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## Being Joined to the Lord

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*(A brief message given on the first Lord's Day morning at the conference in Switzerland, 1967)*

*"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17).*

*"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

Now, dear friends, as we come to partake at the Lord's Table, it is well that we are reminded of its wonderful meaning. When the Lord appointed that His people should so gather at His Table, He knew all the fullness of meaning that is gathered into His Table. This is the one divinely-appointed way in which all the great values of Christianity are gathered together, and there is no other way in which everything that Christianity means is expressed.

This Table brings before us all that our Lord Jesus is, and has done. It tells us why He was 'found in fashion as a man', why He, the Son of God, took the form of a man, and it therefore tells us of the perfection of His life. It tells us that there was One, and only One, amongst all mankind who was without sin. It tells us of His death and the atonement for our sins which He made in His death. It tells us that He, who was without sin, was made sin for us. He offered Himself to God for our sins, and His great atoning sacrifice is set forth in this Table. It tells us of His resurrection. We are made partakers, not of a dead Christ, but of a living Christ, and this loaf and this cup speak to us of this life which He came to give. It tells us that by His death and His resurrection He has overcome death, and in Him, that great enemy of all mankind, death, has been conquered. This Table tells us that He is coming again, "...till He come", and so, as we partake, we say we are looking for His coming and are waiting for that wonderful day. What a wonderful sermon this Table is!

But there is one thing at the heart of this Table which includes everything else, and that one thing is the inclusive meaning of Christianity. It is that which is found in the Scriptures we have read: "Joined to the Lord." In so few words you have everything that Christianity means. "Joined unto the Lord... one spirit." "Baptized in one Spirit into one body", which is the body of Christ.

This wonderful truth of union with Christ has exhausted every kind of relationship. Without preaching a sermon on every one, may I mention just nine of them:

- (a) We are members of Christ. That is what the Word says.
- (b) We are members of His body, of which He is the Head.
- (c) We are branches of the vine, and He is the vine.
- (e) He is the Husband, the Church is His wife.
- (f) We are the temple, and He is the chief cornerstone.
- (g) We are the family, and He is the Elder Brother.
- (h) We are a new race, and He is the new Adam.
- (i) We are the hungry pilgrims, and He is the heavenly food.

Every one of those could have an hour to itself! How full, then, is this union with Christ! He that is joined to the Lord is all that, and that is not all that the New Testament has to say as to the meaning of being joined to the Lord. But all that is centred in the Lord's Table. This Table tells us that those who are the Lord's are joined to Him in all those wonderful meanings.

That is a great blessing, but if you look at the context of 1 Corinthians 6:17, you will see that there is a challenge, for this wonderful statement is placed in a very unhappy setting. This is what it says: If we commit ourselves to anyone, we belong to them. On that very unhappy side, the Apostle says that if you commit your body to a harlot, you belong to the harlot, so that, if you give yourself to the harlot you are one with the harlot. But then the Apostle takes that principle and brings it to us: He who commits himself to Christ belongs to Christ - "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit".

So this Table challenges us. If we partake of these symbols of Christ's body and blood, we are saying that we have committed ourselves to the Lord Jesus; we are one body and one spirit with Christ. The Apostle is saying that we have given ourselves away. We no longer belong to Satan, or to this world, or even to ourselves. We partake, and in so doing we say: 'I am the Lord's. Spirit, soul and body, for time and eternity, I am joined to the Lord Jesus.'

This is *the* meaning of Christianity and this testimony is right at the heart of Christianity.

I need not tell you how great the Lord Jesus is, and therefore how great it is to be joined to Him. As we come to this Table let us rejoice in the greatness of the meaning of being "joined to the Lord... one spirit"!