

UNION WITH CHRIST
The Privileges of the Christian Life
Westminster Presbyterian Church
November 1, 2020

I. Introduction

A. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621)

1. “The greatest of all Protestant heresies is _____.”



B. The Importance of Union with Christ

1. *“How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son—not for Christ’s own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? **First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.**” (John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1)*



II. Union with Christ: What is It?

A. SPIRITUAL (with a capital “S”)

1. **Acts 2:32–33** – *“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”*
2. *Westminster Shorter Catechism (1646–47) Q. 30. How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.*
 - a. **Rom 8:9** – *“Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”*
 - b. **1 John 1:3** – *“... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

B. MYSTICAL

1. **Eph 1:7–10** – *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”*
2. **Eph 3:4–5** – *“When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”*
3. *Yet she on earth hath union / With God the Three in One, / And mystic sweet communion / With those whose rest is won: / O happy ones and holy! / Lord, give us grace that we, / Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee. (“The Church’s One Foundation”)*

C. UNBREAKABLE

1. **Eph 1:4–6** – “. . . even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved”
2. WSC, Q. 37 “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”

D. FULL

1. “Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.1)
2. **1 Cor 1:30** – “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption . . .”
3. “As Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable—namely, righteousness and sanctification . . .” But if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat? Is there anything more applicable to the present matter than this comparison? The sun, by its heat, quickens and fructifies the earth, by its beams brightens and illumines it.” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.6)

E. FREE

1. What about “Come, ye Sinners”?
 - a. Vs. 1 = *Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, / Weak and wounded, sick and sore! / Jesus ready stands to save you, / Full of pity, love and power. / He is able, He is able, He is able, / He is willing, doubt no more!*
 - b. Vs. 2 = *Let not conscience let you linger, Nor of fitness fondly dream; / **All the fitness he requireth / Is to feel your need of him.** / This he gives you, This he gives you, This he gives you: / 'Tis the Spirit's glimmering beam.*
2. **Is 55:1–3** – “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live”
3. **Rev 22:17** – “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.”

III. Conclusion