

Union with Christ

I. The Spirit's great work in us: uniting us to Jesus

- Titus 3:5 “[God] 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 Cor 12:13 “For in [or ‘by’] one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”
- Union consists in a deep, mystical oneness with Christ: Christ becomes our life and our strength and our identity. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).
 - It’s like vine and branches (John 15:5); like a foundation and the building on top (1 Pet 2:4–5); like husband and wife (Eph 5:23–32); like head and body (Eph 4:15–16); like father and son (John 1:13) (Berkhof).
- Everything that we have in our salvation is because of the Spirit uniting us to Jesus.
 - Calvin: “No particle of grace from God may come to us except through the Holy Spirit.”
 - Calvin: “so long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us.”
- In being united to Jesus, we are also united to each other:
 - Eph 4:3–4 “[Be] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit.”

II. How the Spirit unites us to Christ: effectual calling / regeneration

- You cannot believe in Christ unless the Spirit opens your heart.
 - John 6:44 “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 “The natural [i.e., unsaved] person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”
 - John 3:7 “You must be born again.” 3:3 “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” We must be “born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (1:13).
 - Faith is a gift: Eph 2.8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this [i.e., faith] is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”
 - WCF 14.1 “The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts...”
 - God must take the initiative to call us. In our sin, we are dead (Eph 2:1).
- The Spirit makes us alive together with Christ so we can respond to his call.
 - It’s an *effectual* call. The call enacts what it commands. Rom 8:30: “those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified...” (see also 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tim 1:8–9)
 - Analogies:
 - Gen 1:3 “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”
 - John 11:43 “Lazarus, come out.”
 - 2 Cor 3:6 “For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

- Rom 9:15–16 “For [God] says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then *it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*”
- At the point of faith we participate individually in the once-for-all outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. The resurrection life and power of Jesus enters us.
- The Spirit doesn’t force us to come. He makes us *willing* to come, joyfully and freely!
 - WCF 10.1 “[The saved] come most freely, being made willing by his grace.”
 - Ezek 11:19–20 (also 36:26) “And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them.”
 - WCF 10.2 “This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby *enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.*”
 - WSC 31 “Q. What is effectual calling? A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”
- The inner transformation of the Spirit happens when someone shares the gospel, and the Lord is pleased to bless it (John 3:8 “the wind blows where it wishes”). For there to be an effectual call, there must be an outward call.
 - Rom 10:14 “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?”
 - Acts 16:14 “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia ... *The Lord opened her heart* to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”
- The first signs of someone being regenerated is the conviction of sin.
 - The Spirit is called the “advocate” or lawyer. John 16:8 “when [the Advocate] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”
 - Acts 2:37; 16:30: “what must we do to be saved?”
- This is *Jesus* saving us: the work of the exalted Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit are one (Gaffin).

III. The effects of our union (part 1)

- God now abides in us: John 14:23 “my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”
 - Rom 8:9–10 “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. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”
 - Notice how “the Spirit of God dwells in you” parallels “Christ is in you”: Christ and the Spirit are one.
 - 2 Cor 13:14 we now have “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”