

§ 11. Doctrine of Salvation

Lecture 7

The Mystical Union with Christ - Continued

We've been talking about the mystical union between Jesus Christ and his church – between the individual, regenerate believer and Christ. Last time we saw that the expression “in Christ” or “in him” is one of Paul's favorites; some 164 times in his epistles Paul uses this expression to describe all that we are and have in Christ. We saw last time that in Christ we are chosen, called, foreordained or predestined, created to good works, sealed by the Holy Spirit, justified, sanctified, and co-crucified with Christ.

Today, let's continue that list by looking at some of the other blessings that we have insofar as we are united with Christ.

9. *We have adoption as sons and heirs of God.* Galatians 3:16, 26, 29. Paul says,

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many; but, referring to one, “And to your offspring,” which is Christ.

In other words, Paul says this promise is primarily to Abraham's singular offspring Jesus Christ.

. . . for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. . . . And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

So the promise is primarily to Abraham's offspring which Paul says is Christ, but insofar as we are united with Christ, we also are Abraham's offspring and therefore heirs of this promise of God made to Abraham and to his offspring. This is a wonderful illustration of the union that we have with Christ and, in virtue of that union, our sharing in a promise made, according to Paul, first and foremost to Jesus Christ.

10. *We are one body in Christ.* Galatians 3:28, the verse that I just skipped. Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” All ethnic and gender and other barriers to unity are dissolved in Christ. We are one body in Christ. Though we certainly have our differences, nevertheless there is this deeper commonality that we all share in virtue of being members of the one body of Christ.

11. *In Christ we have redemption.* Romans 3:24. Paul says, “They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” So insofar as we are in Christ, we have redemption from our sins. We are freed from our sins and no longer liable to punishment for them.

12. Similarly, *in Christ we have eternal life*. That is stated in Romans 6:23. Paul says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So for those who are in Christ we have eternal life.

13. *We have forgiveness in Christ*. Ephesians 1:7: “In him [that is, in Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses . . .” So we have a divine pardon of our sins in Christ.

14. *As we are in Christ we are a new creation*. 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul writes, “Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.” When a person is in Christ, the old life – the old self – is done away with. Our guilt is wiped out, our death sentence of sin is abolished, and we are given a new status as adopted children, heirs of God, and citizens of a heavenly kingdom. We thus become new creations insofar as we are in Christ and united with him.

15. *In Christ we have liberty*. Galatians 2:4. Here Paul is speaking of Judaizers who were threatening the freedom of the Gospel by forcing Gentile converts to submit to Jewish law. Paul says, “. . . because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage . . .” and then the sentence continues. These Judaizers wanted to deny the liberty which Christians enjoy from all of the demands of the Jewish law, such as circumcision, food laws, and so on and so forth. Instead, Paul says in Christ we have freedom. We have liberty from all of the demands of the law.

16. *In summary, we have every spiritual blessing in Christ*. Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” So, insofar as we are united with Christ, we enjoy a multitude of spiritual blessings in virtue of being united with him.

17. The last blessing that I want to mention is that *as we are in Christ, we always have triumph*. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul says, “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.” This doesn’t mean that our lives are going to be hassle-free and that we won’t be subject to failure and defeat and hardships in earthly things. Keep in mind that that sentence was, after all, written by a man who suffered enormous adversity because of his commitment to Christ and who was finally martyred for his faith. Yet, Paul is able to say, “Christ always leads us in triumph.” He is assuring us that insofar as we are abiding in Christ and walking in his will, even the adversities and the defeats and the failures of life ultimately redound to the purpose of the triumph of God’s Kingdom. So he can say “through us he spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ everywhere.” That, I think, is a tremendous comfort and encouragement as we go through the ups and downs of life. And in hardship and failure, even in those valleys, we know that if we are abiding

in Christ nevertheless we have triumph in him insofar as we follow his will and his leading.

To sum up, just look at all the things that Paul says we have in Christ. In Christ we are chosen, called, predestined, created to good works, sealed with the Holy Spirit, justified, sanctified, co-crucified with Christ, have redemption from our sins, have eternal life, have forgiveness, are a new creation in Christ, are set at liberty, have all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, and are always led in triumph. What a tremendous encouragement this is for us as Christians as we contemplate all that we are and have in Christ.

Next time we will look at a couple of important metaphors used in the New Testament to characterize our mystical union with Christ. Until then, may God lead you this week in triumph as you seek to know and to serve him.¹

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