

# Union with Christ

## BY JOHN COLQUHOUN

*“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.”—1COR. 6:17.*

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In the 15th and 16th verses of this chapter, the apostle exhorts the believers at Corinth to guard against such unclean practices as were very common in that city; and he enforces his exhortation by two considerations. (1) He informs them that if they were to be guilty of such sins, then their bodies being constituent parts of their persons, were united as members to the Lord Jesus Christ — would in that case become the members of a harlot. “Don’t you know,” he says, “that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.” He also represents it as a self-evident principle, that whoever is joined to a harlot in affection and criminal conversation, is one body with her. “What! Don’t you know that whoever is joined to a harlot is *one body*? For two shall be one flesh.” But the one who is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*. Whoever is joined to a harlot is degraded so low as to be one body with her; but whoever is joined to the Lord is advanced so high as to be one spirit with him. To be joined to the Lord, is to be vitally united to the Lord Jesus, who is not only of the same essence with his eternal Father, but by virtue of his mediatorial office, He is Lord and “Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.” It is the exalted privilege of every true believer to be joined to Him; or according to the import of the original word, it is to be compactly cemented to him — so compactly cemented to him, as to be actuated by the same Spirit who, in immeasurable fulness, resides in him as the Head of the body.

In further discoursing on this subject, it is proposed, through Divine aid,

- I. To offer some remarks on the union of believers with Christ;
- II. To inquire into the nature and properties of this union;
- III. To consider the bonds of it, and
- IV. The representations of it in Scripture. and
- V. The immediate effect of it as expressed in the text.

I am then, in the first place,

**I. — To offer *some remarks* on the union of believers with Christ.**

1. True believers had a federal union with Christ from eternity.—We cannot call this an actual and formal union, because believers had then no actual existence. But it may be styled an intentional union, a union in the eternal purpose of God, “just as he chose us in him,” says an apostle, “before the foundation of the world.” In making the everlasting covenant, a certain number of lost mankind was given to Christ as the Head of the election; and upon his accepting them, and consenting to be their Covenant-Head and public Representative, a union between him and them was formed. It is called a *federal* union, for the bond of it was the Covenant of Grace. It was a union in covenant, and a union in law. By this union, Christ stood in the relations of a Representative and Surety to God’s elect; and the Father legally, as well as federally, laid upon Him the iniquities of them all, Isa. 53:6.

2. They begin to have vital union with Christ at the moment they begin cordially to believe in him. — This union proceeds from spiritual life imparted to the soul at *regeneration*. And it is in consequence of this union, that vital influence and spiritual nourishment continue to be communicated in *sanctification*. It is in consequence of it that the believer is one spirit with Christ, or that the same Divine Spirit who resides in Christ, dwells also in every member of his mystical body. Although this union differs from the former, it necessarily depends on it. One may be federally united to the Saviour, and yet not be vitally united to him, as is the case of the elect before regeneration. One may be federally united to Christ, and at the same time continue to be dead in sin. But none can be vitally or spiritually united to Him without being a partaker of his quickening Spirit. And yet no man is vitally united to Christ in time, unless he was federally and legally connected with Him from eternity.

3. The foundation of this vital union between the Person of the Son of God and the persons of believers, is the personal union between *his* Divine nature, and *their* nature. — That union of persons depends on this union of natures. If the Son of God had not graciously consented to unite the human nature to the Divine in his adorable person at his incarnation, none of the sons of Adam could ever have been united to him at regeneration. Are any of the children of men exalted to be sons of God in union with Him who is the Firstborn among many brethren? Yes, because He who is the Son of God became the son of man — became an infant of days, a child born, a son given. If he had not engaged to unite natures infinitely distant from each other, the Divine and human, he could not consistently with his transcendent glory, unite persons to himself who are so distant from him as the persons of sinners are. If he had not been made flesh, none of us would ever have been so united to him as to be one spirit with him. His having a mystical body depends upon his having consented to have a human body, Psalm. 40:6.

4. Before a sinner is vitally united to Christ, he is united to the first Adam, Rom. 5:12. All the children of men, in their natural estate, are united to the first Adam as their moral representative. The bond by which they are joined to him is the bond of the first covenant. He who was their natural, became their moral root, bearing them as their representative in that covenant, Rom. 5:19. “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” “In Adam all die.” There was a moral bond between Adam and his posterity, by which they were joined together; namely, the bond of the covenant of works. Elect sinners, though in their natural state they are federally united to the second Adam, yet they are still, by virtue of the covenant of works, really united to the first. This union between the *first* Adam and the elect sinner is never dissolved, till the latter is vitally united to the *second* Adam; or as the apostle Paul expresses it, “till he is married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead,” Rom. 7:4. As union with the second Adam dissolves union with the first, so none are united to the second Adam except those who were united to the first.

5. Although the union between Christ and believers is mutual, yet it begins first on His side. It commences by *union*, which comes before mutual union. By *union* is meant Christ’s uniting himself by his Spirit to the dead sinner, according to this gracious promise, “I will put my Spirit within you.” The Holy Spirit unites himself to the sinner, by coming into his soul at the time of love, at the happy moment designed for his spiritual marriage with the heavenly Bridegroom of the Church. And he so quickens it, so that it is no longer spiritually dead, but

alive. “Even when we were dead in sin,” says the apostle, “he has quickened us.” As communion flows from union, so vital union arises from union; from Christ’s approaching in the day of his power, and uniting himself by his Spirit to the poor sinner dead in sin. Though it is not completed till the sinner trusts in the Lord Jesus by saving faith, yet it *begins* on His side.

6. The instruments, or means of this union, are the law and the Gospel. Accordingly we read, “I will never forget Your precepts, for with them You have quickened me.” “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” “Through the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God.” “That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel.” The law, by revealing to the sinner his sinfulness and wretchedness, leads him to the Saviour indirectly; while the Gospel, by exhibiting Jesus in his glory, fulness, and ability to save, leads the sinner to Him directly. The law in the hand of the Spirit, set home to the conscience, lets him see that he is united to the first Adam, and that he has communion with him in imputed and inherent sin; and the Gospel, when it comes in a demonstration of the Spirit, powerfully persuades him that he may be united to the second Adam, and have communion with Him, in imputed righteousness and inherent holiness. It is by *believing* the Gospel, as it testifies of Christ, and by confiding in Him as exhibited in it, that the sinner becomes *vitaly* united to him. That is when the poor trembling soul meets the compassionate Saviour eye to eye and heart to heart.

7. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s-supper are the external seals of this union with Christ. — They not only signify, but seal it. Baptism seals the believer’s spiritual engraftment into Christ, or his *begun* union with Him. The Lord’s supper seals his *continued* union with Him, and communion in his body and blood — or in his Person, righteousness, and fulness.

8. Though the union between Christ and the believer is very mysterious, yet it is far from being contrary to right reason. — It is far, indeed, *above* reason, but it is not in the smallest degree contrary to sanctified reason. Were our incarnate Redeemer no more than a man, it would be contrary to reason to suppose that He, at such an immense distance as the third heaven, could be intimately united to a believer on earth. But seeing that he is God and man in one Person, there is nothing inconsistent in supposing and believing it. Though his human nature is in heaven, his Person is everywhere. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” If any inquire where Christ may be found on earth in order to unite with him, it might be replied that He is to be found in the word of truth, which is always near to us. “The word is near you, even in your heart, and in your mouth, the word of faith which we preach,” Rom. 10:8.

I proceed now to the second general head,

**II.** — *To inquire more particularly into the **nature and properties** of union with Christ.*

1. In the first place, it is *not an essential union*. — The union of the Father and Holy Spirit to the Person of the Son is an essential union; but the union of believers to the Son is not. The Person of the eternal Father and that of the adorable Spirit are so united to the Person of Christ as to be one with Him by an essential union, or a union of substance or essence. The persons of believers are so united to Him as also to be one with him. But it is not by an essential union, or else they would be gods, possessed of every divine attribute of which he is possessed. Although Christ and believers are one, and He and the Father are one, yet this is

not to be understood with respect to the kind of union, but with regard only to the resemblance between the one kind and the other.

2. *Neither is it a personal union.* — It is indeed a union of persons, but it is not a personal union. The union of the Divine and human natures in Christ is personal; his Person still continues to be but one. Whereas believers, though they are united to Christ, do not make one person with him; they only constitute one mystical body, of which he is the Head. An apostle says to the believers at Corinth, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular,” 1Cor 12:27. If the union of Christ with believers were personal, if they and He together made but one person, they might, in that case, consider themselves as joint mediators with him, and as equally entitled to the honour of meriting eternal life. This sublime expression which he uttered in ancient prophecy, would no longer be true: “I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me.” But to suppose this, would be blasphemous.

3. It is *not merely a political union.* — To be one with Christ, or to be joined to Him as represented in the text, is much more than to be subjected to Him as a political head. Were it no more than that, it would follow that all the unregenerate among men, yes, the devils themselves would be united to him. For they are all under His sovereign dominion as King of Zion. “You have led captivity captive.” “You have given him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given him.” <sup>Joh 17.2</sup> “Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” The prince and power of darkness are under his control, and all the children of men are under his all powerful restraint. He has them all in his hand, all under his dominion, as Governor among the nations. Were the union between Christ and believers, then, no more than a *political* union, their privilege would be no more than that of the most miserable in the creation of God.

4. *Nor is it merely a relative union,* or union by profession. — To be connected with Christ, as professors of the true religion, is the privilege of all the members of the visible church. They are all visibly united to Him, and receive from Him spiritual gifts and restraining influences. Hence they are represented as persons who are *in Christ*, as the branch is *in the vine*. “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit will be taken away.” “If a man does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered.” This is to be understood not of *true* saints, for they will never be totally or finally separated from Christ; but only of *nominal* Christians, who are visibly in Christ, united to him by the bonds of common influence and temporary faith. Those who are united to Christ in this sense may be taken away, and cast out into everlasting burnings; while those who are joined to Him in the sense of the text, will be secured from eternal misery.

5. It is *not merely to be united to Christ in sentiment and disposition.* — In this sense, holy angels are one with Him. In so far as they can penetrate the amazing mysteries of redeeming grace and Divine Providence, their views coincide with His. And in proportion with what their limited faculties are capable of, they are holy as He is holy, perfect as he is perfect. And yet they are never said in Scripture to be “in Christ” or joined to him, as redeemed saints are. None of these kinds of union, then, come up to the idea of the union with Christ that is intended in the text; for,

In the 1st place, It is a *real* union.—Believers are united to Christ as really as the members of the natural body are to the head. Hence the apostle says, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” Eph. 5:30. Though this union is not an object of sense, yet nothing is more real. The union between soul and body is such that can neither be seen by our eyes nor truly represented by our imagination, like things which are objects of our senses. And yet we cannot doubt its reality. In like manner, the union between Christ and believers, though not the object either of sight or of feeling, is notwithstanding so real, that there is nothing which those who enjoy it are more firmly persuaded of. The reality of vital union with the Saviour is clearly revealed, and its happy effects are sensibly *experienced* by believers. Is it true that you who are saints of the Most High are now sitting in your seats, or see the light of the sun? It is just as true, and just as real, that you are united to Him who is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world.

2ndly. It is an *intimate* union — so inexpressibly intimate, that believers are said to be one in the Father and in the Son; as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, John 14:20. and 17:21. “That they all may be one, as You Father are in me and I in You; that they also may be one in us.” How intimate, how inexpressibly intimate is the union, the oneness between the Father and his only-begotten Son! No less intimate, however, is the union that is between Christ and the true Christian, though it is a union of another nature. So near, so close is it, that Christ is said to be *formed* in the believer, to  *dwell* in him, and to *walk* in him. Though Jesus Christ and believers are not *essentially* one, yet they are *mystically* one. The stock and graft are not so near, soul and body are not so near, husband and wife are not so near, as Jesus and the believing soul. They are incorporated into one, so that the Church is represented as Christ’s body. Though it does not make the believer one person with Christ, yet it is a most intimate union of his person with the Person of Christ.

3dly. It is an *immediate* union. — Though it is not so immediate as to exclude means, yet it is so immediate as to exclude higher and lower degrees of nearness to Christ among believers. In the natural body, every member is not equally near to the head; the foot is not so near it as the hand. But in Christ’s mystical body, every member is alike near to him who is the glorious Head: the lowest believer, as to his state, is as near to Christ as the highest. Some of the saints are much nearer to him than others in their spiritual attainments and exercises; but not as to their *state*. Those in the church at Corinth who said they were *of Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, were as closely united to the living Head as those who said they were *of Christ*.

4thly. It is a *spiritual* union, a union by which, when joined to the Lord, we are *one spirit* with him. — As one soul enlivens and actuates both the head and the members of the natural body, so one Spirit, the self same Spirit, resides both in Christ and in the believer. “If any man,” says Paul, “does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” Rom. 8:9. If in virtue of the marriage union, husband and wife become one flesh, much more do Jesus and the believer become one Spirit, when thus united. Is the Holy Spirit, as he dwells in Christ, a Spirit of grace? He is poured out upon the believer as a Spirit of grace also. For he receives out of Christ’s fulness, and “grace for grace.” The believer by his union with Christ, partakes of the same influences and operations with Christ as to *kind*, though not as to *degree*. This is the reason for its being called a *vital union*.

5thly, It is a *fundamental* union; for it is in some sense the foundation of a believer's other privileges.— “All things are yours, for you are Christ's” by vital union with him. It is the foundation of all acceptable obedience. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, no more can you, unless you abide in me,” the foundation of all spiritual comfort. The saint, while in this Valley of Tears, is in the midst of devouring enemies, and of great tribulations. But since he is united to the Consolation of Israel, he will be comforted. He is one with Jesus Christ; and if this compassionate Saviour were to cease caring for him for a moment, he would cease to take care of himself. Christ is the foundation of life to the believer: “Because I live, you also shall live,” John 14:19. Are any of you destitute of the spirit of life? It is because you are not united to the living Head. It is the foundation of the believer's hope, “Christ in you the hope of glory,” and the foundation of his honour and elevation. The highest honour that can be conferred on a soul is to unite it to Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. How high the dignity of the true believer!

6th. It is union in *the eye of the law*. — Though it is not a mere legal union, such as hath subsisted between Christ and the elect from all eternity, yet it is a union which stands, or which is sustained in law. No sooner does this union begin in the day of first believing, than all that Christ did and suffered for the believer is reckoned in law as if he had done and suffered it himself. Hence he is said to be crucified with Christ; to be buried with him, being buried with him by baptism; and to be raised up together with him, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God: He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ; intimating, that, in the eye of the law, the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the believer's Surety, are placed as properly and fully to his account as if he had been crucified, dead, and buried, in his own person. By this union, Christ and believers are one in law: being thus found in him, they have not their own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.

7th. It is a *mysterious* or *mystical* union. — “This is a great mystery,” Eph. 5:32. Are any of you desirous of hearing mysteries? O what ineffable, what amazing mysteries are here! Christ in heaven far above all things; and yet in the believer on earth, who is less than the least of all God's mercies! Christ, an infinite Person, infinitely distant from the finite nature of the believer, and yet closely united to him! Christ living in the believer, and the believer living by him; walking in the believer, and the believer walking with him; dwelling in his heart, and he at the same time dwelling in God; Christ receiving the believer as one of his jewels, and the believer putting on Christ; Christ always the same without any alteration, and yet the believer eating his flesh and drinking his blood; Christ in heaven, and the Christian on earth, and yet intimately united together! Are there mysteries in the essential union between the Father and the Son, and in the personal union between the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ? there are ineffable mysteries in the union between Christ and the believing soul — mysteries which angels desire to look into. A greater mystery than this has never been exhibited to the children of men — a mystery to be *believed*, and yet never to be fully *comprehended*.

8th, It is an *indissolvable* union. — It is infinitely strong and durable. The saint will be separated from his nearest relations, from his most intimate friends, from his dearest

earthly enjoyments, and his soul before long will be separated from his body; but it shall never for a moment be parted from the Lord Jesus. Supposing the believer's body were burned, and every particle of its ashes removed as far from each other as the east is from the west, they would still be united, *indissolvably* united to Jesus Christ, Rom. 8:35–39. As death did not dissolve the hypostatical union in the person of Christ, so neither will it ever dissolve the mystical union between Him and his saints. Their bodies when dissolved in the grave, are as intimately united to the Lord Jesus as their souls dwelling in the mansions of glory. They sleep in Jesus: he keeps all their bones. This union can never be dissolved: no creature can dissolve it, and the Lord Jesus himself will not. The creature cannot do it, “neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” He, the compassionate Redeemer, will not. “He will not turn away from them, to do them good.” O the safety, and honour, and glory of the true believer! His union with Christ shall continue throughout all eternity.

I proceed now to the third general head, which was

### **III.**— *To consider the **bonds** of union with Christ.*

It is a union so inviolable that this needs strong ligaments or bonds. As Christ and believers are the parties in this union, the bond of it on Christ's part is the holy Spirit; and the bond on the believer's is holy faith, wrought and increased by the Spirit.

1. The bond of this mysterious union on Christ's part is the Holy Spirit.—“By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body,” 1Cor. 12:13. “Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit,” 1John 4:13. “Hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us,” 1John 3:24. Christ, finding the poor sinner connected with the first Adam, that killing root, by the bonds of the covenant of works and his own legal temper, comes to him in the time of love, and unites himself to him by his Spirit, as a spirit of life. Though the elect sinner in his natural state is actually united to the first Adam as his head of sin and death, yet as he is at the same time federally united to the Lord Jesus as his Head of righteousness and life, Christ comes at the appointed time and apprehends him by his quickening Spirit. The same Spirit that is in Christ as the living Head, is now communicated to the sinner who is dead in sin, never to depart from him; but to be in him as a quickening and sanctifying Spirit. Thus Christ, as the Prince of life, unites himself to him, takes hold of him, and keeps him in his own gracious hand. Now, this bond is infinitely powerful, and it renders the union of Christ and the believer indissolvable, and so inviolable that it is impossible for it to be broken. “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,” John 10:28. Once the Holy Spirit has entered the soul, he never departs from it, nor ceases for a moment to dwell in it, John 14:16, 17.

2. The bond of this union on the believer's part is faith, the faith of God's operation. — “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,” Eph. 3:17. When the Lord Jesus apprehends and embraces the dead soul by his Spirit, as a spirit of faith, the soul thus quickened and endued with the principle of faith, embraces Him in its turn by the acting of faith, by which the union becomes mutual and complete. “Having the same spirit of faith, we also believe, and therefore speak,” 2Cor. 4:13. No sooner does the spirit of faith enter the dead soul than the soul begins to believe. The sinner thus quickened believes first the precepts of the law as a covenant, so as to be convinced that he is a sinner in heart and in life; and he believes its dreadful threatening with application to himself, so as to be deeply sensible that he is inexpressibly

miserable. The Spirit working in him the faith of the law, persuading him that he can never live in union with the first Adam under the covenant of works, dissolves his union with the law as a covenant, and separates his heart from it; so that he sees it is in vain to cling to it any longer, Rom. 8:2. While he is enabled thus to believe the precepts and curses of the law, so as to despair of life by the works of the law, he is helped to believe also the offers and promises of the gospel, so as to apply the Saviour and his whole salvation to himself. Accordingly, he applies Christ, as the head of the new covenant, to himself, and he expects righteousness and life from Him. Thus Christ having embraced the sinner by his Spirit, and the sinner having embraced him by faith, the union is completed. Saving faith is the consent of the heart to match with the Lord Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom of the Church, and Head of the body. When it is exercised, therefore, Christ and the believer are joined together as in a marriage-covenant. "You shall not be for another man, so will I also be for you," Hos. 3:3. Now, this bond, as well as the former, is inviolable. For though the actings of faith are sometimes interrupted, the habit of it will never be permitted totally to fail. "I have prayed for you, that your faith does not fail." If one should ask which of these two bonds unites the soul to Christ, it might be replied that *both* of them concur in this act. — So much for the bonds of union with Christ.

The fourth general head was,

**IV. — To consider the *representations* which we have of this union *in the Scripture*.**

1. It is represented in Scripture by five metaphors, or resemblances.

1st. The union between the foundation and the superstructure is employed to represent it — "You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believes in him shall not be confounded,' 1 Pet. 2:5, 6. "Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught," etc., Col. 2:7. As the building is joined to and supported by the foundation, so believers are united to and sustained by Jesus Christ, the sure foundation laid in Zion.

2nd. It is compared to the union between the root and branches of the vine.—"I am the vine," says Jesus, "you are the branches; he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; no more can you, unless you abide in me," John 15:4, 5. Now, as an intimate union exists between the branch and the root, by which the former is supported by, and derives vital sap and juice from the latter, so there is a vital union between Jesus, the Root of David, the true vine, and believers who grow up into Him. In consequence of this union, they partake of vital influence from him, by which they grow up as trees of righteousness, "the planting of the Lord." Sooner would a branch lopped off from the stock derive vital nourishment from it and grow, than a man who is not united to the Saviour partake of grace from Him. This union is also represented by the connexion between the stock and the graft that is set into it. "For if we have been planted together," says an apostle "in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," Rom. 6:5. The true believer is implanted, or as the word is



sometimes rendered, ingrafted into Christ, so as to partake of vital nourishment from his fulness.

3rd. It is represented in Scripture by the union between husband and wife. — Thus says an apostle, “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God,” Rom. 7:4. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Saviour of the body,” Eph. 5:23. As the husband and the wife are no longer two, but one flesh, by virtue of the marriage covenant, so the Lord Jesus and his believing people are one Spirit.

4th. It is compared to the union of two pieces of wood, joined by glue. He that is joined, or as the original word literally signifies, is *glued* to the Lord, is one spirit. The word signifies, not only to cement compactly, but to cement with glue. “From whom,” says Paul, “the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies,” etc. Eph. 4:16.

5th. It is represented by the union between the head and the members of the natural body. — “He is the head of the body the church,” Col. 1:18. “Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ,” Eph. 4:15. As the head and the members are so connected as to become one natural body, so Christ and believers are so intimately united as to become one mystical body, of which he is the Head, and they the members. As one spirit or soul animates both head and members of the natural body, so one quickening spirit animates both the Head and the members of this mystical body. This is the fullest representation of union with Christ to be found in Scripture.

Though this great mystery is represented by these different sorts of union, yet not one of them, nor all of them together, can sufficiently express the nature of it. The union between the foundation and superstructure cannot do it; for every stone in the building cannot be alike near to the head; but every believer is alike near to union with Christ, the foundation laid in Zion. The union between the root and the branches cannot sufficiently represent it, for that union can easily be dissolved; but this cannot. Nor can the union between husband and wife, for this can be dissolved by death, and the one party may live without the smallest connexion with the other; but this stands proof against death and the grave. The union between such things as are glued together cannot do it. This union is indeed very intimate; but the union between Jesus and the believer is vital, as well as intimate. Nor can the union between the head and members of the natural body sufficiently do it; for in this union every member is not equally near to the head; whereas in that mysterious union, the lowest member is as near to Jesus the living Head as the highest.

2. It is represented in Scripture by the most expressive words of it, and the most comprehensive. — “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us. — Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are. — I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one,” John 17. How sublime, significant, and comprehensive these words are!

3. *Lastly*, This union is represented in the Scripture by identity or sameness of interest.—The believer is represented as having interest in Christ’s sufferings, “I am crucified with Christ;” and Christ as having interest in the sufferings of the believer. “In all their affliction he was

afflicted.” “Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh,” Col. 1:24. The believer is said to have interest in the same Father, and the same brethren, as Christ. “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” The believer is represented as having interest in the surety-righteousness of Christ, and Christ as having interest in the inherent holiness of the believer. He has personal interest in the Redeemer’s righteousness, for he is the righteousness of God in him; and his Redeemer has a special propriety in his holiness, for he requires it, and his glory is promoted by it. He has the same interest as Christ himself, for he is an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. I “will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am there ye may be also,” John 14:3.

I go on now to the fifth general head,

**V.** — *To consider the **immediate effect** of union with Christ, as expressed in the text,*

“He that is joined to the Lord, *is one Spirit.*”

To be one Spirit with the Lord Jesus is an inestimable privilege; and it is the sure, the inviolable privilege of every one who is vitally united to him.

Now, in the 1st place, he who is joined to the Lord is not one Spirit with him *essentially*, but only *mystically*. As the believer is a member of Christ’s body mystically, “we are the body of Christ, and members in particular;” so he is mystically one Spirit with Him. Jesus and the believer are so closely united as to be one, and so are Christ and the Spirit, But Christ and the blessed Spirit are so united as to be one *essentially* — the person of the one and of the other possessing only one Divine essence; whereas the Christian and the Spirit are one *mystically*. Though the Divine essence is not so common to the believer and the Spirit as to constitute them one in essence, yet the union between them is, notwithstanding, so intimate that they are no longer two, but one. Believers are not only one in the Father and the Son, but one in the Spirit.

2nd. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit, that is, he is united to the Spirit. — The true Christian not only receives Christ Jesus the Lord, but he receives the Spirit by the hearing of faith. As he is united to Christ the moment he receives him, so no sooner does he receive the blessed Spirit than he is as intimately united also to him. The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, is revealed in the promise; and he makes his triumphant entrance into the soul in the day of regeneration. But whenever he thus unites himself to the soul of the sinner, it is enabled to receive him in the promise as the Spirit of Christ. Wherever union with Christ is, there also is union with the Spirit in him. When one is united to Jesus as his Saviour, he is united to the whole Trinity in Him — to His Father as his Father, to the Son as his elder Brother, and to the blessed Spirit as his Sanctifier and Comforter. This is a necessary consequence of union with Christ, as Mediator. Thus he that is so joined to the Lord Jesus as to be one Spirit with him, is accordingly one Spirit: the eternal Spirit and he are so intimately united as to be one. O what a high honour, what an exalted privilege this is!

3rd. He is one Spirit; he partakes of the same influences and operations of the Holy Spirit that Christ himself does. — Though there is a great difference as to the degree, yet there is none in the kind or quality of the influence. The Father does not give the Spirit by measure to the man Christ, but he deals to every believer according to the measure of faith. And yet

every kind of influence that was communicated to the One as Mediator, is imparted also to the other. All who are joined to him are in this sense one Spirit with Him. Does the Holy Spirit rest upon Christ the Mediator as a Spirit of glory? He rests as such on every believing soul. “The Spirit of glory and of God rests on you,” 1Pet. 4:14.

— Does he rest upon him as a Spirit of wisdom and understanding? He is communicated as such to all who believe. “That God may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,” Eph. 1:17, 18.

— Does he reside in Christ as a Spirit of counsel? So he also does in the believer. “You will guide me with Your counsel.”

— Does he rest upon Christ as a Spirit of knowledge? He rests as such on every member of his mystical body. “You shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.”

— The Spirit resides in Christ as a Spirit of might, and therefore in believers as a Spirit of power: “For God has not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power.”

— Does he rest upon Jesus Christ as the Spirit of life? Then the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made the saints free from the law of sin and death.

— Does he dwell in Jesus as a Spirit of Joy? He resides as such in all his members. “I will send another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.”

— Does he rest upon Christ as a Spirit of truth? He dwells as such in all his people. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

— He resides in the Lord Jesus as a Spirit of the fear of the Lord, and all believers enjoy him as such. “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

— Does he dwell in Christ as a Spirit of grace? Then, “out of his fulness all believers receive, and grace for grace.” Does he rest upon Jesus Christ as the Spirit of holiness?

He resides as such in the heart of every believer, rendering him holy in conformity to his image, as the firstborn among many brethren. Although the blessed Spirit proceeds from the Son, *as God*, yet he is communicated to him, *as Mediator and man*, and to all the members of his mystical body.

4th. *Lastly*, He who is joined to the Lord Jesus is one Spirit; he is of the *same mind* as Christ. To this the apostle Paul exhorts the believers at Philippi, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” etc. Phil. 2:5. None are vitally united to Christ except those who are enabled to correspond to him in sentiment, inclination, and affection — none but those who acquiesce in His gracious covenant, and pursue diligently the exercise of faith and holiness.

1. From what has been said on this subject, we may see a special ground of *consolation* to believers. Union with Christ is the believer’s security for all Divine protection and gracious provision. When Jesus cares for the believing soul, he cares for Himself. When a poor sinner goes home to Christ, and is united to him by faith, his carnal friends begin to cast him off. But be of good courage; *Christ* has received you. Though a servant may frown when the Master

bids you welcome, be of good comfort — for though you have many wants, yet when you are joined to the Lord Jesus, you are united to overflowing fulness.

2. Hence we see a ground for great *admiration*. Christ and the believer are intimately united to one another. The Creator is united to the creature: strength united to weakness, light to darkness, fulness to emptiness, and life to death! O Christian, admire and adore the ineffable mystery of this union. Believers are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified; and yet they grow not on their own root, but on Him who is the Root and Offspring of David.

3. Hence we may infer a special ground of the *perseverance* of the saints; they are vitally united to the Lord Jesus. Their life and His life are bound up together; and because He lives they shall live also. The believer ingrafted into Christ can never be separated from him. The branch of a tree may sometimes be agitated much by a tempest, or even bowed down by a man's hand, and yet it will cleave to the stock; and when the tempest ceases, or the hand lets it go, it will rise as formerly. In like manner, the believer united to Christ may be violently tossed with tempests, and not comforted, and may appear to be torn from him; but being still vitally connected with him, he will rise again and revive. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me," Psa. 138:7.

4. We may learn from this the *sinfulness* and *danger* of persecuting or otherwise injuring any of the saints: they are intimately united to Christ Jesus, and whatever is done to the least of them is done to Him. They are one spirit with Him; when *they* are despised, *He* is despised; when *they* are persecuted *He* is persecuted. "He that touches you touches the apple of His eye." "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Consider, O disdainful sinner, that while you despise the true Christian, you contemn Christ himself. "Whoever despises you despises me; and he that despises me despises Him who sent me," Luke 10:16. Your hard speeches against the believer are all registered as so many reproaches uttered against Christ himself; and if mercy does not prevent it, you shall be called to answer for them.

5. How vain and delusive is it in men to pretend to union with Christ, without partaking of His Spirit? "If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If the Spirit who resides without measure in Christ, does not dwell in them, they are not one spirit with Him. Alas! many seem to have taken hold of Jesus Christ, who still eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel, and are only *called* by His name. "They call themselves of the Holy City, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; they mention the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness," Isa. 48:1, 2. Nothing is more vain and delusive than an empty form of godliness.

6. Hence learn how firm the believer's obligations to the love and practice of holiness are. Fruitfulness in good works is the very end of his vital union with the Lord Jesus. Are any of you united to Christ as your Head of sanctifying influence? Then you are bound to love Him with supreme affection, and to love and practise holiness, in all manner of conversation. You know that in the natural body, if the head is in danger, the hands will interpose for its defence. You are laid under the highest obligations in the faith of His love to you, to love your living Redeemer with all your heart, and to serve, please, and glorify Him in your body and in your spirit, which are *His*. O be tenderly concerned for the honour of the great Redeemer, and never account that glory lost to *you*, that redounds to *Him*!

7. Hence learn why the Lord Jesus sympathises tenderly with his people in all their afflictions; and why they sympathise with Him in whatever dishonour is reflected on Him. It is because he and they are intimately united together. *Mutual sympathy* springs from union. Though Christ, as to his *person*, is infinitely far above the reach of all affliction, yet *mystical* Christ is exposed to calamities of every kind, and needs to be relieved. “In all their affliction *He* was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them,” Isa. 63:9.

8. Hence infer a ground of *praise and thanksgiving*. How thankful you should be, O believer, when you contemplate the amazing love of your dear Redeemer to you, in taking such dust and ashes — such a vile, unworthy, and rebellious sinner as you acknowledge yourself to be — into intimate union and communion with Himself!

9. From the subject before us, we may be supplied with marks for trial. — Are you vitally united to Christ, or not? This is a question of the very highest importance. If you are united to Him, then by the sanctification of the Spirit, your heart is habitually turned against all manner of sin: you are separated from *sin* by means of contrition, and from *self* by humiliation. The union between your heart and allowed sin is dissolved. Again, if this is so, you have come willingly to the Lord Jesus, and your hearts trust in Him for all his great salvation. When the bridegroom has the bride’s heart, it is a right marriage. If you, then, bestow yourselves cheerfully upon the Lord Jesus, and say, “This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend,” it is good evidence that he has bestowed Himself upon you, and that He will never leave you or forsake you. Are you sometimes afraid that you are yet destitute of union with Jesus Christ? On the warrant of the gospel-offer, come anew to Him, and humbly trust that He will unite you to himself, and admit you to communion with him in his righteousness and salvation. Do you love and pursue holiness, both of heart and life, and long for the perfection of it? In a word, can you take no pleasure in any other connexion or comfort, while you apprehend that Christ is *not* united to you? and is it your habitual desire and endeavour to cling to Him in affliction and persecution, as well as in prosperity? If so, it is a sign that you are united to Him, and are true believers.

10. *Be exhorted,*

(1) To rejoice in Christ Jesus. Observe what the root is to the tree; what a friend is to a friend; what a husband is to his spouse; and what a father is to his beloved child: so is Jesus to you, believers.

(2) Believe daily with fiducial confidence in Him. You are united to Him as the branch is to the root. The branch depends on, and it derives all its nourishment from the Stock.

(3) Aspire after much heavenly-mindedness. You are united to Christ, who is exalted far above all heavens, and you are risen with him — “seek then the things which are above,” etc.

(4) Be very careful that you do not yield to any sinful inclination. You are so united to the Lord Jesus as to be one spirit with him. Do not lodge in your heart an unclean spirit together with the Spirit of Christ.

(5) Be clothed with humility. You are indeed highly favoured and advanced; but remember, *you* do not bear the Root, but the *Root* bears you.

(6) Study to be more and more united *among yourselves* — “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” “There is one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling.” Be as the first Christians were, of *one heart* and *one way*.

(7) Advance in brotherly love, “for you are members of one another;” and one cannot love the Head and hate the members.

Finally, be persuaded, you who are *not* united to the Lord Jesus, that while you continue estranged from Him, you can have no spiritual life, no true holiness — and “without holiness no one will see the Lord.” “He that has the Son has life, and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life.” How can you have *spiritual comfort* while separated from the consolation of Israel; or have *spiritual light* while you are not united to the Light of the world? How can you have *peace with God*, when you are strangers to the Prince of peace; or *life*, while estranged from the Resurrection and the Life?

O believe the declarations and offers of the glorious gospel; apply them to yourselves; and trust cordially in the Lord Jesus for complete salvation. Here is a suitable Saviour, a well-ordered covenant, and a sure portion for you. Here are precious promises to embrace, and an infinitely meritorious righteousness to receive. These are all offered, or addressed in offer, to every one of you — so that it might be warrantable for each of you to so trust in Jesus and His righteousness, and to so rely on His promises, as to have union and communion with Him in all His riches of grace and glory.

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