

Introduction: One of the greatest phrases in all of Scripture consists in but two words "in Christ"; this expresses a union with the Savior; connected to this union is our union with one another as believers

I. ITS REDEMPTIVE FOUNDATION: UNION WITH CHRIST – Para.1 (a)

A. Its realization

All believers are united to Jesus Christ their Head by his Spirit and by faith

- 1.) Schematically – Ephesians 1:4
- 2.) Legally – 2Corinthians 5:21
- 3.) Spiritually – 1Corinthians 6:17
 1. **By his Spirit** – Romans 8:9-10
 2. **By faith** – Ephesians 3:17

- our spiritual union with one another is not direct, but through Him (like siblings and parents)

B. Its qualification

although this does not make them one person with him (1Corinthians 8:6)

- the error of the Eastern pantheism, New Age movement and Mormonism

C. Its scope

Therefore they have fellowship (1John 1:3) *in his graces* (John 1:16), *sufferings* (Philippians 3:10), *death* (Romans 6:4), *resurrection* (Ephesians 2:4-6), *and glory* (Colossians 3:4).

II. ITS GENERAL DEFINITION – Para.1 (b)

A. Its bond

Being united to one another in love, (esp. love for Christ, but also to body Ephesians 4:16)

You cannot love Christ and not love His body, His wife, His bride. (Waldron)

B. Its benefits

they have fellowship in each other's gifts and graces, (1Peter 4:10; 1Corinthians 12:7)

C. Its obligations

and are obliged to discharge their duties, (John 13:34) *both public and private, in an orderly way so as to ensure their mutual good in both spiritual and temporal matters.*

III. ITS SPECIFIC EXPRESSIONS – Para.2 (a)

A. Their identity

1. Spiritual services

By their profession, believers are obliged to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God and in performing whatever spiritual services may promote their mutual edification. (1Peter 2:5; Romans 12:1; Galatians 6:2)

- this in contrast to people not needing church to worship, being able to do so on own

2. Physical services

They should also relieve one another in temporal things according to their various abilities and needs. (Acts 2:45; 11:29-30; James 2:16)

B. Their recipients

According to the rule of the Gospel, this fellowship applies particularly to family (1Timothy 5:8,16) *and church relationships*, (1Corinthians 12 – local church) *but as God offers opportunity, this fellowship is to be extended to all the 'household of faith'*, (Galatians 6:10) *that is, all those in every place who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.* (2Corinthians 8-9).

IV. ITS NECESSARY LIMITATION – Para.2 (b)

Nevertheless, this fellowship with one another as believers does not take away or infringe on the personal ownership that each one has of his goods and possessions. (Acts 5:4; Ephesians 4:28;)

- the importance of this chapter in connection with the next ones on the ordinances

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Define communion.** – com (with, together) + union (united, agreement, harmony); to be united with in common purpose
2. **What is the foundation of the communion of the saints? How does that limit the demands we may make upon our brethren?** – Each believers union with the Lord Jesus Christ. ???
3. **Why does the Confession say that we 'are not made one person with' Christ? What is the importance of this qualification today?** – To clarify that we do not have "direct" physical or spiritual connection, which is especially important in light of the false teachings of the New Age movement.
4. **Briefly describe our union with Christ.** It is a union in God's plan for redemption, having been planned "in Him" from the foundation of the world. It is a legal union, His being our substitute, and our being declared righteous "in Him." This is also a spiritual union, being indwelt by His Holy Spirit.
5. **How is union with Christ realized?** By His Spirit and faith. **Support your answer.** Romans 8:9-10; Ephesians 3:17; according to these verses, there is the reality of the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, for those who are born again. Christ dwells in them. This is not merely spatial (as God's Spirit is everywhere), but particularly by faith. As the believer embraces the reality of God's truth and is transformed by it, the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (as defined and shaped by Scripture) is great.
6. **What impact does the doctrine of the communion of the saints have on the modern emphasis on being your own person and maintaining one's individuality?** It should help us escape from the crass individualism and recognize the union, worked out in real communion and fellowship, with the people of God. Even "individuals" tend to clump together into Internet communities, clubs, or other avenues. Within the "church" (at large), this is expressed in refusal to become part of a covenant community of believers to maintain its worship and ordinances. It is also manifest in people wanting to contribute something "unique" to Christianity.
7. **What are the biblical priorities for the practical expressions of our communion with the saints?** Both at home and at church, not only in word but also in deed.