

From Your Pastor

A Study on the Shorter Catechism

WSC Question 30: How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? **A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.**

Scripture Memory: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).*

An Explanation: Union with Christ is the fount from which all blessings of eternity and time flow forth to believers through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14). Christ is the Reservoir of all blessing from the Father through the Spirit (1 Cor. 1:9). Believers have union and communion with Christ in grace and glory (WLC, 65-66). Our union with Christ is like marriage (He is Bridegroom, we are His bride, Eph. 5:22-33), it is a living union (He is Vine, we are branches, John 15:1-5), a representative union (He is Federal-Covenantal Head and Second Adam, Rom. 5:18-21; 6:3-6), and a mystical union (Christ is Head, we are His body, Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:12-13). All of the blessings of justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification are found in, and flow out of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. ***“He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption”*** (1 Cor. 1:30).

These blessings in Christ purchased for believers are received by faith alone. The objective bond in our union from God’s side is the Holy Spirit; the subjective bond in our union from our side is faith. Both are granted by the Holy Spirit in our effectual calling. Faith is a gift from God; faith is a Spirit-wrought gift. Fallen man is dead in trespasses and sins unable to respond to the Gospel of God. God the Father grants the faith that we need to receive Him. ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship...”*** (Eph. 2:8-10a). The Lord Jesus says: ***“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day”*** (John 6:37, 44).

The calling of God to His own is effectual because it powerfully regenerates (makes alive!) and works faith and repentance, and cannot be resisted. Universal, and external calls of the Gospel can and will be resisted by sinners (Acts 7:51) but the specific, special call of God through the Gospel to His elect will always be effectual or effective (Acts 2:37-41; 16:14). The effectual call is the outworking of the grace of God in calling sinners into fellowship with Christ: ***“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”*** (1 Cor. 1:9). God illumines our minds to see the glorious Person of Christ, He frees up our wills to freely choose Him by faith as our own, and He warms our hearts (affections) to love and desire Him. This is an irresistible call offered by grace through the power of the Spirit. ***“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction”*** (1 Thess. 1:4-5). ***“...In [Christ] 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...”*** (Eph. 1:13).

A Prayer: Dear Jesus, you are the true Gift of the Spirit, the Promise of the Father, in that we are united to you in grace and glory for salvation and rich communion. The Father has made you everything for us as believers, let us glory in you and say: ***“To live is Christ, to die is gain!”*** (Phil. 1:21).

In Christ’s love,
Pastor Biggs

“You will never attain true gentleness except by one path: a heart imbued with lowliness and with reverence for others.”

- John Calvin

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WSC Question 30, Part 2: How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? **A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.**



Union with Christ*

An Explanation: “Uniting us to Christ...” Union with Christ is the fount from which all blessings of eternity and time flow forth by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14). Christ is the Reservoir of all blessing from the Father through the Spirit (1 Cor. 1:9). Believers have union and communion with Christ in grace and glory (WLC, 65-66). **What are the practical implications of our union?** 1. **The church has union with Christ in the Father’s eternal election.** This is a union that precedes our birth and conversion, back into the eternal electing mercies of God. Union with Christ includes union in eternity, in history in the fullness of the times, and the Spirit’s union in the application of our salvation. This covenant theology recognizes that union with Christ is not merely a present experience, but an eternal reality in the plan of God. A covenant of grace was made with Christ as the Second Adam, and all the elect in Him as His seed (Heb. 13:20-21). 2. **The church has union with Christ in the Son’s incarnation.** No higher honor was given to humanity than when God the Son took our nature into permanent union with God. The purpose of Christ’s incarnation is particularly His priestly office and work to make propitiation for His people, and intercede for them (Heb. 1:1-2; 2:17; 7:25). The incarnation forms a necessary link with Christ, so that we might have His righteousness to us. Christ joins with us in our nature and this incarnational union makes possible all of the righteousness that He earned and will give to us as we receive it by faith. Only those who are sanctified in Christ can all ourselves “brethren” of God’s Son (Heb. 2:11). This is important as part of God’s promise of being “with us”; the incarnational union impresses upon us that **He is not merely God for us, but God with us.** 3. **The church has union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension.** This is particularly Paul’s theme in his writings (Rom. 6-8). We died with Christ on the cross, were buried with Him, rose from the dead with Him, seated with Him in Heavenly Places, etc (Col. 3:1-4; Gal. 2:20). All of the believer’s experiences of saving faith flow from his union with Christ in these great, redemptive-historical events. Whatever Christ did and received, belong to us as God’s children. As believers, we should count all of these blessings as our own possessions. This union with Christ is an abiding reality that believers must live out of by faith. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: **“One died for all, then all died, therefore we should live not for ourselves, but for Him who died and has risen from the dead.”** Christians died with Christ 2000 years ago with Christ on the cross, but we experientially live this out being transformed in time by God’s Spirit. 4. **The church has union with Christ in the Spirit’s works of personal salvation.** The Spirit establishes a vital union with Christ through effectual calling and regeneration. We are in space and time united to Jesus Christ. In Romans 8:30, Paul wrote: **Romans 8:30** “*And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*” Freedom from condemnation belongs to those who are “in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8). The Spirit of Life liberates us from sin to live for Christ. 5. **Communion with God in love flows out of union.** Spirit, faith, and love are the three “chains of union” (William Ames). The Spirit from God to unites us; faith from us to unite us; love to give ourselves wholly to Christ as His Beloved. All that Christ has or has done is ours by faith in Christ Jesus. The Christian is a fruitful branch, an eating and drinking guest at the banquet, a beloved bride, clothed in His righteousness and glory. All these will be realized at the Consummation of all things, and we will live blessedly (Rev. 19:7ff; 21:1ff)! We shall have total, unhindered, intimacy with Christ in heaven for all eternity! We shall realize fully the Lord’s love for His bride!

* Compiled from Dr. J. R. Beeke’s lectures on soteriology.

A Prayer: Thank you, dear Jesus, that you loved me and gave yourself for me. I am grateful to confess: “I am crucified with Christ...and the life I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20).

In Christ’s love,
Pastor Biggs

“The one basic note or chord that runs through [the Veda of the Brahmans, the Purana of Vishnu, the Qur’an of the Muslims] is salvation by works. [These Holy Books] all teach that salvation must be bought and that your own works and merits must be the purchase price. Our own Bible, ‘our’ sacred book from the East, is from start to finish a protest against this doctrine... [proclaiming to Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims] that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

- Max Muller (Univ. of Oxford, 1901)