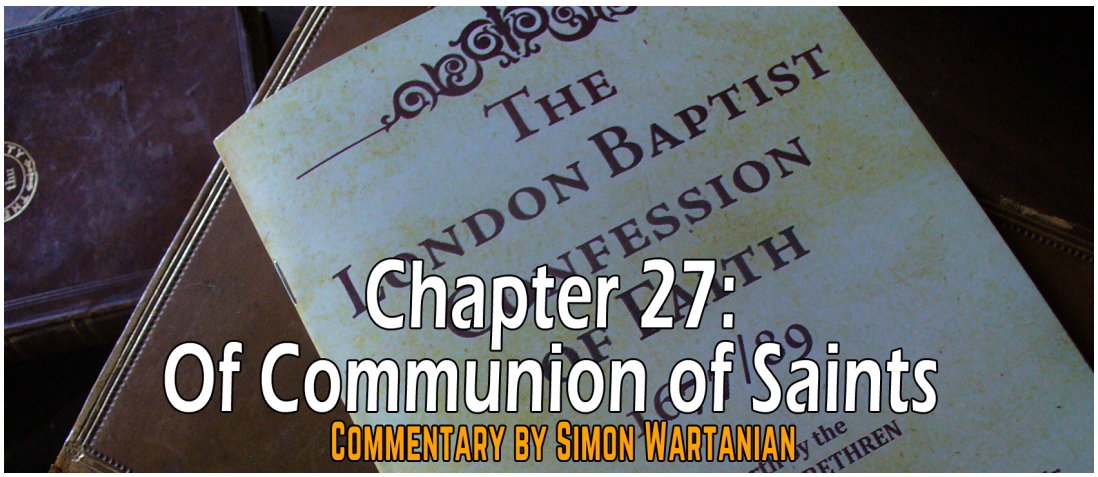
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 27: Of the Communion of Saints

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Chapter 27: Of the Communion of Saints

What does it mean that we are in union with Christ? What are the benefits from being united with Christ? What are our obligations toward fellow believers?

§1 Union With Jesus Christ

1. **All saints that are united to Jesus Christ**, **1** their head, by his Spirit, and faith, **2** although they are **not made thereby one person with him,** **3** have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; **4** and, being **united to one another in love,** they have communion in each others gifts and graces, **5** and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. **6**
    1. Eph. 1:4; John 17:2, 6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:8; 8:17; 8:2; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Peter 1:4[1]
    2. Eph. 3:16-17; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 3:17-18
    3. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:18-19; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; Isa. 42:8; Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:8-9
    4. 1 John 1:3; John 1:16; 15:1-6; Eph.2:4-6; Rom. 4:25; 6:1-6; Phil. 3:10; Col. 3:3-4
    5. John 13:34-35; 14:15; Eph. 4:15; 1 Peter 4:10; Rom. 14:7-8; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 12:7, 25-27
    6. Rom. 1:12; 12:10-13; 1 Thess. 5:11,14; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 John 3:17-18; Col. 6:10; Gal. 6:10

All saints...are united to Jesus Christ (e.g., Eph. 1:1, 4; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). They are in Him and identified with Him. To be **united to Jesus Christ** means that they **have fellowship in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory** (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 3:3-4; 1 John 1:3). They are united with Him in these aspects. For example, in the case of His death and resurrection, it is as if we died and rose again with Him. We did not literally and physically die with Him, but since we have been united to our Head, whatever He does or did on our behalf is counted as our own. This union with Jesus Christ is **by His Spirit, and faith** (Eph. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). There is no other way in which we can be united to Jesus Christ and experience the benefits of this union. In all of this, we do not become **one person with Him**. We still remain us and separate from Him, but we share in Him and are one with Him spiritually and by virtue of His headship.

This union to Jesus Christ goes beyond us and the Lord. In fact, after we have been united to the Lord, we are **united one another in love** (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:15). Union with Christ does not only make us one with the Lord, but also it unites us to others who are one with the Lord. In the same way, we share and **have communion in each other gifts and graces**. We seek to serve each other and bless others with the **gifts and graces** which God has bestowed upon us. We are, in

fact, **obliged to the performance of such duties** which **conduce to** our **mutual good** (Rom. 1:12; 12:10-13). This duty is **public and private**, and it does not only concern spiritual things (**in the inward…man**), but also physically providing for those lacking supply and in need of help materially (**in the…outward man**).

Defining Union with Christ

All the elect are united to Christ. They were united in His death (Gal. 2:20) and share the undeserved blessings coming from his perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension in glory. This union with Christ does not make us one person with Him or with God, that is blasphemy. Rather, we become one with Him in spirit, love, and communion sharing in all those blessings which the Father has given to Christ. This union with Christ spans from eternity past to eternity future. What is then this union with Christ actually? Simply said, it is the application of Christ's accomplished redemption for the elect in space and time. R. L. Dabney writes:

> When made one with His Redeeming Head, then all the communicable graces of that Head begin to transfer themselves to him. Thus we find that each kind of benefit which makes up redemption is, in different parts of the Scripture, deduced from this union as their source; Justification, spiritual strength, life, resurrection of the body, good works, prayer and praise, sanctification, perseverance, etc., etc. Eph. 1:4, 6, 11, 13; Col. 1:24; Rom. 6:3-6, 8; Col. 2:10; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:9; John 15:1-5.[2]

John Murray, in his *Redemption: Accomplish and Applied*, noted that in the Christian life "Nothing is more central or basic than union and communion with Christ."[3] Therefore, it should be beneficial to us to take the time and see what the Scriptures say about our union with the Savior. In the same place, Murray notes that union with Christ is not an aspect of the application of redemption as repentance, faith, effectual calling, but it "underlies every step of the application of redemption."[3] In all the steps of our salvation we have to do with our union with Christ. The whole process of salvation, from beginning to end, is the realization of our union with Christ. A. H. Strong defines union with Christ as "a union of life, in which the human spirit, while then most truly possessing its own individuality and personal distinctness, is interpenetrated and energized by the Spirit of Christ, is made inscrutably but indissolubly one with him, and so becomes a member and partaker of that regenerated, believing, and justified humanity of which he is the head."[4] Louis Berkhof defines it as "*that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation.*"[5]

How This Union Is Spoken Of In Scripture

In the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of Paul, this blessed union with Christ is variously mentioned whether by pictures or by the words used. For instance, Paul says that "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, **in whom the whole structure, being joined together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **In him you also are being built together** into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22). In this analogy, we see the apostle comparing our union with Christ with a building and its stones. We are a temple, but we are a temple because we are in Christ Who is building us into a temple for God. This is similar to what is said by Peter in 1 Peter 2:4-5. In this passage and others like it, we see that our union with Christ is the foundation for our communion with the believers (**paragraph 2**). We are also described as members of a **body** and Christ being the Head (Eph. 3:6; 5:29-30; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Col. 2:19).

R. L. Dabney gives a helpful summary of the images used by Scripture to illustrate this blessed union:

> The nature of this union is to be deduced from a full comparison of all the representations by which the Word illustrates it. In one place it is described by the **union of a vine with its branches**; and in another, of the **stock of an olive tree with its limbs**. (John 15:1-5; Rom. 11:16-24) The stock is Christ, diffusing life and fructifying sap through all the branches. Second, our Savior briefly likens this union to that between **Himself and His Father**. (John 17:20-21). Grace will bring the whole body of the elect into a sweet accord with Christ and each other, and harmony of interest and volition, bearing some small relation to that of the Father and the Son. Third, we find the union compared by Paul to that between the **head and the members in the body**; the head, Christ, being the seat and source of vitality and volition, as well as of sense and intelligence; the members being united to it by a common set of nerves, and community of feeling, and life, and motion. Eph. 4:15-16. Fourth, we find the union likened to that between **husband and wife**; where by the indissoluble and sacred tie, they are constituted one legal person; the husband being the ruler, but both united by a tender affection and complete community of interest, and of legal obligations. (Eph. 5:31-32; Ps. 45:9). Fifth, it is illustrated by the **union of the stones in a house to their foundation cornerstone**, where the

> latter sustains all the rest, and they are cemented to it and to each other, forming one whole. But stones are inanimate; and therefore the sacred writer indicates that the simile is, in its nature, inadequate to express the whole truth, by describing the cornerstone as a living thing, and the other stones as living things together composing a spiritual temple. See 1 Cor. 3:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:4-6.[6]

Besides the pictures of this blessed union, we also see this union mentioned in the words that Paul often uses. For example, "**in Christ**" comes up 90 times in my Bible software (e.g., Rom. 3:24; 6:11; 8:1-2, 39; 1 Cor. 1:2, 4; 4:10; 15:22; 2 Cor. 1:21; Gal. 3:14, 26, 28; Eph. 1:3, 12; 2:6). Various aspects of our salvation are captured with this often-used phrase by Paul. Also, there is the "**in Him**" phrase which is the same (e.g., Eph. 1:4, 7; 2 Cor. 1:10; 5:21; Eph. 3:12; 6:20; Phil. 3:9; Col. 1:14; Col. 2:6-7, 11). Marcus Peter Johnson summarizes what we have "in Christ":

> Furthermore, *in Christ* we are justified (Rom. 8:1), glorified (8:30), sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2), called (1:9); made alive (Eph. 2:5), created anew (2 Cor. 5:17), adopted (Gal. 3:26), and elected (Eph. 1:4–5).[7]

Another phrase which shows our union with the Savior is "**with Him**" (e.g., Rom. 6:4, 5, 6, 8; 8:17, 32; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 6:1; Col. 2:12-13; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:11-12). The alternate phrase "**with Christ**" is also used sometimes (Rom. 6:8, 8:17; 15:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5; Phil. 1:23; Col. 2:20; 3:1, 3). "**With Jesus**" is used once (2 Cor. 4:14).

Not only are we said to be *in Christ* and *with Christ*, but **Christ Himself is said to be in us** (John 15:5; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 1 John 4:4; Rev. 3:20)! What a blessing! What a great comfort and love!

The Scope of Union With Christ

Eternity Past

The union of Christ with His people begins before time began. In eternity past, the Father gave Him a people to save from their sins (Eph. 1:3-4). He would perfectly obey the Law on their behalf and take the punishment for their law-breaking upon Himself. What the Lord Christ did, He did not do for Himself, but for His people. He is our covenant head. What He did in fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption, He did for His elect, not for Himself. It is said in Ephesians 1:4 that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him". The sovereign election of God and the plan of redemption was made with Christ as the center of it all. Notice carefully what is said. it is not said that God chose Christ. But it is said that God chose *us in Christ.*

Christ's Life, Death, and Resurrection

We were also **united with Christ in His life** because the life that He lived He lived in our place so as to provide us positive righteousness. The apostle Paul writes, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). This concerns our union with Christ as our covenant head doing for us what we could never do and that is living a perfectly righteous life. In this way, the righteous life which Christ lived is credited to us. He is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9). This is the active obedience of Christ (**see here**).

The New Testament teaches that we were **united with Him in His death** (Rom. 6:5-6, 8; Gal. 2:20). The curse of the law was removed and the wrath of God satisfied on behalf of the elect. In this sense, Christ's death becomes our death. We, in Christ, died to sin and the punishment of the law of God. The union of the believer with Christ and Christ with the believer is so intimate that it is said, "our old self was crucified with him" (Rom. 6:6). His crucifixion on our behalf was also *our* crucifixion.

Scripture likewise teaches that we were **united with Him in His glorious resurrection** (Col. 2:1, 12). His resurrection is the source of our life and justification (Rom. 4:26). Without the resurrection, there would be no redemption.

Christ's **ascension** is His entrance into His throne room, having accomplished everything which the Father had commanded Him to do. He went to heaven and sent us the Holy Spirit Who will apply the work of redemption to the elect. Scripture teaches that we share in the heavenly reign of Christ (Eph. 2:6). Furthermore, Scripture encourages to live as Christ currently lives His resurrection life (Rom. 6:2-11).

Our Lives

The elect were not only united with Christ in His life, death, and resurrection in the past, but they are also, in the present, intimately united with Him through faith. The Scriptures teach that our **regeneration** and new life is the result of our union with Christ. Paul writes that "even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5). A few verses later he also says that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the

apostle says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” This great blessing of new life is a result of union with Christ.

Our **justification by faith** has its source in our union with Christ. Paul says that our justification was in Him (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 2:16-17) and that our righteousness is likewise because we are united with Him (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8-9). Not only justification, but **sanctification** is likewise a blessing from union with Christ. The apostle Paul writes that “because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Because we are in Him, we have sanctification which comes from Him. Sanctification is the new life given to us in Jesus Christ. Thus the apostle Paul tells us that “our “walk[ing] in newness of life” is because of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). He also says:

> Rom. 6:6-11 We know that **our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing**, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that **we will also live with him**. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but **the life he lives he lives to God**. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and **alive to God in Christ Jesus**.

We see here that Paul says the reason for our union with Christ in His death was so that we would die to sin and sin might lose its power over us. Since we have died with Christ, we will also *now* live with Him. Christ lives His resurrection life in His people through the Spirit Whom He poured on us. Just as the Lord Christ died and was raised to life, so likewise we should die to sin and live to God *in Christ.* Our Christian life is to be lived *in, with,* and *because of* Christ. To die to sin is an essential part of Christian sanctification, therefore we see that even our sanctification is because of our union with Christ. In Christ, we have everything we need for the Christian life. We are even living with Him (Rom. 6:8, 11). Dr. Wayne Grudem writes:

> John writes, “God gave us eternal life, and this life is *in his Son*” (1 John 5:11), and Paul speaks of “the promise of the life which is *in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim. 1:1). We read that “*in Christ*” are “faith and love” (1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:13), “grace” (2 Tim. 2:1), “salvation” (2 Tim. 2:10), “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3) and God’s “riches in glory” (Phil. 4:19). Paul says that it is because of God’s work that Christians are “in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30), and that “God . . . has blessed us in the heavenly realms with *every spiritual blessing in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).[8]

Even our good works are a result of our union with Christ (John 15:5; Eph. 2:10). Dr. Grudem gives us a list again of various things that Christians are said to do in Christ:

> It is “in the Lord” that children are to *obey* their parents (Eph. 6:1), wives are to *submit* to their husbands (Col. 3:18), and all believers are to *be strong* (Eph. 6:10), *be encouraged* (Phil. 2:1), *rejoice* (Phil. 3:10; 4:4), *agree* (Phil. 4:2), *stand firm* (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 3:8), *live a godly life* (2 Tim. 3:12) and have *good behavior* (1 Peter 3:16). “In the Lord” they *work hard* (Rom. 16:12), *are made confident* (Phil. 1:14) and *are approved* (Rom. 16:10). Paul’s hope for Christians is that they *live* in Christ: “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him” (Col. 2:6–7 NIV). Then Paul will achieve his life’s goal, to “present every man *mature* in Christ” (Col. 1:28). John similarly encourages believers to “*abide* in him” (1 John 2:28; 3:6, 24), echoing Jesus’ words, “He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit” (John 15:5).[9]

Even when we come to the end of our earthly life, the Scripture says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:3). We live to the Lord and we die to the Lord (Rom. 14:8). The dead are said to be “in Christ” (1 Thess. 4:16) and are said to be asleep in Him (1 Cor. 15:17-19).

Eternity Future

Lastly, there is the future aspect of union with Christ. First of all, after our death, we are said to be “away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Whether we live or die, we are to live with Him (1 Thess. 5:9).

Secondly, we will be glorified together with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:16-17) and we will share in a resurrection like His (Rom. 6:5; Phil. 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 15:22). We will always be in an intimate relationship and communion with our precious Lord and Savior. From eternity past to eternity future, the elect of God are in union with Christ. There is no separating the elect of God from the Savior! His obedience is our obedience. His death, our death. His resurrection, our resurrection. His glorification, our glorification. What an unspeakable privilege and blessing that the Father has poured upon

us. It is truly amazing grace. We were rebels and God-haters just like the rest of mankind, but God, instead of sending us all to hell, the place where we belong and the only thing that we deserve, chose to bless us with incomprehensible blessings. O, how deep the Father's love for us…

Characteristics of Union With Christ

A few things may be shortly said about the characteristics of our union with the Savior:

1. It is an organic union:
    - We are united with Christ as His body (1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5), God's Temple (Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5), husband and wife (Eph. 5:29-32); the Vine and its branches (John 15:5).
2. It is a vital union:
    - Christ's resurrection life becomes the dominating principle in our own lives (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 3:3-4; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5).
3. It is a Spiritual union:
    - An intimate union mediated by the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9-10; Eph. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 3:2-3).
4. It is an indissoluble union:
    - Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:1, 28-39; Matt. 28:20; John 10:28).
5. It is an intimate and inscrutable union:
    - So intimate that the most intimate of human unions is modeled after it (Eph. 5:29-32).
6. It is a reciprocal union:
    - It is a two-sided union and relationship (John 14:23; 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17).
7. It is a personal union:
    - Every believer is personally united to Christ (John 14:20; 15:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17-18).
8. It is a transformational union:
    - By this union, we are gradually changed into the image of Christ through the new life and the Holy Spirit which He has given us (Rom. 6:4-11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:24; 2:12; 3:1; 1 Pet. 4:13).

For the previous section, I've been greatly indebted to A. H. Strong[10] and Louis Berkhof.[11]

Conclusion

In short, we learn that God "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). John Murray observes concerning our union with Christ:

> We thus see that union with Christ has its source in the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world and it has its fruition in the glorification of the sons of God. The perspective of God's people is not narrow; it is broad and it is long. It is not confined to space and time; it has the expanse of eternity. Its orbit has two foci, one the electing love of God the Father in the counsels of eternity, the other glorification with Christ in the manifestation of his glory. The former has no beginning, the latter has no end. Glorification with Christ at his coming will be but the beginning of a consummation that will encompass the ages of the ages. "So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). It is a perspective with a past and with a future, but neither the past nor the future is bounded by what we know as our temporal history. And because temporal history falls within such a perspective it has meaning and hope. What is it that binds past and present and future together in the life of faith and in the hope of glory? Why does the believer entertain the thought of God's determinate counsel with such joy? Why can he have patience in the perplexities and adversities of the present? Why can he have confident assurance with reference to the future and rejoice in hope of the glory of God? It is because he cannot think of past, present, or future apart from union with Christ.[12]

All praise, thanks, honor, and glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

§2 Holy Fellowship And Communion

2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an **holy fellowship** and **communion in the worship of God,** and in performing such other **spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification;** **1** as also in relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities, and necessities; **2** which communion, according to the rule of the gospel, though especially to be exercised by them, in the relation wherein they stand, whether in families, or churches, **3** yet, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all the household of faith, even **all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus;** **4** nevertheless their communion one with another as saints, doth not take away or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions. **5**
    1. Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25
    2. Acts 11:29-30; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 2; Rom. 15
    3. 1 Tim. 5:8, 16; Eph. 6:4; 1 Cor. 12:27
    4. Acts 11:29-30; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 2; 6:10; Rom. 15
    5. Acts 5:4; Eph. 4:28; Exod. 20:15

Saints by profession are they who profess "the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ" (**chapter 26:2**), who are also called "visible saints". These saints are **bound** and obliged **to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God** (Heb. 10:24-25). They are obliged to attend and participate in the worship and service of God. They are bound to perform **spiritual services** to each other which **tend to their mutual edification**. Christians should primarily do things for each other, for **mutual edification** (Rom. 1:12). As Paul said, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). This mutual edification and help also concerns **outward things** (Rom. 12:13; see also **chapter 26:5**) and not merely spiritual matters. This mutual help and edification is to be **especially…exercised…in the relation wherein they stand, whether in families, or churches**. But there are of course opportunities to extend this grace **to all the household of faith**, i.e., Christians **in every place** (e.g., Acts 11:29). This could be done through donation or other ways of sending help, for example. Most importantly, **their communion one with another as saints** does not mean everyone becomes the owner of these **goods and possessions** (Eph. 4:28). But everyone still retains the right and **title** of their **goods and possessions**, although they are to be shared with the household of faith.

"Saints by profession" refers to those who *claim* to be believers. It refers to **visible saints** as we discussed in the previous chapter (**26:2**). It refers to those who are, according to man's understanding, true Christians, but they may not be so in their hearts. The point is, everyone who professes to be a believer ought to maintain the holy fellowship and convocation of God's people for the worship of God. Having treated the subject of our union with Christ, the Confession moves from that majestic subject to speak of our communion with each other. Our union with Christ is the foundation for our communion with fellow believers.

Our Lord called upon us to love each other (John 13:34-35) and desired that love should be the mark that distinguishes Christians. As the Lord has blessed us with various gifts, so, we must use these gifts to serve each other. The Spirit supplies His people with His gifts for the purpose of serving each other (1 Cor. 12:7). The gifts of God are not to be used selfishly but in order to serve and love each other. Sometimes we may minister to people spiritually—giving them good counsel and praying for them, but other times we may minister to them in physical matters—giving them food, helping them at home, giving them money, and so on. We must display our *authentic* love to each other for Christ's sake and by Christ's power. For Christ's love has been poured out in our hearts and so we should not hold it in, but let Christ minister to others through us and glorify His holy Name. Christians should act like brothers and sisters because *they are, in fact, so.* Therefore, they should be ready to share their belongings with each other just as the early church did so:

> Acts 2:44-45 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

They were ready to sell their belongings and thereby serve their brethren. Are we ready for such sacrifices, even giving monetary help to our brethren, lending them things without cost? Such should be our Christian fellowship. It should be

motivated by brotherly love, for the sake of Christ, in the family of God. John tells those who love God that they ought to love the brothers:

> 1 John 4:10-12 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, **if God so loved us**, **we also ought to love one another**. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

There is an obligation on Christians to love fellow Christians even to the point of death, as our Lord did (1 John 3:6). This obligation to love one another sacrificially is spoken of in strong words. The Greek word for "ought" here is the verb ὀφειλω (*opheilo,* G3784), which means "to owe, be in debt; be bound by oath; be obligated, ought, must"[13]. We are obligated and we owe it to God to love His children. Christian love is not only something which the Lord demonstrated toward us, but also an obligation upon His people to demonstrate to each other. It is not something optional, something that we do when we are comfortable, but it is an obligation—something that is commanded by God. This love should be demonstrated to all the saints of God, especially those of our own congregation.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

(1 John 4:7)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. ^ *Robert L. Dabney. Systematic Theology. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985). pp. 612-613.*
3. a, b *John Murray. Redemption: Accomplished and Applied. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2015, original 1955). p. 171.*
4. ^ *A. H. Strong. Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed For The Use Of Theological Students. (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1970. Originally, 1907). p. 795.*
5. ^ *Louis Berkhof. Systematic Theology. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Banner of Truth Trust. 1963). p. 449.*
6. ^ *Dabney, Systematic Theology. p. 613.*
7. ^ *Marcus Peter Johnson. 10 Things You Should Know about Union with Christ. Crossway Blog, 2016.*
8. ^ *Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). p. 843. Emphasis original.*
9. ^ *Ibid., p. 844. Emphasis original.*
10. ^ *Strong, Systematic Theology. pp. 800-801.*
11. ^ *Berkhof, Systematic Theology. pp. 450-451.*
12. ^ *Murray, Redemption. pp. 174-175.*
13. ^ *William D. Mounce. ὀφειλω.*