

**Sermon Series:** True Spirituality

**Sermon Title:** "Defining the Relationship"

**Sermon Text:** Colossians 2:10,11

**Pre-Sermon:** This is to help you prepare for hearing from God's Word.

- Read the following verses in Colossians and identify what phrase or idea in these verses is repeated:
  - Colossians 1:2,4,14,19,22,27,28
  - Colossians 2:6,7,10,11,20
  - Colossians 3:1,3,11

**Sermon Discussion Questions:** This will help you think through the passage and what you heard in the message.

- Why is it so important to think about the nature of our relationship before we talk about what we need to do in our relationship with God?
- What phrase is found in Colossians 2:10 and 11 that is vital for understanding the argument Paul is making about Christian living in Colossians 2:16-3:17?
- We began by considering the meaning of the word in. Can you think of different ways this preposition can be used?
- What three different nuances did we say that the word "in" tells us about our relationship with Christ?
- What is the significance of being represented by Jesus before God? What illustration did the Puritans use to describe this? What illustration does the Bible use?
- How does Romans 6 talk about our union with Christ? In what way does he apply this reality?
- What illustrations does Paul use in Colossians to help us understand union with Christ? What is the significance of each of those illustrations?
- What are some other illustrations from other parts of the Bible that may help you understand what this phrase means?
- What are some of the results of being in Christ?
- Look up the following passages of Scripture and note the benefits of being in Christ:
  - Romans 3:24; 6:23
  - 1 Corinthians 1:2,4,30; 15:22
  - 2 Corinthians 5:19
  - Galatians 2:4; 3:14
  - Ephesians 1:3
  - Ephesians 2:6,7,13; 4:32
  - Philippians 4:7
  - 1 Timothy 1:14

- 2 Timothy 1:1,9

**Sermon Outline:** A sermon is much more than an outline, but perhaps this outline will help you follow the sermon.

We are thinking about what it means to be in Christ by looking at:

1. The definition of being 'in Christ'
  - a. Location
  - b. Identification
  - c. Immersion
2. The illustrations of being 'in Christ'
  - a. Head and body
  - b. Tree and soil/Vine and branches
  - c. Building and foundation
3. The results of being in Christ
  - a. Have the resources you need
  - b. Changed on the inside
  - c. New identity
  - d. New life

**The Big Idea:** This is a VERY short explanation of what this message is about and what I'm praying God will achieve through this message.

- The next few weeks we want to get practical and talk about what being spiritual looks like and what it doesn't look like. That's really Colossians 2:16 through 3:17- what not to do and what to do. But before we get specific like that, we need to make sure we understand the nature of our relationship with God, and there's a word or phrase that Paul uses, that we see repeatedly in Colossians, and especially here in Colossians 2, that is VITAL for understanding that. It is only two words but it is kind of hard to wrap your mind around what those two words mean, which is why I want to take some time and think together about what being IN CHRIST means.

**Important Quotes:** It may help to take some time to meditate on what others have said about union with Christ.

- "We cannot talk about Christian living, or for that matter Christianity at all, without a grasp of union with Christ." Why do you think he says that?
- "The gospel is not a string of blessings that God gives to us. The gospel is Jesus Christ given to us with all the blessings we need for life and godliness contained in Him." What do you think is the point of the quote? What might be some of the potential dangers of separating the benefits we receive from Christ, from Christ Himself?
- "What is it that the Spirit conveys from Christ to the believer? This is critical for understanding the practical application of union with Christ. He does not give us

merely the status of being in Christ. Status belongs to the legal aspect. Neither does he simply work his own power into us (John 16:13–15). We cannot think of the Holy Spirit's ministry to us apart from what it is that he conveys to us from Christ. It is true that he conveys Christ's truth to us, but even more significantly he conveys Jesus' life to us. This is where the doctrine of union with Christ comes alive. Being united to our Lord is not simply a union of feeling, conviction, or purpose. Morton Smith explains that, "It is not merely a union of moral sympathy, or a union of moral sentiment or affections, or of mind, or of heart, such as frequently exists between human beings in their community of purposes." It is rather a union with Christ's person, that is, with his life and death. With this being stated we should be aware that we are considering a kind of union for which there is no exact parallel in our human experience. For this reason many of the older writers describe this as a "mystical" union. It is not mystical in the sense of being vague or unintelligible. It is a believable yet impenetrable reality." What stands out to you from this quote? What hope does it give us?

- "God ordained that as Christ and the Church were one in law, so also they should be one experimentally: that not only his righteousness be imputed to His members, but that his very life should be imparted to them." Here he identifies two senses of what it means to be united to Christ. What are they? What is the difference between the two?
- "We obey and grow in sanctification because Christ obeyed in his life and was sanctified. Now that same obedient life is imparted to us and animates us now. This must not breed a lazy or passive spirituality. In all of this Scripture teaches that we "work" because God "works" in us (Phil. 2:12–13). It is not that Christ does one part and we do another part; we must not think of Christ living in us in terms of percentages and parts. All of our dying to sin and living to God is the powerful reproduction of Christ's living, dying, and resurrection. What Christ effects in His people is in a sense a replica or reproduction of what took place with Him. Not only objectively, but also in a subjective sense they suffer, bear the cross, are crucified, die, and are raised in newness of life, with Christ. We are called to "work out" what Christ has pre-made and given to us. Paul grounds our efforts in the reality of union in Colossians 2:6–7: "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." "It is because Christ lives and is powerful within us that we become conformed to his image. He is for us not only the example of righteousness but the cause of righteousness." This squarely places "Who is" at the very heart of "how to" Christianity. So, how do you live the Christian life? We begin by understanding that it is lived out in Christ." This is deep. What do you think he means? Where would he get this idea from? What is happening when we say no to sin? What is happening when we say yes to holiness?
- "We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus

that it is 'of him'. If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion; if purity, in his conception, if gentleness, it appears in his birth. For by his birth he was made like us in all respects that he might learn to feel our pain. If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation, if remission of the curse, in his cross; if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly kingdom, in his entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in His kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other." What is the significance of this statement? What would it look like for you to do this?

- "Union with Christ also has implications for the way we think about our justification. Faith is what brings us into union with Christ, but union with Christ is what gives us access to the benefits of Christ. In Galatians 3:26 Paul declares that "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith". Think about the implications for getting 'closer to God'. People endlessly report on being far from God, or getting closer to God, or wanting to get closer to God, or not knowing how to get closer to God. Now, if your mental image of your relationship to God through Christ is that of a lover-relationship, a friendship, or of following God, then the language of 'closer' or 'far away' makes sense. But not if you are united to Christ. Grasping the nature of our union with Christ challenges our very language of 'getting close to God'. We say, "I want to get closer to God". And union with Christ says: "Really? How close to God do you want to get? How do you intend to pull that off? To which part of the universe do you plan to move to secure this 'closer to God' status?" If you know yourself to be in Christ, then surely you are now, presently, in all your brokenness, as close to God as it is possible for any person to be—because you are in Christ. And, if you are in Christ, united to Christ, then the answer to the question "How close am I to God?" is subsumed by the larger question "How close is Christ to God?" If Jesus Christ is as close to God as the only Son of the Father, the beloved of God, the object of the affections of the heart of the Father, and if you are in Christ, then the language of getting closer to God needs re-thinking. I understand that our sense of being close to God fluctuates wildly. I know that the Bible commends us to draw near to God (Heb 10:22). It is right to grow in our subjective experience of closeness to God. But I do fear that, like the Galatians, the language of getting closer to God (understood as something we can do) is a joy-thief (Gal 4:15). Perhaps, if we have grasped the 'in Christ' language, we would not say, "I want to get closer to God", but "I want to know in my heart more of the reality of how close I am to God in Christ." What point do you think he is trying to make?

**Sermon Notes:** This is a place you can record your own notes and thoughts as you listen to the message today so that you can think about them later.