

"THE BELIEVER'S UNION WITH CHRIST"**Introduction**

I look at one of the NT doctrines which is closely related to this theme of Christ's love, namely "The Believer's Union with Christ"

1. CHRIST AND ALL BELIEVERS SHARE A COMMON SPIRITUAL LIFE

- ◆ this is implied by Christ's illustration: **Vine and Branches**
- ◆ regeneration brings us into **fellowship with God**
- ◆ **the Holy Spirit** who resides in Christ is the source of our life
 - (i) this life is maintained by **faith**
 - (ii) **God's Spirit**
- ◆ A relationship of
 - (i) **dependence**
 - (ii) **affection for Christ**

OBSERVE: This explains all cases of apostasy (e.g. Judas) – the soul had some gospel light but was not in union with Christ

2. THE NATURE OF THIS UNION

- ◆ **invisible** and **spiritual** – a mystery to the world
- ◆ from our regeneration onwards, **Christ imparts grace** to us
- ◆ **Christ mediates** all supplies of energy and gift needed
- ◆ So: "**Christ is our life**" – "**I live but not I**" (Gal. 2.20)
OBSERVE: The language of believers is instinctively child-like: "I could not live without Him" – "O empty world!"

3. THE BENEFITS OF THIS UNION

- 1) **growth in holiness:** "he purgeth it" (v.2b) – explained
- 2) **increased fruitfulness:** "more fruit" (v.2b and v.8)

- 3) **liveliness in our graces:** e.g. quickness of spiritual understanding; perception of truth; yearning for Christ
- 4) **perseverance:** "none of them is lost" (chapter 17).
OBSERVE: One of the great tests of this union is the attitude we have to the Bible. Christ imparts His own attitude to those that are His.

4. THIS IS ONE OF THREE UNIONS LEARNT FROM SCRIPTURE

- 1) union of **Persons in God:** Circumincession
- 2) union of **Natures in Christ:** Hypostatic Union
- 3) this union of **Believers with Christ:** Mystical Union
OBSERVE: There is deep and wonderful relationship between these Unions – see especially John 17:21, 22, 23

5. MYSTICAL UNION IS EXPRESSED IN FOUR NT ILLUSTRATIONS

- ◆ here: the **Vine and Branches**
- ◆ the **Head and Body** (1 Cor. 12, etc.)
- ◆ the **Building and its Foundation** (Eph. 2, etc)
- ◆ **Husband and Wife** (Eph. 5; Song of Solomon, etc)
OBSERVE: Christ is more than a Master – He is a Husband. This is the sweetest aspect of all.

6. COMMUNION AND UNION ARE TO BE DISTINGUISHED

- ◆ the distinction explained in terms of **consciousness**
- ◆ **Christ "comes"** to the soul (Explain) – at times
- ◆ this **registered in the soul** as "yearning", "soul-sickness"
- ◆ **Illustrated** by: Flavel; Edwards; J. Wesley...
- ◆ **The best Christians** long for much of this "felt" Christ (Whitefield's phrase); e.g. McCheyne

CONCLUSION

One of the great secrets of the Christian life is to long for Christ to "visit the soul". This is an element in biblical religion which the Puritans rightly emphasized.

Never be content with the mere "form" of religion but seek to experience its "power", which is Christ's love for us (Ephesians 3) and ours for Him.

This love will be consummated in glory: John 17:24-26.

PSALM

45¹: 1 – 5

45²: 6 – 9

45²: 12 – 15