

PCCC Afternoon Study

March 28, 2021

Study based on- Living for God-A Short Introduction to the Christian Faith- Mark Jones The Christ-Focused Life-Redemption Applied

Book Theme- from Petrus van Mastricht- From all this it follows that theology is most correctly defined as the doctrine of living for God through Christ. 1 Thessalonians 3:8- *For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.*

The book is framed up according to five pillars of basic Christianity - Trinity oriented, Christ focused, Spirit energized, Church inhabited, Heaven anticipated.

Redemption Applied

Having discussed the message of the Gospel this past December and January, I now wish to present how we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ. The WSC lays out Christ as the Redeemer, and then his offices as mediator. But how is redemption applied? Hence we look through the lens of the material in Living for God - Redemption Applied.

Key Texts-

- Titus 3:5 - *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*
- 1 Corinthians 12:13 - *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
- 2 Timothy 1:9 - *who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began*

Confession of Faith - WSC # 30-31

Introduction

- What Jesus bestows on us belongs to him. What Jesus gives, still belongs to him.
- Calvin - How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only begotten Son- not for Christ's own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us. Institutes 3.1.1
- Christ has been given the authority to bestow the Spirit in his name, so that all our salvation benefits come from his hand.
- The blessings we receive are all from Christ because these blessings are all true of Christ.

Union with Christ

- NT- "In Christ" usually in the opening of Paul's letters, e.g. Ephesians 1:1 - *To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.*

- The gospel involves the Holy One of God joining himself to those who are unclean and making them spotless and without blemish through his union with his bride.
- Christ takes the initiative and joins himself to us through the secret working of the Spirit.
- We have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us not just simply the Spirit. Romans 8:9 - *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
- Christ dwells in our hearts through faith - Ephesians 3:17 -*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*
- Herman Witsius- By a true and real union, the elect are united to Christ when his Spirit first takes possession of them, and infuses into them a principle of new life: the beginning of which life can be from nothing else but from union with the Spirit of Christ. Further since faith is an act flowing from the principle of spiritual life, it is plain, that in a sound sense, an elect person is truly and really united to Christ before actual faith.
- When does Christ, by his Spirit, take possession of us? Union precedes regeneration. Goodwin- It is not my being regenerate that puts me into a right of all those privileges but it is Christ who takes me, and then gives me his Spirit, faith, holiness, etc.
- Based on Christ's intercession for us, he receives the Spirit in order to personally bestow on us all that we can possibly receive from him, though the effect of some of the blessings we receive may be delayed according to their peculiar nature (e.g., our glorified bodies).
- The gift of faith is given to us by Christ. The faith given to us is necessary insofar as the act of our will formally and publicly completes the union with Christ and the believer (i.e., mutual union).
- Christ's Spirit first apprehends us so that we might respond, by faith, and complete, in a public way, the marriage relationship. We live by faith for Christ because he has made us his own.
 - Romans 10:8-9 -*But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
 - Philippians 3:12 -*Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*
- John Murray - Nothing is more central or basic than union and communion with Christ. Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ. ¹

Faith

- Faith is a supernatural gift from God, delivered through union with Christ and applied by the working of the Spirit. It involves assent not simply to the truth that God has revealed but to the person of Christ.
- The principle by which we think and act in relation to God is by faith.
- Warfield- The conception embodied in the terms 'belief,' 'faith,' in other words, is not that of an arbitrary act of the subject's; it is that of a mental state or act which is determined by sufficient reasons.

¹ For another short but excellent treatment on union with Christ, see *The Christian's True Identity*, Jonathan Landry Cruse. Another excellent treatment is *A Radical Comprehensive Call to Holiness* (Joel Beeke and Michael Barrett), chapter 3.

- Good news- to know that our faith cannot fail because it necessarily finds solace and fulfillment only in the one who gave us the gift in the first place.
- Faith does not merely help us escape God's wrath, but it also brings us to God through Christ. It is not meant to act as a "get out of jail free" card but rather is a grace by which we look continually to our triune God, knowing that he is for us and in us.
- Jesus grants us faith as his gift in order that we may look to him.
- What is the goal of our faith? Surely it is the principle by which we daily fix our eyes on Jesus. Faith is not a one-time act, merely for the purpose of getting us out of hell.
- The life of 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*²

The Christ-Focused Order of Salvation

- We receive grace from Christ's fullness. John 1:16- *And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*
- The order of salvation - Romans 8:28-30 - *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*
- We have the chain of salvation in which the blessings are distinct but not separate. They form an unbreakable bond.
- Note "glorified" is a sort of already-not yet term that can easily include the doctrine of sanctification. 2 Corinthians 3:18 - *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*
- How Christ aligns with us each link of the chain.
 - Regeneration- this is the beginning of new life in us when the Spirit overshadows us and falls on us and in us. This is representative of the new beginning of Christ's life in the womb of the virgin. Luke 1:35- *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy-- the Son of God"*
 - Justification- we see it rooted in Christ's own justification - 1 Tim 3:16 - *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory* - God declared his Son righteous, and he justified him publicly; by faith alone we are declared righteous, and God will one day publicly vindicate us.
 - Adoption - The eternal Son became flesh, and in that state he was also the son of a Mary and adopted to be the son of Joseph. In Hebrews 1 Christ is declared to be God's Son, the true king. Our union with Christ gives us the right to the title of sonship.
 - Sanctification - We receive the holiness of Christ not only by imputation but also impartation. The Spirit who was Christ's inseparable companion on earth stamps Christ's holiness on us as we are conformed to his image from one degree to of glory to another.

² See William Romaine, The Life of Faith

- Glorification - This is more than sanctification as previously mentioned. Christ was glorified as we will be.

Conclusion

In speaking about redemption applied- Christ unites us to himself by a secret operation of his Spirit, and works many operations in our souls, including granting us faith so that we can formally “tie the wedding knot,” and be accounted as those who possess every spiritual blessing in Christ. The blessings we receive come not just by some divine fiat, whereby the Father says we are justified, adopted, sanctified, and glorified, but rather we receive blessings that are true of Christ himself but suited to our condition as sinners.

