

Union with Christ (John 14.12-31)

I. REVIEW: CHRIST WILL SEND THE SPIRIT TO EMPOWER AND HELP BELIEVERS

- A. On the night prior to his crucifixion, Jesus gave a dynamic and profound teaching to his disciples outlining truths that are intended to guard and stabilize their hearts in the midst of the coming crisis.
- B. Jesus exhorted his followers to not let their hearts be troubled (John 14.1) and promised them that he would give them peace as they walked through trials and testing (John 14.27).

¹Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me... ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. (John 14.1, 27)

- C. The *means* that Jesus gave to them for engaging their trouble hearts in the midst of crisis and hardship was to *believe in God* and *believe in him*.
- D. In this section of Scripture, Jesus outlines for his disciples the truth that he will send the Holy Spirit to them when he departs. This section demonstrates various ways that the Spirit will minister and empower believers while Jesus is absent in the flesh. These truths are beautiful realities that all believers are called to experience, cultivate, and receive freely as a gift from God.
- E. Jesus promised that the Spirit would come to *empower them for greater works and answered prayer*. Jesus promises that his Father will answer prayers that are offered in agreement with his heart. The Spirit is sent to align our hearts with his and empower us to see his kingdom expressed in this world.
- F. Jesus also promised that the Spirit would come to *empower his disciples for obedient love*. This is the primary emphasis of this section (stated five-times). Enabling us to walk out our love for Christ in a spirit of obedience is one of the primary activities of the Spirit's ministry in this world.
- G. All of this is possible because of the sending of the Holy Spirit and his ministry to *unite* believers to Christ by faith.

II. EMPOWERED FOR UNION

²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."
²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14.20-23)

- A. Jesus teaches that the presence of the Spirit and his ministry is essential to the life of union that is to be enjoyed and experienced by all those who follow him.
- B. Jesus tells his disciples that it is through the Spirit that they will participate in the same type of union that he possesses with his Father. The glorious outcome of the gospel is the fact that we are invited to participate in loving union with the Triune God. This is the glory of our inheritance as believers.

¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And 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 (2 Cor 3.17-18)

⁴he granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1.4)

- C. The doctrine of *union with Christ* is an essential piece of understanding the Christian life. The reality of union with him is a summary statement that speaks of several different relationships between believers and Christ (experience by the Holy Spirit) through which we now receive the fullness of the blessings of God's life and salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1.3)

- D. Earlier in this passage, Jesus had declared that he shared an intimate union with his Father. This speaks of the enjoyment of full participation in communion and life that Jesus experienced in his life.

¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? (John 14.10)

- E. Now, Jesus declares that believers will experience this type of union with God because of his work and the sending of the Spirit.

- F. The doctrine of *union with Christ* consists of several elements: (1) we are in Christ; (2) Christ is in us; (3) we are empowered to be like Christ; and (4) the Spirit will manifest God's presence to us.

III. WE ARE IN CHRIST

- A. The eternal plan of God was carried out *in Christ Jesus*. God chose those who would be placed into Christ through election.

⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Eph 1.4-6)

⁹who [God] 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 (2 Tim 1.9)

- B. We are in Christ *in his death*. Because of this, our lives take on a "cruciform" shape as we are conformed into his likeness.

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death (Rom 6.3-4)

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2.5-8)

- C. We are in Christ *in his resurrection*. Because of this, our lives are empowered by the same power that raised him from the dead.

⁴...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his... ¹¹So you also much consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6.4-5, 11)

¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom 8.11)

D. We are in Christ now, *seated in heavenly places*.

⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2.5-7)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3.1-3)

IV. CHRIST IS IN US

A. We are recipients of the Spirit of Christ who now dwells within us. This means that Jesus now lives in us through the uniting presence of the Holy Spirit who has been joined to our spirit.

¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him (I Cor 6.17)

B. The Spirit of Christ dwelling in us is our hope of receiving and experiencing the glory of God.

²⁶the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1.26-27)

V. WE ARE EMPOWERED TO BE LIKE CHRIST

A. There is a dynamic relationship through this section between the power for obedient love and union with Christ by the Spirit.

B. One of the dynamic realities of participating in the life of God is the empowering presence of the Spirit to be transformed into the image of Christ in our minds, wills, and emotions.

C. The goal of *spiritual formation* (or transformation) is to partner with Christ by the grace of the Spirit to be formed more into his likeness. To be formed into his likeness means our *thoughts* (mind), our *emotions* (heart), our *desires/will* (soul), and our *actions* (strength) are conformed to his.

¹⁹my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! (Gal 4.19)

²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8.29)

D. Later, in John 15, Jesus defines this union as “abiding”. To abide in Christ is to consistently and intentionally utilize the *means* that he has ordained in order to experience more of his life-giving power in us. We cannot earn God’s activity in our lives by our obedience (it is given as a free gift in Christ Jesus). Yet, we must employ our faculties in partnership with the Spirit and his grace to cultivate loving union with him.

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15.5)

E. To be truly human is to be joined with God and experience his life. This is an “active” reality that is expressed in obedient love (Jesus as the ultimate example; John 14.31). The Spirit is given as the agent of our union with Christ. This is a *free gift* that is received by faith. This gift however *activates our capacities* to respond to God in confident love.

VI. THE SPIRIT WILL MANIFEST GOD'S PRESENCE TO US

- A. Jesus promises that believers will experience manifestations of the Father's presence in their lives *in this age*. We do not experience the fullness of this but seek to align our hearts with him in agreement (belief and obedience) in order to experience more of his presence.
- B. God's presence is spoken of in different ways throughout the Scripture:
1. **Omnipresence:** God is in all places at all times (Ps 139.7-10)

⁷Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. (Ps 139.7-10)
 2. **Covenant:** God is united with his people by the Spirit at new birth (John 3.3-8; 1 Cor 6.17; Eph 1.13)

¹³In 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, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Eph 1.13-14)
 3. **Ecclesial:** God is present with his people when we gather (Matt 18.20; cf. Ps 22.3)

²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them (Matt 18.20)
 4. **Manifest:** Times when the Spirit gives *recognizable* expressions of the presence of God
- C. Our capacity to receive expressions of his manifest presence increases over time as we increase our agreement with him. As we seek to love him (spirit of obedience) our minds and emotions are brought into greater alignment with the heart of God.
- D. There are many ways that we experience the manifest presence of God:
1. **Works of God:** healing, deliverance, salvation
 2. **Gifts of the Spirit:** prophecy, tongues, words of wisdom and knowledge, discernment of spirits, etc. (1 Cor 12, 14)
 3. **Revelation of truth:** the Spirit makes the truth alive to believers (1 Cor 2.10-16; Eph 1.17-18; John 14.26)

²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14.26)
 4. **Peace of Christ:** the Spirit guards and deposits Christ's peace on our mind and emotions (John 14.27; Phil 4.6-7)

²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14.27)
 5. **Conviction:** Godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Cor 7.10; John 16.8)

⁸And when he [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16.8)
 6. **Grace for obedience:** the ability to put to death the works of the flesh (John 14.15; Rom 8.1-8; 2 Cor 7.1; Phil 2.12-13)