

Union With Christ

By David Feddes

The New Testament often speaks of a connection between Christians and Christ. It often speaks of being in Christ or of Christ being in us. It also speaks of us being crucified with Christ, of being raised with Christ, of being seated in heaven with Christ. Christians are in union with Christ.

Union with Christ involves is **legal union**. Jesus is our representative, he is our legal head, he acts on our behalf, and what he does is counted by God as ours. Think for a moment of the ruler of a country. When he says something or takes an action, he is doing it on behalf of the whole country. He decides, for example, to declare war, and suddenly the whole country is at war. Similarly, all who are united to Christ are involved with him legally. When he does something, everybody is involved in that action, in this case his life and death and resurrection and ascension. There is a legal union that affects our status.

In addition to a legal union, there is a **living union**. Jesus lives in us and we live in him through a living connection. Jesus is our living head, and we are his body. His actions affect and direct our experience, not just our status but our experience. His death and resurrection and reign flow into our lives. It's true that he died **for** us and was raised from the dead **for** us, but it's also true that his death and his resurrection flow into our lives and do something **in** us.

Crucified, buried, raised, and seated with Christ

The New Testament, especially the writings of Paul, speaks often of this living union with Christ. Paul wrote, "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:6,11). If you've been crucified with Christ, then you count your sinful self a goner, dead on the cross along with Jesus because you died with him.

Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). He's got a new life, the Christ life. We often emphasize that the Son of God gave himself **for** us in dying on the cross, but we also need to realize we were crucified **with** Him, and an old self dies and the Christ life comes alive **in** us.

The apostle says that we've been buried and then raised with Christ "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4).

Author R. C. Lucas says baptism into Christ is "the work of the Spirit which unites us to Christ, signified and sealed, but not necessarily conveyed by water baptism." When Paul talks about being baptized into Christ, that is an action of the Holy Spirit, and our baptism with water is a sign of that. It is not automatically done by water baptism; it is done by the Holy Spirit of the

Living God. When we go into the water and come out of the water, it is a sign of being buried with Christ and raised with Christ, and it is an action performed not just by a minister and not just by water, but by the Holy Spirit of the Living God.

Paul speaks of “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses.....God made alive together with him” (Colossians 2:12-13). Our union with Christ means that somehow, in Jesus’ resurrection to life, all who are connected with Jesus are also raised to life.

Every conversion is a resurrection from the dead, a participation in Jesus’ resurrection. To make a dead spirit alive, God must unleash the very same power that he used to raise Jesus from the dead. So when you put your faith in Christ, you are alive with the power that performed history’s greatest miracle, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, your conversion is a similar miracle. In a sense, it was no harder for God to raise Jesus’ dead body than it is for him to raise your dead spirit and make you eternally alive to him.

Someone once described preaching as "twenty minutes to raise the dead." When you preach the Word of God in the authority of Jesus Christ, you are bringing the resurrection power of Jesus Christ to bear on your hearers, and God can raise dead spirits to life.

Scripture speaks of being crucified and buried with Christ, but also of being raised with Christ and seated on the throne with Christ. Ephesians 2 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4–6).

Union with Christ means that whatever happens to Christ happens to us, and because Christ is raised and because Christ is enthroned, we also have a participation already now in his resurrection and reign. In some mysterious sense, already now we have a participation in the reign, a connection with the heavenly reign of Jesus Christ.

Christ in you

Not only are we connected with Christ in what happens to him, but union with Christ also means Christ living in us: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Jesus said, “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me” (John 17:22–23). The Father is in Christ, and Christ is in us by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul prayed that people would be “strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:16-17). What a tremendous statement: Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith!

“Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). This is the ultimate of what it means to be a Christian: Christ lives in me, and I live in him and through him. To be a Christian is not just to hold correct opinions based on the Bible, or to get off the hook for your sins, or to have a ticket to heaven.

Praise God, it involves that. True faith is based on the truth of the Bible. It does mean you are forgiven and released from your sins, it does mean that you will go to heaven someday if you belong to the Lord, but that is not all it is.

To be a Christian is to have Christ living inside you. You do not just have eternal life, you have the life of the Eternal. You have the life of God in the soul of man. That is an extraordinary reality. The Bible says we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). We have the life of Christ by his Holy Spirit living in us.

Union with Christ

1. His suffering is your suffering.
2. His mission is your mission.
3. His mind is your mind.
4. His glory is your glory.
5. His life is your life.
6. His energy is your energy.

What does union with Christ involve? His suffering is your suffering. His mission is your mission. His mind is your mind. His glory is your glory. His life is your life. His energy, his power, his strength, is your energy and power and strength.

1. His suffering is your suffering.

Jesus said to Saul, the persecutor of Christians, when he met him on the Damascus road and turned him into Paul, the great missionary: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). Jesus was already in heaven; his suffering was over in one sense, but in another sense he was still being persecuted because Saul was persecuting Christians. When Christians were suffering, Jesus was suffering. When they were being persecuted, Jesus was being persecuted. Jesus said of Paul, "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:16).

Jesus' suffering is our suffering. The apostle Paul later wrote, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him** in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:16-18). That is a phrase we often like to skip over, "provided we suffer with him." But if we are in union with Jesus Christ, we will suffer with him and also share in his glory.

The apostle Paul said, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24). That seems like a strange statement. What is lacking in Christ's afflictions that Paul is going to fill up in his own sufferings?

Why is such a statement hard for us to understand in the first place? One reason is that many of us prize prosperity and pleasure, so any talk about suffering tends to perplex us, baffle us, and get us down. Instead of taking it as part of God's revelation, something very clear in the Bible, we try not to think much about that suffering part. Another reason is that we emphasize

individualism so much that we often overlook interconnectedness among people and even overlook our union with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the head of his body, the church, and when his body suffers, the head suffers. In one sense, there is nothing lacking in the sufferings of Jesus Christ for our salvation. He paid the full price. When he cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), it was finished: his suffering to purchase the salvation of the world was complete, and the full price had been paid for our sins. That was enough to justify all sinners whom God had chosen and to make them right with God. So there is nothing lacking in Jesus' atoning suffering.

But throughout the history of the world, in God's plan, the body of Christ, the people of Christ, are going to suffer more. Until then, there is more suffering to be done, and that is what is meant by "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." There is still more suffering to be done for the sake of the church: suffering by missionaries to spread the gospel, suffering by pastors who face persecution, suffering by all Christians as they face the attacks of the world. That suffering will not be complete until Jesus comes again. Meanwhile, we are filling up what is still lacking in those sufferings of Christ, because our sufferings are his sufferings. His suffering is your suffering.

Prosperity preachers don't talk about suffering with Christ. For instance, Bishop Eddie Long was lead pastor of a megachurch with 25,000 members. He had a \$3 million annual income, drove a \$350,000 Bentley, and ministered in a \$50 million cathedral. He was in the news because of some sexual scandals. When his huge income and lavish lifestyle were questioned, he said, "We're not just a church, we're an international corporation. I deal with the White House. I deal with other world leaders." He presented himself as a very important person who deserved to make a great deal of money as a minister of the gospel.

But genuine preachers do not boast about dealing with presidents and world leaders. They deal with King Jesus, the King of the universe, and he lives in them. They understand that if you are a servant of King Jesus, his suffering is your suffering. It is not about being the head of a corporation or making as much money as possible from the gospel.

The apostle Paul said, "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:8–10). That is part of being in Christ and having Christ in you, that we may share his sufferings.

"For as **we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings**, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too" (2 Corinthians 1:5). And again, "**always carrying in the body the death of Jesus**, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10–11). I am dwelling on this point at considerable length because it is a very hard one for us to take to heart: we share in Christ's sufferings, knowing that we also then share in his eternal life as well.

Missionary David Livingstone did not have an easy life. During his time as an explorer, a medical missionary, and one who fought the slave trade in Africa, he was mauled by a lion. His house was burned in the course of a war. His wife died of malaria. He died while on his knees praying. He had an illness, and they found him dead on his knees. His heart was buried in Africa, and his body was buried back in England with great honor. He was widely admired, but his life was very challenging and not easy at all.

What did David Livingstone have to say about all this suffering that he endured? “I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa... It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then... may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us. **I never made a sacrifice.**”

Missionary Hudson Taylor said exactly the same thing: “I never made a sacrifice. Unspeakable joy all day long and every day, was my happy experience. God, even my God, was a living bright reality, and all I had to do was joyful service.” Hudson Taylor, as a missionary to China, did not have an easy life. He gave up his own culture, crossed the ocean, took on a new form of clothing, cut his hair like the Chinese, carrying a ponytail and partially shaved, fitting in with a different culture and giving up his own culture. He served for 51 years as a missionary. He survived two typhoons on a voyage, was robbed of all his possessions, and lost everything in a fire. Seven of his children died during his missionary service, and his wife died of malaria. During the Boxer Rebellion, 58 missionaries and 21 children of the China Inland Mission, of which Hudson Taylor was the head, were murdered. Yet Taylor refused any reparation payment, to show the meekness and gentleness of Christ, as he put it.

Hudson Taylor knew what it was to suffer with Christ, and yet to have the power of the Spirit of Christ in him. Taylor said, “If I had a thousand pounds China should have it—if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Savior?”

Taylor also said, “The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete.” If you have an ongoing sense of Christ in you and you in Christ, and you live in constant awareness of that, you would be completely holy.

Taylor’s tombstone had this inscription: “A Man in Christ.” That is the key to Paul, to Livingstone, to Hudson Taylor: a man in Christ, a man who is full of Christ. That is what made them so mighty, not only in their sufferings, but also in their missionary power.

2. His mission is your mission.

The apostle says, “I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you” (Colossians 1:25). He always considered himself a steward, a manager, someone who had been given treasure from God in a jar of clay to share with others. He was on a mission from Jesus Christ. Christ in you gives you a commission, a co-mission. You are on a mission

with Jesus Christ. It is a stewardship, a domain, an area of authority or action where Christ acts through your actions and reigns through your responsibility.

For some, that domain is the calling to be a pastor or a missionary to a certain place or group of people. Christ gives a heart for that domain, and that is where they serve. For others, God gives special abilities in a particular occupation and places them among certain people through that work. In that domain, Christ acts through you and reigns through the responsibilities you exercise. Part of your domain is certainly your family. If you are married and have children, then in that domain Christ lives in you, and Christ acts through you, reigning through your responsibilities. Your heart comes fully alive as you enjoy and enhance the domain where Christ acts through you in blessing others.

Sometimes the language of "domain" or "reigning with Christ" is misused as a pretext to get rich or to grab things selfishly. That is not what it means. It means you come alive when you understand the scope of God's calling for you and act on it, because it is not just you acting, it is Christ acting through you to bless others. His mission is your mission.

3. His mind is your mind.

“But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory... these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit... For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God... But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:7-16). When God gives his Spirit to us, when the Spirit of Christ comes to live within us, then we have the mind of Christ. We begin thinking his thoughts, we are shaped more and more to be wired as he is, and we discover from his Word the truth he has for us. It makes sense to us because he is living in us.

It is like tuning a radio or a television. The invisible signals are always there, but only when you have the tuner can you receive the signals. Christ living in us tunes us in to the mind of God. The Holy Spirit living in us helps us receive those signals and think like our Savior. What a calling, what a blessing, and what a privilege that is! Without Christ living in us, we cannot begin to grasp the things of God and the ways of God. The unspiritual person cannot tune in to the things of God, but we have the mind of Christ when Christ is in us.

The apostle Paul said, “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:8–10). The church itself is God's display, his showcase to the rulers and authorities. What God does in the church, and what the mind of Christ does in the people of God, is something that astonishes and amazes even the angels. "Even angels long to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:12).

To have the mind of Christ and the riches of Jesus Christ, to know this mystery that God hid for ages and then revealed, what an amazing privilege that is! That is part of union with Christ, to have more and more of the mind of Christ taking shape in us.

4. His glory is your glory.

“To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). There is something unspeakably glorious about having the eternal God living in us. Scripture says that no one can see God and live, and yet this God of overwhelming glory now dwells in us and gives us the hope of glory. That is astonishing.

Jesus Christ is the one in whom all the glory of God dwells, and when Christ lives in us by his Spirit, our hearts become a temple for him. Just as the cloud of the Shekinah glory came upon the tabernacle or the temple, so the glory of God enters into the people of God. The glory of Jesus Christ is the glory of his people.

Not only the Jewish people, but Gentiles also are made gloriously rich.

Christ is **in** us, not just with us or for us.

God reigns through us, not just over us. We are not just God’s servants, we are also God’s co-heirs, God’s co-authorities. The Bible speaks of God reigning through us and of us reigning with him.

Christ’s co-reign in my domain now is the first taste of the glory of co-reigning with Jesus over a far greater domain in eternity. Jesus said that someone who is faithful with a little will be put in charge of much (Matthew 25:21, 23). They will be given charge over cities and kingdoms (Luke 19:17, 19). We have a domain of authority now where Christ reigns in us and through us, and we want to reign well on his behalf. When we are faithful, that bit of glory we have now, claiming territory for Jesus, claiming people for him, claiming relationships for him, and letting his glory shine through us, is only the first installment. Someday we are going to be seated on a throne with Jesus and reign with him forever and ever (Revelation 3:21; 22:5). Already, in one sense, we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6), but we will one day be seated with Christ and reign with him in an even greater and more complete way.

Christ is so richly glorious that he cannot be fully expressed in any one of us. Millions of believers display different facets of Christ’s glory and reign. The same Christ lives in all of us and reigns in all of us by the same Spirit, yet this one Christ displays himself in different personalities who have a heart for different domains and whose personal glory displays an aspect of Christ’s glory that is not to be found in any other human.

There is too much of Jesus to be displayed in any one of us, so it takes many people to show the different aspects of who he is, the different glimmers and colors of his glory. The way you serve Christ may be different from the way someone else serves Christ, but both may equally display his glory in different ways. That is a splendid thing.

One reason we need to be together as Christians and really know each other in deep fellowship is to see how God's love is experienced differently by each of us and how his glory shines somewhat differently from each of us. We gain a fuller picture of God's love when we hear how others have experienced it, and we gain a fuller vision of God's glory when we see it reflected in all these different displays of glory in different people.

His glory is our glory, not just individually, but together as the church. Many different glories and splendors of Jesus Christ are displayed in the different kinds of people there are and in the different kinds of things that Jesus Christ calls us to do in his kingship and in his reign.

5. His Life is your life.

“If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:10–11). One of my favorite little books was written centuries ago by a man named Henry Scougal. The title is *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. Jesus' life is your life. Christ lives in me: that is the ultimate reality. His life is our very life.

Why do preachers and churches exist? It is simple: to proclaim Christ and to form Christ in people. If his life is your life and his life is my life, then our purpose is to help that life develop and mature in others. Paul kept laboring "until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). God's intent is that Christ more and more takes shape in us "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). Preachers and church should aim for the Christ life to be maturing and developing to its complete stature in us. “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

If you are a pastor, you do not exist to get rich. You do not exist to build expensive cathedrals. You do not exist to make an impression or to build a large organization. You exist for one purpose: to proclaim Christ and to help people become little Christs, and then to mature as the stature and the very character of Christ takes shape in them by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual salvation and spiritual formation is why pastors exist, to help that Christ life in others grow to greater and greater maturity.

Larry Crabb, in his excellent book *Connecting*, speaks of how Christians can help each other by releasing the power that is in each: “What is the power within us waiting to be released? It is the actual life of God, the energy with which the Father and Son relate to each other, a set of inclinations put in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and kept alive by his presence. It is a power that is most fully released as we develop a compelling and awe-inspiring vision of who another person is and what he or she could become because of the gospel.”

It is not just seeing the Christ life in myself, but when I see the Christ life in other Christians, whether it is my wife, my children, my close friends, people in my congregation, or other believers I meet. I have a vision for what that person could become if the Christ life were

magnified and expanded and grew to greater maturity. That is what gives us vision for building others up and ministering to them.

The apostle Paul says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16). Christ living in one believer proclaims the living Christ to Christ living in other believers, to produce the full-grown life of Christ. I have Christ living in me, you have Christ living in you, and as I proclaim the living Christ to you, the Christ living in each of us resonates and builds each other up to grow into the full-grown life of Christ.

Remember Barnabas? His birth name was Joseph, but he was nicknamed Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." He was Joe Encouragement! When hardly anybody else believed that Saul, who became Paul, was really converted, Barnabas vouched for him because he saw the grace of Christ in him. When Gentiles in Antioch were among the first non-Jewish people to become followers of Jesus, Barnabas was the one the church sent there. When Barnabas saw the the grace of God in those people, he was glad, and he helped them grow in their faith and grow into Christ. He helped build up their Christ life. That is what we do. We let the word of Christ dwell in us, and then we share that word from Christ. It awakens more and more of the life of the Spirit, the Christ life, in other people.

In heart-to-heart connections with fellow believers, you display the unique glory of Christ in you, and you delight in the unique glories of Christ in others. Christians connect in order to share what Christ is doing within us, to battle together against hindrances to Christ within, and to strengthen each other. As Christ in you connects with Christ in me, I grow in Christ’s power, insight, and love. His life is my life.

6. His energy is your energy.

Right after speaking about Christ living in us, Paul says, “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Colossians 1:29). Paul is not doing it in his own strength. Hudson Taylor did not win many people to Christ and start a movement that would eventually include millions of believers in China in his own power. David Livingstone did not achieve his explorations of Africa and help open Africa to the gospel in his own power. In each case, the missionary struggled with the energy of Christ working within him. “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

When you do Christ’s work in your assigned domain, you are not on your own. You are energized by Christ. If that domain is your marriage and your family, that is a good place to start. You are energized by Christ, and your family life can become something it never could have been otherwise. In your work life, you are energized by Christ. In your ministry and mission life, you are energized by Christ.

“He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). It does not say he can do a few things we hope for. He can do **all** that we ask or think, **more** than all we can ask or even imagine, **far more abundantly** than all we can ask or imagine, according to the power already at work within us,

because Christ is in us. This is what gives us courage. This is what gives us confidence. This is what helps us rejoice as we move forward, even when we suffer, because we are on his mission, filled with his energy.

To summarize, union with Christ means his suffering is your suffering, his mission is your mission, his mind is your mind, his glory is your glory, his life is your life, his energy is your energy. That is why the apostle Paul could say, "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).

Another mighty missionary who was powerfully used by God was St. Patrick. He went to an island where he had once been enslaved by pagans, escaped, and then was called by the Lord to return to Ireland with the gospel. Many in Ireland came to Christ through his work and the work of those who followed him. In a famous prayer, St. Patrick's Breastplate, he said,

I rise today
with the power of God to pilot me,
God's strength to sustain me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look ahead for me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to protect me,
God's way before me,
God's shield to defend me,
God's host to deliver me
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me; Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me;
Christ to the right of me,
Christ to the left of me;
Christ in my lying down,
Christ in my sitting, Christ in my rising;
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ on the tongue of all who speak to me,
Christ in the eye of all who see me,
Christ in the ear of all who hear me.

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Legal union: Jesus represents us. He is our legal head. He acts on our behalf. What he does is counted by God as ours.

Living union: Jesus lives in us and we in him through a living connection. He is our living head, and we are his body. His actions affect and direct our experience. His death, resurrection, and reign flow into our lives.

Crucified with Christ

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6:6,11)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Buried and raised with Christ

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom 6:3-4)

Baptism into Christ is "the work of the Spirit which unites us to Christ, signified and sealed but not necessarily conveyed by water baptism" (R. C. Lucas).

.....having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

And you, who were dead in your trespasses.....God made alive together with him. (Col. 2:13)

Conversion as resurrection

Every conversion is a resurrection from the dead, a participation in Jesus' resurrection. To make a dead spirit alive, God must unleash the same power he used to raise Jesus from the dead. When you put your faith in Christ, you are alive with the power that performed history's greatest miracle. In fact, your conversion is a similar miracle.

Raised and seated with Christ

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-6)

Christ in you

- Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27)
- The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me. (John 17:22-23)
- ...strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (Eph 3:16-17)
- Christ lives in me. (Galatians 2:20)
- To be a Christian is not just to hold correct opinions based on the Bible, or to get off the hook for sins, or to have a ticket for heaven.
- To be a Christian is to have Christ living inside you. You don't just have eternal life; you have the life of the Eternal One.

Union with Christ

1. His suffering is your suffering.
2. His mission is your mission.
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1. His suffering is your suffering.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” (Acts 9:5,16)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him** in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:16-18)

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Col 1:24)

Why is this hard for us to understand?

- We prize prosperity and pleasure, so sufferings perplex us and get us down.
- We emphasize individualism and often overlook interconnectedness.

Bishop Eddie Long

- \$3 million income
- Drives \$350,000 Bentley
- \$50 million cathedral

When his huge income and lavish lifestyle were questioned, Eddie Long answered, “We're not just a church, we're an international corporation. We're not just a bumbling bunch of preachers who can't talk. I deal with the White House.”

- *Genuine preachers deal with King Jesus!*

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may **share his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 1:29; 3:8-11)

For as **we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings**, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. (2 Cor 1:5)

... always **carrying in the body the death of Jesus**, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor 4:10-11)

Missionary David Livingstone

- Mauled by lion
- House burned during war
- Wife died of malaria
- Died on his knees praying
- Heart buried in Africa

I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa... It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then... may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. (David Livingstone)

Missionary Hudson Taylor

I never made a sacrifice. Unspeakable joy all day long and every day, was my happy experience. God, even my God, was a living bright reality, and all I had to do was joyful service.

- Gave up his own culture, clothing, hair
- 51 years as missionary
- Survived two typhoons on a voyage
- Robbed of all possessions

- Lost everything in a fire
- Seven children died
- Wife died of malaria
- Boxer Rebellion murdered 58 missionaries and 21 children of China Inland Mission, but Taylor refused any payment, to show “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”
- “If I had a thousand pounds China should have it—if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Savior?”
- “The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete.”
- Taylor’s tombstone: “A Man in Christ”.

2. His mission is your mission.

- I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you. (Colossians 1:25)
- Christ in you gives you a commission (co-mission), a stewardship, a domain where Christ acts through your actions and reigns through your responsibility.
- Your heart comes fully alive as you enjoy and enhance the domain where Christ acts through you in blessing others.

3. His mind is your mind.

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory... these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit... we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:7-16)

Manifold Wisdom

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:8-10)

4. His glory is your glory.

- To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:27)
- Gentiles, not only Jews, are gloriously rich.
- Christ is in us, not just with us.
- God reigns through us, not just over us.
- Christ’s co-reign in my domain now is a first taste of the glory of co-reigning with Him over a far greater domain in eternity.

- Christ is so richly glorious that he cannot be fully expressed in any one of us. Millions of believers display different facets of Christ's glory and reign. The same Christ lives in all of us and reigns in all of us by the same Spirit, yet this one Christ displays himself in different personalities who have a heart for different domains and whose personal glory displays an aspect of Christ's glory that is not to be found in any other human.

5. His Life is your life

If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:10-11)

Why do preachers and churches exist? To proclaim Christ and form Christ in people.

...until Christ is formed in you (Gal 4:19)

...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13)

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (Col 1:28)

What is the power within us waiting to be released? It is the actual life of God, the energy with which the Father and Son relate to each other, a set of inclinations put in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and kept alive by his presence. It is a power that is most fully released as we develop a compelling and awe-inspiring vision of who another person is and what he or she could become because of the gospel. (Larry Crabb, *Connecting*)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom (Colossians 3:16).

Christ living in one believer proclaims the living Christ to Christ living in other believers to produce full-grown life of Christ.

Connecting with Christ in one another

In heart-to-heart connections, you display the unique glory of Christ in you, and you delight in the unique glories of Christ in others. Christians connect in order to share what Christ is doing within us, to battle together against hindrances to Christ within, and to strengthen each other. As Christ in you connects with Christ in me, I grow in Christ's power, insight, and love.

6. His energy is your energy

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:29)

When you do Christ's work in your assigned domain, you are energized by Christ.

He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us. (Ephesians 3:20)

Union with Christ

1. His suffering is your suffering.
2. His mission is your mission.
3. His mind is your mind.
4. His glory is your glory.
5. His life is your life.
6. His energy is your energy.

St. Patrick's Breastplate

I rise today
with the power of God to pilot me,
God's strength to sustain me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look ahead for me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to protect me,
God's way before me,
God's shield to defend me,
God's host to deliver me
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me; Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me;
Christ to the right of me,
Christ to the left of me;
Christ in my lying down,
Christ in my sitting, Christ in my rising;
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ on the tongue of all who speak to me,
Christ in the eye of all who see me,
Christ in the ear of all who hear me.