

5. UNION WITH CHRIST

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

INTRODUCTION

- From salvation accomplished to salvation applied

Questions for group discussion:

Look at Ephesians 1:14. From these verses consider:

- Briefly list the “blessings” which Paul notes here.
- What repeated words and themes do you notice in these verses?
- How is it that we enjoy all the blessings listed here?
- What is the purpose of these verses? What are they meant to “do” to us?

1. UNION WITH CHRIST: AN INTRODUCTION

(a) A definition

- “God joins to Christ those people whom he intends to save. What Christ does determines their eternal destiny. All Christ’s blessings are given to those in union with him.”

(b) “In Christ”, “with Christ” (e.g. Eph 1:3-4, 1:7, 2:4-5)

(c) Christ is in me!

- e.g. Colossians 1:27, "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

(d) I'm joined to Father and Holy Spirit too!

- John 14:23, "Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."
- John 14:16-17, 1 John 1:3, Romans 8:9

(e) Scripture illustrations: union with Christ is like...

- the union in the Godhead (John 14:20, 17:23a)
- Adam and humanity (Romans 5:12-21, 1 Cor. 15:19-49)
- man and wife (John 3:29, Rev 21:2, Eph 5:31-32)
- the head and various members of the human body (Eph 4:15-16)
- a vine and its branches (John 15)
- stones and corner stone in one building (Eph 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:4-5)

2. THE NATURE OF THE UNION: WHAT IS IT LIKE?

(a) it is spiritual, i.e. of the Spirit

- 1 Corinthians 6:17,19, "But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?"
- 1 Cor. 12:13, 1 John 4:13

(b) faith-union (Eph. 3:17)

(c) mystical (Eph. 5:32, Col. 1:26-27)

(d) real

3. THE EXTENT OF THE UNION: WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

(a) In eternity past: our election in Christ (Eph. 1:3-4, 11)

(b) At the Cross: our death and resurrection with Christ

- Romans 6:1-10
- Christ is both representative (I am with him) AND substitute (I am not with him)

(c) In our present experience: salvation is actually applied to us in Christ

- The necessity of conversion (Eph. 2:3, Romans 16:7, 11:28)
- In Christ we are justified (Philippians 3:8-9)
- In Christ we receive new life and we live the Christian life (Eph. 2:4-6, Col. 3:3-4, Eph 2:10, 1 Cor. 1:4-5)
- In Christ we die and will rise (1 Thess. 4:14-16, 1 Cor. 15:22, Rom 8:17)

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

“First, we must understand that 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 to us.” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3:1:1)

5. HOMEWORK

For reflection:

- Read, pray and worship in the light of some Bible texts we've looked at today.
- Read Charles Wesley's hymn below and think about its words.

Next session (in two weeks time): predestination and election

- Please read Romans 9:6-24 and 11:33-36

'Tis finished! The Messiah dies,
Cut off for sins, but not His own:
Accomplished is the sacrifice,
The great redeeming work is done.
'Tis finished! All the debt is paid;
Justice divine is satisfied;
The grand and full atonement made;
God for a guilty world has died.

The temple curtain is torn down,
The living way to heaven is seen;
Through Christ, the middle wall has gone
And all who will may enter in.
The ancient shadows are fulfilled,
The law's harsh sentence is applied,
The sinless Lamb of God is killed,
The covenant is ratified.

The reign of sin and death is o'er,
And all may live from sin set free;
Satan has lost his mortal power;
'Tis swallowed up in victory.
Saved from the legal curse I am,
My Saviour hangs on yonder tree:
See there the meek, expiring Lamb!
'Tis finished! He expires for me.

Accepted in the Well-beloved,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
I see the bar to heaven removed;
And all Thy merits, Lord, are mine.
Death, hell, and sin are now subdued;
All grace is now to sinners given;
And lo, I plead the atoning blood,
And in Your right I claim Your Heaven!