

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 17 The Spirit Uniting to Christ

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Transcript

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Chapter 17

The Spirit Uniting to Christ

Two Kinds of Union One of the principal ends or designs of the Gospel is the communication to God's elect of those benefits or blessings which are in the Redeemer; but the communication of benefits necessarily implies communion, and all communion as necessarily presupposes union with His Person. Can I be rich with another man's money, or advanced by another man's honors? Yes, if that other be my surety (one who pledges himself as liable for my debt), or my husband. Peter could not be justified by the righteousness of Paul, but both could be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, seeing they are both knit to one common Head. Principal and surety are one in obligation and construction of law. Head and members are one body; branch and stock are one tree, and a slip will live by the sap of another stock when once engrafted into it. We must, then, be united to Christ before we can receive any benefits from Him. Now there are two kinds of union between Christ and His people: a judicial and a vital, or a legal and a spiritual. The first is that union which was made by God between the Redeemer and the redeemed when He was appointed their federal Head. It was a union in law, in consequence of which He represented them and was responsible for them, the benefits of His transactions redounding to them. It may be illustrated by the case of suretyship among men: a relation is formed between the surety and that person for whom he engages, by which the two are thus far considered as one—the surety being liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is thereby absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connection is established between Christ and those who had been given to Him by the Father. But something farther was necessary in order to the actual enjoyment of the benefits procured by Christ's representation. God, on whose sovereign will the whole economy of grace is founded, had determined not only that His Son should sustain the character of their Surety, but that there should be also a vital as well as legal relation between them, as the foundation of communion with Him in all the blessings of His purchase. It was His good pleasure that as they were one in law, they should be also one spiritually, that Christ's merit and grace might not only be imputed, but also imparted to them, as the holy oil poured on the head of Aaron descended to the skirt of his garments. It is this latter, this vital and spiritual union, which the Christian has with Christ, that we now purpose to treat of. Internal "Drawing" The preaching of the Gospel by the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus is the

instrument appointed for the reconciling or bringing home of sinners to God in Christ. This is clear from Romans 10:14 and 1 Corinthians 1:21, and more particularly from 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." But, as we have pointed out, the mere preaching of the Word—no matter how faithfully—will never bring a single rebel to the feet of Christ in penitence, confidence, and allegiance. No, for that there must be the special and supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit: only thus are any actually drawn to Christ to receive Him as Lord and Savior: and only as this fact is carefully kept prominently before us does the blessed Spirit have His true place in our hearts and minds. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110:3). It is by moral persuasion—"with cords of a man" (Hosea 11 :4)—that the Holy Spirit draws men to Christ. Yet by moral persuasion we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ, leaving it still to the sinner's choice whether he will comply with it or not. For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, nevertheless He puts forth a real efficacy when He "draws," which consists of an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will whereby its native rebellion and reluctance is removed, and from a state of unwillingness the sinner is made willing to come to Christ. This is clear from Ephesians 1:19, 20 which we quote below. "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." Here is much more than a mere proposal made to the will: there is the putting forth of Divine power, great power, yea the exceeding greatness of God's power; and this power has a sure and certain efficacy ascribed to it: God works upon the hearts and wills of His people "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead"—both are miracles of Divine might. Thus God fulfills "all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). Unless the "arm of the LORD" is revealed (Isa. 53:1) none believe His "report." Spiritual Union Spiritual union with Christ, then, is effected both by the external preaching of the Gospel and the internal "drawing" of the Father. Let us now take note of the bands by which Christ and the believer are knit together. These bands are two in number, being the Holy Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on our part. The Spirit on Christ's part is His quickening us with spiritual life, whereby Christ first takes hold of us. Faith on our part, when thus quickened, is that whereby we take hold of Christ. We must first be "apprehended" (laid hold of) by Christ, before we can apprehend Him: Philippians 3:12. No vital act of faith can be exercised until a vital principle is first communicated to us. Thus, Christ is in the believer by His Spirit; the believer is in Christ by faith. Christ is in the believer by inhabitation; the believer is in Christ by implantation (Rom. 6:3-5). Christ is in the believer as the head is in the body; we are in Christ as the members are in the head. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). The same Spirit which is in the Head is in the members of His mystical body, a vital union being effected between them. Christ is in Heaven, we upon earth, but the Spirit being omnipresent is the connecting link. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles" (1 Cor. 12:13)—what could be plainer than that? "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). Thus, Christ is unto His people a Head not only of government, but also of influence. Though the ties which connect the Redeemer and the redeemed are spiritual and invisible, yet are they so real and intimate that He lives in them and they live in Him, for "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11), and this, because the Spirit is the bond of union between us and Christ. Because there is the same Spirit in the Head and in His members, He will therefore work the same effects in Him and in us. If the Head rise, the members will follow after, for they are appointed to be conformed

unto Him (Rom. 8:29)—in obedience and suffering now, in happiness and glory hereafter. Christ was raised by the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4), and so shall we be—the earnest of which we have already received when brought from death unto life.

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