

APPLYING TRUTH TO LIFE

Grace Gatherings

THEOLOGY NIGHTS | May 29, 2024

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WILLIAMSBURG

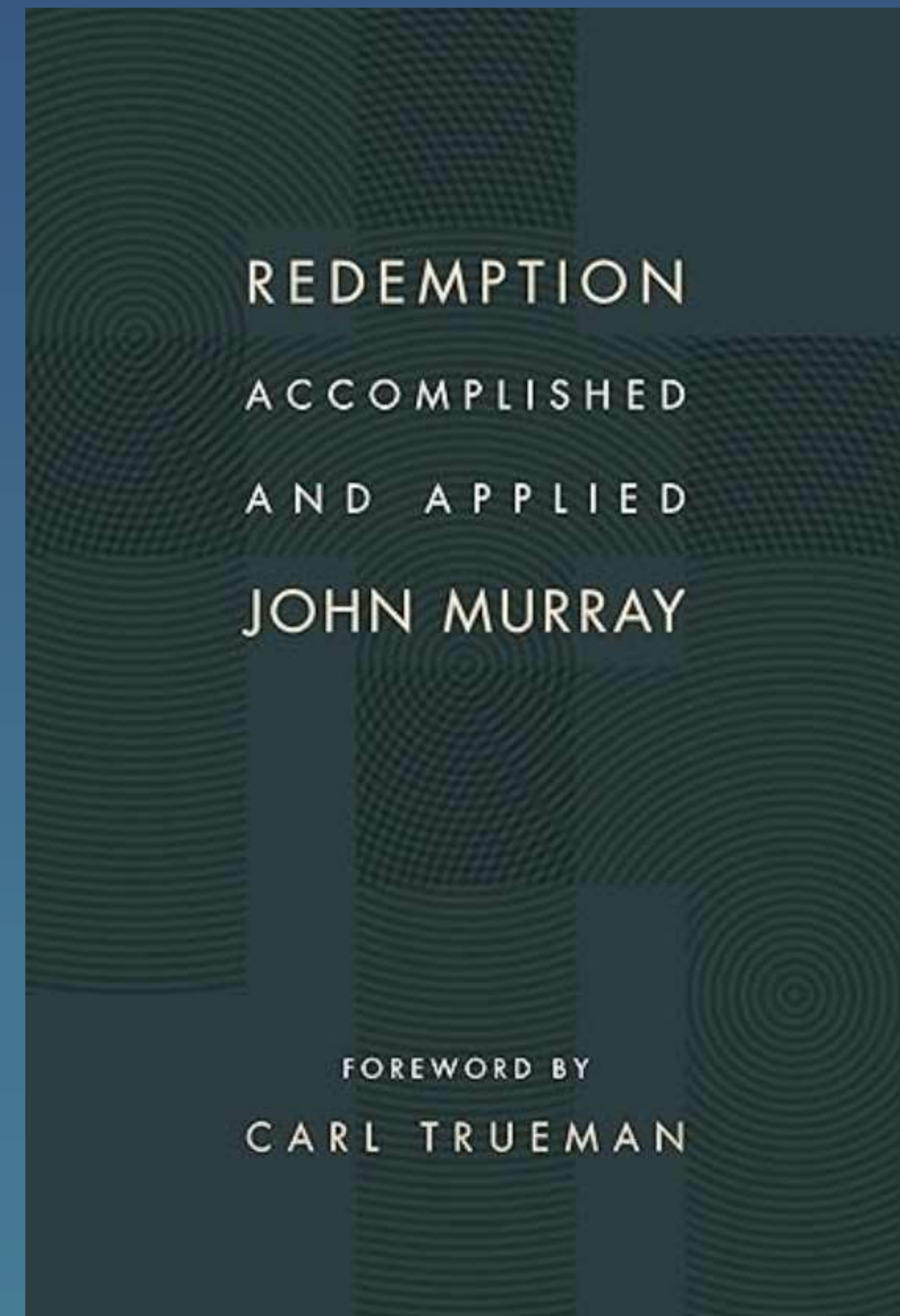
Question 18

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Union with Christ has its source in the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world and 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 ... 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**. (p. 164; emphases added)



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Regarding the believer's **union with Christ**:

John Murray ("Redemption Accomplished and Applied", p. 161):

*It is the **central truth** of the whole doctrine of **salvation**.*

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue ("Biblical Doctrine", p. 603):

*It is the **unifying principle** of all **soteriology** [study of salvation], spanning from eternity past to eternity future.*

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A. Biblical Basis: **God's Election**

- Ephesians 1:3-4 - ... chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world ...
- 2 Timothy 1:8-9 - ... which He gave us **in Christ Jesus** before the ages began ...

God the Father's election is **rooted in Christ** and **occurred before we even existed**.

This means there was never a time when God contemplated His elect apart from their vital **union to Christ!**

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B. Biblical Basis: **Christ's Redemptive Work**

Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14

- In Christ we have **redemption** and **forgiveness**.

Matt. 3:15; Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 5:19

- In Christ we are **righteous** (credited with His **obedience**).

2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24

- In Christ our sins are **imputed** to Him.

Rom. 6:8; Col. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:11; Rom. 6:6

- In Christ our old self was **crucified** with Him.

Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1

- In Christ we were **buried** with Him, **raised** from the dead with Him, and **seated** with Him in the heavenly places.

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B. Biblical Basis: **Christ's Redemptive Work**

In Christ ... His **life** is our life, His **punishment** is our punishment, His **death** is our death, His **resurrection** is our resurrection, His **righteousness** is our righteousness, His **ascension and glorification** is our ascension and glorification.

Though we had not yet been born, God nevertheless counted His people to be in **union with their Savior** throughout the accomplishment of **His redemptive work**.

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Describe the doctrine of **Union with Christ** explaining its biblical basis and implications for Christian living.

C. Biblical Basis: **Believer's Salvation**

- Regeneration (new birth)
- Conversion (repentance and faith)
- Justification (legal right standing)
- Adoption (placed into God's family)
- Sanctification (progressive growth in holiness)
- Perseverance (remaining in Christ)
- Glorification (receiving a resurrection body)

*Union with Christ is the matrix out of which all other soteriological doctrines flow. Indeed, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:3, **our union with Christ is the source of every spiritual blessing we receive** – from the Father's election in eternity past, to the Son's redemptive life, death, burial, and resurrection, all the way to the glorification of the saints with Christ in heaven.*

(MacArthur/Mayhue, "Biblical Doctrine", p. 603)

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Regeneration:

Believers are born again (new life!) unto saving faith in union with Christ.
(Eph. 2:5, 10; 2 Cor. 5:17)

Conversion:

This new spiritual life issues immediately in repentant faith. (Gal. 2:20)

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Justification:

United to Christ by faith, believers lay hold of Christ's righteousness and so are justified in him. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:16b; Rom. 8:1)

Adoption:

Declared righteous in Christ, believers are adopted into the family of God through Christ. (Eph. 1:5; Gal. 3:26)

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Sanctification:

Believers are sanctified in Christ for holiness and service to God. Christ is called our sanctification because it flows from Him. (1 Cor 1:2, 30)

We bring forth the fruit of righteousness only as we stay connected to the vine. (John 15:4-5)

Perseverance:

While believers are in Christ, nothing can separate them from the Father's love. It is on the basis of union with Christ that true believers always persevere until the end. (Rom. 8:38-39; John 10:27-28)

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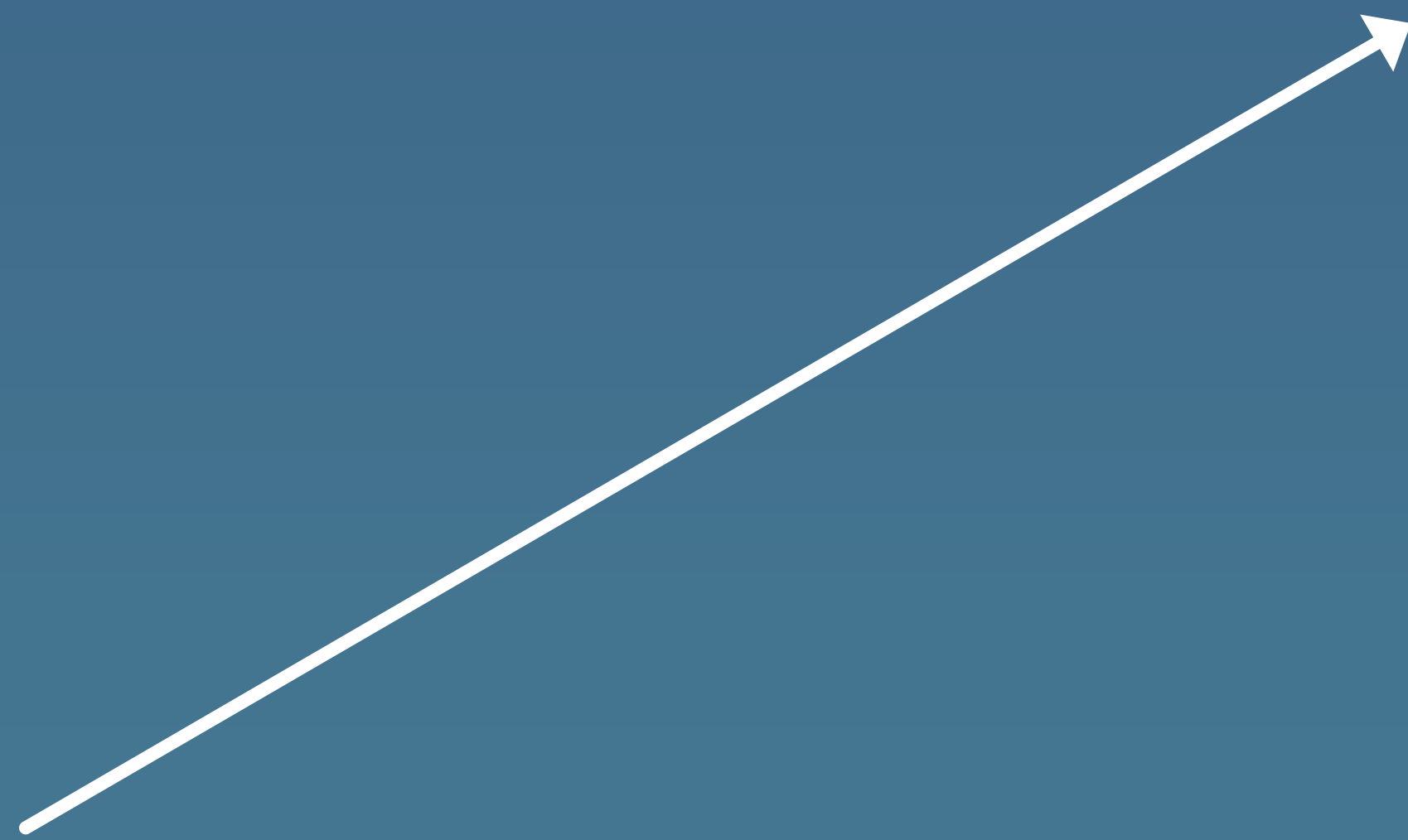
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Glorification:

Christ is the firstfruits of our resurrection
(1 Cor. 15:20-22; Rom. 6:5; 8:17)



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Definition: **Union with Christ**

A basic dimension of the doctrine of salvation: by being **identified with Christ** in His atoning death as well as His resurrection power, believers are **credited** with His righteousness and share in His holiness. (MacArthur/Mayhue, "Biblical Doctrine", p. 938)

Union with Christ is a phrase used to summarize several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive **every benefit of salvation**. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ. (Grudem, "Systematic Theology", p. 841)

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Implications for Christian Living

- We who were once separated, alienated, and without God in the world are swept up into the divine life of the triune God Himself → **Great cause for worship!**
- Those who are one with Christ are also one with everyone else who is one with Christ (i.e., the church) → **A motivation for diligently pursuing the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace among all believers!**
- Every spiritual benefit received in salvation comes only through Christ → **If we are to have an interest in Christ's blessings, we must have an interest in His person.**

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References:

- John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*
- John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*
- Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*

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