

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 6-19-16 PM NOTES  
"OUR UNION WITH CHRIST"  
COLOSSIANS 3:1-4  
# 10 in Series, "Jesus Is Enough"

**Colossians 2:10b** "and in Him you have been made complete..."

**Ephesians 2:6 (NIV)** "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

"Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation".

– John Murray

"The subject of spiritual union is the most important, the most profound, and yet the most blessed of any that is set forth in the sacred Scriptures; and yet, sad to say, there is hardly any which is now more generally neglected. The very expression 'spiritual union' is unknown in most professing Christian circles, and even where it is employed it is given such a protracted meaning as to take in only a fragment of this precious truth."  
– Arthur Pink

**John 15:4-5** "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

**John 17:20-21, 23** "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me... I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

We are chosen in Him (Ephesians 1:4), called in Him (1 Corinthians 7:22), made alive in Him (Ephesians 2:5), justified in Him (Galatians 2:17), sanctified in Him (1 Corinthians 1:2), enriched in Him (1 Corinthians 1:5), assured of the resurrection in Him (Romans 6:5). We have redemption in Him (Romans 3:24), eternal life in Him (Romans 6:23), righteousness in Him (1 Corinthians 1:30), wisdom in Him (1 Corinthians 4:10), and every spiritual blessing in Him (Ephesians 1:3).

**Ephesians 5:32** "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

**Ephesians 1:22-23** "And He [God the Father] put all things in subjection under His [God the Son] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

**Colossians 1:18a** "He is also head of the body, the church"

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

**Romans 6:6-7 (HCSB)** "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims."

**Romans 6:11** "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

**Colossians 1:26-28** "... the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."

I. Those In Union with Christ Were Raised with Christ (V1)

**Ephesians 4:1** “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called”.

A. The Condition of Those in Union with Christ (V1a)

B. The Command to Those in Union with Christ (1b)

**Psalms 110:1** “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’”

**Ephesians 2:5-6** “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”.

**Luke 22:69** “from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

**Acts 2:33** “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God...”

II. Those In Union with Christ Died with Christ (V2-3)

A. The Focus (V2)

**Philippians 4:13** “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

B. The Facts (V3)

**Romans 6:6a** “knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him...”

**John 10:27-28** “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

III. Those In Union with Christ Will Be Displayed with Christ (V4)

**Revelation 19:11-16** “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”

**First Baptist Church Powell 06 19 2016 PM**

**Sermon 10: Our Union with Christ**

**Series: Jesus Is Enough**

**Colossians 3:1-4**

If I had to pick one verse in Colossians that tells us what this book is really about (a theme verse), it would be Colossians 2:10b: “and in Him you have been made complete...” Often we focus on what being “made complete” means (as we should). But in this message, I want to focus on the words “in Him.” Being “in Him” is referring to the doctrine often called “our union with Christ.” This doctrine is also

called “our identification with Christ.” I believe that the doctrine of our union with Christ is one of the most important doctrines in Scripture, especially when it comes to the practical living out of the Christian life.

## Introduction

In this rather lengthy introduction, I want to focus on the doctrine of our union with Christ. Theologian John Murray wrote, “Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.” [Boice, page 389]

One of the strongest statements of the importance of this doctrine comes from Arthur Pink:

The subject of spiritual union is the most important, the most profound, and yet the most blessed of any that is set forth in the sacred Scriptures; and yet, sad to say, there is hardly any which is now more generally neglected. The very expression ‘spiritual union’ is unknown in most professing Christian circles, and even where it is employed it is given such a protracted meaning as to take in only a fragment of this precious truth.

[Arthur Pink quoted in *Boice*, page 389]

While the Holy Spirit used the apostle Paul to reveal the majority of truth we have about this blessed doctrine, the roots for it were laid in the Gospels by Christ Himself. John 15:4-5: “Abide *in Me*, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide *in Me*. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides *in Me* and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (emphasis added)

While the Gospels lay the foundation of the doctrine of our union with Christ, it was the inspired writings of Paul that most clearly develops this doctrine. In the New Testament books the Holy Spirit used Paul to write, we find the phrase “in Him,” “in Christ,” and “in Christ Jesus,” 164 times! Here are a *few* of the things that Paul tells us are ours because we are in Christ. We are chosen in Him (Ephesians 1:4), called in Him (1 Corinthians 7:22), made alive in Him (Ephesians 2:5), justified in Him (Galatians 2:17), sanctified in Him (1 Corinthians 1:2), enriched in Him (1 Corinthians 1:5), assured of the resurrection in Him (Romans 6:5). We have redemption in Him (Romans 3:24), eternal life in Him (Romans 6:23), righteousness in Him (1 Corinthians 1:30), wisdom in Him (1 Corinthians 4:10), and every spiritual blessing in Him (Ephesians 1:3).

This doctrine of our union with Christ is illustrated in the New Testament in several ways. The first illustration is found in marriage. In Ephesians 5 Paul speaks of Christ as the husband and the church (the saved) as the bride. He says in Ephesians 5:32: “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

Let’s look a little closer at this illustration that we are given of our union with Christ. Ideally, the marriage is a union of love that results in oneness that is like no other relationship between two people. In marriage, there is a new set of legal relationships. There is a legal name change. On June 12, 1971 Kathy came to the Longfield Baptist Church as Kathy Lawson and left that church as Kathy Jones. In marriage she was identified with me. In the same way, we come to Jesus as a sinner and there is a legal change – we are declared a saint, a set apart one (the meaning of “saint”). Another way the union of marriage illustrates our union with Christ is that our behavior changes to match our legal change of no longer being single. The wife doesn’t flirt with other men, call old boyfriends, or join “match.com”. The husband is true to His wife and fulfills the roll of leader, provider, and protector of her. As with all illustrations, they aren’t perfect when pushed too far, but marriage helps us see some of what is meant by our union with Christ. In Christ as in marriage, we have a new name and a new identity.

A second illustration of our union with Christ is that we become the body of Christ and Christ is the head of the body. Ephesians 1:22-23: “And He [God the Father] put all things in subjection under His [God the Son] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Colossians 1:18a: “He is also head of the body, the church.” In this illustration we see that

our union with Christ is also a union with one another. The fact is that the head of the human body is the control center for the whole body. The foot doesn't make the decisions for the body; the head does. This truth that Christ is the head also illustrates that in our union with Christ, He is Lord and we are His servants.

The third illustration is the vine and the branches (John 15:1-17). This illustration shows that the purpose of our union with Christ is to bear fruit. We don't produce the fruit; we bear the fruit that the vine produces. Our strength to bear fruit does not originate in us (the branch) but our strength is from our union with and our abiding in the vine.

There are more illustrations in Scripture of our union with Christ, but we will stop with those three. Being in Christ means that we have a new name, a new relationship, and a love for Him that is different from every other love. When we are in union with Christ, He is absolute Lord and we are His servants acting in obedience to His commands. In our union with Christ, He is the vine – the source of strength and nourishment for the branches (believers). Our task in this relationship is to simply abide, remain in dependence on the vine.

These three illustrations of our union with Christ are instructive and helpful, but our union with Christ is much more than these illustrations communicate to us. Being in union with Christ means that "in Him" our old man in Adam, who was a slave to sin, is united to Christ on the cross and executed. The one that sin had authority over is dead. Being united to Christ also means that His very life (eternal life) and His accomplishments are ours. These truths must be illumined by the Holy Spirit before we can grasp them. This union with Christ is initiated by the *baptism by the Holy Spirit* which takes place at salvation. To baptize is to be immersed into something (or in someone). At salvation, the Holy Spirit immerses us into Christ. We are identified with Him; we are in union with Him. All that separated us from God was laid on Christ and all that Jesus did on the cross was put on our account. This is absolutely glorious.

This is *not* just a unique way to illustrate that in Christ we can get help from Him and as we get his help and we try harder we will be victorious. In actuality, when we were baptized into, united with Christ, our old sinful man was put on the cross with Christ. Every act of sin was placed on Christ, and there He died for our sins. When He died (because were in union with Him) we were set free from slavery to sin. His *Holy Spirit* now resides in us to teach us, comfort us, and empower us. His righteousness is put on our account so that we can stand before a holy God with the righteousness of His Son.

In summary, He takes our sin and the condemnation sin brings (death and separation from God) and gives us His righteousness and His Eternal life. What does mean in our everyday life? It means that we can live in assurance of salvation. It means that we can walk in victory over every sin. Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Romans 6:6-7 (HCSB): "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims." Romans 6:11: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Oh the glorious truth of our union with Christ – I have only scratched the surface. With that introduction, I want us to look at this text and throughout this series on Colossians I want us to grow in our knowledge of and our appropriation of our union with Christ. Colossians 3 begins the practical application of this doctrine of our union with Christ. All that we are told to "do" in Colossians 3-4 is possible because of what God has already done in chapters 1-2. A good summary of what He has done is Colossians 1:26-28: "... the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you [our union with Christ], the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."

## **I. Those in Union with Christ Were Raised with Christ (v 1)**

The “Therefore” in verse 1 ties in chapters 3-4, which major on application, and with chapters 1-2, which major on the doctrinal. That is a pattern of Paul. For instance, in Ephesians Paul takes the first three chapters to tell us who we are and what we have in Christ. We are hardly told to do anything. But the whole emphasis changed in Ephesians 4-6 where we are told how the truth of who we are in union with Christ worked its way out in everyday life. Ephesians 4:1: “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” We see this same pattern in Colossians 3.

### **A. The Condition of Those in Union with Christ (v 1a)**

The “Therefore” ties us back to chapters 1-2. Because we are in union with Christ, and thereby raised up from our spiritually dead condition, to experience Christ’s resurrection life, and because we have rejected the world’s legalism, mysticism, and asceticism that we looked at last week, there are some truths about us that we must appropriate and walk in. The “if” is the “if” of argument, not the “if” of doubt. It could probably better be translated by “since.” Since His resurrection life is now our life, there are some things we must do.

### **B. The Command to Those in Union with Christ (v 1b)**

The text literally says that we are to be continually seeking the things above. That is referring to the realities of our life in union with Christ. This is simply an exhortation to continually live based on who we are in union with Christ rather than how we feel, how we have been programmed, or what others have told us.

Where is Christ now? He is seated at the right hand of the Father. The right hand of a king was the place of authority, power, and honor. The Psalmist referred to this in Psalm 110:1: “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’” Where are we? We are in Christ! Ephesians 2:5-6: “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

The former Vice President and Senator from Minnesota, Hubert Humphrey once made a great statement. He was not referring to spiritual things, but what he said certainly has a spiritual application. He said, “How you stand depends on where you sit.” [source unknown]

That is certainly true of believers. When we reckon by faith that we are seated in Christ at the Father’s right hand, we begin to understand that we are in the place of victory; we are united with the one who has all authority and power. No sin, no enemy can ultimately triumph over us. Several times in Scripture we are reminded that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus Himself said in Luke 22:69: “from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” At Pentecost, Peter said of Jesus in Acts 2:33: “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God...”

The doctrine of our union with Christ is not some remote theological truth that has no application to practical everyday life. This truth is central and essential to living the Christian life. We are to “keep seeking” the application of this glorious truth to our view of ourselves, our trials, our challenges, and indeed all of life!

## **II. Those in Union with Christ Died with Christ (v 2-3)**

These two verses enlarge on what we saw in verse 1.

### **A. The Focus (v 2)**

The phrase “set your mind” means to focus on, to choose the direction of our mind. We are to focus on the reality of things above and not on circumstances here on this earth. Let’s get real practical here. When we are faced with a trial or a dilemma or a disappointment or a challenge, what is your thought process?

Do you do a logical survey of the situation, and then do a “needs assessment,” and then determine if you have the ability to handle it? What the text is saying is that first we are to focus, to set our minds on Christ. We are in Christ, and He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is the one in whom all power and authority resides. The question is not “am I able?” The question is “what does Jesus my Lord want me to do and once I determine that, I step out in faith knowing that as Philippians 4:13: says, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” By the way, that verse is probably the verse that is quoted out of context more than any verse in the Bible! It is not referring to hitting home runs, getting the promotion we seek, or running a marathon. It is referring to what Jesus, our Lord, has told us to do. Our focus is on Christ, seated above at the Father’s right hand and that we are in union with Him. He is the conqueror who has all things under His authority and we are in Him!

### **B. The Facts (v 3)**

This is one of the deepest and most profound verses in all of Scripture. At salvation, the old us in Adam died. His programming (the flesh) is still with us and we must “walk by the Spirit, and ... not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). But the old man enslaved to sin has died. Romans 6:6a: “knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him...” Because of our union with Christ, we have died. What does it mean that our life is hidden with Christ in God? I think it means that we are hidden in the sense that no enemy can get to us to steal us away! This is why Jesus could say in John 10:27-28: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” We are hidden in union with Christ in the Father and no one can get to us. To get to us, the devil (a created being that is not omnipotent) would have to defeat the Father and then defeat the Son. The Father is omnipotent and the Son has already defeated the devil and sealed the devil’s doom when He conquered sin and death in rising from the dead. The fact is that no enemy can get to us to steal us from Him because we are hidden with Christ in God.

### **III. Those in Union with Christ Will Be Displayed with Christ (v 4)**

The word translated “revealed” means to appear, to make manifest, to be shown or displayed. This is obviously referring to the Second Coming of Christ. When Christ returns, we will be revealed with Him in glory. Revelation 19:11-16:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven [that’s us], clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

We shall be revealed with Him at His coming!

### **Conclusion**

There is an old saying used to describe a person who seems to always be focused on Heaven. It says, “He is so heavenly minded, he’s no earthly good.” I submit that we are no earthly good until we are heavenly minded. Colossians 3:2-3: “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” If you are saved, you are in union with Christ. There is no more glorious truth than that!

Unless otherwise stated all Scripture quotations taken from the NASB.  
([www.lockman.org](http://www.lockman.org))