

# Unity with Christ

In 1769, James Watt—a Scottish inventor—patented the first practical steam engine. He saw that water could be transformed into steam and used to produce power for mechanical devices.

Mere water in a container has no real power of its own, but unify it with heat and it becomes something new altogether that has power and effectiveness.

Apart from Christ, you are just like lukewarm water. You have all the potential of becoming steam and being effective, but you have not allowed the fire of Christ's work to transform you and thereby make you useful.

And how easy it is for those molecules once transformed to drift away from the flame, only to settle down somewhere and become lukewarm again. Steam maintains its state only as long as it is in contact with the source of heat. So too the believer maintains his or her effectiveness through continued unity with Christ.

God's plan for you is that you would attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ through continuous unity with Him in His death, resurrection, and ascension. How does one undertake these three stages of unity with Christ? Perhaps we should look at each aspect of that unity in turn.

## ***Unity in His Death***

***Galatians 2:20***—*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 (NIV).*

**Death to self is a matter of faith. The cross is appropriated (*applied to your life*) by faith.** Faith is absolute reliance upon the Lord. It's an extreme dependence marked by reckoning yourself as dead so that He might express Himself through you. Faith is two-sided: it's a death to self followed by an appropriation of the life of Christ.

If you will put to death your selfishness, sin, and union with the world, you will find just how much more freely the Lord can express Himself through you.

Faith must become a lifestyle—it's not a one-time event. The Apostle Paul also wrote, "I die daily." You must choose to die once and for all to sin, self, and the world; but you must also make the daily decision to maintain that death through union with Jesus Christ.

Once while driving down the road I noticed how the telephone poles looked like crosses, and I began to thank the Lord for His work on the cross. Then I was stricken by an analogy: In order for the power of God to flow in your life, the road of your life must be marked by cross after cross after cross.

This continual dying is possible because God does not use death as an *end*, but rather as a *means*. Jesus didn't just die; He also rose from the dead. And if your death is one of unity with Him, then the next natural step in God's plan is...

## **Unity in His Resurrection**

*Romans 6:5-8—If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup>For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—<sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (NIV).*

**New life is the work of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is appropriated by surrender.** Surrender to the Lord requires a willful choice to consider ourselves dead to sin, self, and the world. To surrender unto death brings you into a genuine freedom so that you can express a new life through the Holy Spirit.

If you will surrender your mind, will, and emotions to the Lord, He will set you free from sin, self, and the world; but it's not a one-time event. Total surrender to the Holy Spirit must continue in order for your new life to take full effect.

New life is not something you can conjure up on your own. If you could do ANYTHING, it would imply that you're not yet dead. New life must originate with the power of the Holy Spirit and be maintained through continued reliance upon the Spirit of God.

When a caterpillar emerges from its cocoon as a butterfly, it lives a completely new life. It doesn't crawl around; it flies. It doesn't munch on leaves; it gathers nectar and pollen. It's a new creature altogether. And what does it do in the cocoon? It doesn't TRY to become something new—it simply waits and allows the natural design of God to take place.

So now that you're a butterfly, it's time to embrace your new life. Unity with Christ does not stop at the mere aspect of His resurrection by the Spirit, but it continues on to the expressing of that new life. And this can only be done through...

## **Unity in His Ascension**

*Ephesians 2:6,7—And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (NIV).*

**Ascension is a matter of intimacy with God the Father. This intimacy is appropriated by the exercise of our new life.** The exercise of your new life involves obvious freedom from sin, demonstrations of Christ's authority, and open conversation with the Father.

If you will accept that you are a new creation and begin to live accordingly through continuous faith and surrender, you will find that intimacy with God is as natural as walking.

The restoration of mankind's intimacy with God is the chief goal of Jesus Christ's work. It should become all-consuming to us because it is the greatest privilege in the universe!

Intimacy with God was the original purpose for man's existence. We are the only creatures in existence that get to have this kind of relationship with our Creator.

In the book of Revelation, John had a vision of the Lord Jesus and was shown the throne room of heaven. He said in chapter 5:11, *"Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne..."* An ocean of angels surround God's throne...an ocean! But what is the believer's place? John recorded a couple chapters earlier in 3:21 these words of Jesus: *"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."*

God's desire for you is complete unity with Jesus Christ so that you might fulfill your purpose for existence. Maintaining intimacy with God is the chief expression of that unity on this earth. But one question remains: At what stage are you living *right now*?

Knowing where you are at this moment will give you a sure indicator as to your next step.

- Do you feel that you are not yet dead to sin, self, and the world? Seek the cross; and continue to seek it day after day so that the power of God might flow in your life.
- Do you feel that YOU are trying to generate new life on your own instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to do it? Surrender again at the cross and rely on God to do the work in you.
- Do you feel like you are distant from God? It's time to step out in faith and walk in the new life of freedom, authority, and relationship with God that the Holy Spirit has produced in you.

Let's pray that the Holy Spirit would do His daily work in each of us so that we may all come into unity with the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.