

UNION WITH CHRIST: PART 3
The Privileges of the Christian Life
Westminster Presbyterian Church
November 22, 2020

I. Introduction: Union with Christ (Review)

A. Union with Christ is “Spiritual,” “Mystical,” “Unbreakable,” “Full,” and “Free”!

1. Westminster Larger Catechism – Q. 66. *What is that union which the elect have with Christ?*
A. The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God’s grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.

II. Effectual Calling and Union with Christ

A. **1 Cor 1:9** – “*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

“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. . . We also, in turn, are said to be 'engrafted into him' (Rom 11:17), and to 'put on Christ' (Gal 3:27); for, as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him. It is true that we obtain this by faith. Yet . . . reason itself teaches us to climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits ... To sum up, the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.” – John Calvin, Institutes, 3.1.1

B. **Eph 2:4–8** – “*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world ...⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*”

1. To sum up so far, effectual calling by the Father causes union with Christ (1 Cor 1:9, WLC 66). And the attendant human response to our union with Christ is faith and repentance (Eph 2:8).

“There is a union made between Christ and us, when he comes into the heart, when he dwells in us, and we in him; when Christ is so brought into our hearts, that he lives there; and when we are so united to him, that we live in him; when he grows in us as the Vine in the branches, and we grow in him as the branches in the Vine; when faith has done this, then it is an effectual faith, when it knits and unites us to Christ.”
– John Preston (1587–1628), *The Breastplate of Faith and Love*, Second Sermon

III. Union and Communion with Christ

- A. Union with Christ brings communion with it, in which we enjoy all of the saving benefits found in Christ as our Mediator.
1. Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 69. *What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?* A. The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him.
 2. A quick look at a few Scriptural texts will make it clear that all saving benefits secured by Christ, benefits that we receive *from* Christ, come to us only insofar as we are *in* Christ.

Believers are:

- a. Elected and predestined in Christ (Eph 1:4-5)
 - i. "...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world..." (1:4)
- b. Die and rise with and in Christ (Eph 2:4-6; Col 2:11-13, 3:1-4)
 - i. "...you have been raised with Christ..." (Col 3:1) "...you have died..." (Col 3:3)
- c. Regenerated in Christ (Eph 2:5; Col 2:13)
 - i. "...made us alive together with Christ..." (2:5)
- d. Justified in Christ (Rom 8:1; Gal 2:17; 1 Cor 1:30)
 - i. "...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." (8:1)
- e. Adopted in Christ (Gal 3:26)
 - i. "...in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." (3:26)
- f. Sanctified in Christ (1 Cor 6:11; Rom 6:5ff)
 - i. "...you were sanctified...in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ..." (6:11)
- g. Persevere in Christ (Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Phil 1:6)
 - i. "...[we] walk in newness of life..." [in him] (6:4)
- h. Die in Christ (Rev 14:13; 1 Thess 4:16)
 - i. "...the dead in Christ will rise first" (4:16)
- i. Raised and glorified in Christ (1 Cor 15:22; Rom 8:30).
 - i. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (15:22)

IV. Conclusion

- A. Salvation is best understood in terms of Spirit-wrought union with Christ, in whom we have "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3).
- B. We ought to think of our salvation *first* as centered on a Person, and then in terms of the (Person-centered) benefits found in him.
- C. May we commune with Christ, praise him for his benefits, and respond to him with worship!

"In Christ believers were chosen, called, justified, and will be glorified. To be converted is to die with Christ and to rise with Him. The entire Christian life, root and stem and branch and blossom, is one continuous fellowship with Christ." – Geerhardus Vos