

The Union and Communion With Christ

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of union and communion with Christ, highlighting the believer's participation in Christ's sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorification.

Scripture: Matthew 15:38, Romans 6:8, Romans 8:17, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 6:17

Topics: "Christology", "Union With Christ"

Description

J.C. Philpot delves into the profound union of the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ, emphasizing that even in His earthly journey, the two natures remained inseparable. He highlights the intimate connection between the Church and Christ, where believers partake in His sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorification as members of His mystical body. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believers experience a spiritual baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, leading to a deep fellowship with Him in suffering and victory over sin and the world.

Transcript

Chapter Seven from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

In our Meditations on the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer we must never, even in thought, separate his human nature from his divine. Even when his sacred body lay in the grave, and was thus for a small space of time severed from his pure and holy soul by death and the tomb, there was no separation of the two natures, for, as we have before shown, his human soul, after he had once become incarnate in the womb of the Virgin, never was parted from his Deity, but went into paradise in indissoluble union with it. It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had no existence independent of his divine. In the Virgin's womb, in the lowly manger, in the lonely wilderness, on the holy mount of transfiguration, in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate's judgment hall, on the cross, and in the tomb, Jesus was still Immanuel, God with us. And so ineffably close and intimate is the conjunction of the human nature with the divine, that the actings of each nature, though separable, cannot and must not be separated from each other. Thus, the human hands of Jesus broke the seven loaves and the fishes; but it was God-man who multiplied them so as to feed therewith four thousand men, besides women and children. #Mt 15:38. The human feet of Jesus walked on the sea of Galilee; but it was the Son of God who came on the waves to the ship. #Mt 14:33. The human lips of Jesus uttered those words which are "spirit and life;" #Joh 6:63; but it was the Son of the living God who spake them. #Joh 6:69. The human hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; but the blood shed by them was indeed divine,

for all the virtue and validity of Deity were stamped upon it. #Ac 20:28.

But there is another thought connected with a believing view of the Lord Jesus Christ as Immanuel, God with us, and that is, the union of the Church with him in all that he did and suffered for her. He being the Head, all the members of his mystical body in covenant union with him shared in his sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. Thus Paul speaks of himself as crucified with Christ, #Ga 2:20, and of believers generally as dying with Christ; #Ro 6:8 2Ti 2:11; being buried with Christ; #Ro 6:4 Col 2:12; as rising with him, #Col 3:1, and sitting together with him in heavenly places. #Eph 2:6.

Now, as the Blessed Spirit is pleased to guide us into an experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to give us a measure of union and communion with his sacred Majesty, he leads us into a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. This is what the apostle speaks of as typified by the ordinance of baptism as a standing figure and permanent representation of the baptism of the Holy Ghost: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." #Ro 6:3-5. The ordinance of baptism is thus represented as the figure of that higher, more sacred, and spiritual baptism whereby, in living experience, believers are made one with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. And here his humanity is indeed seen in its special grace and distinguishing glory, for it is only as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," #Eph 5:30, this being the foundation of the union, that they are baptized into this spiritual communion with him.

But this part of our subject may demand a little further opening up. The Church, then, has a mystical, but not less real, union with Christ, from his having taken the flesh and blood of the children into union with his own divine Person. By virtue of this union with him, as members with the head, she participated with him in all he did and suffered for her sake. But this mystical union all the elect have, even those still unregenerated or unborn. This union does not, therefore, of itself give communion, though it is the foundation of it. Another kind of union, then, is needed, which is peculiar to the regenerated, and which they have in exact measure to their participation of the Spirit of Christ, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," that is, by inward or outward manifestation. By being made partakers, then, of Christ's Spirit, the members of his mystical body have a living union with him, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." #1Co 6:17. Being thus baptized by the Blessed Spirit, they are made one spirit with the Lord, and thus have a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. As, then, he died under the curse of the law and the guilt and burden of sin, and yet by death died unto the law and unto sin, being by death freed from the curse of the law and the penalty of sin, so the believer dies under the curse of the law and the burden of guilt and sin in his conscience; and yet by virtue of his union with Christ as a member of his body, and of communion with him as baptized by his Spirit, he dies also unto the law and unto sin, no more to suffer the penalty of the one or to live under the power of the other. But though thus delivered, yet to the end of his days, as mourning and groaning under sin, as suffering from the hidings of God's countenance, as tempted and assailed by Satan, as hated and persecuted by the world, and often forsaken by followers and friends, he is crucified with Christ, and has fellowship with him in his sufferings and death. His sorrows, his trials, his temptations, and his sufferings, all, as sanctified to his soul's good, lead him to the cross of his suffering Lord, to get life from his death, pardon and peace from his atoning blood, justification from his divine obedience, and resignation to the will of God from his holy example. Here the world is crucified to him, and he to the world; #Ga 6:14; here sin is mortified, #Ro 6:6 8:13, and

its reigning power dethroned; #Ro 6:12; the old man crucified and put off. #Ro 6:6 Eph 4:22, and the new man put on. Thus, having a spiritual union with his suffering, dying Lord, the heaven-taught believer suffers and dies with him, and by this fellowship of his sufferings and death becomes here below conformed to his suffering image, #Ro 8:17,29 2Ti 2:12, and is made conformable to his death. #Php 3:10.

This is no mere doctrine, an article only of a sound creed, but a fountain of life to every believer's soul in proportion to the measure of the Spirit whereby he is baptized into the death of Jesus. But for the most part it is only through a long series of afflictions, bereavements, disappointments, vexations, illnesses, pains of body and mind, hot furnaces, and deep waters, as sanctified to his soul's profit by the Holy Spirit, that the child of God comes into this part of Christian experience.

These things are indeed death to the flesh, and are meant to be so, that it may be crucified and mortified; and are killing blows to all schemes of earthly joy, worldly happiness, and temporal prosperity and pleasure, as well as to all legal hopes and pharisaic righteousness; but they are, in the Spirit's hand, the very life of the believing soul. For "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of their spirit." #Isa 38:16. Crucifixion is a long, painful, lingering death. Nature dies hard, and struggles, but struggles in vain, against the firm but blessed hand that nails it to the cross of Christ; but grace, cleaving all the more closely to him who suffered and bled there, draws life and power from his blood and love. This experience made the apostle say of himself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." #2Co 4:10,11. Here was the secret of all his strength, of all his holiness, and all his happiness. This inward experience of the power and blessedness of the cross inspired him with a firm and holy determination to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified; and this made him say, as the grand distinguishing test of the lost and of the saved, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." #1Cor 1:18.

For this was not Paul's experience only, a hidden secret of which he alone was made by grace the happy partaker. All who are taught by the same Spirit, and have the same union and communion with a crucified Lord, whether Jew or Greek, know him to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. #1Co 1:24. We read of believers being "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," #Isa 61:3, and this planting is a being planted into Christ so as to have that union and communion with him which the living branch has with the vine. The apostle therefore speaks of our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." #Ro 6:5. What the vine is, the branches are. Where the vine is, there will the branches be. The vine was once prostrate on the ground; the branches were prostrate with it. The vine rose from earth to heaven; the branches rise with it. As then a tree planted into good soil drinks of its juices, or rather as a grafted scion becomes so incorporated with the stock as to be one with it, not merely in outward strength and firmness of union, but so one with it as to draw virtue, sap, and fruitfulness out of it, so the true believer, being planted into the likeness of Christ's death, draws supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness.

Here, then, we see the blessedness of the bleeding, suffering, dying humanity of our adorable Redeemer. By virtue of his suffering humanity he has union with a suffering people, and by virtue of being baptized with his Spirit they have union and communion with a suffering Lord. He died that they might live, bore the curse of the law that it might not light on them, and suffered "the just for the unjust" that they having fellowship with him in his sufferings and death might have every gracious motive communicated, and the supply of all spiritual strength imparted, to crucify them to sin, to the world, and to self.

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