

## A Sermon From the Past

I've been busy the last few weeks moving many of my files at home into the file cabinets in the preacher's office in the annex. Going through the plastic totes I've had them stored in has given me an opportunity to see a lot of sermons and notes I haven't seen or used in quite a while. One that I came across a couple of weeks ago was especially eyeopening.

I used to handwrite my sermons in a little book that had pages that could be added to. I know I have more of them somewhere, but I found one, out of the notebook, clipped together with a paperclip. The date on it was 1-10-88. The Title: In Christ. Eventually I'll type it up and deliver it to you some Sunday morning, but I thought I'd share with you a little of what it says.

1. God will fulfill in us all the promises He has made. Ephesians 3:20 says that He is able to do "far more abundantly than all we ask or think." Peter says in I Peter 3:9 that God wants to fulfill his promises in us, His children.
2. God's promises are conditional. We will reap the rewards of eternal life and constant association with God if we are "in Christ."
3. We must be in Christ and have Christ in us. Jesus tells us as much in John 15:1-11. If we remain in Him, the True Vine, we will bear the fruit he has called on us to bear.
4. If we walk in the light of God, and don't stray from that light, Christ's blood will continue to cleanse us. (I John 1:6-7) Paul says much the same thing in Romans 8:1 when he says "there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Paul says in Colossians 1:27 that our "hope of glory" is only possible because we have Christ in us.

There are many who say that God is too loving to condemn anyone to eternal punishment. My illustration in 1988 was that would be much the same as rewarding an unrepentant child for doing just the opposite of what you want with the same reward you would give to an obedient child. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 guarantees God's vengeance on those who "know not God." The message couldn't be any clearer.

We must live in Christ to avoid God's vengeance. In order to achieve the status of being in Christ, God's word tells us we must be a new creation. We must kill off the old and put on the new. Romans 6:3-11 tells us to be baptized into Jesus' death and be resurrected to live a new life. We must crucify our old self so that we can be raised with him. Galatians 3:26-29 says we are "clothed with Christ" and become children of God. We are "in Christ," in his body, in his church of steadfast believers.

This scripture says it all:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."  
(Galatians 2:20)

In order to reap the rewards of God, we must become a branch of the True Vine, be united in a death like His, and "get into" Him and walk in His light. Being "in Him" assures us that His promises are true and guaranteed.