

Union and Identification with Christ

Lesson #1

Memory Verse: Romans 6:5

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection

Union and identification with Christ is a topic that is often underemphasized in Christian churches. However, it is a vital and life-transforming truth. To live victorious Christian lives to the glory of God, it is imperative for believers to understand who they are in Christ.

I. Union with Christ

At the moment of salvation, the believer becomes individually and corporately united with Jesus Christ. On a personal level, believers are said to be “in Christ”, and Christ is said to be in them. This is also true on a corporate level, where the church, which is the body of Christ, is united to Jesus, who is the head of the church. It is important to understand that union with Christ is union with the Father and the Spirit as well. So, believers are united to the whole Trinity by a union that has always been guaranteed and can never be broken.

A. Union with Christ means that Christ is in believers and believers are in Christ.

1. According to Ephesians 3:17, where does the Son of God dwell? _____

2. What mystery did Paul speak about in Colossians 1:26-27? _____

3. What important benefit comes along with knowing Him who is true (1 John 5:20)?

4. How is the believer’s union with Christ described in John 15:4-5? _____

5. According to Galatians 2:20, where does Christ live? _____
6. How is the Christ’s presence in the believer depicted in Galatians 3:27? _____

B. Union with Christ is corporate as well as individual.

1. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, Christ is the head of the church and the church is the body of Christ. How is the church described in verse 23? _____

2. According to Ephesians 4:15-16 and 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27, how does a believer's individual unity with Christ ensure that he will have unity with other believers and that all believers will together have corporate unity with Christ? _____

3. What metaphor is used in Ephesians 5:30-32 to describe the unity of Christ and His church? _____

C. Union with Christ is union with the Father.

1. How did John describe believers in 1 John 2:24 and 2 John 9? _____

2. According to John 17:21, the Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Father, and believers are in the _____ and the _____
3. According to John 14:20, 23, who makes their abode/home with believers? _____

D. Union with Christ is union with the Holy Spirit.

1. According to 1 John 3:24 and 4:13, who has been given to believers? _____

2. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul wrote everyone who believes is baptized into the body of Christ. Who performs this baptism and how does Paul continue on to describe the believers union with Him? _____

E. Unity with Christ was planned in eternity past and is guaranteed forever.

1. According to Ephesians 1:3-4, Christians receive every spiritual blessing because God chose them in _____ before the foundation of the world.
2. On the basis of Paul's argument in Romans 8:38-39, what is able to separate the one who is in Christ from the love of God in Christ? _____

Indeed, expressions such as [in Christ, in the Lord, in Jesus Christ, in Him, etc.] occur 216 times in the Pauline corpus and twenty-six times in Johannine writings. Amply attested in the [New Testament], union with Christ proves to be a central verity, indeed a touchstone reality of the Christian life and experience...Union with Christ thus marks the end of the old existence and the beginning of the new...In identification with Christ, the old sinful nature du jure has been excised, and a radical change of life has occurred.¹

II. Identification with Christ

Since believers in Jesus Christ are intimately united with Him and the Spirit of God lives in them, they have a new identity. The writers of the New Testament consistently conveyed this truth as a statement of fact through the use of the indicative mood in the original Greek. Since believers are identified with Christ and given a new nature, they are also required to live accordingly. The writers conveyed this truth as a statement of command through the use of the imperative mood in Greek. The idea is that the believer is told who he is positionally in Christ (i.e. how God views him in Christ), and then he is admonished to practically act in accordance with his position. In other words, “here is what you are, and therefore, here is what you are to do.” Since these imperative statements always flow from the indicative statements, we will study them together.

A. Christians are identified with Christ’s death and burial.

1. How did Paul identify with the death of Christ in Galatians 2:20, and what did he do as a result? _____

2. What statement of fact did Paul make in Galatians 6:14? What practical result of this fact is stated in Galatians 5:24-25? _____

3. How does identifying with the death of Christ impact the believer’s life (2 Corinthians 4:10)? _____

¹ Bruce Demerest, *The Cross and Salvation*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books, 2006), 313, 323, 334.

4. According to Colossians 3:3-5, how should the believer see his identity in Christ and what should he do as a result? _____

5. Read Romans 6:2-13 and answer the following questions.

a. What is the relationship between the believer's identity and action in v.2? _____

b. With what do believers identify themselves in baptism (vv.3-4) and how does it impact their lives (vv.4-5)? _____

c. How and why are believers identified with the death of Christ (vv.6-10)? _____

d. What are the practical commands resulting from this teaching and how can adherence to them change believers' lives (vv.11-13)? _____

B. Christians are identified with Christ's resurrection and life.

1. What two areas of identification with Christ did Paul speak of in Colossians 2:12-13 and what admonition followed as a result in Colossians 3:1-10)? _____

2. How are believers identified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22 and how should that identity influence their behavior (1 Corinthians 15:34, 58)? _____

C. Christians are identified with Christ's ascension.

1. Read Ephesians 2:4-10 and answer the following questions.

a. Where does God view believers to be seated (v.6)? _____

b. What benefits do Christians receive as a result (v.7)? _____

c. What ought believers to do as a result (v.10; cf. 4:1)? _____

D. Christians are identified with Christ's mind.

1. Describe the way in which believers are identified with Christ and the resulting commands for each of the following passages.

a. 1 Corinthians 2:16 and 3:18-23 _____

b. Philippians 2:5 and 2:14-16 _____

c. Romans 12:2 and 12:16 _____

d. Ephesians 4:22-24 and 4:25-27 _____

E. Christians are identified with Christ's Spirit.

1. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:17, what is true for anyone who joins himself to the Lord? How should this be evidenced in the believer's life (vv.18-20)? _____

2. According to Romans 8:9-13, how are Christians identified with the Spirit of Christ and what obligation are they under as a result? _____

F. Christians are identified with Christ's nature.

1. How is the new nature described in 2 Corinthians 5:17? What responsibility and privilege come as a result (vv.18-20)? _____

2. What is expected of those who have become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4-10)? _____

G. Christians are identified with Christ's holiness.

1. In John 13:8-10, how did Jesus speak of the disciples' position before God (v.10)? What did He command them to do as a result (v.14)? _____

2. Describe the positional truth and practical command that are found in Hebrews 10:14 and 10:22-25. _____

3. According to Colossians 2:9-10, believers have been made _____ in Christ. Therefore, according to vv.20-22, believers are to _____

4. How closely are position and practice tied together in Romans 8:1? _____

5. How did Paul describe the holiness of the believer and what command did he give as a result in Ephesians 5:8? _____

H. Christians are identified with Christ's victory over sin.

1. According to 1 John 2:6, if someone abides in Christ, he ought to _____

2. For what reason did John argue that believers cannot make a practice of sin (1 John 3:9)? _____
3. What practical impact does abiding in Christ have (John 15:4-4; Philippians 4:13)?

4. According to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, what victory does a Christian have over sin? What ought Christians to do as a result (v.20)? _____

5. How does a believer's position with God and power from God affect evangelism (2 Timothy 1:7-8)? _____

6. How does a Christian's freedom impact his life (Galatians 4:31-5:1)? _____

7. How did Paul speak of victory in Christ in Romans 6:6 and 7:4? _____

...the new life in its moral manifestation is at one time proclaimed and posited as the fruit of the redemptive work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit – the indicative; elsewhere, however, it is put with no less force as a categorical demand – the imperative...Now as regards the relationship to each other of these two different ways of speaking, it is immediately clear that the imperative rests on the indicative and that this order is not reversible. For in each case the imperative follows the indicative by way of conclusion.²

III. Personal Application

A. How does the knowledge that you are in Christ and Christ is in you deter you from sin?

B. How can you do a better job of identifying yourself as Christ identifies you? How will that identity help you to live a more holy and victorious Christian life? _____

² Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 253, 254-255.