

Greetings.

As you walk the road to Emmaus I would like to encourage you to pause and consider how you would define the spiritual life of the believer. To be sure, the spiritual life has been equated with activities and obligations that exemplify and honor Jesus Christ. As good as these responsibilities are they can be done by the unregenerate; they don't distinguish the sinner from the saint. Rather, the spiritual life of the believer is the life of Jesus Christ reproduced in the child of God by means of the Holy Spirit.¹ In other words, Christian living is Jesus Christ living in and through me. As Neil Anderson states:

Thanks to the incredible redemptive work of Christ in your life, your old self has been replaced by a new self, governed by a new nature, which was not there before (2 Cor. 5:17). Your old self was destroyed in the death of Christ and your new self sprang to life in the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20-22). The new life which characterizes your new self is nothing less than the life of Jesus Christ implanted in you (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:4).²

In a very real sense, what is true of Christ is now true of us as believers. We are inseparably linked with God through Christ. The reality of this union was evident when Christ confronted Saul on the road to Damascus. Saul had been persecuting the followers of Christ, but Christ said, "**Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?**" (Acts 9:1-4). To persecute Christians was to persecute Christ himself! No union could be more vital and personal. In fact, He gave his personal assurance to the disciples that He would be "**in**" them (John 14:15-23). It was also the subject of His high priestly prayer for all believers (John 17:20-26). This new relationship would begin with the arrival of the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-16; Acts 1:4-8). Unlike any other period in biblical history as believers are able to experience a unique nearness to God (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:13; Heb. 10:19-22; 1 John 1:3).

The foundation for this definition flows from the greatest biblical truth I ever discovered as I've considered what it means to be spiritual, esp. in view of my own shortcomings, failures, and regrets. In Romans 6:5 the apostle Paul says that we are "**united**" or "**joined together**" in Christ in both His death and shall be in His resurrection. The Greek word for "**united together**" is "**sumphutos**." This word, which only occurs here in the Greek New Testament, means to "**plant in union**." "**Sumphutos**" describes two plants that have grown together whereby they are not only "**intertwined**" but "**united**." The two become one, completely inseparable.

But consider to whom are you united? You are united to the one and only Triune God who is the sum-total of His infinite perfections. As mysterious as this biblical truth is, you have to count it to be true. Jesus Christ is in you and you are in

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to Be Like Him*, p. 105.

² Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, p. 78.

Jesus Christ. You are in Christ in terms of your position, possessions, safe-keeping, and association and Christ is in you giving you life, character, and dynamic for conduct. The best illustrations I've ever seen on this issue were in a book titled *Grace* by Lewis S. Chafer, the founder of Dallas Seminary: The bird is in the air, the air is in the bird; the fish is in the sea, the sea is in the fish; the iron is in the fire, the fire is in the iron.

If we were to describe this biblical truth further we might say:³

(1) It is a two-way union with Christ. Jesus said, "*On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.*" (John 14:20). We are "*in Christ*" and Christ is "*in us*". Paul cited this two-way relationship as the essence of his life. *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.* Galatians 2:20.

(2) It is a spiritual union with Christ. The believer's union with Christ is often spoken of as "mystical". "Spiritual" is a preferable term. "*But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*" (1 Cor. 6:17). Contrary to some cults we do not "become God." Union with Christ does not mean assimilation into deity or loss of our human identity. Rather, we are unique individuals, indwelt by means of the Holy Spirit.

(3) It is a dynamic union with Christ. Our union with Christ is a vibrant, living connection. Jesus used the figure of a vine and branches to express this relationship (John 15:5). As the life flows from the vine into the branches, so Christ's life flows into and through the believer. Growth and fruitfulness are both the evidence and the outcome of this relationship. Thus, the very life of Christ is experienced by and expressed through you as a believer. (2 Cor. 4:10-11).

(4) It is a corporate union with Jesus Christ. Union with Christ is true of individual believers and of all believers in the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19). Thus, as believers we are placed into union with one another as well as with Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:15-16). "*So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*" Rom. 12:5.

(5) It is a permanent union with Christ. Salvation, sanctification and glorification are all assured by God's eternal plan. They are as certain as the character of God. *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.* Romans 8:29-30. Nothing can separate you from this vital union with Christ (Rom. 8:35).

In closing, we might ask why aren't we more spiritual than we are right now? Suffice to say it is not because of capacity. I contend it has to do with our moment-by-moment willingness to allow Jesus to live through us. Words like "*abide*", "*be controlled*", "*be transformed*", and "*confession of sin*" are biblical terms I would ponder as I

³ These five points are adapted from Henry Holloman, *The Forgotten Blessing*, pp. 28-30.

explore how to unpack this dynamic union in my daily life. But most of all, I would think that the key to experiencing true spirituality is to love the God of the Bible fervently. As we love Him fervently, we will serve Him faithfully.

No matter how steep, rocky, muddy, dry, humid, hot, or cold the path to Emmaus becomes, always remember that Jesus is not merely *with* you; He is *in* you!

Love in the Lamb,

Paul