

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 21 (HCLD 7)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Vocabulary: Election, Union

Question: What is that union which the elect have with Christ?

Answer: The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace,[a] whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband;[b] which is done in their effectual calling.[c]²

As we have struggled to find the words to try and precisely explain how Christ is one, yet three in the Trinity, then has taken to Himself the essence of human nature and thereby is fully

¹ Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 7

Q20: Are all men, then, saved by Christ as they have perished in Adam?

A20: No, only those who by true faith are ingrafted into Him and receive all His benefits.[a]

a. John 1:12-13; I Cor. 15:22; Psa. 2:12; Rom. 11:20; Heb. 4:2-3; 10:39

Q21: What is true faith?

A21: True faith is not only a sure knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word,[b] but also a hearty trust,[c] which the Holy Ghost [d] works in me by the Gospel,[e] that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God,[f] merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[g]

b. James 1:6

c. Rom. 4:16-18; 5:1

d. II Cor. 4:13; Phil. 1:19, 29

e. Rom. 1:16; 10:17

f. Heb. 11:1-2; Rom. 1:17

g. Eph. 2:7-9; Rom. 3:24-25; Gal. 2:16; Acts 10:43

Q22: What, then, is necessary for a Christian to believe?

A22: All that is promised us in the Gospel,[h] which the articles of our catholic, undoubted Christian faith teach us in summary.

h. John 20:31; Matt. 28:20; II Peter 1:21; II Tim. 3:15

Q23: What are these articles?

A23: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

² a. Eph. 1:22; 2:6-8

b. I Cor. 6:17; John 10:28; Eph. 5:23, 30

c. I Peter 5:10; I Cor. 1:9

God, yet fully man, so the struggle will continue in this question. The answer is to take a dose of God given faith and latch on for life to the word of God. Mystery in the Bible usually refers to that which is hidden in God's will and remains to be revealed, not something mysterious. Yet this union is mystical, in both senses of the word in that being hidden within the eternal decrees of God we cannot uncover the fullness of this union. At the same time from a human perspective such a joining with the spirit world is mysterious.

Before the foundation of the earth God chose the elect in Christ. The Divines have rightly joined the doctrine of effectual calling to this joining with Christ. While the decree is from all eternity, its manifestation is in God's time as He calls His elect to repentance. By the nature of the question much of what follows is subjective. Let us then praise God He has chosen to present us His Holy Word, that we might have an absolute point of truth to reference these subjective feelings and thoughts to. By faith the Bible is God's word. Only by the work of illumination of the Holy Spirit will we understand this Word of Life given from the hand of God. Effectual calling is then connected to the call to salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:8). There are other callings to service or office of God. These are not to be confused with effectual calling.

We can contrast effectual calling with that which is not effectual. We can "see" the two and the difference in our own life and the lives of others. We have all seen people come under the influence of the Gospel, only to rapidly fade during times of stress and or its opposite when by God's blessing they achieve great earthly wealth, fame or both. This cannot be used as a measure of who is and who is not elect, since the elect for a season may exhibit this same behavior. However effectual calling will bring a person into close fellowship with Christ and they will in no way ever be totally separated from Christ. Christ explains this somewhat in the parable of the sower, and the differing grounds upon which the seed fall. We will deal with effectual calling more fully in the next question.

At the moment we are dealing with the union of Christ and the believer. I believe the greatest evidence of this union comes from the illumination of the Holy Spirit so even the most illiterate understands those things essential for his conduct as a believer. This union so powerfully enables the believer that for the first time in their life they may taste what true freedom is. From the beginning God gave to man the ability to rule over sin. The Scriptures teach that we are never tempted without there also being a way out of or away from the temptation. However in our depraved condition we cannot, will not see this truth. It is this union that puts action to the words of the elect and enables them to be about God's work at all costs.

The union is with Christ, yet it is the physical presence of the Holy Spirit effectively working within the believer the union is made manifest. The union will also bring about an inner peace that I doubt we have the words to articulate in anyway that comes close to its affect on the believer. As I think of this passage I am reminded of the story of Elijah upon the holy mount seeking God. God was not where Elijah expected to meet Him, but within that small inner voice speaking from within. There is a quietness, peace within the spirit that does not exist until this union is completed. Its final perfection awaits that final day, but it is complete today, in God's timing. This is what I think Paul is referring to in Romans five about having peace with God. Even the elect will feel the restlessness of the spirit and experience an unexplainable void and searching within until in God's time God gifts the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer.

While we are yet outside this union, though we be elect awaiting the fulness of God's time, there exists a war within the spirit of man against the will of God that can and does bring about all sorts of mental confusion. Peace with God brings rest to this inner turmoil and we are no longer

confused, for now we know the God of a sound mind, and have the ability to learn fear of God, and thus true wisdom. How profound, how mysterious, yet how true and simple to the child in Christ. This union becomes a fact to us, though we may never be able to express to another how we know this truth and that it is tangible to us, we know. How often do we or those we know consult a physician with some great pain in various parts of the body and are told there isn't anything wrong. Yet the pain is there, and it really doesn't matter to the person suffering where anyone else believes they are hurting or not, they know the pain is real. The union of Christ is similar to this in that you know it is true, that you are indeed one with Christ. Your inability to explain or for another to confirm this union does not lessen your sureness of this truth by one small dot. Then, above all else we have the testimony of the Bible and the Holy Spirit with our spirit whereby the truth is established by two or more witnesses. Praise God we do not rest upon these fleeting emotions or feelings of man, but the sure word of God alone.

This is the peace, the sureness of life and the comfort the soul man is ever seeking. Fortunes have been spent in trying to obtain even the smallest fraction of this peace. It cannot be bought, it is God's gift to His elect in Christ. The book of Ecclesiastes spreads all these vain attempts down all the byways of life to find this peace, yet ends without this peace being found. The concluding words of this Old Testament book, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all." Solomon with all his wisdom, position, and wealth was unable to find love, joy, peace, comfort, all of which man would relate to happiness. I believe the book of Ecclesiastes is an outline of Solomon's life, whether written early as prophetic words, or after the fact looking back at wasted time and efforts I don't know, but it clearly shows the searching of the wisest, wealthiest man ever, who came to the correct conclusion by God's grace, not his efforts. The union with Christ enables the obedience needed to live lives that are pleasing to God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without the indwelling Spirit, who enables us to put this faith into practice, the gift would remain unused, and useless.

Election and that unconditional pours forth from this study as the second tenet of Christian faith takes center stage. The Westminster Divines illuminate the fifth petal in the word "inseparably." What a mockery to think that God would allow His creation to taste the Lord in such a magnificent union, only to snatch that joy away. How beautiful the passages in Ephesians one become when understood in the light of the TULIP. This is the place where God has so beautifully interwoven His Holy Word with the doctrines of the TULIP that surely to be reformed is but to be Christian. In the world of apologetics, need we any other passage to set forth our TULIP in full bloom? For once again I would submit that our forefathers in laying before us the understanding of the Holy Writ have so designed their words that if any petal stands, all others will flow from it of necessity. "...it is the gift of God..." What then does man have to do with it other than glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Man's duty and destiny in one short sentence, though Solomon took a whole book to bring us to the same point. To God be the glory, great things He hath done!

Concerning the election there are those that teach a "double predestination." By this they teach that God chose the elect, by name and number in an eternal decree that cannot be changed. Then likewise chose all others by decree to condemnation. I deny the doctrine of double predestination and believe it is blasphemy to lay such at the feet of God. If before the foundation of the world God chose or created a person for condemnation only, then God has no cause to punish that creature for being no different than what God has solidly set in place. In other words the created could on that faithful day say to God, you created me thus. We see this same excuse without justification used by those who ignore God and turn in their own lust to sexual perversions, or those with chosen addictions to various substances claim genetic causes for their behavior.

God chose the elect by name and number which will not change. All of mankind being condemned already, because none, to include Adam have ever voluntarily chosen God. The Bible says no one, no, not one has sought God. Thus God had no need to elect some to reprobation, reprobation will flow from the will of man and man's disregard of the God of creation. The end result is the same as if God had made such a decree, but God did not, could not have made this decree and maintained His perfect justice and His wrath would be unrighteous. Thus my conclusion to introduce such as double pre-destination is heresy and blasphemes God. The only way of salvation is through the decree of election whereby in His time God gives the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit regenerates the heart of fallen man. Thus the offer of grace is sincere and laid before all the world, but left to self even the elect would not chose God. We can therefore see that it is of grace alone in the election that salvation has its root and to save any the most gracious gift of a loving God who works all things for His own glory and the good of the elect. For in due time Jesus Christ died for the ungodly, not good men or religious men, but the ungodly which we all were and are apart from this union with Christ.

Suggested Sermon Outline

What is True Faith?

Will all men, then, be saved through Christ as they became lost through Adam?

No. Only those who, by true faith, are incorporated into Him and accept all His benefits.

What is true faith?

It is not only a certain knowledge by which I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a wholehearted trust which the Holy Spirit creates in me through the gospel, that, not only to others, but to me also God has given the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ's saving work

What, then, must a Christian believe?

All that is promised us in the gospel, a summary of which is taught us in the articles of the Apostles' Creed, our universally acknowledged confession of faith.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen.

I. Salvation Is Particular, Not Universal

A. Only believers have hope in Jesus. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13)

B. If salvation were merely a cultural or social matter, Rabbinic Israel would still

control the religion of Abraham. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: (Romans 11:17-20)

C. Faith is the way in which God distributes new life. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. (Hebrews 4:2)

D. The great benefits of the Christian religion belong to those who live by faith. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Hebrews 10:35-39)

E. The promise was always particular and not universal. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)

II. Only True Faith Counts with God

A. Believers must have genuine knowledge of the truth. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

B. It was through propositional revelation that God reached and transformed us. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

C. From the start, faith has been the normal context for grace. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Romans 4:13) Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (Romans 4:16)

D. God develops this faith in the believer. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 16:16-17)

E. The Spirit at work in our hearts is a sign to us of God's interest in us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

F. The Holy Spirit uses preaching to cultivate genuine faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

G. All these things occur out of sheer grace for the sake of Christ. But God, who is rich

in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:4-9)

III. The Redeemed Will Believe the Revealed Gospel

A. God gave us the Scriptures so we would know and could then believe the truth. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (John 20:31)

B. Genuine faith functions through propositions commanded by Jesus. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

C. The Apostles' Creed is the universally acknowledged confession of faith for the Christians.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

and in Jesus Christ,

His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

He descended into hell.

the third day He rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,

and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;

the holy Catholic church,

the communion of saints;

the forgiveness of sins;

the resurrection of the body;

and the life everlasting.

Amen.

Heidelberg Confession

Lord's Day 7

Questions 20-23

Dr. Edwin P. Elliott, Jr.