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UNION WITH CHRIST

#214

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SURPASSINGLY WONDERFUL UNION

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

THE present writer has not the least doubt in his mind that the subject of spiritual union is the most important, the most profound, and...the most blessed of any that is set forth in the sacred Scriptures. Yet, sad to say, there is hardly any that is now more generally neglected. The very expression “spiritual union” is unknown in most professing Christian circles; and even where it is employed, it is given such a protracted meaning as to take in only a fragment of this precious truth. Probably its very profundity¹ is the reason why it is so largely ignored in this superficial age. Yet there are still a few left who are anxious to enter into God’s best and long for a fuller understanding of the deep things of the Spirit. It is principally with these in mind that we take up this subject.

There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures that are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three Divine persons in one Godhead: having distinct personalities, being eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one Jehovah. Second, the union of the Divine and human natures in one

¹ profundity – great depth of thought.

person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the Church to Christ, He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form an exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all because they are clearly revealed in Scripture and are the necessary foundation for other points of Christian doctrine. Hence, it is our holy privilege to study prayerfully the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to enlighten us graciously thereon.

The most wonderful thing of all, and yet the greatest mystery in the natural world, is a union, namely, that conjunction that God has made between mind and matter—the soul and the body. What finite intelligence would or could have conceived of the joining of an immaterial spirit and a clod of clay! What so little alike are the soul and an organized piece of earth! Who had ever imagined such a thing as animate and thinking dust! Or that a spirit should be so linked with and tied to a carnal body that while that is preserved in health, it cannot free itself! Yet there is a union, a real union, a personal union, between the soul and the body. But that is only a *natural* mystery and falls immeasurably below the *sacred* mystery of the union between human beings and the Lord of glory.

The Scriptures have much to say upon the union that exists between Christ and His people. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (Joh 14:20). “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1Co 6:17). “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones...This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:30, 32). What an astonishing thing it is that there should be a union between the Son of God and worms of the earth!—infinitely more so than if the king of Great Britain had married the poorest and ugliest woman in all his realm. How immeasurable is the distance between the Creator and the creature, between Deity and mortal man! How wonderful beyond words that sinful wretches should be made one with Him before Whom the seraphim veil their faces and cry, “Holy, holy, holy!”

“The union of Christ to His people is an amazing subject. It is an eternal union; it is a union made known and enjoyed in time; it is a union that will be openly and manifestatively² declared in all its glory and perfection in the latter day; it is a grace union; it is also a glory union. As it is the foundation of all the gracious actings of Christ towards His Church in a time state, so it is of all the glory He will put on His church and communicate unto His people at the last day. I cannot but lament [that] most of us are so great strangers to these important and heavenly truths. Depend on it: we are great losers hereby. The people of God lose much because they neglect truths of the greatest importance. In the present day, they are too neglectful of important truths. They are willingly ignorant of them.

“We treat the Scriptures in the present day as though the less we knew of the deep things of God, so much the better. Alas! Alas! This, let us think of it as we may, is to cast contempt on God Himself. Nor will it serve to say, ‘We do not so mean or intend!’ It is a matter of fact [that] we are too neglectful of those Divine truths and doctrines that concern the glory of Christ. The ancient and glorious settlements of grace are too little in our thoughts. It is sensibly felt, and by some very expressively confessed and acknowledged, that the influences of the Holy Spirit are very greatly suspended. Yet the cause is overlooked. Most assuredly, one grand reason why we have so little of His sacred presence with us and His power and influence manifested amongst us may be laid to the account of neglecting to preach supernatural, spiritual truth, and the mysteries of the everlasting Gospel.”³

The vital importance of this subject of the union of the Church to Christ may be clearly seen from the place that it occupies in the High Priestly prayer of Christ. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Joh 17:20-21). Our Lord here began His prayer for the whole body of His people by speaking of the union that they had with Him and His Father in Him, and He spends the verses that follow in expressing the blessings that follow as the fruits thereof. We are not to conceive that Christ here prayed for a union to be brought about or obtained—no, for it was established from all eternity. Rather was He praying that His beloved might be blest with the clear knowledge of it, so that they might enjoy all the benefits of the same in their own souls.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (Joh 17:22). This subject of the union between Himself and the elect was truly sweet and blessed to the heart of Christ. He knew that the knowledge and use of it is of great value and service to His people. Therefore did He speak of it again and again that His saints in all ages might receive the knowledge of it into their minds and enjoy in their hearts the blessings contained in it. My readers, if Christ Himself esteemed this truth of union with Himself as a foundation truth, we should learn to

² **manifestatively** – showing clearly and conclusively.

³ **Samuel Eyles Pierce** (1746-1829) – a Dissenter from Honiton in Devon, England, Pierce was an evangelical church minister aligned with Calvinist Baptist theology.

think of it so also. We should bring ourselves unto the closest and [most] prayerful study of the same; for by it, our faith and hope are sustained and kept in exercise on God our Savior.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one.” This petition is the very center of Christ’s prayer, expressing the supreme desire of the Savior’s mind toward His redeemed: it summed up the uttermost longing of His heart toward them. The union about which He prayed is such that thereby the Father and the Son dwell in us and we in them. It is such that the elect are so joined unto God and His Christ that it is the very highest union of which the elect are capable. It is the chiefest and greatest of all blessings, being the foundation from which all others proceed.

“I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (Joh 17:23). A great variety of blessings is set before us in the Gospel. Salvation is an unspeakable one, yet not as great as our union to the person of Christ. If we had not been united to Christ, He had not been our Savior: it was because we stood eternally related to Him that He was most graciously pleased to undertake for us. The grace of justification⁴ is an unspeakable blessing, yet not so great as that of union because the effect can never be equal to the cause that produces it. To be in Christ must exceed all the blessings that flow from Him that we have or ever shall partake of, either on earth or in Heaven. Communion with Christ is unspeakably blessed, yet not as great as union, for our union is the foundation of all communion. It is the greatest of all those super-creation⁵ “spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3) that the Father bestowed on the Church before sin entered the universe. It is the fruit of God’s eternal love to His people.

Union with Christ is the foundation of all spiritual blessings, so that if there had been no connection with Him, there could be no regeneration,⁶ no justification, no sanctification,⁷ no glorification⁸...As it is for Christ’s sake that God bestows upon His people all the blessings of salvation, so according to His eternal constitution those blessings could only be enjoyed in a state of communion with Him...But the foundation of that vital, spiritual, and experimental union that the saints have with their Beloved in a time state and that they will enjoy forever in Heaven was laid by God in that mystical union that He established between the Mediator and His elect before the foundation of the world, when He appointed Him to be the Head and they the members of His Body—when God gave Christ to them and gave them to Christ in everlasting marriage.

In consequence of God’s having given the Church to Christ in marriage before the foundation of the world, He says to His people, “And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” (Hos 2:19)...“Consider the closeness and intimacy of the union between Him and them, and let this encourage thee to lean and live on Him by faith. It is far more intimate and dear than the union between husband and wife among men, for they are indeed ‘one flesh,’ but He is ‘one body’ and ‘one spirit’ (1Co 6:19) with His spouse. He is in them, and they are in Him. And by virtue of this intimate union, thou hast a title to Him and to His whole purchase”⁹...

The union between Christ and His Church is so real, so vital, so intimate that God has never viewed the one apart from the other. There is such an indissoluble¹⁰ oneness between the Redeemer and the redeemed, such an absolute identification of interest between them, that the Father of mercies never saw them apart. He never saw Christ as “Christ” without seeing His mystical Body; He never saw the Church apart from its Head. Therefore, the Holy Spirit has delighted to emphasize this wondrous and glorious fact in many Scriptures. In connection with Christ’s birth we read, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb 2:14)...We are told that when the Savior was nailed to the tree “our old man was crucified with him” (Rom 6:6). We are told that when He expired at Calvary “if One died for all, then all died” (2Co 5:14). We are told that when He was revived, we were “quicken together with Christ” (Eph 2:5). He did not rise again as a single and private person, but as the Head of His Church: “If ye then be risen with Christ” (Col 3:1). Nor is that all: in Ephesians 2:6, we are told, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” O how surpassingly wonderful is the Christian’s oneness with Christ!

⁴ **justification** – Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 32, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

⁵ **super-creation** – decreed before creation.

⁶ **regeneration** – God’s act of creating spiritual life in a sinner by the Holy Spirit’s power.

⁷ **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 34)

⁸ **glorification** – the final aspect of salvation that includes the resurrection of the believer’s body at Christ’s Second Coming, perfect conformity of the believer to Christ’s image, freedom from both physical and spiritual defect, and entrance into the eternal kingdom of God.

⁹ **Ebenezer Erskine** (1680-1754) – Scottish Dissenter; a founder of the Secession Church.

¹⁰ **indissoluble** – cannot-be-broken; perpetually binding.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and numerous books; born in Nottingham, England.



THE NATURE OF UNION WITH CHRIST

John Murray (1898-1975)

UNION with Christ is an important part of the application of redemption. We do not become actual partakers of Christ until redemption is effectually applied. Paul in writing to the believers at Ephesus reminded them that they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, but he also reminded them that there was a time when they were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12) and that they were “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). Although they had been chosen in Christ before times eternal, yet they were Christless until they were called effectually into the fellowship of God’s Son (1Co 1:9)...Only then do they know the fellowship of Christ. What is the nature of this union with Christ that is effected by the call of God? There are several things to be said in answer to this question.

1. It is Spiritual. Few words in the New Testament have been subjected to more distortion than the word *spiritual*. Frequently it is used to denote what is little more than vague sentimentality.¹¹ *Spiritual* in the New Testament refers to that which is of the Holy Spirit. The *spiritual* man is the person who is indwelt and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and a spiritual state of mind is a state of mind that is produced and maintained by the Holy Spirit. Hence, when we say that union with Christ is spiritual, we mean, first of all, that the bond of this union is the Holy Spirit Himself. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1Co 12:13; cf. 1Co 6:17, 19; Rom 8:9-11; 1Jo 3:24; 4:13). We need to appreciate far more than we have been wont to¹² the close interdependence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the operations of saving grace. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord; and Christ is the Lord of the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9; 2Co 3:18; 1Pe 1:11). Christ dwells in us if His Spirit dwells in us, and He dwells in us by the Spirit. Union with Christ is a great mystery. That the Holy Spirit is the bond of this union does not diminish the mystery, but this truth does throw a flood of light upon the mystery...

This brings us to note, in the second place, that union with Christ is spiritual because it is a spiritual relationship that is in view. It is not the kind of union that we have in the Trinity—three persons in one God. It is not the kind of union we have in the Person of Christ—two natures in one Person. It is not the kind of union we have in man—body and soul constituting a human being. It is not simply the union of feeling, affection, understanding, mind, heart, will, and purpose. Here we have union that we are unable to define specifically. But it is union of an intensely spiritual character, consonant with the nature and work of the Holy Spirit so that in a real way, surpassing our power of analysis, Christ dwells in His people and His people dwell in Him.

2. It is Mystical. When we use the word *mystical* in this connection, it is well to take our starting-point from the word *mystery*, as it is used in the Scripture. We are liable to use the word to designate something that is completely unintelligible and of which we cannot have any understanding. That is not the sense of Scripture. The Apostle in Romans 16:25-26 sets the points for the understanding of this term. There Paul speaks of “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

There are four things to be observed about this mystery: (1) It was kept secret from times eternal—it was something hid in the mind and counsel of God. (2) It did not continue to be kept hid—it was manifested and made known in accordance with the will and commandment of God. (3) This revelation on God’s part was mediated¹³ through and

¹¹ **sentimentality** – over-indulgence of emotion.

¹² **wont to** – accustomed to; used to.

¹³ **mediated...Scripture** – the Bible was the means through which the revelation came.

deposited in the Scripture—it was revealed to all nations and is no longer a secret. (4) This revelation is directed to the end that all nations may come to the obedience of faith. A mystery is, therefore, something that eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither hath entered into the heart of man (1Co 2:9), but which God has revealed unto us by His Spirit and which by revelation and faith comes to be known and appropriated by men.

That union with Christ is such a mystery is apparent. In speaking of union with Christ and after comparing it with the union that exists between man and wife, Paul says, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). Again Paul speaks of “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” and describes it as “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints” (Col 1:26-27). Union with Christ is mystical because it is a mystery. The fact that it is a mystery underlines the preciousness of it and the intimacy of the relation it entails.

The wide range of similitude¹⁴ used in Scripture to illustrate union with Christ is very striking. On the highest level of being, it is compared to the union that exists between the Persons of the Trinity in the Godhead. This is *staggering*, but it is the case (Joh 14:23; 17:21-23). On the lowest level, it is compared to the relation that exists between the stones of a building and the chief corner stone (Eph 2:19-22; 1Pe 2:4-5). In between these two limits, there is a variety of similitude drawn from different levels of being and relationship. It is compared to the union that existed between Adam and all of posterity (Rom 5:12-19; 1Co 15:19-49). It is compared to the union that exists between man and wife (Eph 5:22-33; cf. Joh 3:29). It is compared to the union that exists between the head and the other members in the human body (Eph 4:15-16). It is compared to the relation of the vine to the branches (Joh 15:1-8). Hence, we have analogy drawn from the various strata of being, ascending from the inanimate¹⁵ realm to the very life of the Persons of the Godhead.

This should teach us a great principle. It is obvious that we must not reduce the nature and the mode of union with Christ to the measure of the kind of union that exists between the chief corner stone and the other stones in the building, nor to the measure of the kind of union that exists between the vine and the branches, nor to that of the head and the other members of the body, nor even to that of husband and wife. The mode, nature, and kind of union differ in the different cases. There is *similitude* but not *identity*. But just as we may not reduce the union between Christ and His people to the level of the union that exists on these other strata of being, so we must not raise it to the level of the union that exists within the Godhead. Similitude here again does not mean identity. Union with Christ does not mean that we are incorporated into the life of the Godhead. That is one of the distortions to which this great truth has been subjected. But the process of thought by which such a view has been adopted neglects one of the simplest principles that must always guide our thinking, namely, that *analogy does not mean identity*. When we make a comparison, we do not make an equation. Of all the kinds of union or unity that exist for creatures, the union of believers with Christ is the highest. The greatest mystery of being is the mystery of the Trinity—three Persons in one God. The great mystery of godliness is the mystery of the incarnation, that the Son of God became man and was manifest in the flesh (1Ti 3:16). But the greatest mystery of creaturely relations is *the union of the people of God with Christ*. And the mystery of it is attested by nothing more than this: it is compared to the union that exists between the Father and the Son in the unity of the Godhead.

It has been customary to use the word *mystical* to express the mysticism that enters into the exercise of faith. It is necessary for us to recognize that there is an intelligent mysticism in the life of faith. Believers are called into the fellowship of Christ and fellowship means communion. The life of faith is one of living union and communion with the exalted and ever-present Redeemer. Faith is directed not only to a Redeemer Who has come and completed once for all a work of redemption. It is directed to Him, not merely as the One Who died, but as the One Who rose again and Who ever lives as our great High Priest and Advocate. And because faith is directed to Him as living Savior and Lord, fellowship reaches the zenith of its exercise. There is no communion among men that is comparable to fellowship with Christ—He communes with His people and His people commune with Him in conscious reciprocal¹⁶ love. “Whom having not seen, ye love,” wrote the Apostle Peter, “in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8).

The life of faith is the life of love, and the life of love is the life of fellowship, of mystic communion with Him Who ever lives to make intercession for His people and Who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15). It is fellowship with Him Who has an inexhaustible reservoir of sympathy with His people’s temptations, afflictions, and infirmities because He was tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15)...

Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation. All to which the people of God have been predestined in the eternal election of God, all that has been secured and procured for them in the once-for-all

¹⁴ **similitude** – comparisons drawn between two things.

¹⁵ **inanimate** – without life.

¹⁶ **reciprocal** – giving and receiving.

accomplishment of redemption, all of which they become the actual partakers in the application of redemption, and all that by God's grace they will become in the state of consummated bliss is embraced within the compass of union and communion with Christ...It is significant that the election in Christ before the foundation of the world is *election unto the adoption of sons*. When Paul says that the Father chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be holy, he also adds that *in love* He predestinated them unto adoption through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:4-5). Apparently, election to holiness is parallel to predestination to adoption—these are two ways of expressing the same great truth. They disclose to us the different facets that belong to the Father's election. Hence, union with Christ and adoption are complementary aspects of this amazing grace. Union with Christ reaches its zenith in adoption and adoption has its orbit in union with Christ. The people of God are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). All things are theirs whether life or death or things present or things to come, all are theirs because they are Christ's and Christ is God's (1Co 3:22-23). They are united to Him in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and they are complete in Him Who is the head of all principality and power (Col 2:3, 10).

It is out of the measureless fullness of grace and truth, of wisdom and power, of goodness and love, of righteousness and faithfulness that resides in Him that God's people draw for all their needs in this life and for the hope of the life to come. There is no truth, therefore, more suited to impart confidence and strength, comfort and joy in the Lord than this one of union with Christ. It also promotes sanctification, not only because all sanctifying grace is derived from Christ as the crucified and exalted Redeemer, but also because the recognition of fellowship with Christ and of the high privilege it entails incites to gratitude, obedience, and devotion. Union means also communion; and communion constrains a humble, reverent, loving walk with Him Who died and rose again that He might be our Lord. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:5-6). "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (Joh 15:4).

There is another phase of the subject of union with Christ that must not be omitted. If it were overlooked, there would be a serious defect in our understanding and appreciation of the implications of this union. These are the implications that arise from the relations of Christ to the other Persons of the Trinity and from our relations to the other Persons of the Trinity because of our union with Christ. Jesus Himself said, "I and my Father are one" (Joh 10:30). We should expect, therefore, that union with Christ would bring us into similar relation with the Father. This is exactly what our Lord Himself tells us: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Joh 14:23). The thought is overwhelming, but it is unmistakable: the Father, as well as Christ, comes and makes His abode with the believer!

Perhaps even more striking is another word of Jesus: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (Joh 17:20-23). And not only is it the Father Who is united with believers and dwells in them; Jesus tells us likewise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (Joh 14:16-17). It is union, therefore, with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit that union with Christ draws along with it...Believers enter into the holy of holies of communion with the triune God, and they do so because they have been raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6). Their life is hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3). They draw nigh in full assurance of faith having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and their bodies washed with pure water because Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for them (Heb 9:24).

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John Murray (1898-1975): Reformed theologian; author of numerous theological books and articles; born in Badbea, Sutherland County, Scotland.



AN ETERNAL UNION OF LOVE

John Gill (1697-1771)

I shall begin with the union of God's elect in Christ. I shall not here treat of any time-acts of union, [such as] our nature to the Son of God by His incarnation when He became our brother—our near kinsman, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone—and He and we were of one, that is, of one nature (Heb 2:11, 14, 16). Nor [will I treat] of the vital union of our persons to Him in regeneration,¹⁷ when we are quickened by the power and grace of God, Christ is formed in our hearts, and we become new creatures in Him and are living, fruitful branches in Him, the Living Vine. This is our *open* being in Christ in consequence of a *secret* being in Him from everlasting by electing grace (*see* Rom 16:7; 2Co 5:17; 12:2). Nor of the more open and manifest union of the saints to God hereafter, who being once in Christ are always found in Him, die in union to Him, rise from the dead by virtue of that union, and who will then in soul and body be one in God—Father, Son, and Spirit. [They will be one in God] as the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, Whose union to one another is the pattern and exemplar¹⁸ of theirs. For the open manifestation of [this,] Christ prays (Joh 17:21, 23).

But I shall consider the union of the elect to God as it is in its original and as an eternal immanent act¹⁹ in God. [This act] is no other than the going forth of His heart in love to them and thereby uniting them to Himself. [This] love—as it is from everlasting (Jer 31:3; Joh 17:23-24)—is of a cementing and uniting nature. Indeed, [it] is the bond of union between God and His chosen people, or that by which He has taken them into near union with Himself. Love is the bond of union among men, of friendship one to another. It was this that knit the soul of Jonathan to the soul of David, so that he loved him as his own soul. It is the bond of the saints' union to each other; their hearts are knit together in love. Hence, charity, or love, is called the bond of perfectness, or the perfect bond, which joins and keeps them together (Col 2:7; 3:14). It was love that so closely cemented the hearts of the first Christians to one another, insomuch that the multitude of them was of one heart and of one soul (Act 4:32). And now love must operate infinitely more strongly in the heart of God, attracting and uniting the objects of it to Himself, giving them such a nearness and union to Him that cannot be dissolved. Nothing can separate from the love of God! Not the fall of God's elect in Adam nor their actual sins and transgressions in a state of unregeneracy nor their revoltings and backslidings after conversion (Rom 8:38-39; Eph 2:3-4; Hos 14:4). This bond of union is indissoluble by the joint power of men and devils. In virtue of this, the people of God become a part of Him, a near, dear, and tender part, even as the apple of His eye. [They] have a place in His heart, are engraven on the palms of His hands, and [are] ever in His thoughts. The desires and affections of His soul are *always* towards them, and He is ever devising and forming schemes for their welfare. How great is His goodness¹⁹ that He has laid up and wrought for them (Zec 2:8; Psa 139:17; Song 7:10; Isa 49:16; Psa 31:19)!

The love of Christ to the elect is as early as that of His Father's love to Him and them, and which, it seems, was a love of complacency²⁰ and delight. Before the world was, His delights were with the sons of men (Joh 15:9; Pro 8:30-31); and this is of the same cementing and uniting nature as His Father's. This causes Him to stick closer than a brother to His people does, and nothing can separate from His love to them any more than from the love of the Father. Having loved His own, He loves them to the end. This bond of union remains firm and sure and gives such a nearness to Him the Church wished for: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm" (Song 8:6; *see* Pro 18:24; Rom 8:35). The same may be said of the love of the Spirit: for it is the everlasting love of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—that is the bond of the union of God's elect to the sacred three. They have all three loved the elect with an everlasting love and thereby have firmly and everlastingly united them to Themselves. Hence, because of the Spirit's love of them and union to them, He in time becomes the Spirit of life and grace in them (Rom 15:30). Now of this love-union there are several branches, of which are so many illustrations and confirmations of it and all in eternity, as,

1. An election-union in Christ: This flows from the love of God—election presupposes love (*see* 2Th 2:13). Particular persons are said to be *chosen in Christ*, as Rufus (Rom 16:13). The Apostle says of himself and others that God had chosen them in Christ and that before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Election gives a being in Christ—a kind of subsistence²¹ in Him—though not an *actual* being, yet at least a *representative* being, even such a one as that they are capable of having grants of grace made to them in Christ and of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him before

¹⁷ See FGB 202, *The New Birth*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁸ **exemplar** – something serving as an excellent example.

¹⁹ **immanent** – a mental act performed entirely within the mind.

²⁰ **complacency** – satisfaction; the state of being pleased with someone.

²¹ **subsistence** – existence.

the world began (2Ti 1:9; Eph 1:3-4). How they can be said to have a being in Christ, and yet have no union to Him, I cannot conceive.

Besides, in election, there is a near relation [that] commences between Christ and the elect. He is given to be a Head to them, and they are given as members to Him. As such, they are chosen together: He first in order of nature as the Head; and then they as members of Him. Nothing is more common with sound divines than to express themselves in this manner when speaking of the election of Christ and His people in Him. “Particularly,” says Dr. Goodwin,²² “as in the womb, head and members are not conceived apart, but together, as having relation to each other; so were we and Christ (as making up one mystical body to God) formed together in the eternal womb of election.” In the same place he says, “Jesus Christ was the Head of election, and of the elect of God; and so in order of nature elected first, though in order of time we were elected together. In the womb of election He, the Head, came out first, and then we, the members.” Now what relation can well be thought of [as] nearer or more expressive of a close union than this of head and members? Christ is the chosen Head of the Church, [and] the Church the chosen Body of Christ, the fullness of Him that fills all in all (Eph 1:22-23). Hence is the safety and security of the saints—being in Christ through electing grace and united to Him, and therefore said to be preserved in Him. Herein and hereby put into His hand, made the sheep of His hand, out of Whose hands none can pluck them, nor [can] they ever fall (Jude 1:1).

2. There is a conjugal²³ union between Christ and the elect that also flows from love and commenced in eternity. By the institution of natural marriage, the persons between whom it is contracted become one flesh, as did Adam and Eve. A nearer union than this cannot well be conceived of. [Their] marriage was a shadow and representation of that between Christ and His Church, whom, having espoused, He nourishes and cherishes as His own flesh. They become one...Now though the open marriage-relation between Christ and particular persons takes place at conversion, which is the day of their espousals²⁴ to Him (Jer 2:2), the more public notification of it will be when all the elect of God are gathered in: [they] shall in one body be as a bride adorned for her husband, and the marriage of the Lamb shall be come. This [will be] declared in the most open manner and the nuptials solemnized most magnificently (Rev 21:2)! Yet the secret act of betrothing was in eternity, when Christ, being in love with the chosen ones, asked them of His Father to be His spouse and bride. Being given to Him, He betrothed them to Himself in lovingkindness and from thenceforward looked on them as standing in such a relation to Him. [This] is the foundation of all other after-acts of grace unto them. Hence, because of His marriage-relation to His Church, He became her Surety²⁵ and gave Himself for her. [He] shed His precious blood to sanctify and cleanse her from all the impurities of the fall and other transgressions that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; even just such a Church and in such glory [in which] He had viewed her when He first betrothed her (Eph 5:25-27). So with the Jews, there was a private betrothing before open marriage and the consummation of it. At [this] betrothing, the relation of husband and wife commenced (Deu 22:23-24); so Christ is said to be the Husband of the Gentile Church before she was in actual being (Isa 44:5).

3. There is a federal²⁶ union between Christ and the elect. They have a covenant-subsistence in Him as their Head and Representative. The covenant²⁷ flows from and is the effect of the love, grace, and mercy of God—these are spoken of along with it as the foundation of it (Psa 89:2-3; 33-34; Isa 54:10). Hence, it is commonly called the Covenant of Grace, and this was made from everlasting. Christ was set up as the Mediator²⁸ of it. His goings forth in it were so early (Pro 8:23; Mic 5:2), eternal life was promised before the world began, and blessings of grace so soon provided (Ti 1:2; 2Ti 1:9)—all which proves the antiquity of this covenant.

²² **Thomas Goodwin** (1600-1679) – Congregational pastor and theologian; leader of the Dissenting Brethren of the Westminster Assembly.

²³ **conjugal** – relating to marriage.

²⁴ **espousals** – the promise to enter into marriage.

²⁵ **surety** – one who undertakes the debt of another.

²⁶ **federal** – Federal theology suggests that Adam, as the first human, acted as the “federal head” or legal representative of the rest of humankind. Thus, God entered into a covenantal relationship with Adam that promised blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience...Because Adam was disobedient, the curse extends to humankind, of which Adam is the covenantal representative...Just as Adam was the federal head of humanity, so also Christ enters history as a second Adam, free from the curse, and acts as the covenantal head of righteousness for all those who believe in Him. (Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 50-51)

²⁷ **covenant** – a solemn promise or oath of God to man.

²⁸ **Mediator** – one who goes between two hostile parties to remove conflicts and to reconcile them; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (1689 London Baptist Confession, 8.1; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

Now this covenant was made with Christ, not as a single person, but as a common Head. [This was] not for Himself or on His own account only, but for and on the account of His people. As the Covenant of Works²⁹ was made with Adam as the federal Head of all *his* posterity—hence he is said to be the figure or type of Him that was to come (Rom 5:14)—so the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the federal head of *His* spiritual offspring. For this reason a parallel is run between them in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, as if they had been the only two men in the world: the one called the *first*, the other the *second* man. Christ represented His people in this covenant, and they had a representative union to Him in it. All that He promised and engaged to do, He promised and engaged in *their* name and on *their* account: when performed, it was the same with God as if they had done it. What He received—promises and blessings of grace—He received in *their* name; and they received them *in Him*, being one with Him as their common Head and Representative.

4. There is a legal union between Christ and the elect, the bond of which is His suretyship for them, flowing from His strong love and affection to them. In this respect, Christ and they are one in the eye of the Law as the bondsman and debtor are one in a legal sense; so that if one of them pays the debt bound for, it is the same as if the *other* did. Christ is the Surety of the better testament: He drew nigh to God, gave His bond, laid Himself under obligation to pay the debts of His people and to satisfy for their sins; Who being as such accepted by God, He and they were considered as one. This is the ground and foundation of His payment of their debts, of His making satisfaction for their sins, of the imputation of their sins to Him, and of the imputation of His righteousness³⁰ to them.

In short, it is the saints' antecedent³¹ union and relation to Christ in eternity...that are the ground and reason of all that Christ has done and suffered for them and not for others—and of all the blessings of grace that are or shall be bestowed upon them, [but] are denied to others. The reason why He became incarnate for them and took upon Him human nature with a peculiar regard to them was that they were children given to Him. He laid down His life for them because they were His sheep; He gave Himself for them because they were His Church; and He saved them from their sins because they were His people (Heb 2:13-14; Joh 10:14-15; Eph 5:25; Mat 1:21).

In a word, union to Christ is the first thing, the first blessing of grace flowing from love and effected by it; hence, [it] is the application of all others. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus"—first loved and united to Christ—and then it follows, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30). So Dr. Goodwin observes that "union with Christ is the first fundamental thing of justification³² and sanctification and all. Christ first takes us, and then sends His Spirit; He apprehends us first; it is not my being regenerate that puts me into a right of all these privileges; but it is Christ takes me, and then gives me His Spirit, faith, holiness."

From *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, reprinted by
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John Gill (1697-1771): Baptist minister, theologian, and biblical scholar; born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England.



Beloved brother or sister in Christ, how I wish that you could get a firm grip of this blessed truth, so that you could enjoy it to the full in your own soul! It is not always easy to realize your union with Christ: to see how He takes your place, and you take His; to mark how He is bruised for your iniquities, and how the chastisement of your peace is laid upon Him; and that, in consequence, you take His place as accepted and beloved by the Father, that you are raised from the dead and honored even to share His glory in the highest heavens, for He has gone up there as the Representative of all His people, and you also are raised up together with Him and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places... What a glorious truth this is, that all believers are dead, raised, living, exalted, and glorified in Christ Jesus!—*Charles Spurgeon*

²⁹ **Covenant of Works** – the agreement God established with Adam in the Garden of Eden before his fall into sin. It established man's obligation to obey God with the penalty of death for disobedience (Gen 2:16-17); cf. *The Covenants of Works and of Grace* by Walt Chantry, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³⁰ See FGB 191, *Imputed Righteousness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³¹ **antecedent** – going before in time; prior.

³² See FGB 187, *Justification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

IN CHRIST JESUS

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”
—Ephesians 2:4-7

THERE is a sense in which we can say quite rightly and truly that we have here one of the profoundest statements with respect to the condition and the position of the Christian that can be found anywhere in Scripture...Now there are obviously a number of preliminary remarks that one must make about a statement like this. The first that I feel constrained to make is that *this* is true Christianity, that it is the very essence of Christianity and nothing less than that. What is described in these words is the very nerve of this whole matter! It is what God has done *to* us and *for* us and not primarily anything that we have done. Christianity, in other words, does not just mean that you and I have [made] a *decision*...People can decide to stop doing certain things and to start doing other things: that is not Christianity. People can believe that God forgives them their sins, but that is not Christianity *in and of itself*. The essence of Christianity is the truth we have here: *this* is the real thing, and nothing less than this is the real thing.

I would emphasize, also, that this is true of *every* Christian...Here we come face to face with the wonderful teaching and doctrine about the union of the Christian with the Lord Jesus Christ...*This* is what makes us Christians; apart from this, we are not in the Christian position at all.

It is important therefore that we should understand at once that we are really dealing here with something that is basic, fundamental, and primary. At the same time, of course, the doctrine is so glorious and great that it includes the whole of the Christian life. The Christian life is a whole; and you, as it were, have the whole at once and then proceed to appropriate it in its various parts and to understand it increasingly. *This* is Christianity: “When we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ...And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

What happens, I wonder, when we examine ourselves in the light of such a declaration? Can we say that we always think of ourselves as Christians in these terms? Is this my way of thinking of myself as a Christian? Or do I still tend to think of myself as a Christian in terms of what I am attempting and striving to do, and what I am trying to make myself or to make of myself? Now this is obviously quite basic because the Apostle’s whole emphasis here is that the primary thing, the first thing, is this that *God* does to us, not primarily what you and I do ourselves.

There are two ways of looking at this great statement. There are some people who take a purely *objective* view of it. They think of it exclusively in terms of our position, or our standing, in the presence of God. What I mean is that they think of it as being something that, in a sense, is already true of us in Christ, but is not true of us in practice. They regard this as a statement of the fact that beyond death we shall be resurrected and shall share the life of glory that is awaiting all who are in Christ Jesus. They hold that the truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ has already been raised from the dead; He was quickened when He was dead in the grave, He was raised, He appeared to certain witnesses, He ascended into heaven, He is in the glory in the heavenly places. “Now,” they say, “that has happened to Him; and if we believe in Him, it will happen to us.” They say that it is true of us by faith now, but actually only by faith. It is not real in us now: it is entirely in Him. But it will be made real in us in the future. Now that is what I call *the purely objective view* of this statement. And of course as a statement, it is perfectly true, except that it does not go far enough. All that is true of us. There is a time coming when all of us who are Christians shall be resurrected unless our Lord returns before we die. Our bodies will be changed and will be glorified; and we shall live, and we shall reign with Him and enter into and share His glory with Him. That is perfectly true.

But it seems to me that to interpret this statement *solely* in that way is very seriously to misinterpret it. And that I can prove. There are two arguments that make it quite inadequate as an interpretation. The first is that the whole context here is *experimental*.³³ The Apostle is not so much concerned to remind these Ephesians of something that is *going* to happen to them: his great concern here is to remind them of what has *already happened* to them and of their present

³³ **experimental** – involving experience; experiential.

position. It is important that we should always carry the context with us. What the Apostle is concerned about in this whole statement is that we may know “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Eph 1:19-20). He is praying, in other words, that these Ephesians may have the eyes of their understanding so enlightened that they may know what God is doing for them now, at that very time, not something that He is going to do in the future...He is concerned that they should appreciate now in the midst of all their difficulties what is *actually* true of them.

But there is still stronger proof, it seems to me, in the fifth verse. The Apostle says, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,” and then in a parenthesis “(by grace ye are saved).” In other words, he says, “What I am talking about is your salvation at this moment.” “By grace ye are saved” means “by grace you *have been* saved.” That is the tense: “You *have been* saved.” Clearly, that is something that is experimental. This is something subjective, not something purely objective. The tragedy is that people so often put these things up as opposites, whereas in reality the Scripture shows always that the two things must go together. There is an objective side to my salvation; but thank God, there is a subjective side also...That is the thing the Apostle is so anxious for us to understand. In other words, this must be interpreted spiritually and subjectively. It must be understood experimentally. “What God has done to us spiritually,” says the Apostle, “is comparable to that which He did to the Lord Jesus Christ in a physical sense when He raised Him from the dead and took Him to Himself to be seated in the heavenly places.”

We must go back to the end of the first chapter. The power that is working toward us and in us who believe is the same power that God “wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:20). “Now,” says Paul, “I want you to know that the self-same power that did that is working in you spiritually.” That, then, enables us to say that all that has happened to us, if we are Christians, has happened by this self-same power of God. All the tenses the Apostle uses here in these very words that we are studying are all in the *past*. He does not say that God is going to raise us, is going to quicken us, is going to put us to be seated in the heavenly places; he says that He has *done* so already—that when we were dead, *He quickened us*...We must say of ourselves as Christian people that we *have* been quickened, we *have* been raised, we *are* seated in the heavenly places.

Or, perhaps, we can put it best like this—and surely this is the thing that the Apostle had in his mind—the position of the Christian is the exact opposite of the man who is *not* a Christian. The man who is not a Christian is a man who is dead in trespasses and sins. He is being led about according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. His conversation³⁴ is in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; he is under the wrath of God by nature. That is the non-Christian.

What is the Christian? He is the exact opposite of that—quicken, alive, raised, seated in the heavenlies, entirely different, the complete contrast. The “but” brings out everywhere this aspect of contrast. Obviously, we cannot truly understand our position as Christians unless we realize that it is a complete contrast to what we once were. You see how important it is in interpreting the Scripture to take everything in its context. We must be clear about our state in sin because, if we are not, we shall never be clear about our state in grace and in salvation.

If that is the truth about us as Christians now, two main matters must occupy our attention. The first is, “How has all this happened to us? How has this come to be true of me as a Christian?” The Apostle answers the question: it is “together with Christ.”

Do you notice his constantly repeated emphasis? “When we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Here we are undoubtedly face-to-face with one of the greatest and most marvelous of all the Christian doctrines, one of the most glorious beyond any question at all. It is the whole teaching of the Scripture with regard to our *union with Christ*. It is a teaching that you find in many places. I would refer you to the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which is in many ways the most extended statement of the doctrine to be found anywhere. But it is to be found in exactly the same way in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is likewise found in 1 Corinthians 15, the great chapter that is read so often at funeral services; but it is seen equally clearly in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5. Similarly it is the teaching found in those beautiful words at the end of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). This is the most wonderful and the most amazing thing of all, and to me it is always a matter of great surprise that this blessed doctrine should receive so little attention! For some reason or other, Christian people seem to be afraid of it...[Yet] according to this teaching in Ephesians 2 and elsewhere, you are not Christians at all *unless you are joined to Christ and “in Him”*...

³⁴ conversation – lifestyle; behavior.

What is meant by our being joined to Christ? It is used in two senses. The first is in what may be called a *federal* sense, or, in other words, a *covenant* sense. That is the teaching of the fifth chapter of Romans, verses 12–21. Adam was constituted and regarded by God as the head and the representative of the human race. He was the federal head, the federal representative, the covenant head. God made a covenant with Adam, made an agreement with him, made certain statements to him as to what He would do, and so on. Now that is the first sense in which this doctrine of union is taught. And what is said, therefore, about the Lord Jesus Christ is that He is our Federal Head, He is our Representative. Adam, our representative, rebelled against God: he sinned, he was punished, and certain consequences followed. But because Adam was our representative and our head, what happened to Adam also therefore happened to all his posterity and to us.

Now that is one aspect of the matter and a very important one. We know something about this in ordinary life and living. The ambassador of this country in a foreign court represents the whole country, and he engages in actions in which we are all involved whether we want to be or not. As citizens of this country, we all suffer the consequences of actions that were taken before we were ever born...What the leader or the official representative of a nation does is binding upon all the citizens of that nation. Now that was true of Adam. It is also true of the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam was the first man; Jesus Christ is the Second Man. You have the first Adam; you have the Last Adam. Now Jesus Christ, according to this teaching, is the Representative of this new humanity. Therefore, what He did and what He suffered is something that applies to the *whole* of this new race that has come into being in Him. So that the union of the believer with Christ must be thought of in that federal sense.

But it does not stop at that. There is another aspect of the union that we may call mystical or vital. This is something that was taught by our Lord Himself in the famous words in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to John, where He says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (Joh 15:5). The union between the branches and the vine is not mechanical: it is vital and organic. They are bound together: the same sap, the same life is in the stock as in the branches. But that is not the only illustration used. At the end of the first chapter of [Ephesians], Paul says that the union between a Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ is comparable to the union of the various parts of the body with the whole body, and especially with the head. Now, any one of my fingers is a vital part of my body. It is not simply tied on: there is a living, organic, vital union. The blood that flows through my head flows through my fingers. That indicates a kind of internal, essential unity and not merely a federal, legal, or covenant union.

All these blessings that we enjoy become ours because we are joined to Christ in this double manner: in the forensic,³⁵ federal, covenant manner, but also in this vital and living manner. We can therefore claim that what has happened to Christ has happened to us. This is the marvel and mystery of our salvation, and it is the most glorious thing we can ever contemplate! The Son of God, the Second Person in the eternal Godhead, came down from heaven to earth; He took unto Him human nature, He joined human nature unto Himself, He shared human nature; and as the result of His work we human beings share His life and are in Him, and are participators in all the benefits that come from Him. Now I reminded you at the beginning, and I must repeat it: *that*, and nothing less than that is Christianity. If we do not realize this, I wonder what our Christianity is? This is not something you arrive at; this is something with which you begin...What the Apostle is primarily concerned to emphasize is, that whereas we were dead, we are now alive.

The question arises at once, “How can this happen?” Something must happen before we who are dead and under the wrath of God can ever be made alive. I can derive no benefit whatsoever until something has been done to satisfy the wrath of God, for I am not only dead and a creature of lusts and controlled by the god of this world, I am under the wrath of God—we were “by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (2:3). And, thank God, that something *has* happened. Christ has taken upon Him our nature, He has taken upon Him our sins, He has gone to the place of punishment; the wrath of God has been poured out upon Him. That is the whole meaning of His death upon the cross: it is sin being punished; it is God’s wrath against sin manifesting itself. And if we do not see that in the cross of Calvary, we are looking at that cross without New Testament eyes. There is that terrible aspect to the cross, and we must *never* forget it. We must never forget the cry of dereliction,³⁶ “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46). That was because He was experiencing the wrath of God against sin, nothing less. But the Apostle, here, is much more concerned to emphasize the positive aspect. Christ not only died and was buried; He rose again. God “raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Eph 1:20-21). All that involved a *quicken*ing, a raising, and an exaltation. And the same thing, says the Apostle, is true of us because we are *in Christ*—“hath quickened us together with him.” This has happened to *everybody* who is a Christian. It is God’s action. Surely, this does not need any demonstration. That

³⁵ **forensic** – relating to law; judicial.

³⁶ **dereliction** – being abandoned.

man who is dead in sins and under the wrath of God, what can he do? He can do *nothing*. God does it to him; He quickens him. As He quickened the dead body of His Son in the grave, He quickens us spiritually.

What does “to quicken” mean? It means “to make alive,” it means “to impart life.” The first thing then that is true of the Christian is that he has come to the end of his death—we were dead in trespasses and sins, we were not born spiritually. There is no divine spark in anybody born into this world. All born into this world, because they are children of Adam, are born dead—born dead *spiritually*. This whole idea of a divine spark remaining in man is a contradiction not only of this Scripture, but also of the whole of Scripture. The position of every person born into this world is that he is dead. The comparison used to illustrate this is the dead body of the Lord Jesus Christ buried in a grave with a stone rolled over the mouth. This then is the first positive truth: I have come to an end of my death. I am no longer dead in trespasses and sins, I am no longer dead spiritually. Why? Because I have died with Christ. I have died with Christ to the Law of God and to the wrath of God.

Now a Christian is a man who must assert this truth. The beginning of Christianity is to say, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). The Christian is not a man who is *hoping* to be forgiven; the Christian is not a man who hopes that ultimately he will be able to satisfy the demands of the Law and to stand before God. If he is a Christian who understands Christianity, he says, “I am already there, I have ceased to be dead, I am alive, I have been quickened, I have been made alive!” The first important aspect of that statement is the negative one, which says that I am no longer dead. I have finished dying; I am dead to sin, I am dead to the Law, I am dead to the wrath of God. “There is therefore now no condemnation.” Can you say that? It is the statement that every Christian should be able to make...The Scriptures make this definite assertion: I am not a Christian; I cannot be a Christian at all without being *in Christ*. It follows that if I am *in Christ*, what is true of Him is also true of me. He has died unto sin once, and I have died unto sin once, *in Him*. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on that cross on Calvary’s hill I was dying with Him...when Christ died on that cross and endured the wrath of God against sin, I was participating in it. I was in Him, I was dying with Him. I am dead to the Law, I am dead to the wrath of God...But, *more*, He has quickened us, He has made us alive...Are you dead spiritually or are you alive spiritually?

But look at the case more positively. It means that God has put a new Spirit of life into me. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ” is in the Christian. This is the opposite of death and deadness. Before this new Spirit of life in Christ Jesus came into us, we were dead in trespasses and sins and subject to a very different spirit—“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). But that is no longer true. There is a new Spirit of life.

What is “quicken”? Quickening is regeneration and nothing else. When the Apostle says here, “You hath he quickened,” he means, “You He has *regenerated*.” He has given you new life, you have been born again, you have been created anew, you have become partakers of the divine nature. What is regeneration? I cannot think of a better definition than this: regeneration is an act of God by which a principle of new life is implanted in man and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy. That is regeneration. It means that God by His mighty action puts a new disposition into my soul. Notice I say “disposition,” not faculties. What man in sin needs is not new faculties: what he needs is a *new disposition*. What is the difference, you ask, between faculties and disposition? It is something like this: the disposition is that which determines the bent and the use of the faculties. The disposition is that which governs and organizes the use of the faculties, which makes one man a musician and another a poet and another something else. So the difference between the sinner and the Christian, the unbeliever and the believer, is not that the believer, the Christian, has certain faculties that the other man lacks. No, what happens is that this new disposition given to the Christian directs his faculties in an entirely different way...What is new is a new bent, a new disposition. He has turned in a different direction; there is a new power working in him and guiding his faculties.

That is the thing that makes a man a Christian. There is this principle of life in him; there is this new disposition. And it affects the whole man: it affects his mind, it affects his heart, it affects his will...

Are you alive? Has God put this principle of life into you? Just as you are at this moment, do you know that this has happened to you, that there is this essential difference between you and the man of the world?...*Quickened!* We were dead, lifeless, could not move ourselves spiritually, had no appetite spiritually, no apprehension or understanding spiritually. But if we are Christians that is no longer true. We have been quickened together with Christ, the life principle has come in, we have been regenerated. *There is no Christianity apart from that...* Because we are joined to Christ, something of His life is in us as the result of this vital, indissoluble union, this intimate, mystical connection...Have you life? Have you been quickened? It is the beginning of Christianity. There is no Christianity apart from this...Are you aware of a principle that is working within you, as it were, in spite of yourself, influencing you, molding you, guiding you, convicting you, leading you on? Are you aware of being possessed?—if I may so put it, at the risk of being misunderstood. The Christian is a possessed man; this principle of life has come in, this new disposition

possesses him. And he is aware of a working within him...God has begun a good work in me, and I know it. He has put this new life in me—in me! *I am born again and in union with Christ.*

May God by His Spirit enlighten the eyes of our understanding so that we may begin to comprehend this mighty working of God's power in us.

From *God's Way of Reconciliation: An Exposition of Ephesians 2, 70-81*, published by
The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org. Used by permission.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): well-known expository preacher and minister of Westminster Chapel, London, England, 1938-68; born in Wales, UK.



FAITH UNITES US TO CHRIST

William Cunningham (1805-1861)

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves:
it is the gift of God.”—Ephesians 2:8*

LET us now...shortly consider the effect of faith as uniting us to Christ, and thus saving the soul. There is a great deal spoken of in Scripture on the subject of faith—of its great importance and of its indispensable necessity to salvation. We read, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). It is faith that makes a man a Christian, that produces all those things that accompany salvation, that salvation which is the turning point of a man's existence, that salvation which delivers him from the authority of the devil and translates him into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Faith occupies this important place in our salvation because it unites us to Christ. We are expressly told this by the Apostle in Ephesians 3:17, where it is written, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” This union of believers to Christ, effected by faith, is indeed frequently spoken of in the New Testament. The nature of it is set before us by every mode of expression and description fitted to convey the strongest impression of its closeness and its importance.

It hath pleased the Father that in Christ “should all fulness dwell” (Col 1:19); and it is from Him alone that any portion of this “fulness” can be derived. The Covenant of Redemption³⁷ was made between the Father and the Son, for man was not directly and primarily a party to it. As Christ fulfilled the conditions of this covenant, so all the blessings that the covenant secured were bestowed upon Him and continue in His possession. In everything connected with this eternal covenant, He acted as the Head and the Surety of His people in their room and stead. He took their place, agreeing to suffer what they ought to have endured and to purchase for them what was necessary for their salvation, but what they never themselves could have earned. He was accepted by God as the Surety and Substitute of all those who should afterwards believe in Him, and He was dealt with accordingly.

Now when a man believes in Christ, he is, according to God's appointment, united to Him. There is a union formed between them. God regards him as if he were Christ and treats him as if he had suffered the punishment for his sins that Christ endured in his room—as if he had in his own person performed that full and perfect obedience to the Divine Law that our Savior's conduct exhibited. It is this imputation of Christ's sufferings and of His righteousness, or, as it is often called, His *active* and *passive* obedience—it is this communion of suffering and of merit in which the union of believers with Christ mainly consists. This union and communion with Him is the foundation of their salvation in all its parts and in all its aspects. When they believe Him, God regards them as one with Him—as if they had offered what He has suffered, as if they had done what He has done, as if they had paid the penalty for their sins and had gained a title to His favor.

Viewing them thus as united to Christ—as *one with Him*—God bestows upon them the blessings that Christ purchased for all who should believe on His name. They obtain through faith the forgiveness of their sins, acceptance

³⁷ **Covenant of Redemption** – the term applied to the agreement between the members of the Godhead to redeem sinners: God the Father purposed the accomplishment of salvation through the Person and work of God the Son, and the application of salvation through the regenerating power of God the Holy Spirit.

with God as righteous persons, the renovation³⁸ and sanctification of their natures, and, finally, an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Christ is the great Head of influence: all spiritual blessings are the fruits of His purchase. It is only by abiding in Him that we are enabled to bring forth fruits unto eternal life; as it is written, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (Joh 15:5).

You see now the great importance of faith in the salvation of sinners. It is the instrument by means of which we receive everything necessary to our peace. None can be saved without it, and everyone who has it will assuredly be saved. It is connected in the statements of God’s Word with almost every blessing that is mentioned as important and valuable, as the origin from which they are all derived, the instrument by which they are all received. It is the Holy Spirit that forms the union between Christ and believers, and faith wrought in their hearts by His almighty power is the tie that connects them together and forms the bond of union.

While salvation is thus through faith, it is, at the same time, “by grace” (Eph 2:5, 8). It is to be traced wholly to God’s free and unmerited favor. There is nothing whatever in faith as a grace or virtue, as an act of ours, to merit anything at God’s hands [or] to deserve anything for us...Faith, viewed as a work or act of ours, could not itself procure for us the pardon of sin any more than repentance, if that too were in our power. Far less—[even if] *we could believe by our own strength*—could it ever *merit* for us any reward at God’s hands.

It is not indeed, then, as a work or a grace that faith saves: it is merely the instrument of uniting us to Christ. His work is the sole ground of our salvation and of all that is connected with it. We owe it all to Him. He purchased it for us by His own sufferings and obedience, and He bestows it upon us by His Spirit. Therefore, we must beware, friends, of giving to our own faith, in the work of salvation, *the place that belongs only to Christ*. When salvation is ascribed to faith, this is so far from attaching merit to faith that it is just expressly renouncing it. We are saved indeed by faith, but *it is faith in Christ Jesus*. Our faith is that which carries us out of ourselves to Christ, transferring our whole dependence, as it were, from our own doing to what He has done and suffered for us. And it is a constant act of trust, a confidence in Him for everything pertaining to another world. It bears at all times upon it a declaration of our utter inability to do anything for ourselves. Hence, not only is salvation by faith quite consistent with being by grace, but further, as the Apostle tells us, it is of faith that it might be by grace. Not only are they consistent with each other, but the one affords the most striking illustration of the other. Nothing could have more fully established or more clearly illustrated the free grace of the Gospel than making our salvation depend upon faith; for faith, besides being originally God’s gift, is a constant appeal to His agency: it is both in form and in substance a casting [of] ourselves entirely and unreservedly upon His mercy through Christ and resting upon Him alone. We believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved.

From *Sermons from 1828 to 1860*, reprinted by Still Waters Revival Books,
www.swrb.com & www.PuritanDownloads.com. Used by permission.

William Cunningham (1805-1861): Scottish theologian; author of many theological works, including *Historical Theology*; born at Hamilton, Lanarshire, Scotland.



JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”—Romans 4:5

WHEN it is said that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our own, what is meant is that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever that God judges it proper³⁹ that this benefit of Christ should be ours...Here, for the greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions.

³⁸ **renovation** – renewal wrought by the Holy Spirit; the new birth.

³⁹ The author used the word *meet* several times throughout the article; and because numerous other edits were necessary, the editor has substituted *proper* or *fitting*.

(1) **It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ stand in to Him.** [This] is expressed in Scripture from time to time by being *in Christ* and is represented frequently by those metaphors of being members of Christ, or being united to Him as members to the head and branches to the stock. [It] is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine of what sort this union is, nor is it necessary to my present purpose to enter into any manner of disputes about it. If any are disgusted at the word *union* as obscure and unintelligible, the word *relation* equally serves my purpose. I do not now desire to determine any more about it than all of all sorts will readily allow,⁴⁰ that is,⁴¹ that there is a peculiar relation between true Christians and Christ, which there is not between Him and others. [This] is signified by those metaphorical expressions in Scripture of being *in Christ*, being members of Christ, etc.

(2) **This relation or union to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be *in Christ* (whatever it be) is the ground of their right to His benefits.** This needs no proof: the reason of the thing, at first blush, demonstrates it. It is exceeding evident also by Scripture: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1Jo 5:12). “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...righteousness” (1Co 1:30). First, we must be *in Him*, and then He will be made righteousness or justification *to us*. “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). Our being *in Him* is the ground of our being accepted. So it is in those unions to which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to compare this. The union of the members of the body with the head is the ground of their partaking of the life of the head. It is the union of the branches to the stock that is the ground of their partaking of the sap and life of the stock. It is the relation of the wife to the husband that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate. They are looked upon in several respects as one in law. So there is a *legal* union between Christ and true Christians, so that...one, in some respects, is accepted for the other by the Supreme Judge.

(3) **And thus it is that faith is the qualification in any person that renders it [fitting] in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him,** that is, because it is [*faith*] in him that, on his part, makes up this union between him and Christ. By what has been just now observed, it is a person’s being *in Christ*...that is the ground of having His satisfaction and merits belong to him and a right to the benefits procured thereby. The reason of it is plain: it is easy to see how our having Christ’s merits and benefits belonging to us follows from our having—if I may so speak—*Christ Himself* belonging to us or our being united to Him. If so, it must also be easy to see how or in what manner [*faith*] in a person, which on his part makes up the union between his soul and Christ, should be the thing on the account of which God looks on it as fitting that he should have Christ’s merits belonging to him. It is a very different thing for God to assign to a particular person a *right* to Christ’s merits and benefits from regard to a qualification in him in this respect—from his doing it for him out of respect to the value or loveliness of that qualification or as a reward of its excellency.

As there is nobody [who will not agree] that there is a peculiar *relation* between Christ and His true disciples by which they are in some sense in Scripture said to be one, so I suppose there is nobody [who will not agree] that there may be something that the true Christian *does* on his part, whereby he is active in coming into this relation or union...Now *faith* I suppose to be this act.

I do not now pretend to define justifying faith or to determine precisely how much is contained in it. [I will] only determine thus much concerning it: [justifying faith] is that by which the soul, which before was separate and alienated from Christ, unites itself to Him. [The soul] ceases to be any longer in that state of alienation and comes into that fore-mentioned union or relation to Him. Or, to use the Scripture phrase, it is that by which the soul *comes to Christ* and receives Him. This is evident by the Scriptures using these very expressions to signify faith. “He that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Joh 6:35–39). “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (6:40). “Whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures, for—they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life” (5:38–40). “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another” (5:43–44). “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (1:12).

If it is said that these are obscure figures of speech that...are with difficulty understood [in our day], I admit that the expressions “receiving Christ” and “coming to Christ” are metaphorical⁴² expressions. And if I should admit them to be

⁴⁰ **allow** – admit that something is true.

⁴¹ The author used *viz.*, which is the Latin *videlicet* for “namely; that is”; the editor has sub-stituted “that is” in its place throughout the article.

⁴² **metaphorical** – expressing one thing in terms normally denoting another.

obscure metaphors, at least this much is certainly plain in them: *faith is that by which those who before were separated and at a distance from Christ*—that is to say, [they] were not so related and united to Him as His people are—*cease to be any longer at such a distance and come into that relation and nearness...*

God does not give union with or an interest in the Savior to those that believe as a *reward* for faith, but only because faith is the soul's *active uniting with Christ*. [Faith] is itself the very act of union⁴³ on their part. God sees it fit that in order to a union being established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both that each should receive [the] other as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in requiring this in order to a union with Christ as one of His people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice. Hence, [He] sees it fit that they *only* who are one with Christ by their own act should be looked upon as one in Law. What is real in the union between Christ and His people is the foundation of what is legal; that is, it is something really in them and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the Judge. And if there be any act or qualification in believers of that uniting nature upon which account it is fitting that the Judge should look upon them and accept them as one, [it is] no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualification He should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other as if these were their *own* satisfaction and merits. This necessarily follows or rather is implied.

It is [in this way] that faith justifies or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits and a right to the benefits procured thereby, that is, as it thus makes Christ and the believer one in the acceptance of the Supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life because it is by faith that we have the Son of God by whom life is. The Apostle John in these words, "He that hath the Son, hath life," (1Jo 5:12) seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ of which he gives an account in his Gospel: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Joh 3:36). And where the Scripture speaks of faith as the soul's receiving or coming to Christ, it speaks of this receiving, coming to, or joining with Christ as the ground of an interest in His benefits. To as many as received Him, "to them gave he power" to become the sons of God. Ye will not come unto me "that ye might have life." And there is a wide difference between its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs who believe because an interest in that satisfaction and merit is a fit reward of faith...and its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs because Christ and they are so united that in the eyes of the Judge they may be looked upon and taken as one.

From "Justification by Faith Alone" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1,
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Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational preacher; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.



SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

CHRISTIANS are supernaturally and livingly incorporated with Christ. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10): that new creation is accomplished in our union with His person. This is our spiritual state: a "new man" has been "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24), and this we are exhorted to "put on" or make manifest. This is not at all a matter of progress or attainment, but is true of every Christian the moment he is born again. The terms "created in righteousness (our *justification*) and true holiness" (our *sanctification*) describe what the "new man" is in Christ. It is not simply something that we are to *pursue*, though that is true and is intimated in the "put ye on"; but it is what all Christians actually *are*: their sanctification in Christ is an accomplished fact. It is just because Christians are "saints" [that] they are to lead saintly lives.

The believer begins his Christian life by having been perfectly sanctified in Christ. Just as both our standing and state were radically affected by virtue of our union with the first Adam, so both our standing and state are completely changed by virtue of our union with the last Adam. As the believer has a perfect standing in holiness before God because of his federal union with Christ, so his state is perfect before God because he is now vitally united to Christ: he is *in*

⁴³ **union** – joining into one.

Christ, and Christ is *in him*. By the regenerating operation of the Spirit we are “joined unto the Lord” (1Co 6:17). The moment they were born again, all Christians were sanctified *in Christ* with a sanctification to which no growth in grace, no attainments in holy living, can add one iota. Their sanctification, like their justification, is “complete in Him” (Col 2:10). Christ Himself is their life, and He becomes such by a personal union to Himself that nothing can dissolve. From the moment of his new birth every child of God is a “saint in Christ Jesus” (Rom 1:7), one of the “holy brethren” (Heb 3:1); and it is just because they are such, they are called upon to live holy lives. O what cause we have to adore the grace, the wisdom, and the power of God!...

When one is made alive in Christ by the Holy Spirit, he at once becomes separated from those who are dead in trespasses and sins; and therefore, this is another aspect of the “sanctification of the Spirit”...It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that constitutes a believer a holy person...Amazing, blessed, and glorious fact, the Holy Spirit indwells the regenerate so that their bodies become the temples of the living God!...This indwelling of the Spirit is, in the order of God, subsequent to and in consequence of our being sanctified by the blood of Jesus; for it is obvious that God could not “dwell” in those who were standing under the imputation of their guilt. The Holy Spirit, therefore, from the very fact of making our bodies His temples, attests and evidences the completeness and perpetuity of the sanctification that is ours by the sacrifice of Christ...

“Sanctification of the Spirit” (2Th 2:13) is a comprehensive expression that has a fourfold significance at least. First, it points to that supernatural operation of the Spirit whereby a sinner is “created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10), made vitally one with Him, and thereby a partaker of His holiness. Second, it tells of the vital change that this produces in his relation to the ungodly. Having been quickened into newness of life, he is at once separated from those who are dead in sins, so that his standing and state to Satan, sin, and the world are no longer [in] common with them. Third, it speaks of the Spirit Himself taking up His abode in the quickened soul, thereby rendering him personally holy. Fourth, it refers to His bringing the heart into conformity with the Divine Law with all that that connotes...

It is on the ground of Christ’s work that the Spirit comes to us... Yet let it be pointed out that the blessed Spirit does not allow our hearts to *remain* in the awful condition in which He first finds them...In Titus 3:5, we read, “According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” All that is comprehended in this “washing” we may not be able to say, but it certainly includes the casting of all idols out of our heart to such an extent that God now occupies the throne of it. By this “washing of regeneration,” the soul is so cleansed from its native pollution that sin is no longer loved, but loathed; the Divine Law is no longer hated, but delighted in; and the affections are raised from things below unto things above...Though this “renewing” falls far short of what will take place in the saint at his glorification, yet it is a very real and radical experience. A great change and renovation is made in the soul, which has a beneficial effect upon all of its faculties. This “renewing of the Holy Spirit” has in it a transforming power, so that the heart and mind are brought into an obedient frame toward God. The soul is now able to discern that God’s will is the most “good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2) of all, and there is a deep desire and a sincere effort made to become conformed thereto. But let it be carefully noted that the present and not the past tense is employed in Titus 3:5—not ye were washed and renewed, but a “washing” and “renewing”: it is a continual work of the Spirit...

The believer has already been perfectly sanctified in the decree and purpose of the Father. Christ has wrought out for him that which, when reckoned to his account, perfectly fits him for the courts of God’s temple above. The moment he is quickened by the Spirit, he is created in Christ and therefore “sanctified in Christ”: thus, both his *standing* and *state* are holy in God’s sight. Furthermore, the Spirit’s indwelling him, making his body His temple, constitutes him personally holy...It is of the very first importance that the Christian should be thoroughly clear upon this point. We do not become saints by holy actions—that is the fundamental error of all false religions. No, we must first *be* saints before there can be any holy actions, as the fountain must be pure before its stream can be, the tree good if its fruit is to be wholesome...God first sets our hearts at rest before He bids our hands engage in His service. He gives life that we may be capacitated to render love. He creates in us a sanctified nature that there may be sanctified conduct. God presents us spotless in the Holiest of all according to the blood of sprinkling that, coming forth with a conscience purged from dead works, we may seek to please and glorify Him.

It is the creating of this holy nature within us that we must next consider... It is something entirely new: a new creation, a new heart, a new spirit, a new man, the conforming of us to another image, even to that of the last Adam, the Son of God. It is the impartation of a holy principle, implanted in the midst of corruption, like a lovely rosebush growing out of a dung-heap. It is the carrying forward of that “good work” begun in us at regeneration (Phi 1:6). It is called by many names, such as “the inward man” (2Co 4:16) and “the hidden man of the heart” (1Pe 3:4), not only because it has its residence in the soul, but because our fellows can see it not. It is designated “seed” (1Jo 3:9) and “spirit” (Joh 3:6) because it is wrought in us by the Spirit of God.

It is by the reception of this holy principle or nature that the believer is freed from the domination of sin and brought into the liberty of righteousness, though not until death is he delivered from the plague and presence of sin. At their justification, believers obtain a relative or judicial sanctification that provides for them a perfect standing before God, by which they receive proof of their covenant relationship with Him, that they are His peculiar people...But more, they are also inherently sanctified in their persons by a gracious work of the Spirit within their souls. They are “renewed” throughout the whole of their beings; for as the poison of sin was diffused throughout the entire man, so is grace...Yet let it be pointed out that though the whole of the Christian’s person is renewed by the Spirit and all the faculties of his soul are renovated, nevertheless, there is no operation of grace upon his old nature so that its evil is expelled. The “flesh” or principle of indwelling sin is neither eradicated nor purified nor made good...

But we must now turn to the most important aspect...of the nature of this principle of holiness whereby the Spirit sanctifies us inherently. Our experimental sanctification consists in our hearts being conformed to the Divine Law. This should be so obvious that no labored argument should be required to establish the fact. As all sin is a *transgression* of the Law (1Jo 3:4), so all holiness must be a *fulfilling* of the Law. The natural man is not subject to the Law, neither indeed can he be (Rom 8:7). Why? Because he is devoid of that principle from which acceptable obedience to the Law can proceed. The great requirement of the Law is love: love to God and love to our neighbor. But regarding the unregenerate, it is written, “Ye have not the love of God in you” (Joh 5:42). Hence it is that God’s promise to His elect is “the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart” (Deu 30:6)—for “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10).

This is the grand promise of the Covenant: “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10); and again, “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Eze 36:27)...When Christ comes to His people He finds them entirely destitute of holiness and of every desire after it; but He does not leave them in that awful condition. No, He sends forth the Holy Spirit, communicates to them a sincere love for God, and imparts to them a principle or “nature” which delights in His ways. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). Why? Because any work to be pleasing to Him must proceed from a right principle (love to Him), be performed by a right rule (His Law, or revealed will), and have a right end in view (His glory); and this is only made possible by the sanctification of the Spirit.

Experimental holiness is conformity of heart and life to the Divine Law. The Law of God is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12), and therefore does it require inward righteousness or conformity as well as outward. This requirement is fully met by the wondrous and gracious provision that God has made for His people. Here again we may behold the striking and blessed cooperation between the Eternal Three. The Father, as the King and Judge of all, gave the Law. The Son, as our Surety, fulfilled the Law. The Spirit is given to work in us conformity to the Law: first, by imparting a nature that loves it; second, by instructing and giving us a knowledge of its extensive requirements; third, by producing in us strivings after obedience to its precepts. Not only is the perfect obedience of Christ imputed to His people, but also a nature that delights in the Law is imparted to them. But because of the opposition from indwelling sin, perfect obedience to the Law is not possible in this life; yet, for Christ’s sake, God accepts their sincere but imperfect obedience.

We must distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the principle of holiness that He imparts at regeneration: the Creator and the nature He creates must not be confounded. It is by His indwelling the Christian that He sustains and develops, continues and perfects, this good work that He has begun in us. He takes possession of the soul to strengthen and direct its faculties. It is from the principle of holiness that He has communicated to us that there proceeds the fruits of holiness—sanctified desires, actions, and works. Yet that new principle or nature has no strength of its own: only as it is daily renewed, empowered, controlled, and directed by its Giver, do we act “as becometh holiness.” His continued work of sanctification within us proceeds in the twofold process of the mortification⁴⁴ (subduing) of the old man and the vivification⁴⁵ (quickenings) of the new man.

The fruit of the Spirit’s sanctification of us experimentally appears in our separation from evil and the world. But because of the flesh within, our walk is not perfect. Oftentimes there is little for the eye of sense to distinguish in those in whom the Spirit dwells from the moral and respectable worldlings; yea, often they put us to shame...But the heart is washed from the prevailing love of sin by the tears of repentance that the Christian is moved to shed frequently. Every new act of faith upon the cleansing blood of Christ carries forward the work of experimental sanctification to a further degree...Thank God, one day Christ will “present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph 5:27).

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, reprinted by and available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴⁴ See FGB 201, *Mortification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴⁵ **vivification** – being made alive in a spiritual sense.



THE FOUNDATION OF ALL HAPPINESS

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

I proceed now to the application of this subject. I shall press out the juice of this pomegranate unto you in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

USE: OF INFORMATION. It informs us,

1. **Concerning the saints in general that they are highly dignified beyond all the rest of the world.** They are all members of Christ, of the blood royal of heaven, even those of them that some would disdain to rub shoulders with (Eph 5:30). Thus, we have these lessons:

(1) *Woe to those that maltreat, oppress, or persecute any of the saints.* For what they do against them, they do against *Christ*, as doing it to the members of Christ's body (Act 9:4). And He will resent it and plead their cause as His own cause, accurately and exactly, so as to make men accountable for omissions of duty to them, [and] far more for commissions of evil against them (Mat 25:42-45). The saints have good reason to lay aside all thoughts of revenge, for their Redeemer is mighty.

(2) *The best-bestowed good turns are they that are done to the godly for Christ's sake.* For as they are done to them, they are done to *Christ*, since they are one with Him. Our Lord will take it so and graciously reward it (Mat 25:35-40). Therefore, the Apostle gives that exhortation, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). Have ye any love to Christ? Love is communicative:⁴⁶ ye cannot reach the Head, but the members ye have always with you. Say not then [that] ye lack occasion to testify your love to Him. It is the best seed ye can sow and will bring the most plentiful harvest.

(3) *Believers are members one of another (Eph 4:25).* There is a true and real sibness⁴⁷ among all the godly, as there is between the arms and legs of one body or one leg and another. For since they are all united to Christ, it necessarily follows that they are all united among themselves (1Co 12:12). Therefore, they are called "one bread," having a union and communion among themselves, sealed by the [ordinance of the Lord's Supper]. O! If this great truth were believed, what love, what sympathy, what care for one another's temporal and spiritual welfare would there be among the godly! There would not be such strangeness, alienation of affections, or such a Cain like unconcernedness about one another among them.

(4) *It is a thankless office to rend and divide the Church of Christ, to tear Christ's seamless coat.* Many make no bones of...casting off communion with those who, their consciences must acknowledge, do yet remain united to Christ. They say [that] they can have no communion with them without sin. I grant that if one leg goes into a mire⁴⁸ and is defiled, the other ought not to follow; nor [should] one saint communicate with another in sin. Ay, but⁴⁹ no man in his wits would cut off either of the legs in that case. But the Body of Christ is not so tenderly handled, though we owe more tenderness to it than to our natural bodies. Nay, but let men abhor communion with such as much as they will, they [must] either have the most close and intimate communion with them; or they shall have *none* with Christ [because] there are not two Christs to head the separate bodies! If they are both united to one Christ, they have the most intimate union and communion one with another.

2. **It informs us concerning some great and weighty principles of our holy religion, clearly deducible from this grand point.**

(1) *The saints shall persevere in grace and can never totally or finally fall away from it.* For there is an indissoluble union between Christ and them. This secures the believer's life: it can never be lost (Col 3:3). The Spirit, the bond of this union, never leaves His habitation (Joh 14:16; 4:14). This keeps a "seed" always in him for God (1Jo 3:9). And Christ will lose none of His members (Joh 17:12). It is true [that] if the firmness of this union depended entirely on the hold the sinner has of Christ by faith, it might be broken; but it depends on the hold that *Christ* has of the sinner by His Spirit, as the nurse has of the babe in her arms.

(2) *Faith in Christ is the great comprehensive Gospel-duty.* Many have mean thoughts of faith in comparison of other duties. But the Scripture gives it the preference (Joh 6:29; 1Jo 3:23). When we bid you [to] believe, we bid you [to] get all privileges and do all duties; for believing is the way to both, in so far as it unites the soul to Christ, which is the

⁴⁶ **communicative** – inclined or ready to communicate or to give gifts.

⁴⁷ **sibness** – relationship; kinship.

⁴⁸ **mire** – wet, swampy ground in which one may be engulfed.

⁴⁹ **Ay, but** – indicating a temporary agreement with a statement for the sake of refuting it; "I agree with your statement on the surface of it, however..."

fundamental privilege of the saints. If ye believe, ye do *all* in effect, as he who takes hold of the first link of a chain has hold of *all* the links. If ye believe not, ye do nothing; for without faith, ye are without Christ; and without Christ, ye can do nothing (Joh 15:5; cf. Heb 11:6).

(3) *There is a solid, rational ground for the doctrine of our justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ.* Let profane men deride it as...[an] imaginary righteousness⁵⁰ and justification to make way for their own works; and let the corrupters of the Protestant doctrine set up faith, repentance, and new obedience as our evangelical righteousness upon which we are justified as the fulfilling of the Gospel-law—we need no other righteousness for justification but Christ's. For a believer is by faith united to Christ. Having this union with Him, we have a communion with Him in His righteousness that is ours since we are one with Him. And being ours, [it] must be imputed to us or reckoned ours on the most solid ground. Christ is the believer's Surety by His own voluntary act [and] the debtor's consent by faith...What then is more rational than that this righteousness be imputed to the believer, and he thereupon justified?

(4) *The way to obtain true repentance and sanctification is to believe.* For these are the benefits of Christ's redemption (Act 5:31; Mat 1:21); and these are applied by the Spirit working faith in us and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling. How can one think to repent truly or to be holy when he is not united to Christ (Joh 15:5)? Or [how can one think] to be united [to Him] without faith? As soon shall the falling dew pierce through the rock as one shall be able to do any of these out of Christ, Whom the Father has constituted the Head of influences and on Whom all our fruitfulness depends.

(5) *Lastly, the bodies of believers shall have a glorious resurrection (Rom 8:11).* There is a union between Christ and the bodies of believers that death does not break off (1Th 4:14). Therefore, they shall not always lie in the dust; nor will Christ lose any of His members...

3. This doctrine informs us concerning the happiness of the saints: To be united with Christ is the foundation of all happiness and the richest privileges.

(1) *Christ is theirs.* "My beloved is mine," says the spouse (Song 2:16). They have an interest in His person. He is their Lord, their Elder Brother, their Husband, yea, their Head. Whatsoever He is...they may reckon upon it as theirs to make them happy. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and so God is their God and their Father (Joh 20:17). His mercy is theirs to pity them, His power to protect them, His all-seeing eye to direct them, etc. Thus, they have a fountain to go to that never runs dry, a treasure that is never exhausted, a table that will never be drawn, etc.

(2) *What Christ has is theirs; and He is the heir of all things, so all is theirs* (1Co 3:22-23). [They have all things that have] Him to Whom all things belong. Union infers a communion between Christ and believers. His active and passive obedience is theirs for their justification, as if they had done it themselves. His Spirit, Word, and providences are theirs for their sanctification. His power in heaven is theirs for their glorification. In a word, His broad covenant, with all the precious promises in it, is theirs to make them happy here and hereafter (2Pe 1:4).

(3) *They are perfectly safe from the wrath of God.* "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Their sins are still very displeasing in the sight of God and deserve condemnation as well as those of others. But being in Christ, they are beyond the reach of the curse of the Law...They are under the mild government of the Covenant of Grace, which threatens fatherly anger and temporal chastisements in case of transgression, but no more (Psa 89:30-33).

(4) *The Lord takes pleasure in and accepts their persons, graces, and duties, though attended with manifold imperfections.* Their persons are accepted [even] though a body of death hangs about them (Eph 1:6). Their graces, though there is much dross in them, are accepted because the image of Christ is on them (Song 5:1). Their duties, though far from the perfection that the Law requires, are accepted (Song 2:14)...

(5) *All their [needs] lie upon Christ (Col 2:10).* As union gives them a communion with Him in what is His, so He has communion with them in what is theirs. Christ is to answer for all their debt, poverty, and wants, as he that marries the widow in debt. So they look and may look to Him for all—for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1Co 1:30).

USE: Ye may [examine] by this whether the Spirit has applied to you the redemption purchased by Christ. If so be, then ye are united to Christ. If men only apply that redemption to themselves, it will be found presumption, not faith, and no union with Christ...Ye may [examine] whether ye be united to Christ or not by these marks. The general mark is [this]: *if ye be disjoined from what ye were formerly knit to and carried to Christ for all...* Ye may take this up in these three things:

⁵⁰ In Boston's day and in our own, some theologians and ministers deny the imputed righteousness of Christ as a "legal fiction."

1. **Ye have given up the Law as a covenant of works and betaken yourselves wholly to the grace of Christ in the [New] Covenant.** That is to be dead to the Law and married to Christ (Rom 7:4). Ye are broken off from all your natural confidences before the Lord—founded on anything whatsoever that is not Christ or in Christ—and [have laid] your whole confidence before the Lord on Him, so that He is your all in point of confidence before the throne (Phi 3:8). This is a sure evidence (Phi 3:3; Mat 5:3)...

2. **Your hearts are separated and disjoined from sin and laboring to take up their everlasting rest in Christ as the center of your desires (Psa 119:128; 73:25).** Men's desires naturally go out after the world and their lusts; if they have any desires after Christ, it is but a desire of Him together with their lusts. But grace turns the heart against these and kindles desires of Christ instead of lusts (Mat 13:45-46). This is a sure evidence (Mat 5:6). It is true [that] while here, the saints are not separated from sin in action (Psa 65: 3); but in affection they are (Rom 7:24). In that respect, Christ has the crown and lusts [have] the cross (Gal. 5:24)...

3. **Ye are carried out of yourselves into Jesus Christ (Mat 16:24).** To a natural man, his sweet *self* is his all. But grace turns self off the throne and sets up Christ in its stead. While the man is separated from Christ, he has separate interests from Him: but when united to Christ, these are all swallowed up in Christ's interest, as the rivers when they go into the sea have no more their separate channels ...Such is the difference between one separated *from* and one united *to* Christ.

From "Of Union with Christ" in *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. 1,
reprinted by Tentmaker Publications, www.tentmaker.org.uk.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland.



BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."—Romans 6:3-4

BAPTISM sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and our participation therein. Its teaching is twofold. First, think of our representative union with Christ, so that when He died and was buried, it was on our behalf. We were thus buried with Him. This will give you the teaching of baptism as far as it sets forth a creed. We declare in baptism that we believe in the death of Jesus and desire to partake in all the merit of it.

But there is a second equally important matter, and that is our realized union with Christ that is set forth in baptism, not so much as a doctrine of our creed as a matter of our *experience*. There is a manner of dying, or being buried, of rising, and of living in Christ that must be displayed in each one of us if we are indeed members of the Body of Christ.

I want you to think of our representative union with Christ as it is set forth in baptism as a truth to be believed. Our Lord Jesus is the Substitute⁵¹ for His people; when He died, it was on their behalf and in their stead. The great doctrine of our justification⁵² lies in this: Christ took our sins, stood in our place, and, as our Surety, suffered, bled, and died, presenting on our behalf a sacrifice for sin. We are to regard Him, not as a private person, but as our *Representative*. We are buried with Him in baptism unto death to show that we accept Him as being for us dead and buried.

Baptism as a burial *with* Christ signifies, first, acceptance of the death and burial of Christ as being *for* us. Let us do that at this very moment with all our hearts. What other hope have we? When our divine Lord came down from the heights of glory and took upon Himself our manhood, He became one with you and with me. "And being found in fashion as a man" (Phi 2:8), it pleased the Father to lay sin upon Him, even your sins and mine. Do you not accept that truth and agree that the Lord Jesus should be the bearer of your guilt and stand for you in the sight of God? "Amen!

⁵¹ **substitute** – one who takes the place of another.

⁵² See *God's Gospel of Grace*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Amen!” say all of you. He went up to the tree, loaded with all this guilt; and there He suffered in our room and stead, as we ought to have suffered. It pleased the Father, instead of bruising us, to bruise Him. He put Him to grief, making His soul an offering for sin. Do we not gladly accept Jesus as our Substitute? O beloved, whether you have been baptized in water or not, I put this question to you: “Do you accept the Lord Jesus as your Surety and Substitute?” For if you do not, you shall bear your own guilt, carry your own sorrow, and stand in your own place beneath the glance of the angry justice of God...

Now, by being buried with Christ in baptism, we set our seal to the fact that the death of Christ was on our behalf and that we were in Him and died in Him. In token of our belief, we consent to the watery grave and yield ourselves to be buried according to His command. This is a matter of fundamental faith: Christ dead and buried for us—in other words, *substitution, suretyship, vicarious*⁵³ *sacrifice*. His death is the hinge of our confidence: we are not baptized into His example or His life, but into His *death*. We hereby confess that all our salvation lies in the death of Jesus, which death we accept as having been incurred on our account.

But this is not all: because if I am to be buried, it should not be so much because I accept the substitutionary death of another for me as because I am dead myself. Baptism is an acknowledgment of our own death in Christ. Why should a living man be buried? Why should he even be buried because another died on his behalf? My burial with Christ means not only that He died for me, but also that I died *in Him*, so that my death with Him needs a burial with Him. Jesus died for us because He is one with us. The Lord Jesus Christ did not take His people’s sins by an arbitrary⁵⁴ choice of God; but it was most natural, fit, and proper that He should take His people’s sins, since they are His people and He is their federal head. It behoved⁵⁵ Christ to suffer for this reason: He was the covenant representative of His people. He is the Head of the body, the Church; and if the members sinned, it was meet that the Head—though the Head had *not* sinned—should bear the consequence of the acts of the body. As there is a natural relationship between Adam and those that are in Adam, so is there between the second Adam and those that are in Him. I accept what the first Adam did as my sin. Some of you may quarrel with it and with the whole covenant dispensation, if you please. But as God has been pleased to set it up, and I feel the effect of it, I see no use in my controverting⁵⁶ it. As I accept the sin of father Adam and feel that I sinned in him; even so with intense delight, I accept the atoning sacrifice of my second Adam and rejoice that in Him, I have died and risen again. I lived, I died, I kept the Law, I satisfied justice in my covenant Head. Let me be buried in baptism that I may show to all around that I believe I was one with my Lord in His death and burial for sin.

Look at this, O child of God, and do not be afraid of it. These are grand truths, but they are sure and comforting...Realize the sanctifying effect of this truth.

Suppose that a man had been condemned to die because of a great crime. Suppose, further, that he has actually died for that crime; and now, by some wonderful work of God, after having died, he has been made to live again. He comes among men again as alive from the dead. What ought to be the state of his mind with regard to his offense? Will he commit that crime again? A crime for which he has died? I say emphatically, “God forbid!” Rather should he say, “I have tasted the bitterness of this sin, and I am miraculously lifted up out of the death that it brought upon me and made to live again: now will I *hate* the thing that slew me and abhor it with all my soul.” He who has received the wages of sin should learn to avoid it for the future.

But you reply, “We never did die so! We were never made to suffer the due reward of our sins.” Granted. But that which Christ did for you comes to the same thing. The Lord looks upon it as the same thing. You are so one with Jesus that you must regard His death as *your* death, His sufferings as the chastisement of *your* peace. You have died in the death of Jesus; and now by strange, mysterious grace, you are brought up again from the pit of corruption unto newness of life. Can you, will you, go into sin again? You have seen what God thinks of sin: you perceive that He utterly loathes it; for when it was laid on His dear Son, He did not spare Him, but put Him to grief and smote Him to death. Can you, after that, turn back to the accursed thing that God hates? Surely, the effect of the great grief of the Savior upon your spirit must be sanctifying. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? How shall we that have passed under its curse, and endured its awful penalty, tolerate its power? Shall we go back to this murderous, villainous, virulent,⁵⁷ abominable evil? *It cannot be!* Grace forbids.

This doctrine is not the conclusion of the whole matter. The text describes us as *buried with a view to rising*. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death”—for what object? “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Be buried in Christ! What for? That

⁵³ **vicarious** – suffered by one person in the place of another.

⁵⁴ **arbitrary** – based on whim; based solely on personal wishes or feelings rather than on reasons or principle.

⁵⁵ **behoved** – was necessary for.

⁵⁶ **controverting** – arguing against.

⁵⁷ **virulent** – highly poisonous or malignant.

you may be dead forever? No, but that now getting where Christ *is*, you may go where Christ *goes*. Behold Him, then: He goes, first, *into* the sepulcher, but next *out* of the sepulcher; for when the third morning came, He rose. If you are one with Christ at all, you must be one with Him all through. You must be one with Him in His death, one with Him in His burial, and then you shall come to be one with Him in His resurrection!

Am I a dead man now? No, blessed be His name, it is written, “Because I live ye shall live also” (Joh 14:19). True, I am dead in one sense, “For ye are dead”; yet not dead in another, “For your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3); and how is he absolutely dead who has a hidden life? No. Since I am one with Christ, I am what Christ is: as He is a living Christ, I am a living spirit. What a glorious thing it is to have arisen from the dead because Christ has given us life. Our old legal life has been taken from us by the sentence of the Law, and the Law views us as dead; but now we have received a new life, a life out of death, resurrection—life in Christ Jesus. The life of the Christian is the life of Christ. Ours is not the life of the first creation, but of the new creation from among the dead. Now we live in newness of life, quickened unto holiness, righteousness, and joy by the Spirit of God! The life of the flesh is a hindrance to us; our energy is in His Spirit. In the highest and best sense, our life is spiritual and heavenly. This doctrine is to be held most firmly.

I want you to see the force of this, for I am aiming at practical results this morning. If God has given to you and to me an entirely new life in Christ, how can that new life spend itself after the fashion of the old life? Shall the spiritual live as the carnal? How can you that were the servants of sin, but have been made free by precious blood, go back to your old slavery? When you were in the old Adam life, you lived in sin and loved it; but now you have been dead and buried, and have come forth into newness of life. Can it be that you can go back to the beggarly elements from which the Lord has brought you out? If you live in sin, you will be false to your profession, for you profess to be alive unto God. If you walk in lust, you will tread underfoot the blessed doctrines of the Word of God, for these lead to holiness and purity. You would make Christianity to be a by-word and a proverb, if, after all, you who were quickened from your spiritual death should exhibit a conduct no better than the life of ordinary men and little superior to what your former life used to be. As many of you as have been baptized have said to the world, “We are dead to the world, and we have come forth into a new life.” Our fleshly desires are henceforth to be viewed as dead, for now we live after a fresh order of things. The Holy Spirit has wrought in us a new nature; and though we are in the world, we are not of it, but are new-made men, “created anew in Christ Jesus.” This is the doctrine that we avow to all mankind: that Christ died and rose again and that His people died and rose again *in* Him. Out of this doctrine grows death unto sin and life unto God, and we wish by every action and every movement of our lives to teach it to all who see us...

Poor sinner, you do not know anything about this death and burial, and you never will until you have power to become sons of God, and that He gives to as many as believe on His name. Believe on His name, and it is all yours. Amen and Amen.

From *Baptism—A Burial*, reprinted and available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



Every one of us, separately, is in union with Christ. This needs to be emphasized because there is a teaching which is very popular, especially among Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics, and, indeed, I notice that it is insinuating itself into those who like to call themselves “liberal evangelicals.” [This] teaching maintains that we have no direct union with our Lord as individuals but that we are only connected to Him through the Church. This teaching does away with the individual aspect and emphasizes the corporate aspect...it goes on to say that in a sense, we cannot be born again except in and through the Church, which is a complete denial, not only of Scriptural teaching, but particularly of the evangelical emphasis...We all have a personal relationship with our Lord, and it is only because of that that we are members of the Body...You cannot be a Christian without being a member of the mystical Body of Christ. But the right order is to put the person and individual first and the corporate second. So that I am not born of the Church—the Church is not my spiritual mother—I am born of the Spirit.—David Martyn Lloyd-Jones