

### **Study 4: Rejoicing in Our Unity with Jesus**

"Jesus has satisfied the mind and heart of the infinite God for eternity... If the Father can be infinitely and eternally satisfied in him, then he must be overwhelmingly all-sufficient for us."

#### **Greater Union After the Ascension**

Although Jesus has completed his time with us on earth and ascended to the right hand of the Father, we are not separated from him.

John 14:27-28 - "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.... If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father".

He would soon be sending his spirit to reside within each one of them.

Reeves - "Jesus had become one of us, but now by the Spirit he would wonderfully become one with us."

Union with Jesus through the Spirit is greater than any union shared with him prior the ascension and Pentecost.

The union shared between fellow believers is also far greater now. The closer we are with Christ, the closer we are with one another.

An example of this is found in communion, as we take the bread and wine that represents the body and blood of Jesus into us, rather than residing near it.

Ephesians 2:15-18 - "<sup>15</sup>by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup>and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup>He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

#### **To Love, Cherish and Obey**

There is a PC word that gets used to describe couples. "Partner".

We aren't partners with our spouses. Marriage is not simply living alongside another person and being buddies with benefits. Scripture says that in marriage the man and the woman become one flesh.

Gen 2:23 - "This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."

Traditional wedding vows contain "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health" to say them knowing that as one flesh, when your spouse is worse you are worse, when they are sick you are sick, when they are poor you are poor, and when they are better and richer and healthy you are better, richer, and healthy.

Why would we do this? For the great prize that comes with being married. The great prize is not having someone to stick out life and achieve our own goals with us. To have kids, build our wealth together and so on... The prize is the person you are marrying.

Often the oneness Jesus has with his church is described as a marriage between the bridegroom and the bride.

Like our marriages, it is not a partnership of convenience, giving us free access to heaven, or blessings, to a way of weathering the difficult times of life. No. The prize of our marriage to Jesus is... Jesus.

When we receive the Spirit, it opens our eyes to the glory and beauty of Christ and a share in the Father’s eternal pleasure in him. We see Jesus’ “unfathomable love for us, how kind and merciful he is and has been how much he has suffered for our forgiveness, how he is truly better than all the other things we run after.”

He takes all the sickness, poverty, and weakness seen in the rags of sin that we wore, and dresses himself in it to be just like us in every way. And he dies and is buried dressed in those rags. United with humanity. But death could not hold him and in the Gospel of John it says that when Peter look into the tomb all he found were the wrappings and linen that shrouded his face. The rags of sin were left there in that place of death. But not Jesus, for now he is dressed in robes of righteousness. Robes that he offers to all who believe in him.

This is the Christ that the spirit opens our eyes to, when we were worse, he was worse for us, when we were poor, he was poor, when we were sick, he was sick. And, when he was better, we were better, when he was richer we were richer, when he was well, we were well. Forevermore.

Knowing yourself to be the desired and beloved bride of a bridegroom such as this is the fuel that runs the Christian life. We obey out of a rejoicing heart, a free heart, dressed already in the righteousness of Christ.

Reeves speaks a little in this chapter about the disconnection seen between evangelism and discipleship within the church. When it comes to evangelism, and evangelism events, what is preached is that salvation is free. But then when people get on board, they become confused and uncertain when in the discipleship classes they are hearing about holy living and obedience.

Reeves points out that salvation and Christian living are both about Jesus. So, when he preaches he doesn’t offer heaven, or an escape from hell for free, he offers Christ. “I offer no life apart from him. He is salvation: in him is all righteousness and knowing him is the heart of holiness.” Luther wrote “Through faith in Christ, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, He Himself becomes ours.” For that is the only reason we have any of his righteousness.

Richard Sibbes wrote a series of sermons on Isaiah 25:6-9 called the “The Glorious Feast of the Gospel”. In it he writes “the believer has ‘put on’ the Lord Jesus ‘the wedding garment’, and is not only the guest, but the spouse of Christ, and the bride at this wedding supper. Here Jesus Christ is the master of the feast, and the cheer, and provision too. He is the ‘Lamb of God’, the ‘ram caught in the thicket’,. He is the ‘fattened calf’... His ‘flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed’.”

In Charles Spurgeon first sermon in the Metropolitan tabernacle, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1861, he said, “I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ.” His last words from the pulpit, dated June 1891 were: “It is heaven to serve Jesus. I am a recruiting sergeant, and I would fain find a few recruits at this moment. Every man must serve somebody: we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ, either self or the Savior. You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold, he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids us carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious,

generous, kind, and tender, yea lavish and superabundant in love, you always find it in him. These forty years and more have I served him, blessed be his name! and I have had nothing but love from him. I would be glad to continue yet another forty years in the same dear service here below if so it pleased him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus even this day! Amen.”

### **The Life of the Son**

In our union with Christ, we share not only in his love, but also his life as the son of God.

Reeves says “The Son’s very identity is found in this: that he is the beloved of the father. All that he does flows from that identity. He does not act out of guilt, neediness, or a desire to curry favor with his Father or anyone else. For eternity, his Father has showered him with so much love that he overflows. He cannot but love his Father back, and long to please him. Being the Son of so perfectly kind a father, it is the meat and drink for him to do his will. That is the life of the Son of God.”

John 4:34 - <sup>34</sup> “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

Paul says in Romans 8:14 – “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”

But our heavenly father is the definition of constant. He is the same today as he was before creation, as he will be a million years from now. And his children we are secure before him. The rest of Romans 8 says: “<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘*Abba*, Father.’” My dear Father.

We can take all that Reeves wrote of Christ’s relationship to the Father and through our unity with him in the spirit apply it to ourselves. In unity with Christ, we are the beloved of the father. All that we do flows from that identity. We do not need to act out of guilt, neediness, or a desire to curry favour with our Father or anyone else. Our Father has showered us with so much love that we overflow. We cannot but love our Father back, and long to please him. Being the children of so perfectly kind a father, it is the meat and drink for us to do his will. That is the life of the children of God.

1 John 3:1, NKJV is the only version that does justice to this verse. It is the only one to say behold: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”

J. I. Packer wrote in his book *Knowing God*, that adoption to sonship is the highest privilege that the gospel offers. Higher even than our justification.

Our unity in Christ brings us to share in his joy, passions, and the cry of his heart.

Reeves writes “The more I know myself to be a true child of God, and the more I see of Christ, the deader I find myself to sin. It still allures me, but not as it did. I find old sinful desires dying and new holy ones springing up: I find myself longing, yearning to be free of the sins I once held so dearly. I have a new heart, after all – the heart of a child of God – and it feels and wants differently. Like Christ.”

In Hebrews 2, Jesus “is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.” In v. 12 He says, “I will declare your name, Lord, to my brothers and sisters; in their midst I will sing your praises.” And again, he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

It means that as you face life... you are not on your own. You are sharing in the life of Christ. Sharing in his joys, agonies, concerns, and his passions.