

Sermon #75 — *Ephesians Sermons*

Title: **UNION WITH CHRIST**

Text: Ephesians 5:30-32

Subject: *The Union of Christ and His People*

Date: Tuesday Evening — July 18, 2017

Readings: *Bobbie Estes and Merle Hart*

Introduction:

I want, as God the Holy Ghost will enable me, to talk to you about “**a great mystery**,” something that cannot be known except by the revelation of God in the blessed experience of his saving grace, something altogether hidden from human knowledge and reason. The title of my message is — **UNION WITH CHRIST**. You will find my text in Ephesians 5:30-32. — **UNION WITH CHRIST** (Ephesians 5:30-32)

(Ephesians 5:30) “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (32) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

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“We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” — Truly, this is *“a great mystery”!*

“Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?
Oh, height, oh, depth of love!
With Thee we died upon the tree,
In Thee we live above.

Such is Thy grace, that for our sake
Thou didst from heaven come down,
Thou didst of flesh and blood partake,
In all our sorrows one.

Our sins, our guilt, in love divine,
Confessed and borne by Thee,
The gall, the curse, the wrath were Thine,
To set Thy members free.

Ascended now, in glory bright,
Still one with us Thou art,
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
Thy saints and Thee can part.

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Oh, teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That Thou with us art truly one,
And we are one with Thee!

Soon, soon shall come that glorious day,
When seated on Thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display,
That Thou with us art one!”

“*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*” — Having made that statement, the Apostle Paul says, “*This is a great mystery.*” **I do not hesitate to say that my text is one of the most wonderful and meaningful statements to be found in the pages of Inspiration.** It sets forth the mystery of mysteries, the very substance of the most lofty doctrine of Divine Revelation — the living, loving, and lasting union of Christ and his church.

Most assuredly, we shall never, at least not in this world, fathom the depths of this great sea. He who handles such a subject as this needs to be filled with

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all the fulness of God. I readily confess my inability to understand, let alone preach on this subject. It is too vast and too great for me. I can no more hope to expound its meaning than a child can hold the ocean in his hand. **This is a text that must not be looked upon with the eyes of cold, theological orthodoxy,** which might make us content to say, “Yes, that is a great and important truth,” and then leave it. **This is manna from heaven. It is to be tasted, eaten, digested, and lived upon day by day, hour by hour, and moment by moment.**

This is a text to take to your closet, and there turn it over in the meditation of your heart. If all you learn from this text is what I now preach to you, I fear that you shall have far less than a tithe of its riches. **When I am done preaching, get alone with your heavenly Husband and worship.** Then, in your heart, you shall rejoice in such blessed realities as tongue can never utter.

Even now, I ask you to pray for that frame of mind that is suitable to think upon such a subject. Pray for

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me, that I may have that condition of heart that will best enable me to speak upon this heavenly mystery.

Come, like Mary, and set at the Savior's feet, leaving all the cares of the day behind you, and drink in the love of Christ which is like "*wine upon the lees well refined*," that is to be found in this inspired declaration. — "*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*"

This is the children's bread. It belongs only to God's dear children. It is Israel's manna. It belongs to Israel alone. This is like the stream that flowed from Israel's smitten Rock. It flows neither for Edom, nor for Amalek, but for the chosen seed alone.

If you are not joined to Christ by a living faith, all that I have to say will be but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. It is said concerning the members of Christ alone — "*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*"

EPHESIANS 1

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Look back to the beginning of the epistle, and you will see who the Apostle is addressing when he says “we.” **That little word, “we,” is like the door of Noah’s ark.** It shuts us in, or it shuts us out. Does it shut you out or in? The Apostle wrote these words to those of whom it is written —

(Ephesians 1:3) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

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Is this all doctrinal theory with you, or is it a blessed reality of life?

- Chosen in Everlasting Love!
- Predestinated unto Eternal Salvation!
- Accepted in the Beloved!
- Redeemed by His Precious Blood!
- Blessed with All Spiritual Blessings!
- The Forgiveness of Sins!
- The Riches of His Grace!

Before we proceed, I call upon you to examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Make your calling and election sure. What is the ground of your confidence before God? Do you trust the Lord Jesus Christ? Is he made of God unto you “*Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption*”? If so, God had chosen you. Christ has redeemed you. You are born of God. You are accepted in the Beloved. Among all those spiritual blessings, none is sweeter or more blessed than this fact, this fact that is beyond all question, this fact of undoubted assurance, you are one with him. Of all whom the Lord God has

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chosen, the Spirit of God says — “*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*”

Oh, may God the Holy Spirit who caused Paul to write these words, now write them upon our hearts and cause us this hour to rejoice in our union with Christ.

Proposition: There is between Jesus Christ and his chosen, redeemed bride, the church, a sacred and eternal union, by which we have become one with God’s own Son.

Divisions: I want to try to give you the answer to just two questions:

1. What is this great mystery?
2. What does our union with Christ secure?

THE MYSTERY

1st — **What is this great mystery?** “*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*”
The incarnation of our Lord is called by the Apostle

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the great mystery of godliness. And this is the great mystery of grace. — “*We are members of his body.*”

Since Paul himself calls this a mystery, I think that **Charles Hodge** is correct in stating that, “Any explanation which dispels that mystery, and makes the doctrine taught perfectly intelligible, must be false.”

Realizing the impossibility of fully answering my question, I will simply to give a few precious truths that are plainly revealed in the Book of God.

“*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*” — As you read those words, recall the events that are recorded in the second chapter of Genesis verse 23, for there is, I think, a distinct allusion to the creation of Eve. The very words of Adam are here quoted by the Apostle Paul. Mentally, we are conducted to that scene in the Garden of Eden, when the first man gazed upon the first woman, who was created to be his dear companion and helpmeet.

(Genesis 2:23) “And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she

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shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

What did Adam mean when he used those words? It is certain that the Great Husband of our souls must mean the same thing, only in an emphatically spiritual sense.

A SIMILARITY OF NATURE

The first thing that is evident in these words is the fact that there is a similarity of nature between Christ and his church. When Adam looked at Eve, he did not regard her as a stranger, as a creature of a different mind and nature. He said, “*She is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.*” One very simple meaning of those words is that she was of the same nature and race as Adam himself. There is a very blessed spiritual truth here.

The Lord Jesus Christ has taken upon himself our nature. We rejoice to declare that Christ himself is “*God over all and blessed forever,*” that he is the

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eternal Son of the eternal Father, that he “*thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*” We worship our Redeemer as the sovereign Creator, “*without whom was not anything made that was made.*” He is very God of very God. **Yet, the joy of our salvation is this — Because of the Savior’s great love for us, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took our nature into union with himself.**

(Hebrews 2:11, 16-17) “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.... For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

1. **The very nature that we have upon this earth, once was carried about among us by Christ**

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Jesus, and is now seated upon the throne of glory.

Remember, Christ is not man deified, and he is not God humanized. He is perfectly God, and, at the same time, perfectly man. He is the God-man. He is our blessed Kinsman-Redeemer.

- It is necessary that the Redeemer be God, or else he could not satisfy infinite holiness, justice, and wrath.
- It is necessary that he be man, because man who sinned must be punished.

2. Dwell upon this thought for a moment — **Christ Jesus is a man, like unto his brethren in all things, sin alone excepted.**

- He was born of the virgin as a man.
- He was cared for like any baby.
- He knew the depressions of our nature.
- He was tempted in all points like as we are.
- He knew all the pains of our nature, poverty, hunger, thirst, sorrow, reproach, slander, and treachery.

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Christ Jesus was tossed on the stormy sea. For him the ground brought forth briars and thistles. He suffered, he ate, he labored, he rested, he wept, and he rejoiced, just as we do.

3. **But mark this one glorious exception. “He knew no sin.”**

- He had no taint of original sin.
- He had no spot of actual transgression.
- Yet, he who knew no sin was made sin for us. — Else, he could never have been justly punished for sin as our Substitute.

4. **As a real man, our Lord died in our place, was buried, and is now ascended into heaven.**

“A man there was, a real man,
Who once on Calvary died;
And streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side.”

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- There is a man in glory. He is exalted above all things, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.
- Since there is a man in heaven, like unto myself, there is hope for me.

Now, by the mighty operation of God, my brother, my sister, as he has made your nature his, his nature is yours.

(2 Peter 1:4) “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

We were carnal, sold under sin. But Christ has made us spiritual by divine creation. — *“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- The new birth is nothing less than Christ himself being formed in you! It is nothing less than the sovereign creation of the life of Christ in you.

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- Now, as spiritual men and women, you have a new, divine nature.
- You cry out to God in prayer, as did our Savior when he was here.
- Your meat and drink is to do the will of your Father.
- In agony of soul, you strive against sin.
- Your heart beats with love for God.
- Your life is marked by one goal. You long for God's glory above all else.
- You cannot be satisfied until you awake in the likeness of him after whose image you are created.

What a blessed truth! — *“We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* He bares our nature in heaven; and we bare his nature upon the earth. — *“I’m in Christ; and Christ is in me. Everything’s alright.”* (Mabel Dix)

- We live in Christ.
- And Christ lives in us.

AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

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For another thing, **these words imply an intimate relationship.** It seems unlikely to me that Adam would have said, “*She is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,*” if he had thought that Eve would disappear, or become the wife of another. **Eve was Adam’s helpmeet, joined to him in the bonds of intimate communion.** Therefore, he did not simply say, “She is of the same bone and flesh as I am,” but, “*She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.*” They were one.

There is no relationship upon the earth that is nearer, or more blessed than marriage. It is a relationship of love, joy, and peace. This is the divinely ordained union of man and woman that is dissolved only by death.

Now, think of this. You women, as is your relationship to your husband, you men, as is your relationship to your wives, such is the relationship that exists between you as a believer and the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. **This is the nearest,**

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dearest, closest, most intense, most intimate relationship which can be imagined.

This is a more intimate relationship than that of parents and children.

- Parents may forget their children, and fail to have compassion upon them; but Jehovah shall never neglect his wife.
- Children, at least when they are small, cannot enter into the thoughts and feelings of their parents; but the wife communes with her husband. She is one with him; and she knows his cares and sorrows, his joys and delights. His very will is made known to her.
- Children are born and raised for separation from their parents, to live on their own, with their own husbands and wives; but husbands and wives are united for life.

Children of God, we can never explain, or even understand, this deep mystery; our souls are wed to the Son of God! — *“Let him kill me with the kisses of his mouth, his love is better than wine.”*

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- He espoused us as his bride before the world began.
- He redeemed us for himself.
- He prepared for us our wedding garments.
- He allured us into the wilderness and won our hearts.
- He has taken us into union with himself. Blessed be God, my Maker, my Redeemer, my King is my Husband! — *“We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”*

Is this the kind of relationship you have with Christ? Are you wed to him?

A MYSTERIOUS ORIGIN

I clearly see a deeper meaning than this in our text.

These words certainly declare a mysterious origin.

Though Adam was unconscious when Eve was created, it certainly seems from his statement that he knew Eve’s origin was within himself. Whether Adam knew it or not, Christ knows right well the origin of his spouse. He knew where his bride came

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from. The mark is still in his side. From the side of the second Adam, a new Eve was born, the mother of all living.

Our Lord said, “*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*” (John 12:24). Had Jesus Christ not suffered and died, he would have been made to abide alone. But, by his sufferings and death, the church is born into the world.

What is this church which has its origin in the death of Christ? It is the church which is made up of all the people of God, all the redeemed of Christ, all believers, all who love the name of Christ. It is not all professed Christians, or all religious people, or any denomination, but the church which is his body, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. **This church springs from Christ, as Levi sprang from the loins of Abraham.** This church lives upon Christ. This is the church “*that cometh up out of the wilderness leaning on her beloved.*”

- She is ravished with Christ’s love.

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- She leans upon Christ for all her hope.
- Her desire is toward her Beloved.
- She is set as a seal upon the Savior's arm.
- She is loved with a love that is stronger than death.

Are you a member of this church? Only those who thus have their origin in Christ are “*members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*”

A LOVING POSSESSION

I must also call your attention to the fact that — **These words imply a loving possession.** Adam said, “*She is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.*” She belongs to me. Now, let this thought dance through your soul: You belong to Christ. — “*Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.*”

“‘Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's and He is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

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1. For many a year we willingly, gladly laid in the arms of another, but we belonged to Christ — (Like Gomer).
2. But Christ redeemed us, by price and by power.
3. Let him alone have our love.
 - Set your heart upon your Husband.
 - Realize his possession of your entire being. — O God, give me grace to live only and always for him!

Do you belong to Christ? If so, “*we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*”

A VITAL UNION

Once more, **there is a vital union between Christ and his church.** When Paul shows our union with Christ by using the picture of the husband/wife relationship, he used a very blessed picture. But, he knew that there was something more. He shows us here that the church is even more closely related to Christ than a wife is to her husband. After all, in a

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mysterious sense they are one; but in reality they are separate individuals. But **Christ and his church are in reality one, in the closest sense imaginable, closer than that, indescribably more closely than the mind of man upon earth can imagine.** — “*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones!*” **This is not just unity; it is identity.** What a mystery; I am one with Christ!

What does this mean? It means that Christ must have his church, and that we must have Christ.

Having chosen to become our Mediator, Christ cannot be complete without his church. Paul says of the church, “*which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*”

Such a statement as this could not be imagined, were it not given by inspiration. The church is the fulness of Christ. We are essential to his mediatorial glory. Without his fulness, he would not be full!

- The Savior must have his saved ones.
- The Redeemer must have his redeemed ones.
- The Sanctifier must have his sanctified ones.

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- The King must have his subjects.
- The Shepherd must have his sheep.
- The Head must have his body.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” — “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one Shepherd and one fold.”

When I say that there is a vital union between us and Christ, I mean that we cannot do without him. — *“Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee.”*

How is it that we are one with Christ?

- We are one with him eternally. — For as Long as Christ has been my Savior, I have been his, one with him – from everlasting!
- We have been one with him secretly, from everlasting; and become one with him manifestly, when called by his grace.
- We are one with him as our Surety and Representative.

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- We are one with him by a living faith.
- We are one with him in heart.

Are you one with Christ? — *“We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”*

THINGS SECURED

This is a most practical and blessed truth. In the few minutes that remain I want to give you some things that should make your heart to dance with joy before the Lord. So...

2nd — **What does our union with Christ secure for us?** This much is certain — **Our union with Christ secures our safety.** Our beloved Head is in heaven. And as long as my head is above water, his feet can never drown. — *“Because I live, ye shall live also.”* — *“I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”*

If my security were dependent upon me, I know that I should surely be lost very soon.

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“If ever it should come to pass
That one sheep of Christ could fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day!”

But our life is Christ. And he can never perish.
Therefore, we must be secure.

If I am one with Christ, then I shall certainly enjoy his love. — *“As my Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love.”* — *“Having loved his own, which were in the world he loved them to the end.”* Christ is a husband who both nourishes and cherishes his bride.

- We are loved by God with the same love he has for his Son, and for the same reason — His Obedience!
- We are accepted by the Triune Jehovah with the same perfection and fulness with which he is accepted and for the same reason — His Perfect Righteousness and His Sin-atoning Blood!

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- We are eternally and immutably loved by his Father, accepted by his Father, and delight his Father just as he, and for the same reason — His Eternal Accomplishments as Our Surety!

If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, then he will one day present us to himself “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

Soon, oh, blessed thought, soon he shall appear, and we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

We shall share in all the glory of Christ. His glory he will not give to another. But we are one with him; and we shall have his glory.

- Does he have perfect holiness? Then we shall.
- Does he enjoy perfect rest? Then we shall.
- Does he set upon a throne? Then we shall.
- Does he wear a crown? Then we shall.
- Does he have a perfect joy? Then we shall.
- Is he triumphant? Then we shall be.
- Is he the heir of all things? Then we shall be.
- Is he great? Then we shall be.

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“Twixt Jesus and the chosen race,
Subsists a bond of sovereign grace,
That hell, with its infernal train,
Shall ne'er dissolve, nor rend in vain.

Hail sacred union, firm and strong!
How great the grace! How sweet the song!
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!

One in the tomb when He arose,
One when He triumphed o'er His foes,
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat.

This sacred tie forbids our fears,
For all He is, or has is ours;
With Him, our Head, we stand or fall,
Our Life, our Surety, and our All!”

— *John Kent*

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I haven't even started to scratch the surface of this vast diamond of grace!

- Our union with Christ is eternal.
- Our union with our Savior was not altered by our fall in Adam.
- Our union with the Lord Jesus preserved us through all our days of rebellion and unbelief. — The prodigal son was just as much his father's son in the far country, where he wasted his life in riotous living, as he was before he left the father's house and as he was when he came home.
- Our union with Christ is always the same.

APPLICATION

Are there any here without Christ who long for this blessed oneness with him? Then, I have good news for you. Christ is come to seek and to save that which is lost. Call upon him. Trust him. Flee to him. He will embrace you.

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Do you know, by your own experience, the truth of Paul's words? — *“We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”*

- Do you have this living union with Christ?
- Do you have this loving union with Christ?
- Do you have this lasting union with Christ?

Children of God, rejoice! Your Bridegroom is coming! When he does, he will present us to himself — *“A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing...holy and without blemish...before in love!”* — *“So, shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”*

Amen.