

Living in Union with Christ

Session #4 - Your Sanctification Story in Christ

**All Saints Church
2024-03-10**

<https://georgekong.me/asc/living-in-union-with-christ.zip>

introductory questions

Does God give us the ability to obey his commands?

What does it mean to be a Christian? (Answer in one sentence.)

you are here

Sessions

- 1) Living in the Presence of God - Psalm 139, Psalm 1, proactivity, "bring it on"
- 2) Taste and See - The Affections and Loving God - Edwards, Piper, Smith
- 3) Union With the Present, Loving Lord Jesus Christ - John 14
- 4) Your Sanctification Story in Christ**
- 5) Your Calling in Christ and Christ in Your Calling
- 6) United with Christ in His Suffering and in Our Suffering
- 7) United with Each Other Through Christ

introduction

The previous session was about the loving presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with us, as expressed and depicted in John 14, as background for the radical statements about our union with Christ in the Bible

This session will focus sanctification - our personal holiness - with two main points:

- The loving presence of the Lord Jesus Christ with us is how we obey God's commands.
- Our holiness develops progressively, over time, under God's providential care, and thus can be thought of as a story.

Bible texts

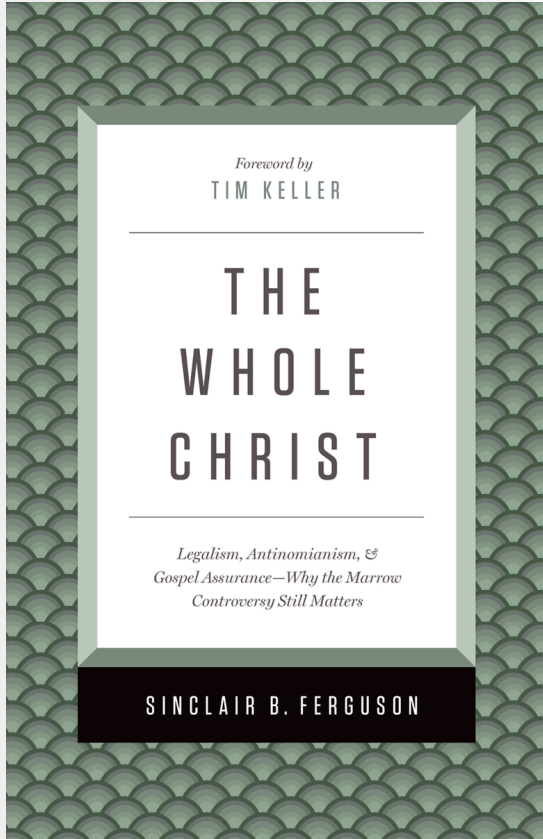
I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6)

Ferguson - The Whole Christ (2016)



background - the Marrow Controversy in Scotland in the early 1700s - a controversy over the nature of the gospel, which Ferguson argues is relevant for contemporary evangelical churches

"The benefits of the gospel (justification, reconciliation, redemption, adoption) were being separated from Christ, who is himself the gospel. The benefits of the gospel are in Christ. They do not exist apart from him. They are ours only in him. They cannot be abstracted from him as if we ourselves could possess them independently of him."

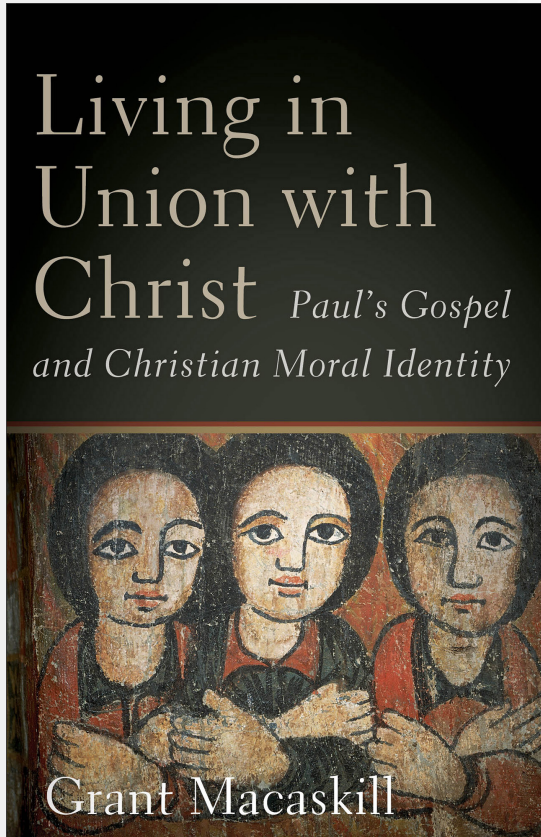
"This separation rarely takes place deliberately as a conscious decision in either doctrinal exposition or gospel preaching; nevertheless it does frequently take place. It is a subtle change from the preaching and teaching of the New Testament, with potentially far-reaching effects."

Ferguson - The Whole Christ (2016)

other topics

- union with Christ
- basis for offering the gospel to those outside of Christ
- the Fall resulted from the considering the law of God apart from the loving, trustworthy person of God - the essence of legalism
- antinomianism (rejection of law) comes from the same kind of thinking as legalism
- assurance and the role of the Holy Spirit

Macaskill - Living in Union With Christ (2019)



"[This] is a book about hope - the hope of the gospel, and the hope that this gospel really does bring about freedom from the power of sin to control and destroy our lives. And it is about the *personal* character of this hope, by which I mean that it is constituted by a person who makes himself present with and in us to deliver us from sin. That person, Jesus Christ, is not just the one who brings us hope; he *is* our hope."

Macaskill - Living in Union With Christ (2019)

"People will act, think, teach, and lead in ways that serve [their] constitutional idolatry ... Their only prospect for salvation lies in their being inhabited by another self, a better self who can act in them to bring about real goodness. Hence Paul's personal hope is expressed in his statement, 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.' (Gal 2:20) ... something has changed ... it is his most basic sense of *who* he is ... of *who* he is becoming. He is not becoming a better version of Paul; he is becoming Paul-in-Christ."

"... the gospel of Jesus Christ is not just the entry point into the kingdom of God ... but is the very constitution of the kingdom itself. To put it differently, it is not just *how* we get saved; it is *what* we are saved into and what we become within that reality. We are saved 'in Christ,' and in Christ we do 'good works' (Eph 2:10); these are done not by ... people who can say 'with the help of the Spirit, I can obey,' but by those who collectively say, 'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' "

Macaskill - Living in Union With Christ (2019)

other topics

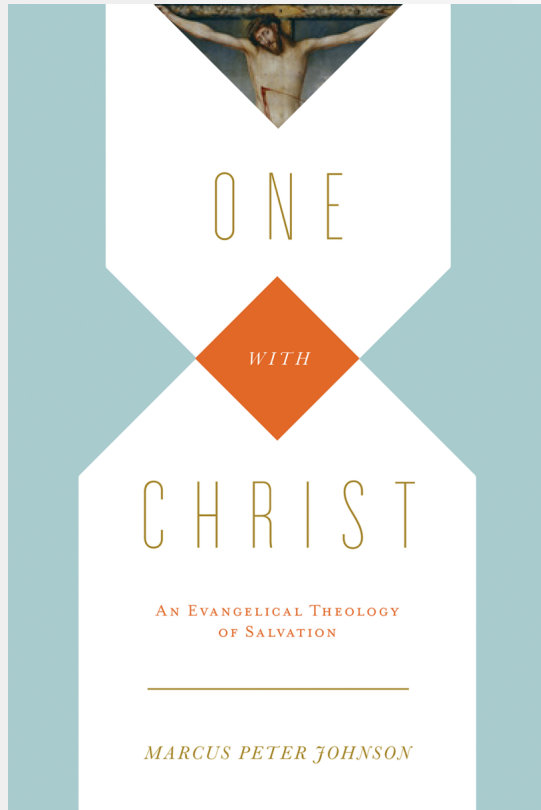
- interaction with contemporary Biblical scholarship
- detailed exegesis of relevant Bible texts (all from the writings of Paul)
- the Holy Spirit not as "power source" but as the Spirit of Christ, who realizes the life of Christ in us
- autonomous law-keeping as "commodified righteousness" in order to obtain "social capital" within the church
- guilt and doubt as the result of feeling autonomous responsibility for law-keeping instead of perceiving the on-going work of the indwelling Christ
- belief in autonomous responsibility for law-keeping is ultimately idolatry

perspectives for preachers ... and the rest of us

[Ferguson] When the benefits are seen as separate from the Benefactor, preaching focuses on "How can I offer these benefits?" and hearers focus on "How can I get these benefits into my life?" When Christ and his benefits are seen as inseparable, preaching focuses on "How do I preach Christ himself?" and hearers focus on "How do I get into Christ?"

[Macaskill] "... all talk of the Christian moral life must begin and end with Paul's statement, 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.' (Gal 2:20) ... This means that we can never talk about the moral activity of a Christian without always, in the same breath, talking about Jesus. ... It ought to be unthinkable that preachers could ever see their task as simply explaining the passage before them and showing the moral burdens it places on their congregations, without also feeling compelled to point to the one person *in* whom those responsibilities could be met."

Johnson - One With Christ (2013)



"We tend to rejoice in the fact that God *declares us righteous* in Christ ... assuming that this wonderfully good news constitutes the whole of our salvation. ... God is also *making us holy* in Christ."

"... sanctification is not merely a byproduct of salvation, it is part of what it means to be saved. In other words, there is no such thing as being saved without being sanctified ... To be in union with him is to be crucified, buried, and risen with him - to participate in the sanctifying power of his death and resurrection in our very lives. Indeed, God has predestined us to the end that we might be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, the embodied holiness of God. This is what sanctification is all about."

Johnson - One With Christ (2013)

"What does it mean to be definitively sanctified in Christ? It means that believers have experienced an actual, decisive break with the power of sin through their participation in Christ's death, and have experienced an actual, decisive newness of life through their participation in his resurrection. We are 'dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Rom 6:11). 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come' (2 Cor 5:17). This means that those in Christ have actual newness of life; they have experienced a transformation or renewal of their very persons through their death-dealing and life-giving union with Christ.

"This does not mean that Christians do not and will not struggle with sin or that they have entered into a state of sinless perfection. Such ideas flatly contradict biblical teaching."

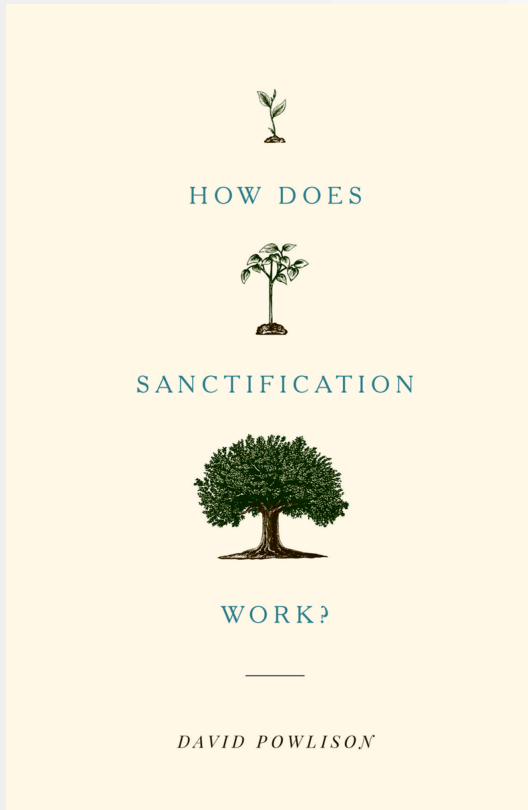
Johnson - One With Christ (2013)

"To be progressively sanctified in Christ means that believers experience the gradual, continual benefits of having already been sanctified in him. ... 'And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit' (2 Cor 3:18)"

"... We grow more and more into our Christ-existence. We are, therefore, to 'grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ!' (Eph 4:15)"

means we are called to employ: faith, the written word of God, the body of Christ, the Lord's Supper, God's law

Powlison - How Does Sanctification Work? (2017)



"The process of sanctification is personal and organic - not a one-size-fits-all formula.

Many popular views try to reduce the process of Christian growth to a single template: *Remember past grace. Rehearse your identity in Christ. Avail yourself of the means of grace. Discipline yourself.* But Scripture portrays the dynamics of sanctification in a rich variety of ways. No single factor, truth, or protocol can capture why and how a person is changed into the image of Christ." [from the back cover]

our stories

My Story

- one-sentence statement of what it means to be a Christian
- evangelism training - truncated gospel
- "What is the cutting edge of Christ's work in your life right now?"

Your Stories

- How do you react to the idea of "being inhabited by another self, a better self who can act in [you] to bring about real goodness?"
- Briefly share a way in which God has worked in your life to transform you into the image of Christ
- What is the cutting edge of Christ's work in your life right now?