

SRM14111

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“Union with Christ by the Indwelling
of the Holy Spirit” Acts 2:33

This morning we have remembered before God and prayed for our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church around the world. We are one with them because of our oneness or Union with Christ.

First, we saw from Eph 1:3-6 that the Foundation of our being One with Christ is that God the Father chose us “in Him” before the foundation of the world.

Then we saw the beginning of that oneness from Col. 1:15-17 which begins with "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." It tells us that Christ is the Beginning of all things as Lord, Maker and Sustainer.

Last week, in Hebrews 2:14-18, we considered its Basis in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews says that the Son of God became human in order to rescue sinners from being slaves to the fear of death, and Our Union with Christ in His Incarnation is the basis of our salvation from the fear of death.

Many of you know that as a boy, I grew up spending every summer, all summer at a camp in the Adirondacks.

This was not because my family was wealthy, we were far from it, but because from the time my parents were in college, they were involved in establishing a ministry to young adults that encouraged them to totally dedicate their lives to serving Jesus Christ in every aspect of their lives.

They took its name from the place of Jacob’s encounter with God recorded in Genesis 32, which he named, “Peniel”, “face of God”, because there he “met God face to face”, and was changed forever.

I mention this because Union with Christ has been a major emphasis in that ministry, and there are four distinctive teachings in their statement of faith.

The third is, “We see the Holy Spirit as the One who incorporates us into Christ and makes our union with him and with one another a dynamic reality in experience.”

So, while the ministry was not “Pentecostal” in the usual sense, there was a lot of teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

The foundation of our Union with Christ is the Father’s choosing us “in Him” before the foundation of the world, its beginning is our creation in Christ, its basis is the incarnation of the Son of God, and an individual’s personal experience of Union with Christ comes about by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, His actually coming into their heart, mind and body.

While there are examples of this happening for a time and specific purpose to certain people in the Old Testament, this was not the experience of every believer in the true God of the Bible until the Holy Spirit was given to the believers on the celebration of the Jewish feast of Pentecost that was held following the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In Acts 2, the Bible says God the Father and Jesus Christ changed the world by sending the Holy Spirit to work in a more powerful way than ever before. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, he powerfully took control of the disciples:

Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV) "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

To be "filled" is an expression used in scripture to refer to taking control of a person: Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV) "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,".

In his explanatory sermon, Peter even uses this analogy: Acts 2:15-21 (NKJV)

"For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidser-vants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'

Peter then implies that the Holy Spirit is God: v. 22 (NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--

Peter, the uneducated fisherman, speaks with amazing theological depth and insight of the interaction of the persons of the trinity when he says, in Acts 2:32-33 (NKJV) "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

How do you receive the Holy Spirit? It is part of the salvation-conversion process: Acts 2:37-38 (NKJV) "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Cf. V. 18-21: "I will pour out My Spirit ... and ... whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved."

This morning I'm going to call your attention to many other scriptures that show how we become one with Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

1. God promised the indwelling of the Spirit through the Prophets.

Ezekiel 36:27 (NKJV) "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

Ezekiel 37:14 (NKJV) "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.' "

Joel 2:28-32 is the passage Peter quotes in his sermon: "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidser-vants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved."

From the time of Abraham, the covenant promise was intended to bless all the nations of the earth. This greatly opens up with the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, first in the life of Christ, and then at Pentecost.

2. The Holy Spirit was involved in the earthly life of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit's activity in the life of Jesus is seen in his incarnation,

- when Mary meets Elizabeth,
- in Zechariah's prophecies about his son, John,
- at his dedication, telling Simeon he would see the Messiah,
- in John the Baptist's prophecies,
- at his baptism,
- in his temptation in the wilderness,

- in Jesus casting out demons by Him (Matt. 12:28),
- and in raising Jesus to life again (Rom. 8:11).

Trans: God promised the indwelling of the Spirit through the Prophets, and The Holy Spirit was involved in the earthly life of Jesus.

3. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to live in Christians, uniting them to Christ.

Jesus told his disciples He would send the Holy Spirit in John 14 and 16:

John 14:17 (NKJV) the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

The apostle Paul says in the Holy Spirit, God's love is poured out: Romans 5:5 (NKJV) "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

He also says that when you put your life in Christ's hands, it changes your whole being:

Romans 8:9 (NKJV) "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

He uses the example of a Temple to describe us:

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV) "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"

2 Cor. 6:16 (NKJV) "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

4. The Holy Spirit unites Christians to Christ and the Father by grace through faith.

Then, they will know for themselves that He and the Father are in each other. They will also know that Christ is in them:

John 14:20 (NKJV) "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

Then Jesus enlarges upon what He has just said:

John 14:23 (NKJV) “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

Robert Letham: “Here, both the Father and the Son will come to the one who loves Jesus. The context points to the activity of the promised Holy Spirit. Behind this lies the fact that all three persons act together indivisibly in all the works of God, yet each work is specifically attributable to one of them”

The Son died, offering himself to the Father by the eternal Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father through the Son, so when the Holy Spirit indwells a person, the Father and the Son are also involved.

The Holy Spirit is not a temporary visitor. The result of Pentecost is permanent. Paul reflect on this:

Ephesians 2:22 (NKJV) “in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:6 (NKJV) “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

And John says, 1 John 4:12 (NKJV) “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.”

In the background of all this are the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into one body. As the baptismal waters saturate, the Holy Spirit permeates.

In the Supper, we drink Christ’s blood, not materially, but *in the Holy Spirit*.

This all happens by grace through faith. It is through the gift of faith that we are united to Christ. Paul and John both affirm that we are incapable of faith without the Holy Spirit drawing us to Christ.

Sinners are “dead in trespasses and sins”, and no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Because of this bond, Christ taking possession of the whole person, our natures are made more and more like His nature.

What a wonder is this! Letham: “since we are united to Christ, God regards us in the identical way He does Christ. The Father treats us in exactly the same way as He does His own eternal and beloved Son.” So we call Him “Abba, Father”.

So, in the Lord’s Prayer, we are to call God, “Our Father”. Next Sunday we will begin to unfold the implications of all this. For now ...

Action: Thank God for His eternal plan, prophesied in the Old Testament.

Invite Jesus Christ fully into your life.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the grace and faith to live like a temple of God in all of your life.