

“In Christ”

From John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, Book III, 15.5-6; Book IV, 17.8, English updated and emphasis added.

Paul says, that in the architecture of Christian doctrine, it is necessary to retain the foundation which he had laid with the Corinthians, “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

What then is our foundation **in Christ**? Is it that He begins salvation and leaves us to complete it? Is it that He only opened up the way, and left us to follow it in our own strength? By no means, but as Paul had a little before declared, it is to acknowledge that He has been given us for righteousness. No man, therefore, is well founded in Christ who has not entire righteousness **in Him**, since the Apostle says not that He was sent to assist us in procuring, but was Himself to be our righteousness. Thus, it is said that God “has chosen us **in Him** before the foundation of the world,” not according to our merit, but “according to the good pleasure of His will”; that **in Him** “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins”; that peace has been made “through the blood of **His** cross”; that we are reconciled by **His** blood; that, placed under **His** protection, we are delivered from the danger of finally perishing; that thus engrafted **into Him** we are made partakers of eternal life, and hope for admission into the kingdom of God.

Nor is this all. Being admitted to participation **in Him**, though we are still foolish, **He** is our wisdom; though we are still sinners **He** is our righteousness; though we are unclean, **He** is our purity; though we are weak, unarmed, and exposed to Satan, yet ours is the power which has been given **Him** in heaven and in earth, to bruise Satan under our feet, and burst the gates of hell (Matthew 28:18); though we still bear about with us a body of death, **He** is our life; in short, all things of **His** are ours, we have all things **in Him**, He nothing in us.

On this foundation, I say, we must be built, if we would grow up into a holy temple in the Lord.

. . . Hence, so soon as you are engrafted **into Christ** by faith, you are made a son of God, an heir of heaven, a partaker of righteousness, a possessor of life, and (the better to manifest the false tenets of these men) you have not obtained an opportunity of meriting, but all the merits of Christ, since they are communicated to you.

Christ is life.

8. First of all, **we are taught by the Scriptures that Christ was from the beginning the living Word of the Father, the fountain and origin of life, from which all things should always receive life.** Hence John at one time calls Him the **Word of life**, and at another says, that **in Him was life**; intimating, that He, even then pervading all creatures, instilled into them the power of breathing and living.

He afterwards adds, that the life was at length manifested, when the Son of God, assuming our nature, exhibited Himself in bodily form to be seen and handled. For although He previously diffused His virtue into the creatures, yet as man, because alienated from God by sin, had lost the communication of life, and saw death on every

side impending over him, he behooved, in order to regain the hope of immortality, to be restored to the communion of that Word.

How little confidence can it give you, to know that **the Word of God**, from which you are at the greatest distance, **contains within Himself the fullness of life, whereas in yourself, in whatever direction you turn, you see nothing but death?** But ever since that fountain of life began to dwell in our nature, He no longer lies hid at a distance from us, but exhibits Himself openly for our participation. No, the very flesh in which He resides He makes vivifying to us, that by partaking of it we may feed for immortality. "I," says He, "am that bread of life;" "I am the living bread which came down from heaven;" "And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:48, 51). By these words He declares not only that He is life, inasmuch as He is the eternal Word of God who came down to us from heaven, but, by coming down, gave vigor to the flesh which He assumed, that a communication of life to us might from there emanate.

Hence, too, He adds, that His flesh is meat indeed, and that His blood is drink indeed: **by this food believers are reared to eternal life.** The pious, therefore, have admirable comfort in this, that they now find life in their own flesh. For they not only reach it by easy access, but have it spontaneously set forth before them. Let them only throw open the door of their hearts that they may take it into their embrace, and they will obtain it.