All In

*1 Corinthians 15:16-17 - For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*

What an incredible verse. What a clear testimony to what this Jesus means to those who love and trust Him. What a verse to demonstrate to you how the cross and the resurrection of Jesus are God's way of saying to the world "I'm all in" when it comes to your salvation, to your redemption, and your way of living by faith in the things that God has accomplished down through history.   
  
All in! I used to be a basketball player back in the days of my youth. Oh, it was fun. Well, it was fun sometimes. There were times you didn't want to practice; you didn't want to run another step. The teams that I played on in high school and college emphasized a defensive way to play where we would "press" the other team from the time they got the ball until the time that they would relinquish it back to us through a missed shot or a turnover. To get ready to play that kind of basketball, every person on the floor, every person on the bench, every person, every coach, every player -- they had to be *all in* as it were. Such a winning game plan couldn't work if some people were all in and others were not.  
  
All in. That means no excuses; you do whatever it takes to make the defense work, to stop the strength of the other team right in their tracks. No matter how tired, no matter whether you had a good game last week against others. Game night was about being all in with your teammates; it was about engaging those you were teamed with, encouraging them, challenging them, winning or losing with them. Why? Because you were all in for the cause, for those you were partnered with, for those you sought to engage as well.  
  
And that's the point Paul makes about Jesus and His team, the church. Jesus was all in for you. No cross got in His way to live your life, to die your death, and to give you His life as a gift. Do you hear me? God is all in for you in Jesus Christ. Not only did He *not* shrink back from the challenges of this sinful world, He *took up* that challenge to rescue and reconcile a sinful world back to the One who loves them.  
  
His all-in commitment literally makes life possible for us again. It also challenges us to look to others with that same commitment to love them as God indeed loves us. So next time you think about the struggles you are having in work, or at home, or in the neighborhood -- remember you have an all-in Savior who desires you to have an all-in attitude for those you love, and He also challenges us to be His change-agents in the lives of others, for their very sake as well.  
  
**THE PRAYER**: Dear Lord, thank You for Your all-in commitment to loving us, forgiving us, and leading us in this time. Give us an all-in joy of loving others in Your Name even as we are resourced by your all-in service to us through Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost! Amen.