

Get A New Life: United with Jesus

Ephesians 1:3–10

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I'm going to say something and I hope you hear it with the grace of God. What I'm going to tell you is the truth. Not everyone responds well to the truth. I'm being honest, transparent. Sometimes, after being a Christian for many, many years, I still trust myself more than I trust Jesus. There it is the truth, I trust myself more than I trust Jesus. May you receive my words with God's grace. Don't judge me too harshly.

On occasion I act independently of God. I take it upon myself to do my own thing. I put myself first. I take action without including Jesus. To be independent is the natural and normal state of Sanders' men. Every man on my side of the family for a more than a few generations has been independent. We do what we want. We don't want anyone telling us what to do.

But, that's not just in my DNA is it? We're all guilty of having an independent streak. We believe we can be independent of God. It's not just men who are independent, women are also. We all may paint a picture of ourselves, but God sees us just as we are. The greater truth is that no Christian is independent of God. But, through our faith in Jesus we are one in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3–10 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

To be in Christ is to be united with Christ, the greatest spiritual blessing. Our minds tend to think about blessings on earth and not in heaven. We think about food and clothing as blessings. We think about shelter as blessings. We think about the daily events that lift us up as blessings. We go for a walk and that's blessing. The flowers blooming, the sun shining, the warm air in hair is a blessing.

You have a roof over your head and you feel blessed. You have a nice bed to sleep in and you feel blessed. You wake up in the morning, eat three meals and you feel blessed. We can't live without our cars. We can't get by without our TV. We can't make it without our phone. We've got to have internet. When we don't have them we realize how blessed we were.

We've got a job, income to spend, so we're blessed. There's coffee in the morning, so we're blessed. We've got a pet to keep us company, so we're blessed. Our families are blessings for us, right? If you're married to a believer you know that your spouse is a blessing. Watching your children grow up and become successful is a blessing. Seeing your family come to Jesus as their Savior and Lord is a blessing.

All of these things are blessings. They are blessings from God. We receive them because Jesus has forgiven our sins. The most important for every Christian is Christ in us. This is not a tangible, physical blessing. So, we forget about being blessed.

Jesus in us and us in Jesus is the greatest blessing. God has entered our lives. The Lord of all life has taken up residence in you, because you believe in Him. The Creator of the world, the sun, the moon, the stars in the sky is living in you. The One who spoke the animals into existence, who separated the light from the darkness is dwelling in you.

Now that is a blessing. This is the God who loves you in every situation and blesses you with hope and joy. The God who never leaves you blesses you with peace and faithfulness. These are only the beginning of God's spiritual blessings. God opens all of heaven to bless you every moment of every day. Wisdom and knowledge, gentleness and kindness are His blessings. These blessings come to every person who is in Christ.

You are only in Christ Jesus if you have asked Him to forgive your sins and come live in you. Then in ways that words cannot describe Christ Jesus blesses you with His Holy Spirit. The blessings are available to you. The blessings are being poured out upon you. The blessings never end. You are not alone, you are not independent, you are in Christ Jesus. Thank you Jesus.

Ephesians 1:4–6 (NIV) For God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love God predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

If we're chosen by God and in Christ, why do we still live independently? God has always wanted you to be saved. When your mother first held you in her arms, God wanted to save you. When your father looked at your mother with tenderness in his eyes, God wanted to save you. When your grandparents first met, God wanted to save you. Before there was light, before there was anything, God wanted to save you.

If you were a grain of sand on the seashore, God knew you and wanted to save you. You are not insignificant to God. The Lord knows you now and knew you when you were without form. Nothing in your life has happened that God hasn't known about it. You haven't been so far away from the Lord that He can't see you. No matter what you have done, said, or thought God, through Jesus is ready to forgive you.

Because of Jesus, God sees you without your sin. Those bad things you thought about your parents, Jesus has forgiven them. Those times you were angry at God, Jesus has forgiven you. Those moments of weakness when you looked with envy at your neighbor, Jesus has forgiven you. The hour you walked away from the Lord, rejecting His plans for your life, Jesus has forgiven you. That's what I mean when I say God sees you without your sin.

When you asked Jesus to forgive your sins, He washed them away. Now, through Jesus, God only sees the forgiving blood of Jesus. Your sins are gone. You can hold onto them, the devil can bring them up again and again, but Jesus has taken them away.

You are more than just a person, you are a child of God. In all of your independence, in all your selfishness, in all your thoughts of self-sufficiency Jesus has brought you into God's family. You tried to break away, you tried to do your own thing, but Jesus brought you back. You wanted to be your

own person, God called you His child. You wanted to live life on your own, God called you His child. As a child of God you have a home in heaven. Every child of God wears God's name. Every child of God reflects the image of God. Every child of God is empowered by God. Every child of God holds a special place in God's house. Every child of God receives all of God's blessings.

You are part of God's plans and purposes. You and I live for only a minute on this earth. What happens in that minute matters for a eternity. You may think that you don't have a purpose, that you aren't accomplishing anything. Being faithful to God is your purpose. Proclaiming God's goodness is your purpose. Giving thanks to God is your purpose.

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV) In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Being united with Christ means you've been cleansed of your sins and you're able to perceive and comprehend God's grace. Grace is the release of God's blessings on your soul. I don't deserve God's love. I don't deserve God's mercy. I don't deserve God's grace. For my selfishness I deserve to be punished. For my independence I deserve to be forgotten. For my sins I deserve to be in hell. It is by grace that I have been saved. What I deserve I have not received. What I have done should be disciplined. What has come out of mouth and over my lips should be rebuked.

You are no different. You don't deserve God's love, mercy, or grace. You deserve punishment and hell. But by the grace of God in Jesus Christ you are forgiven. It is through God's grace in Jesus that you can be saved from hell when call upon Jesus as Savior and Lord. Through grace from God everyday you are able to live as a child of God when call upon Jesus as Savior and Lord. Everything that is happening around you and in your life is a gift of grace.

You knew this already, right? How are you doing at living in that grace? Since your life is a gift of grace from God you can live in that grace. You don't have to live without God. You can have His grace flow into your life and through your life. The weight of the world doesn't have to hold you down. The decisions about what to do and when to do it no longer need to be a big concern. All of my attempts and all of your attempts to handle every situation don't have to be a problem.

As a child of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's grace is everything you need for every day. When you wake up tomorrow give thanks for the things God will do to you and through. Then commit your day, your job, your daily tasks to the glory of God. In other words tell Jesus that you are and willing to glorify Him with your thoughts, your words, your actions. Go to your job, do your work as though Jesus asked you to do it. Interact with the people you encounter - family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors - as Jesus would interact with them. The events that happen during your day treat them as though God already knew what was happening. Don't let them divert you from trusting Jesus. Let them be moments to call out to Jesus. Allow yourself to be at peace, filled with hope, and empowered with joy and gratitude.

As the world tries to squeeze you into it's box of disappointment, fear, anger, and selfishness remember you are God's child living for God's plans and purposes. This is God's wisdom and God's understanding. This is God's grace, mercy, power, and love.

Ephesians 1:9-10 (NIV84) The Father made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have

reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Stop living on your own and start living under the authority Christ. Everyone of the apostles of Jesus came to this realization. They saw themselves not from their point of view, but from God's perspective. When you are one with Christ you start to see your life and world from God's point of view. Blessings start to look different. They are no longer about the material things you receive. Blessings become the ways God works in you and through you. They are the transformation that is taking place in your life. Blessings are revealed not with your eyes but in your soul. The blessings of God are the person God created you to be.

Living under the authority of Christ is being filled with everything from wisdom to compassion to power. Your neighbors are still important. Your friends still matter. Your family is immensely valuable to you. When you are one with Jesus the people around become the recipients of God working through you. Once you become one with Jesus, His love, mercy, and grace overflow from your life. What you think is what Jesus is thinking. What you say is what Jesus is saying. What you do is what Jesus is doing.

You are not your own, you are in Christ Jesus. When you ask for your sins to be forgiven Jesus enters your life. Jesus through His Holy Spirit makes clear to you what must go: sin. Not only are your sins removed, but Jesus fills you with His desires. His desire is that you follow Him always. His desire is to be united with you. His desire is to bring glory to God through you.

This is the end of your independence. Is that bad news? You might think so, but it's actually good news. Remember this is God's grace. You may live under the authority of Jesus by proclaiming to Jesus that you need Him. Then by asking Jesus to take full control of your life.

This is a big step. It is a step of faith. It is a an opportunity to allow Jesus be with you always. Take that opportunity today. You are set free from the power of sin. You are empowered to bring glory to God. So start living. Living with His power. Covered in grace. Start looking at your life as belonging to Jesus. Created by Jesus for Jesus' purposes.