

## Chapter 43 - Union With Christ

- I. Introduction.
  - A. Study today – Chapter 43 of Wayne Grudem – Union With Christ.
    - (1). **What does union in Christ mean to you?**
    - (2). Union in Christ according to Erickson is an inclusive term for all parts of salvation. He gives a definition on page 841 - Union with Christ summarizes several different relationships between the believers and Christ through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation.
      - a. **What are the relationships?**
        - We are in Christ.
        - Christ is in us.
        - We are like Christ.
        - We are with Christ.
      - b. **What are the benefits of salvation?**
        - We will cover these.
    - (3). In Grudem, it is the sum of election, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, being filled by the Holy Spirit, and the future glorification.
  - B. In Grudem, the chapter is listed in the section - The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption.
    - (1). In Erickson - it is part of the section on Salvation.
    - (2). In Berkhof - it is listed under Soteriology - the blessings of salvation to the sinner and the restoration to God's favor and intimate communion with him.
  - C. **Why are we studying this?** One of the main reasons we study this - it is the amount of times that the terminology is made of us being "in Christ" and of Christ being "in us". Some of the verses will be review from other chapters. Some of what we will cover will be a look at how it affects our walk in Christ today.
2. Various Aspects of our Union in Christ.
  - A. **Where does our union in Christ begin?**
    - (1). It was God's eternal plan. **Eph. 1:4 God chose us in him before the foundation of the world.** The "him" refers back to **verse 3** that **we have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. When does union in Christ really begin? Verse 5** says that **God predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. What are the spiritual blessings that we have received?**
      - a. Adoption of sons - verse 5.
      - b. Redemption through his blood and forgiveness of sins - verse 7.
      - c. Know the mystery of his will - verse 9.

- d. The seal of the Holy Spirit - verses 13-14.  
**Are any of these blessings visible to others?** The relationship through these verses is in Christ.
- (2). God foreknew - **Rom. 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...** The relationship here is to be like Christ.
- (3). Why is it important for us to know that our union in Christ happened before the world began?
- It affects what we think of ourselves. How much value does God put in us? It places value and purpose to our existence.
  - It affects what we think of others. How much value has he put in mankind in general? How much more do we desire others know Christ and come to know the blessings that are prepared for them before the world began?
- B. To what effect was our union in Christ demonstrated while Jesus walked on the earth?
- (1). Jesus suffered temptation - **Heb. 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those being tempted.**
- (2). Jesus became sin for us - 2 Cor. 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. There is a song "We Have Been Healed" from the CD Risen that I listen to that says: All our sin for your grace, what a glorious exchange.
- (3). **We have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).** This is our relationship "with Christ". **How many sins of ours are forgiven? All! If Jesus came back tonight and we sinned just before we went to bed, would he still be taken with him? Yes!**
- (4). How are we united in Christ's burial? **Rom. 6:4 We are therefore buried with him (relationship - with him) through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**
- Baptism shows our union in Christ.
- (5). **God raised us up with Christ and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6).** This is our relationship "with Christ".
- (6). In **1 Pet. 1:3-4 through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have born again to a living hope to an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for us.** Our union in Christ's resurrection points to our future inheritance.
- (7). **Why is it important to see our union in Christ during his time on earth, including his death, burial and resurrection?**
- We identify with a real person, not a myth.
  - The gospel is defined by his death, burial, and resurrection.
  - It helps us to focus on the eternal and not be entangled in the temporary.

- C. Our union in Christ covers from before we were born to after we die:  
**Romans 8:30 Those he predestined he also called; those he called he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.**
3. But What About Our Daily Walk? What is the practical application?
- A. I'm up in Annapolis looking to buy a motorcycle at the Harley store, chatting with another customer who is with the Hells Angels and currently is not a Christian. How does union in Christ make me different than this nice chap? Now I'm not trying to use this guy as a stereotype, but it helps our discussion. I could have chosen a political figure, a well-known Hollywood actress, a Tibetan monk, or a waiter at a local restaurant.
- (1). We'll define some other models that people use to explain union in Christ. These are from Millard Erickson's Christian Theology.
- a. First model - Union in Christ is metaphysical - we are one in essence with God. God is one with all of the people in the human race. **What's wrong with that? 2 Cor. 5:17 says that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.** Not everyone is in Christ.
  - b. Second model - Union in Christ is mystical - it is deep and in it we lose our individuality. We become robots where Jesus has taken over every part of our lives. **What is wrong with that? Where do we see individuality in the gospels?** We see it in the writers themselves. We see that God works through people even in their weaknesses, like Paul and Barnabas arguing over taking John Mark with them to visit churches in Acts 15. **John 14:12 Jesus says that anyone who has faith in him will do what he was doing and even greater things because Jesus was going to the Father.**
  - c. Third model - union with Christ is like two friends or even between a teacher and a student. **What is wrong with this type of relationship?** It is too casual.
    - **What kind of relationship did the apostles have with Jesus? What was it like for those three years they were together?**
    - **Which apostle would you like to be if you were to choose one? Is there a reason no one would choose Thomas?** Did he heal people? Did he go out and share the gospel?
    - **John 14:23 Jesus said if anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. Is that very casual? What is the relationship between Jesus and the Church?** It is the picture of a groom and bride.
  - d. Fourth model - union with Christ is sacramental. The believer receives the grace of Christ through the

sacraments. This goes to a literal interpretation of communion. **What is the problem with this?** We have union with his physical flesh and blood with a human intermediary, the priest.

- (2). We went through the first part defining various aspects of union in Christ so we might differentiate what it is not. But now back to the motorcycle dude. What is the difference between he and I?
- a. I have judicial union in Christ; I have right standing before God. My fellow motorcycle customer is under wrath.
  - b. I should be there to serve God. **Was Christ casually walking around Judea and Samaria with his disciples?** We receive Christ in us through the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit led Jesus in his earthly ministry, so we should seek to be led by the Spirit.
  - c. I have what Christ has given me through the Spirit. **John 16:15 Jesus said: all that the Father has is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.** What kinds of things might we expect the Spirit to make known?
    - **Mark 1:12** - the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the desert.
    - **Mark 13:11** - give words to speak when the apostles are arrested.
    - **Luke 4:18** - preach good news to the poor; proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.
    - **John 15:26** - to make known the truth and testify of Christ.
    - **Acts 2:17** - Spirit is poured out on all people, sons and daughters will prophecy, young men see visions and old men dream dreams.
  - d. **Phil. 4:13 - Paul says I can do all things in him who strengthens me.**
    - **John 15:5** shows that this is continual. **He is the vine; we are the branches. If we abide in Christ, we will bear much fruit. How is that different than the motorcycle dude?**
    - **1 John 2:6** says that he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked (relationship of being like Christ). What kind of personal fellowship do we have with Christ? We know him (Phil. 3:8 - I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord); we are encouraged and strengthened by him (2 Thess. 2:17); we are taught

by him (Matt. 11:29 - take my yoke upon you and learn from me); and we live our lives in his presence (2 Cor. 2:10 - Paul speaks of forgiving in the sight of Christ).

- **So how do I walk differently by union in Christ than the Hells Angel guy? Is it by continually asking myself - what would Jesus do?**
  - A better way would be to follow **Hebrews 12:2 Let us look fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. 1 Thess. 1:6 says that they become imitators of "us (Paul and his team) and the Lord"**.
  - We are not just mimicking Jesus, **we are reflecting his glory and being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory - 2 Cor. 3:18.**
- e. We can ask of things in Jesus' name - **John 16:23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth; my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. What can we ask in his name?**
- **What did Jesus ask for?**
- f. We might also suffer persecution in Christ - **John 15:20 if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.** Hopefully the motorcycle dude is not offended by the gospel. We can read about the current persecution of Christians in Egypt and in other places. Is anyone interested in this part of being in Christ? Paul says in **Phil. 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings...**
- B. **How does union in Christ differ in me from another Christian?**
- (1). **We have different gifts according to the grace given us (Rom. 12:6).**
  - (2). **There are different kinds of service but the same Lord (1 Cor. 12:5).**
  - (3). **Does this mean all Christians are not the same?**
  - (4). **Do we see union in Christ as connecting us to each other? We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may also have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ - 1 John 1:3.**
- C. How does union in Christ affect little things like arguing with my spouse, deciding how to use my time, etc.?