of Christ. If you are not a child of God today, I hope that these benefits will motivate you to think about your own life, and what you are missing if you are not living faithfully before Jesus. What are some of the benefits found “in Christ”?

First, redemption is found only in Jesus Christ. The word “redeem” means “to buy back.” A good image of this comes from the Old Testament where someone might have been sold as a slave. Then, when the year of Jubilee arrived, the price could be paid and that person could be “bought back.” That is the idea of being redeemed. We “sold” ourselves to sin, but Jesus paid the price necessary to buy us back. This principle is illustrated in Romans 3:24 where Paul said that we have been “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Jesus is the only way that people can be brought back together with God. It was sin that severed that relationship (Is. 59:1-2), and all of us have sinned (Rom. 3:23). But for that chasm to be spanned, and for us to be brought back into fellowship with God, we must be “in Christ.” Jesus gave His life as a ransom to buy us back. Revelation 5 is a bittersweet scene. John sees some scrolls, but no one can be found to open them. As a result, John begins to weep bitterly. Then the scene changes from that sad and despondent vision to a beautiful image. He looks up and sees the Lamb of God Who was slain before the foundation of the world. The Lamb, then, is able to open the scrolls and redeem those who had all their lifetime been held in bondage by sin. Jesus came to bring salvation to all people. God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). There is “one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Christ brings God and man together because He is the propitiation [substitutionary sacrifice] for our sins, yet “not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2). The price that Jesus paid to redeem us was His own life (Gal. 1:4). Jesus was willing to buy us back with His own life. Titus 2:14 says that He “gave Himself for us, that He

might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people.” The text of 1 Peter 2:24 speaks of Christ “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” If you are not in Christ, then you have not been bought back. You are still separated from God. But one of the benefits of being in Christ is that you can have an intimate relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ.

Another benefit of being in Christ is that there is “no condemnation” to those who are followers of Jesus. On the Day of Judgment when we stand before God, if we have lived faithfully, we will not hear these words: “Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” That statement is not for a child of God because there is no condemnation in Christ. Notice what Paul said about this in Romans 8: 1—“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” If we are children of God, we have the promise that we will not be condemned for all eternity. There is, however, condemnation for those who refuse to obey the Gospel. Mark 16:16 often is remembered for its statement about salvation. But the latter part warns us about condemnation when it says, “He who does not believe will be condemned.” In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we are told that Jesus will come “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” These people will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Think about Luke 16, where we find the account of Lazarus and the rich man in reversed roles. In this life, the rich man had everything, but Lazarus was a beggar. Both men died. Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom, while the rich man awoke in torment in the Hadean realm. He had what we would have to be the most horrible situation imaginable. He was spending eternity lost—where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. Revelation 21:8 says, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” But because Christ has overcome sin, we, too, can overcome sin. Revelation 3:21 teaches us, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” God will not condemn faithful Christians the way He condemns those who have remained in the world. If we remain faithful until the Judgment Day, then we can have boldness. In 1 John 2:25 we are told, “This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” Living faithfully in Jesus means that instead of receiving condemnation, we receive the promised blessing of eternal life. Titus 1:2 says that we live “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.”

Another benefit of being in Christ is that we have victory in Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 15:57 we read, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” Christians have not been defeated. Christ—although He was crucified—became the Victor. He defeated the devil. If we follow Christ, we, too, can have that victory. One of the most beautiful passages to illustrate victory in Christ is 2 Corinthians 2:14, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” As we go out, not only does the aroma of Christ go with us, but because we are in Christ we are able to go out triumphantly because we have won the battle. We need to realize today that we are in a battle. The devil “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). From the time of Genesis 3 when the devil (in the form of a slithering serpent) approached Eve, until the present day, man has been in a battle for his soul. In 2 Corinthians 10:2-5 we are told that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of

God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Right now we are in a battle for our souls! We need to take the time to properly prepare ourselves. Ephesians 6:10-17 teaches us that we must “put on the whole armor of God” so that we can stand against the wiles of the devil. If we do that, and if we fight the battle against Satan every day, we are already the winner of that battle. Christ has won; thus, we have won. The victor has already been decided. The end result is not undetermined. It’s not like a baseball or football game where we do not know what the outcome is going to be. The outcome is this: Christians have already won by being “in Christ.” The question is: Will we be faithful and lay hold of that victory? Paul discussed this victory in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 when he wrote,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Those of us who love and obey Jesus are promised that if we fight the good faith, and if we finish the race, we will receive the crown of righteousness that has been laid up for us. The victory **is** ours—if we remain true to Jesus all the days of our lives!

Another wonderful blessing of being in Christ is that we get a second chance. Just think of how many people would like to have a second chance in life so they could “wipe the slate clean” in regard to all the things that previously had done, and have those things “no more remembered against them” (Heb. 8:12). Being “in Christ” means that we **get** a second chance. Consider the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17, which illustrate what it really means to have a second chance in Christ. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” The life that we once lived in sin no longer exists. It has been wiped from the memory of God and will not be held against us. Before becoming Christians, we were dead in sin. Ephesians 2:12 speaks of people who were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” Ecclesiastes 7:20 reminds us, “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” Paul summed it up in Romans 6:23 by saying, “The wages of sin is death.” All of us at one time were dead in sin, and were headed for a sinner’s doom. But thanks be to God that Romans 6:17 is in the Bible: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.” Let me illustrate this for you. Imagine that you are in the middle of nowhere. It’s about noon, and you decide to look for a place to eat. Way in the distance, on the horizon, you see a restaurant. As you get closer, you approach it and see on the sign the following words: THE OLD SHACK. When you pull up to it, you see that it’s not very appealing to the eye. There are potholes in the parking lot. The sign is hanging unevenly. There are shingles missing from the roof. As you look inside, there is grease everywhere—and lots of bugs! In short, it’s just not a place you think you would like to eat. So, you decide to go elsewhere. But later you come back that same way, and once again you are hungry. This time, however, the place has been completely cleaned up. It has been painted. The shingles have been repaired. The potholes have been filled. The glass is clean. And the sign outside says: “SAME OLD SHACK—UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.” That is what it means to have a second chance. Our bodies are “the same old shacks.” But now they are “under new management.” We have been given a second chance, which means that we must decide to straighten up, live right, and do God’s will. We have a new focus. Romans 6:4 says that we are to “walk in newness of life.” We are to be faithful to Jesus all the days of our lives. Revelation 2:10 teaches us to “be faithful unto death.” We must be good examples to those in the world (1 Tim. 4:12). Thus, one of the wonderful benefits of being in Christ is that we get to start over again. We get a second chance.

Another benefit of being in Christ was mentioned earlier in Ephesians 1:3, but is worth noting again. As a child of God, the fact that I am “in Christ” means that I have access to “every spiritual blessing.” Think about that. Every spiritual blessing that God has afforded His people is to be found in Christ. Let’s turn our attention to Ephesians 1:3, where Paul emphasized this point. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” What are some of the blessings that are ours? What about the privilege of being a child of God? Talk about a spiritual blessing—**that** is it! The very fact that we can be considered a child of the Creator of the Universe, and that we can look up and say, “Our Father who art in Heaven” (Mt. 6:9), is astonishing. John described it in 1 John 3:1 this way: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” What an honor and a privilege it is to be adopted sons and daughters of God (Gal. 4:4-6). We have a God Who loves us more than we could ever imagine.

Another spiritual blessing is the heavenly inheritance that we have been promised. As a child of God, one of the things to which each of us can look forward is that one day we will live with God in Heaven. In reality, we are not citizens of the world in which we actually live. We may live in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, or some other state. But Paul said in Philippians 3:20 that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” One day we are going to be changed. And that is where our true heavenly inheritance represents such a blessing.

Another benefit to being in Christ is that the dead in Christ will rise first. Those who have been faithful, yet who have passed from this life, are promised that they will be resurrected with Christ when He returns. Turn your attention to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, where Paul teaches us that the children of God who have died will be the first to join the Lord. The dead in Christ will rise first. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” One of the blessings of being in Christ is that death no longer has dominion over us. The power of death, the sting of death, and the sting of sin (1 Cor. 15:51-57) have all been defeated by Jesus so that death no longer haunts us. Think about the one thing that most people fear: death. Revelation 14:13 says death is a blessing for Christians. How does a Christian look at death? This is one of the richest blessings that a person could ever envision. For a child of God, death is looked upon as a wonderful thing and a great blessing. John wrote, “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ “Yes, says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” Did you notice the language? It says “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” Death is viewed as a good thing! How many people in this life take the approach that death is a blessing? Not many! Psalm 116:15 puts it in even more magnificent language: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” God views the death of one of His children as a precious thing. It is a “going home” for the child of God. Paul thought in this manner, because in Philippians 1:21 he wrote, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” We must come to the realization that this life is not going to last forever. Psalm 90:9-10 tells us that our lives are but a sigh, and that if we are fortunate we might have 70 or 80 years to live. Life is short for each of us. I am reminded of the words of 1 Samuel 20:3 where David said, “There is but a step between me and death.” Each of us could say that. James 4:14 describes life as “a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” Probably some of the most graphic language is found in 2 Samuel 14:14—“We will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.” None of us is going to live forever. One day we **will** die. Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” But here is the

good news. Being in Christ means that all the people at your funeral who are there to mourn your loss will know that you have passed on to something better. In God's sight, that truly is a blessing.

Another benefit of being in Christ is that it is where God's grace is found. Think about the connection between God's grace, and the salvation that is found only "in Christ." Jesus is the epitome of God's grace on Earth. Titus 2:11 teaches us, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Grace **has** appeared. So where is it? Notice John 1:17—"The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Yes, God's grace is available. Yes, it is God's grace that saves us (Eph. 2:8-9). But we cannot be saved by the grace of God outside of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the epitome of God's grace. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul wrote, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." God's grace is embodied in the sacrifice and death of His Son on the cross. If we are going to be saved, we must access the grace of God that is available only "in Christ." In 2 Timothy 2:10 we read, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

If grace is in Christ, and if salvation is in Christ, then we need to ask: "Are we in Christ where all these spiritual blessings are found?" If we are not in Christ, then what must we do to get inside Christ? Galatians 3:27 gives us the answer to the question, "How does a person get inside the body of Christ where all spiritual blessings are found." Paul wrote, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Some versions say, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ." If grace is in Christ, and salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10), then we need to understand what the Bible teaches that a person must do to get "in Christ." The Bible is very clear. If we are going to get "in Christ" where all spiritual blessings are found, then we must be baptized into the body of Christ. There are a lot of people today who say that to get "in Christ," all you have to do is "believe in Jesus." That is so odd, because the only time that the Bible teaches anything about "belief only" ("faith only"), **it teaches exactly the opposite!** Yes, it is a popular religious doctrine to teach that all a person has to do to be saved is "just believe." But James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, **and not by faith only.**" The Bible says that faith only will not save anyone. Someone might ask about Acts 2:19-21 where we are told that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." There is no doubt that a person must "call on the name of the Lord" to be saved. But **how** does a person do that according to biblical teaching? Suppose a man is sinking in quicksand, and he calls out for help. If help is offered, the man who is sinking must do his part, just as the one who is offering the help must do his part. Salvation is a combination of God's grace plus man's faith (Eph. 2:8-10).

So let us ask, "What must a person do to be saved?" What must a person do to become a child of God? If you are not a Christian, think about the benefits we have been discussing here. Those benefits can be yours if you will just obey the Gospel. In Acts 16:30-31 we find the greatest question that has ever been asked. The Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Throughout Scripture, in numerous accounts we are told what a person must do to be saved. For example, a person must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." There is no doubt that, in order to be saved, a person must have faith that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. But belief is not enough. Once a person believes in Jesus, then he must be willing to repent, which means that a person must change his way of thinking and acting. Repentance is a changed will that leads to a changed way. In Acts 3:19 Peter preached, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blot-

ted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” A person must stop sinning, make a 180-degree turn, and return to God. That is what repentance is all about. A person then must be willing to confess Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of mankind. In Acts 8 we see Philip and the Ethiopian nobleman traveling down the road. Evidently Philip had taught the man about the importance of baptism. They came to a body of water, so the man asked, “Here is water; what hinders me from being baptized?” Philip then said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The Ethiopian then made the good confession: “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” Romans 10:10 teaches that “with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Once a person has believed, repented, and confessed, the Bible teaches (even though this is not what most people today teach) that a person must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Someone might ask, “Where is that found in the Bible?” In Acts 2:38, during the first Gospel sermon, the Jews realized that they had crucified Jesus. They were cut to the heart. They cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (vs. 37). Peter answered, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus had already said in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Both belief and baptism are prerequisites to salvation. In John 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (vs. 2). Jesus then got right to the heart of the matter when He said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (vs. 3). In verse 5 He clarified His statement by adding, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Someone might suggest, “Well, the Bible never says that baptism saves.” I beg your pardon, but it does. In 1 Peter 3:21 we read, “Baptism does now also save us.” It is hard to get around words like that. It is not baptism alone that saves. It is “baptism also”—combined with hearing, believing, repenting, and confession. Baptism is an essential step in God’s plan of salvation. In Acts 22, what was the one step that Saul still had to take before his sins could be washed away? Ananias came to him and said, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (vs. 16). The point of baptism is where a person contacts the blood of Jesus. So again I ask: Are **you** in Christ? Do you have access to all of these spiritual blessings? If not, then I would say to you the same thing that Ananias said to Saul: “Why are you waiting?” Get “in Christ” and begin enjoying the wonderful blessings that come only by obeying the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “BENEFITS OF BEING ‘IN CHRIST’ ”

1. According to Ephesians 1:3, where are “all spiritual blessings” to be found?
2. What does the word “redeem” mean?
3. According to Romans 3:24, where is redemption found?
4. According to Isaiah 59:1-2, what separates us from God?
5. According to Romans 3:23 and Ecclesiastes 7:20, who has sinned against God?
6. What, according to 1 Timothy 2:4, is God’s desire for all people?
7. Who, according to 1 Timothy 2:5, brings sinful man and God back together?
8. John wrote in 1 John 2:2 that Jesus is the “propitiation” for our sins. What is a propitiation?
9. What, according to Galatians 1:4, did Jesus use to redeem sinful humankind?
10. According to 1 Peter 2:24, if we want to “live for righteousness,” what must we first do?
11. Romans 8:1 lists a benefit of being “in Christ.” What is that benefit?
12. In 1 Corinthians 15:57 we find another benefit of being in Christ? What is it?
13. Hebrews 8:12 mentions a benefit of being in Christ. What is it?
14. What spiritual blessing is discussed in 1 John 3:1?
15. According to Philippians 3:20, Christians have a spiritual blessing that relates to their citizenship. Where is that citizenship?
16. What, according to Paul’s discussion in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, is one of the spiritual blessings reserved for those who are in Christ?
17. What spiritual blessing for Christians was discussed by John in Revelation 14:13?
18. Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” How, according to Psalm 116:15, does God view the death of a Christian?
19. According to John 1:17, what spiritual blessing do Christians enjoy because of Christ?
20. According to Galatians 3:27, how does a person get “in Christ”?
21. According to Romans 6:3, how does a person get “in Christ”?
22. According to 2 Timothy 2:10, where is salvation found?