

# **SOTERIOLOGY: The Glorious Doctrine of God's Great Salvation**

## **Lesson 2: Union with Christ**

### **I. The APPLICATION of our salvation**

God PLANNED, ACCOMPLISHED, and APPLIED our salvation.

He planned our salvation before time began in choosing a people for Himself.

He accomplished our salvation through the atoning work of Jesus, who lived perfectly, died sacrificially, rose physically, ascended visibly, rules currently, and will return imminently.

He applied our salvation when we were granted by His grace to hear and respond to the Gospel and come to Him in faith.

This application of our salvation – UNION WITH CHRIST – is the means by which God grants all the *other* blessings of salvation to us.

*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 for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours, and to dwell within us.*

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

*"... the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory."*

*Colossians 1:27*

This "mystical union" is expressed in two "directions":

*<sup>20</sup>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.*

*Galatians 2:20*

*<sup>17</sup>Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ**, he is a new creation.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

The Apostle Paul used this sort of terminology 216 times. John used 26 times. It is a foundational to understanding what happens when we are saved and what it means to be saved.

### **II. Some Key Scriptures**

*<sup>20</sup>"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. <sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup>I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

**John 17:20-26**

Jesus prays ...

... for the UNITY of the church based on the standard set by the TRINITY,

... that believers will be IN both the Father and the Son (and vice versa ... John 14:17, 20),

... and that in FUTURE GLORY, we would SEE this unity in reality.

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— <sup>13</sup> for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

*<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup> And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup> For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

### **Romans 5:12-19**

We all were once “in” ADAM – He represented the entire human race in the Garden of Eden and through his SIN, sin (and its fruit – death) entered into our world.

Adam is a prefiguring of Jesus (v. 14) in that REPRESENTATIVE sense.

But now, all believers are “in” CHRIST and represented by Him before the Father. We benefit from his sinlessness, and righteous act of ATONEMENT. Instead of condemnation and death, we receive grace and eternal life.

All of humanity is now either a) “In Adam” (by default), or b) “In Christ” (by grace thru faith). We are either in the “race” of the REDEEMED, or in the “race” of the CONDEMNED.

***6** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

#### **Romans 6:1-14**

The challenge being addressed in this passage is ANTINOMINISM ...

Paul's answer to the challenge is the effects of being "In Christ":

In baptism, we are joined to Christ's DEATH, and are therefore dead to SIN.

We are also joined to his RESURRECTION, being given new LIFE and freedom from sin's POWER.

In vs. 11, we are urged to APPLY what we know about who we now are: "Consider yourselves ..."

Thus, we see the imminently PRACTICAL nature of the doctrine of Union with Christ: We cannot and will not godly lives without this reality.

His presence in us has delivered us from the dominion of sin, and enables us to live with resurrection power a life that pleases him.

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

*11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

#### **Ephesians 1:1-14**

We praise God because we have all of the blessings of salvation applied to us by way of his adopting us. By his grace, he chose us to join in the inheritance of Christ by:

CHOOSING us, REDEEMING us, FORGIVING us, "GRACING" us,

Ultimately for the purpose of UNITING us eternally in Himself.

And he GUARANTEES the end result through the Holy Spirit.

This great act of salvation is a "MYSTERY" ... that is, it is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, but fully revealed in the New Testament in Christ.

*2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

### **Ephesians 2:1-7**

In this passage, we see our need for salvation clearly. Our great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, had killed us spiritually. Our desires and our actions were sinful. Worst of all, we were justly under the wrath of God.

“But God ...”

This passage shows us how God applies our salvation to us. We're linked to Jesus' death, his resurrection, his ascension, and even to his SESSION!

This passage shows us the ALREADY and NOT YET aspects of our salvation. Because we're in Christ now, we are as good as in heaven now!

*3 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup> assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. <sup>4</sup> When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

*<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

### **Ephesians 3:1-10**

This passage describes the pitiable condition of anyone who is unsaved: They (we) were “without Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (2:12).

But by the grace of God, Gentiles (us) can be redeemed: “In Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (2:13)

This section of Paul's letter is autobiographical. Paul certainly knew what it was like to be outside of Christ. He actively lived as an enemy of Christ. But in the conquering and delivering salvation of Christ, Paul knew exactly what it meant to now be in Christ.

His God-given mission was to invite the nations to also be in Christ just as he now is.

### **III. Recap and Conclusion**

#### **Our need for “Union with Christ”:**

In our default condition of lostness, we are SEPARATED from God. Ephesians 2:12 tells us we were “Separated from Christ... having no hope and without God in the world”. But Ephesians 2:13 tells that through our Redeemer and because of the Spirit, “In Christ Jesus, we who are far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” The result is this: We have access in one spirit to the Father, and we are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the Saints and members of God's household. (Eph 2:18-19)

#### **Definition of “Union with Christ”:**

*Union with Christ is the Holy Spirit's work of joining people to Christ and all his saving benefits. God the Father plants salvation, for He chooses people for salvation before creation. God the Son accomplished the salvation, for he redeems the people of God through his death and resurrection. God, the Holy Spirit applies the salvation plan by the Father and accomplished by the Son. The most comprehensive category of application of salvation is Union with Christ.*

Morgan and Schreiner, *Salvation, Theology for the People of God*, pp. 35

As believers in Christ we have been identified with him at every stage of His redemptive work. We are said to be *crucified* with Him (Gal. 2:20), we *died* with Him (Col. 2:20), we were *buried* with Him (Rom. 6:4), *made alive* and *raised up* with Him (Eph. 2:5, 6). Presently we are positionally *seated with Him in the heavenlies* (Eph. 2:6).

#### **This “Union with Christ” is ...**

Definitive ...

Personal ...

Permanent ...

#### **NOTES:**