

The Oneness of the Believers with Christ

- 1 Oh, what a wonderful place
Jesus has given to me!
Saved by His glorious grace,
I may be even as He.
When with my Lord I appear,
Like Him I know I shall be;
But while I walk with Him here,
I may be even as He.
Even as He, even as He,
Wonderful words that even we,
Saved by His marvelous grace, may be
One with the Savior, even as He.
- 2 One in His death on the tree,
One as He rose from the dead;
I from the curse am as free
E'en as my glorious Head.
One on the throne by His side,
One in His sonship divine;
One as the Bridegroom and bride,
One as the branch and the vine.
- 3 One in His merits I stand,
One as I pray in His name;
All that His worth can command,
I can with confidence claim.
One in His faith and His love,
One in His life I may be.
Sealed by the heavenly Dove,
I may be holy as He. (*Hymns*, #479)

The above hymn, written by A. B. Simpson, may be deemed by some music critics as “unsingable.” The hymn’s musical arrangement goes against many of the factors that should be observed in order to make a hymn or spiritual song one that can be remembered and enjoyed. A. W. Tozer, who highly esteemed Simpson, is, nonetheless, critical of many of his hymns in this regard, saying, “It is in the music that his songs suffer the most. A few of his compositions can be sung, but the most of them can be negotiated by none except trained singers” (120).

Although the music to some of his songs may present difficulties for singing, the deep longings, spiritual desires, and godly aspirations in Simpson’s compositions have captured the hearts of many seeking believers. Because of the

captivating quality of Simpson’s inspired utterances, Tozer still testifies,

After saying all this I would yet confess that hardly a day goes by that I do not kneel and sing, in a shaky baritone comfortably off key, the songs of Simpson. They feed my heart and express my longings, and I can find no other’s songs that do this in as full a measure. Of his songs—there are 155 of them in the old *Hymns of the Christian Life* alone—only about three have attained to anything like wide popularity, and not above a dozen are heard even in the gatherings of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. Yet it is my sober judgment that Simpson has put into a few of his songs more of awful longing, of tender love, of radiant trust, of hope and worship and triumph than can be found in all the popular gospel songs of the last hundred years put together. Those songs are simply not to be compared with his. Simpson’s songs savor of the holy of holies, the outstretched wings of the cherubim and the Shekinah glory. The others speak of the outer court and the milling crowd. (120-121)

Although this hymn is brief, consisting of only three stanzas with a chorus, it contains many very clear and elevated points related to the divine economy of God that highlight our oneness with our Lord Jesus Christ. The bold vision in this hymn must be realized and experienced as our subjective reality. By bowing our knees in genuine humility before the Lord, opening our minds to receive vision from the Bible, and emptying our spirits by praying ourselves out of all competing interests, we can substantiate the revelation of this oneness and cooperate with the Lord to enjoy the experience of the wonderful place Jesus has given to us.

The Bible affirms that the believers’ position of oneness with Christ is a critical aspect of God’s glorious salvation accomplished in Christ. Consider, for example, the jubilant exclamation of the apostle Paul concerning the full salvation and transfer out of death into life:

God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:4-6)

We joyfully receive God’s great love for us with His rich

grace, which affords us a share in Christ's particular accomplishments of death, resurrection, ascension, and being seated in the realm of the heavenlies.

Simpson acknowledges that some Christians may apply the experience of these accomplishments to the time of the Lord's second coming, as expressed in John's first Epistle: "We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is" (3:2). Simpson clarifies that he is not focusing on the day in which Christ will be manifested; instead, he writes, "When with my Lord I appear, / Like Him I know I shall be; / But while I walk with Him here, / I may be even as He." Thus, he speaks of the present delight of walking in oneness with Him, of being now even as He is.

Such a walk is a matter in faith. As those who believe, we have seen and received with thanksgiving and praise the eternal salvation that the only true God has accomplished through His only begotten Son, who has been incarnated as the man Jesus Christ our Lord. We firmly believe that Christ, having made purification of sins through His death and resurrection, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). In resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), and as the Spirit, He has taken up residence in the human spirit of each of His redeemed and regenerated believers in order to dispense all that He is, has, has accomplished, and has attained and obtained into them as life (6:17; cf. 1 John 5:12). We should aspire to never neglect or be inattentive to the power of His life to transform the life and living of us, the believers, so that we may be holy and well pleasing to God. This marvelous hymn proclaims the present realization of our organic oneness with Christ according to the objective truths that God in His salvation has ordained for us.

The focus of this hymn is on the believers' oneness with the Lord Himself, a oneness that is absolute, constituting us to be the same as our Savior in experiences, attributes, entitlements, and merits and even in sharing with Him His birthright, faith, love, life, and holiness! The chorus marvels at "wonderful words," the precious and life-changing words of the Bible, which open our eyes to see all that God is to us and all that He has done and is doing for us in His Son, Jesus Christ. The wonderful words of the Bible speak of the wonderful Jesus Christ, who is everything in God's economy!

Details of Our Oneness with the Savior

This hymn declares many astounding, yet genuine, bequests that have been bestowed objectively upon and into us through our oneness with Jesus Christ. We are one with Him in His death; one with Him in His resurrection; one with Him in His freedom from the curse of the law; one with Him on the throne by His side; one with Him in His divine sonship; one with Him as the bride to the Bridegroom; one with Him as a branch in the vine; one with Him in His merits so that

when we pray in His name, we have the right to claim everything that His worth can command; and one with Him in His faith, love, life, and holiness.

Our oneness with Christ in His death results in not only freedom from the guilt and condemnation of sin but also deliverance from the power of sin over us in our active daily living. We are free from sin by baptism into His death (Rom. 6:3-4), and we are free from slavery to sin through our crucifixion with Christ (v. 6). Our death with Christ has freed us permanently and eternally not only from the condemning and defiling effects of sin but, even more, from sin's usurping power and mastery over us. Through His death we have been set free!

Having been freed from the condemnation and the power of sin through our oneness with the Lord Jesus in His crucifixion, we were raised to walk together with Him in newness of life (vv. 4-5). Peter tells us that through Christ's resurrection we were born of God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). We need a vision to see that we are not living the divine life by our human life, attempting by our limited natural strength and capacity to live like God, which is impossible. Rather, we are living our human life by the divine life that we received through regeneration.

The hymn continues, "I from the curse am as free / E'en as my glorious Head." Because Christ became a curse on our behalf by dying on the cross (Gal. 3:10-13), the law no longer has any jurisdiction over Him; neither does the law have any authority over us. This is because in His resurrection He entered into a realm where the outward system of law has been fulfilled in Him, and He has raised us together with Him into a realm of grace, where the law has been satisfied. Hence, "I from the curse am as free / E'en as my glorious Head." It is wonderful to be set free from the curse of trying to keep the law.

We have also been seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), sharing in His ascended status. This is a matter for today, but the overcomers will also be seated with Him in the coming kingdom. The Lord's call for overcomers comes with the promise of a reward of sitting with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). On the one hand, this promise applies to the future, when Christ will gather His overcomers to His bridal celebration and reward them with His promised blessings. On the other hand, there is a present experiential ruling in life—as Paul writes, "If, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17).

We also are one with Him in His divine-human sonship. In resurrection the man Jesus, the seed of David, was designated

in His humanity the Son of God in power (1:3-4). The humanity of Jesus, before His death and resurrection, was that of a man in the likeness of the flesh of sin. As the incarnate Word, the only Begotten of the Father, He had the divine nature within Him, but that divine nature was distinct from His humanity, even though His humanity was sinless. It was not until His death and resurrection that His humanity was incorporated into divinity. God became a man in incarnation to bring man into God through death and resurrection. This is the divine sonship. Praise the Lord that, as those who are born of God through receiving Christ, we share His sonship as His many brothers! We are born of God (John 1:12-13; 3:1-6). We, who are sons of God through regeneration with the divine life by the Spirit, have been given a subjective realization—the Spirit of God witnesses with our human spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). Now our entire being is becoming “sonized.” Divinity is being dispensed into our humanity, and our humanity is being incorporated into divinity. In this process God is adding Himself into our tripartite being—spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23)—with the result that we are becoming the same as He is in life, nature, function, and purpose, but not in the Godhead. This process is being carried out by the Spirit of God in our human spirit.

We are also one with the Lord in His corporate expression. Christ is the Bridegroom who has the bride. John the Baptist recognized that the Lord is the Bridegroom and identified Christ’s increase as the bride, referring to the disciples who were coming to be baptized by Christ (John 3:29-30). Later, Paul pointed to Christ and His church as the great mystery, declaring:

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church, because we are members of His Body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:29-32)

Our oneness with Christ, the Bridegroom, our becoming His counterpart, His bride, is full of intimate similes. The marriage of Christ with His bride is a central feature in the achievement of the final goal of the divine economy. The matured sons of God, the overcomers, will join the Lord in a great wedding feast at the consummation of the age. Following the wedding, the Bridegroom will lead His newly acquired bride as His army to defeat Antichrist and his armies. Then Christ will set up His millennial kingdom, and He will reign with His overcomers for one thousand

years (Rev. 19—20). May we all aspire to be a mature son, a part of the bride, the church, in this age so that we may become a part of the overcoming bride of the Lamb to reign with Him in His kingdom.

The hymn, after speaking of the oneness of the Bridegroom with His bride, refers to another factor of oneness—that of being branches in the vine. On the night before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus shared with His disciples the wonderful fact that He is the true vine, and we are the branches (John 15:5). The Father is the husbandman cultivating the vine and branches for His glorious expression (v. 1). When we abide in Christ and allow His words to abide in us, we bear much fruit, and by this fruit-bearing life the Father is glorified (vv. 5, 7-8). The oneness of the branches with the vine portrays our oneness with the Lord, our being the organism of the Triune God, manifesting all that the Father is and has in the Son for the increase of Christ through the branches. The Father pours out all that He is and all

His riches into the Christ the vine with His branches. We and our Lord mutually abide in one another to produce fruit for the glory of the Father. This fruit is the increase of Christ.

When the Lord shared with the disciples concerning their relationship with Him as branches in the vine, He said, “If you abide in Me and

My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you” (v. 7). In a footnote on verse 7, Witness Lee writes,

When we abide in the Lord and let His words abide in us, we actually are one with Him, and He works within us. Then, when we ask in prayer for whatever we will, it is not only we who are praying; He too is praying, in our praying. This kind of prayer is related to fruit-bearing (v. 8) and will surely be answered. (*Recovery Version*, note 2)

Because of this realization, the first part of stanza 3 declares that the writer, when he is praying in the name of Jesus, is able with confidence to claim all the worth of what the Lord Himself can command. If we are clear, we will be able to enter into the burden that is in the heart of the Lord and pray with full assurance, and we will fully recognize that as we pray with a proper heart and understanding, we are standing in His place. We will be Christ praying on the earth. As we pray, Christ will be praying through us, His disciples.

One in His Faith, Love, Life, and Holiness

The beginning point of our identification with the Lord Jesus

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is our being joined to Him organically, becoming one with Him in His faith, love, life, and holiness. This joining takes place in a spontaneous way. When we appreciate, admire, and treasure Him, something responds in our innermost being—we believe in Him, and at the same time, He moves in us as faith. He is our faith because when we look at Him, we are infused with belief. This faith is not of us; it is generated in our being by our beholding this wonderful person. The rich value of His multiplied virtues engender faith in us. His attributes, riches, and accomplishments flood into our heart, and we believe.

Our love for Him also is not out from us. It is a response in our heart to the magnetism of His marvelous being. “We love,” the Bible says, “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The love of God, rising up in our being, then flows over in love to our brothers: “If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen (v. 20). Because we have His love poured out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5), we are able to love even our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

When we believe into the Son, we receive Him. When we have Him, we have His life. The life of God becomes our life not primarily as an objective belief but as a subjective experience.

This is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:11-13)

Every believer in Christ has had the life of God dispensed into his inward being. In fact, Christ Himself has become our life (Col. 3:4). When we see the glorious reality of Christ in us, we are able to declare with the apostle: “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

The hymn concludes with the expectation that because we

have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, “the heavenly Dove,” we may also be as holy as the Lord Himself. To be sealed with the Spirit is to have His mark of ownership upon us. As we might put our name upon a book that we own, the seal of the Spirit upon us identifies us as belonging to God. The sealing of the Holy Spirit may be considered His divine anointing designating us the sons of God.

As those who are sealed, we may be as holy as He is. According to the Scriptures, for a person to be holy is not the same as for him to be righteous or upright in character and behavior, nor does it signify being without sin or fault. The primary meaning of holiness is to be set apart, separated from everything common to be solely for God. We are His. We belong to Him, and we are not available to be used by anyone, by anything, or for any purpose other than God and His economy: “The One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God, He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge” (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

We have been firmly attached to Christ and anointed with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God Himself; therefore, He is holy. By anointing us, He “signs” God’s name upon us, as signified by the seal. This “signature” is the Spirit Himself constituting us as those who belong wholly and uniquely to God; He thus makes us the same as He is in His holiness. We are soaked with the sealing Spirit, making us the same as He. By being firmly attached to Christ, we can experience all the aspects of His accomplishments in our organic oneness with Him. We should continually sing of our oneness with the Lord.

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Works Cited

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The Objective and Subjective Aspects of Faith

Concerning faith there are two aspects, the objective aspect and the subjective aspect. Objectively faith is what we believe. Subjectively faith is our believing. Therefore, faith denotes both the act of believing and that in which we believe. Regarding the act of believing, faith is subjective, but regarding what we believe, faith is objective. As we hear about those things in which we are to believe, faith is produced within us. The more we hear about these good things, the more we appreciate them. Spontaneously this appreciation issues in our believing in those very things about which we have heard. Therefore, faith is both objective and subjective...

Faith involves hearing. Without the hearing of the word, there can be no faith. Faith comes from hearing. The word we hear includes God, Christ, the Spirit, the cross, redemption, salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life. It also includes the fact that God has been processed to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. According to the New Testament, the gospel tells us of all these matters. When the gospel is preached in a proper way, those who hear it will be stirred up and filled with appreciation. Their hearing of the word of the gospel is the beginning of their believing.

From *Life-study of Galatians* by Witness Lee, pp. 122-123