

Series: 2 Thessalonians 2024
Title: The Church in God
Text: 2 Thessalonians 1: 1-2
Date: June 23, 2024
Place: SGBC, NJ

2 Thessalonians 1: 1: Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Subject: The Church in God

Proposition: By "the church" scripture here speaks of God's elect, redeemed, regenerated, soon to be glorified people. The church is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In his high priestly prayer in John 17, the Lord Jesus Christ had one petition that is so very assuring to each of God's saints. Interceding for each of his elect, he prayed that each of his people might know this union and reach the end purpose of it.

John 17: 21: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

There is perfect union between God the Father and his Son--"As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." Christ said, "I and my Father are one." But what is amazing and wonderful to us who believe is that the church of God is one in the Father and in Christ the Son--even as they are one. The church is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with the same union as all three persons of the Godhead are in union.

Divisions: we will look at this in four ways 1) Eternal union, 2) Federal or Representative Union 3) Experimental Union--when we are made to know it 4) Glory Union--that day we will be in glory perfectly united with God our Savior.

ETERNAL UNION

This union is eternal. The church is eternally in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We were united when there was no time, only eternity. This union is of sovereign, free grace, established before God made the heavens and the earth. This union is in Christ our Surety (Ephesians 1:3-6).

Ephesians 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Father and Son being one, the church of God was in union with God our Father and the Son of God in eternity before time--"*According as he hath chosen us in him.*" This union is so real that God has never viewed the church apart from our union in Christ. Thus we were in union with God our Father in Christ. God the Father has never viewed his elect apart from Christ, but in Christ, and thus in him. From eternity "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."--"accepted in the Beloved" (Heb 2: 11; Eph 1: 6).

FEDERAL OR REPRESENTATIVE UNION

God's elect have union in all that Christ accomplished as our Head. When Christ was made flesh like unto his brethren, all God's elect were in Christ.

We were in the first Adam. Due to our union in Adam, we disobeyed God when Adam disobeyed God. God imputed sin to us because Adam made us sin by his disobedience. Think of that statement. That is true imputation.

God will not impute sin where there is no law (Rom 5: 13). That verse declares that unless a man has been made sin before the law, God will not impute sin. Between Adam and Moses, God gave men no law, as God did with Adam. From Adam until Moses at Sinai, God did not make all men know he had given a law. There was no known law. Yet God imputed sin, and death reigned, even over them that had not broken a known law like Adam. Why was God just to impute sin to men who had not consciously broken a law as did Adam? It is because "in Adam all have sinned" (Rom 5: 12). That is due to federal, representative union.

So it is with the church of God in union with the last Adam, Christ Jesus. Everything Christ did as the Head and Representative of his people, the whole elect church of God did in Christ. It is because we were in union with Christ. Being in Christ, when Christ obeyed, we obeyed.

Romans 5: 19...by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Being in Christ, when Christ worked out a perfect righteousness under the law, all God's elect worked out a perfect righteousness in him. When he was crucified, we were crucified in him

Galatians 2: 20: I am crucified with Christ:

When he died, we died with him

Romans 6:8: if we be dead with Christ...

When he was buried in the tomb, we were buried in him.

Romans 6: 4 Therefore we are buried with him...[pictured in water baptism]

When Christ was raised up from the dead, we arose together in him.

Colossians 2: 12...wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

When our Head sat down at God's right hand, we sat down in him. God has made us sit together in heavenly places in him

Ephesians 2: 6: And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

Being in union with Christ, everything our Lord did, in every act of obedience, in everything he suffered, in everything he accomplished, even the glory he entered into, so we did in him. And he accomplished it all "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph 2: 7). For this reason, Christ promised "because I live, you shall live also" (Jn 14: 19).

EXPERIMENTAL UNION OR MANIFEST UNION

This is what every sinner who Christ redeemed shall experience in the new birth. God makes us know, manifestly, this union we have in Christ.

Some of the old preachers used to call this "vital union." It is vital because we cannot be created and have be received into eternal glory apart from this manifest union with Christ. Like a branch cannot exist or live if severed from the vine so we cannot live, experimentally, except Christ be the life within us making us one with him (John 15:1-6).

Nothing about our first birth is life, only death. Nothing about our first birth is this new creation. Nothing about our first birth will enter into glory. This is Christ's creation by Christ entering into these dead bodies

and creating a new man in his righteousness and his holiness. This union is vital because Christ is the Head and his church is his body. He gets the glory for creating this experimental, vital, manifest union within us.

Ephesians 1:22: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23: Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

What vital interest Christ has in bringing this union to pass! His body will not be full until he has united every member with him in the new birth. Christ promised we would know our union with him and with God our Father in the new birth.

John 17: 18: I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19: Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20: At that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Not only was the church in eternal union with God the Father and Christ Jesus in the purpose of God before time, not only were we in federal union with Christ when he accomplished making us righteous in him, but each of his redeemed shall be brought into this spiritual and living union by the Spirit of Christ in you in regeneration.

Romans 8: 9: But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his

1 Corinthians 6: 17: He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.

This union is by the Spirit of Christ regenerating us. He creates a new man within us. The Lord calls it a new heart and a new spirit. We did not have it before. With Christ in you, our new man is one in Christ and in God our Father.

Christ illustrated this union by saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." (John 15:5). Like the branches of a vine grow out of the vine, so Christ gives his redeemed life by Christ the Life being formed in us. Like as sap flows from the vine to the branches, Christ the Vine is the life in his redeemed who are born again of the Spirit of Christ. He is the vine, we are the branches. We have no existence but by him. It is by Christ in us that we Christ makes us know we are in him. Christ said in John 15: 15, "Without me, ye can do nothing." The margin reads "severed from me, ye can do nothing."

Until Christ give us this union, personally, we have no spiritual existence. By Adam's natural generation we are of the world. It is only by this work of grace in creating a new man within us that we are not of this world. We are born from above. It is entirely the work of God.

Like all fruit in the branch is produced by the vine so it is with us. Christ is our Life. Christ is our Strength. Christ is our Wisdom. Christ is Holiness of the new man. All comes from Christ. Sanctification from self and from every vain way, which is true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, is all of Christ the Vine. Hope in his mercy and love to his name, the fear of God in our conscience, a broken and contrite heart, the desire to please him in all we say and do is all from being united with the Vine by the Spirit of our Lord creating this vital union with him.

Another illustration is that of the Head and the body.

Colossians 2: 19: [Christ is] the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Our physical head rules and governs our physical body. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and having good sense is communicated to our members from our head. In like manner, out of the Head--from Christ's fulness--we receive all life and grace and every spiritual gift.

Every member does not have the same measure of grace. Christ gives each member different graces--"unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph 4: 7). This is illustrated by the Lord in our physical body: by one member being a foot, another a hand, another an eye, another an ear.

1 Corinthians 12: 18: But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19: And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? 20: But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. 21: And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

One saint is an eye and another an ear having a clear spiritual discernment. Some are hands to minister to the needs of God's saints. Other are feet to run the errands of the church. But each are the members set and gifted by Christ as it pleases him, however different from one another. We are all governed and get every grace from Christ our Head.

GLORY UNION OR PERFECT UNION

There will come a day for every chosen, redeemed, regenerated child of God when we will have perfect union in glory with Christ. Our Lord's high priestly prayer for his body is heard and answered by God our Father. One day we shall be perfectly one in God the Father and Christ his Son.

By Christ, this union can never be broken. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35). Our sin cannot break it. Satan cannot break it. Not even death can sever this union, though it break all others. "To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

Since Christ is the Righteousness and Holiness of our new man, our Savior will raise us with a perfect body. He shall present us to himself without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing. We shall be holy and perfect in Christ by Christ's perfection.

Ephesians 1:10: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: 11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Then we shall be "the church in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" in perfect, glorious union. Then Christ's intercessory prayer will be fulfilled in perfection and we shall all know perfectly:

John 17: 21: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:...22...that they may be one, even as we are one: 23: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

John Kent wrote this hymn that sums it all up so beautifully:

“Twixt Jesus and the chosen race
Subsists **a bond** of sovereign grace,
That hell, with its infernal train,
Shall ne'er dissolve nor rend in vain

This **sacred bond shall never break**,
Though earth should to her center shake;
Rest, doubting saint, assured of this,
For God has pledged His holiness.

He swore but once the deed was done;
'Twas settled by the great Three One;
Christ was appointed to redeem
All that the Father loved in Him.

Hail! **sacred union**, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be

One with incarnate Deity!

One in the tomb, one when He rose,
One when He triumphed o'er His foes,
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat.

This **sacred tie** forbids their fears,
For all He is or has is theirs;
With Him, their Head, they stand or fall,
Their life, their surety, and their all."

The sinner's Peace, the Daysman He,
Whose blood should set His people free;
On them His fond affections ran,
Before creation's work began.

Blest be the wisdom and the grace,
Th' eternal love and faithfulness,
That's in the gospel scheme revealed,
And is by God the Spirit sealed.

Amen!