



M

ON UNION
WITH CHRIST
AND EFFECTIVE
CALLING

JOHN BROWN
OF HADDINGTON

The background of the cover is a painting of a man in a dark, long robe and a wide-brimmed hat, seen from behind, walking down a narrow, stone-paved street. He is carrying a large, thick book under his left arm. The street is lined with buildings, and the scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall style is reminiscent of a classical or religious painting.

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On Union with Christ and Effective Calling

by John Brown of Haddington

The overall benefit that Christ, through His humility, achieves and grants in His exaltation, is our redemption or salvation. This encompasses our complete deliverance from the violated law, from sin, Satan, the world, death, and hell. It encompasses our full right to and possession of grace and glory for all eternity. It also includes the transformation of our spiritual state through our union with Christ, justification through His blood, and adoption into His family, which is perfected in the very first moment. Additionally, it involves the transformation of our nature and condition through regeneration, sanctification, consolation, and eternal glory, which are perfected gradually, as stated in Romans 8:30.

Christ's purchase of redemption for us does not benefit us unless it is effectively applied to us. First, this is evident from its symbolic representations. The water of purification did not cleanse legal impurity unless it was sprinkled. Likewise, the mixture of blood and water did not purify the leper unless it was applied to his flesh (Numbers 19; Leviticus 11; Leviticus 15-16; Leviticus 14; 1 Peter 1:3; Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 12:24). Second, emblematic representations of Christ and His benefits, such as clothing (Romans 13:14; Isaiah 61:10), food (John 6:53; Isaiah 25:6), and medicine (Isaiah 53:5; Revelation 22:2), demonstrate that they do not benefit unless they are applied. All the promises of the gospel portray God as transferring Himself and His blessings to humanity (Genesis 17:7-8; Isaiah 25:6; Isaiah 55:2-3; Acts 13:34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Fourth, if this application were not absolutely necessary, then eternal happiness would be equal for all individuals, since the price of our

redemption holds infinite value and is equally suitable for everyone. However, this contradicts John 13:18; Acts 8:21,23; Matthew 7:13-14. Fifth, Christ's word, sacraments, and other established means of salvation clearly indicate the necessity of a spiritual application of redemption (2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Luke 10:21; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

The Holy Spirit is the effective applicator of redemption to us. It is through Him that Christ and His Father work in us. He applies it either indirectly, through the Word and sacraments, to adult individuals, or directly to infants and in the heavenly realm (Isaiah 44:3-5; John 16:7-14; Ezekiel 36:27; Isaiah 59:21). As Christ serves as the Surety, Trustee, Administrator, Source, and Sum of all the blessings of the new covenant, being united with Him must be a remarkable benefit in itself and the immediate foundation of all the other blessings that reside in His person.

There is an apparent union between Christ and all the members of the visible church, which is established through their reception of common gifts and influences from Him, as well as their open profession of His truths and service. However, this union can easily be broken (John 15:2,6; Matthew 8:12). Additionally, there is a moral union of mutual affection between Him and believers, which is more accurately described as communion (John 14:21). But the union with Him upon which our enjoyment of His benefits depends includes:

1. A legal union between us, as guilty and self-ruined debtors and criminals, and Him as our surety. This union was formed from eternity when we were chosen in Him. The everlasting love of God and the covenant of grace serve as the bonds of this union. The imputation of our sins to Christ's account, so that His satisfaction for them can be imputed to us in legal terms, is the result of this union (Hebrews 7:22; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:19).

2. His personal union with our nature, established in the fullness of time, to fulfill the requirements imposed upon Him by His legal union with us (Hebrews 2:11-16; John 1:14; Isaiah 7:14; Romans 8:3-4; Galatians 4:4-5).
3. A spiritual or mystical union, formed at the moment of our regeneration. In this union, we, as the purchased Bride of Christ, are united to Him as our Husband and Head of influence through His Spirit entering into our hearts and our acceptance of Him through faith (1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Corinthians 6:17; John 17:26; Ephesians 2:21-22; Ephesians 3:17).

To attest to the reality of this union between Christ and believers, the Scripture portrays Him as being in them and them as being in Him. They are described as having Him as their life, being partakers of Him, and possessing Him (John 14:20; John 6:56; John 15:4-5,7; John 17:21,26; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 5:20; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 45:17). They are also depicted as having Him as the source of their life (1 John 5:11-12; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3-4) and sharing in Him (Hebrews 3:14).

This spiritual union between Christ and believers, which is highly mysterious in itself, is illustrated to us in Scripture through various similes. Some of these similes are surpassed by the union, while others fall short.

1. It is likened to the union between the persons of the Godhead (John 17:21; John 14:20; John 6:57). However, it falls infinitely short of that union. It is not absolutely necessary or self-existent, nor does it make Christ and believers one individual substance.
2. It is likened to the union of Christ's two natures in His person. Just as His humanity was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are born of the Spirit (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35; John 3:5-6,8; 1 Peter 1:3,23; 1 John 3:9; 1 John 5:18). As Christ,

through a sovereign act, assumed our nature, He, through another act, apprehends our person (Hebrews 2:14,16; Philippians 3:12). Just as the fullness of the Godhead dwells in His humanity, we, being in Him, are filled with the fullness of God (Colossians 2:9-10; Ephesians 3:19). He, in His incarnation, dwelt among us, and through our union with Him, God dwells with us in Him (John 1:14; Revelation 2:13; Ephesians 2:21-22; Ephesians 3:17). In Him, as the God-man, there is the grace of union, anointing, and headship, while in us, as united to Him, there is a gracious union, anointing, and membership (John 1:14,16; Colossians 2:19; Colossians 1:18). However, our spiritual union with Him falls far short of the union of His two natures. It does not make Him and us one person, nor does it make us temporarily incapable of sin (Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:14-25; Romans 8:13). It is through the new nature formed in us by His act of self-union that He has fellowship with our soul (2 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). By His gracious influence, this new nature mortifies our inner corruption until it is completely abolished (Romans 8:2,13; Galatians 5:17,24; Romans 7:14-25).

3. It is likened to the union between a king and his subjects. As our Brother, Christ has power over us, cares for us, rules over us, and protects us. We willingly submit to Him, and our eternal happiness depends on His infinite wisdom, power, mercy, and honor (Revelation 15:3; Matthew 25:34-40). However, this spiritual union is much closer and permanent than the union between a king and his subjects.
4. As it involves mutual knowledge, choice, solemn self-dedication, and results in mutual love, delight, and shared interest, it is likened to the marital union between a husband and wife (Ephesians 5:30,32; Isaiah 54:5; Ezekiel 16:8-14; Song of Solomon 2:16; Song of Solomon 6:3). However, it surpasses this analogy as it makes Christ and believers one spirit and can never

be dissolved (1 Corinthians 6:16-17; Philippians 2:5; 2 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:3; Hosea 2:19-20).

5. To emphasize that their happy connections, support, and glory depend on Him, it is compared to the union of a building with its foundation or cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:9,11,17; Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:20-22). However, it goes beyond this analogy as Christ is equally close and imparts life to every believer (1 Peter 2:5; Galatians 2:20; John 14:19; John 11:25).
6. Because through it we receive all our supporting, enlivening, beautifying, and fruitful influences, it is likened to the union between the root of a tree and its branches (John 15:1-7; Colossians 2:7). Yet, it transcends this comparison as Christ, our root, is equally close to all His branches, and none of them can become completely withered, unfruitful, or broken off (Romans 7:4; Romans 6:14; Romans 8:35-39; John 10:28-29).
7. As we are enlightened, guided, honored, and receive our spiritual nourishment and breath through Christ, it is likened to the union between our head and the other members of our body (Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 1:12; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:18-19). However, it surpasses this analogy as Christ is equally close to every member, and none can be separated from Him or become completely numb or lifeless (John 14:16,19; Colossians 3:3-4; Galatians 2:20; Isaiah 26:19).
8. As Christ enters into our soul and is the very life of it, our spiritual union with Him is likened to the union of our soul or our food with our body (John 6:56-57; Colossians 3:4). Yet, it is much closer, as Christ can never be separated from us or cease to animate us (Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19; Galatians 2:28).

Our spiritual union with Christ can be further explained by considering our connection with Adam. As a result of our legal union

with him, which occurred within the covenant of works, his Fall under the curse immediately involved all his descendants as well. We are held within the threats of the broken law, constantly susceptible to the outpouring of its wrath whenever we come into existence. The influence of this curse plays a malevolent role in bringing us into actual existence. However, it can only take hold of us once we become united with Adam as our natural root or parent.

Likewise, as a consequence of Jesus fulfilling all righteousness on our behalf, He, as our legal Head and Husband, obtained complete justification for us. This justification is readily available to us in the promises of the gospel. However, until we are united with Him as our Head of influence, in whom all the promises are affirmed and fulfilled, we do not possess an actual share in His righteousness and grace.

This illustration can also be further understood by looking at the personal union of Christ's two natures. Firstly, in the establishment of the legal union between Christ and us, a precise moment was designated for the union of our human nature with His divine person. This ensured that the debt charged against Him as our Surety could be demanded and obtained from Him (Galatians 4:4; Romans 8:3-4). Similarly, in God's purpose, a precise moment was determined for the spiritual union of our persons with Him. This allowed His righteousness, fulfilled on our behalf, to be imputed to us, and its effects to be imparted to us (Ezekiel 16:8; Psalm 110:3).

Secondly, despite Christ's eternal commitment to paying our debt to the broken law, He remained in His Father's presence without it being demanded until He assumed our human nature at the appointed time. Furthermore, even though our debt was transferred to Him, and He satisfied it long ago, we, though chosen in Him, continue to be under the dominion of the broken law as children of wrath until the time of love when we are spiritually united to Christ (Ephesians 2:2-3; Ezekiel 16:5-8).

Lastly, from the beginning of creation until the appointed time, God was continuously preparing to demand the satisfaction He required from His Son. His Son repeatedly appeared in our human nature before actually assuming it. Similarly, while the elect individuals remain unborn or in a state of wrath, God is always making preparations to unite them to Christ during their time of love. Through the common workings of His Spirit, apparent unions with Him are manifested in many individuals (Revelation 3:20; Matthew 13:20; Hebrews 6:4-5).

Although the transfer of our debt to the broken law onto Christ through His legal union with us as our Surety was the reason for His actual assumption of our nature, the demand for satisfaction, in terms of sequence, began after that assumption. Furthermore, while Christ's righteousness—which is truly ours, as fulfilled by our Surety who is legally united to us—serves as the foundation or meritorious cause for God's spiritual union of our persons with His, the formal, actual, and judicial accounting of that righteousness to our persons, resulting in our being considered righteous in the eyes of the law, follows in sequence, not in time, after our spiritual union with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:1; Romans 7:4; Isaiah 45:24-25).

In infants, this mystical union with Christ is established through the Holy Spirit's application of Him or Christ's spiritual application of Himself, as designated by God, who grants them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This results in the formation of a new nature within them, including faith, love, repentance, and every other saving grace. These graces, in accordance with the natural capacities of their souls, are ready to manifest themselves at the appropriate time, as God provides the opportunity (John 3:5-6,8; Mark 10:14).

However, in individuals who have the ability to reason, this union is formed in the process of effectual calling. In effectual calling, Christ, through His word and Spirit, invites, compels, and draws them to Himself. Through His powerful declarations and the offer of the

gospel, He imparts Himself and His grace into their hearts. This effectual calling is the work of God and is attributed to the Father, the Son, and particularly to the Holy Spirit, who is sent by the Father and Son to apply redemption to us (Romans 9:24; Romans 8:30; Romans 11:29; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 1:6; 2 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:2; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Revelation 2:7; John 16:7-13; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Isaiah 44:3-5).

Effectual calling is a benefit of the covenant of grace, purchased by the blood of Christ as our Surety. It is received only by the elect, and at different stages of their earthly life. This work of God is referred to as a calling because it assumes that individuals are naturally distant from Christ and implies His interaction with them as rational beings through convictions, illuminations, and persuasions to bring them to Him. Through effectual calling, they are transformed from a state of sin, wrath, darkness, and worldliness into a state of fellowship with Christ, His Father, and the Holy Spirit. They are brought into the kingdom of God, to marvellous light, love, liberty, holiness, and eternal happiness in Christ (Romans 8:30; Romans 8:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-13,19-22; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Peter 2:9; John 15:9; 1 John 1:3,7; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Corinthians 7:22-23; John 8:32,36; 1 Thessalonians 2:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:11-12; 1 Peter 1:16; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:3-10).

The manifestations of God's perfections in the works of creation and providence can make individuals more receptive to rational attention towards His word, if they have the opportunity to experience it. Afflictions may also prompt seriousness and attentiveness. However, many people do not have an outward call to enter into fellowship with Christ.

1. Multitudes of them are devoid of knowledge of His statutes and ignorant of His judgments. They are not His people in an external sense. They are strangers to the covenants of promise, without God, without Christ, and without any hope of future happiness. They perish due to a lack of vision and are allowed to

continue on their own destructive paths. They remain ignorant of God despite their wisdom.

2. The doctrine of salvation is concealed from the heathen world.
3. God prohibited the preaching of the gospel to certain individuals.
4. A broad knowledge of the world experientially confirms that the majority of mankind is unaware of the method of salvation through Christ.

Objection I: "The call of the gospel reaches all men." Answer: The call is extended to people of all kinds, Jews and Gentiles, and individuals from all walks of life, whether poor or rich. However, it does not reach every specific person.

Objection II: "The voice of nature, which extends to every man, calls all to repentance and virtue." Answer: Nature calls individuals to acknowledge God as a Creator and Preserver but provides no indication of Him as a Redeemer.

Objection III: "All men have had a double revelation of the gospel of Christ, in the first promise to Adam and Eve, and in God's covenant with Noah." Answer: Were all men who have lived, are living, or will live on earth present to hear these declarations? Are they all capable of understanding them? We cannot claim that all of mankind, in their own personal experiences, lived in perfect happiness in Eden or have just come out of the ark into a world that is barely dried.

Objection IV: "Many heathens were endowed with eminent goodness and virtue." Answer 1: While they may have received remarkable gifts from God as their Creator and sustaining Governor, there were no signs of saving graces among them. In fact, their pride, selfishness, or indulgence in certain wickedness clearly revealed the flaws behind their apparent virtues. 2: No matter how virtuous they may have been, there is no salvation without Christ. There is no

saving connection between adult individuals and Christ without knowledge of Him and faith in Him. Without knowledge of or faith in Christ, salvation is impossible. And without hearing the gospel, there can be no knowledge of or faith in Him.

Objection V: "Melchizedek, Job and his friends, the centurion whose faith Christ admired, the Syrophenician woman, Cornelius, and many other heathens had true and saving faith. All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Those who fear God and work righteousness are accepted by Him. All that is necessary to come to God is to believe that He exists and rewards those who diligently seek Him."

Answer 1: None of the mentioned individuals appear to have lacked divine revelations. Melchizedek, Job, and his friends had access to them through tradition from Noah or directly from God, just like Abraham and his immediate descendants. The two centurions and the Syrophenician woman had access to Jewish revelations and worship.

2: The good deeds of unregenerate individuals are acknowledged and rewarded by God in this life.

3: Under the gospel, people are accepted by God regardless of their family, nationality, or outward circumstances. However, people can only truly fear God and work righteousness through belief in Christ. True faith in Christ is only possible when connected with Him. Acceptance and other blessings of the new covenant are promised only in Christ.

Objection VI: "It is inconsistent with the infinite mercy of God to leave many people without the necessary means of salvation."

Answer 1: We have long ago demonstrated, against Deists, that God has done so in full consistency with all His perfections.

2: God's infinite mercy does not obligate Him to provide the means of salvation to all individuals any more than it obligates Him to provide them to all devils, who are His more excellent creatures by nature.

3: Scripture never suggests that God bestows any saving mercy except through Christ.

Objection VII: "All heathens must have sufficient means of salvation. If God requires them to worship Him, He must provide them with the proper laws and motives for acceptable worship. If He has given them immortal souls, He must guide them towards obtaining eternal happiness. It is not consistent with His infinite wisdom and goodness to require something for their salvation without informing them. In distributing eternal rewards or punishments, He must judge people based on the opportunities, revelations, abilities, and motivations He has given them. The faithful improvement of even the smallest talents will be rewarded with everlasting life."

Answer 1: God has given heathens some knowledge of the object of worship, but not of the way of salvation.

2: God made devils immortal beings but never provided them with a way of salvation after their fall.

3: Sins committed against the light of nature are sufficiently grave to lead to eternal punishment. Ignorance of God and spiritual matters, although not as heinous as sins committed against gospel-light, is still a sin and cannot make something sinful innocent or virtuous.

4: Although God may reward the outwardly good works of heathens with temporal benefits as an encouragement for order and virtue, when examined according to His spiritual and comprehensive law, these works are inadequate to be rewarded by Him with eternal happiness.

All individuals who read and hear the gospel as recorded in the Scriptures are called to enter into a relationship with Christ and receive complete salvation in him as a free gift from God. The law, which reveals our sinfulness and the danger we are in, warns us to flee from the coming wrath and, upon the revelation of Christ, binds us to believe in him. This law is binding upon all people. The gospel, on the other hand, presents and offers Christ and his salvation to everyone who hears it, inviting them to receive him without considering whether they are well or poorly qualified, elect or reprobate.

1. Christ's righteousness, being infinitely valuable and fulfilled in his humanity, fully satisfies the demands of the broken law for every person. All the blessings purchased by Christ that pertain to their change of state, nature, or condition are equally sufficient and suited for everyone.
2. In the gospel, Jesus Christ is presented and offered indefinitely to all who hear it as God's completely free gift and the Saviour of mankind.
3. In the gospel, people are called in the most general and unlimited manner to receive the blessings of salvation.
4. Even those who may seem most likely to be excluded are explicitly invited to receive Christ and his salvation, such as the lost, the ignorant, the foolish, those who hate knowledge, scoffers, notorious transgressors, the stubborn and far from righteousness, the rebellious, those who have sinned greatly, the self-conceited, and those unaware of their own sinfulness and misery.
5. The moral law, which requires individuals to receive and obey God as the one true God and their God, has the same scope as God's offer of himself to be their God.

6. If the gospel offers and calls were not directed to all people in general who hear it, no one would dare to embrace them until they were certain they possessed the necessary qualifications. However, it is certain that the more a person understands themselves, the more they will see their own pride, wickedness, laziness, insincerity, enmity against God, unworthiness of Christ, and unfitness to receive him. A deeply convicted individual, especially when tempted by Satan, will not be able to see enough sincerity, sensitivity, and willingness within themselves to receive Christ as offered in the gospel.

Objection I: "Only those who are thirsty, willing, and heavily burdened are invited to receive Christ and his salvation." Answer: In Isaiah 55:1, the thirsty cannot refer only to those who earnestly desire Christ and his righteousness, for in verse 2 they are said to be spending money on things that do not satisfy. It must mean those who desire happiness in any form. "Whosoever will" in Revelation 22:17 denotes the universality of the invitation, not the qualification of the individuals invited. The heavy burdened labourers in Matthew 11:28 includes those who have exhausted themselves in sinful ways and are burdened with guilt and the enslaving power of sin.

Objection II: "It would be highly inappropriate for people who have just been immersed in wickedness to approach or receive the holy Jesus without some change being made in them." Answer: Indeed, God must make them new creatures before they are capable of receiving him, but it is not as new people, but as sinful people, that they are authorised and required to receive him for their salvation. Just as it is not inappropriate for the dangerously sick to approach or admit the highly skilled physician before they are almost cured, or for the unclean to use the purifying water before they are partially cleansed, or for the starving to consume nourishing food before they are fully satisfied, it is not inappropriate for the ignorant to come directly to the only effective Teacher, the guilty to receive the Lord as their righteousness, or the lost to approach the divinely appointed Saviour. It is impossible for people to attain true sincerity, humility,

or a reformed heart before they receive Christ. When we receive Jesus Christ as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we cannot continue to cling to our sins because we receive him to cleanse and eliminate them.

Objection 3: "God cannot be honest if he calls all men who hear the gospel to receive Christ and his salvation, knowing that many of them are reprobates." Answer 1: If God intends to cut off someone by death, does that justify the person withholding proper sustenance, medicine, or warmth from themselves or inflicting harm upon themselves? Answer 2: God, through his gospel, calls no one to believe anything other than essential truth and to do anything other than what his law requires.

Objection 4: "It is completely absurd and futile to call reprobates to believe in Christ since they cannot believe." Answer 1: Indeed, they cannot and, what is worse, they will not believe in him. Ministers, being completely uncertain about who is elected and who is not, must invite people in general to Christ and leave it to the Holy Spirit, who knows all things, to determine those who are elected to believe for the salvation of their souls. 3. Through the general invitations of the gospel, many reprobates receive common gifts and graces, have many sins prevented, obtain temporal happiness, and become remarkably useful to the elect.

Before their spiritual union with Jesus Christ, individuals, particularly those who hear the gospel, may perform actions that are naturally or civilly good, and even engage in religious practices. Under the general influence of the Holy Spirit, they may exhibit behaviors that resemble spiritual goodness. However, they can never wholeheartedly respond to the call of the gospel, believe in Christ, or engage in truly holy and spiritual actions.

1. We have previously established that all people, by nature, are under the curse of the broken law, which empowers sin. This curse not only deprives them of original righteousness from the

moment of conception but also keeps them in that state as long as it remains upon them.

2. Scripture declares that all people are unclean, and this universal statement must be understood as referring to sinful pollution. Job 14:4 states that even David, a child of pious parents and one of the most righteous individuals, was conceived and born in sin. The Jewish people, who were considered God's chosen ones, were described as wicked transgressors from birth. Furthermore, it is affirmed that all people, by nature, are so enslaved by their inherent corruptions that they are incapable of doing anything spiritually good.
3. If individuals had any natural inclination or ability to perform actions that are spiritually good, why do we observe such widespread wickedness in thoughts, words, and deeds, despite the presence of numerous powerful incentives towards virtue and the absence of incentives towards vice? Why do even the most observant and sanctified individuals experience strong inclinations towards vice and encounter great difficulty in doing anything spiritually good?

These observations point to the inherent limitations and corrupt nature of humanity, emphasizing the need for the transformative power of Christ and the Holy Spirit in order to truly engage in righteous and spiritual conduct.

Objection I: "Without freedom of will and the ability to perform spiritually good actions, individuals cannot be in a proper state of trial for eternal happiness or misery; they would either be in the state of devils or of established angels."

Answer 1: Believers, while on earth, are not in the state of established angels because they are imperfect in their nature, works, and condition. Likewise, wicked individuals are not in the state of devils

because they are under God's mercy, which can lead to their eternal salvation.

Answer 2: Since Adam's fall, no one has been or will be in a proper state of trial for eternal happiness.

1. All believers are secure in a state of eternal salvation in Christ. Without this assurance, they would have no solid hope of their perseverance or eternal glory.
2. If all individuals were in a state of trial for eternal happiness, they would need to have equal means and opportunities for grace, which is not the case.
3. Such a state of trial would place eternal happiness on their own inclinations and behavior, contradicting the concept of free grace from God.
4. The Israelites were in a state of trial for their temporal happiness in Canaan, but not for their eternal happiness.
5. Believers face trials, temptations, and sufferings that test their faith and demonstrate their graces, but their eternal salvation in Christ is not dependent on their own behavior.
6. Scripture includes warnings, exhortations, promises, and threats directed at sinners to awaken their awareness and urge them to change their state through union with Christ. Similarly, believers receive guidance to live according to their state of salvation.

These points clarify that the idea of a state of trial for eternal happiness or misery based on human abilities is not supported by scripture. Instead, salvation is secured in Christ, and warnings and exhortations serve specific purposes in relation to believers' union with Christ and their conduct in light of that salvation.

Objection II: "If individuals do not have a free will to choose between good and evil and the power to act accordingly, then their qualities and actions, not being freely chosen, cannot be considered virtuous or vicious, deserving praise and reward or blame and punishment."

Answer 1: Does God lack freedom of choice and liberty? Are His attributes and works unworthy of praise because His perfect and unchanging nature prevents Him from doing anything base or sinful? Are the actions of holy angels, glorified saints, and especially Jesus Christ not virtuous or praiseworthy because their wills are divinely determined towards good alone? Are the acts of devils not sinful because their inclination is fixed on mischief? Can all these acts not be voluntary, even if their will is unalterably inclined towards good or evil?

Answer 2: It is highly absurd to claim that the greater inward holiness one possesses, inclining them towards good, the less virtuous and praiseworthy their good actions are. Likewise, it is illogical to argue that the more fixed and inclined towards malice one is, the less bad their evil actions are. Does it make sense that the better the root, the less valuable the fruit, and the worse the root, the better the fruit?

Answer 3: Man's will has never been and will never be equally inclined towards good and evil. In the state of innocence, it was inclined only towards good, although changeable towards evil. In the fallen state, it is inclined only towards evil. In the state of begun recovery, the new nature is inclined only towards good, while the old nature is inclined only towards evil. In the heavenly state, it will be inclined only towards good.

Objection III: "To suggest that individuals, by nature, lack this freedom of will to choose and the ability to perform what is spiritually good is inconsistent with the entire covenant of grace, as well as all the promises and calls of the gospel, which assume that individuals are capable of believing and repenting."

Answer 1: The promises of the new covenant clearly presuppose that individuals have hard and stony hearts and are in desperate need of God's Spirit to be placed within them in order to change their hearts and enable them to choose and do what is spiritually good.

Answer 2: The calls of the gospel do not assume that individuals have natural ability to do anything that is spiritually good. Instead, they are intended to convince individuals of their weakness and wickedness, and to lead them to Christ, in whom alone spiritual strength is found.

Objection 4: "Without an equal inclination of their will towards good and evil, individuals cannot be subject to any moral law."

Answer: Does this mean that Christ, holy angels, glorified saints, and even devils and damned individuals are not subject to any moral law because their will is not equally inclined towards good and evil? If so, then the blasphemy and murderous malice of the latter are as pleasing to God as the love and lively services of the former.

Objection 5: "Scripture testifies that if heathens had received proper means of grace, they would have repented and been saved."

Answer: It is not stated that they would have turned to the Lord in a truly heartfelt and evangelical manner and been eternally saved. Rather, they would have turned in a way that would have prevented their temporal destruction, which can be accomplished without special grace.

Objection VI: "To deny the equal inclination of men's will towards good and evil, or their natural ability to do what is spiritually good, is simply adopting the beliefs of atheistic Hobbes and the ancient pagan stoics."

Answer 1: We can confidently and honourably embrace the truth, even if Satan and his followers were to adopt it for wicked purposes.

Answer 2: Hobbes claimed that God, by His grace, cannot determine the will of men; that He has no more involvement in their good actions than in their bad ones; that infants have no original sin and are not capable of fault as they are not under any law; that the initial thoughts of men are not sinful; that good thoughts are not inspired

by God and bad thoughts are not inspired by Satan; that individuals can understand the Bible sufficiently without the assistance of God's Spirit; that mere belief in Christ being the true Messiah is enough for salvation; that saving faith is not a gift from God but a product of one's own mind; and that our faith and obedience justify us before God, with the will being accepted instead of the action. Many ancient stoics also taught that human nature is not corrupted by original sin, that following right reason is enough to attain the highest happiness, that individuals have little or no ability to do evil and can perfectly conform to God in moral goodness, that virtuous individuals are, in some respect, superior to the gods as they achieve perfection through personal choice and effort rather than through natural necessity, and that truly virtuous dispositions can be completely and finally lost. So, let our opponents claim these thinkers as their intellectual forefathers and ideological kin.

If men's eternal happiness does not depend on their own free will, an effectual calling of any of them to a state of fellowship with Christ must be entirely due to God's free grace.

1. Scripture attributes this calling solely to God's free grace (James 1:17-18; Ephesians 1:3-8; Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 5:16-21; Romans 9:16,18; Romans 11:6; Romans 3:24; Romans 6:14; Titus 3:3-7; Titus 2:11-12; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:13,15-16).
2. This calling finds men in a dreadful state of sin and misery (Titus 3:3; Romans 1:21-32; Romans 3:10-20,23; Romans 8:7-8; Ephesians 2:1-3,12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Job 14:4; Job 15:14,16; Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Jeremiah 3:1-5; Psalms 14:1-4).
3. God often effectually calls those who are most outrageously wicked, as seen in the examples of Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the harlot of Samaria, the dying thief, the murderers of Christ, and Saul the persecutor (2 Chronicles 33:11-13; Luke 7:36-50; John 4; Luke 23:42-43; Acts 2; Acts 6; Acts 9; 1 Timothy 1:13-16).

4. Immediately before their call becomes effectual, men's hearts are at their worst, under the sin-irritating power of God's law (Romans 7:5,8-13).
5. While God may bestow His grace upon men as they attend His ordinances, He has never promised to reward their most serious attendance with special and saving grace. When they do receive it, it is not as a reward for their attendance but as the result of using God's appointed means (Exodus 14:16-22; 2 Kings 5:10,14; John 5:4; John 9:7; Mark 3:5).

Objection 1: "Then men, by the most outrageous sinning, put themselves as much in the way of effectual calling as by the most serious prayer, reading, hearing, or meditating on God's word."

Answer 1: Only the most abandoned men would sin because grace abounds (Romans 6:1-2; Romans 2:4-5; Jude 4).

Answer 2: Though men do not prepare themselves for Christ and His grace through their attendance on God's ordinances, their attendance provides Him with opportunities to convert them to Himself, just as beggars position themselves on the path where the king often passes to receive his charity (Proverbs 8:34-36; Isaiah 55:1-3).

Objection II: "Many conditional promises are made to the good endeavours of unregenerate men, James 4:8; Rev 3:20; Matt 7:7-8."

Answer: These texts are addressed to professed saints. And it cannot be proven that the actions mentioned, such as drawing near to God, opening to Christ, asking, seeking, and knocking, mean nothing more than what unregenerate men can do.

An almighty and irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit is therefore necessary, in addition to the outward call of the gospel, in order to apply it to the hearts of individuals and bring them from a state of sin and misery into a state of union and fellowship with Christ.

1. Men's inherent weakness and deep-rooted enmity against what is good require such a powerful influence (2 Corinthians 3:5; John 15:5; Romans 5:6; Romans 8:7-8; Jeremiah 17:9; Titus 3:3). Moreover, they face numerous hindrances from fully understanding Christ and salvation.

They fail to seriously consider the certainty, severity, and profound consequences of their own death and final judgment (Deuteronomy 32:29; Psalm 10:13; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Ecclesiastes 12:14), nor do they grasp the nature, extent, and gravity of their sins (Jeremiah 2:35; Jeremiah 8:6-7,12). They fail to comprehend the dreadful nature, inevitability, and eternal duration of hell's torments and their personal connection to them (Matthew 10:28; Matthew 16:26; Matthew 22:13; Luke 10:22-26). They also overlook the necessity, spirituality, comprehensiveness, excellence, suitability, and everlasting nature of the salvation that Christ has obtained for them.

They harbor a vain notion that salvation can be easily obtained or use contrary thoughts as an excuse for laziness and despair (1 Peter 4:18; Jeremiah 2:25; Ezekiel 37:11). They tend to postpone their concern for eternal matters to some future time, perhaps even to their dying moments (Acts 24:25; Proverbs 24:33-34; Proverbs 6:9-11; Proverbs 1:22-28). They are closely associated with wicked individuals, taking them as role models and companions (Psalm 49:11-20; Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 9:6). They are enslaved and inflamed by a love for the world, with all its various temptations, appearances, and desires. They may also be entangled in the busyness of worldly affairs (James 4:4; Luke 10:41-42; Luke 12:16-20; Ephesians 4:18-19; Romans 1:21). They prioritize the care and pleasures of their physical bodies over the salvation of their souls (Matthew 16:26; Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:18-19). They hold onto numerous errors and convince themselves that a infinitely merciful God will accept minimal religious devotion, especially from those not in any ecclesiastical position.

2. Many passages of Scripture clearly state that an almighty influence is necessary in the effective calling of sinners. It is described as the surpassing greatness of God's power, a work of creation, a raising of the dead, and so on (Ephesians 1:18-19; Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Isaiah 65:17,19; Isaiah 66:19; Ephesians 2:5,9-10; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; John 1:13; John 3:5-6; John 5:25; 1 Corinthians 2:12,14; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Jeremiah 31:18,33; John 6:37,44-45,63,65; John 15:5; Philippians 2:13; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Ezekiel 11:19-20; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 51:12; Deuteronomy 30:6; Song of Solomon 1:4; Acts 11:18; Acts 5:31; Acts 16:14; Acts 26:17-18; 1 Peter 1:2-3,23; Colossians 1:13; Colossians 3:1; Romans 4:17; Romans 8:2; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Peter 1:4). Therefore, the gospel, through which this powerful influence is exerted, is referred to as the rod of Christ's strength, the arm of the Lord, and the power of God (Psalm 110:2-3; Isaiah 53:1; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:24).
3. Unless the influence of the Holy Spirit in this work is invincible, men's faith, repentance, and good works would have to be attributed to their own free will, as making God's influence effective, which goes against Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Isaiah 26:12; Philippians 2:13; Romans 9:6,16,18; Titus 3:3,5.
4. Unless God, in this work, could and did provide more than enough means, opportunities, and influences, and it is up to men's free will to rightly utilize them or not, then these secondary causes would act independently of God but dependently on men's free will, contradicting 1 Corinthians 3:5-7; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; John 6:63.
5. If God's influence in changing men's state and nature is not almighty and invincible but dependent on their free will for its effectiveness and success, then glorified saints in heaven would have no more reason to thank God for their eternal salvation than the damned in hell would have to thank Him for theirs, as

it would not be God but their own free will that is the true cause of it, contrary to Revelation 5; Revelation 9; Revelation 7:10,12.

6. Unless this heart-changing influence is almighty and invincible, we cannot have a comforting certainty of our eternal happiness, not even in heaven, as even there the free will of countless angels led them to damnation (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Matthew 25:41; 1 Timothy 3:6

Objection I. "These scriptures which represent men's conversion to God as an effect of divine power, mean no more than that the miracles, which they saw or heard of, determined or excited them to believe the gospel-doctrines thereby confirmed, 1 Corinthians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Romans 1:16."

Answer: The interpretation that these scriptures refer to miracles as the determining factor in men's conversion is incorrect. The term "power" in these texts does not specifically refer to miracles. Miracles are not synonymous with Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:24). Moreover, Paul did not require knowledge of miracles from those who opposed him. Miracles themselves do not serve as evidence of one's election, unlike the power mentioned in these passages (1 Thessalonians 1; 1 Thessalonians 4:5; Matthew 7:22-23).

Objection II. "Many inspired promises and exhortations depict God as exerting Himself to the fullest extent for the conversion of men, yet with unsuccessful outcomes, Isaiah 5:4 (which can be interpreted as 'What shall be done hereafter to my vineyard'), John 1:7,9; John 5:34,40; John 12:32-40. They also portray God as desiring their compliance with His calls and lamenting their failure to do so. They present the efficacy of His ordinances as dependent on their choice, diligence, and care, Deuteronomy 32:29; Deuteronomy 4:29; Deuteronomy 8:2; Deuteronomy 30:19; Deuteronomy 10:16; Psalm 81:10-14; Proverbs 1:22-30; Matthew 33:37 (indicating that the Jewish rulers and parents hindered their subjects and children from attending or benefiting from Christ's teachings), Luke 19:41-44;

Isaiah 1:16-20; Isaiah 30:15; Isaiah 55:1-7; Isaiah 45:22; Isaiah 46:12-13; Genesis 4:7; Jeremiah 4:4,14; Jeremiah 6:8; Ezekiel 18:30-32; Ezekiel 24:13; Ezekiel 33:11; Joel 2:13; Zechariah 9:12; Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17; Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 13:24; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Philippians 2:12; Titus 2:11-12; Ephesians 5:14; James 4:8; Revelation 3:19-20; Matthew 25:14-29; Luke 19:12-27," and so on.

Answer 1. Although unregenerate men cannot perform spiritual goodness, they can engage in actions that are materially good, such as praying, reading, hearing, or meditating on Scripture. The Holy Spirit may use these means to bring about His regenerating and quickening influences. While God cannot accept their efforts as originating from their cursed nature and corrupt heart, He may, out of regard for His own ordinances, engage with them in their use. Perhaps, He never fails to graciously meet those who persistently seek salvation with natural earnestness.

2. God's demands for dutiful obedience do not necessarily imply that men have sufficient strength to fulfil them. Instead, they serve to convict them of their inability and drive them to Christ for righteousness and strength. These demands represent what they owe to God, themselves, and their neighbours under the consequence of eternal damnation.
3. God may do everything that is possible or appropriate in providing outward means of salvation to men without achieving success, as seen in Isaiah 5:1-4. However, He has not exhausted all that He can do in the exertion of His spiritual influence, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Romans 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
4. Many of the texts mentioned in the objection simply portray God as declaring His law in a friendly manner, while others indicate Christ's human sympathy towards His self-ruined Jewish countrymen. Some of them present what the Israelites

were obligated to and capable of performing as means for their temporal happiness in Canaan.

5. While some of these texts pertain to elect individuals whom Christ effectively enlightens and draws to Himself and His heavenly throne, others, particularly the ones

Objection III. "Men are depicted as grieving, vexing, rebelling against, quenching, resisting, outstriving, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace, Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 63:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Genesis 6:3; Acts 7:51; Hebrews 10:29; Amos 2:13; Ezekiel 16:43."

Answer: Any indulgence of sin in the hearts and lives of those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells or deals with is a resistance, grief, and vexation to Him. However, such opposition does not necessarily mean that it prevails over His strongest efforts. His influences and declarations through the prophets and apostles, as well as His common operations, can be effectively resisted, quenched, and despised. But His special and saving influences cannot be, Psalm 110:3; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Believers vex, grieve, rebel against, and to some extent quench the Holy Spirit when they listen to the temptations of Satan and the world instead of cherishing His influences.

Objection IV. "An almighty and invincible influence of the Holy Spirit in men's conversion to Christ excludes any role for His word, which can only work through moral persuasion."

Answer 1: Did the word of God, in the creation of all things, work solely through moral persuasion? Genesis 1; Psalm 33:6,9; Hebrews 11:3.

Answer 2: The almighty influence we speak of perfectly aligns with the nature of the human soul and is truly and morally persuasive, though infinitely powerful. It can indeed be conveyed through the

word of God. While men may be able to resist the influence of the word when spoken by humans, they cannot withstand it when it is savingly applied by the Holy Spirit.

Objection V. "If men believe in the necessity of an almighty influence of God's Spirit to convert them, they will never be motivated to make any effort towards reformation in their heart and practice until they certainly feel this almighty influence and can no longer continue in sin."

Answer 1: Men can reform their outward behaviour without experiencing this almighty influence. Philippians 3:6; 1 Kings 21:27-29; Mark 6:20; Isaiah 58:2; 2 Peter 2:20.

Answer 2: It is not men's feelings but the law of God that serves as the rule of their duty. Isaiah 8:20; Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 5:32; Deuteronomy 12:32; Matthew 28:20.

Answer 3: No one acts in accordance with the gospel without recognizing their own sinfulness and seeking Jesus Christ for the reformation of their heart and life, without making any prior attempts to reform themselves. Proverbs 23:26; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:3,18,33; Titus 3:3-7; Acts 26:17-18; John 3:14-18,36; Isaiah 45:22; Isaiah 55:1-7.

Objection VI. "The effectual calling, regeneration, or conversion of men to Christ by mere moral suasion exceedingly glorifies all the perfections of God. He thus, in infinite wisdom, deals with reasonable men by precepts, promises, and threatenings suited to their rational powers. With unblemished candour, he calls all men to repent and be saved if they will. In infinite equity, he punishes men only for the sins which they could have avoided. Thus, the glory of all that is good redounds to God, and all the guilt and shame of that which is evil falls only on the sinners themselves."

Answer: How can it be for the glory of God to be portrayed as if His almighty hands were so bound that He can do nothing effectively for

the eternal salvation of men unless their free will, which is enmity against Him, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, assists and succeeds in His regenerating and sanctifying work? How does He receive the honour and praise of all that is good in men when their free will alone determines whether despiteful blasphemy and redoubled damnation or faith in Christ and eternal salvation will be the outcome of all that He can do for and with them?

Men's conversion by the almighty and invincible influences of God's Spirit is truly and highly honourable to God. His ordinances, as intended, lead to the eternal salvation of His elect and make multitudes useful to them on earth, Isaiah 55:10-11. It encourages men who are aware of their weakness and wickedness to seek and expect a thorough change of their nature through the almighty power and grace of God. While God, in the most affectionate manner, deals with men through His word, His accompanying almighty influences enlighten, renew, and draw their hearts to Himself, Psalm 110:2-3; Philippians 3:12; Galatians 1:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Thus, all the conditional declarations of the gospel and the salvation of the elect are harmoniously accomplished. Reprobates are left with all their power of free will and are as capable of salvation as our opponents allow of mankind to be, if not even more so, as we affirm that even the weakest act of faith in Jesus Christ infallibly secures eternal salvation, John 3:16,18; John 6:39-40; Mark 16:16. Only disobedience to the law of God, which constitutes the formal nature of sin, is punished, and willful persistence in sin, which makes crimes more heinous, leads to further punishment. No one who rejects Christ is punished for any inability to believe or repent, but for their refusal to do as well as they could have done.

The Holy Spirit, through His convincing and enticing but resistible influence, interacts with those who have access to the gospel, and particularly with the elect individuals before their union with Christ. However, in the appointed time of love established in God's purpose and covenant, He, through His almighty and invincible influences,

effectively brings about conviction in His elect. He applies the declarations of His law to their consciences, leading them to a deep understanding of the divine authority, indispensable obligation, spirituality, holiness, righteousness, goodness, and unimaginable scope of its precepts. Moreover, He reveals to them the significance, fairness, and faithfulness of its threatenings. Through this process, He convicts them of their sins in heart and actions, and impresses upon them the justice, certainty, dreadful nature, and eternal duration of their deserved punishment. As a result, they are filled with shame and fear, and all their hopes of attaining happiness through their own good deeds are eradicated. They recognize the infamous characteristics that invite them to Christ in the promises and declarations of the gospel, as stated in Isaiah 55:2,7; Isaiah 46:12; Proverbs 1:22; Proverbs 9:4; Luke 19:10; Matthew 9:13; and 1 Timothy 1:15.

Hosea 13:9 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 charge and urge individuals to believe in Jesus as their offered Saviour. Through the almighty and invincible influence of the Holy Spirit, manifested in the declarations, promises, and invitations of the gospel, applied to their hearts, Christ is revealed in His person, offices, relationships, righteousness, and redemptive work. He is shown to be infinitely excellent, fully sufficient, and perfectly suited to their needs. God has appointed, presented, and offered Christ to them under the very same infamous characteristics that the law had identified in them. In this manifestation of Christ, the Holy Spirit conveys Him and His abundance through the promise into their hearts.

As a prophet, Christ fills their understanding with spiritual light and knowledge. As a priest, He purifies and calms their awakened conscience, providing righteousness. As a king, He delivers them from the slavery of sin, transforms them, and reigns in their will. Moreover, as an infinitely lovely, gracious, necessary, and suitable Husband and Saviour, Christ changes, conquers, captivates, and binds their affections to Himself forever.

Through this work of the Holy Spirit, they become partakers of Christ, apprehended by Him and united to Him. It is an act that involves union, justification, adoption, and regeneration. The word of the gospel, through which the Holy Spirit acts, can be likened to Christ's marriage vow, the declaration of justification, the act of adoption, and the seed of the new nature. It is the means by which these blessings are conveyed into the soul. This entire process is a passive experience, in which individuals encounter and personally witness the surpassing greatness of God's power and grace.

These truths are conveyed in various biblical references, such as Ephesians 1:18-20, Ephesians 2:4-10, Psalm 110:3, Titus 3:5-7, Matthew 16:17, John 1:13, John 3:3,5-6,8, 1 John 3:1,9, 1 John 5:18, 1 Peter 1:3,23, Colossians 3:11-12, Ezekiel 11:19-20, Ezekiel 36:25-27, and Jeremiah 32:40.

Communion with Christ is the immediate result of the Holy Spirit's uniting act in our effectual calling. This communion can be understood in three ways: mutual interest in one another and what belongs to each, mutual communication between Christ and believers, and mutual intercourse between them. Through our union and communion with Christ, both our relational and real state undergo a complete transformation.

By uniting Himself to us as the Lord our righteousness and the fulfillment of the law for righteousness, Christ grants us justification and completely dissolves our binding to the law as a broken covenant. Through this union, our whole relationship to the law changes. Likewise, by uniting Himself to us as our everlasting Father and elder Brother, we receive adoption into God's family. As the only begotten Son of God made flesh, uniting Himself to us as a quickening Spirit, full of grace and truth, and the source of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we experience regeneration, new creation, and spiritual resurrection in the image of God.

Throughout the Holy Spirit's work of convicting consciences, enlightening minds, and renewing wills, individuals are prepared to receive and rest upon Christ as He is offered in the gospel. The Holy Spirit conveys Christ and His abundance into their hearts, leading them to believe God's report about Him and unite themselves with Him. Through this union and communion, their spiritual condition is gradually changed and perfected.

By their union and fellowship with Christ as their quickening and sanctifying Head, believers experience the progressive sanctification of their nature and life. By their union and fellowship with Christ as the Lord their righteousness, the means of fellowship with the Father and the Treasury of all blessings, they find spiritual comfort. And by their union and fellowship with Christ as the Conqueror of death, the risen and exalted Saviour with all power, they obtain their eternal glorification.

This union and communion with Christ result in a transformed and perfected spiritual condition, bringing sanctification, comfort, and ultimate glorification. These truths are expressed in various biblical references, such as Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 10:19-22, Revelation 1:18, Revelation 14:13, Isaiah 25:8, John 14:2-3, Romans 8:1, Colossians 3:3-4, and Revelation 3:21, among others.

Reflection:

Do I truly possess this holy and heavenly calling from God? Have I been spiritually united to the precious Redeemer? Can I confidently declare that He is my Beloved and I am His? I pray that I never proclaim a Jesus Christ who is not truly mine. May my union with the Son of God, who has become my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, serve as the very foundation of my faith.

Am I truly crucified with Christ and yet alive? Is it no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me? Is the life I now live in the flesh lived

by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me? Oh, what a marvelous and astonishing truth! God, the divine Bridegroom, has chosen to unite Himself with me, a wretched, sinful, and undeserving bride.

May I constantly marvel at the wonder of this truth. May it shape and define my entire existence. To be espoused by God Himself is a remarkable privilege beyond comprehension.

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