

As Believers We Are Now “in Christ”!

False Separation

This point might be clarified by expressing it the other way around. The benefits of the gospel (justification, reconciliation, redemption, adoption) were being separated from Christ, who is himself the gospel. The benefits of the gospel are in Christ. They do not exist apart from him.

...

But this truth had been lost sight of and badly needed to be recovered. What was true then may still be true now. It is not only that until very recently an emphasis on union with Christ was tellingly absent from the evangelical subculture, but with it the corollary that the reason we need to grasp this emphasis is **that everything we need for salvation is in him and not in us.** [Ferguson, Sinclair B.. *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (pp. 44-48). Crossway. Kindle Edition.]

In the English Standard Version we find 91 results in 89 verses of Scriptures in the NT with the phrase “in Christ.”

(Romans 6:11 ESV) So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 8:1 ESV) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 8:2 ESV) For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

(1 Corinthians 1:2 ESV) 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 1:30 ESV) And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

(1 Corinthians 15:22 ESV) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

(2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

(Ephesians 1:3 ESV) 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 2:5–6 ESV) Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us

with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

(Ephesians 2:13 ESV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 4:16 ESV) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

(2 Timothy 3:12 ESV) Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

(Hebrews 3:14 ESV) For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

(1 Peter 5:10 ESV) And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

(1 Peter 5:14 ESV) Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

First, God does this. This does not happen during water baptism. This is a supernatural act of God which is beyond our comprehension apart from the basic details that he gives us in his word of truth.

We are placed “in Christ” by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit at the moment of belief.

From that moment on, we are supernaturally part of the body of Christ.

This is a forever position.

This is based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross—what was unholy is made holy; what was a curse is now redeemed; what was unrighteous now is the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

NOTE THE CONTRAST ...

Please note the contrast in the following verses between water baptism, which is performed by humans, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is accomplished by God alone.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is out of our league as far as comprehending anything beyond accepting the plain statements of Scripture and believing that God will do what he promises. To think that humans could be a part of this supernatural, eternal act of God speaks of ignorance and arrogance on the part of those who reduce this to a human work.

(Matthew 3:11 ESV) I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

(Mark 1:6–8 ESV) Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

(Luke 3:16 ESV) John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

(John 1:25–27 ESV) They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

(John 1:29–33 ESV) The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”

(Acts 1:4–5 ESV) And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

(Acts 11:15–16 ESV) As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’

(1 Corinthians 12:13 ESV) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

The study was conducted by the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University, under the direction of Daniel C. Dennett and Linda LaScola. Dennett, of course, is one of the primary figures in the “New Atheism”—the newly aggressive and influential atheist movement that has gained a considerable hearing among the intellectual elites and the media.

Interestingly, Dennett also proposes a new interpretation of theological liberalism. Noting that many modern people claim to be Christians while holding to virtually no specific theological content, Dennett suggests that their mode of faith should not be described as “belief,” but rather as “believing in belief.”

Rick, a campus minister ... does not believe “all this creedal stuff” about the incarnation of Christ or the need for salvation, but he remained in the ministry because, “These are my people, this is the context in which I work, these are the people that I know.” In the pulpit, his mode is to talk as if he does believe, because “as long as ... you are talking about God and Jesus and the Bible, that’s what they want to hear. You’re just phrasing it in a way that makes sense to [them] ... but language is ambiguous and can be heard in different ways.”

Adam ... has moved fully into an atheist mode, yet he continues to lead his church in worship. How? “Here’s how I’m handling my job on Sunday mornings: I see it as play acting. I see myself as taking on the role of a believer in a worship service, and performing.”

Early in their report, Dennett and LaScola point to a problem of definition. **Many churches and denominations have adopted such fluid and doctrineless identities that determining who is a believer and who is an unbeliever has become difficult.** Their statement deserves a close reading:

The ambiguity about who is a believer and who is an unbeliever follows inexorably from the pluralism that has been assiduously fostered by many religious leaders for a century and more: **God is many different things to different people, and since we can’t know if one of these conceptions is the right one, we should honor them all.** This **counsel of tolerance creates a gentle fog that shrouds the question of belief in God in so much indeterminacy that if asked whether they believed in God, many people could sincerely say that they don’t know what they are being asked.**

In other words, some theologians and denominations have embraced a theology so fluid and indeterminate that even an atheist cannot tell the believers and unbelievers apart.

[<http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/03/18/clergy-who-dont-believe-the-scandal-of-apostate-pastors/>]

Excerpts from an article on the Albert Mohler web site ...

Preachers Who Don’t Believe

The Scandal of Apostate Pastors

Are there clergy who don’t believe in God? That is the question posed by a new report that is certain to receive considerable attention — and rightly so. Few church members are likely to be disinterested in whether their pastor believes in God.