

Unpacking “Union with Christ”

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1. **“Union with Christ” describes the relationship of the believer to Christ:**
 - a. We are in Christ
 - b. Christ is in us.
 - c. We are like Christ.
 - d. We are with Christ.

2. **“Union with Christ has its origins in the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world and its culmination in the glorification of the children of God.”** Bruce Bickel

3. **Different understandings of what it means to be a Christian/Believer.**
 - a. **The “good person” understanding.** God loves everyone and Jesus came to set an example, giving us commandments to live by. The purpose of life is to strive to become a better person by obeying those commandments, to pray for comfort and strength, and to hope that your good deeds outweigh the bad ones so you can go to the “good place.”

 - b. **The “getting saved” understanding.** God loves everyone and Jesus died for your sins if you will “accept him into your heart”. This is being born again or saved. The purpose of life is to strive to become a better Christian, to pray for strength, comfort and answers, and go to heaven when you die.

 - c. **The “Union with Christ” understanding.** God the Father chose those who would be born again before time and unrelated to any human choice or work. At regeneration, you receive not simply salvation, but the very life of Christ and “*every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*”, i.e. new desire, new mind, atonement, resurrection and glorification. The purpose of life is to “*abide in him*” and, from this abiding, to do “*good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*” (Eph 2:10) “*... for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*” (Phil 2:13)

4. **“Union with Christ” is the true and right understanding** of who we are, whether or not we understand or experience that life.



5. **God the Father’s sovereignty:** “*God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*” Eph 4:6.
 - a. “*He (God the Father) chose us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace ...*” Eph 1:4-6

 - b. **Chosen by God before creation**, i.e. before we could do anything: “*... when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might*

continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—¹² she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”¹³ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” Rom 9:10-12.

- c. **His choice is based on “the purpose of his will”** (Eph 1:5); “... *having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will ...*” (Eph 1:11)
- d. **The purpose of election:** “that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Eph 1:4)
- e. **“In Adam” v. “In Christ”:** “You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him ...” Col 2:13.
 - ✓ “... *as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*” 1 Cor 15:22.
 - ✓ “If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more ... shall we be saved by his life.” Rom 5:10.
 - ✓ “If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” Rom 5:17.

6. How is “Union with Christ” experienced, acted out, lived out?

- a. **Every part of “Union with Christ” is supernatural in its origins and working out:** “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. John 6:63. “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life ...” Rom 8:6
- b. **Truth**  **Desire**  **Action.**

“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” Matt 13:45-46.
- c. **“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** John 8:31-32.

“The **word** of God is **living** and active, sharper ... piercing ... and discerning ” Heb 4:12
- d. **“... the church,²³ which is (Christ's) body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** Eph 1:22-23.
 - ✓ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Eph 5:31-32.
 - ✓ “The household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” 1 Tim 3:15
 - ✓ “That they (those who will believe in me) may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²³...that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:21 & 23