



DEVOTIONAL · 1 OCTOBER 2026

Established and Raised in Christ

Grace & Love of God, Church & Community, Union with Christ

Every human heart longs to belong somewhere — to be known, held, and at home. We search for that rootedness in achievements, relationships, experiences, and identities, yet nothing seems to satisfy it for long. This week we explore how the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks directly into that longing. Drawn from a sermon on Romans 6:3–4, these five days trace the arc of death and resurrection — and invite you to discover that the belonging your heart has always craved is found in being *in Christ*.

Each day builds on the one before. Begin slowly, let the Scripture sink in, and allow the testimonies woven into this week to remind you that this is not abstract theology — it is the lived experience of real people who were just as restless as you may be.

Day 1 — The Longing to Belong

Romans 6:3–4

Or aren't you aware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.

Philippians 1:1

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Every human heart carries a deep, aching question: *Where do I truly belong?* We chase belonging in careers, relationships, experiences, and identities — and though these things offer moments of warmth, they cannot seem to hold the weight of that longing for long. The testimonies of people who have come to faith make this plain. One person chased material success, spirituality, and self-help, only to find an endless cycle of temporary fixes that left her empty. Another sought belonging through substances and wrong relationships, eventually finding himself spiritually alone and broken. Another traveled across the world, restless, searching for something she could not name.

The Apostle Paul offers an answer to this restlessness that cuts straight to the heart. To be a Christian, he insists, is not merely to admire Jesus from a distance, to follow his teachings, or to submit to his authority — though all of these matter. At the deepest level, to be a Christian is to be *in Christ*. This is the language the early church used most naturally when they spoke of those who believed: not "Christians" as a badge, but those who are *in Christ Jesus*. That phrase is more than a label. It is a description of a real spiritual union — a belonging so deep that where Christ has gone, you too have gone; what has happened to him has happened to you.

This is the rootedness the human heart has always been searching for.

Reflect: In what areas of your life have you been looking for belonging or rootedness in something other than your union with Christ?

Prayer prompts:

- Thank God for the deep longing for belonging he has placed in you, and that it points toward him.

- Confess the ways you have tried to satisfy that longing in things that cannot ultimately hold its weight.
- Ask God to make the reality of being 'in Christ' feel more true and more alive to you today.

Day 2 — Carried Into Death

Romans 6:3

Or aren't you aware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Before there can be resurrection life, there must first be death. This is the pattern of spring — a seed must go into the ground and die before new growth can come. It is also the pattern of the gospel, and it is not a comfortable message. The cross of Jesus insists that human beings are not essentially fine and in need of only minor adjustment. It insists that the sin within us is not a small problem we can manage with enough discipline or enough self-improvement.

There is an honesty in the gospel that can feel crushing before it feels freeing. We try to be generous and find ourselves selfish. We want to love people well and find ourselves using them. We want to be free from destructive patterns and discover we are not strong enough to break them on our own. The debt our sin places us in before a holy God is one none of us can pay. And yet — here is the staggering good news — Jesus has gone where we could not go. He has gone into death *in our place*, so that we can be spiritually united with him there. The power of sin that enslaves us can be put to death on his cross. The penalty of sin that condemns us can be paid by his death.

One person who came to faith described the moment she broke down weeping, suddenly seeing for the first time how far she had drifted from God and how sinful she truly was. That painful clarity

was not the end of her story — it was the beginning. The cross is not the place where hope dies. It is the place where everything that was killing us is finally dealt with once and for all.

Reflect: Have you allowed yourself to be honest about the weight of sin in your own life — not compared to others, but measured against the holiness of God?

Prayer prompts:

- Confess specific ways sin has held power over you that you have not been able to break on your own.
- Give thanks that Jesus went into death on your behalf, paying a debt you could not pay.
- Ask for a deeper understanding of what it means that your old self has been crucified with Christ.

Day 3 — Raised to New Life

Romans 6:4

We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:8-11

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. So you too must count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Death was not the end for Jesus — and because of that, death is not the end of the story for anyone who is in him. Three days after the cross, he rose. The long winter broke. And the resurrection of Jesus is not merely a historical event to admire; it is a reality to be *joined to*. Just as those united to

Christ share in his death, they are raised to share in his life.

This new life is not symbolic or theoretical. It is real, experiential, and it begins now. It works at the level of desire — the things that once enslaved and destroyed begin to lose their grip, while the things of Christ, once foreign or even resented, begin to draw the heart. One person described how she stopped searching for ways to fix herself through spiritual practice because she had found the one who actually makes whole. Another described discovering joy again after years of spiritual emptiness. This is the tide of God's life flowing into people who were once drowning.

And even this present renewal is not the full picture. The life that begins in Christ by the Spirit now is pointing toward something even greater — the physical resurrection of all who are in Christ when he returns. The Spring we see around us every year, with its tidal wave of color and life overwhelming the cold and gray, is only a dim glimmer of that final morning. For now, the life of God is at work within every believer, moment by moment, restoring and renewing — a tide that no wall of sin, or deception, or even death itself, is strong enough to hold back.

Reflect: Where do you see evidence — however small — of God's life actively renewing something in you?

Prayer prompts:

- Give thanks for the specific ways Christ's resurrection life is at work changing you from the inside.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to make that renewal more vivid and real in an area where you feel stuck.
- Express hope in the final resurrection — that death does not have the last word for those in Christ.

Day 4 — Rooted, Not Restless

John 15:4-5

Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing.

Colossians 1:2

To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy, now that you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

There is a restlessness that runs through many of the stories of people who have come to faith. A woman who left her country, moved across an ocean to a city where she knew no one, somehow at peace with the inexplicable pull. A man who had drifted through decades of marriage, divorce, substances, and empty escapes, arriving in middle age spiritually hollow. A young woman who had tried every spiritual practice and self-help framework available, only to remain empty. What is striking is not just that they all eventually found Jesus — it is that they all, in different ways, stopped running and found themselves *home*.

To be in Christ is to be rooted. Jesus himself uses the image of a vine and its branches to describe this. A branch does not need to go searching for nourishment — it simply abides in the vine and the life of the vine flows into it. The rootedness that Jesus offers is not the false security of a comfortable life with no troubles. It is something far more stable: a union with the one who has already conquered death, whose life cannot be stopped, and who holds those who are his in himself. When one man described coming full circle back to Jesus with a wisdom and appreciation he never had before, he was describing the peace of a man who had finally stopped trying to build his life on sand.

The belonging the Gospel offers is not a feeling that comes and goes. It is a spiritual reality — being placed *in Christ*, where no tide of circumstance, no wall of sin, no power of death can reach you and remove you from him.

Reflect: What does it look like practically for you to 'abide' in Christ today — to draw your sense of rootedness and identity from your union with him rather than from circumstances?

Prayer prompts:

- Ask God to deepen your sense of being rooted in Christ rather than in the shifting things of this world.
- Give thanks that belonging to Christ is a spiritual reality, not a feeling dependent on your circumstances.
- Confess any restlessness that reveals you have been looking for rootedness somewhere other than in him.

Day 5 — A People Shaped by the Gospel

Romans 6:4

We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.

Philippians 1:1

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

John 16:33

I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!"

The Gospel does not create isolated individuals who each have a private relationship with Jesus. It creates a people — a body, a community of those who are in Christ together, gathered in a particular place, shaped by his death and resurrection. Baptism captures this beautifully. It is a public act, witnessed by a gathered community, declaring not just personal faith but entrance into a body of people whose common identity is that they are *in Christ Jesus*.

One person described finding the most fulfilling and true friendships she had ever known, built on the foundation of Christ — a community and belonging she had been searching for her whole life. Another spoke of restored relationships with parents and siblings, and new family found in the church. These are not incidental blessings added on top of the gospel. They are fruits of it. When people are rooted in Christ together, they find in one another a depth of belonging that the world cannot manufacture or sustain on its own.

And this community is not gathered around a shared interest or a common culture. It is gathered around a person — Jesus Christ, who is risen and alive, who walks with his people daily, who has overcome the world. On the hardest days, when life is still heavy and the weight of this world presses in, the promise is not that everything will be easy. It is that we do not walk alone. The risen Christ walks with us, and his people walk with us, all of us held together in him — rooted, belonging, and being made new.

Reflect: How might you more intentionally invest in and receive from the community of those who are 'in Christ' around you, as a way of living out the rootedness the Gospel offers?

Prayer prompts:

- Give thanks for specific people God has placed around you in the community of Christ.
- Ask God to show you how to be a source of belonging and rootedness for someone else in that community.

- Pray for a growing sense that your deepest home is in Christ, held together with his people, now and forever.

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