

APPLYING TRUTH TO LIFE

*Grace Gatherings*

THEOLOGY NIGHTS | June 5, 2024

GRACE CHURCH  
WILLIAMSBURG



# Question 18

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



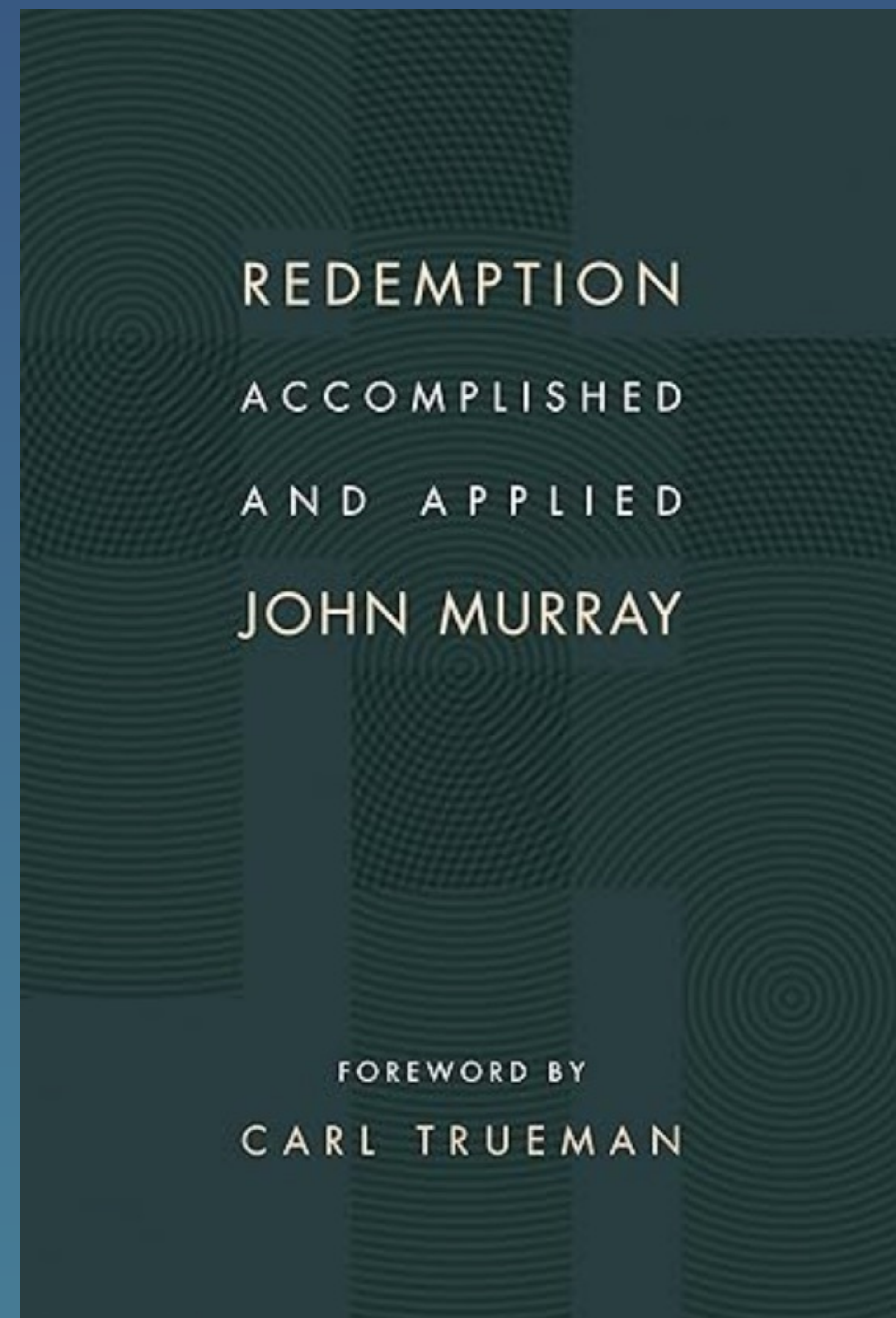
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*Union with Christ* has its source in the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world and has its fruition in the glorification of the sons of God. The perspective of God's people is not narrow; it is broad and it is long. It is not 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. 174-175; emphases added)





# Question 18

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

John Murray ("Redemption Accomplished and Applied", p. 171):  
*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.*

# Question 18

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

## 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!**

# Question 18

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

## 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**

("order of salvation" – Latin, *ordo salutis*)

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

- Regeneration
- Conversion
- Justification
- Adoption
  
- Sanctification
- Perseverance
- Glorification

### **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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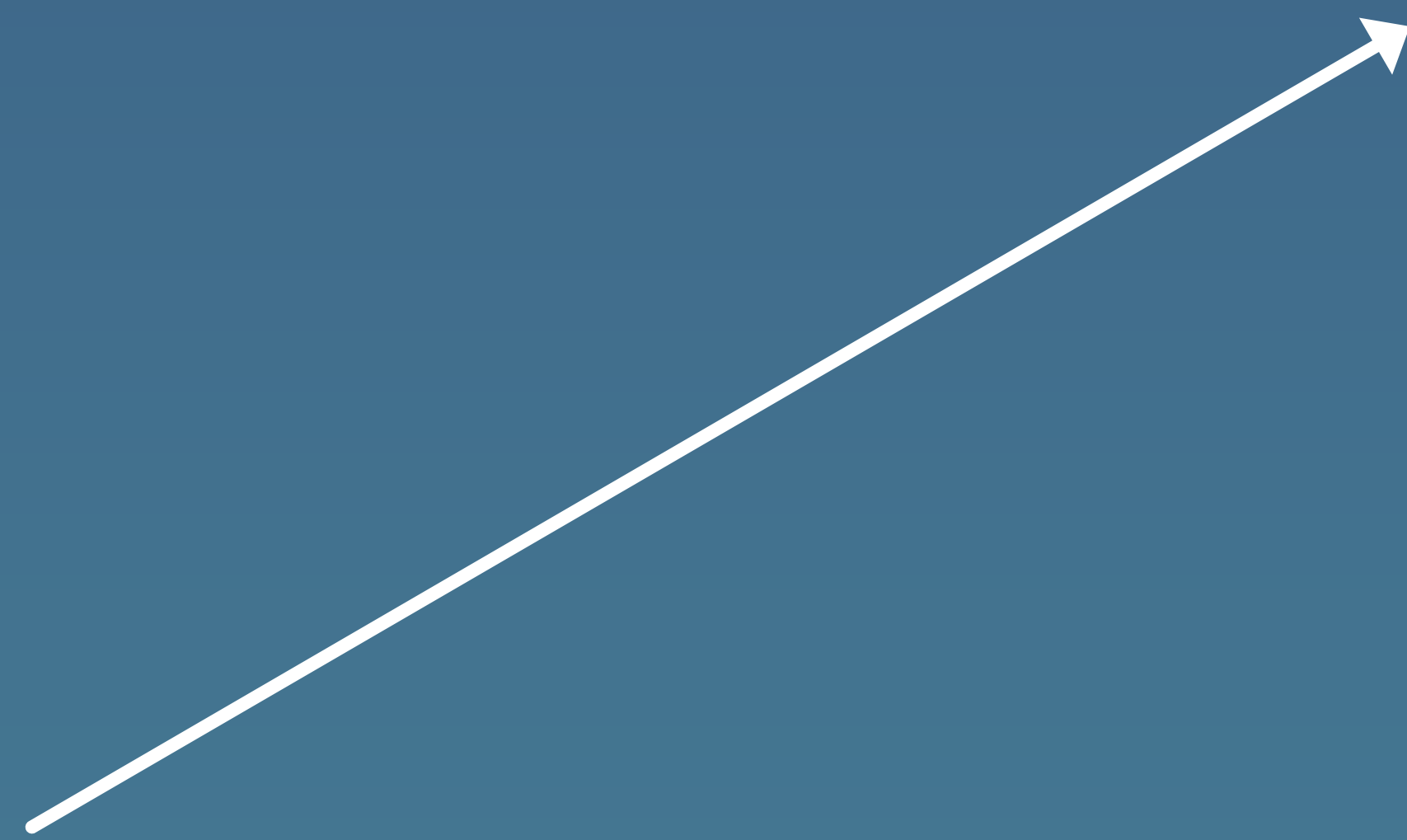
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### **Glorification:**

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





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

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)



# Question 18

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

1. Since the Son is united to Father and Spirit, believers by their union with Christ are also **made one with the Father and the Spirit**

- God the Father – John 17:21, 1 Thess. 1:1, 1 John 4:15
- God the Holy Spirit – Rom. 8:9-11, 2 Tim. 1:14

Separated, alienated, and without God → Swept up into the **divine life of the triune God** Himself.

**Union with the triune God is a great cause for worship!**



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

2. Every spiritual benefit received in salvation comes only through Christ

- In being united to Christ, we receive not only Christ Himself, but also His benefits.
- The graces of **regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, resurrection, glorification** – these are all communicated to us by virtue of our **union with Christ**.
- It is only as we share in Christ that we have a share in what is His.
- John 17:21

**If we are to have an interest in Christ's blessings, we must have an interest in His person.**



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3. Those who are one with Christ are also one with everyone else who is one with Christ (i.e., the church)

- We are the unified members of his body – Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:26
- We are the living stones in the spiritual house build on Christ the foundation – Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; 1 John 1:3; John 17:21

**Union with Christ is a motivation for diligently pursuing the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace among all believers!**



# Question 18

## References:

- John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (published 1955; 2015 edition)
- John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*
- Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*



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