

Oneness

John 17:20-23

Imagine the act of baptism, let's say that you were going to be baptized. You would have prepared yourself by dressing for the moment and thinking about the meaning of what you are to do. Now, you enter the water coming down the stairs and stand next to the pastor. He has taught you that as you stand there, you are representing what Jesus did for you so that you could be saved. Standing there is a picture of His death on the cross. Going under the water is a picture of His burial and coming back out of the water, a picture of His resurrection. But baptism, the pastor has explained, is also a picture of what God is doing in your life. Standing there in the water next to the pastor is a confession that your old life was filled with sin, sin that had stained you as one guilty before the Lord. When you go under the water, this pictures the cleansing and forgiving power of Jesus' blood. Once you are washed then you are clean. Then, when you come up out of the water this represents the new life that you now have and your sincere desire as witnessed by the church that you want to live your new life for God.

Now the pastor did not make this stuff up. He got it from the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Romans 6. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism unto death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection." Paul goes on to explain that "we died with Christ" in that "our old man was crucified with Him." This means that our body of sin (our flesh) has been "done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." But Paul continues this train of thought by adding to it the resurrection. For if we died with Him then we were also raised with Him. As Jesus was raised to glory in the presence of the Father we have been raised to "walk in newness of life." As a consequence of this new reality (the reality of who we are in Christ), Paul gives direction for us to internalize this reality through three actions: 1) Know. Know "that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Know "that Christ having been raised from the dead, dies no

more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." 2) Reckon. The word reckon is reflective. Based on what we know, we draw a conclusion. We resolve. This is what Paul means with the work "reckon." "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is to accept the reality of our old man having been crucified with Christ so that we are now dead indeed to sin and awakened to the new life that we live for God. 3) Yield. We are to no longer yield to sin and the devil but to God. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Just as there is a process of thought that leads to sin, there is also a process of thought that leads to right living.

Eve's experience in the garden began with a sense of deprivation. The serpent asked, Is it really true that your harsh and abusive creator told you that you cannot eat of all the trees in the garden? Don't you know that things are not as He would have you believe, He is really trying to hold you back, to keep you from reaching your potential. Then he took Eve to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil so that she would look over the forbidden. Looking over the forbidden as a part of temptation is to focus on the perceived benefits of the forbidden while ignoring the consequences that the proposed action might bring about. Finally, Eve felt an urgency about eating of the tree. She was deceived and thought that she had only two options, she could eat and enjoy the delectable fruit with all of the new wisdom that she would gain or she could miss out. The deception was that she had far more than two options and of course, her act of disobedience was to bring curse rather than blessing.

In contrast, follow Paul's thinking of Know, Reckon, and Yield. Know that you belong to God and that you are His child as a result of your coming to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You know that not only did Jesus die for you on the cross but that your old man (that is your old ways, your flesh, or your

sense centered obsessions) was crucified with Christ. All of this that had been raging within you is now dead. And being dead, it is impotent, powerless. And so you reckon (conclude, resolve) that you are dead to sin and alive to God and to the life that he has called you to live. So your eyes are opened to the glory of a life lived for God and this is what you desire above all other things. And so you do not yield yourself to make the same mistakes all over again and live once more as a slave to sin. Instead, you yield yourself and all of your energy and intellect to God, to live for Him being with Christ, alive from the dead, and richly living your new life for God.

So when Jesus prayed for us (we already knew we were in the prayer because our identification with the disciples is so strong), He prayed specifically for a particular work of God in our lives. He prayed, "That they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

There are two ways to interpret the oneness that Jesus prayed for. Oneness could have the meaning of unity or it could have the meaning of union. For example, If your husband, on Father's Day, takes his credit card and buys a new fishing boat, You now owe the bank, together with your husband, the money required to pay off the loan. Husbands and wives live legally as a marital union. A debt incurred by one is a debt incurred by both. If, your child disobeys you and as parents, as husband and wife, you talk together about how best to handle the situation and you come to an agreement so that you share the same goals in respect to your child and you also share and are in agreement about how best to accomplish those goals, then this is unity.

Paul identified first our union with Christ. "We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Our union with Christ, that we are one in Him, means that what has happened to Him has also happened to us. Paul applies this specifically in terms of death and resurrection. So we are one with Christ, in a union with Christ, in His death and His resurrection. The oneness of unity with Christ is experienced when we follow

Paul's prescription of Know, Reckon, and Yield. These steps internalize the spiritual reality of our union with Christ so that we become one with Him, unified in renouncing our sinful past and in engaging fully in the new life we now live for God. Jesus rose to the glory of the presence of God and to the ministry of intercession on behalf of the saints. We rise to a life we now live for God and His glory in order to further the mission of Christ, to encourage each other in this life of faith and to reach the world with the Good News. This is unity.