



# Independence Church Of Christ

*Sharing The Freedom That Is In Christ*

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## LESSON FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2020

### **The Resurrection Means That Believers Are United With Christ**

#### **Scripture:**

*So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the One who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.*

- Romans 7:4 (NLT)

When we believe in Christ, we are united to Him in faith. Union with Christ means that when God looks at us, He does not see our unrighteousness, but rather the righteousness of Christ. It means that we have died with Him and will also live with Him. *“And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him.”* (Romans 6:8 NLT).

This union is made possible by the resurrection of Christ. It is similar to when a couple is united in marriage and one spouse’s belongings become the possession of both spouses. Christians are able to receive the righteousness of Christ because of their union with Him. *“God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; He made us pure and holy, and He freed us from sin.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:30 NLT).

We are now able to walk in newness of life because we are bound to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. *“For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.”* (Romans 6:4 NLT). This idea is shown in baptism, which is the powerful physical demonstration of the spiritual reality of our dying with Christ and being raised with Him.

## Take Note Of These Scriptures:

*And all who have been **united with Christ** in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. - Galatians 3:27 (NLT)*

*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are **united with Christ**. - Ephesians 1:3 (NLT)*

*Furthermore, because we are **united with Christ**, we have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us in advance, and He makes everything work out according to His plan. - Ephesians 1:11 (NLT)*

*For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are **united with Christ** Jesus. - Ephesians 2:6 (NLT)*

*So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of His grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all He has done for us who are **united with Christ** Jesus. - Ephesians 2:7 (NLT)*

*But now you have been **united with Christ** Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to Him through the blood of Christ. - Ephesians 2:13 (NLT)*

These scriptures paint a beautiful picture of our union with Christ. Romans 6:1-5 is a perfect illustration of what the Apostle Paul taught to all 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians (as noted in scriptures above). Paul's Romans 6 rendering also identifies the point that this *union with Christ* occurs – *in baptism*. Paul pointed this out to the Christians in Galatia: “*And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.*” - Galatians 3:27 (NLT). Paul's inspired rendering of how a sinner becomes forgiven and united with Christ could not be clearer. To not accept Paul's teaching on this subject is not only a rejection of the inspired Word, it is also a rejection of the purpose and meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And since the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central / core to Christian doctrine, can someone who rejects that core teaching truly say they are a Christian? It should give us pause to consider the implications of such a rejection.

We live in complicated times. In the current crisis spawned by the COVID-19 virus, you hear many contradictory statements. Should you wear masks or not? Should you wear gloves or not? Should you *shelter in place* or not? How far apart from another person should you stand? When and how often should you wash your hands? Is hand sanitizer just as good as soap and water, or not? We hear very different views on these, and other,

questions from supposed *experts!* Does that strike you as peculiar? Shouldn't *experts* be able to look at the same data and come to the same conclusions? We are instructed by those who are wise to exercise caution and restraint in the medical advice we accept and to not accept blindly the *opinions* from the *so-called experts*; rather, we are counseled to wait for verifiable research data to guide us into the truth of what we should chose to do.

So why do we bring this up? Well, throughout the world, religious *experts* will tell you conflicting guidelines on how one can be saved and brought into union with Christ. Who should you believe? Now we are not calling into question the *goodness* or *honest opinion* of these *so-called experts*. What we are stating is that just as medical experts can have differences of opinions and not all can be correct, so religious experts can have similar differences of opinions and, again, not all can be correct. So, who can you believe? Well, just as in the current crisis, the *wise person* will study carefully and give greater weight to those whose *Word* is verified by God's Holy Spirit and documented in an acceptable written format (i.e. *the Bible*). So, if the Apostle Paul's writings are inspired and correct (and true Christians believe they are), then what he states should carry more weight than that of some *so-called expert* found in today's Theological Seminaries or in some Bible Commentary or some New York Times Best Selling Book. The counsel or interpretation of a mere man or woman should never be accepted if it is not in agreement with the *Divinely Inspired Word of God*. So, when the Apostle Paul writes in Holy Scripture... "*And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.*" - Galatians 3:27 (NLT), then it should, logically, be accepted over the word of, let's say, some popular tele-evangelist or popular religious author or any other person who might have a contrary point of view. In fact, Paul was so animated by this logic that he wrote the following to those same Christians in Galatia:

*<sup>6</sup> I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News <sup>7</sup> but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.*

*<sup>8</sup> Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. <sup>9</sup> I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.*

*<sup>10</sup> Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant. - Galatians 1:6-10 (NLT)*

This *Good News* is the message of salvation that brings about a *Union With Christ*. Paul states that anyone who teaches something different than what he taught to the Galatians should be *cursed* (*anathema* or *eternally condemned*). That is not just an ego driven statement on the part of Paul; it is an inspired Word that God's Spirit led him to write into Holy Scripture. So, to not accept Paul's statement of how one becomes *United With Christ* (Galatians 3:27 *see above*) becomes a *spiritual problem* for the person who does

not accept that teaching. Surely the logic of this is clear and irrefutable. So why is the religious world so split on this issue (and many other issues)? Why are *the experts* all saying different things about how salvation is received and how unity with Christ is achieved? It can be as confusing as what we are presently hearing from the *so-called medical experts* who provide conflicting information and guidelines about how to deal with the COVID-19 virus.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has meaning on a variety of levels, not the least of which is in how it relates to our Salvation and our Unity with Him. As it pertains to Salvation, scripture is clear to those willing to perceive it with open eyes and an open mind. Jesus was clear on this subject while teaching on this earth. Listen to HIS WORDS carefully (and He was speaking to those who believed themselves to be *religious* and *scripturally correct*): “*Not everyone who calls out to Me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of My Father in heaven will enter.*” - Matthew 7:21 (NLT). We are not calling into question the sincerity of those who think differently than what the Apostle Paul has taught in scripture. We just believe that they are sincerely wrong. What’s more, being unwilling to find salvation and union with Christ in baptism, they are placing their eternal destiny in jeopardy (see Matthew 7:21 above). This should bother us. Many of these are our friends and neighbors whom we love dearly. And we should love all of mankind and not want any to be in jeopardy of missing out on heaven. We should be *bothered enough* to want to share the truth about salvation and union with Christ and how understanding the resurrection of Jesus Christ relates to the means for finding that salvation and union with Him is possible.

This week make it a goal to share the truth of scripture on this matter with someone you love and dearly want to join you in heaven. You may have to do it with a mask and / or gloves on, or six-feet distanced from them, or even by sharing the message of this truth with them digitally. However you may have to do it, make it your mission to help bring the truth of God’s message about Salvation and Unity with Christ to another soul.

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