Union with Christ

There is no better framework to begin this section of our Christian Basics Study, Experiencing God, than by looking at the doctrine of Union with Christ. This series will take us through what theologians call the *application of salvation*, or the *ordo salutis*, and our text from Romans 6 is a perfect place to take our first steps from.

Romans 6:1-14

> 1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2By no
> means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3Do you not know that all of us
> who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were
> buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was
> raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of
> life.
>
> 5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be
> united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self was
> crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so
> that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For one who has died ahas been set
> free from sin. 8Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live
> with him. 9We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again;
> death no longer has dominion over him. 10For the death he died he died to sin,
> once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11So you also must consider
> yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
>
> 12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.
> 13Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but
> present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and
> your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14For sin will have no
> dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

One with Jesus Christ

John Murray described the importance of the doctrine of Union with Christ in this way, "Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation... It is not simply a phase of the application of Redemption; it underlines every aspect of redemption... it has its source in the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world and it has its fruition in the glorification of the sons of God." With this importance of Union with Christ we see from Romans 6 some priorities Paul wants believers to note as they wrestle with the importance of the application of Salvation in their lives.

6:1-4. Paul wanted the believer to understand that when they are in Christ they are dead to sin and should therefore live in sin no longer. 6:4-5.The framework Paul builds on this foundation with is the believer's Union with Christ, specifically that those who have faith in Christ were baptized into His death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might be able to walk in a newness of life.

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6:6-11. From there we noticed that the threads that constituted the fabric of the framework were threefold:

- The reality that our old self was crucified in him so sin would be brought to nothing and we have been set free
- If we died with Christ we believe we also live with him
- Death no longer has dominion over the believer found in Christ.

6:12-14. All of this, according to Paul's argument, comes to fruition, or the final result, of this aspect of the believers Union with Christ, namely that the believer is forgiven and free in Christ!

Discussion Questions

1) In your own words, what does "union with Christ" mean?

2) In Christ your old self has been crucified and sin has been rendered powerless, that you may walk in a "newness of life." IN what ways do you find freedom in these _____?

3) What do you think are characteristics of this "newness of life"?

Related Reading

Westminster Larger Catchism #66 and #79

Redemption Accomplished and Applied – Chapter 9: Union with Christ
by John Murray

Saved by Grace Chapter 4: Union with Christ
by Anthony A. Hoekema

Institutes of the Christian Religion: Book III
by John Calvin

Notes:

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