

The Believers' Organic Union with Christ

by Witness Lee

The revelation concerning the believers' organic union with Christ is the most crucial aspect of the secret of experiencing Christ. For us to experience Christ and enjoy Him, we must see a clear vision concerning our organic union with Him. The Bible first reveals to us the person of Christ, and then it reveals to us the work of Christ. After these two basic revelations, the Bible reveals to us the organic union that we have with Christ. In one of the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospel of John, we see an illustration of the vine with all the branches. Then in the following twenty-three books, from Acts through Revelation, what is revealed is mainly this organic union. Paul's fourteen Epistles especially focus on this one thing.

A Union of Life

The most wonderful reality in the Christian experience is that all the believers in Christ are united with Him in the way of life. The union of the believers with Christ is not by organization but by life; hence, this union is organic. The word *organic* denotes that this union is absolutely a matter of life. Christ is wonderful in His person, and He is excellent in His work. In His person He is both the complete God and the perfect man. In His work He did everything that is needed for the fulfilling of God's purpose, and He did everything that is needed for our benefit. Whatever He is and whatever He has done is altogether for one thing: that He could be united to us organically. This wonderful organic union is very much neglected by most Christians today. Today's Christianity has become a religion, a religious organization, full of teachings, doctrines, ordinances, and practices, a religion that neglects the matter of life. Many Christians preach Christ and teach Christ in an objective way, making Him an objective Redeemer and an objective Savior. In their concept and realization Christ is in the third heavens, not

within them. They may be right to a certain extent in an objective way, but surely they are wrong in relation to the subjective reality. Today the Lord is recovering this neglected matter of the believers' organic union with Christ.

A Grafted Life

The Bible is a wonderful book. It is wonderful not only in revealing Christ's person and work, but it is even more wonderful in its revelation of this organic union. In the Old Testament there are thirty-nine books, and in the New Testament there are twenty-seven. In the four Gospels we cannot see a full revelation of this organic union. However, the organic union is strongly stressed in John chapters 14 through 17. The central thought and focus of John 14 through 17 is this organic union. In chapter 15 the Lord Jesus illustrated this organic union by saying that He is the vine and we, the believers in Him, are all the branches of this vine. Between the vine and the branches there is an organic union.

In John 15 we see the vine with all the branches, but we do not see that all the branches have been grafted into the vine. Originally, we, the believers in Christ, were not united to Christ. According to the picture in Romans 11:17 and 24, we were branches of a wild olive tree. But when we believed in the Lord Jesus, we were saved, and we were regenerated. In regeneration we received a new life, and this new life made us alive. This new life also grafted us into Christ. We who formerly were branches of a wild olive tree have all been regenerated and made alive, and we all have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree, which is Christ with God's chosen people given to Him as His members. Originally, we were not branches in Christ, but we have been grafted into Christ. By our natural birth we were not branches of Christ, but through regeneration we were cut off from the wild olive tree and

were grafted into the cultivated tree, which is Christ with His members as the divine organism to express the Triune God. Now between Christ, the cultivated tree, and us, the grafted branches, there is an organic union. This grafted life between the grafted branches and the cultivated tree is the best illustration of our organic union with Christ.

Christ Becoming the Life-giving Spirit to Enter into His Believers

After passing through the first four major processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, Christ in His resurrection became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). This wonderful man is the complete God and also the perfect man. Furthermore, He has done everything for God and for us. Eventually, in His resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit is the extract of His person and His work. In making a medicine we may collect a number of elements from various plants, flowers, roots, and trees, and combine them together. We may then process these elements fur-

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ther and extract the crucial essence of each element to formulate the most effective medicine. This medicine may be a liquid, or it may be in the form of pills. In one drop of that liquid, or in one pill, we have the extract of many elements. This extract may be called the spirit of all those elements. In this extract is the crucial essence of all the elements. After passing through all the processes in His humanity, Christ as the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit can be considered as the extract of Christ in His person and His work. In this life-giving Spirit, or in this extract, we have divinity, humanity, human living, the effectiveness of Christ's all-inclusive death, and the power of Christ's resurrection. The ascension of Christ is also included in this life-giving Spirit.

In His resurrection Christ became such a life-giving Spirit in order that He might enter into His believers (John 20:22). Today, anywhere on this earth, wherever and whenever a person calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, believes in Him, and receives Him as his Savior, this life-giving Spirit immediately enters into him. This

means that Christ as the life-giving Spirit enters into His believers. Have you believed in the Lord Jesus? Have you called on His name and received Him? If so, you should realize that He has entered into your innermost being. He is the Almighty God, the Almighty Creator, and He became a perfect man. As such a One He accomplished everything. He died for us, He was buried, and He was resurrected. In His resurrection He was transfigured into the life-giving Spirit. Now this life-giving Spirit is not restricted by anything. He is not limited by time or by space. He is everywhere, He is present, and He is now. In the morning, at noon, in the evening, or at midnight, He is always now, and He is always present. He is present with you just like the air. Wherever you go, there is air. Air is always now, and air is always present. Whenever you open your mouth, air gets into you. Often you are unconscious of the fact that the air has entered into you. This is why Romans 10:8 tells us that Christ as the living Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart. I do not deny that Christ is great. On one hand He is still on the throne in the third heavens (8:34; Col. 3:1). There in the third heavens He is the Lord of all and the

Administrator of the entire universe. He is the great God and the great Lord. Yet, on the other hand, He is the Spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, He is everywhere. Whenever we call on Him, He enters into us. Now He is within us. Hallelujah for this!

Christ as the Life-giving Spirit Regenerating the Believers in their Spirit

As the life-giving Spirit, Christ has regenerated the believers in their spirit (John 3:5-6). Doctrinally, it is difficult to explain how Christ, after entering into us, regenerates us in our spirit. However, in experience it is simple. When a sinner repents, confesses his sins, believes in the Lord Jesus, and calls on His name, at that very moment Christ as the life-giving Spirit enters into his spirit to enliven his dead spirit, that is, to regenerate him in his spirit. Immediately such a person becomes alive, happy, and joyful. He cannot explain what has happened to him, but he is rejoicing. He may continue to repent of his sins for the remainder of the day. A great change has taken place in his life. This sinner has been saved. He has been regenerated, and he is now a Christian. I believe that many of us have had this kind of experience. This is what it means to be saved, to be regenerated, and to be converted.

Through their believing in Christ and their being baptized into Christ, the believers have been brought into an organic union with Christ (vv. 15, 36; Rom. 6:3, 5). When we believed in Christ and were baptized into Him, an organic union took place in our being. This organic union, which took place at our believing in Jesus, has united us

to Christ. In other words, this union has grafted us into Christ, who is the vine tree. It is by such a transaction that we have been made branches of Christ. Hallelujah, we are believers in Christ, and we are branches grafted into this wonderful, universal vine tree! This is the organic union.

The Believers' Regenerated Spirit and Christ as the Life-giving Spirit Joined to Be One Spirit

The believers' regenerated spirit and Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit, are joined to be one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). This is wonderful. We, the believers in Christ, all have a regenerated spirit. Our spirit was dead, but through believing in Christ it has been made alive (Eph. 2:1). Now we all have within us our own spirit that has been regenerated and made alive. At the same time Christ as the life-giving Spirit is within our spirit. These two spirits are joined to be one spirit. This is a most mysterious and wonderful thing. Most Christians today have no concept of this mysterious and wonderful reality. That our spirit is joined to Christ, the life-giving Spirit, as one spirit is a most crucial and vital matter. This is the ultimate consummation of the organic union that we have with Christ. No union could be more intimate than this union.

The realization that we are one spirit with Christ will cause us to be beside ourselves with joy. Such a realization may cause us to shout, "Hallelujah, we are one spirit with the Lord!" Many times I have been asked how I, as an elderly man, could be so active and so energetic. My secret is that I am one spirit with the Lord. Today many toys are made to operate by electricity. It is electricity that makes them so active. Because we are one spirit with Christ, we have the heavenly, divine electricity energizing us continually. How we need to realize our organic union with Christ and live in this reality!

Christ as the Life-giving Spirit Indwelling the Believers in Their Spirit

Christ as the life-giving Spirit indwells the believers in their spirit. First, as the life-giving Spirit, Christ regenerated us in our spirit. Now He dwells in our spirit (Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:22). It is a wonderful fact that Christ is not only in us, but He also dwells in us. For a person to dwell in a room means that he occupies it and fills it with his activities. Moreover, a person accomplishes many of his intentions in his own home. Although I have a very adequate office in which to do my work, I do not like to work there; rather, I like to work in my home. While I am dwelling in my home, I work. The Lord Jesus today only has a home; He does not have an office. His home is His office. The Lord's office is within us. Many of us may realize that the Lord Jesus has made us His home, but not

many realize that, as the Lord's home, we are also His office.

The Lord Jesus not only dwells in us as His home, but He also works within us. He is carrying out all His work within us. Because He has many things to do within us, He is working in us twenty-four hours a day. We all need to realize that today the Lord Jesus indwells us, making us His home and also His office. He is working within us as His office. What a wonderful thought this is! Our Lord dwells in us, and while He dwells in us, He works. He has made us His home and His office as well. This is the organic union that we have with Christ. We all need to know Christ in such a living way.

Christ Making His Home in the Believers' Hearts

Christ is making His home in the believers' hearts through the Spirit's strengthening them into their spirit, that is, into their inner man (Eph. 3:16-17). The strangest thing, and also the sweetest and most enjoyable thing, is that within us, the believers in Christ, there is always a kind of

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strengthening. Continually, both day and night, we are being strengthened from within. It is this inward strengthening that enables us to say, "Lord Jesus, I love You. Lord, occupy me and fill me up. I desire to be possessed and taken over by You. I want to be fully occupied by You. Lord, I simply want to be one with You." We fail to realize that this strengthening has a direction, that is, that Christ would make His own home in our entire being. By this inward strengthening, gradually we will say, "Lord Jesus, fill me with Yourself and possess me in my mind, my emotions, and my will. Fill and possess me in every part, in every avenue, of my inward being." This is to allow Christ to make His home in our whole being. This is the fullness of the organic union that we have with Christ, a union in which we are fully united with Christ in an organic way.

Christ as the Head and the Believers as the Members Being Joined Together

Eventually, Christ as the Head of the Body (Col. 1:18) and the believers as the members of the Body (Eph. 5:30) are

joined together to be the great, universal new man (2:15; Col. 3:10-11). In the organic union Christ becomes the Head of the universal new man, and we the believers all are the members of this great, universal new man. He is the Head and we all are the members. He and we, we and He, are organically united together to be one complete and perfect universal new man. In such an organic union we live together with Him, move together with Him, and work together with Him. Christ and we have only one purpose, one goal, and one aim. This is the ultimate consummation in full of our organic union with Him.

Based upon this union, the New Testament tells us that we need to abide in Christ. The Gospel of John tells us that Christ is the vine and that we are the branches (John 15:5). As the branches, we should abide in Christ as the vine all the time. The branches and the vine not only give us a good illustration of the organic union, but they also illustrate how the branches abide in the vine. When the branches abide in the vine, the vine also abides in the branches. This mutual abiding actually causes the vine and the branches to grow. The growth of the entire vine

Christ is heresies. Some of the teachings among Christians today are good, but some are heretical. First John 2:22 says, "Who is the liar if not he who is denying that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who is denying the Father and the Son." At John's time there were some who taught that Jesus was an earthly man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and that Christ was another person. These were heretics who taught that Jesus was not the Christ. In this verse John says that whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ is an antichrist. Such a person is anti-Christ, that is, against Christ. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the Father and the Son. If you say that Jesus is not the Christ, then you deny both the Father and the Son because the Triune God is one. The New Testament tells us that Jesus is the Christ, that Christ is the Son of God, and that this Son of God is always together with the Father and one with the Father (Matt. 16:13, 16; John 16:32; 10:30). If you say that Jesus is not the Christ, that means you deny Christ. If you deny Christ, you deny the Son of God, and you also deny the Father who is one with the Son. This is surely a heresy.

The matter of abiding in Christ is a central teaching in the New Testament, especially in the writings of John and Paul. The foundation of this teaching of abiding is in John 15. Then Paul goes on to develop this teaching.

depends upon this abiding. Christ is the vine, and we are His branches. For us to grow in Him and for Him to grow in us, we need to abide in Him. The matter of abiding in Christ is a central teaching in the New Testament, especially in the writings of John and Paul. The foundation of this teaching of abiding is in John 15. Then Paul in his Epistles goes on to develop this teaching of abiding.

Remaining in Christ and Not Being Distracted from Him

To abide in Christ is to remain in Him. All the branches abiding in a vine remain in it. Once a branch is removed, it dies. On the one hand, the tree must support the branches, but on the other hand, the branches must remain in the tree. As believers, we should remain in Christ, but there are many things that would distract us from Him. Therefore, in order to remain in Christ, we must avoid being distracted by any of these things.

By Heresies

The first category of things that can distract us from

By Philosophy, Tradition, and Teachings Other Than God's Economy

Another category of distractions from Christ is philosophy (Col. 2:4, 8). Philosophy in Colossians 2 refers to the ancient Greek philosophy. As early as the first century, this kind of philosophy invaded the church. Heresies came mainly from the Jews, while philosophy came mainly from the Greeks. It is the subtlety of the enemy, Satan, to bring in these things among Christians to distract them from Christ. Traditions are also a distraction from Christ. In the first century there were Jewish traditions and also Greek traditions. Wherever the gospel goes, those who hear it have their own kind of tradition. All such traditions distract believers from Christ. Another category of distractions from Christ is teachings other than God's economy. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4 Paul tells us that we must avoid the teachings that differ from God's economy. In the human thought there are many different kinds of teachings. The good teachings as well as the bad teachings distract us from Christ. The teachings of Confucius are good, but in China those teachings have distracted many learned people from Christ. At the apostles' time the Jews had many teachings from the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. After the churches were established, these Jewish teachings entered into the church life. There was a strong invasion of the Jewish teachings and the Greek philosophy into the church life. Both the Jewish teachings and the Greek philosophy distracted the early Christians from Christ. These are some of the winds of teaching that Paul refers to in Ephesians 4:14.

Throughout the past twenty centuries many teachings have become winds to blow Christians away from Christ. In order for us to remain in Christ, we must stay away from all heresies, philosophies, traditions, and even from so many good teachings that are not concerning God's New Testament economy.

By the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, the Vainglory of Life, and Pleasures

As mentioned in 1 John 2:16, another category of things that would easily distract us from Christ includes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. We are all people in the flesh, and in our flesh there are many lusts. Therefore, we must be very watchful lest at any time, any lust may rise up from our flesh to carry us away from Christ. Besides the lust of the flesh there is the lust of the eyes. In 1933 I went to Shanghai for the first time. In that large city the church had two meeting halls, one on the west side of the city and the other on the north side. While going between the two halls to speak, I traveled down Nanking Road, which was lined with department stores having large show windows. Even at midnight the show windows were brightly lit. After looking at the displays many things came into my mind, and by the time I reached the other hall I found it difficult to speak the word as a message from my spirit. The show windows in the department stores stir up the lust of the eyes. By window-shopping in this way, many people indulge the lust of their eyes. This verse also mentions the vainglory of this life. To have a big house and a better car is a vainglory. To have a big car to show off is the vainglory of this life. These three things—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of this life—all distract us from Christ. James 4:1 and 3 mention pleasures as another category of distractions from Christ. Drinking, eating, sight-seeing, and certain kinds of music are pleasures that can distract us from Christ.

By Anxiety, Murmuring, Anger, and Any Agitation

Another big distraction is anxiety. Anxiety is like a little demon always bothering us. Who could live even one day without any kind of anxiety? Very often wives are anxious concerning their husbands. From the day of her engagement a wife may begin to be anxious about whether her husband will be faithful to her or not. Once this anxiety enters into her, it will never leave her. After marriage, a husband and wife may have some children. From the first day their little child is born, they may be anxious whether this child will breathe well, sleep well, and eat well. The parents are anxious for their children from the time of their birth to the time they themselves have children. They are anxious to see whether their children will read

well, study well, get the best grades, and graduate from the best university. Then they become anxious concerning their children's marriages. After the children's marriages they are anxious concerning the grandchildren. This human life is full of anxiety, and this anxiety keeps us away from Christ. We human beings are just people of anxiety. But once you have anxiety, you are cut off from Christ. It is not easy to get rid of anxiety. The best way to get rid of anxiety is to tell your need to God (Phil. 4:6). Do not worry for anything, but rather unload your care (1 Pet. 5:7). You need to charge your anxiety to God. To say this is easy, but to practice not having anxiety is very difficult. Besides anxiety, another distraction is murmuring (Phil. 2:14). Every married person has murmured about his husband or wife at some time. The young ones may murmur about the older ones, and the older ones may murmur about the young ones. Anxiety and murmuring are two things that so easily keep us away from Christ. Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. This experience is quite often frustrated by these two things, anxiety and murmuring. Hence, the apostle Paul exhorts us concerning both. Anger and any kind of agitation also

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cut us off from the experience of Christ (Eph. 4:26, 31). We all are too easily agitated. Sometimes just a little word will agitate us. Both the young people and the older ones are very easily agitated. But any time you are agitated by anything or by anyone, you are distracted from Christ. Anger is an issue of agitation. Although it cannot be considered as sin, it surely distracts us from experiencing Christ in our daily life. Therefore, the apostle exhorts us not to remain in anger to the point where it becomes sin (4:26).

By Culture, Religion, Ethics, Morality, and Character-Improving

Another category of distractions includes culture, religion, ethics, morality, and character-improving. Character-improving seems to be quite good. Although it is good, it is nevertheless a problem, for if you try to improve your character, this character-improving will distract you from enjoying Christ. This means that you pay your attention to your character rather than to Christ. Therefore, character-improving is also a distraction from Christ. We may

also be distracted by trying to do good. I do not mean that we do not need to do good, but trying to do good distracts us from Christ. Trying to be spiritual, scriptural, holy, and victorious also distracts us from Christ. While we are trying to be these things, we are distracted. This means that we should not be people of culture, religion, ethics, or morality. Neither should we be people of character-improving, doing good, or trying to be spiritual, scriptural, holy, and victorious. We should only be people of Christ! Our entire being—our thought, our consideration, our feeling, our every part—must be filled and saturated with Christ, and we should only care for experiencing Christ. I do not mean that we should be wild, evil, or careless. I mean that we should not be occupied by any good thing other than Christ, nor should we care for anything other than the experience of Christ. After studying the New Testament for many years I eventually realized that it requires us to drop all things other than Christ Himself and to remain in Christ, because Christ is much higher and better than all culture, religion, ethics, morality, and character-improving. He is the most excellent among all things for us to apprehend and experience. Do not stay in

results in our enjoyment of Christ as grace and truth.

Abiding, Dwelling, and Making Home in Christ

To abide in Christ is not only to remain in Him, but also to dwell in Him. To dwell in Him means to make your home in Him. Most English readers understand the word *abide* to mean simply to remain. But the Greek word for *abide* means to make home. In John 14:23 the same Greek root is used in the nominative form. Used as a noun, this word means an abode, a dwelling place, a home. Therefore, the Greek word for *abide* does not mean simply to remain, but also to dwell, to make home.

To abide in Christ is not only to remain in Him but to be fully settled in Him. If you abide in a certain place for a few days and then leave, that is not a home to you, but a hotel or a motel. Unfortunately, many Christians abide in Christ as a motel, just for a temporary stay. But we need to get ourselves settled in Christ, to make Christ our home. We need to dwell in Him. In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.” This verse says that both the Father and the Son will come to us and make an abode with us. For the Father and the Son to make an abode with us means that the Triune God settles in us, making us His abode, that we would make Him our abode. The abode in John 14:23 and in 1 John 2:6, 3:24, and 4:15-16 is a mutual abode. God takes us as His abode, and we take Him as our abode. Our real and permanent home is our God. Christ is our home and our dwelling place.

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anything other than Christ, no matter how good it may be. Do not remain in even the best thing but rather remain in Christ all the time.

Remaining in the Fellowship of the Divine Life

Because we have received the divine life, we have been brought into the divine fellowship. This divine fellowship is just the flow of the divine life. In order for us to enjoy Christ and experience Him, we must remain in this flow of the divine life. When we remain in the flow of the divine life, we touch God as the source. This is fully taught by John in his first Epistle. First John tells us that the apostles preached, or ministered, the divine life to us (1 John 1:2-3). After we receive this divine life, we are in the divine fellowship. We should remain in this fellowship to touch God and to enjoy Him as the very source of grace and truth. In this fellowship we realize that God is love and that God is light (4:8, 16; 1:5-7). The divine love is the source of grace, and the divine light is the source of truth. It is when we are touching the source that we enjoy Christ. We enjoy God as love and light in Christ, and this

Growing in Christ

Finally, to abide in Christ is to grow in Christ. If you take Christ as your home, He will eventually become the soil to you. Look at the branches abiding in the vine. The vine is a home to the branches, and at the same time the vine is the soil to the branches. While the branches are abiding in the vine, they are also rooting into the soil (Col. 2:7). Therefore, they all are growing (1 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 4:15). The vine and the branches in John 15 are not an illustration of a dead, lifeless home. The abode in John 15 is an organic home because all the dwellers are fruit-bearing branches (v. 5). That the branches bear fruit indicates that they are growing. While we are abiding in Christ, we are growing. This is the way to experience Christ, to enjoy Him, and to grow in Him and with Him. While we are growing in Him and He is growing in us, there is a kind of mutual growing (Rom. 6:5). This is the enjoyment of Christ, and this is the real experience of Christ. I hope that we all would practice abiding in Christ. 