

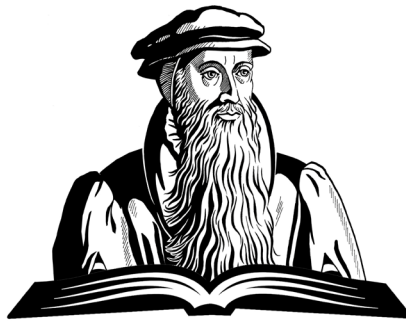
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

# *The Application of Redemption*

by Rev. William Macleod

Lecture 10

## *Union with Christ*



**The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

## **John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

© 2024 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: [www.johnknoxinstitute.org](http://www.johnknoxinstitute.org)

Rev. William Macleod recently retired, after serving as minister of the gospel for 45 years at Knightswood Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), in Glasgow, Scotland. In addition, he was for many years the editor of the denominational magazine, *The Free Church Witness*. He was also Professor of Systematic Theology and Principal of the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, in Inverness, Scotland. He is married and has three adult children and six grandchildren.

[www.freechurchcontinuing.org](http://www.freechurchcontinuing.org)



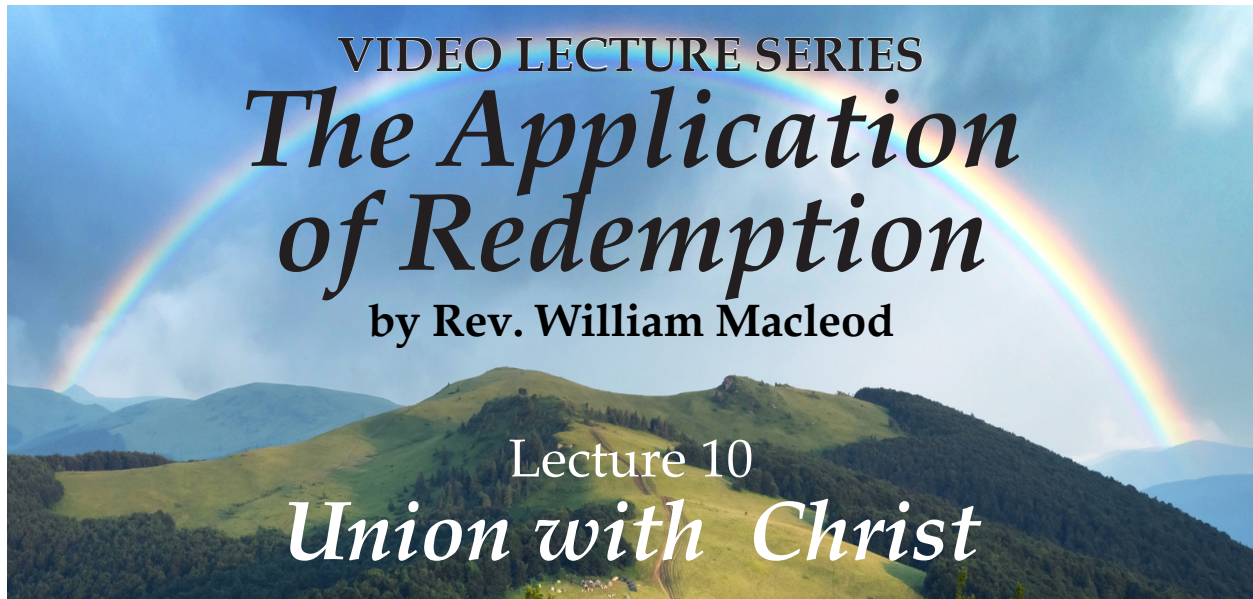
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

# *The Application of Redemption*

by Rev. William Macleod

**12 Lectures**

1. The Order of Salvation
2. Total Depravity
3. Effectual Calling
4. Regeneration
5. Repentance
6. Saving Faith
7. Justification
8. Adoption
9. Sanctification
10. Union with Christ
11. Perseverance of the Saints
12. Glorification



Our lecture today is on *Union with Christ*. Nothing is more important than our union with Christ. It underlies the whole application of redemption. Every blessing that we receive comes to us because of our union with Christ; and outside of Christ, there is no blessing, but only God's wrath and curse. Why then leave the treatment of such an important doctrine to this point in our lectures? The reason is that, having dealt with most of the other aspects of the application of redemption, we can now consider them in relation to the Bible's teaching about union with Christ. So we look then at *the Relation to Other Teachings*.

First of all, *the Eternal Plan*. Our union with Christ began before time. We were chosen in Christ and loved in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid. And the purpose of this choosing in him was that we might be holy. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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" (Ephesians 1, verses 3 and 4).

*Chosen in Him*. The Father predestinated us to be adopted as his children, by and in Christ. There never was a time when God did not view us in Christ.

Thinking of *the Covenants*. When God created man, he created all mankind in Adam, in the covenant of works. Adam was our covenant head. That is why, when Adam sinned, we all sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression. In a similar way, all God's elect are related to Christ in the covenant of redemption. As Adam was our covenant head in the covenant of works, so Christ is our head in the covenant of redemption. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15, verse 22). With Adam, we all sinned and died. In Christ, we are perfectly obedient to God, keeping all his commandments in union with Christ. And more, when Christ suffered the penalty for sin, we suffered, and we died with Christ. We were buried with him, and rose with him. We were united to Christ as he atoned for us on the cross. "He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1, verses 6 and 7). Christ's righteousness is ours, and his satisfaction rendered to the justice of God when he was punished for our sins is ours too.

Now thinking of *Effectual Calling*. The work of salvation starts, in our experience, with

effectual calling. There may be convictions and stirrings before that time, but it's only when we are effectually called that we rise from being dead in sins. And effectual calling is being "called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1, verse 9). Prior to conversion, we "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2, verses 12 and 13). We have been called into union with Christ by faith, because we were elected in Christ, and suffered on the cross in Christ, our covenant head.

Now thinking of *Regeneration*. Immediately following effectual calling in the application of redemption comes regeneration, or the new birth. What happens in regeneration is that the Spirit of Christ enters into us and raises us from being spiritually dead. From now on, Christ lives in us by the Spirit. We are crucified to the old life and risen with Christ to a new life. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (that's from Romans 6, and verses 4 to 6). We are united to Christ by being planted in Christ, and by Christ dwelling in us by his Spirit. Paul wrote, "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. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8, verses 9 and 10). So, regeneration unites us to Christ.

Now thinking of *Faith*. The first act of the regenerate soul is to respond to God's call in faith and repentance. Repentance is turning from sin, and faith is turning to Christ, and receiving Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel. To the church at Laodicea, Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3, verse 20). Faith welcomes Christ into the heart. Christ, by his Spirit, comes to dwell in the heart, and we become "the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you" (1 Corinthians 6, verse 19). Faith comes to Christ and rests on him. Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6, verse 37). And having come, by faith we receive and embrace the Lord Jesus. By faith, we are united to Christ, who is in us and we in him: "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John 3, and verse 24).

Next, *Justification*. Faith is the instrument of our justification: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5, verse 1). By faith, we lay hold on Christ for our justification and are united to him: "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Romans 4, verse 25). In justifying us, God views us as perfectly obedient in Christ. He pronounces us pardoned and accepted because we are united to Christ. He sees us as having paid the penalty for our sins, in Christ, and now risen with him.

Next, *Adoption*. Paul states that our adoption follows our union with Christ by faith: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3, verse 26). All who believe are assured of their adoption, because "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4, verse 6). We are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8, verse 17; and so, united to Christ in the family of God. The Spirit dwelling in us assures us of our adoption by witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Now, thinking of *Sanctification* in connection with our Union with Christ. Our union with Christ

plays a major role in our sanctification, as an incentive, and as an encouragement. As Christians united to Christ, we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6, verses 14 to 18). Being one body with Christ, we are not to have fellowship with devils (1 Corinthians 10, verses 16 to 21). Surely it would be outrageous to take the members of Christ's body, the parts of Christ, and join them to a harlot. Remember, your bodies are the members of Christ, parts of his body (1 Corinthians 6, verses 15 to 20). The Spirit of Christ is in you, and he is sanctifying you, fighting against the flesh (Galatians 5, verse 17), and enabling you to die to sin (Romans 8, verse 13). You are to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2, verses 12 and 13).

Then, thinking of *Perseverance*. Union with Christ assures us of our perseverance. Where Christ begins the good work in us, he will complete it (Philippians 1, verse 6). Christ dwells in us by his Spirit, and will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13, verse 5). Paul assures the Romans, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8, verses 38 and 39). Christ has come to live in us permanently, and assures us that he is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12, verse 2).

And then, *Glorification*. The Christian's death is described as falling asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4, verse 14). *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* makes the amazing statement: "Their bodies,"—the bodies of Christians—"being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection"—the answer to Question #37. Man is made up of a body and a soul, and that whole person is united to Christ in regeneration, and shall remain so forever. So Christ returns at the end of the world to raise our bodies, to unite our bodies and souls together once more, and so, we will forever be with the Lord in eternal union. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4, verses 14, and 16 to 18). Our Lord says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Revelation 3, verse 21).

Now, I'd like us to think of *Pictures of Our Union with Christ*. The Scriptures present us with several pictures of our union with Christ.

The church is described as a building, with Christ as the foundation, and we are built on him: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3, verse 11).

Christ is the rock: "Upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16, verse 18).

We are living stones, but he is the cornerstone: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2, verses 4 to 5).

In another picture, Christ is presented as the vine, and we the branches: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15, verse 5).

Paul speaks of God's church as being like a body with Christ as the head, and we the members, or individual parts, of that body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the

members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 to 14, and verse 27).

When dealing with the subject of marriage, the Apostle goes on to present Christ as the husband and the church as the spouse: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5, verses 31 and 32).

Even the Trinity, the closest union there is, the closest union possible, has been used by our Savior to describe the relationship of union with himself. He prayed, in the High Priestly Prayer, “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” (John 17, verse 21).

Now, thinking of *the Implications of Union with Christ*. Taking the pictures given above, and using the insights which we receive from them, there are certain implications of our union with Christ which it is helpful to express.

First, take the picture of a building on its foundation. This implies our duty to abide on him, on Christ—resting, trusting, loving, and building upon him as our foundation. Some build on sand and perish, but we, by grace, are building on Christ, the rock.

Second, think of the cornerstone. United to one another in the building, and to the cornerstone, we find strength. Our eye must be upon him constantly in prayer and faith. Without the cornerstone, the building falls apart. But cemented to him and to one another, we stand.

Thirdly, the illustration of the vine emphasizes that we bear fruit only through union with Christ. Outside of him, we are dry, shrivel up, and die. We are barren, cast away, and burnt in the fire. But abiding in Christ, we bear much fruit.

Fourthly, the vine also makes clear that we should seek closer and closer union with Christ, for it is only through this relationship that we can draw the nourishment we need from Christ. The sap and the Spirit which we need comes from him, and that’s what makes us healthy and fruitful.

Fifthly, the vine exists in the branches. It is seen there. We, as the branches, are to be witnessing constantly to him, to Christ. Christ is the light of the world, but then he says that “Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5, verse 14). We are to shine and transmit his light to the world. He is seen in us.

Sixthly, the figure of the body and the head emphasizes that we must constantly look to him for directions. The head guides the body in everything, and so, Christ should be our Lord and Master. The body can do nothing without the head.

Seventhly, without the head, the body has no living existence. Outside of Christ, we are headless, like a beheaded corpse and have no life or blessings, but rather, death and hell.

Eighthly, union with Christ in the body means also union with one another. The hand needs the foot. We need one another. Let us love our fellow Christians. They are part of us. If one member is in pain, the whole body is in pain. And if one member is honored, all are honored.

Ninthly, marriage is the closest bond of love known in this life. It is wonderful that the love of Christ should be described in these terms. The Lord loved his bride and gave himself for her. Keep yourself morally pure for him. You are joined to the Savior; how then, can you join yourself to a harlot? Remember, idolatry is adultery from him, from Christ.

Tenthly, the Trinity is a deep, mysterious union. Be intimately united to the Lord. Let his peace, and joy, and love flood your heart. Be filled with the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit, and quench not the

Spirit. Christ in us, the hope of glory, and so we are assured of heaven. Glory be to God, he came to live in us and has transformed us, will finish the work, and will never leave us. We will share with him in his throne, in his house, and we will be made perfectly blessed to the full enjoying of God to all eternity. Amen.