

Maranatha Bible Church

Men's Training Class Winter/Spring 2021

Part 2: Leadership / Conviction – Soteriology (part 2)

Introduction

Last time we were together we discussed **predestination, election, reprobation** and the **atonement**. With the exception of the atonement, all these happened before creation took place and before anyone was here on earth. The atonement, while taking place within time, has eternal effects for those who, both before and after, are called, repent of their sin and put their faith in Christ alone for salvation.

This is going to be the topics that we are considering this morning, **effectual call, repentance and faith, our union with Christ, justification and then we will finish by looking at sanctification**. Once again, the hope is to show the logical link and sequence between all these doctrines and to show how if even one is not properly applied, the whole chain is broken.

From the doctrine of election all the way through to glorification, it is a work of God's grace that He must be doing in us as we are in Christ. We are going to spend the majority of our time discussing three of these aforementioned topics, *effectual call, repentance and faith and our union with Christ*. These are the three that have massive practical application to our daily life in the Lord. Understanding these properly will not only lead to a life which is God honoring and glorifying, but it will also help you better understand how to share the gospel. Remember, learning theology is not the end in itself, it is a tool the Lord gives us so that we may live holy and reach others with the message of Christ.

The Gospel Calling

- 1) The effectual calling is more commonly known as “irresistible grace,” which is the I in the acronym TULIP. The doctrine of effectual calling is closely related to the doctrine of total depravity, the T in TULIP.
 - a) Since the unregenerate man is “dead in transgressions and sins” (**Ephesians 2:1**), he is incapable of reaching out to God or responding to the gospel of Jesus Christ on his own.
 - b) It says in **Romans 3:10–11** “**There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God**” This state of total depravity makes the effectual calling of God necessary to give anyone the opportunity for salvation.
- 2) There are three main *callings* when we read through the Bible.
 - a) You have the **calling unto service**:
 - i) **Acts 13:2** “**While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**

b) You have a **general call to salvation**:

- i) Acts 2:38 “Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

c) You have the **effectual call to salvation**:

- i) 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...”

d) It is important that when you are reading the Bible, you are able to differentiate between what call is being used.

i) Here are some examples:

- (1) 1 Peter 2:21 “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...”

(a) What *calling* is Peter talking about¹? _____

- (2) 2 Thessalonians 2:14 “It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(a) What *calling* is Paul talking about? _____

- (3) 1 Thessalonians 5:24 “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”

(a) What *calling* is Paul talking about? _____

- (4) Matthew 22:14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

(a) What *calling* is Jesus talking about? _____

3) The general call of the gospel (external call).

a) We see this a lot in the life of Jesus. He says in Matthew 11:28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

- i) This is a general call for anyone who desires to come to Christ to find their rest.
- ii) Anyone who responds positively to this call will be saved. Jesus was genuine in His calling of the people to salvation (**Rom. 10:13-17**).

b) In order for someone to be saved, they must hear the gospel.

- i) Romans 10:13-15 “for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”

- ii) We know that when people do not respond, it is because of their hardened hearts.

¹ Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, “Peter has described our heavenly calling; he does not conceal our earthly calling”

(1) **Romans 2:5** “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God...”

(2) Notice that Paul places the blame squarely on those who refuse to believe.

(3) This flies in the face of those who hold to prevenient grace, or helper grace. Paul did not say that they did not believe, but were able to if they so desired. He said that they did not even desire, in fact they are hostile towards God.

(a) Another thing to notice, Paul says that they are storing up wrath for themselves. If he thought they *could* save themselves, he would have said *you could be storing up wrath*.

(b) The point is clear, their stubbornness towards the gospel proved their hearts.

c) Man cannot respond to the general call for salvation. The general call for salvation goes out to all men, but it is only powerful enough to convict them as sinners.

i) **Psalm 19** is a powerful contrast of the external/internal calling or natural/special revelation.

(1) **Verses 1-6** show the natural revelation in all the earth, showing that there is a God.

(2) **Verses 7-14** display the special revelation which comes from God in His word.

ii) “In light of the fact that the external call of the gospel is essential to the salvation of sinners, *it is imperative that we understand what truly constitutes that call*.”²

(1) What MacArthur is pointing out here is that in order for the gospel call to go forth externally, it must contain some specific language.

(a) We must talk about man’s sin and God’s holiness. We must tell people how they have broken the perfect law of God and now they deserve eternal punishment; separated from God.

(b) They must know that they are not and cannot ever be good enough to get into heaven. God is not looking on them for their good works, but desires a contrite heart.

(c) “Only by repentant faith may a sinner subjectively lay hold of the benefits objectively purchased by Christ. Further, because this is the sinner’s only hope for life and salvation, this call to repent and believe is to be delivered with the utmost urgency.”³

(2) Going back to **Matthew 22:14** “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

(a) Many people have been invited to the banquet; they have heard the gospel and not responded. They care not for the blessings of eternal life but rather enjoy this life to the fullest.

iii) **What a saving response to the gospel is not...**

(1) **James 2:19** “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”

(a) Believing in God or even the Trinity is not enough to be saved.

² *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 572

³ *Ibid*, p. 573

- (2) **Mark 3:11** “Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!”
- (a) Worshiping Jesus as the Son of God is not enough to be saved.
- (3) **Matthew 7:21–23** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’
- (a) “Spiritual gifts” will not get someone into heaven.
- (4) **Luke 4:9-11** “And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,’ and, ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’”
- (a) Even the knowledge of Scripture is not enough to get you into heaven.
- (5) **Acts 8:13** “Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.”
- (a) Simon believed and was baptized by Philip. He went with Philip and saw the signs and great miracles that were taking place. Surely, this is a sign of salvation?
- (b) Simon asked to pay for the Holy Spirit, so he could make money off of Him by doing the same signs and wonders.
- (c) Peter had some choice words for him “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.”
- (i) So, not even baptism or doing ministry with Philip proved to be salvific in his life.
- d) We should never base someone’s spiritual state on what they are doing on the outside.

4) **The Efficacious Call of the Gospel**

- a) As Sproul notes “Which comes first: faith or the new birth? The answer of much of Christendom is that faith comes first, and then, when God sees that we have graciously put faith in Him, He gives us a new birth. The Bible actually teaches the reverse. God gives us a new birth, and we cry out to Him in faith as a result.”⁴

⁴ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/effectual-calling/> 01/28/2021

- i) He goes on to say “It is true that God calls all men, but it is not true that God gives them new life based on their repentance and faith. Rather, while God calls all men externally, He only calls His own internally. Those who truly respond to the external call are those who have been internally called by God and given new birth. Then they respond in faith to the external call.”⁵
- ii) This is the main sticking point between those who hold to the doctrines of grace and those who do not. You have to answer the question, *when does someone actually have faith to believe?*
- iii) **Ephesians 2:1 “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...”**
 - (1) The word that Paul uses for dead here, means dead. He does not just say dead, but he says dead *in your trespasses and sins*.
 - (2) Paul is using a physical term (dead) to show a spiritual reality. Before we are born again, we have no spiritual aptitude towards God at all.
 - (3) Technically, the word translated *were*, is more literally translated *being*. So Paul is technically saying *And you being dead in your trespasses and sins*.
 - (4) It is a state of being; spiritually dead in our sins is our natural state.
- b) Listen to what Paul tells Timothy in **2 Timothy 1:9 “...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity...”**
 - i) The *who* in this verse is actually a participle τοῦ σώσαντος (the one who saves us) and *called* is a participle (καλέσαντος) and both refer back to verse 8 which says κατὰ δύναμιν θεοῦ (according to the power of God).
 - ii) There is nothing in that verse that would lead someone to think they had anything to do with their own salvation.
- c) Therefore, the effectual call is **God’s action toward the elect**, those whom He chose in Christ “before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless. . . . He predestined [them] for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ” (**Ephesians 1:4–5**).
 - i) **Acts 16:14 “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and *the Lord opened her heart to respond* to the things spoken by Paul.”**
 - ii) **Acts 13:48 “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as *many as had been appointed to eternal life believed*.”**
 - iii) Our faith, our belief, our response, our conversion and regeneration are all because God initiated a work in us. It is by our response in repentance and faith that we prove the work the Lord has done.

⁵ Ibid

Regeneration

- d) “The immediate re-creation of the sinful nature by God the Holy Spirit and an implanting into the body of Christ.”⁶
- i) This is not a judicial act, this is not the declaring the justification or righteousness of someone. This is the actual changing of the condition of man in an instantaneous, once off action.
 - ii) John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
 - iii) John 3:7 “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘*You must be born again.*’
 - iv) Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of *regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...*”
 - v) 1 John 2:9 “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness *is born of Him.*”
- (1) Notice that in these verses, man is passive in what is happening to him. God is the ultimate agent of the action coming down upon man.
- (a) It is literally saying *to be regenerated*.
- (2) You and I have nothing to do with being born again; or regenerated. There is nothing that we can do in order to have the Holy Spirit regenerate us.
- (3) Some have taken **John 3:3** to say *unless one is born from above*.
- (a) Now, this adverb has a local meaning to it (from above...meaning heaven), but when we look at the context, what is Nicodemus asking...*how one can be born again*. He is not asking how one can be born in heaven.
 - (b) This gets even clearer when we read **verse 4** “...“How can a man be born when he is old? *He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb* and be born, can he?”
 - (c) Nicodemus knows exactly what Jesus is talking about, just not the means which he is talking about. Had he thought it was *from above*, his question would have been different. His question had to do with being born anew, a second time.
 - (d) **Galatians 4:9** brings this out well “*But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?*”
 - (e) Paul is saying to go and do it again, a second time. It is the same word that Jesus uses in John 3:3.

⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics* vol. 4:Soteriology, p. 29

- e) **Why does all this matter?** We need to understand that regeneration is⁷:
- i) An act done exclusively by God (see above verses)
 - ii) A renewal of nature
 - (1) Galatians 6:15 “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”
 - iii) An instantaneous act having two sides, the removal of your old life and an imparting of a new.
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”
 - iv) An act in which the Holy Spirit appears as the one who produces this new life
 - (1) Ephesians 2:5 “...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...”
 - v) An act in which the Holy Spirit works out of Christ and jointly with Christ
 - (1) Romans 6:4 “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
- f) “At the most fundamental level, regeneration is the divine impartation of eternal spiritual life into the spiritually dead sinner.”⁸
- i) This is why it is so important to understand the proper view of the order of salvation. Man is dead, dead people cannot choose anything, especially things that are spiritually good.
 - ii) “In regeneration, then, the Spirit opens the blind eyes of the mind (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Eph. 1:18), replacing, as it were, the mind of the flesh with the mind of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5–9)—indeed, with the mind of Christ himself (1 Cor. 2:16)—so that the regenerate man appraises all the things that he once could not understand (1 Cor. 2:15; cf. 1 John 2:20, 27). The Spirit removes the sinner’s heart of stone and implants in him a heart of flesh capable of perceiving and loving spiritual truth (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; cf. Deut. 30:6). The affections are thus renewed after the likeness of Christ so that the new man hates sin (Matt. 5:4), loves righteousness (Matt. 5:6; John 3:21), thirsts for the God whom he once abhorred (Pss. 27:4; 42:1–2), and loves and rejoices in the Christ whom he once regarded as foolish (1 Pet. 1:8; cf. 2 Cor. 5:16).”⁹

⁷ Ibid, p. 32

⁸ *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 580

⁹ Ibid, p. 581

Where we are so far in the Order of Salvation:

- 5) Before Time
 - a) Election (those whom God chose)
 - b) Reprobation (those whom God passed over)
- 6) In Time (though in the past for us and future of OT saints)
 - a) Atonement (our sins are finally forgiven)
- 7) Currently in our own lifetime
 - a) Calling (internal, effectual call of God)
 - b) Regeneration (the Holy Spirit making us new in Christ)
- 8) Now, how do we respond?

Repentance and Faith (Conversion)

- 9) “One of the most common questions related to evangelical soteriology concerns the relationship between regeneration and faith.”¹⁰
- 10) This question has caused church splits since the early 5th century and has been the cause of wars, tortures, taxes and an host of other sinful acts.
- 11) You need to be able to answer the question of does faith produce regeneration or does one have to be regenerated before they believe.
 - a) “Scripture counsels us against defining regeneration in terms of its results. Jesus asserts that regeneration itself is mysterious, unobserved, and uncontainable, like the wind that blows where it wishes (John 3:8). We may perceive the effects of the wind, such as hearing a loud gust or seeing the trees toss from side to side. Yet these results of the wind are not the wind itself. In the same way, the results of regeneration are not regeneration.”¹¹
 - i) Our faith is a gift from God and is only given *after* we have been regenerated. Logically, we never read in Scripture of a unregenerate person who is full of faith. That person does not exist.
 - ii) Furthermore, as we get into sanctification, we must be able to distinguish between the work of regeneration and the continued work of sanctification. Regeneration is a once off, sanctification is the continued fruit of the work of regeneration. One is monergistic (God alone) and the later is synergistic (our cooperative work with the Holy Spirit).
 - b) I like how MacArthur explains this “Now a man perceives light in the very same moment that he opens his eyes; no time passes between the opening of his eyes and his perception of light. However, his

¹⁰ *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 584

¹¹ *Ibid*

perception of light is causally dependent on opening his eyes. Seeing does not cause him to open his eyes; his sight is the consequence of his eyes being opened.”¹²

i) It is like saying you had spiritual gifts *before* you were born again by the Spirit of God. There has to be a sequence that takes place.

12) So, we must conclude that saving faith is a fruit of regeneration. As we are regenerated, we see ourselves and our sinful state, we see and understand the holiness of God, the greatness of the majesty of Christ.

a) We embrace our saving faith from God, repent of our sin and turn to a new life in Christ.

13) The term used most frequently in the New Testament is μετανοέω or μετάνοια. Both words are made up of a preposition μετα and then the noun nous (mind/thoughts).

a) Repenting is literally a changing or an alteration of your mind. Therefore, conversion is a change of what we know in our consciousness¹³.

b) We see this in Acts 8:22 “Therefore **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.”

14) With faith and repentance, it is not just about now going in a new direction. It is not just about now you are thinking the thoughts of God.

a) Now, your mind, will and emotions have an aversion to walk in the course of the world. You are now controlled by the new nature, you weep over your old nature and you seek to live a life which is full of righteous fruit.

15) One of my favorite verses concerning those who are regenerate is 1 John 2:29 “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.”

a) This is a powerful verse in the life of those who are claiming to be born again. You cannot be born again, regenerate, and not practice (live a lifestyle) of righteousness.

16) One question that is posed is *conversion exclusively a work of God, or is man also active in it?*

a) “In it, man is worked on by God’s grace such that he converts himself-that is, consciously turns from sin and turns to God. The subject that is active here is, however, the regenerated man, not the old, natural man.”¹⁴

i) What Vos is pointing out is that to even be able to turn from your sins, you must be the regenerate man. There is no place in Scripture that places an unsaved man turning from his sin. In fact, as we have seen previously, we have had unsaved men turning from the truth back to their sin.

17) It is safe to say that conversion is the direct result of effectual calling. Then, flowing from conversion you have faith and repentance.

¹² Ibid p. 586

¹³ Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics* vol. 4: Soteriology, p. 58

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 65

Union with Christ

18) In my estimation, the doctrine of the believer's union with Christ is the least talked about but of the utmost importance. Every doctrine that we have looked at thus far (and will look at) finds its roots in this fact.

- a) While union with Christ is not a precise phrase found in Scripture, the doctrine presents itself in many other grammatical ways. For example, *in Christ* is found over 90 times in the New Testament.

Furthermore, when we read *in Him* or *in Whom* (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14) also represent our union with Christ.

19) "In one sense, union with Christ is an inclusive term for the whole of salvation; the various other doctrines are simply subparts."¹⁵

- a) Nothing that we have, with regards to our salvation, can be applied to anyone who is not *in Christ*. It is when we are in Christ that we are privileged to be blessed with all that He has.

- i) Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places *in Christ*, just as *He chose us in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."

- ii) Everything that we discuss regarding our salvation or order of salvation or the application of our redemption, begins with God electing us *in Christ*. This is not something that was tacked on at the end of our salvation nor was it simply a beneficial afterthought, this *is* the reason we are saved.

(1) Furthermore, to additionally link this together, there was a time when this was not applied to you but the truth of it was sure. It is not until you have been effectually called that redemption can be applied and your union with Christ is realized.

(2) The Bible speaks of times when the believers were enemies of God (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 2:12, etc.)

- iii) The ramifications of an Arminian or Semi-Pelagian belief is to say one either has to believe that everyone is in Christ or we choose to be in Christ. If the former is true, then everyone is saved (universalism), if the later, then we were not in Christ before the world was formed and God is a liar.

(1) Additionally, we read in Romans 6:6 & 8 "knowing this, *that our old self was crucified with Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin...Now *if we have died with Christ*, we believe that we shall also live with Him..."

(2) Notice what Paul is saying here, whoever is saved, was in Christ when Christ died. Therefore, there are a specific amount of people whom Christ died for. The atonement, redemption, conversion, union, etc. cannot be effectually applied to someone who was not in Christ when He was crucified on the cross.

¹⁵ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 961

- 20) Union with Christ “is not simply a step in the application of redemption; when viewed, according to the teaching of Scripture, in its broader aspects it underlies every step of the application of redemption.”¹⁶
- 21) “United to his people in this way, Christ acts as their representative and substitute; that is, that which Christ has accomplished on behalf of his people God reckons to have counted for them, just as if they had done it themselves.”¹⁷
- a) Colossians 3:3 “For you have died and *your life is hidden with Christ* in God.”
 - b) 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.”
 - c) Romans 6:8 “Now if *we have died with Christ*, we believe that we shall also live with Him...”
 - d) Colossians 2:20 “If you *have died with Christ* to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as...”
 - e) Colossians 3:1 “Therefore if *you have been raised up with Christ*, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”
 - f) John 15:4 “*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.”
- 22) How can we view our union with Christ?
- a) Calvin said “We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but *because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body*—in short because he deigns [condescends] to *make us one with him*.”¹⁸
 - b) “First, Scripture uses the picture of a building and its foundation. In **Ephesians 2:19–22**, Paul speaks of the church as God’s household, a spiritual building laid on the foundation of the divine revelation communicated by the apostles and prophets.”¹⁹
 - i) I think this is the first place we need to fully understand our union with Christ. It is because of our union in Christ that we form one body with one another.
 - ii) It is in Christ that the building even exists because He is the foundation. As Christ is building, He is perfectly fitting all the pieces together to fit exactly how He has designed it.
 - iii) This is why it is important for the church to never leave the foundation of Christ. When the church seeks other means outside of Christ, the believers lose their foundation, security and support.
 - c) “As Christ enters into our soul, and is the very life of it, our spiritual union with Him is likened to that of our soul, or of our food with our body.”²⁰

¹⁶ John Murray *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*, p. 161

¹⁷ *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 603

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.11.10

¹⁹ *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 605

²⁰ John Brown of Haddington, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 337-339

- i) We read in **John 6:56-57** “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.”
- ii) Also, in **Colossians 3:4** “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”
- iii) As we read these two verses and apply them in the area of our union with Christ, we must take some precautions.
 - (1) Firstly, there is not a physical change in our personhood nor in Christ’s personhood.
 - (2) Secondly, we are not becoming Him by taking on His divine nature.
 - (3) This is what is *classically* called **spiritual** and **mystical**.
 - (a) Spiritual in the sense that it is the Holy Spirit who places us in Christ at our redemption and then lives in us.
 - (i) “This brings us to note, in the second place, that union with Christ is spiritual because it is a spiritual relationship that is in view. It is not the kind of union that we have in the Trinity—three Persons in one God. It is not the kind of union we have in the Person of Christ—two natures in one Person. It is not the kind of union we have in man—body and soul constituting a human being. It is not simply the union of feeling, affection, understanding, mind, heart, will, and purpose. Here we have union that we are unable to define specifically. But it is union of an intensely spiritual character, consonant with the nature and work of the Holy Spirit so that in a real way, surpassing our power of analysis, Christ dwells in His people and His people dwell in Him.”²¹
 - (b) Our union with Christ is a great mystery.
 - (i) “When we use the word mystical in this connection, it is well to take our starting-point from the word mystery, as it is used in the Scripture. We are liable to use the word to designate something that is completely unintelligible and of which we cannot have any understanding. That is not the sense of Scripture...That union with Christ is such a mystery is apparent. In speaking of union with Christ and after comparing it with the union that exists between man and wife, Paul says, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). Again Paul speaks of “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” and describes it as “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints” (Col 1:26-27). Union with Christ is mystical because

²¹ John Murray *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 166-168

it is a mystery. The fact that it is a mystery underlines the preciousness of it and the intimacy of the relation it entails.”²²

(c) We do not want to think of mystical as in something that is from a mystic or something that is only experienced on another plane of being.

(d) As Murray pointed out, the same is said about a marriage union between a husband and a wife. The husband/wife relationship is now one, just as Christ and His church.

d) My favorite comparison is that of the vine and the branches found in **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.”

i) The reason why this is my favorite comparison is it is the most tangible. We cannot see our marriages being one flesh nor can we see Christ in us or us in Him. While more tangible, even Christ being the cornerstone of a church is, at times, just a façade.

ii) But not so with the vine and the branches. Jesus is the true vine and God the Father is the one who is doing the trimming.

iii) Jesus talks explicitly about fruit being the objective reality of one who is *in Him*. Why fruit and not Spiritual gifts?

(1) **2 Corinthians 11:14-15** “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

(2) Satan nor demons are ever said to be able to have spiritual fruit, but they are said to be able to perform false spiritual gifts.

(3) That is because it is impossible to have fruit without Christ, it simply will not last.

23) What are the riches which we have by being in Christ?²³

a) Being chosen by God and given new life (**Ephesians 1:4; 2:4-5, 10**)

b) Justification (**1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:8-9**)

c) Sanctification: having a new life that obeys God (**Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:16-17; 4:16; 1 Corinthians 1:30; John 15:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17**)

d) A new identity in this life and the next (**Romans 14:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 14:13**)

e) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (**John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 3:16**)

f) Preservation/perseverance in the faith (**John 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39**)

g) Bodily resurrection in the future (**Colossians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 15:22**)

²² Ibid

²³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/union-with-Christ.html> 01/29/2021

h) Glorification in the future (**Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17**)

Justification

24) Justification deals with our guilt before God. We are born sinners, we willfully sin throughout our whole life and care less about what God thinks or about His standards.

25) All sin must be forgiven only by blood. **Hebrews 9:22** “And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

26) Justification is firstly a legal declaration.

- a) “The language is forensic, that is, the language of a law court. In that court God is the judge, and we are on trial for our sins.”²⁴
 - i) It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between justification and sanctification. The Roman Catholic Church has not made this distinction and holds to a *progressive justification*.
 - ii) This means that one is not and can not be declared righteous on this earth. They need to earn their merits here so that when they die, they will have them counted towards their penalty in purgatory.
 - iii) They believe that the more good we do, the more grace we earn; there is not judicial declaration.
 - iv) Our sanctification is a process that starts at our redemption and ends when we are glorified. It is the subjective process that we partner with the Holy Spirit to become more conformed into the image of God.
- b) **2 Corinthians 5:21** “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
 - i) Notice that God had to have Christ *become sin*, that is take on sin on the cross, so that the law could condemn Him in our place. It is because the law cannot bring salvation to anyone.
 - ii) When Christ died, He paid our penalty for not being righteousness. When He died, all those whom the Father elected from before time became righteous. It was applied to them once they were called, given faith, repented and placed in Christ.
 - (1) “He did not actually make Jesus a sinner; it would be blasphemous to suggest that the God-man was actually made a sinner, for God cannot sin. Instead, since justification is a legal declaration (as established in the previous section), the Father judicially reckoned Christ to have committed the sins of those for whom he was giving himself as a substitute.”²⁵
 - iii) Paul also says in **Philippians 3:9** “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...”

²⁴ John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, p. 966

²⁵ *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 615

- (1) Paul knew that his own righteousness could not get him into heaven. He needed, what Martin Luther named, alien righteousness. A righteousness which is outside of himself.
- c) When it comes to the doctrine of righteousness, it is arguably the most precious doctrine which the church must get right. It is the only way in which sinful, hopeless and helpless man can be made right in the eyes of the Lord.
- i) “Man’s answer is always to try to order his life by some moral or ritualistic standard; if he does that successfully, he can contribute something to his salvation and thus achieve a righteousness acceptable to his god. Yet the Bible consistently denies that anyone can be justified by works.”²⁶
- ii) Anyone or any organization which promotes any works based righteousness is heresy.
- (1) I reserve the term heretic for anyone who gets the gospel wrong. There are many false teachers out there who still preach a Biblical gospel. A heretic is one who preaches that salvation is found in anything other than the person and work of Christ.
- d) It is only by faith alone that we are imputed with the righteousness of Christ and our sins taken away. Paul says in **Romans 3:22** “even the righteousness of God *through faith in Jesus Christ* for all those who believe; for there is no distinction...”
- e) And then in **Romans 3:26** “for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier *of the one who has faith in Jesus.*”
- f) “It is important to state that faith in Christ is not the ground of the believer’s righteousness but merely the means, or instrument, through which we receive righteousness. This is an important distinction, because many people mistakenly suppose that faith is the basis of our righteousness. Their hope for heaven rests on the fact that they had the good sense to believe the gospel. But such an understanding undermines the truth that we are saved by grace alone. Righteousness cannot be based on my faith without that righteousness becoming “a righteousness of my own” (**Phil. 3:9**). If saving righteousness is grounded on the sinner doing anything—even believing—it is no longer an alien righteousness given as a gift and therefore cannot be the righteousness of God required for salvation.”²⁷
- i) Faith cannot be a work, because grace is not a work. I like how MacArthur put it, if our righteousness is because of something good in us (namely faith) then it is no longer from outside of us (Christ’s righteousness).
- ii) Once again, this is where many believers have deep disagreements. Some think that faith is not a work but what one does in order to be declared righteous. They would claim that because you have faith in the gospel, you are saved.

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 610-611

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 620-621

- iii) We would say that because you have *saving faith*, from God as a gift, you are saved as that faith is rightly put in the gospel of God.

Sanctification

- 27) Sanctification is the process of making God's children, those whom He elected to salvation, holy as He is holy. It is the Holy Spirit working through us what has already been worked in us.
- a) "Sanctification may be defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works."²⁸
- 28) The key difference between justification and sanctification is the difference between a single act of free grace and a work of grace.
- a) Justification is a single divine intervention which never takes place after the initial act. It is not repeated in the life of the believer and really has nothing to do with them.
- b) Whereas sanctification is a work of grace as it continues in the life of the believer until our final consummation. Sanctification is not a legal declaration of our standing before God, it is bringing us to our righteous standing before God.
- 29) Understood correctly, there are two aspects to sanctification: Positional and Practical. You have nothing to do with your positional sanctification. You are, by your union with Christ, already sanctified. That never changes before God.
- a) I like the way MacArthur puts this "The most significant reality in definitive sanctification is that, through union with Christ, the believer is set free from the dominion of sin. While justification and imputed righteousness grant the Christian freedom from sin's penalty, initial sanctification grants him freedom from sin's power."²⁹
- i) 1 Corinthians 6:11 "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."
- (1) Notice the past tense *were*...they should not longer act like unsaved heathens because they have been washed, sanctified and justified.
- b) Your practical sanctification is what you, with the Holy Spirit, work on daily.
- c) "As has already been implied, however, though the believer enjoys this decisive victory over the dominion of sin as a result of union with Christ, his heart and life are not totally purified."³⁰
- i) The Bible continually calls the believer to a life of holiness and being renewed in our thoughts, our deeds and our speech.

²⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 532.

²⁹ *Biblical Doctrines*, p. 633

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 635

ii) 1 Thessalonians 4:3 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality...”

(1) God’s will for us is that we are sanctified.

iii) John 17:17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

(1) God’s means for us to be sanctified is through His word.

iv) Romans 6:6 “knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin...”

(1) Being in Christ means that we are no longer under the power of sin. We are now able to say no because we are not slaves to it.

(2) When we sin as believers, we are placing something of greater value over Christ. The reason that sin no longer has any power is because now we can see Christ as the greatest object in our life. He is the one who deserves our worship, our time and all of our life.

(3) It is when we diminish the worth of Christ that we fall prey to worthless of sin.