

Theme: The Church is the communion of the saints, all of those in every age who have been united to Christ in faith and draw their life from Him and who are therefore spiritually united with one another now and in eternity.

## I. Intro - Strange Phrases in Creed

- A. Apostles Creed - so many familiar phrases
- B. God the Father Almighty; only begotten Son
- C. Holy Catholic Church? (Not the Roman Catholic Church - the universal Church)
- D. The Communion of Saints? What is that?
- E. Question 70: What is the Church?  
The Church is the Body, Bride, and Temple of Christ, **the community of all true believers for all time.**
- F. What do we mean by the communion of saints?

## II. The Communion of Saints With Christ

- A. Jesus is our One True Shepherd  
I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. John 10:16
- 1. The essence of being a saint is hearing and responding to the voice of Jesus!
- 2. This is true whether one is a Jew (this sheep pen) or a Gentile (not of this sheep pen).
- 3. The deepest unity we can have is the reality of having heard and responded to the voice of Jesus Christ, of having Him as our Shepherd and being part of His one flock.

- B. All saints are in spiritual union with Jesus Himself  
But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:17
- 1. We are not just a sheep who follows; we are in actual spiritual union with Jesus Himself
- 2. We saw this especially in the Church as the Body
- 3. We experience in our daily union with Christ, but also as we gather in worship and come to the Lord's Table  
Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17
  - a. Note there is one loaf, one Body - as one flock
  - b. But we do not just have an external relationship or go through a mere symbolic ritual when we come to the Lord's Table - we participate with Jesus' Body and Blood.
  - c. Participation is κοινωνία (koinonia) - fellowship; sharing; participation
  - d. When we participate in the Supper in faith we experience communion with God and are freshly united with Jesus and all of His saving benefits by the Holy Spirit.
- 4. This is why the Gospel is always the central message of the Church - our only life is found in union with Christ and His sacrificial life and death for us! LOOK TO HIM FOR SALVATION TODAY!!!
- 5. The Church is the communion of the saints, all of those in every age who have been united to Christ in faith and draw their life from Him.

### III. The Communion of Saints With One Another

#### A. The saints are all united with one another - One Church

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and **there shall be one flock and one shepherd.** John 10:16

1. There is only one flock! The Church is One!
2. This is the other aspect of being the Body of Christ - we are all members not only of Christ but of one another

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others.** Romans 12:4–5

- a. To be united with Jesus by faith is also to be united with one another
- b. This means that you are closer to a believer from a different ethnic background, a different country, a different political party than you are to someone of your own ethnicity, country, and political party.

#### B. This includes the local and universal church

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> **To the church of God in Corinth**, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, **together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours:** 1 Corinthians 1:1–2

1. The church of God in Corinth - a local church
2. All those everywhere.... - the universal Church

3. Through our union with Christ and the Spirit we are united with all Christians - no matter their ethnicity, sex, economic class, political affiliation, or location. We are in spiritual union with everyone who calls on the name of Christ!

#### C. The saints of all ages are united together in Christ

1. The Church militant (saints who are still alive on the earth) and the Church triumphant (saints who have died and are alive in heaven now) are united with one another through faith.
2. This is not talking about praying to the dead or asking them to intercede for us, but it is a recognition that the unity we experience in Christ by the Spirit is so deep that it even transcends death!
3. This is why the saints of the ages are witnesses cheering us on as we run our race  
Therefore, **since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses**, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1
  - a. This is right after the “hall of fame” in Hebrews 11
  - b. It is not speaking about us cheering one another on, but the Church triumphant cheering on the church militant as we wage spiritual war to remain faithful to Christ!
  - c. We are not only spurred on by their example (Hebrews 11) but they cheer us on to be faithful.
4. When we gather in worship we are spiritually united with saints in heaven who are worshipping God

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. **You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,** <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, **to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,** <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:22–24

- a. This is speaking of us joining in with the heavenly worship - thousands of angels in joyful assembly
- b. The spirits (not bodies) of righteous men made perfect (not still struggling with sin!) - these are saints in heaven joined in worship with God.
- c. We are all coming to Jesus the mediator - they are with Him in heaven, and we are joined with them and Him by the Holy Spirit as we gather in worship!

5. When in the Creed we profess to believe the Church, reference is made not only to the visible Church of which we are now treating, but also to all the elect of God, including in the number even those who have departed this life. Calvin, Institutes, 4.1.2

D. The union of believers of all ages carries into eternity

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Revelation 7:9–10

1. Every nation, tribe, people, and language - all believers across the ages

2. Salvation belongs to our God and the Lamb - their unity is found in the salvation won by Jesus Christ! It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel... <sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Revelation 21:12–14
3. Twelve tribes and twelve apostles - one Bride for Christ, not two
4. Every single believer who has ever lived are part of the Church, united with Jesus and with one another
5. I will speak more about the unity of the Church and Old Testament believers in After Hours

#### IV. Applying the Word

A. The individual believer and the communion of saints

1. This has huge implications for each believer!
2. Do I realize my deep unity with all other believers?
3. Do I act as if I have more in common with a believer of a different ethnicity, socio-economic group, nationality, and political beliefs than I do with an unbeliever with whom I share those other traits?
4. Do my words and actions stress my communion with other true believers, or do they tend to stress my differences on issues less than the Gospel?

B. BRCC and the communion of saints

1. The faith did not start with BRCC, and it will not end with us!

2. We stand in line with the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3)!
3. Churches always looking for the novel and hip are in grave danger of making shipwreck of their faith
4. We must stress what we hold in common with all believers - not that which makes us distinct
5. We know what we believe and will not compromise on essential Christian beliefs, but we will walk in unity on non-essentials
6. The Church's one foundation  
The church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ, her Lord;  
she is his new creation  
by water and the Word:  
from heav'n he came and sought her  
to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her,  
and for her life he died.

Elect from ev'ry nation,  
yet one o'er all the earth,  
her charter of salvation  
one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
one holy name she blesses,  
partakes one holy food,  
and to one hope she presses,  
with ev'ry grace endued.

'Mid toil and tribulation,  
and tumult of her war,  
she waits the consummation  
of peace forevermore;  
till with the vision glorious  
her longing eyes are blest,  
and the great church victorious  
shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union  
with the God the Three in One,  
and mystic sweet communion  
with those whose rest is won:  
O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
on high may dwell with thee.

### C. Communion

1. Here we are united with Christ our Lord and life
2. Here we are united with one another
3. Here we declare our unity with all believers across time - the Apostles Creed

### The Church - The Communion of Saints

John 10:16; Hebrews 12:22-24

September 27, 2020

Communion

Revelation 22:21

Teaching keywords: Church; catechism; union with Christ; Israel; eschatology

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.  
Revelation 22:21

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. John 10:16

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:22–24