



Aletheia
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
November 20, 2022
“True Freedom”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

NO Wednesday Classes on November 23, Happy Thanksgiving

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Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com

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John 8:31&32 ~ ³¹So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

In modern Christianity, we _____ people to believe in Jesus.

We were told in verse 30 that many of the “Jews” who had formerly been _____ to Jesus, now “believed Him.”

What did they believe exactly?

Specifically, they “believed _____ Him.”

These people “Believed in Jesus” and so, how did Jesus _____ to their faith?

Either adopt 1) correct, 2) transformative, and 3) unswerving faith, or forget the whole thing.

“IF you continue in the Word... *Then, and only then*, are you a true _____ of Jesus.”

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

The condition at the obvious level is the _____ of Jesus which is the Gospel. The deeper level is recognizing that Jesus Himself is the _____.

It is to continue to be found _____ Jesus no matter what happens.

The desire to be less, so that the Lord is more, comes from allowing the Light to shine into your heart, and so reveal to you, the depth of your _____.

It is to fear the Lord because His Light has shown you that you _____ eternal death, and He can easily make good on your _____. Only then can His Grace be appreciated for what it is.

It is about conducting your life as though you volunteered to be a _____ through whom Christ could live in this present physical world – because what you did.

How can I be in Christ, and you be in Christ, and us _____ be one with each other as well?

A disciple is a μαθητής (mä-thā-tās), someone who lives with and closely follows their teacher as their _____ allowing him to discipline them in his discipline making them his disciple.

What does He want you to know? Well, in a word, _____. Knowing Him and being in Him and therefore following Him, is synonymous with knowing the Truth. Why? Because Jesus is the _____.

For a lot of Americans freedom means doing what you _____ to do.

In Christ freedom is freedom from _____ and its most grievous consequences.

It is our attempts to control things that create all manner of dysfunction in our relationships. Perfect love drives out _____ and therefore according to the Bible, there is zero _____ in perfect love.

John 8:33 ~ ³³They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?”

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

 Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____



lêtheia

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the gospel of

JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ
 ΘΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΥ ΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
 ΤΟΝ ΘΝ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟ ΥΕ ΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΚΑΧΩΤΙΣ

Last week we closed with John 8:30 which informed us that after hearing the debate between Jesus and His opponents, “many came to believe in Him.” The next verse picks up that theme seamlessly.



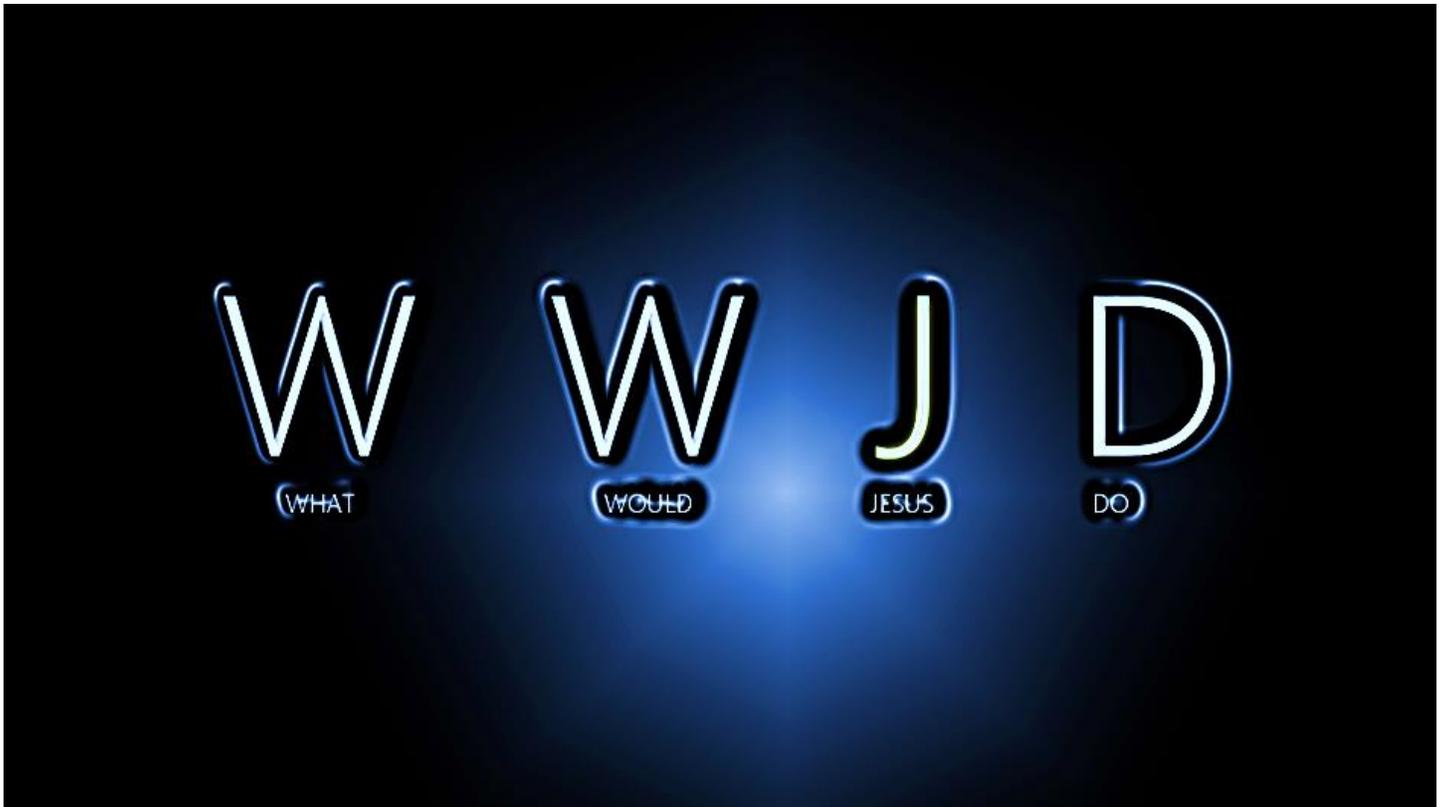
John 8:31&32, 31So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

We soften any talk about changing their lifestyle, giving up their vices, or faithfully belonging to the church.

And perish the thought, that any of us would actually mention the vital self-sacrificing submission to Jesus that requires a total trusting obedience to Him, no matter what the cost is to us personally (John 3:36). Certainly, we wouldn't dream of implying the God also requires Christians to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21), that we are to submit to our spiritual leaders, (Hebrews 13:17, I Corinthians 16:16, etc.), that husbands are to submit to the responsibility for cherishing their wife regardless of her attitude and that wives are to submit to their own husbands! (Ephesians 5:22–33).

Yeah, let's not talk about any of that stuff because we really, really, really, want them to say yes. We desperately want them to join our little club – “our little band of merry men.”

Oh, we say it's for their eternal good, but really, we just want to feel better about our own choice by getting others to make the same choice and unite with us.



Harsh. Well, “What would Jesus do?” My friends, what did Jesus do? Let’s carefully understand what actually happened. We are told that in verse 30, many of the “Jews” who, from context, had formerly been opposed to Jesus, were persuaded by Him and now “believed Him.”

What did they believe about Him? Was it His enchanting personality, His prowess in winning an argument, His ability to silence the pompous elites, His turn of phrase, His ruggedly handsome visage, what precisely did they believe? Specifically, from the previous verse we know that they “believed IN Him.”



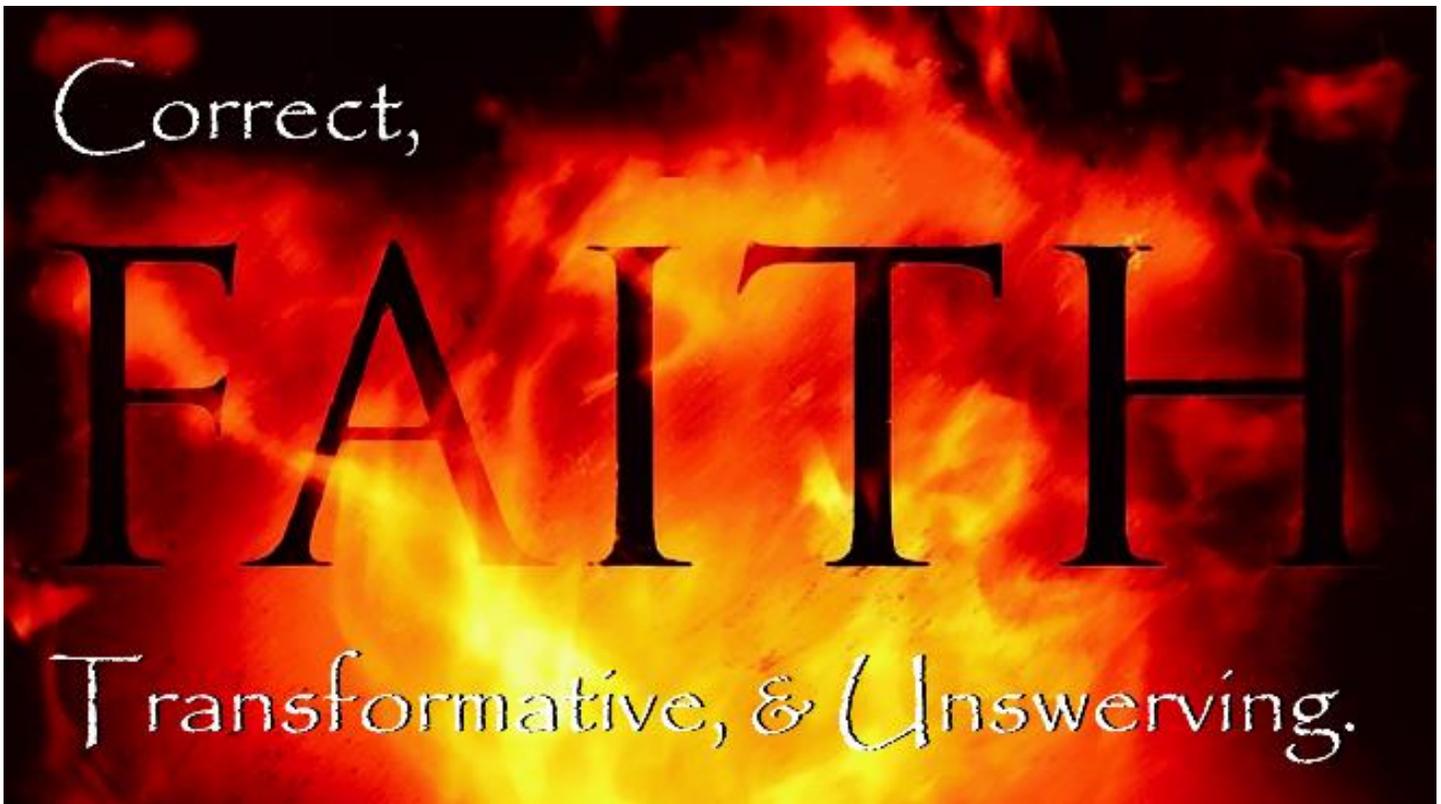
The precise requirement for full Salvation according to Jesus Himself when He told them just a few verses earlier in John 8:24, “for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Better yet, Jesus said in the previous chapter John 7:38, “He who believes IN Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”

So... Many of these people “Believed in Jesus” Salvifically speaking... Because of that, Jesus responded to their faith by giving each of them a gift basket and a welcome to the team, pat on the back. He set aside time to intently listen to their personal

problems, ambitions, and gripes. He prayed for them, asking that they be granted their heart's content. He signed them up for the new Believer's class on Sundays and He put their Baptism ceremony on the calendar. Right? Isn't that what He did?

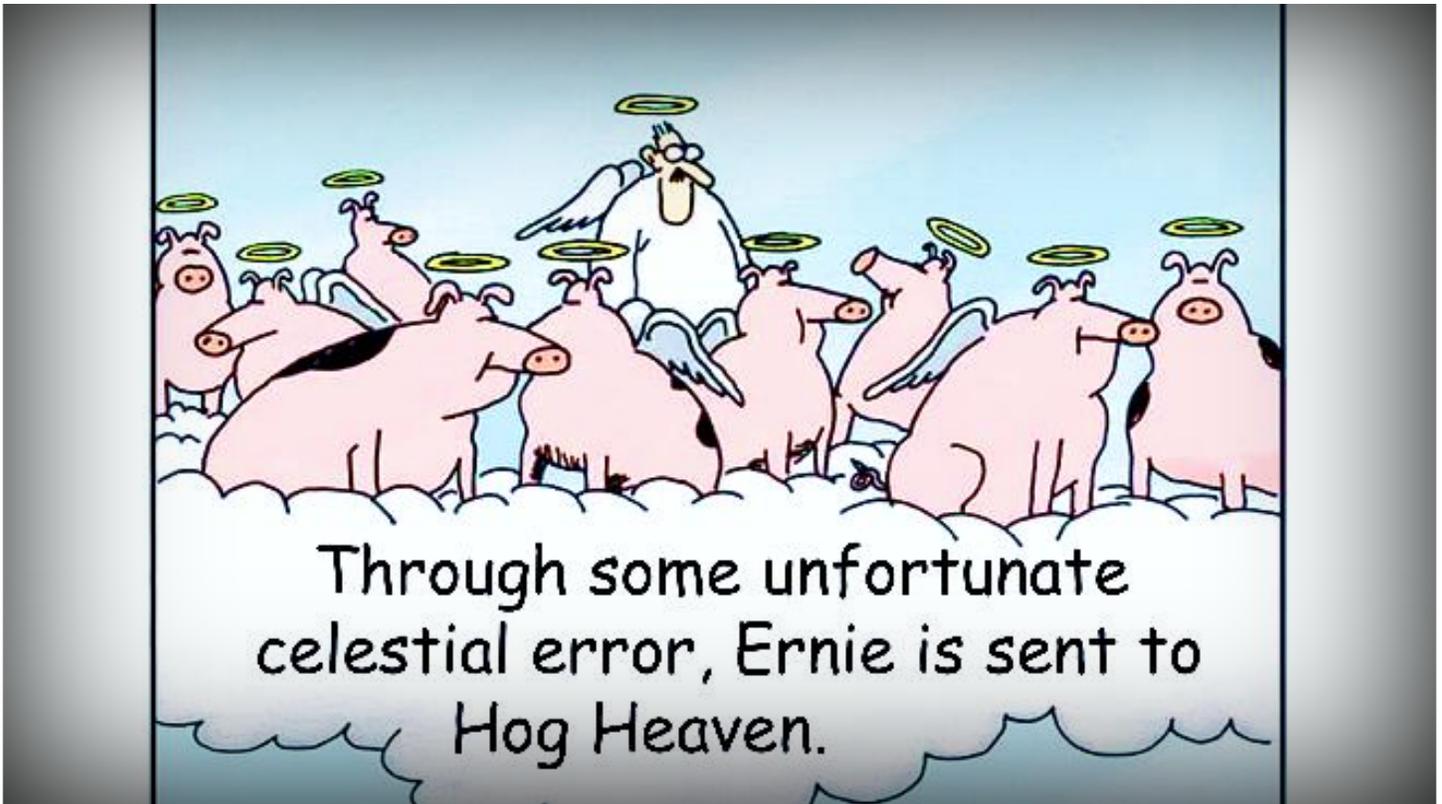


Well, not exactly, Jesus immediately tested their faith by being as blunt as a spoon. He, as He always does, pushed them to either adopt 1) correct, 2) transformative, and 3) unswerving faith, or forget the whole thing.



He basically said to them, as they were looking up at Him with great joy and expectant anticipation... “Belief isn’t belief, if it isn’t 1) right belief, and if it isn’t 2) strong enough belief to cause a change, and if it isn’t 3) committed enough belief to persevere, no matter the cost, to the very end.”

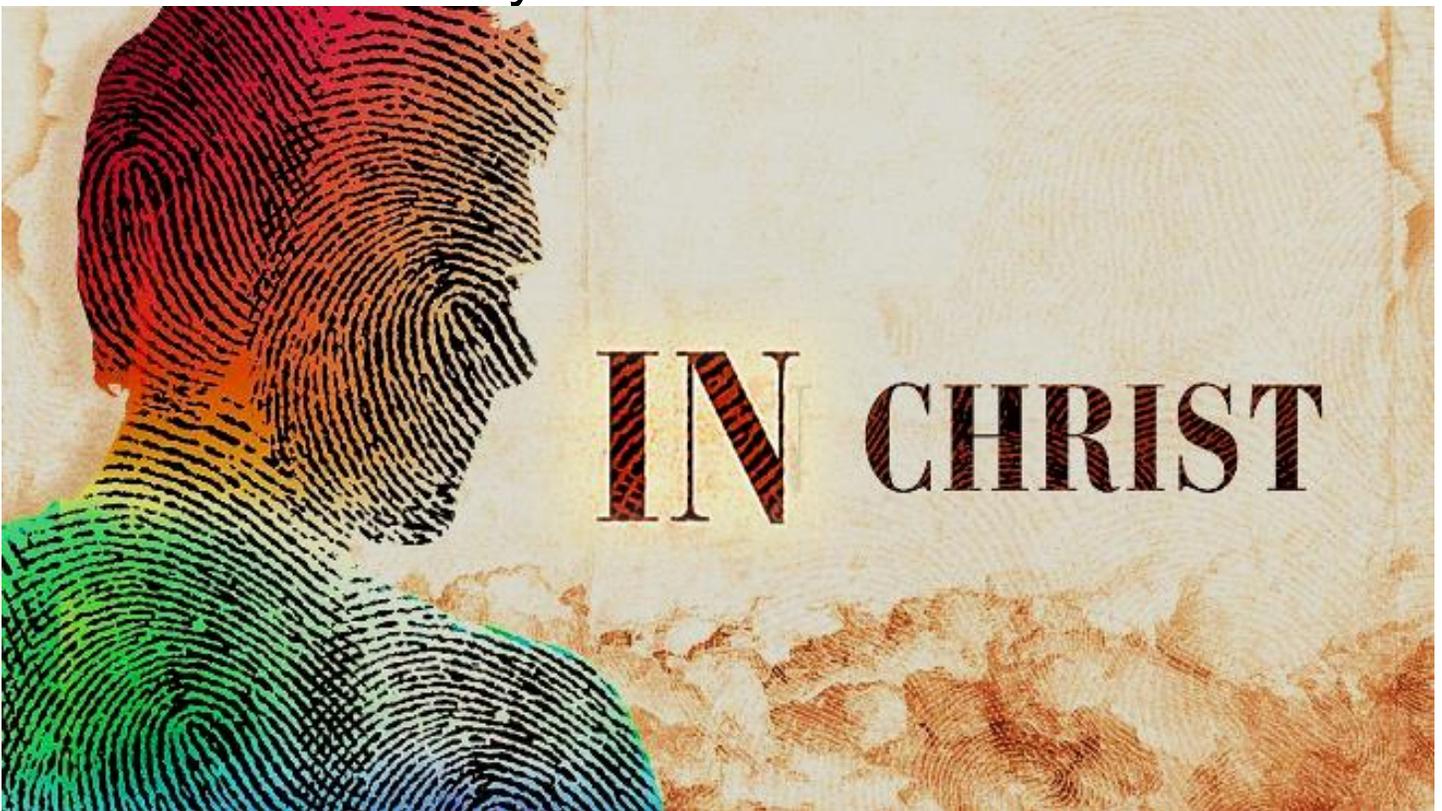
The second two of those three ideas occur in our first verse for today. Jesus started with a massive “IF.” In Greek there are little “ifs” and medium “Ifs” and then there are huge “IFS.”



You don't want to leave important things to chance. This is the biggest "IF". "IF you continue in My Word." That's the condition. Meet the condition and then you have the result, if "A," then "B." "IF you continue in the Word... Then, and only then, are you a true follower of Jesus."

The condition, like so many things, has levels, the simple obvious level is the teaching of Jesus which is the Gospel Message of Salvation. If a person remains rooted in, and stands in, that Message, they will be the Lord's disciple, follower, learner, student, mimic.

The deeper level is recognizing that Jesus Himself is the Word, or Message and so, it is to remain, or abide, or continue, or dwell within Him. It is to continue to be found in Jesus no matter what happens. Christians talk about being in Jesus and Jesus Himself, is the reason. He, using the analogy of a grape vine, said that we must “abide” in Him as the branches abide in the vine. Those healthy branches fully connected to the vine are alive and vibrant and they “bear much fruit.” Cool, but what does that really mean?



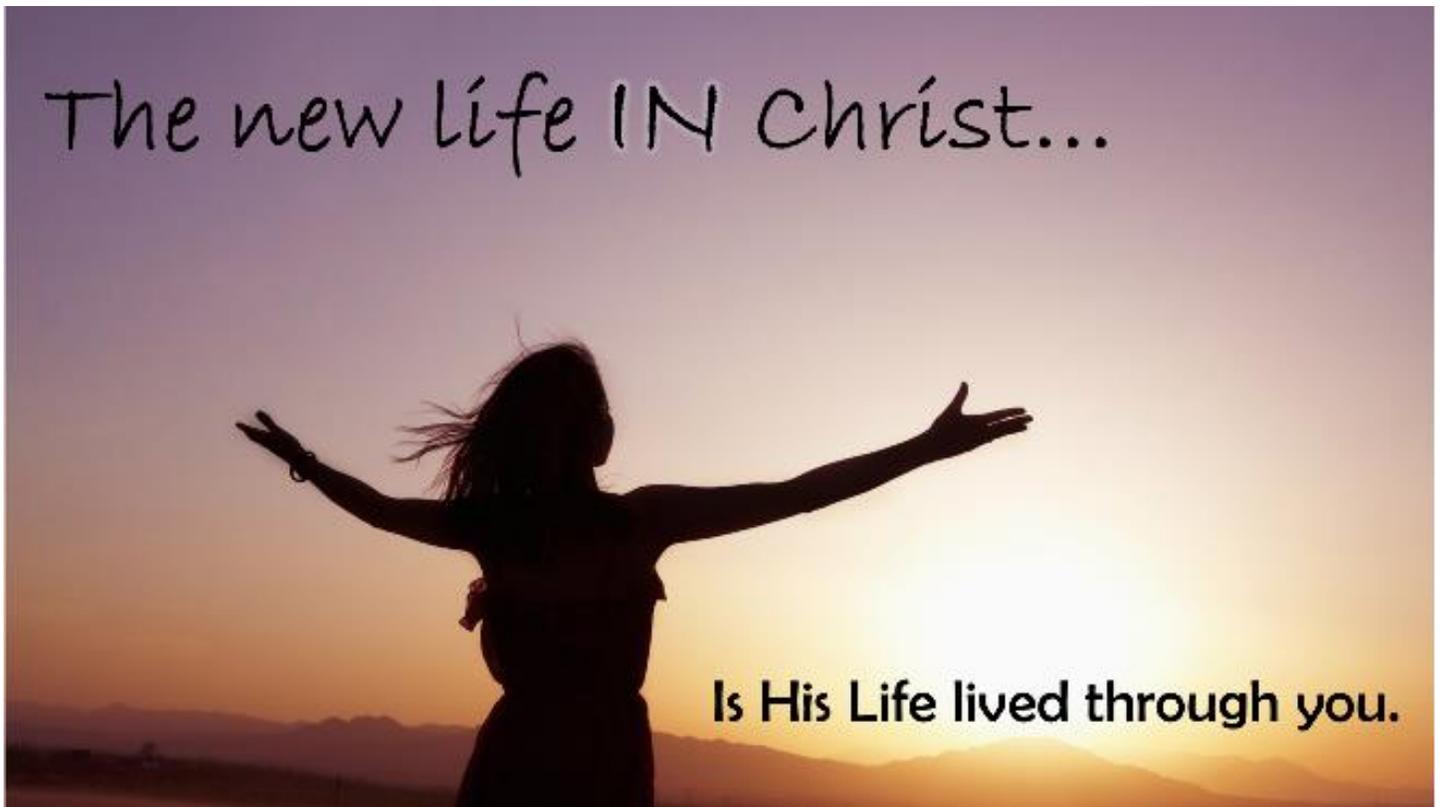
The Apostle Paul used the concept of being in Christ over 160 times in his Epistles. He wrote in II

Corinthians 5:17, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away.”

To be in Christ is to be transferred from death to life. Then in Galatians 2:20&21, we get the rest of the picture where Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me (that’s the new creation bit – to be “born again” as Jesus called it, Paul went on...); and the life which I now live in the flesh (so, this physical life remaining) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” What then is this new life – this being in Christ? It is to trust in Him entirely for every ounce of your Salvation. That not only includes your “sonship” in Christ it is your sanctification and glorification as well.

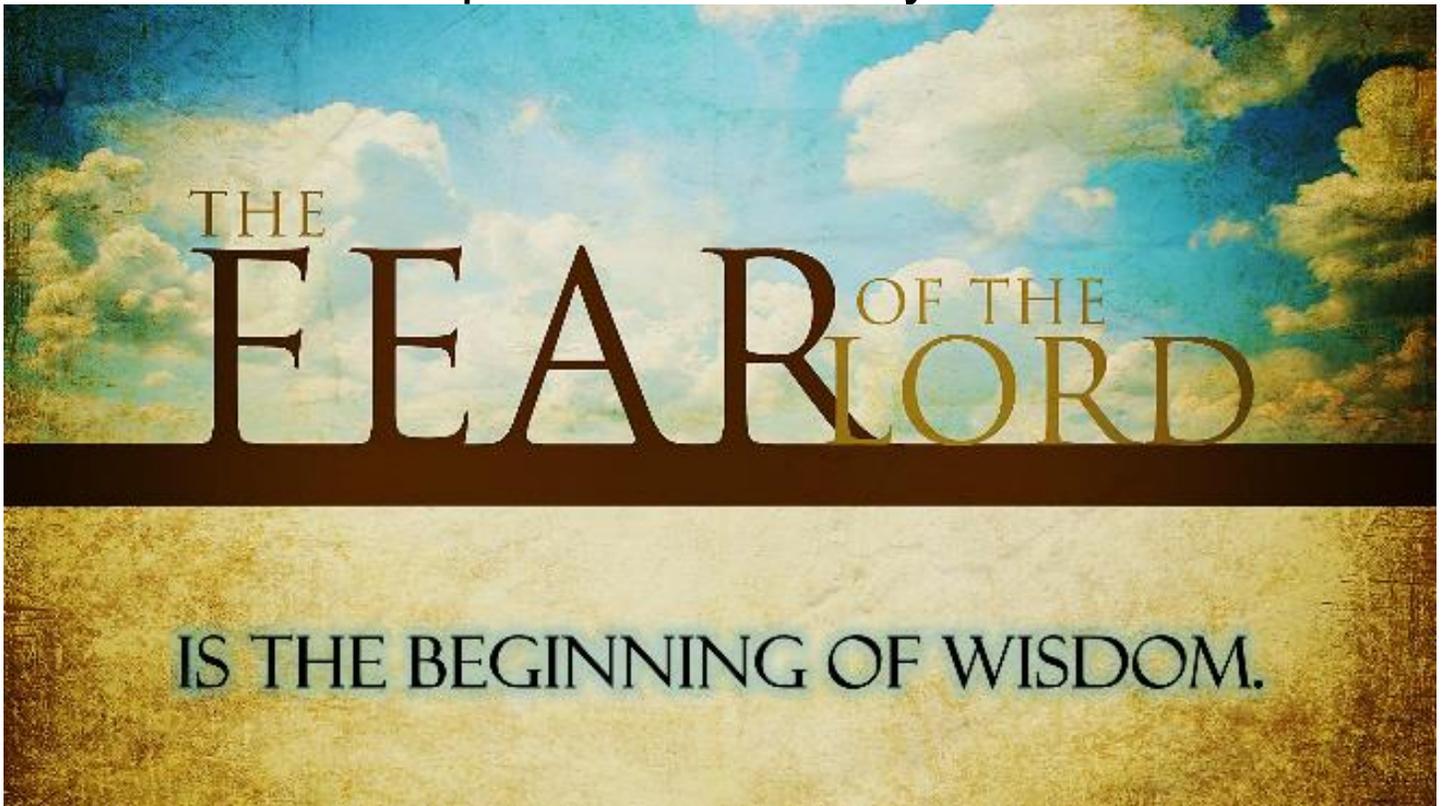
In other words, to truly be in Christ means that we consciously, intentionally, and purposely consider our person, our life, our being, to be an extension of Christ. What He wants takes precedence over everything and everyone else, including us. What it looks like is finding out what Jesus wants and then doing all that we can to yield, or submit, to His course for us. That’s what the Apostle Paul was saying, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” It was never just for Apostles, or

saints, or super Christians, or the clergy – it is for all Christians.



How do you know if it's working? When it becomes obvious that Christ lives through you. When your hands and feet become the hands and feet of Jesus. When your mind and words become the mind and words of Jesus. Then you know. It isn't a constant, because we are so weak, but the constancy is what we must strive for constantly. We do that by first of all genuinely wanting to do that. The desire to be less, so that the Lord is more, comes from allowing the Light to shine into your heart and so reveal to you the depth of your unworthiness.

To look for and examine the evil within yourself may seem counterintuitive, much with God is, but honestly, my dear friends, it's essential. If you think that you are basically good – that you are a fairly decent bloke of blokette, you have not looked into your heart closely enough with the Light shining in all its brightness. You want to be truly horrified? Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the deepest recesses of your heart.



So, again, why? What good does that do? At a minimum, just at a minimum, it should humble you, which makes you less judgmental and more grateful. What is that? That is the only part of the Lord's Prayer

with a condition. “Father forgive us our trespasses, just as we have already forgiven those who have trespassed against us” (Matthew 6:12). That’s the meaning of that stanza. Then Jesus went on immediately after to explain. He said, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14–15).

The way you forgive others is to recognize the monumentally generous and entirely undeserved forgiveness that the Lord has lavished upon you... You can only grasp the magnitude of that graciousness when you also grasp the magnitude of your unworthiness.

It is to fear the Lord because His Light has shown you that you deserve eternal death, and He can easily make good on your sentence. Only then can His Grace be appreciated for what it is. When you can admit that only thing separating you from a serial killer is circumstances, opportunity, and the Lord’s intervention in your life. When we have the attitude in looking at others, “There but by the grace of God, go I.” We are

far more able to forgive them. Make no mistake about it, the source of our forgiving ability, is rooted in the forgiveness we have received and the Holy Spirit renewing of our mind to see it for how amazing it really is.

Show me an unforgiving Christian and I'll show you a person who doesn't have a clue about the magnanimity of God, or the depravity of their heart. When we think that we contribute anything to our own Salvation, or we think that God Saved us because we are better than those whom He doesn't, we elevate ourselves to the precise degree that we diminish the Sacrifice of Christ. There can only be 100% of your Salvation. If you assign any bit of it to yourself, you lower what you believe Jesus accomplished by that amount. You do zero, Christ does 100%. You do 50% and Christ can only do the other 50%.

Seeing who you really are, and recognizing what Jesus has really done, motivates us to seek the power of the Holy Spirit to change our nasty heart, to enable us to be transformed into a more Christ-like person... That is the renewing of your mind.

Only such an altered mind, perspective, focus, attitude, trajectory, makes us genuinely desire Jesus to take the reins of our life.

That enables the “first of all” that I gave concerning the ability for Jesus to live His life through you. First of all, it is genuinely wanting that. Now that we do, from there it is prayer for focus and perseverance and strength to stay on task. It is study of God’s Word to better know what Jesus would do. It is to worship with all the humbleness and the gratitude we gain by truly seeing things in the Light. It is to be an active participant with our brothers and sisters in Christ for building up the Body. It is to risk embarrassment, rejection, and failure, by deliberately ministering to non-Christians.

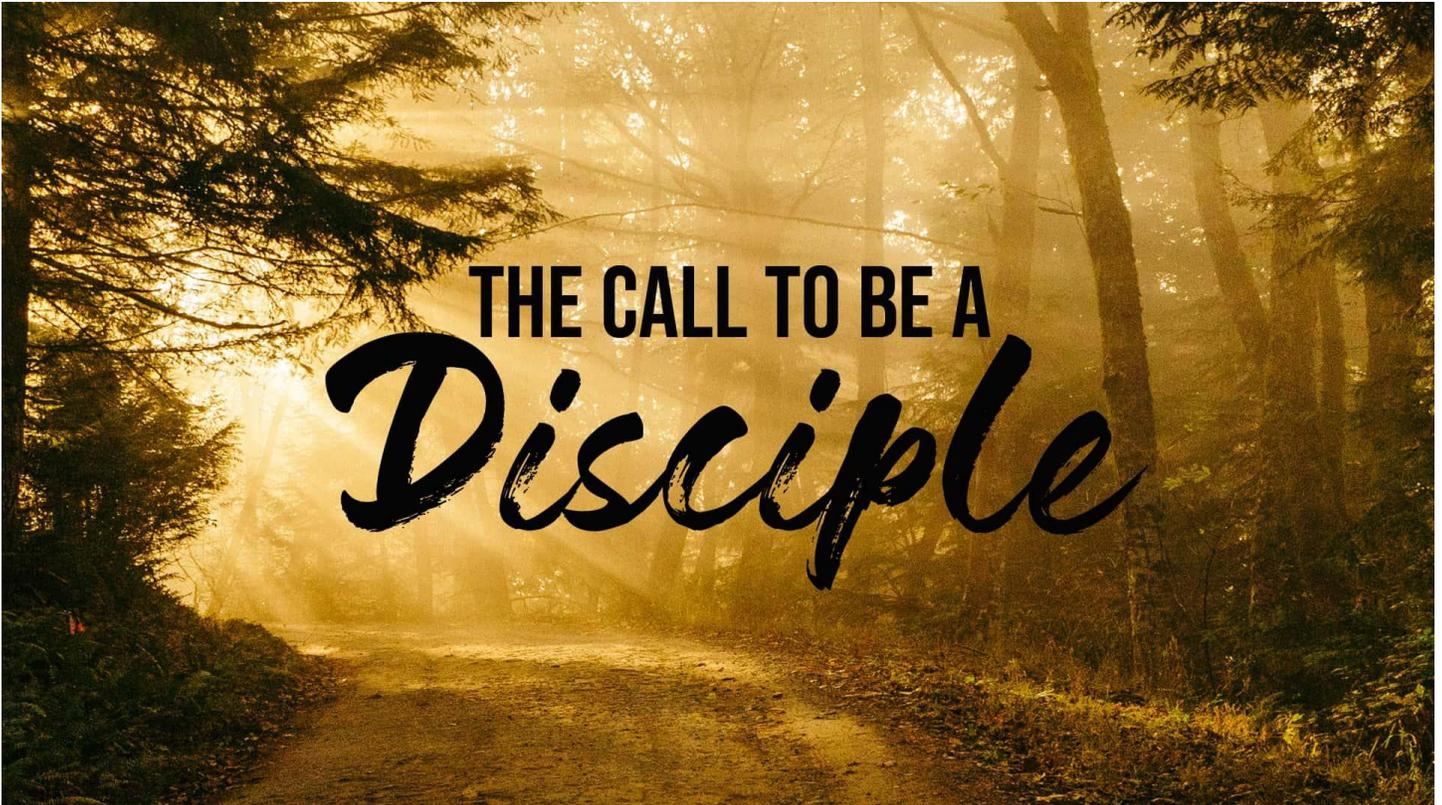


It is about conducting your life as though you volunteered to be a vessel through whom Christ could live in this present physical world – because what you did. That’s what it actually means to “be in Christ.” Because the other half of that is then Christ is in you.

When that is our purpose, we are following Jesus – we are His disciples – truly. We belong to Him, and we are in Him, and He belongs to us and is likewise in us. We join in the relational unity found in the Trinity. We retain our individuality, but in harmonious union with God. Beyond that we are supposed to likewise be interconnected with all other Believers doing the same

thing. John, Jane, Bill, Sandy, and whoever else, cannot all be connected with God and not be connected with each other – right?

How can I be in Christ, and you be in Christ, and us not be one with each other as well? This is what Jesus prayed in John chapter 17, asking the Father to “Sanctify” His disciples in the Truth, which is the Word, because just as He was sent into the world, He, in turn, was sending His disciples into the world. Jesus prayed, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word (well friends, that’s you and me – did you know that Jesus mentioned you in the Bible? He went on...); that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us (and the purpose?), so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20&21).



A disciple is a learner and a follower of a teacher and a master. We have no masters and therefore no teachers of this type in our experience because we are fiercely independent ungovernable Americans bowing to no one's authority. We don't get it, so I'm going to explain – briefly, because some of you have heard this before.

A disciple is a μαθητής (mä-thā-tās), a word that gives us our word mathematics. Math is learned exactly. If you tell your math teacher that 2 plus 2 equals 5, it doesn't make you unique, or special, it just makes you wrong. The English word disciple itself is tied to the concept of discipline. In ancient times people would

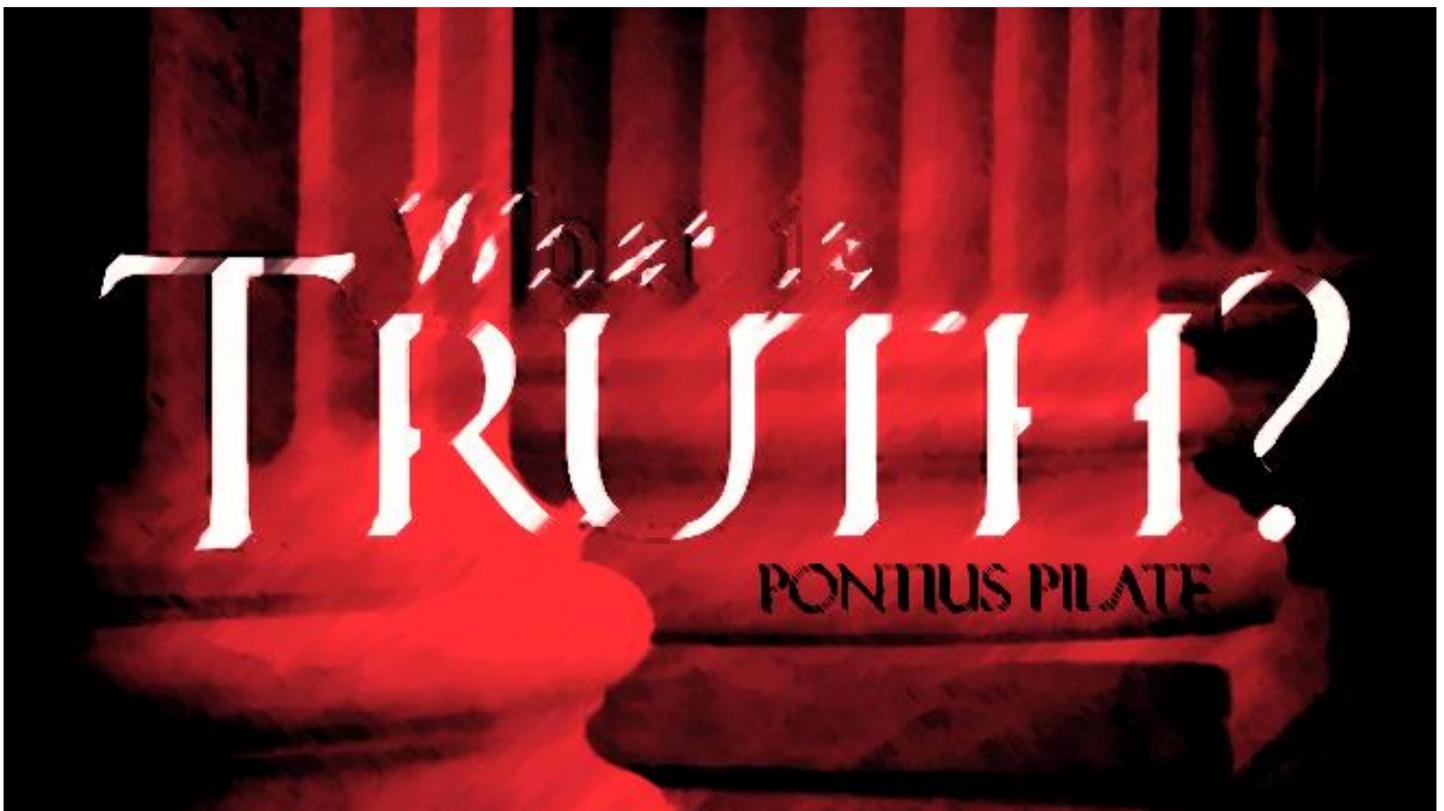
attach themselves to a teacher willing to take them on and they would then live with and closely follow that teacher as their master who trained them in his discipline with discipline.

They would do whatever the teacher asked in an effort to learn all that the teacher had to share, typically living with the teacher who functioned as their master, for many years in order to become like the master.

Jesus has agreed to take you on as a student, which all by itself ought to humble you beyond comprehension, and now it is for you to live with Him, learning from Him, following Him wherever He takes you, doing all that you can do to be like Him, to be conformed to Him as your Teacher and obedient to Him as your Master. That's a disciple.

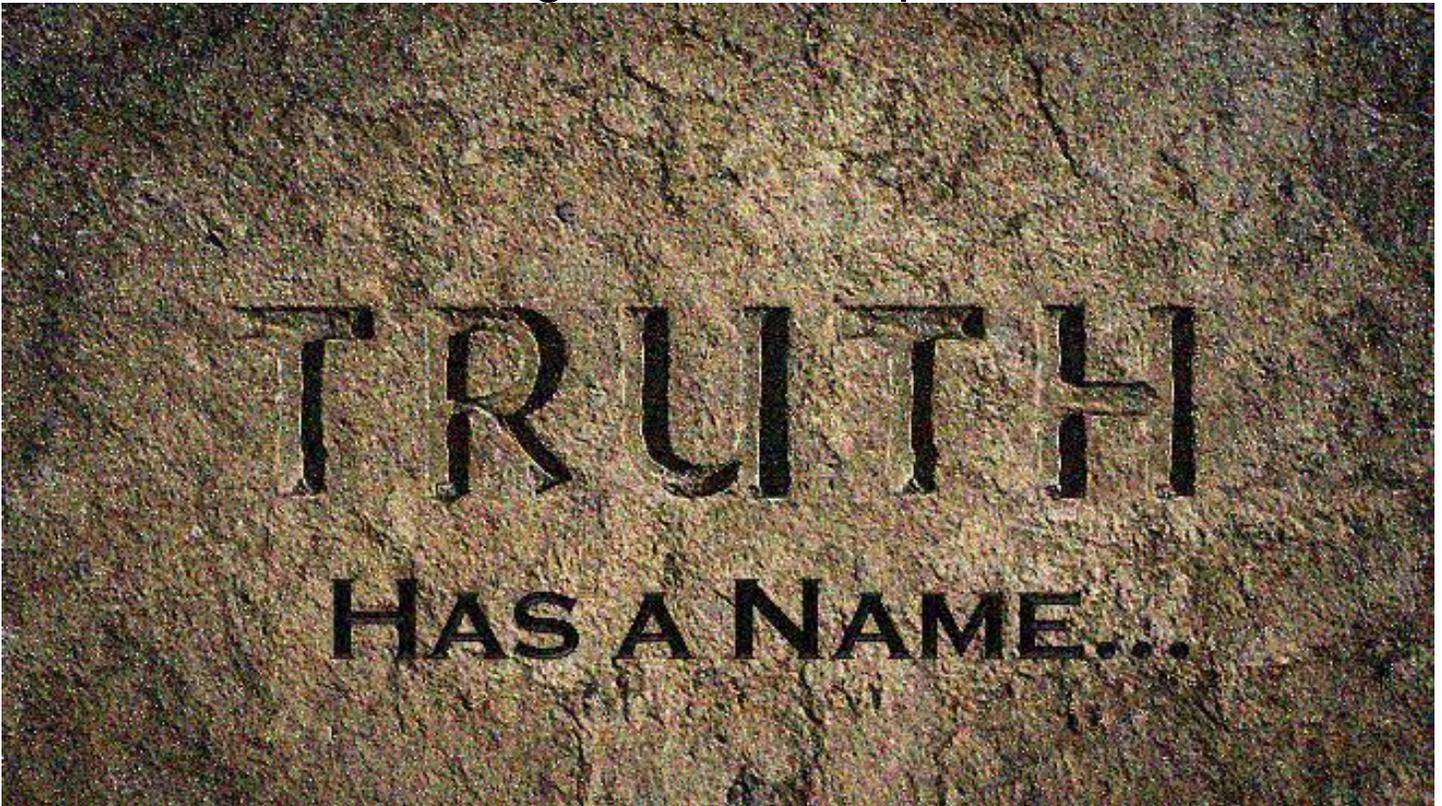
Notice, being disciplined in the discipline of Christianity is not optional – I don't know where we get the idea that it's a non-obligatory thing only radical Christians do. Okay, one verse down. Continuously strive to be in Christ by knowing Him through His Word and you will find that you are going where He leads and learning what He wants you to know.

What does He want you to know? Well, in a word, Him. Knowing Him and being in Him and therefore following Him, is synonymous with knowing the Truth. Why? Because Jesus is the Truth. Literally, as the Word of God He is the absolute, universal Truth with a capital "T."



Again, two levels... You'll know the Truth as the Gospel Message that there 1) is a God, that 2) He is pure timeless existence, and that 3) He created the entire universe by simply commanding it so. You'll know that 4) we humans are the pinnacle of His creative efforts and that 5) given the chance to fully trust Him as God,

we chose self-sufficiency instead. You'll know that 6) compared to God, "No one is good, no not one," and that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Mark 10:18, etc., Romans 3:23). 7) No person has any claim on God, yet 8) God unilaterally satisfied His perfect justice and His perfect love by 9) sacrificing Himself to pay our debt of sin so that 10) we might live forever with Him in right relationship.



At a deeper level it's even simpler, you'll know Jesus. When that's the case, that double Truth of message and person will set you free.

Awesome! Free! We love that. We're all about freedom, but what does it mean? For a lot of Americans freedom means doing what you want to do. Evidently the dictionary agrees saying that freedom is "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint." Well, as you might have guessed that's nothing to do with the freedom found in the Truth – found in right relationship with Almighty God.

Seeing freedom as the ability to do whatever you want is precisely how a spoiled toddler sees it. Unfortunately for our society, it's pretty much how most adults now see it as well. Ironically, the freedom that Jesus offers is a freedom from that way of looking at freedom.



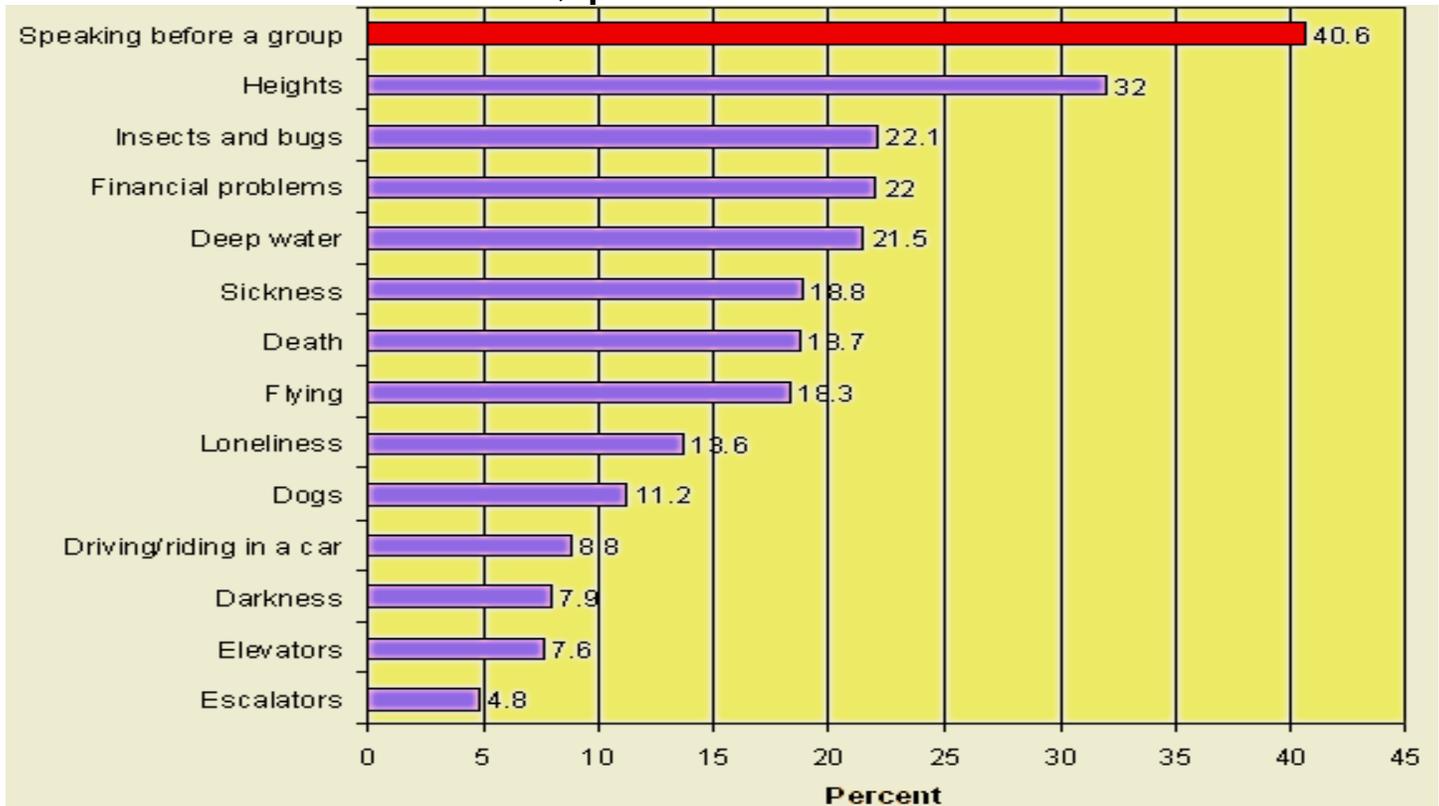
FREEDOM FROM SIN

In Christ freedom is freedom from sin and its most grievous consequences. Some consequences we're stuck with, some we battle to mitigate, and some, the worst of them, Jesus conquered for us.

In the first category, we have physical decay and death. Nothing is going to stop the march of time in the physical world. You will age, you will deteriorate, and you will physically die.

In the final category, we have spiritual death and eternal condemnation. Neither of those things are necessary results for anyone – Jesus has destroyed

sin, and therefore conquered death, and therefore eliminated condemnation. The catch is a person must fully embrace Him for that. If you do, you will be reborn spiritually, you will never die relationally, and you will never be condemned, period.



The middle bit is the bit we contend with if we are disciples of Christ. Here, we have, fear. Very simply put, it is fear that drives the human condition. We are afraid of being rejected, afraid of being used, or taken advantage of, and afraid of being attacked, whether emotionally, psychologically, mentally, verbally, or physically. We are afraid of sickness, disease, and pestilence. We are afraid of poverty, pain, and

suffering. We are afraid of snakes, spiders, and rats, both human and otherwise. We are so afraid, we don't even know all the things that we fear, but all of that fear drives us to seize some kind of control.

Our life seems to spin out of control at the drop of a hat and so we aggressively take the reins and desperately try to gain the upper hand in creating some sense of stability, some feeling of power, some measure of control and it is all an illusion, better yet, it is all a delusion.



It is our attempts to control things that create all manner of dysfunction in our relationships. Dysfunction

in our relationship with God, with other people starting in our own families and extending all the way out to the stranger who is bold enough to tailgate you, but too wimpy to pass.

I could give any number of examples, of how fear-driven efforts to control life turn to disaster particularly with relationships, but what you must do to fully grasp this concept is to examine your own life and see the thousands of ways that your personal fears cause you problems. Someone might say those problems are better than the problems I would have if I didn't try to control things... Well, our fear is only ever of possible unpleasant outcomes. Remember, the future isn't real for us. Fear is being afraid of what might happen. The dysfunction caused by fear is present and it is real.



Perfect love drives out fear and therefore according to the Bible, there is zero fear in perfect love. When there is literally, and yes, I'm using that word correctly, when there is literally zero fear, there is zero reason to control anything... Zero reason to control anyone.

Heaven is where God's perfect Will is perfectly accepted... Meaning, that not only is His perfect Will perfectly obeyed; it is perfectly unopposed in any way. But beyond that, it is perfectly and enthusiastically agreed with by all. There is no hint of dissent, second-guessing, or consideration that there might be a better course. Because everyone is fully on the same

sheet of music, there is perfect harmony and in that perfect unity, perfect love is perfectly experienced, and perfectly reciprocated.

No one is jockeying for position, no one has their own agenda, no one is concerned about the future, or anything else, and so everyone experiences perfect love and zero fear, and so zero reason to manipulate, which allows perfect love and so zero fear, and so... around and around we go... upward.

That is the freedom that Christ offers... Not a freedom of individuality, but a freedom to live in perfect harmony within community – within family. Not a freedom to sin, but a freedom from sin, not a freedom of independence, but a freedom of belonging, not a freedom to control things, but a freedom from the need to control things.

It is the freedom to fully trust in Him. If you are in Christ, you do not need to fear – He's got you – He's got you for all eternity. The Truth, both the Scripture we study and the Word Himself grant us the freedom to reject fear, reject running around trying to manipulate

people and control events, the freedom to rest in His love – the freedom to find our acceptance in Him.

Even if the entire world was against you – even if everyone and everything in the whole physical universe and in the metaphysical realm beyond was arrayed against you... It does not matter in the least if God is for you. If you are in Christ, then He is on your side and all of the forces in the natural and supernatural worlds quiver and shake and bow low before Him. With a single thought, He could obliterate it all – you have nothing to fear; you are in good hands.

Uh, sorry,
not this Abraham...



John 8:33, 33They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?”



The Jews who “Believed in Him” were now indignant. They were outraged and offended by Jesus’ charge that they needed something, that they, of all people, needed anything to be made free.

Please get what’s going on here. These people believed in Jesus – there’s no getting away from that although some commentators try. Contextually, or like Jack Sparrow said, “Spiritually, ecumenically, grammatically,” really, any way you examine the test

there's no way around the fact that Jesus was talking to His new friends, His new parishioners, His new crew – the ones who had believed Him.

Instead of a warm congratulatory speech, Jesus instantly challenged them by saying, you are not there yet. You don't get that I'm not just a little extra to help you on your way to your birthright. You are still dead in your sins and as such you are slaves to that sin.

You need a Savior. You will never see Heaven on your own – you must be found in Me or be found outside of God and His Kingdom. These are the only two possibilities.

They knew exactly what Jesus meant with His conditional statement that “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” His comments were an indictment against them, and they knew it.

Jesus was telling them that they needed Him for Salvation, and they were offended. “What do you mean that we need You to Save us, we are already the very children of the Living God Yahweh – we are the direct descendants of Father Abraham to whom God

promised Salvation. We, for 2,000 years, have been free and we will always be so. We are the only people and the only nation that has never been enslaved to idolatry. We have, and always will, serve the One True God – what in the world do you mean that we will be free?!?! We are free!!!!”

Is there some of that in you? As an American Christian in the 21st century, would you react the way they did if Jesus suggested to you that you don't fully get Him, because you don't fully get yourself?

Examine your nature under the intense Light of God and be ruined.

Once you see yourself for who you are, you can then see the Lord for Who He is. As the great Prophet Isaiah said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).



They desperately needed Jesus, not just to get them the last 10 percent they needed for Salvation, not the last 50, or even 90 percent, but the entirety of their Salvation, the full 100 percent had to be Jesus and that means zero percent from their personal goodness, efforts, and performance. Zero percent from their racial, political, and national affiliations – It had to be 100 percent Jesus, that is what they desperately needed...

And my dear friends, nothing has changed. That is precisely what you need as well.



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