

# One With Christ Risen

**"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1)**

If the Lord will help me, I shall first speak of the mysterious and most blessed doctrine of the union that subsists between Christ, the Head, and the members of His mystical body. It is implicit in the text. And the union is deeper than may appear at the first sight of this word, goes further back than the resurrection of Christ. It goes back not to the decree of God only, - that is eternal; especially in this word it goes back to the death and the burial of Christ. For it was necessary, in order to the church rising with Him, that she should die with Him; and she did die with Him when He was actively offering Himself on the cross without spot to God. Even as the high priest never offered the sin offering, nor went into the holy of holies as a private person, but represented the whole nation; so Christ, our Priest, was not alone on the cross, nor when He entered heaven, but had with Him all His children, whom He represented. For them He offered Himself a Sacrifice, putting away their sin, pleasing Jehovah, honouring the law, opening a new and living Way to God, whereby His people should approach God. In the sixth of Romans the Spirit by Paul treats of this, and exhorts the Lord's people to reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin by the death of Christ. And they were baptized "in the likeness of His death," they were as He in that death, they were with Him. Their sins were taken from them, and laid on Him, to atone for them, die for them. So, as Kent expresses it, they were one on the cross, one in the tomb, and one when He rose. Blessed be God, if we do really receive the testimony of the Scripture to this truth, that Christ was not alone on the cross, but had with Him His people, in a mysterious and mystical, blessed, efficacious union. I say it was an efficacious union; it effected their salvation. When He died, there was nothing for them to do; no death remaining for them to endure, no curse remaining for them to suffer, no demands remaining for them to obey, no law remaining on them to walk by, or live under God's frown. But He effectually and perfectly and for ever atoned for them, and so brought in a people before His Father without sin. The apostle says in the Romans, "In that He died, He died unto sin once;" and this great truth was declared by the prophet Isaiah, who says that the Lord God made to meet on Christ the iniquity of all His people; and then it was the Father bruised Him and wounded Him, chastised Him and laid stripes on Him. Christ did all this for His people; so that when He died, they died. We are reckoned as having fulfilled the whole law, as leaving nothing behind of duty, or debt, or curse or death, or banishment from the face of God in the future. If we receive this truth into our hearts, it will give us true liberty, we shall be freed from the curse and death, and all things to which sinful men under the law are liable.

"If ye then be risen with Christ," His resurrection, then, was a representative as well as a personal resurrection. He must rise from the dead by the power of His Father, by His own power, and by the power of the eternal Spirit. As the Trinity was concerned in the baptism of Christ when He entered on His ministry, so the Trinity was concerned in His resurrection when He had done all. As the Father said of Him when He was coming up out of the water, "This is My beloved Son," and as the Spirit descended upon Him in the shape of a Dove - a beautiful type, for Jesus became the Prince of peace: so in His resurrection the Father brought Him from the grave, He came by

His own power, and the Spirit raised Him. According to the Scripture, all the Three Persons were concerned in His resurrection; and when He rose, He brought with Him all His people.

"One in the tomb, one when He rose,  
One when He triumphed over His foes."

What a great blessing it will be for us to be led experimentally into this truth! The resurrection of Christ is like the keystone to the arch; it is everything, as the Spirit sets forth: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not . . . and we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. 15:15-19) When Christ and His mystical body rose from the dead, then there appeared in the presence of the eternal Father a perfect church- - a perfect body with a perfect Head, the many members all viewed as in Him. They were to come, one by one to the end of time, but they were in Christ when He rose, and were viewed as one in that blessed Redeemer, the now risen, glorious Lord Jesus Christ. This is that profound, mysterious, and glorious doctrine which every saint is led into more or less distinctly by the eternal Spirit; and it is set before us in the Scriptures as being the salvation of the election of grace. The oneness with Christ of the church is a fundamental article of faith, dear friends. Jesus was an effectual and a complete Saviour when on the cross. Jesus is a complete Head, made perfect through sufferings, having now nothing to do, but to expect, till all His enemies be made His footstool, and till all His dear, blood bought ones, the whole election of grace, shall be with Him, and go out no more for ever.

And this great doctrine becomes a living experience in all who are born again. "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus "enters into every elect child of God; and when He so enters, there is the new birth. The new birth is the communication of eternal, spiritual life to the soul by the Spirit of Christ. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) This is a very mysterious, a very blessed truth: that the eternal Spirit does come to each individual person brought by the blood of Christ, and quicken him into eternal life. And then begins to be fulfilled in him that scripture, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) He came, - came to the cross, came to the grave, came forth from the grave; then sends His good Spirit, who quickens each soul into life eternal. "I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep." (John 10:14) The good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep; and when He rose and ascended, He began to live that wondrous, glorified life unto God in heaven of which we read "But this Man, after He had offered one: Sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." Also, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

It is this spiritual life of Christ in His people that raises true religion to a plane infinitely above the world. Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Also Isaiah, "The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." (Isa. 2:2) It is a word that expresses the truth that vital religion is high above the whole of nature. Nature's highest building and fabric can be nothing but a poor, low thing as compared with this blessed religion, this divine, spiritual kingdom which the Lord gives to His children. And also that word comes in: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with

reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28) It is a great thing to be born again, to have the Holy Ghost in the heart as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" to have "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" making us free "from the Law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2) The word "law" used in those two places appears to be used to express dominion. So when "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" enters a sinner, he no longer is under the law of sin. He has it in him, but he is not under its dominion. It struggles, it plagues him, it wounds him, hurts him, ensnares him, entraps him, beguiles him, and outrages him again and again; but he is not under its dominion. And all this is owing to the communication of that life which Jesus Christ has, and of which He is the fullness. The abundance of it is in Him. And when people are thus raised from the dead, are thus risen with Christ, they have, as we see, a new life. It is called, taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh; it is called spirit: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6)

And this new life manifests itself. As it moves by the power of its divine Giver and Author in the soul, it manifests itself. We manifest our natural life by our appetites, we manifest our minds by our pursuits, our hearts are viewed by our conduct. And so one may say that the spiritual life which every saint lives, manifests itself; manifests itself in its appetite, in its pursuit; and in doing this, the people of God are enabled to obey the Holy Spirit in this text. The flesh will be always flesh; that is, the corruption in us. For flesh is not to be taken for the body in such scriptures, but for the old man, "which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and will never be better; it will be the plague, the burden, the grief, the wounding of the soul from time to time. I speak what some of you know, and what I know myself; we can enter into Paul's lament and confession and trouble. He says, "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am I Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:19,24)

But now when born again, and to the end of this mortal life, the new life that is in us will manifest itself; and in doing so, it walks out this exhortation, "If ye then be risen with Christ" - if the doctrine of union has become your life, if you do possess the Spirit of Christ, who comes, now that Christ is in heaven, to His people, then follow this - "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, at the right hand of God."

My brethren, we are fools and wicked to be engaged as we are so much with trifles, taken up with vanities. The Word of God has not a superfluous word, a superfluous sentence in it. It does not speak this word for nothing, "Seek those things." For the Lord knows the disposition that we have to seek the things after which the Gentiles seek, the hankering of the old man after the world. He knows the power of unbelief and the deceitfulness of sin that are in us; and we are made to know it. So we need to have, as Peter speaks, our pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance; and this is one of those stirring-up texts, a remembrancing text. Seek the things that are to last, the things that make you most blessed, really happy; the things which are above, and are reached by faith only, seek. Let us look a little as helped at the things which are above."

First of all, there is a precious and blessed atonement above. The intercessory work of Christ was commenced on the cross, when there as a Priest He offered Himself to God. That is what the priest under the old dispensation typified. He had the sacrifices brought to him, he stood between the people and God, and offered those things to God; and therein was intercession. The Antitype

of that intercession was Christ on the cross, offering Himself without spot to God. The Propitiation for our sins He was; the opening of a new and living Way to the Father was His great work on the cross, the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself was His great offering, perfecting for ever them that are sanctified. He entered heaven with His own blood. "Whither our Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." (Heb. 6:20) He entered heaven with His infinite merit, as I have often spoken, entered there with the merit of His death, with all the infinite fervour of His love, with all the greatness, the infinitude of His compassion; with all this He entered heaven, and He stands at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, interceding for His own; or, as the Spirit expresses it, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25) that come unto God by Him. So, dear friends, there is, in heaven above, that blessed atonement. Jesus took it with Him, took His merit there. He is exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31) And the sweet touches of love, the gracious intimations of mercy, the beams of life and grace that emanate from God, and reach our souls, come from the Lord of life, come through His great work.

Yes, He is there, and what have we to seek but "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." And to encourage poor seekers to seek this thing, this first thing, the Spirit by Paul again says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near." (Heb. 10:19-22) That is, let us "seek those things which are above." The only solid peace you can ever have is through the blood of the everlasting covenant, by the sweet persuasion of the Spirit of God in your conscience that that blood was shed for you, that that atonement was made for you, that that intercessory work is carried on in heaven for you. Then, as the Spirit of Christ brings in this wondrous atonement, this wondrous gospel, the sinner finds peace in his soul. Seek that, my friends, it is good to have peace. This peace was first, proclaimed in Eden; fallen, defiled man heard it: "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." (Gen. 3:15) And when the dear eternal Son of God came from His Father's bosom, where He had eternally been, and took on Him our nature in the womb of the virgin, then, neglected though He was by man, a mighty multitude of the heavenly host came and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men!" (Luke 2:14) That is how this great thing came down from heaven; that is how peace comes to us. Christ is the Prince of peace; the heavenly Dove came down upon Him at His baptism to signify that there would be peace, peace to sinners: Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." The Prince of peace reigns, He has this blessing in His hand, this great thing, to give to troubled sinners, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." The peace of God, which when felt tells you that no temporal power can curse; no affliction that can befall the saint, has a curse in it; but all, all things come to His redeemed through Him who has made the peace, who has signed and ratified it, and who ratifies it in the conscience by the witness of His Spirit. This calms the troubled breast, this soothes a sinner in affliction, this enables him to say of his trouble, "The will of the Lord be done." This brings him to submit to God's holy will with a quietness of mind, a willingness in his heart, that would be impossible without the peace of God. It puts a new light, a different hue upon everything that may trouble the person who has it. It is a great thing for us to seek, to seek "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This true peace is a great matter.

Seek a sense of the love of God, seek to have it in your souls. Is not this that "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal?" (Rev. 22:1) Is not this that pleasure which is at the right hand of God for evermore? For what can be compared with a sense of being loved of God? Solomon, notwithstanding his dreadful sins, was beloved of his God. It is a great and a beautiful testimony, and may the Lord help some of us who are out-of-the-way sinners, who are ashamed of our poor, ragged profession, of our barren lives, ashamed that we have lived as we have lived; may He make it comfortable to us that it is written of Solomon that he was beloved of his God. Many things will contradict that in your feelings, many appearances will contradict it, many suggestions of Satan will contradict it, and your own evil pursuits in spirit will contradict it. But if the eternal Spirit is pleased to give power to seek the sense of the love of God, and then give you that in answer to your Spirit-inspired prayers, you will find it very efficacious, you will find it very powerful in you; a thrice-comfortable feeling it will be to you, O, more comfortable than you can express. What harm can reach one beloved of his God? How can there be a curse in that cup which a loving Father gives His child to drink? How can there be a sword in the hand of a loving Father? There is a rod, but O, it is not a sword. Satan may say it is a sword, your fears may say it is, your reason may say it looks more like a sword than anything else. And the effect of it is very bitter, because rebellion is stirred up in your heart; but the truth remains, that there is neither wrath in the cup nor a sword in His hand for His dear children. They are beloved of their God.

Seek clearer manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ. His promise is an abiding promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20) Had I time and grace and ability to express some thoughts that I have had about this presence, it might be for edification. Always means to the end, with us; and as our journey to the end lies in a path of tribulation, as there is a fire, as there is water, as there is a river, as there is a devil to tempt, this promise must go into all those places. Or, as those places are used to express different troubles and experiences, the presence of Christ is promised for them all. He will not suspend His presence; He may suspend your experience of it, but He will never take His presence away. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned" (Isa. 43:2) - nothing shall hurt you. "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" And what a good thing it is to be enabled to seek the presence of Christ in a manifestation of Himself. "If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Now that word has respect to manifestations. One said, "How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22)

O, Christ comes and shows Himself to His disciples who have love in their hearts. Love prepares a welcome for Him, love opens the heart for Him, love gives a desire for Him, love in you will make you unhappy without Him. Seek His presence. One says,

"In Thy presence I am happy, in Thy presence I am secure,  
In Thy presence all afflictions I can easily endure."

And it is so, as some of us know. The presence of Christ is the presence of God's only-begotten Son Incarnate. It is the presence of the fairest of all heaven, the presence of heaven's best, the Father's best and greatest and uttermost gift, the presence of Him who was in the

Father's bosom from eternity, of Him who has graciously redeemed His children; who is fairer than the children of men, into whose lips grace is poured. (Ps. 45:2) It is a presence that makes heaven, that gives strength, vigour, boldness to the child of God who is indulged with it. Seek this thing.

One may add to these, seek communion with God. Communion with Him means nearness to Him; and I find it difficult to speak of this, because of the little I know about it. But there is such a mercy as communion with God, the communication of some good gift from Him to you, and the communication of your heart to Him; the opening of His love to you, and as He says, "My son, give Me thine heart," so your heart goes out to Him; the Lord letting out some blessing into your soul, telling you that He will be with you, that He will sanctify to you your deepest distress, that He will guide you with His eye, that He will be all-sufficient to you; as He said to Abraham, "I am God all-sufficient; walk before Me, and be thou perfect;" as Paul says to the Philippians, "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." These things are the communications which the Lord makes to sinners, a touch here, a beam there, an influence, a drawing at another time coming to your very soul out of the full river of pleasure which is at God's right hand for evermore. And then the effect of that communication is that you can walk in a path of obedience. When He says, "My son, give Me thine heart;" when, as here, He says, "Seek those things which are above," you say, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek; I want to see it; Thy power I seek I desire to feel it; Thy goodness I seek, I desire to be led to repentance by it; Thy presence I seek, that I may be preserved from the hurt of the fire, and from the evil effect of trouble." He receives all that. I think we do not half know the pleasure the infinite God has in the prayers, the sighs, the groans, and the desires of His dear children, as they speak them before Him without words, when they present their hearts to Him; and the pleasure He has in the merit of Christ, and in the prayers of the saints which are mingled in the golden censer with the much incense that is there. If we realized it more, our desires would be to seek the Lord more, to be more fervent and constant in seeking His blessed face. "Seek those things," seek communion.

Seek to have the holy Scriptures in their life and their power, their authority, and their sanctifying effect in your hearts. God has written the Scriptures for His saints. It is said in the 102nd Psalm, "This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. The things in that Psalm, and the whole of the Scriptures, are "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." It is a great thing to have the Scriptures in our hands, and in our memories; but the best thing is to have them, in some portions of them, in our hearts to feel the authority of one passage; - a commandment coming to you to kill you, the gospel coming to you to make you live; a promise coming to you, assuring you of divine guidance and of heaven at last; a manifestation of the Lord Jesus in some scripture. To have such things is to have some of the best gifts that God has to bestow on His poor people. "Seek those things" from the holy Scriptures.

And now lastly here, seek to join the song that is ever being sung in heaven. Here we sigh and groan; here sometimes we sing, we praise a good God for His greatness in mercy, His greatness in love, His greatness in the gospel. But the apostle Paul tells us that the saints on earth "are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the New Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect;" (Heb. 12:22,23) are come to them, made one with the saints above, who are one with their Head, and one in their holy praises.

And every saint, when blessed in his soul with liberty in the truth by Jesus Christ, has the substance in him of that reverence felt by the seraphim, that we read of in Isaiah: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." (Isa. 6) Each was reverential, each worshipped, each felt his creatureship; and have not you that spirit when the Lord blesses you, to cover yourself? to feel as Ruth felt when she said, "Who am I? Wherefore have I found favour in thy sight?" - "O how could the Lord bless me? How could He look on such as I am?" and you cover yourself. A healthy, an acceptable shame covers you; I say, healthy; it is not the shame that attends you when in bondage under the law, no; but it is a shame begotten of the presence and love and goodness of God. And also there is a willingness, and there is worship in your willingness, worship in your submission to God;  $\frac{1}{2}$ s holy will. And then you can unite with the spirits of just men made perfect, who are around the throne, in singing, "Worthy is the Lamb;" and unite with the holy angels who take up the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing . . . for ever and ever." (Rev. 5:12)

These are the "things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." The joy of the wicked is like the crackling of thorns and a pot; but this joy, though, interrupted often, as to our sense of it, is for ever and ever. The song of the drunkard is an abomination; but the song of a broken heart is a sweet song. The theme of a worldling is the world; the theme of a saint is "Christ, and Him crucified." The song of the world is nothing but an abomination to God, but the sound of a song arising out of a broke heart, with Christ there the Hope of glory, (Col. 1:27) how acceptable is that! "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." (Rev. 1:5,6) I wish we may live to sing oftener in our spirits. Where then have been groanings which could not be uttered, may there be songs also that exceed our voices, that exceed all our ability to speak them, songs of praise rising to the throne of God and of the Lamb. Seek those things "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." And if we seek Him, then we seek all those things, for they are all His; they belong to Him, and He has them to bestow on His poor, seeking people.