

## **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 3, Union with Christ Continued**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on salvation. This is session 3, Union with Christ Continued.

We continue our study of salvation, specifically looking at the most overarching way of understanding the application of salvation, that is, union with Christ.

And we have done a little description of union, saying it is definitive, personal, and permanent or enduring. Now, we're ready to consider Jesus' story and union with Christ. The Apostle Paul ministers union with Christ to us by placing us as participants in Jesus' story.

By the grace of God, we die with Christ, are raised with him, ascend and sit down in heaven with him, and even, in a certain sense, return with him. We died with Christ. Let's turn to some of these passages.

How about Galatians 2:20? Paul is discussing justification, and he says, I have been crucified with Christ. In other words, I died with Christ. It is no longer I who live, alone is the sentence, something like that, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I have been crucified with Christ. Paul thus says we participate in Jesus' story in his crucifixion.

It is the same for Colossians 2:20. I cannot help but laugh whenever I see verse 21. Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. I can't get this image out of my mind.

Thankfully, it's not a bad image, like some other things in there, but it's a funny image. It is women in the 1920s protesting alcohol in any fashion or form. And they have white dresses on from their necks to the floor.

And they have a banner that says, do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. The funny part is that Paul uses that. That was representative of the false teacher's teaching.

I jokingly think most people probably didn't understand that that's where that prohibition slogan came from. Oh, verse 20 of chapter 2, Colossians 2:20. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you still were alive in the world, do you submit to its regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not

touch. Referring to things that are all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teachings.

These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism, denying bodily appetites in the name of holiness and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. If with Christ you died to the realm of the demonic, to the sin, to the world, that is once again, Paul says believers in Christ participate retroactively, if you will, in his crucifixion. Not only so, but we were raised with Christ.

Let's go to Colossians 3:1 while we're right there. If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

For you have died, it doesn't say with Christ, but following 3:1 as it does and following 2:20, the meaning is, as any evangelical commentary will tell you, for you have died with Christ. These are living people he's writing to, but spiritually, they were united to Christ in his death, for you have died with Christ.

You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. We'll come back to this one because it pertains to the next two subcategories as well.

We were raised with Christ, and here Paul says because of that, we don't deny our lives on earth; we don't ignore human responsibilities. Good grief. One of his household lists, one of his rules for Christian households, follows in the end of the same chapter.

I know the chapter divisions aren't inspired, but in 3:18 through 4:1, which I'm not going to read, Paul addresses believers' responsibilities in the home. So, he's not saying to ignore your life on earth, but he is saying that exactly as you live your life on earth, focus on Christ in heaven. Because you spiritually died with him, were raised with him, actually, and you ascended with him.

That's what he means when he says, for you've died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. It's not explicit, as we'll see Ephesians 2 is, but the implication is you're at the right hand of the Father. That is incredible.

We were raised with Christ. Romans 6 is the most famous passage here. Paul is offended that people would claim that his teaching on grace leads people to sin.

It makes Paul very angry because his goal is for his teaching on grace to promote godliness and honor the Lord. What shall we say then, Romans 6:1, are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? Here's that word again: by no means, no, no

way, perish the thought. How can you possibly think that? How can we who died to sin still live in it? They died to sin in union with Christ, and specifically, this was experienced in church life in Christian baptism.

Christian with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death. In order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

As the passage unfolds, Paul teaches this, the death and resurrection of Christ not only save us from the penalty of sin once and for all, but the death and resurrection of Christ by virtue of union with Christ save us from the power of sin again and again and again. Don't you understand, the verses that follow say, that sin's power over you has been broken? You're no longer at the mercy of the tyrant, sin. You have been joined to Christ.

You died to sin. It has no proper power over you, so don't live like that. Obviously, believers can do that, but it is a misunderstanding and even a denial of their union with Christ in his death by virtue of which he liberated us, not only from the penalty of sin in justification but also from the power of sin in progressive sanctification.

Our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer, verse 6, be enslaved to sin. Death no longer has dominion over him, and death no longer has dominion over us. We died with Christ.

God joined us to Christ in his death. God joined us to Christ in his resurrection. The former means he freed us from sin's cruel domination.

The latter means we have been raised spiritually to newness of life, to live a new life by the Spirit of God that honors God and blesses us and many others. We are participants in Jesus' story. How could it be? By virtue of union with Christ.

We died with him. We're buried with him. We're raised with him.

We ascended with Christ. Now, we never would say something like this if the Bible didn't, but it does. Ephesians 2:6. I have a friend who fought with sin in his life, an addiction, for many years, and this verse set him free now for many years.

After digging a deep hole for unbelievers and giving the plight of unsaved people in regard to our three big enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, perhaps better than in any one terse context in Ephesians 2:1-3, verse 4 says, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved.

The epitome of grace is God regenerating spiritually dead sinners and raising us up with him.

There's union with Christ in his resurrection. And, get a load of this, seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Like I said, my son, now my son.

It is not my son, my friend. My friend said, told me that when sin comes knocking at my door and temptation comes, he says, I'm seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father. I'm seated in the heavenlies.

That's how secure my salvation is. I'm not giving in to you. And the Lord broke that bondage in his life, especially using that verse.

Praise the Lord. Paul teaches that not only are we joined to Christ spiritually in his death and resurrection via union, but we have been joined to Christ in his ascension, and in that sense, we who very much are still on earth struggling with sin ascended with him, and sat down with him in heaven. Nobody made this religion up, my friends.

This is divinely planned, executed, applied, and revealed. Nobody made this up. Paul didn't make it up.

Paul was apprehended by Christ as an enemy of Christ, and Christ revealed it to him by his spirit. We died with Christ. We're raised with Christ.

There's a sense that we ascended with him and sat at God's right hand. That's how close our union with him is. That's how much it defines us.

That's how permanent it is. We are as good as at his right hand now. He will never cast us out, as we will study specifically when we study preservation later on in these lectures.

But for now, not only those things but there is a sense that we will come again with him. We will have a second coming. Are you kidding me? No.

Let's go back to Colossians 3 because we were there more recently than Romans 8. It's in both places. Colossians 3, if then you've been raised with Christ, verse 1, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

Don't neglect them, but don't set your mind on them. Don't merely live for them. Look to Jesus, Hebrews 12, the author and perfecter of your faith.

Similar passage. For you have died with Christ, and your life is hidden with Christ in God, as you ascended with him. Spiritually speaking, implied.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. There is no question, and I don't know any commentator who says that when Christ, who is your life, appears, does not speak of the second coming. It's a second-coming verb.

Appear. But here's the amazing thing. Then you will also appear.

A second coming word is used in the context of the same word used with Christ of the second coming. When Christ, who is your life, that's the language of union again, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. You say this makes me nervous.

We're going to have a second coming. Are we little Christs? No. Although Luther could talk about being Christ to your neighbor. No, we're not Christ.

We're his people. But we have been so definitively, intimately, and permanently joined to him that the Bible could ascribe to us a second coming. Oh, it is not literal, but it is spiritual, and it is real.

We are so joined to the Lord Jesus Christ that our true identity as his sons or daughters will only be made manifest when he returns. Oh, we have good days now, but I don't know about you. I need that part of the Sunday worship service in which we confess our sins. Surely, none of us could say we love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, constantly, every day.

It's ridiculous. Or love our neighbor as we naturally love, oh, number one, ourselves. No, we don't.

I'm not excusing our sins, just the opposite. I'm confessing our sins, my sins, and saying we need God's grace in its fullness. We need union with Christ from beginning to end, and we need our second coming, so to speak.

Christ's death uniquely makes atonement for sins. When the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ, he unites us to his death so that we die spiritually with Christ. Similarly, the Spirit unites us with the living Christ and his resurrection through Christ's saving.

Though Christ's saving work ranges from his incarnation to his second coming, the heart and soul of his salvation are his death and resurrection. Christ's atoning death and resurrection accomplish salvation past, present, and future. Thank God, or we wouldn't be saved.

I know of a teacher today who says Christ's death does not atone for future sins. Well, we're all lost then, as is false teaching. Christ saves us with regard to the past, for he has delivered us up for our trespasses and raised us for our justification.

Christ's death pays the penalty for our sins, and his resurrection brings acquittal and new life to us who are condemned and spiritually dead. Christ saves us with regard to the present, for we were buried with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. Christ's death broke sin's tyranny over our lives.

His resurrection enables us to live new lives, pleasing to God. Christ's death and resurrection save us with regard to the future; for quote, if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, then how much more having been reconciled will we be? Will we be saved by his life, Romans 5 10. Christ's ascension and session save us, too, for God, because of the great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ.

As we said, he raised us up and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ. Notice the purpose of that, so that in the coming ages, he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. The church is God's showcase to proclaim to the angels, to the universe, the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:4-7, God puts his love, grace, and kindness on display when he unites us to Christ, seated at God's right hand. Twice, scripture says we share in Christ's return. The passage we haven't turned to yet, I'm going to refer to now.

The eager, first, the eager expectation of the creation awaits eagerly the revelation of the sons of God. That is Romans 8:19. A friend of mine slipped one in on me here.

He has that, and he says it's his own translation. Yeah, for the eager expectation of the creation eagerly awaits the apocalypse. It's the same word as the name of the last book in the bible, the apocalypse of Jesus Christ, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I don't know why the translations are obscure; even my favorite ESV obscures the fact that this is talking about the apocalypse. I love the ESV, and it's my favorite. I've been using, and I've been quoting from the Christian Standard Bible for which I made these, from which I made these notes as I said, but 8 20, 8 20, uh 19 of in the ESV, the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

It's not wrong, but the word is the revelation of the sons of God. Creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God. We will have a revelation, as it were, a second coming.

The word revelation is the same word some scripture sometimes uses for the second coming of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:13, Revelation 1:1, the one we're really familiar with. Scripture uses this apocalyptic, apocalyptic, apocalyptic in these places.

1 Corinthians 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:13, Revelation 1:1. There is a sense in which believers have a revelation, a return. Paul means our true identity is so wrapped up in Christ that it will be fully revealed only when he and we come again. That is a great comforting promise for us to persevere and love this gracious Lord and live for him, confessing our sins, sharing the gospel, and so forth.

And we see the same thing there. We saw it in Colossians 3 4. Both Jesus and Christians will appear at his second coming. Believers are so united to Christ at his saving events and his saving events.

Believers are so united to Jesus and his saving events that at his return, the sin that obscures our identity in Christ will be removed so that we will shine like the sun in our Father's kingdom. Matthew 13:48, Matthew 13:48, perhaps an allusion to the book of Daniel. So, it is glorious to behold, by God's grace, we participate in Jesus' story.

Not only so, but every aspect of the application of salvation occurs in union with Christ. Just think about it. If all God's salvific blessings are in him and we are, God joins us to him, and then we get all those blessings.

In other words, regeneration is in Christ. Justification is in Christ. Adoption is in Christ.

I'll stop boring you with the repetition, but it's true. Perseverance is in Christ. All the blessings of Christ are in salvation.

Hence, the aspects of salvation are part and parcel of union with Christ. Richard Gaffin's words are apt. His book, *By Faith Not By Sight, Paul and the Order of Salvation*, Richard Gaffin.

I'm quoting him. The central soteriological reality is union with the exalted Christ by spirit-created faith. That is the nub, the essence of the way or order of salvation for Paul.

For this reason, each individual aspect of the application of salvation is in Christ. Regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation, and glorification are blessings we receive, not apart from Christ. That's ridiculous and impossible but in union with him.

Regeneration is in Christ. We already saw this. For God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ.

Ephesians 2:4 and 5. Even though we were dead in trespasses, you are saved by grace. For God raised us up with him, Paul says in the next words. Regeneration is a subset of union with Christ.

Being joined to Jesus, we get all of his saving benefits, one of which is regeneration. Likewise, we are justified in union with Christ. There's no other way.

For God, quote, made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21. God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Paul values gaining Christ above all. And this means to be found in him, that is in union with him. And that entails not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

Philippians 3:9. Back to 2 Corinthians 5:21, Luther's famous great exchange. Christ is sinless and righteous. We are the opposite.

We're sinful. God imputes our sins to him. And God imputes his righteousness to us.

God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. We get Christ-imputed righteousness credited to our spiritual bank account, if you will, by virtue of union with Christ so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

It is the same for adoption, of course. By the way, I cannot show that calling is like this. The others I can explicitly show everyone.

I can't find we're called in him or the like. It is the same for adoption. But of course, I would say the Bible doesn't say it.

But by writing as a Christian theologian and understanding God's teachings, we are called into union with Christ as well. It is the same for adoption, as Paul teaches. Through faith, you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26, 27. Through faith, you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus, for those of you who are baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.



One of the ways is actually a minor way, and it's often not even noticed, but one of the ways Paul speaks of union with Christ is by putting on clothes. Romans, the verse that God used to subdue Saint Augustine. Romans 13:14.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Augustine was making a lot of provisions for the flesh, and that verse hit him like a flash and broke him down, and it was beautiful. He remembered the gospel that his mother Monica and others had shared with him, and he believed.

He believed in Christ, and here, the same concept is used. All of you who are baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. Here, Paul says what God has done for us.

This is the indicative imperative distinction. What God has done in the indicative voice, saying the indicative mood, expressing the way things are, you have been clothed with Christ. In Romans 13:14, it's an imperative.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. So, Paul sometimes tells us what God has done for us, and then he tells us to do what God has done for us in response to what God has done for us. The imperative, the Christian life exhortations, are based upon the indicative of what God has done for us in Christ.

The indicative, the statements of what God has done, are not an end in themselves. They're to motivate the imperatives, our obedience to the imperatives. The indicative statements are the basis of our response to God and living for God.

Through faith, you're all sons of God in Christ Jesus, for those of you who are baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. The clothes, the way in which that verse is introduced, the being baptized, and being clothed with Christ in Christian baptism are the explanations for this.

Through faith, you're all sons of God in Christ Jesus. One of the meanings of Christian baptism is adoption. Like putting on clothes, right, on one's body, Christian baptism signifies union with Christ.

And that is, that includes adoption. Through faith, you're all sons of God in Christ Jesus. Being clothed with Christ speaks of union with Christ.

As clothing covers the body, so Christ covers believers. Union with Christ is the embrace of the overarching concept of which adoption is a part. Through faith, you're all sons of God in Christ.

His natural sonship, his eternal sonship, and even his sonship were recognized in his death and resurrection, Romans 1, first few verses. God declared him with power to

be the son of God by the resurrection of the dead, his resurrection of the dead that his eternal natural sonship is the basis for our sonship being adopted by God the Father by grace through faith in the unique son of God.

Adoption is in union with Christ. Being joined to Jesus, the eternal son, we become the gracious, grace-based sons or daughters of God. The spirit's work of sanctification is not separate from Christ, but in union with him.

We are his workmanship. After saying we're saved by grace through faith, not of any works of our own, God says, but there are works involved. We're God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus.

The meaning is actually recreated. It's part of the new creation created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do. Ephesians 2.10. We're recreated in Christ for good works.

Our progressive sanctification is not apart from Christ's good grief. It is in union with Christ. As we saw in Romans 6, we died to the power of sin by virtue of dying with him.

We're raised to new life, pleasing God in union with his resurrection. Indeed, our union with Christ in his death and resurrection is the basis for successful Christian living. Romans 6:1-14. God's preservation of his saints is done in union with his son.

There is now no condemnation to those who are far apart from Christ Jesus. I don't think so. There's now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

On the last day, God will save and not condemn all human beings in Christ Jesus that is in union with him. In fact, because believers are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us, Paul was confident that nothing at all would be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I quoted the first verse in Romans 8 and the last two.

Union with Christ includes preservation. How could it be otherwise? Because in him, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Ephesians 1 verse 3. Our glorification is also in union with Christ.

That's what we understood. There are passages that say we have a second coming with Christ. When Christ, who is your life, appears, you also appear with him in glory.

There's glorification. It appears with him in glory. Our glorification is in union with Christ.

Our full identity will be disclosed only when Jesus comes back. And this is because we will appear with him, in union with him, in glory. Our final salvation will involve great glory.

For by God's grace, we will obtain, quote, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14. Even an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17. Paul piles up words.

It's incredible. He can't pile them up any higher. This ends this lecture.

And in the next one, we will take up the doctrine of election. First of all, we're looking at doing some historical reconnaissance and then actually studying the Scriptures themselves to understand what they mean. God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world.

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