

## Theological Equipping Class – Union with Christ: One with the Son

“Once you have your eyes opened to this concept of union with Christ you will find it almost everywhere in the New Testament.” – Anthony Hoekema

“Union with Christ the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation it is not simply a phase of the application of redemption it underlies every aspect of redemption.” – John Murray

“There is no joy in this world like union with Christ. The more we can feel it, the happier we are.” – Charles Spurgeon

“Union with Christ is the central category for apostolic thinking...about the substance, the reality, of the salvation that is ours when we put faith in Christ.” – J.I. Packer

“Union with Christ, rather than justification or election or eschatology, or indeed any of the other great apostolic themes, is the real clue to an understanding of Paul’s thought and experience.” – James S. Stewart

### Story of Union with Christ

"Union with Christ begins with God's pretemporal decision to save his people in and through Jesus Christ. This union, further, is based on the redemptive work for his people which Christ did in history. Finally, this union is actually established with God's people after they have been born, continues throughout their lives, and has as its goal their eternal glorification in the life to come." - Anthony Hoekema

### **We are one with Christ:**

- John 17:20-26 – “*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me... <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*
- 1 John 4:13 – “*By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”*
- John 14:20 – “*In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”*
- John 15:4 – “*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”*
- Acts 9:4-5 – “*And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” <sup>5</sup> And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”*

### **We are “in Christ”**

- Ephesians 1:3-14 – “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an*

*inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”*

- Romans 8:1 – *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 – *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*
- Ephesians 2:10 – *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*
- Philippians 3:9 – *“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.”*

#### **Christ is “in us”:**

- Galatians 2:20 – *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”*
- Colossians 1:27 – *“To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*
- Romans 8:10 – *“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”*

#### **Salvation and Union with Christ**

“This doctrine (union with Christ) is the wheel which unites the spokes of salvation and keeps them in proper perspective” - Michael Horton

“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 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.” - John Murray

#### **Election:** Chosen in Christ

- Ephesians 1:4 – *“<sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”*

#### **Redemption:** Purchased in Christ

- Ephesians 1:7 – *“<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses”*

#### **Justification:** We are declared righteous when united to the righteous Son

- Romans 8:1 – *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 – *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*
- “If we are to understand justification correctly, union with Christ has the highest degree of importance.”  
– John Calvin

#### **Adoption:** The Son shares His sonship

- Galatians 4:4-7 – *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as*

sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

**Sanctification:** We bear Christ's fruit

- 1 Corinthians 1:30 – "because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption"
- John 15:5 – "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."
- Romans 8:29 – "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

**Perseverance:** Kept in union with Christ

- Romans 8:38-39 – "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- "We have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life if we are in communion with Christ." – John Calvin

**Death:** Asleep in Christ

- 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."
- Westminster Confession: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection."

**Resurrection:** Raised with the Son

- 1 Corinthians 15:22 – "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

**Glorification:** Made like Christ

- 1 John 3:2 – "we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."
- Colossians 3:4 – "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

**Everlasting Life:** Forever with Christ

- Romans 6:23 – "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"A focus on our union with Christ will keep our focus on Christ himself, on his person, rather than being preoccupied merely by the benefits we receive from Him. It keeps Christ central. It will not allow him to fade into the background as a mere facilitator of these benefits." – Richard Gaffin

Facets of Union with Christ

**Redemptive Union with Christ:**

- Galatians 2:20 – "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
- Colossians 2:6-14 – "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him...<sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised

*with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.”*

- Colossians 3:1-4 – *“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”*
- Ephesians 2:4-7 – *“But God...made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

### **Legal Union with Christ: He is our “federal head”**

- Romans 5:12-19 – *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... <sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup> And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup> For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”*

### **Corporate Union with Christ: The Church**

- Galatians 3:28 – *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*
- Colossians 1:1-2 – *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, <sup>2</sup> To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae”*
- John 17:20-23 - *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”*
- Romans 16:3-10 – *“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> who risked their necks for my life... <sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.”*

### **Relational Union with Christ: We share in His Trinitarian life**

“Indeed, in the triune God is the love behind all love, the life behind all life, the music behind all music, the beauty behind all beauty and the joy behind all joy.” – Michael Reeves

- John 20:22-26 - *“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and (that you Father) loved them even as you loved me...<sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you (Father) have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*

- Just as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, so the Son is in us and we are in God. Nothing less than the love that the Father has for the Son is in us, and the glory the Father gave the Son has been given to us. It is as though the inner life of the Triune God is so rich that it spills over into his relationship with us. We are caught up in the most basic and fundamental of all realities: the relationships that make God who he is. To have a part in something so good, so rich, and so real is an immense privilege.” - Allen Chappel
- John 20:17 - *“Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father’”*

## Practical Union with Christ

We participate in union with Christ by faith:

- Galatians 2:20 – *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*
- Colossians 2:12 – *“having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith”*

#1. Union with Christ is the means by which we communion with the Triune God.

- “This oneness with Christ is life. It is eternal life. It is an astonishingly precious, intimate, lively relationship of love and friendship with Jesus, the Son. It is, in fact, the most sublime thing in the universe in which we can be involved.” – Clive Bowsher
- Reading Scriptures “in Christ”
- Praying “in Christ”
  - “Lord, I offer your own Son unto you, a Son of your own sending, sealed, appointed, elected, and predestined to be my Savior. You cannot refuse the righteousness of your own Son; you gave him to be my Savior. Lord, I bring one with me that has satisfied your justice; therefore I go through your justice to your mercy seat in Christ, in whom your mercy is glorified. I go not with my own righteousness, but clothed with Christ.” - Richard Sibbes

#2. Union with Christ allows us to worship the God who unites us to Himself.

#3. Union with Christ banishes moralism.

#4. Union with Christ protects us from temptation and sin.

- Romans 6:1-4 – *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”*

#5. Union with Christ makes us confident in a dark world.

#6. Union with Christ is the source of our peace and joy.

- “There is no joy in this world like union with Christ. The more we can feel it, the happier we are.” – Charles Spurgeon
- Philippians 4:4-7 – *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice...<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
- Romans 8:35-39 – *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For your sake we are*

*being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

“It is out of the measureless fullness of grace and truth, of wisdom and power, of goodness and love, of righteousness and faithfulness which 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.” - John Murray