

Believers are said to have been baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) and to have been joined to Christ (Rom. 7:4; I Cor. 6:17; Eph. 5:31-32). As a result, they are in Christ (Jn. 14:20; 15:2; 17:20; Rom. 8:1; I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:17; 5:21; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:4, 6; 4:15; Phil. 3:9; Col. 2:10, 11; I Thess. 4:16), and are members of Christ (I Cor. 6:1.5; Eph. 1:23). Christ is also said to be in them (Jn. 14:20; 17:23; Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27).

Believers are also said to have been baptized into one body (I Cor. 12:13), and to be members of Christ's body (I Cor. 12:12; Eph. 3:6; 4:16; 5:30).

They are said to abide in Christ (I Jn. 2:6; 2:24; 2:27; 3:24; 4:13); and Christ is said to abide in them (Jn. 15:5; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13). And yet they are called on to abide in Christ (Jn. 15:4, 5, 7; 1 Jn. 2:28).

As a result of being united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, believers have entered into saving relationship with Christ. They are within the sphere of Christ's redemptive and kingly work. They belong to Christ. Christ indwells them.

Being joined to Christ the Head, they are also joined to each other, as members of his body. They are the body of which Christ is the Head.

Having been united to Christ by the Spirit, they remain united to Him, and He to them. Nothing can separate them from Him or from each other.

And yet in practice they often experience something less than oneness with Him or with each other. Sinful attitudes or actions often obscure their oneness and distance them from each other. Sometimes small veils of obscurity become opaque shields; and sometimes shields become walls or hills or mountain ranges or vast oceans! Without communion, relationships between believers and Christ or between believers and other believers can turn cool or sour or virtually nonexistent, as far as experience is concerned.

This points up the distinction between union, established and maintained by the Holy Spirit, and communion, in which our attention to and watchcare over our relationships to Christ and to each other become extremely important.

Union with Christ is preserved as long as we are savingly related to Christ; communion can be enhanced or diminished by holy or sinful thoughts, desires, words, actions, and habit. Continuance of our saving relationship to Christ is contingent on God's continuous preservation of us in saving grace. Maintenance of communion is contingent on our continuous perseverance in God's sanctifying grace as we strive with sin and get the victory over our evil tendencies, the evil world-system, and the devil.

## 2. Objective union with Christ

Some of the scriptural data speak of an objective union with Christ, one established and maintained by the Spirit of God, on the basis of which believers are viewed by God as being in Christ and as sharing in all of the benefits of His atoning work.

Accordingly we may define this aspect of union as follows: