

*Redemption  
Accomplished  
and Applied*

*by John Murray*

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Eighteenth Lecture

Presented by Dr. Richard Spencer

# Review

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- Here is Murray's order of the events in the application of redemption:
  1. Effectual calling
  2. Regeneration
  3. Faith and Repentance
  4. Justification
  5. Adoption
  6. Sanctification
  7. Perseverance
  8. Union with Christ
  9. Glorification

# Union with Christ

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- Murray explains why union with Christ is not just a step in the ordo salutis:

*union with Christ is in itself a very broad and embracive subject. It is not simply a step in the application of redemption; when viewed, according to the teaching of Scripture, in its broader aspects it underlies every step of the application of redemption. Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ.*

# *Union with Christ in the Ordo Salutis*

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- Puritan theologians talked about a believer's threefold union with Christ:
  - “Immanent union” refers to our being elected unto salvation in Christ from all eternity (Eph 1:4)
  - “Transient union” refers to our being united to Christ in his life, death and resurrection (Rom 6)
  - “Applicatory union” refers to our experience of union with Christ in our own life (Eph 2:5-6)
- It is instructive to examine what the Puritans said ...

# Relation to Regeneration & Justification

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- The Puritan view is summed up well by Beeke and Jones, who quote the Puritan Thomas Goodwin:

*Christ establishes a union with the elect sinner by “apprehending” him and then giving the Spirit to him. But this union is only complete (“ultimate union”) when the sinner exercises faith in Christ. This basic pattern is confirmed later in Goodwin’s work on justifying faith:*

*It is true indeed the union on Christ’s part is in order of nature first made by the Spirit; therefore Philip. iii. 12, he is said first to “comprehend us ere we can comprehend him;” yet that which makes the union on our part is faith, whereby we embrace and cleave to him. ... It is faith alone that doth it. Love indeed makes us cleave to him also, but yet faith first.*

# What Does the Bible Say?

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- Goodwin quoted part of Philippians 3:12,  
*I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*
- Beeke and Jones note,  
*Before the new believer is aware, our Lord unites us to Himself (“takes hold of us”) and works in us. The Spirit then regenerates the sinner, who in turn exercises faith toward Christ and completes the union. From that union flow all other spiritual blessings.*

# *Union with Christ*

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- Who is shaking hands with whom?



- Christ must be in us (united in regeneration)
- We must be in Christ (consummated in faith)
- But our ultimate confidence is in him!

*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;  
no one can snatch them out of my hand.      Jn 10:28*

# John Calvin

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*so long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. To communicate to us the blessings which he received from the Father, he must become ours and dwell in us. Accordingly, he is called our Head, and the first-born among many brethren, while, on the other hand, we are said to be ingrafted into him and clothed with him, all which he possesses being, as I have said, nothing to us until we become one with him. ... The whole comes to this that the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself.*

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk 3, Chap 1, Par 1



# Union with Christ

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- Paul wrote:

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 2:20

- We want to understand this verse, and others like it; what does the apostle mean?
- Paul uses the expressions “in Christ”, “in Him” and “in Christ Jesus” 112 times!

# Union with Christ

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- John Murray called union with Christ the “mother of all doctrines”, why?
  - All other doctrines are traceable back to it; without God’s having chosen a people for himself, *in Christ*, from all eternity, there would not be any Christian faith
- The Puritan Thomas Goodwin said that *being in Christ, and united to him, is the fundamental constitution of a Christian*

# *What Does the Bible Say?*

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- We are united to Christ:
  - In election (Eph 1:3-4, 2 Tim 1:9)
  - In rebirth (Eph 2:5, 10)
  - In justification (Rom 8:1, Gal 2:17)
  - In redemption (1 Cor 1:30, Eph 1:7, Col 1:14)
  - In eternal life (1 Jn 5:11, 2 Tim 1:1)
  - In salvation (2 Tim 2:10)
  - In grace (2 Tim 2:1)
  - In faith & love (1 Tim 1:14, 2 Tim 1:13)
  - In wisdom & knowledge (Col 2:3)

# *What Does the Bible Say?*

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- We are united to Christ:
  - With the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13)
  - In holiness (1 Cor 1:30)
  - In righteousness (1 Cor 1:30, 2 Cor 5:21, Phil 3:9)
  - In perseverance (Phil 4:1, 1 Thess 3:8)
  - In death (Rom 6:5, Rev 14:13)
  - In resurrection (Rom 6:5, 1 Cor 15:21-23, Eph 2:6, 1 Thess 4:14, 16)
  - In session (Eph 2:6)
  - In glory (Phil 4:19 – ESV)

# Union with Christ

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- Murray summarizes it well:

*What is it that binds past and present and future together in the life of faith and in the hope of glory? Why does the believer entertain the thought of God's determinate counsel with such joy? Why can he have patience in the perplexities and adversities of the present? Why can he have confident assurance with reference to the future and rejoice in hope of the glory of God? It is because he cannot think of past, present, or future apart from union with Christ.*

RA&A, pg 164

# *What Does the Bible Say?*

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- Our ultimate hope is bound up in Christ – it is our death and/or his second coming that will bring our union to its ultimate expression

*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

1 Thess 4:16-17

# *When did this Union Begin?*

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- In one sense, we were in Christ from all eternity, but we became “actual partakers” of Christ when we first believed

– There was a time when we were without Christ:

*at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

Eph 2:12

– We were objects of wrath:

*Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

Eph 2:3

# *The Nature of this Union*

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- Murray examines the nature of our union with Christ under two headings:
  - It is a spiritual union
  - It is a mystical union



# A Spiritual Union

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- Murray notes,

*Few words in the New Testament have been subjected to more distortion than the word “Spiritual.” Frequently it is used to denote what is little more than vague sentimentality. “Spiritual” in the New Testament refers to that which is of the Holy Spirit. ... Hence when we say that union with Christ is Spiritual we mean, first of all, that the bond of this union is the Holy Spirit himself. ... second ... it is a spiritual relationship that is in view.*

RA&A, pp 165-166

# *The Bond is the Holy Spirit*

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*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.* Rom 8:9

- The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Christ” and is the bond that unites us to him

*we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body*

1 Cor 12:13

- By the Spirit, we are all made part of the body of Christ

# *A Spiritual Relationship*

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- Murray notes that we cannot define exactly what this union means, but it is unique; it is not
  - Like the relationship within the Trinity  
(One God in three persons)
  - Like the union of God and man in Christ  
(Two natures in one person)
  - Like the union of body and soul in man
  - Just a matter of feeling, affection, understanding,  
mind, heart, will and purpose

# *A Mystical Union*

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- By saying that our union with Christ is a mystical union, Murray means that it is a mystery that has been revealed to us by God (Rom 16:25-26):
  - It was kept secret from eternity
  - It has now been made known
  - It has been revealed in the Scripture
  - Its goal is the obedience of faith

# A Mystical Union

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- Paul clearly tells us that this union is mystical:

*I have become its [the church's] servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Col 1:25-27

# A Mystical Union

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- The Bible gives us a number of different comparisons for the mystical union
- The highest comparison is found in John:  
*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*  
John 17:20-21
- This passage also tells us that our unity is not just with Christ, but also with the Father

# A Mystical Union

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- But, we must guard against error as Murray notes:

*Union with Christ does not mean that we are incorporated into the life of the Godhead. That is one of the distortions to which this great truth has been subjected.* RA&A, pg 168

- Nevertheless, this union is astounding:

*Of all the kinds of union or unity that exist for creatures the union of believers with Christ is the highest.* RA&A, pg 169

# *A Mystical Union*

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- We also see the union compared with:
  - A vine and its branches (Jn 15:1-8)
  - A head and the body (Eph 4:15-16)
  - Adam and his posterity  
(Rom 5:12-19, 1 Cor 15:19-49)
  - The stones of a building  
(Eph 2:19-22, 1 Pet 2:4-5)



# *A Mystical Union*

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- Paul compares this union with the most intimate human relationship, marriage:

*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

Ephesians 5:31-32

- As a husband and wife should be united to form one entity – defined by one purpose and will, so the church is united with Christ

# *Murray Explains: Intelligent Mysticism*

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*It is necessary for us to recognize that there is an intelligent mysticism in the life of faith. Believers are called into the fellowship of Christ and fellowship means communion. The life of faith is one of living union and communion with the exalted and ever-present Redeemer. ... There is no communion among men that is comparable to fellowship with Christ ... The life of faith is the life of love, and the life of love is the life of fellowship, or mystic communion with him who ever lives to make intercession for his people and who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*

# The Life of Faith

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- Murray notes,

*The life of true faith cannot be that of cold metallic assent. It must have the passion and warmth of love and communion because communion with God is the crown and apex of true religion. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).*

RA&A, pg 170

# *The Central Truth*

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- Calling communion with God the “crown and apex of true religion” goes along with what he said before, and repeats here,

*Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.*

RA&A, pg 170

# *Adoption and Union with Christ*

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- He goes on to relate this to adoption,

*As we found earlier in these studies, it is adoption into the family of God as sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty that accords to the people of God the apex of blessing and privilege. But we cannot think of adoption apart from union with Christ. ... Union with Christ reaches its zenith in adoption and adoption has its orbit in union with Christ.*

RA&A, pg 170

# What Does the Bible Say?

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*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Rom 8:15-17

- A passage well worth meditation. What privilege! To be co-heirs with Christ and, ultimately, to share in his glory!

# *Implications for our Lives*

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- Murray makes an important application of this doctrine clear,

*It is out of the measureless fullness of grace and truth, of wisdom and power, of goodness and love, of righteousness and faithfulness which resides in him that God's people draw for all their needs in this life and for the hope of the life to come. There is no truth, therefore, more suited to impart confidence and strength, comfort and joy in the Lord than this one of union with Christ.*

# What Does the Bible Say?

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*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

John 14:23

*I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

John 17:20-23



# *Our Relation to the Trinity*

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- Murray brings out another aspect of this union,

*The thought is overwhelming but it is unmistakable – the Father as well as Christ comes and makes his abode with the believer. ... And not only is it the Father who is united with believers and dwells in them. Jesus tells us likewise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.*

RA&A, pp 171-172

*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

Jn 14:16-17

# *Our Relation to the Trinity*

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- Murray continues,

*It is union, therefore, with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit that union with Christ draws along with it.*

RA&A, pp 172

*our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

1 John 1:3

# Murray Concludes

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*Here indeed is mysticism on the highest plane. It is not the mysticism of vague unintelligible feeling or rapture. It is the mysticism of communion with the one true and living God ... It is not the blurred confusion of rapturous ecstasy. It is faith solidly founded on the revelation deposited for us in the Scripture and it is faith actively receiving that revelation by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. But it is also faith that stirs the deepest springs of emotion in the raptures of holy love and joy.*

RA&A, pp 172-173

# *What Does the Bible Say?*

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- We will have that “holy love and joy” Murray speaks about if we meditate on the wondrous things God has done for us and how they are expressed by this doctrine of union with Christ

*God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus* Eph 2:6

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* Col 3:2-4

# Application

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- Since union with Christ is central to our faith, in order to make our calling and election sure we must be sure that we are, in fact, united with him
- There are different ways of expressing this; we can look for:
  - The life of God in the soul of man
  - True love for God, his Word, and his church
  - A sense of alienation from the world – we are aliens, ambassadors of Christ, citizens of heaven

# What Does the Bible Say?

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*if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

1 John 2:5-6

*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

John 15:4-5

# *To Prepare for Next Session*

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- You should read Chapter 9 of Part II (on Union with Christ)