

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—  
*Lesson 25—Our Union with Christ, Q. 30*

**Introduction**

In the question before us this morning, we learn that *the way* Spirit of God *applies* Christ's redeeming work to us is by *uniting us to Him*. By a real and actual union the Spirit puts us in possession of Christ's redeeming work. Without this union, we stand apart from Christ and can get nothing from Him: Eph 1.7, *In Him* we have redemption through His blood. \*What we need to see is that our union with Christ is not only *the heart* of the gospel but also its very *security* and *comfort*.

**I. There is a real union between Christ and believers.**

A. Consider the way by which Scripture expresses our relationship with Christ.

1. Christ is in believers, Col 1.27 and believers are in Christ, 1Cor 1.30; Jn 15.4. Believers have put on Christ, Gal 3.27. Believers are so joined to Christ as to be one Spirit with Him, 1Cor 6.17.

B. Consider the real unions to which it is compared.

1. It's compared to the union between the vine and its branches (Jn 15.5), the head and the body (Eph 1.22-23), food eaten and the eater (Jn 6.56), the Father and Christ (Jn 17.21), the husband and wife (Eph 5.31-32).

**II. What is this union?**

A. There are three mysterious unions in Christianity: 1) *the essential union* of the three Persons in one Godhead, 2) *the personal union* of the two natures in the Person of Jesus Christ, 3) *the mystical union* between Christ and believers, by which they are one Spirit, one mystical Body, 1Cor 6.17; 12.12-13

B. In this union the *whole man* is united to a *whole Christ*. The soul is united to Christ's soul and the body to Christ's body, so that *all* Christ did and suffered in both soul and body may be shared with us and stand for us before God, Eph 3.17; 1Cor 6.19. Moreover, we are to united to His divine nature, Col 1.27, as well as to His human nature, Eph 5.30, so that the *infinite value* of His work as God, done in our nature as man, may both be shared with us and stand for us before God.

**III. What are the bonds of this union?** This union is spiritual and so are the bonds of it.

A. *On Christ's part*, the bond is *His Spirit*, who apprehends and takes hold of us, 1Jn 3.24. Christ abides in us by His Spirit, Rom 8.9-11; Gal 2.20. The same infinite Spirit who dwells in Christ is given to His elect in their effectual calling (i.e. regeneration), Ezk 36.27, to dwell in their hearts, so that the one Spirit of God lives and acts in the Head and in His members, making them both spiritually one and drawing from the head all the vitality needed by the members.

B. *On our part*, the bond is *faith*, Eph 3.17. The elect apprehend, take, and keep hold of Christ by faith. By faith we receive Christ, Jn 1.12. By faith we come to Christ, Jn 6.35. By faith we feed on Christ, Jn 5.56. By faith we receive life, light, truth, and all that we need from Christ, Mt 11.28; Jn 1.16

1. Why is *faith* such a fit bond for this union on our part?

a) Faith is by nature a *self-emptying* and *self-denying grace*. It's a casting off of all other hopes and resting on Christ alone, Phil 3.8; Ezk 36.27-28, 31-32

b) Faith is *the only* suitable response to the *manner* by which Christ is offered to the soul. Christ, with all His benefits, is offered by God *through the preached Word*. There's no other way to lay hold of Him than by giving credit to, consenting to, and resting on that promise.

**IV. Who is the Author and cause of this union?**

A. As the agent of our entire salvation (Q.29), *the Holy Spirit* alone is the Author of this union. Just as the Spirit was the agent to bring our human nature into personal union with Christ in the womb of the virgin, Heb 10.5, so He's the agent to bring the elect into personal union with Christ in our salvation, Rom 6.5

B. By the preached Word, the Spirit enters into the heart and soul of the elect, dead in sin. When He enters, He makes room for Himself and takes up His dwelling there, 1Th 1.5; Jn 6.63. As the Spirit

of life and Christ, He brings both life and Christ with Him into the soul to quicken, change, regenerate, and unite the soul to Christ.

- C. Having regenerated the soul, the Spirit works faith in it and leads the sinner by the hand to lay hold of and believe in Christ for salvation, Rev 3.20. The once dead soul, being quickened by the Spirit, and given the grace of faith, goes freely, willingly, and naturally unto Christ for salvation. Thus it is the sinner who believes, but it is the Father who draws, by His Spirit, through His Word.
- D. The sinner is united to Christ *passively by the Spirit* upon his regeneration, and then *actively by faith* when he puts forth the hand of the soul and embraces Christ—and it is all the work of God, Jn 1.12-13

V. **What are the properties of this union?**

- A. It's a spiritual union, 1Cor 6.17
- B. It's a mysterious union, Eph 5.32; Col 1.27
- C. It's a close and intimate union. The believer is in Christ and Christ is in him, Jn 15.5
- D. It's an indissoluble union. Once in Christ, ever in Christ, Jn 10.28-29. Nothing can separate the believer from Christ, Rom 6.5, 8; 8.35-39, not even death, 1Th 4.14
- E. It is THE leading, comprehensive, and fundamental privilege of believers, 1Cor 3.23; 1Cor 1.30-31
  - 1. All other privileges are derived from and grafted upon this root, Eph 1.4. Our justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification are all branches on this trunk. All acceptable obedience in the Christian life comes from this union, Jn 15.4-5. All blessings of the covenant come from this union, 1Cor 3.21-23. All gifts and fruits and graces of the Spirit come from this union, Gal 2.20; 3.3; Eph 1.3
  - 2. Where this union is lacking, *nothing* can be had from Christ. But where it is secured, *all* that is Christ's becomes irrevocably and eternally ours.
  - 3. This union is the believer's *eternal security, guarantee and right* to all covenant blessings, comfort in all hardships and temptations and even backslidings, *and peace* in all fatherly chastisements. This union is our greatest weapon against all the weapons of darkness and lies of Satan. This union establishes our true identity and standing and relationship to God the Father, to the Covenant of Grace, to life on earth, and to heaven itself.

**Reflections for Application**

- 1. Let this truth comfort your hearts beyond all others. This indissoluble union means you *will* persevere in grace and can *never* totally fall away from it. The Spirit of God, as the bond of this union, will *never* leave your soul. The seed and saving grace of God which abides in you will *never* die. Christ will *never* lose you, His sheep. This union is *enjoyed* by the hold your faith has on Christ, but it is *secured* by the hold His Spirit has on you. The former may falter and be strained by your sin, but the latter can never falter and there's not a devil alive who can put a strain on it.
- 2. See by this that faith in Christ is the comprehensive gospel-duty. Faith is the way to get Christ and all His benefits, Mt 11.28, and faith is the way to do all the duties of the covenant of grace, Gal 2.20. Faith is the way to acquire repentance and pursue sanctification. Faith is the way to grow in grace and preserve in grace and die in grace. The life of a Christian is a life of faith simply because it's a life united with Christ. By faith we live in Him, take from Him, rest upon Him, walk with Him, receive from Him, and die in Him.
- 3. See here the ground and reason why you *must* give up on the covenant of works: because you're united to Christ and by faith have every benefit He brings with Him.
- 4. See here the ground and reason why you *must* break with all sin and ungodliness: because you're united to Christ and light and darkness can have no communion with one another.
- 5. See that unless you are united to Christ by Spirit-wrought faith, you have neither part nor lot in the redemption purchased by Christ. The only way to have communion in Christ's redemptive benefits is to have union with Christ the Redeemer. Short of this, you remain in Adam and will perish without salvation.
- 6. Let this raise your appreciation for the union we have as members of one another, Eph 4.25; 1Cor 12.12. If this great truth were better believed, wouldn't there be more love and sympathy between us and better care for one another's temporal and spiritual needs? Isn't the reason for so little love, sympathy, and care among the saints, because we forget that our union with Christ has resulted in a union with each other?