

The Benefits and Blessings of Union with Christ

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"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:30, 31

The sovereignty of God is a great deep—a deep so profound as to be absolutely unfathomable by the human intellect. Unable, therefore, or unwilling to believe what they cannot comprehend, men have denied the sovereignty of God, and sought, with feeble hands, to wrest the sceptre of omnipotence out of the grasp of the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, the great and glorious Arbiter of all events and Disposer of all circumstances, who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35.) But because we cannot comprehend the sovereignty of God, is it less real? Can we comprehend any one perfection of that great and glorious Being, "who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see?" Can we comprehend, for instance, his *eternal existence*? Is our intellect able to fathom that profound mystery, that there is a glorious, self-existent Being, who from all eternity is, according to his own declaration of himself, "I AM that I AM?" Our mind is lost in the contemplation of an eternal, self-existent Being; and yet to deny it is atheism. What shall we say too of his *omnipresence*?—that he fills all time and all space, so that wherever we are there God is. Can the mind of man fathom a presence that spreads itself, so to speak, in every place, and yet is but one God? Or view his

omniscience—that he reads with one glance the hearts of millions of men. Can we fathom that perfection of the Almighty? And yet dare we deny it when our own conscience assures us that all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do? Or look again at his *omnipotence*—that the same hands which formed the sun, that glorious orb of light, created the crawling worm and the slimy snail. Are we not lost when we attempt to bring the powers of our reason to bear upon any one of the infinite perfections of Jehovah? To all such vain reasoners who attempt to measure God by the line of human intellect, and presumptuously reject what they cannot understand, we may well apply the keen language of Zophar: "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." And to all who would attempt to comprehend what is incomprehensible, we may well apply his pungent description of what man really is, with all his attempts to introduce his earthly wisdom into heavenly mysteries: "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." (Job 11:7-9.)

But these proud reasoners, who bring everything to the bar of human intellect, are not the only persons who deny the sovereignty of God. There is a generation of men, and a numerous generation too, who, because the sovereignty of God militates against their favourite doctrine of creature agency—what is commonly called "free will"—fight against it with desperate enmity. They clearly see that the sovereignty of God cuts up by the very roots their darling dogma, and that a God who is the sovereign Disposer of all events sadly interferes with the liberty of man to do what he pleases and be what he wills. They would sooner, therefore, give up the

sovereignty of God than the free agency of man; and rather than allow God to be the Governor of his own world, they would put every circumstance under the dominion of blind chance, and a confused raffle of luck and fortune. But whether men deny it, or whether men dispute it, it matters not: neither their denial nor their contention will alter the solemn fact that God reigns supreme; that "he sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." (Isai. 40:22.) But the child of grace, who is under divine teaching, whatever may have been his strong prejudices against, or his violent opposition to scripture truth in the days of his ignorance, is brought sooner or later to see and acknowledge the sovereignty of God; and, when he is led into the mystery, receives it as a most blessed truth. In fact, as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to enlighten the eyes of his understanding, he sees the sovereignty of God in everything. If he look at creation, he sees there a sovereign hand which fixed the sun in the sky and made the day-spring know its place. If he look at himself, he sees and feels that a sovereign power called him into birth and being; that he had no control over his own coming into his present time and state, no choice who should be his parents, what the circumstances of his birth, what situation he should occupy, whether of peer or of peasant, or where his lot be cast among the children of men. Over these circumstances, which affect the whole of his life, he feels that he had no more control than he had over the creation of the sun, or of "the seven stars and Orion" (Amos 5:8); and that free will had no more name or place in the disposal of any one of these events on earth than it had of those in heaven. But as his eye is opened to see the sovereign hand of God in fixing and determining the circumstances of his earthly being, he sees how all was arranged by infinite wisdom and executed by infinite power. And when he comes to the department of grace, and can with believing eye trace out the dealings of

God with his soul, then, in a more conspicuous manner still, does the sovereignty of God beam upon his heart; for well he knows that free will had no place there, and that "it was not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." How plainly he sees and feels that it was sovereign grace which first arrested him on his downward course; that it was sovereign grace which made him feel the burden of sin; that it was sovereign grace which put a cry and a sigh into his soul; that it was sovereign grace which brought him to the footstool of mercy; that it was sovereign grace which revealed the Saviour, and applied the message of mercy and peace to his heart. Thus what some deny and others dispute, he is brought to receive in the simplicity of faith, as most glorifying to God and suitable to man; and as he receives it, he admires it, adores it, and submits to it.

But you may say, "What has all this to do with your text? We fully see with you in your description of the sovereignty of grace, and we believe it to be the truth: but what has this to do with the words from which you intend to speak this morning?" To this I answer, "Much every way. The sovereignty of God is stamped upon our text in living letters of light." "The sovereignty of God in the text?" you say; "I see no sovereignty mentioned there." No, not the word; but the thing is there if the word be absent; and I have to deal with things and facts, not bare words. Thus I can see the sovereignty of God stamped upon our text in the broadest characters. I see it first in the expression "*Of him* are ye in Christ Jesus." What but sovereignty is fully implied, if not positively expressed, in the declaration that it is "*of God* that the saints are in Christ Jesus?" for if it be wholly and solely "of God," it is wholly and solely of the sovereignty of God. Did the saints of God at Corinth put themselves into Christ Jesus, or did God put them? And if God put them into Christ, so as to give them a standing in him, and a union with him,

what was that but an act of divine sovereignty? But I see it also in the declaration which the apostle has made in the same text, that Christ Jesus "*of God* is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" for was it not as much an act of God's sovereign grace and power to make Christ Jesus to be to us and for us all these divine and heavenly blessings, as to give us a union with him? Could *we*, could any, have made him to be all this unto us? Did *we* devise the plan? Did *we* carry it into execution? Did *we* raise up Christ from the dead? Did *we* set him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and make him head over all things to the Church? Is not the whole of this, first and last, of the sovereign will and gracious execution of the God of all grace? Well does the apostle sum up the whole: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Having thus laid a broad and scriptural foundation for the truth of God, as set forth in our text to stand upon, I shall now, with his help and blessing, direct your mind chiefly to these three points, which you will find clearly revealed in it.

I.—*First*, the *union* which the saints of God have *with Christ Jesus*, as declared in the words, "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the *benefits* and *blessings* which spring out of this personal union with Christ Jesus: that he "*of God* is made unto them *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, what is *the fruit* of all these heavenly blessings? *Praising* and *blessing* the name of the Lord for what he is in himself, and for what he is to his people. "That according as

it is written, He that glorieth, let him *glory in the Lord.*"

I.—I have first, then, with God's help, to show you the union which the saints of God have with Christ Jesus. This union is the source and foundation of every spiritual blessing: in fact, we may broadly say, without this union with Christ, of spiritual blessing there is none.

i. But, in order clearly to trace out the foundation of this union with Christ, we must revert for a few moments to that grand and glorious truth which I just now brought before you in my introduction—I mean the *sovereignty* of God; for you will observe that the apostle does not speak as if we gave ourselves this union with Christ Jesus, if indeed we are possessed of it; but he takes it up to a higher source, and ascribes it to a more glorious and exalted will than that which can dwell in a mutable creature's breast. "Of him," he declares, "are ye in Christ Jesus." As these words are full of heavenly truth, and form indeed the grand and solid basis on which the text is built, let us see, as the Lord may enable, how this union—for union is declared by the expression "*in Christ Jesus*"—is *of God*.

1. It is, then, first *of the purpose of God*. Whatever God does, he does in harmony with his eternal purposes. This in Scripture is sometimes called "the counsel of his own will." "Who worketh all things," says Paul, "after the counsel of his own will." (Ephes. 1:11.) To the same effect the apostle speaks in the words, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself;" and in similar language he expresses himself, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." But still more plainly, if possible, and clearly does he lay down the same solemn truth where

he says, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Now, if we put together these passages, we shall see in them all the sovereignty of God's *will*, and that this will determined itself in certain fixed *purposes*. Thus, whether we speak of the "good pleasure of his will," or the "counsel of his own will," or his "good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself," or "his own purpose and grace," we still come to the same point, the sovereignty and supremacy of the will of God. This, therefore, we must lay down as a foundation truth, that the will of God must be supreme, and being supreme, can never meet with any disappointment or defeat. No creature in heaven and no creature upon earth can ever stand before the execution of God's will. No creature in heaven could or would do so, for his will is there perfectly obeyed; and whatever opposition any creature upon earth may raise against it, his will must triumph over all, as he says, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." (Isaiah 27:4.) It was, then, of this eternal will of God that his people should have a union with the Son of his love.

2. But this union of the Church with his dear Son was not only according to the will and purpose of God, for that will and that purpose embrace all events and circumstances; but it was also of the *love of God*. I have often been struck with an expression of our blessed Lord in his intercessory prayer, "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John 17:23.) What a view does this give us of the love of God to his people, that he loved them with the same love as that with which he loved his only begotten Son! But we must bear in mind that this love to them was only in the Son of his love. This, therefore, made our Lord say, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." (John

17:26.)

3. But not only was God's sovereignty displayed in the good pleasure of his will and his everlasting love, but also in the *execution* of his eternal purposes; for the good pleasure of his will can only be made known by its execution. In pursuance, therefore, of his eternal purpose and in the flowing forth of his eternal love, he gave his people a union with Christ. This is beautifully expressed by our gracious Lord: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me;" and, again, "They are thine, and all mine are thine and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." (John 17:6, 9, 10.)

4. But this sovereignty is to be made known in *manifestation*, as well as in purpose and execution; for the will of God is secret to us until it flows down the stream of time and is made known to our heart by a divine and heavenly power. Thus there is not only an eternal union with Christ Jesus in the purpose of God and in the gift of his people to him, before time began to run its course, but there is a spiritual and living union built upon it and flowing out of it, which is given to the soul when it is regenerated by the power of God's grace. The apostle tells us that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) But these spiritual blessings depend upon and flow out of union with Christ, which made the apostle say, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Now, amongst these spiritual blessings, the greatest is a spiritual union with Christ, for in that is contained every other. Whatever then be the purposes of God, or whatever eternal union a man may have with Christ, he has no *spiritual* union until he has been made a partaker of his Spirit; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom.

8:9); and, again, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) We thus see that the saints of God are in Christ Jesus, not only in the original purpose of God, which forms the foundation as well as the source of every other blessing; but that they are also "in Christ Jesus" by the execution of that purpose in the gift of them to be his, and also "in Christ Jesus" by the manifestation of that union by that work of grace upon their heart, whereby Christ is formed in them the hope of glory.

ii. But we have in Scripture four sweet and most expressive figures whereby this union with Christ, as a vital, experimental reality, is set forth. They all tend to the same point; they all preach the same doctrine; they all unfold the same experience; indeed, they are so graciously and divinely constructed, that each serves to illustrate and confirm the other. I shall, therefore, in endeavouring this morning to trace out more plainly and clearly the nature and effects of this heavenly union, bring forward these four figures, that we may gather from them not only a clearer view of what this union is in itself, but may also gather up some encouraging testimony that we are personal partakers of it.

1. The first figure which I shall bring forward is that which our most gracious Lord employed when he said to his disciples, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches.*" (John 15:5.) Here the Lord sets forth the union which the Church has with him by the figure of a tree, and the branches which are in it and grow out of it. Now, if you look at a tree, and especially at a vine, you will observe in a moment that the branches have no life, or growth, or indeed any being out of the stem; that they never were possessed of any independent existence; that they grew out of the stem, and had no being but what they had in union with it. Look at this point again. Set before the eyes of your mind the stem of a vine as first

planted against a wall. What do you see? A solitary stem. But look a little closer: you will now see peeping out of the bark on each side of the stem little buds from top to bottom. Now, as spring advances and the sap flows, mark what follows. First, the bud swells; then it elongates itself into a branch; then as the season advances the branch becomes clothed with leaves, and flowers, and fruit. But whether bud, or branch, or clothed with leaves, flowers, or fruit, it had no existence independent of its existence in the stem. Its being was originally in the stem, and it was gradually evolved out of it through the communication of the life and sap which were in the stem out of which it came. So it is with the members of Christ: they have no independent existence out of him. Our blessed Lord, therefore, himself says, "Without me," or, as it is in the margin, "severed from me," ye can do nothing. Thus, without a union with Christ, we have no spiritual existence; and we may boldly say that we no more have a spiritual being in the mind of God independent of Christ, than the branch of a tree has an independent existence out of the stem in which it grows. But you will observe, also, in this figure of the vine and the branches, how all the fruitfulness of the branch depends upon its union with the vine. Whatever life there is in the branch, it flows out of the stem; whatever strength there is in the branch, it comes from its union with the stem; whatever foliage, whatever fruit, all come still out of its union with the stem. And this is the case, whether the branch be great or small. From the stoutest limb of a tree to the smallest twig, all are in union with the stem and all derive life and nourishment from it. So it is in grace: not only is our very being, as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, connected with our union with Christ, but our well-being. All our knowledge, therefore, of heavenly mysteries, all our faith, all our hope, and all our love—in a word, all our grace, whether much or little, whether that of the babe, the child, the young man, or

the father, flows out of a personal, spiritual, and experimental union with the Lord Jesus; for we are nothing but what we are in him, and we have nothing but what we possess by virtue of our union with him.

2. Now take another figure which the Holy Ghost has employed and sanctified to the same divine use—that of a *building* of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation, and his people living stones built upon him. This figure is very beautifully brought forward by the apostle where, speaking of the saints, he says, that they "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." You will observe that the people of God are spoken of here, as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"—that is, the foundation which they laid, but that Jesus Christ himself is "the chief corner stone;" and they are represented as growing into a holy temple in him. From this figure we gather two things, first, that this union is a union of support, and, secondly, a union also of living and spiritual influence. For our blessed Lord is spoken of as "the corner stone," which is that stone on which the whole weight of the building rests. And as the saints "*grow* into a holy temple in Christ," it implies a communication of divine life, for life and growth always go together. But the apostle Peter opens up this figure in a still more clear and blessed way, where he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:4, 5.) The words "*lively* stones" should have been translated "living stones," for it is in the original exactly the same word as is translated a "living

stone" in the preceding verse; and I hardly know why our translators made an alteration which has rather obscured the meaning. Now what a wonderful difference there is between a building such as we this morning are assembled in, of which the stones are dead stones and the foundation a dead foundation, and that heavenly building which "groweth up into a holy temple for the habitation of God." In this spiritual house, this glorious temple, built for eternity, the foundation is a living foundation, and the stones built upon it and in union with it are living stones. Thus not only does every living stone rest upon the foundation as its only support, but from this corner stone which bears it up and on which it leans with all its weight, there flows a stream of heavenly life which diffuses itself into every stone of the spiritual building, of whatever size it be, or whatever part it occupy; and the more heavily and the more closely that each stone presses upon the foundation, the more does life flow into it. Thus to be built upon Christ is not merely to rest upon him as the foundation, as stones do in a literal building, but so to rest upon him that a sensible communication of his grace may flow into every living stone in union with it. Look at this in an experimental point of view. If the grace of God be in your heart, there will be a resting upon the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will be leaning upon him with all the weight of your sins and sorrows; and the more heavily they press you down the more you will lean upon him. Now you will find just in proportion as you lean upon him that there will be a communication of life out of his fulness to your soul; and as this is more and more opened up to your heart there will be a more exclusive resting upon him in every doubt and difficulty, in every trial and temptation, for you will find that you cannot bear your troubles alone, for "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth." (Eccl. 4:10.) And you will also find that when you can cease from all exertions and all strivings of your own, and clasp him round in faith, as the stone

embraces the foundation, there will be a communication out of his fulness to maintain in active exercise every grace of the spirit in your heart.

3. But take another figure, for I wish to open up this subject as the Scriptures have laid it down—that of *the head and members*. This we find very clearly spoken of by the apostle, both in the Epistle to the Ephesians and in that to the Colossians. I shall take the latter, as the more clear: "Not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19.) Here the blessed Lord is represented as the Head, and his people as the members of his mystical body. Now we know what an intimate union the members of our body have with the head and with each other, and that, as I pointed out in the case of the vine, our bodily members never had an independent existence; they never subsisted out of union with the head and with each other. So it is in grace: the saints of God, viewed as saints of God, never had any subsistence except in union with the Son of God. In him they were chosen, as the apostle declares, "According as he hath chosen us in him." In him they are "accepted" (Eph. 1:6); in him they obtained their inheritance. (Eph. 1:11.) But we must bear in mind that as no figure can adequately set forth the mystery of union with Christ, so this figure of Head and members falls short of the divine reality shadowed forth therein. Our literal head does not differ from our members in nature or substance; but Christ, our glorious Head, widely differs from us, as being the eternal Son of God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the unity of the divine Essence. He, therefore, as our spiritual Head, is more to us spiritually than our head to our body naturally, as being everything to us; for we derive from him all our life and all our fruitfulness. As our Head, he is not only over us to rule and govern, but to communicate to

us out of his own fulness every spiritual gift and grace. But this communication is only by virtue of a close, intimate, and vital union with him. Thus everything which makes us and manifests us as saints of God, is derived from a union with him as close as that which our members have with our literal and natural head. Where are our eyes but in our head? our ears but in our head? our smell, our taste, our speech but in our head? Whence all our powers of thought, reflection, memory, or movement? Do not all centre in, all flow from our head? Such is Christ as "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.)

4. But there is another figure also which the Holy Ghost has employed to set forth this vital union between Christ and his Church—that of *man and wife*, who have one flesh, one name, one interest, and one affection, the closest of all possible unions between persons naturally distinct. Thus the apostle, exhorting husbands to love their wives, and quoting the ancient declaration that "a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh," adds, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Eph. 5:32.) She is, therefore, called the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19:7); and the holy city, New Jerusalem, a type of the Church in its triumphant state, is said to be "prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2.) Upon this figure is built the whole of the Song of Solomon; and in many passages in the Old Testament does the Lord speak of his Church as being "betrothed" to him in that closest and tenderest of all unions, as, for instance, in Hosea, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever;" and again, "It shall be at that day saith the Lord that thou shalt call me Ishi (that is, my husband), and shall call me no longer Baali," that is my Lord or master. (Hosea 2:16.) This union stands in two things, a participation of the

same nature whereby the Lord partakes of her flesh, and a participation of his Spirit whereby she is baptized into a spiritual union with him.

Now these four figures the Holy Ghost has made use of to set forth the union which the saint of God has with Christ Jesus; and though they differ from each other, yet one common idea runs through the whole—that of a union of a most intimate and indissoluble nature, designed, executed, and manifested as the result of infinite wisdom, love, and grace, and the only source and fountain of everything that can make us holy and happy both for time and eternity.

iii. But the question may arise, How are we brought to realize our knowledge of a *personal interest* in this union? It is not seeing it in the word, or assenting to it as a grand and glorious truth, that will give us any scriptural evidence of a personal interest in it. We must have the *witness of the Spirit* to our spirit that we are the children of God, and especially the Spirit of adoption to call God, Abba, Father. This is being baptised with the Holy Ghost into the same Spirit with Christ. As, then, you are thus made to drink into one Spirit with the Lord, and he is pleased to reveal his Person and work, blood and love, grace and glory to your soul, it gives you a sensible evidence, and I may say the highest and greatest of all evidences, of your eternal union with him. How does the branch of a tree know, so to speak, or rather manifest its union with the stem? By receiving sap out of the stem, flowing into its tissues and fibres, and clothing it with leaves and flowers and fruit. How does the stone, so to speak, know its union with the foundation? By constantly leaning upon it and feeling the support which it gives, and the strength which it communicates. How do the members of the body know their union with the head? By being directed by it, acting in obedience to it, and being continually influenced by

it. How does the wife know her union with her husband? By looking back to the day on which the marriage knot was tied, and knowing that that was the means whereby they were made one flesh. So it is in grace. We have to know our union with Christ by its sensible effects; by the experimental communication of his Spirit, as in the vine; of his support, as in the foundation; of his life and influence, as in the head; and of his love and presence, as in the husband. Thus if in him we live, as the branch in the vine; if on him we lean, as the stone on the foundation; if in him we move, as the member in the head; and if in him we embrace in love and affection, as the wife the husband—that will be the clearest evidence of our union with him.

But this union is not always thus clear to the saint of God. There may be a real union, and yet, through doubt and fear, from the weakness of faith, the temptation of Satan, and the exercise of a misgiving heart, a sense of this union may be much obscured. It is, therefore, necessary to look at what I may call *minor* evidences, signs, and tokens which the Lord has graciously given in his word to clear up these doubts and difficulties. The grand point of union with Christ is, as I have shown, the possession of his Spirit; for as he is one with us by a participation of our nature, we are one with him by a participation of his Spirit. Now, where his Spirit is, there will be certain fruits of his indwelling presence, for the Spirit is never without his fruits wherever he is by his indwelling presence and power. There will be then repentance of sin; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; a hope in his mercy; love to his name; the fear of God in a tender conscience; separation from the world; a spirit of prayer; real humility of mind and self-abasement before the Lord; there will be also at times heavenly affections and gracious desires, a sensible abhorrence of all evil, and a cleaving to all that is good. So that if you cannot always or often realise your union with

Christ by the flowing in of his love and presence, and by the immediate witness of his Spirit, you may still look at these minor evidences in your favour, and as the Lord may enable, gather up from them a comfortable hope that indeed you have union with the son of God, and that he has taken possession of your heart.

II.—But I pass on now to show some of *the benefits and blessings* of this union with Christ, for it is not an unfruitful union. As a proof of this, glance for a single moment at the figures which I have brought forward from the word of truth. Is not the union of vine and branches a fruitful union? "So shall ye bear much fruit," said our Lord to his disciples. Is not the union of foundation and living stones a fruitful union, when the result is the growing of a holy temple to the Lord? Is not the union of head and members a fruitful union, when life and health and every active movement of the body are connected with it? And is not the union of husband and wife a fruitful union, when the olive branches overspread the table? So it is by the benefits and blessings which spring out of this union with Christ, and by the possession and enjoyment of them that we are able chiefly to realise the blessed fact that we are one with him.

i. In our text, four leading benefits and blessings are declared to arise out of our union with Christ; for the apostle declares that "of God he is made unto us *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

I have before pointed out that the gift of Christ to us, to be in us and for us such a source of heavenly blessings, is as much an act of the sovereignty of God as giving us a union with the Son of his love. We thus see the sovereignty of God firmly fixing, and, if I may use the expression, unalterably riveting together Christ and the Church—giving and fixing them in

Christ, and giving and fixing Christ in them. But now let us look at these benefits in detail, and view by the eye of faith how Christ Jesus of God is made unto us each of these heavenly blessings.

1. First, then, he is made unto us *wisdom*. The Lord knows what we are, as so deeply, so awfully sunk in the Adam fall. Adam was wise as well as upright; but with the fall both were gone as in a moment; for the same awful crash which broke to pieces his innocency wrecked and ruined his wisdom, and thus he became a fool as well as a sinner. This folly we inherit from him; for "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." God, then, as perfectly acquainted with the folly of our mind, with our wretched ignorance and inability to find out the way of salvation, or to walk in it when found, has mercifully and graciously given to us One in the courts of bliss who shall be to us and for us far beyond all that we have lost, and has therefore made him our "wisdom." "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and therefore a fulness of heavenly wisdom as well of every other divine grace; and of this wisdom he communicates out of his fulness to his believing people. I do not like exactly to say that his wisdom is theirs by imputation, and yet there is a sense in which it may be called such. Take for instance the figure of head and members. Is not our head, in a sense, wisdom for every member of the body? Does it not bear the responsibility of every movement, so that all the wisdom or skill which any member possesses may be considered as being in the head? Does not the eye guide the hands and feet? Does not the ear hear for the whole body? Does not the brain think and the tongue speak for every member? Thus we see naturally that all our wisdom lies in our head, and the wisdom of our head is put to the account of all the members. So, spiritually, all our heavenly wisdom is in our covenant Head. The people of God see and feel their ignorance and

folly; their inability to guide their own feet into the way of truth and peace. Their daily experience convinces them how easily they are entangled in the snares of sin and Satan; how dark their mind, how hard their heart, how carnal their frame, when the Lord does not communicate light, life, and power to their souls. To remedy then and overcome these miserable evils under which they groan and sigh, being burdened, Jesus Christ is of God made unto them wisdom; so that when the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon his dear Son in the courts of bliss, he views him as their representative head, and sees all the wisdom that they need stored up in his eternal fulness. Thus, as he does not impute to them their sins because of Christ's righteousness, so he does not impute unto them their follies because of Christ's wisdom. "Ye are wise in Christ," says the apostle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:10)—wise by your union with him. Now out of this wisdom which dwells in Christ without measure, he communicates to his people. They have none of their own. What they have is freely given to them liberally and bountifully, without stint and without upbraiding.

But it may be as well to glance at some of the effects of this wisdom as divinely communicated to the saints of God. To see, then, their ruined and undone estate, and to flee from the wrath to come; to sue for mercy; to cry for a manifestation of pardoning love; to be thoroughly and deeply convinced that there is no salvation by the works of the law; and to despair of being justified by their own righteousness, ever bearing in mind the day of death and of judgment after death, is a part of this wisdom; as Moses cried aloud, "O that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end." (Deut. 32:29.) To look unto Jesus by the eye of faith; to see him as the Son of God, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" and to view the treasures of love and grace which are stored up in

his blood and righteousness, is also a part of this wisdom. To depart from all evil and seek all that is good; to obey the precepts as well as believe the promises; to walk tenderly, cautiously, and circumspectly in the fear of God; to read and pray and meditate; to commune with their own heart, and be ever seeking divine teaching, is a part also of this wisdom. In fact, this wisdom is indispensable for every right movement in heart, lip, and life; for every good word and work; for our conduct in the church and in the world; and for everything becoming our holy profession. This the people of God deeply feel. Well do they know that not a single truth can they see aright except by seeing light in his light. Not a snare can they shun, or danger avoid, but by his warning voice or guiding hand; not a doctrine can they understand, not a promise believe, not a precept obey, except he who of God is made unto them wisdom, is pleased to communicate it to their heart. But, by looking to him, and receiving out of his fulness supplies of divine instruction, which he communicates to them through the word of his grace, as made life and spirit to their hearts, they are made wise unto salvation; and thus from their living and spiritual union with him, wisdom flows into their bosom out of his fulness, as in the figure of the vine, sap flows out of the stem into the branch. Thus, as he is their wisdom *representatively* in the courts of bliss, being their Counsellor and Advocate who pleads their cause, so he is their wisdom *efficiently*, by the communication of this wisdom to their hearts, for all the wisdom they have comes out of his fulness. And he is their wisdom also, as being the *end* and *object* of all the wisdom they possess or require, for the highest, greatest, and best of all wisdom is to know him and the power of his resurrection; to know experimentally the beauty and glory of his divine Person; the efficacy of his atoning blood and of his justifying righteousness; and, above all things, to know our happy and eternal interest in all that he is, in all that he has to the Church of God.

2. But he is also made of God unto them "*righteousness.*" We have all and each of us to stand before the bar of God; and how can we stand there, unless we have a righteousness wherewith the law of God shall be fully satisfied? Our own righteousness, the Scripture declares, is "as filthy rags." In that, then, we cannot appear before the throne of God. But our blessed Lord has wrought out a righteousness by a full and perfect obedience to the law which we have broken. He as thoroughly obeyed it in thought, in word, and in action; and this righteousness is imputed to those that believe. This is our wedding garment; this is our justification. We have no other in which to stand before the throne of God. But this robe of righteousness which is imputed to those that believe is perfect, because it is the obedience of the Son of God; and by it all that believe are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. I shall not dwell, however, longer on this point, as it is one which I have often brought before you, and in which, I trust, you are well established by the grace of God. I therefore pass on to the next heavenly blessing.

3. Of God he is made unto us "*sanctification.*" It is a solemn declaration of the apostle, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.) To possess this holiness, therefore, is a necessary and indispensable meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; but this meetness must be wrought in us by the power of God's grace, for I am very sure that in ourselves of it we have none. But see its necessity. What happiness could there be in the courts of bliss unless we had a nature to enjoy it? Unless we were made capable of seeing Christ as he is, and enjoying his presence for evermore, heaven would be no heaven to us. Nothing unclean or unholy can enter there. Sanctification, therefore, must be wrought in us by the power of God, to

make us meet for the heavenly inheritance.

But as this is a rather important point, let us devote a few minutes to it. The apostle declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is "of God made unto us sanctification." Now, he is so in various ways. He is so, first, as our *federal Representative*—that is, he, in the presence of God, as the covenant head of the Church, represents her as perfect in holiness. But he is also the *source* and *fountain* of all sanctification; for all the holiness ever possessed by all or any of the saints of God is received out of his fulness. And he is their sanctification also *imputatively*, in that the holiness of his nature is imputed to them; for they stand "complete in him;" and the holiness of his human nature, with the merit of his obedience and sufferings and blood-shedding, are put to the account of the people of God; in which sense he is said to have "sanctified them with his own blood." (Heb. 13:12.)

But besides this representative, imputed, and meritorious sanctification, he is so as the *root* of all holiness, for it is by being grafted into him that we partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. He, therefore, communicates of his Spirit and grace to give us heavenly affections, holy desires, gracious thoughts, tender feelings; and above all, that love whereby he is loved as the altogether lovely. By the sanctifying operations of his Spirit, he separates us from everything evil, plants his fear deep in the heart, that it may be a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death; and works in us a conformity to his suffering image here, that we may be conformed to his glorified image hereafter. Thus there is a perfect and an imperfect sanctification—perfect by imputation, imperfect in its present operations. But the one is the pledge of the other; so that as surely as Christ now represents his people in heaven as their holy Head, so will he eventually bring them to be for ever with him in those abodes of perfect holiness and perfect happiness, which are

prepared for them as mansions of eternal light and love.
4. We now approach the last blessing of which our text speaks, "*Redemption.*"

This word implies several things.

It implies, first, a state of *captivity*; for in ancient times captives in war could only be redeemed by a price paid for their deliverance. Thus we read again and again of the children of Israel being "redeemed out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," implying their captivity under Pharaoh.

It is sometimes applied to a *deliverance* from *death*, as in the redemption of the first-born, or of unclean animals whose neck was to be broken unless redeemed.

And sometimes it is applied to a redemption from *debt*, as it was often the practice to sell a debtor for a slave.

Now in all these three senses is Christ of God "made unto us redemption;" from the captivity of sin, from the curse of the law, from the awful debt which we owe to divine justice, has the blessed Lord redeemed all who believe in his name.

Now just see, by way of retrospect, what heavenly blessings there are for those who have a living union with the Son of God. Everything is provided for them that shall be for their salvation and their sanctification: not a single blessing has God withheld that shall be for their eternal good. View them as foolish, ignorant, unable to see the way, puzzled and perplexed by a thousand difficulties, harassed by sin, tempted by Satan, far off upon the sea. How shall they reach the heavenly shore? God, by an infinite act of sovereign love, has made his dear Son to be their "*wisdom*," so that none shall err so as to err fatally; none shall miss the road for

want of heavenly direction to find it or walk in it. Their glorious Head, who is in heaven, is made of God unto them wisdom on earth to bring them to their heavenly inheritance. He opens up his word to their heart; he sends down a ray of light into their bosom, illuminating the sacred page and guiding their feet into the way of truth and peace. If they wander, he brings them back; if they stumble, he raises them up; and whatever be the difficulties that beset their path, sooner or later some kind direction or heavenly admonition comes from his gracious Majesty. Thus the wayfaring man, though a fool, does not err in the way of life, for his gracious Lord being his "wisdom" leads him safely along through every difficulty until he sets him before his face in glory.

But they want a "*righteousness*." How can they stand before the throne, seeing they are of and in themselves such poor, filthy, defiled creatures? God has devised a way. His dear Son has wrought out for them a perfect robe of righteousness; and the Holy Spirit brings it near and clothes them with it, so that in it they stand without spot or blemish before the throne.

But besides this they are unholy; their very nature is defiled; they are worldly and carnal, and have no taste naturally, for heavenly things. The blessed Lord is of God made unto them "*sanctification*," to impute to them not only the holiness of his nature, but also to send down the Holy Spirit into their bosom to give them a new heart and a new spirit, to supply them with heavenly graces, to raise up in their soul spiritual affections, and adorn them with every new covenant fruit.

But again, they have sold themselves to sin and Satan; are often in deep captivity to a body of sin and death; owe a thousand talents, of which they cannot pay a single farthing.

The Son of God is made unto them "*redemption*," so as to pay off their debts, to break off all their legal fetters, to set the prisoners free, and bring them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

And all those heavenly blessings are connected with, and flow out of their union with Christ. How needful, then, it is to be able to realise some inward sense of this union; for if we can realise our personal interest in it, then all these blessings are ours. Can we realise it? Do we feel it? Are we experimentally acquainted with it? Do we know anything of the Lord Jesus Christ by any revelation of his Person, his work, his love, his blood, and his grace; by any teaching of his blessed Spirit; by any communication of his light, life, and power to our heart; any living faith in his name, any hope in his mercy, any love toward him who is altogether lovely? As we can trace these things more or less in our bosom, it raises up an evidence of our union with the Son of God; and as we can trace this union more and more clearly, then our faith rises to embrace him as of God made unto us all these heavenly blessings. Under a deep sense of our ignorance and folly, we go to him to be taught as our "*wisdom*;" under a sense of our nakedness, we go to him for clothing as our "*righteousness*;" under a knowledge of the carnality of our heart and inability to be aught that is good, we go to him as our "*sanctification*;" feeling the bondage of sin and Satan, we go to him as our "*redemption*." This is making use of him; this is receiving of his fulness; this is believing in his name unto eternal life; and this is realising the blessedness of a personal union with the Son of God.

III.—Now, as these things are feelingly realised, then there comes a *praising* and *blessing* the name of God for these mercies, and a glorying only in the Lord. "That, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." But

where is it written? Is it not in Jeremiah? "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." (Jer. 9:23, 24.) So we are allowed to glory. But in what and in whom? Not in ourselves: *that* is for ever disannulled. The Lord has purposed to pour contempt upon all human glory, that none should glory in himself, whatever he be or whatever he have. But when a man has a view of the Son of God in his beauty, in his suitability, in his heavenly grace and divine glory, then he can and may glory in the Lord. He can say, "O what a Lord there is above! How glorious is he in his excellency, in his suitability, and in his blessedness; how glorious his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and his redemption. Let my whole glory be there; let me not take to myself a single atom of it. If I am wise, let me give him the glory of being my wisdom; if righteous, let me give him the glory of being my righteousness; if I have any fruit of the Spirit, let me give him the glory of being my sanctification; if I am redeemed from death and hell, let the glory of my redemption be his." This is doing as God would have us to do, glorying in his dear Son. And the Lord will bring all his people to this spot sooner or later. He will give them such views of the effects of the fall, of the misery of sin, and of their own helplessness; and will give them such gracious views of his dear Son, as shall wean them from glorying in the creature and make them glory in the Lord as all their salvation and all their desire. It may be by a long course of severe discipline, but the Lord will eventually bring all his people there; for he has determined to glorify his dear Son, and when we can thus glorify him, then we have the mind of Christ, and are doing the will of God.