

Union with Christ

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Date: 21 October 2019

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[0:00] We've been, of course, looking at the doctrine of conversion as contained in the order of salvation.

! The conversion process involves repentance and faith, which are both grace gifts from God.! And we also discuss the fact that these two gifts are intimately connected to one another.

In fact, they are so connected, they are often described as two sides to one coin. In the salvation of a soul, you cannot have one without the other.

They both have to be there. Following closely after conversion, something else very beautiful happens. We're not aware of it.

Maybe not for years, but it happens. We don't feel it in the sense that it happens, but it does happen nevertheless.

[1:14] It says we become united with Christ. I refer to this in the order of salvation as union with Christ. We're going to talk about that tonight.

A believer's union with Christ is one of the most precious and reassuring truths in all the Word of God. The reformers and others referred to this as spiritual intimacy between the Lord and His people.

When we are born from above in regeneration, Christ Jesus becomes our Lord, Savior, Master, and Teacher.

We come into association with Christ. And He is our object of saving grace and love. But there's more.

At genuine conversion, brought on by the rebirth, we begin to worship the Lord Jesus Christ, obey the Lord Jesus, we pray to the Lord Jesus.

[2:26] And these are all beautiful outgrowths of our new relationship with the triune God. And they develop deeper over the years.

But there is more. The more can be described as the grace gift of spiritual intimacy that I mentioned above.

It means that we have become intimately identified with Christ Jesus. He becomes intimately identified with us.

And it is so intimate that it is referred to as being united to Him. He is in us. We are in Him.

Once united, we share a common spiritual life with the Lord. And the Apostle Paul spoke of this new relationship in almost poetic terminology, both in Colossians and Galatians and probably other places.

[3:31] But in Colossians 3.3, he says, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

And then in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

So we see these verses, in these verses, the truth concerning union with Christ. And this is vitally important to us as believers.

Once we were united to Christ through the new birth, He became both our representative and our substitute.

Very important terms. If He does not represent us before the Father, we cannot be saved. No one else is going to represent us.

[4:34] And the accuser, Satan, is there accusing us. We need someone to represent us. And that's the Lord Jesus Christ. If He is not our substitute on the cross and died a substitutionary death, we cannot be saved.

He took our place on the cross. I deserve to be there. Mr. Lee deserved to be there. Even Mike deserved to be there. I'm told.

See, I told you how this union with Christ is important. It's really important. Because of our union to Him, and by the way, that is a grace gift from God, another one.

We've been going through a lot of them, haven't we? Every believer has been crucified with Jesus. We've been crucified with Christ.

Again, as it says in Galatians 2.20, and I'll put the pronoun we. We have been crucified with Christ. And we have died with Him. Romans 6.8.

[5 : 38] Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. And our verse in Galatians again says, I know that it is no longer I who live.

Christ lives in us. Having died with Him. Carry another step. Having died with Him, we have also been buried with Him.

We've been buried with Him. Romans 6.3. Do you not know that all of us have been baptized into Christ Jesus?

Those of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. Into His death. And, you know, baptism, as we do it in this church, through immersion, is a picture of our burial with Christ.

We go under the water, just as someday we'll go under the dirt. But there's good news. We are raised out of the baptismal waters.

[6 : 49] And we have been raised with Him. Even when we were dead in our trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

And though we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive in Christ by raising us from the dead. Colossians 3.1 If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.

Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. But there's more. If we've been raised with Him, then we have also been enthroned with Him in heaven.

Gets more difficult, doesn't it? Ephesians 2.6 He seated us with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

In the mind of God, the Father has us sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Christ is there. We're in Christ. And when all of this happens, that we have mentioned this evening, Christ became our mediator.

[7 : 59] He mediates all the benefits of salvation. As a result of this, God the Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

That's found in Ephesians 1.3, arguably the longest sentence in the Bible. That goes about 14 verses there. And right there in verse 3, we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

And by the way, if you look up that Ephesians passage, the sentence is long in Greek. Not necessarily in English. They break it up. But do you begin to see the picture that our union with Christ and just how important it is to us individually.

We are united to Jesus. And that's so important. Jesus becomes the life in us when we are united to Him. And may I say that such a symbiotic relationship is unique to Christianity.

It's unique to Christianity. Muslims never say they are in Allah. Muslims never say they are in Mohammed.

[9 : 22] Muslims never say they are in the same place. I traveled with a good friend of mine, a Moroccan, a Muslim, Abdul Hakim Janna. It sounds Muslim, doesn't it? And Hakim took me to task one day.

He said, did I hear you refer to God as your father? Well, we would never do that. That's blasphemy in Islam. I said, that's why I'm not in Islam. I'm in Christianity and he's our father.

He's our father. You will never hear a Buddhist say that he's in Buddha, although there would be plenty of room. And so it goes with the human devised systems of religion.

The religious man or woman may follow the religious teachings of their leader. That happens in Mormonism, Jehovah Witness, Church of Science.

It happens in other cults. But Christians are said to be in Christ and thus united to him as our representative, substitute and mediator.

[10 : 26] And that sets us apart. That's why Christianity is not a religion. Religion is man's efforts to reach God and always fails. Christ is God reaching down to mankind.

And when God reaches, it succeeds. Christ is God reaching down to mankind. There is a common phrase in the New Testament that speaks to our union with Christ.

It is represented by a two letter preposition. In. Believers are said to be in Christ. So allow me a couple moments just the privilege of supporting that with scripture.

1 Corinthians 1.30. 2 Corinthians 5.17.

2 Corinthians 5.17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away.

[11 : 31] Behold, the new has come. Another expression that speaks to our union with Christ is found in the closing words of Paul in his letter to the Romans.

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5.17. 5.17. 5.17. 5.17. 5.17. 5.17. 5.17. would consider that blasphemous. They would never speak that way.

And that, though, is foundational to Paul's theology. Romans 8.10, But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

[12 : 36] Righteousness. You know, I heard something the other day that said in your notes.

Because we don't have a body, I want to get this right. We're a soul who has a body temporarily.

Our body houses the soul that's eternal. But our bodies are going to pass away, aren't they?

They're going to turn into dirt someday. Dust from whence we came.

Another passage, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. There's another in. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves that Christ Jesus is in you?

There it is. Then Paul says, unless indeed you fail to meet the test. You've got to pass this quiz, guys. Is Jesus in you?

By the way, that's 2 Corinthians 13.5. Paul said, our union with Christ was a mystery and described Him as our great hope in glory.

[13 : 43] Now, you all know hope in the New Testament is settled hope. It's not something we wish for. It's a certainty. In Colossians 1.27, to them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery.

And here's the mystery. Christ in you. The hope of glory. And if He's in you, you've got that hope and it's settled.

It's settled in the heavenlies. There is no way that our union with Christ can be overstated. It is of prime importance.

Our union with the Messiah is our salvation. We are saved because we are united to Christ.

According to Ephesians 1.3, as I already said, this union provides us with every spiritual blessing we receive from the Trinity.

If you're being blessed, if you've ever been blessed, it's because you're united with Christ. This is God's election of us in eternity past to the Son's redemptive life, His death, His resurrection, His intercession for us.

[15 : 01] It's connected ultimately to our glorification in heaven where we shall be with Him forever. Union with Christ, being united to Christ, is the unifying principle from eternity past to eternity future.

And we could say eternity past because that's when He wrote your names down in the Lamb's Book of Life, before the foundation of the world. The Father chose His children before the foundation of the world.

The Father gave us grace in Christ before the ages began. There was never a time when the Father contemplated His own elect apart from their vital union with Christ.

That's what makes us the elect. We are united with Christ. We were also united with Christ through every act of the Son's accomplishment of redemption. And we've been going through those, haven't we?

We were united to Him and therefore we have redemption and forgiveness. We are united to Him in His perfect life of obedience.

[16 : 20] And by the way, that's His obedience, not mine. We even said to be clothed in His righteousness. That means we have been credited with His obedience.

Remember that credit, how important that word was? That Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness? We have been credited with the obedience of Christ.

The Father looks at us, He sees obedience. Mine, no. Mike's, no. Christ. Christ's obedience. That is a major truth in the Word of God.

This union with Christ is the very ground of Christ imputing His righteousness to us and imputing our sins to Himself.

He took our sins at the cross. Without this double imputation, we're forever lost. We have His obedience, His righteousness, His perfections.

[17 : 26] He has our sins. Wow. In our union with Christ, we are said to have died with Him. We are said to be buried with Him.

We are said to have been raised with Him. We are even said to be presently seated with Him in the heavenly places. And this is a quote from a theologian of old.

I even lost his name in the translation. His life is our life. His punishment is our punishment.

His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. His righteousness is our righteousness.

His ascension and glorification are our ascension and glorification.

In summary, though we had not yet been born, God nevertheless counted His people to be in union with their Savior throughout the accomplishment of His redemptive work.

[18 : 29] Christ did not live, die, and rise again for a faceless, nameless, individual, or group.

Redemption was remarkably personal as the body was always reckoned to be united to the head.

We were united by Christ before the foundation of the world.

and in due time we will be studying the doctrine of sanctification. Probably after the first of the year, maybe before, I don't know. We will learn then that our union with Christ is the source of every believer's progressive sanctification.

And it's our perseverance. The reformers like the word preservation. we are preserved through union with Christ.

God the Father and God the Spirit preserve us because we are united to Christ Jesus through this mystical bond that Paul talks about. The Lord is called our sanctification because it flows from Him.

[19 : 43] And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us the wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.

And you understand sanctification is being recreated in Christ likeness. Being conformed to His image. A follower of Christ is known for His fruit.

For His fruit. Even the world can look at our fruit and make a judgment call. I think that God's a Christian. I don't think that God's a Christian. Now they may be wrong but they're given that right. But let me remind everyone that it is not the fruit we produce. If I've ever produced any fruit it's plastic. It's going to burn up like wood, hay, and stubble.

I guess plastic melts. It's not my fruit. It is the fruit Christ produces in and through us.

[20 : 45] John 15 great section on abiding in Christ verses 4 and 5. Abide in me Jesus speaking abide in me and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself. You understand that? The orange doesn't grow out of the branch. The apple doesn't grow out of the branch.

It comes up through the tree through the vine. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing.

That's the words of our Lord and Savior. Pretty important aren't they? A fruitless branch is an oxymoron and an impossibility.

[21 : 58] I should have said there a branch that produces fruit because it can't. It is a contradiction. We bring forth fruit as we stay connected to the vine and the vine is Christ and there's no other vine.

Don't look for any other vine. Jesus said I am the vine. Sanctification is living the life of Christ moment by moment every day not Sunday morning only every day moment by moment.

Christ is becoming progressively more Christ like and let me say and I'll say this again in a few months or weeks don't worry because somebody's gone ahead of you in the sanctification process and don't make fun of someone that's lagging behind you.

We all go at a different rate and we'll talk about that at some length but we go at different rates.

Sanctification though is living that life of Christ progressively becoming like him.

It is increasing in holiness not unto perfection but in this life at least but as a direction in this life.

[23:27] We increase in holiness for one reason. We are in union with him who is absolute holiness. We are being conformed to his image through sanctification which we haven't even got to yet.

Increasing in holiness is impossible apart from being united to Christ. It will not happen. It can't happen.

This union is why we persevere to the end. perseverance is a great doctrine. That's the one doctrine we'll finish with when we get to the end here. Perseverance of the saint.

I like preservation because perseverance kind of implies that we're persevering but preservation is God's preserving us. Listen to this.

John 10. Very familiar. 27-28. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

[24:32] I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

No one. He goes on there. I didn't write it down but he goes on and says the father is greater than everybody and we're in his hands. Picture that. We're in Christ's hands.

The father's hands are around Christ's hands. That's pretty secure isn't it? Once we are truly united to Christ through the redemption provided by the triune God nothing can separate us.

And I have some lively discussions with my Arminian friends on that point. We have some lively discussions and we're friends. They're truly friends and I believe a lot of brothers in Christ.

I believe that. But you're very familiar with Romans 8, 38 and 39. For I am persuaded, another translation, for I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[26:06] Well, that's quite a list, isn't it? That's quite a list of things that cannot separate us once we are united with Christ through redemption.

Through all these things we've been studying. And I want just to look at three things on that list in brief. Three things. Because the passage, written by the Holy Spirit, by the way, who cannot lie, nothing in death can separate us.

Nothing in life can separate us. Nothing in all creation can separate us. What else is there?

What are we leaving out? Nothing in death, nothing in life, nothing in all creation. In all creation. I mean, what else is there? That's kind of a form of saying there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

I had a guy ask me, you mean, do you tell me there's no condemnation for Christians? That's exactly what I'm telling you. Romans chapter 8 verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

[27:25] No condemnation if you're in Christ Jesus. That's the answer, by the way, for no condemnation for Smyrna and Philadelphia in Revelation 2 and 3. The other five churches had varying levels of condemnation.

Smyrna had none, Philadelphia had none. Why? Were they a perfect church? No, but they were a church of believers. They were made up of believers. But remember this warning.

Not being condemned is not the same as not being disciplined. Two different things. Two different things.

Hebrews chapter 12 starting in verse 5. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure.

[28:36] God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? discipline. If you are left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Great passage of scripture. I remember a real good friend of mine, he's passed now, and he got in a fight on the playground, and the next day the principal called him in and said, Denzel, do I understand you fought on the playground?

[29:44] He said, yes, sir. He said, well, I have a policy to get three licks for fighting. He said, I understand. So he hit him with the paddle three times. Next day he calls him in and says, Denzel, do I understand a couple boys jumped on you and you just fought them off?

Yes, sir. He said, a man's got a right to defend himself. I should not have paddled you yesterday. He said, Denzel, let's count that for all the things that I've never caught you at. He said, that sounds good to me, sir.

And he told me, boy, that was a bunch of them. Well, as we close this evening, let us meditate often on the blessings we have as a result of our union with Christ.

We do well to listen to the words of the 17th century Puritan John Owen, who said this, union with Christ is the cause of all other graces that we are made partakers of.

They are all communicated unto us by virtue of our union with Christ. Hence, in our adoption, our justification, our sanctification, our fruitfulness, our perseverance, our resurrection, our glory, it is only as we share in Christ that we have a share in what is His.

[31:07] No spiritual blessing in all the world is found anywhere but in Jesus. Therefore, if we are to have an interest in Christ's blessings, things, we must have an interest in His person.

The gifts are wrapped up only in the giver. moment.

Thank you.