In Christ*

Acts 24:24-26 (24) And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith **in Christ**.
(25) And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.
(26) He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.
In the world during the lifetime of Paul there were many religions. Aside from the Jewish faith there were many false gods with each engrossed in its own faith experience. The Romans believed in many different gods and goddesses, demigods (half-humans and half god), and spirits. They believed that each god had specific powers and controlled parts of the world. They believed the gods showed their unhappiness by sending earthquakes, hailstorms, and other natural disasters. The main god was Jupiter. He was similar to the Greek god, Zeus. They were gods of the sky and would throw lightning bolts if they became angry. For each of the gods and goddesses the Romans built temples. These temples were filled with beautiful treasures. Priests looked after the temples and took part in the religious ceremonies. The people regarded the temple as a sacred and holy place. Romans also built statues that represented the god's human form.
Some of the Roman gods were;
Jupiter, king of the gods, and god of rain, thunder, and lightning.
Cupid, god of love. He's the cute little guy with the bow.
Neptune, god of the sea.
Mercury, messenger and god of Trade and Thieves.

Vulcan, god of the forge.
Minerva, goddess of wisdom, crafts, and war.
Venus, goddess of love and beauty.
Mars, god of war.
Diana, goddess of the Moon and of the Hunt. Paul had a run-in with some of her followers. Now if anyone of you have ever had a run-in with a false religion coupled with the love of money, it can get ugly! Turn with me to;
Acts 19:24-28 (24) For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;
(25) Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.
(26) Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:
(27) So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.
(28) And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.
The Romans tolerated all religions, even Christianity for a while until Nero blamed the Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome. However at Ephesus, there were influential citizens who sensed a danger to their craft and wealth due to the preaching of Paul and that was reason enough for their intolerance. As Christianity spread, its enemies no longer were content merely to object to its central tenets or those who espoused them. Eventually, vocal disagreement gave way to physical violence as in the case of Demetrius the silversmith. The efforts of the Roman emperor Nero to obliterate Christ's message by charging His followers with all

manner of falsehoods, and killing them by the thousands, are well documented. Later, the Roman emperor Domitian was even more hostile in his attempts to destroy Christianity. The attacks made upon Christianity, and the deaths of those who had become its faithful adherents, became innumerable.
Fast forward about two thousand years. In the United States most Christian based faiths are tolerated. In the world, Islam tolerates no other. We must never forget—even for a moment—that men's souls are at stake. Success in Christ is critical, and failure is eternal. Turn with me to;
Titus 1:10-11 (10) For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:
(11) Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.
There are unruly and vain talkers and deceivers in the world today, one dangerous to life itself, Islam. The Apostle's were different. They taught about the gift of Christ. What one Apostle taught they all taught. What one Apostle obeyed they all obeyed. For the gospel of Christ to be successful there had to be unity among them all. And that unity came by the testimony of the comforter, the Spirit of Truth which Christ promised would come; But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: (John 15:26). *But why would the Comforter testify of Jesus Christ? After all, Christ was not trying to win a popularity contest. In fact, he became so unpopular that He was banished to the cross. But the reason the Comforter testified of Christ is because that is where all spiritual blessings reside.*
The Apostle Paul was not with Christ from the beginning like the other Apostles were, however his first encounter with Christ was unlike the others also. What was Paul told to do?
And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou

have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do (Acts 9:6).
Many say Paul was saved at this point. But was he? Jesus said nothing about salvation in this text, only to go into the city and there it would be revealed unto him what He must do. Turn with me to;
Acts 22:12-16 (12) And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,
(13) Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.
(14) And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.
(15) For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.
(16) And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and **wash away thy sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.
Paul received instructions to be baptized and wash away his sins, and he obeyed. The same instructions are still in force today. Very little debate exists regarding the power to forgive sins. The Bible is abundantly clear that the blood of Christ maintains that singular quality. Paul wasted no time. He was washed from his sins. And he became an inherit teacher of the gospel of Christ teaching that all spiritual blessing are in Christ. While few would argue with the fact that the blood of Jesus covers all sin, there remains some confusion as to the specific point at which a person comes in contact with that blood. One way to ascertain when a person comes into contact with the blood of Christ is to examine the phrase "in Christ" in the New Testament. Depending on what version you read, the phrase "in Christ" is used approximately 80 times. What do we find "in Christ?" Paul, in the book of Ephesians, used the phrase multiple times in chapter one. He stated that "every spiritual blessing" is found in Christ (verse

3). He also noted that "forgiveness of sins" is found only in Christ (verse 7). Paul obviously wanted his audience to understand that everything good in the spiritual realm is found in Christ alone.
Turn with me to;
Romans 3:24-25 (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the **redemption that is in Christ Jesus**:
(25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
Faith is the effect of belief, and repentance, confession and baptism is the effect of faith. It begins with belief, are you listening?, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, *(Mark 16:16). The proof of all this can be observed in;*
Acts 2:37-41 (37) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
(38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
(39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.
(40) And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
(41) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
So how does a person get into Christ? It is interesting to note that the New Testament specifically mentions water baptism as one essential element that puts a person into Christ.
Romans 6:3 *states:* Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? *And* Galatians 3:27 *declares;* For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. *While some have*

incorrectly attempted to claim that the baptism mentioned in these two verses refers to Holy Spirit baptism, many religious people have not resorted to this faulty line of reasoning. Let us, then, put these pieces together. If the Bible says that forgiveness and all spiritual blessings are in Christ, and if Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27, as well as other scriptures, clearly state that baptism is the point at which a person enters into Christ, then any accountable person who has not been baptized in water is outside of Christ. Water does not save anyone by or of itself, but baptism in water is the point of obedience into salvation by the faith of the operation of God, (Col 2:12). It is ironic that many religious groups and teachers insist that Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 does refer to water baptism, but then deny that water baptism has anything to do with salvation. Such a position militates against the straightforward reading of these two passages. Relatively few within Christendom would deny that eternal salvation is a free gift from God. The New Testament is replete with statements stressing this point. The most oft'-quoted verse in all of Scripture teaches this very fact: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). *God did not offer the gift of eternal life to the world because of some great accomplishment on the part of mankind. Rather, as Paul wrote to the church at Rome,* But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). *The New Testament leaves no doubt that the grandest of all gifts, salvation through Christ—a spiritual gift that was in God's mind "before the foundation of the world"—(Ephesians 1:4; 3:11) is not the result of meritorious work on the part of man, but does require obedience. This point also can be understood effectively by noting our attitude toward physical gifts today. If a friend wanted to give you $1,000,000, but said that in order to receive the million dollars you had to pick*

up a check at his house, would any rational person conclude that this gift was earned? Of course not! Even though some effort was exerted to receive the gift, the effort was not a work of merit. The apostle Paul stressed this point several times in his writings. To the Christians who made up the church at Ephesus, he wrote: For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). *In his epistle to Titus, Paul emphasized that we are saved,* not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy (Titus 3:5). *Then, again, while writing to young Timothy, Paul highlighted the fact that we are saved by the "power of God," and "not according to our works" (2 Timothy 1:8-9). This truth cannot be overly stressed; however, it can be, and has been, perverted and misrepresented. For one to be "in Christ" he must be baptized "into Christ", therefore fulfilling scriptural doctrine within his own life and receiving in the spirit, eternal life. The New Testament gives specific prerequisites that must be followed before one can receive the atoning benefit of Christ's blood. These conditions are neither vague nor difficult to understand. A person must have faith based upon the word of God, (Romans 10:17). He must repent of his past sins, (Acts 2:38). He must confess faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, (Acts 8:37). Few, if any, would accuse a man who emphasizes these prerequisites, however, the Bible discusses yet another step that precedes salvation—a step that has become unquestionably controversial within Christendom—believers baptism. It is mentioned numerous times throughout the New Testament, and both Jesus and His disciples taught that it precedes salvation (Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38). A person goes into the waters of baptism to crucify the old man and comes out of baptism to walk a new man in Christ. Will anyone step forward and espouse the idea that faith is a meritorious work? To this day, we have never heard anyone assert that faith is a work of*

merit. Although it is described in the Bible as being a "work," we correctly understand it to be a condition upon which one receives salvation. This description is in 1Thessalonians 1:3; Remembering without ceasing your **work of faith**, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.
Salvation is still a free gift from God; it is the result of His grace and the work of Jesus on the cross, not our efforts. The New Testament specifically excludes baptism from the class of human meritorious works. Meritorious works are unrelated to redemption. In fact, the two books where the apostle Paul condemns most vehemently the idea of salvation by works—Romans and Galatians—are the very books that relate the fact that water baptism by faith places a person "into Christ" (Romans chapter 6, Galatians chapter 3). Also, there is the fact that baptism is not a work of merit on the part of man, turn to;
Titus 3:4-5 (4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
(5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
This passage reveals at least two things. First, we are not saved by works of righteousness of ourselves (that is, not according to any plan or course of action that we devised—see Thayer, 1977, p. 526). Second, we are saved by the "washing of regeneration" *(which is, baptism), listen!;* The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: (1Peter 3:21). *When one is raised from the watery grave of baptism to walk in "newness of life", it is according to the "working of God", and not any man made plan. It is;* Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him

from the dead (Col 2:12). *Although many have tried, no one can suggest, justifiably, that baptism is a meritorious work of human design. If you really think about it, baptism is something done out of an obedient work of faith, that is, faith that is the effect of belief that cometh by hearing the word of God. Thus, the one being baptized could hardly have performed any kind of meritorious "work." And for those who ascribe to the "faith only" concept of salvation, faith only is a scriptural doctrine, but not in the way one may think.* James 2:24 *deals a crushing blow to the "faith only" doctrine of men.* Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by **faith only**. *Yes "faith only" is in scripture, but as a warning that it does not stand alone. The "Faith only" doctrine reminds me of the man in;* Luke 8:18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. *The man which seemeth to have salvation by mans "faith only" doctrine, even that shall be taken from him. I would that you study the scriptures concerning "in Christ," and also that you obey them. Have you been baptized into Christ? If not, then you are outside Christ and will not benefit from the blessings that are "in Christ." Mental consent acknowledging the deity of Christ cannot save. Are you listening?* Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 7:21). *Blessed is that man who is a doer of the word and not a hearer only.*

True biblical faith in Christ is belief in His deity, conjoined with obedience to His commandments. Saving faith is always made complete and living only through obedience to God's commands. It is a living faith that "works through love" to accomplish the "works approved by God." It is a living faith that brings about repentance, confession and submission to water baptism to receive forgiveness of past sins. And is also

raised up to walk in newness of life with love for God and one's fellow man. Israel received the Promised Land from God after following His instructions. Today, any alien sinner can "take possession" of the free gift of salvation, at any time, by obeying the formula from God, in Christ, of the Holy Spirit. If one is in Christ, he is founded upon a rock. Turn with me to;

Matthew 7:24-27 (24) Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:
(25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
(26) And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
(27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Adhering to the strict observance of baptism in; 204 A.D. Tertullian wrote: "The church of Christ composed of baptized believers, does meet each Lord's day to partake of the Lord's Supper." *His conclusion cannot be false if its supporting premises are true. Listen, while on earth Jesus Christ established the ordinance of baptism, His exact words are;* He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, *(Mark 16:16)*. *Faith in Christ is the effect of belief, and baptism is the effect of that faith; it is only those who have first believed the testimony of God, and by faith repented of their sins, and by faith confessed Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and by faith are baptized into Him for remission of sins that have the full and explicit testimony of pardon. If you are not in Christ, will you obey the gospel invitation today, or if one desires prayer for other reasons, in either case come and make your desire known while we persuade with song.*

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