

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 13, Foundations for Union with Christ in Paul, 1 and 2 Corinthians

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on the Holy Spirit and union with Christ. This is session number 13, Foundations for Union with Christ in Paul, 1 and 2 Corinthians.

As we continue our studies on union with Christ in Paul, let us seek the Lord's help.

Father, thank you for your holy word. Thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit and making us your saints. Open our eyes that we might behold wonderful things in your word. Encourage us, lead us in the everlasting way, we pray through Jesus Christ, the mediator. Amen.

We are studying Pauline passages in which he teaches union with Christ.

We are being very selective because union with Christ permeates Paul's letters. As we'll see later on, when we summarize some of his themes and ideas, it can be in casual references in the salutations and closings of letters. Half of those have references to union with Christ.

It just became part of his vocabulary. Somebody's name and then in Christ, for example, Timothy, and in Christ is a synonym for Christian sometimes. In Christ is a synonym for Christian.

In Christ language always has a basic substratum of relationship to Christ, but many other nuances, is a good word, are he has studied and brought to light. Many other nuances of that in Christ language are on top of that substratum, if we can talk like that. Of course, in him, in Christ, it does not always speak of union with Christ, but most of the time, it does.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul teaches concerning the Lord's Supper, and these verses should be taken into account much more than they are in light of the famous institution of the Lord's Supper passage in 1 Corinthians 11. That is a key passage, but Paul intends for us to read it in light of his previous words here in chapter 10. 1 Corinthians 10:16-22.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? Notice that Paul inverts the order; instead of bread and cup, he mentions the cup first. Is the bread that we break not a participation in the body of Christ? 1

Corinthians 10:17. Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Consider the people of Israel, are not those who eat the sacrifices participants at the altar? What do I imply, then, that food offered to idols is anything or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Strong words. In the larger and narrower contexts, Paul seeks to dissuade the Corinthian church, especially the men of the church, from participating unwittingly in pagan worship.

Some of them foolishly think they can eat meals at idol temples with impunity. They claim such behavior has no bearing on the Christian life. Their reasoning seems to be that because idols have no reality, eating meals sacrificed to them is harmless.

Although Paul agrees that idols have no reality, he rejects their line of reasoning. On the contrary, believers should have nothing to do with idols or their temples. Why? Because, quote, what pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons, and not to God.

I do not want you to be participants, the key word in this passage, with demons. Close quote, verse 20. This notion of participation with the supernatural realm, that is, supernatural evil as well as supernatural good and God, is reinforced by Paul's references to Old Testament sacrifices in verse 18.

So, here's the flow of thought. After twice saying, believers who partake of a Lord's Supper in faith find that it is a participation, verse 16, in the blood and body of Christ—again, inverting the elements.

Then, he talks about participation with demons involved in pagan worship. And then, another illustration, this time from the Old Testament, participation in sacrifices ordained by God, verse 18. With a rhetorical question, Paul points to the Jewish worship practices of his day that were based on Old Testament teaching.

Partaking of the food offered in the sacrifices meant partaking in the religious act of the sacrifice, namely, participating in the worship of Israel's God. It meant partaking in faith in the benefits of the altar, verse 18. Consider the people of Israel.

Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? In the immediate context, thus, Paul speaks of participating with demons in pagan religious meals and participating with the God of Israel in Jewish sacrifices. The emphasis is on the supernatural effects of partaking. The word *koinonia* used twice in verse 16 of a

koinonia in the blood of Christ, and a koinonia in the body of Christ means participation and sharing.

A very fine translation would be communion. We use that word, of course, of a Lord's Supper if we only understood that the deepest meaning of the Supper, the embrace of one that encompasses all others, is, in fact, communion or union with Christ. Hence, when Paul speaks of Christians partaking in the Lord's Supper, he means that in so doing, they participate, they commune, and they share in the body and blood of Christ.

That is, they partake of the benefits of Christ's once for all sacrifice on the cross. Verse 16, the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? Is the bread that we break not a participation in the body of Christ? There are rhetorical questions, and the Greek negative particle used indicates a positive answer. That is, it is, is it not? It is, is it not? Champa and Rosner are perceptive.

"With the aid of a rhetorical question, the apostle teaches that believing partakers of the Lord's Supper enjoy true communion with God and participation in the life he has won for us through the cross." Their great commentary on 1 Corinthians. I would have to say I have a good selection of commentaries, and they are my favorite.

They are fair, they give a range of views, they're not overly dogmatic, and boy, have they mastered the larger and smaller context of 1 Corinthians. And all in well-written prose. This interpretation is confirmed by verse 21, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Paul's concern is not merely with appearances. Participants have fellowship with demons if we can talk like that, in pagan sacrifices.

And with Christ in the supper. Once more, Champa and Rosner come to our aid. Quote: Paul's argument, with its emphasis on participation in the blood and body of Christ, seeks to stress where God is or where God's, small g, are invoked as the host or patron or hosts or patrons of the meal.

The fellowship is not merely with the men and women gathered around the table but with the deity as well. Through our fellowship with Christ, we participate in the benefits of his sacrifice, which serves to establish or renew our covenantal relationship with God. Am I teaching the Lord's Supper automatically saves? No! But it is the gospel, ceremonialized, so the church would never forget the gospel.

As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, the atonement, and the gospel until he comes. This interpretation is confirmed, as we said, by the verses that follow verse 16. As Romans 6:1-11 and Colossians 2:11-12

speak of union with Christ as the most important meaning of Christian baptism, Romans 6:1-11, Colossians 2:11-12, the most embracing, comprehensive, and profound meaning of Christian baptism is union with Christ.

So here, in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul teaches that believing participants in the Lord's Supper receive the benefits of union with Christ. They enjoy true fellowship with him, and I'm not talking about that which we bring, our feelings, which are important and are a subjective response to the objective reality of God's grace in the Holy Supper. I'm talking about the objective reality of God's grace in the Holy Supper, as the Holy Spirit brings the benefits of Christ, seated at God's right hand, to us in the Lord's Supper so that it is actually a means of grace.

Automatic? There's no such thing. When I say baptism in the Lord's Supper are visible words that the Gospel put into ceremony, I would not ascribe to them more than I would of the Word. The Word of God is a means of grace.

All evangelical Christians agree. When the Gospel is preached, grace is offered. Is it automatically effective? No.

It must be received in faith, of course. And so with baptism in the Lord's Supper. Europe is filled, and France is filled with millions of people baptized in the Roman Catholic Church as infants who are unsaved.

The sacraments do not work, contrary to Rome's contention, *ex opere operato*, by the mere performance of the act, grace is bestowed. No. But grace, real grace, is bestowed.

And our response to that grace must be faith, which too is a gift of God, but that's another subject. Believing participants receive the benefits of union with Christ. They enjoy true fellowship with Christ and partake of the blessings of his atoning sacrifice.

And as 1 Corinthians 10:16 speaks of vertical fellowship with him in the Supper. It's not the cup of blessing; that's the third cup in the first-century Jewish Passover ceremony, the cup of redemption. It's not the cup of blessing, a participation in the blood of Christ.

This is vertical communion, participation, and sharing with Christ. The next verse speaks of horizontal fellowship in union with Christ. Our union with him leads us to union with one another, and boy, do the Corinthians need to hear that, based upon the early chapters and their divisions.

And that is why the elements are inverted, by the way, because Paul goes from, instead of going bread to cup, he goes up to bread and then appeals to the way they observed the Lord's Supper. We're not commanded to do it exactly as they did. They

used a common loaf, or maybe loaves, and the bread would come to a believing participant, who would break off a piece and pass it on.

Paul uses that imagery in verse 17 to speak of horizontal union or communion with other believers, which is grounded in vertical union with Christ, which is the chief meaning of the Supper. Because there's one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread, common loaf, which Paul uses as a symbol of their common horizontal unity. This is the reason Paul inverts the bread and cup in verse 16, as I said, to provide for an easy transition from vertical to horizontal union in the next verse.

The theological question comes: if Christian baptism signifies initial union with Christ, doesn't automatically accomplish it, but it signifies the gospel to which we believe, and we are saved, then why do we need ongoing union with Christ in the Lord's Supper? It's like asking, why do we need ongoing grace and faith? Why do we need the ongoing gospel? Because we are joined to Christ savingly once and for all. But God uses the means of grace, the preaching and reading of the word, prayer, and our believing participation in the Lord's Supper as means of strengthening faith. So, Calvin talks about God using the Lord's Supper to strengthen our bond of union with Christ and enhance our bond.

I'm reaching for a word, and if I understand how my old mind works, it'll come later. In addition, in verse 17, Paul appeals to the image of the church as Christ's body. He does it almost casually.

He doesn't explain it at all. It's just part of the Christian vocabulary. Because there's one bread, we who are one body, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

As the many members of the Corinthian congregation partake of the one common loaf of bread in the Lord's Supper, they are one body. The many become one body of Christ, one church, in the partaking of the bread. Their union with Christ, experienced in the Supper, establishes and exhibits their union with one another as the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:21-23. We cannot possibly examine every Pauline text. On union with Christ, I'm picking some great ones, and I'll just say that.

I would not speak against any of them, of course. Paul compares and contrasts two human beings. 1 Corinthians 15:21-23.

It's the two Adams, of course. After contemplating the disastrous results for believers if Christ were not raised from the dead, in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, I mention as one of two things, the Lord used mightily in my life as a 21-year-old to bring me to faith in

Christ. I said, how honest can God be? He says in black and white, what would have been obtained if Jesus had not been raised? Disaster.

We'd be a bunch of fools. The apostles would make liars out of God. We would be lost.

Those who have died in Christ would be lost. But now in verse 20, the other thing, by the way, that convinced me was the Trinity. Of course, I had heard of it before, but as a 21-year-old who came to Christ, I devoured the Bible, especially Paul, and I saw in his thoughts all over the place.

On top of his thought, underneath his thought, in the middle, the doctrine of the Trinity is everywhere. And I said, who would make this up? It's a stumbling block. It's a mystery.

It goes beyond our ability to understand. This must be of divine origin, not human. This must be the way God always has been.

Anyway, verse 20 of 1 Corinthians 15. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead—the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

How in the world could the Corinthians, as believers in Christ, and Paul regards them as such, the vast majority anyway, doubt the resurrection of Christ? Because as Greeks and Romans, they looked, as Romans permeated by Greco-Roman culture, they saw what happened to bodies in death. And their naive assumption was the resurrection of the body, and they got this from their philosophers, which is why on Mars Hill when Paul mentioned the resurrection, the Greek philosophers just laughed at him. That's ridiculous.

They thought resurrection meant stinking corpses coming back to life. Not totally unlike zombies, I am told. I'm certainly not a zombie expert.

I will leave that area to some of our grown sons. I don't get that, really. But anyway, rotting corpses walking around? Ah! And Paul goes to great lengths here to show that, to make a long story short, our mortal bodies and corruptible ones will become immortal and incorruptible.

As a matter of fact, they are immortal, incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual, dominated by the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of the dead, so they don't understand the resurrection of the dead, and their naive ideas about rotting bodies being resuscitated actually has a disastrous impact on the resurrection of Jesus, which they believe in to be saved. 1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4, it's the gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ, and that one must believe in him.

So, he shows their inconsistency. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, then in his coming those who belong to Christ. Paul compares and contrasts two human beings.

As Adam brought death into the world of humanity through his primal sin, Christ, a second Adam, brings life through his resurrection from the dead. He was raised first and will raise his people when he comes again. Paul here describes Christians as, quote, those who belong to Christ, verse 23.

Paul's use of in Christ in verse 22 is to be read over against his use of in Adam in the same verse. As such, in Christ reflects the basic locative sense, having to do with location, of the expression used figuratively to denote realm, domain, and kingdom. All those in Adam's domain die.

All those in Christ's domain will be made alive at his return. Champa and Rosner capture the spirit of Paul's in Adam, in Christ parallel in this passage. Paul is presenting the most concise form of the story of redemption imaginable.

The archetypal problem of sin finds its eschatological resolution through the climactic breakthrough of the resurrection accomplished by Christ. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. To be in Adam, they wisely and concisely say, is to be part of the group that finds in Adam its representative and leader, and finds its identity and destiny in Adam and what he has brought about for his people.

To be in Christ is to be part of the group that finds in Christ its representative and leader, which finds its identity and destiny in Christ and what he has brought about for his people. It's a beautiful parallelism. Oh, antithetical in their effects, but in their roles, they are the two Adams and covenant heads, federal heads of their people.

Adam, all people. Christ, Paul has qualified for all those who belong to him. The expressions in Adam and in Christ reinforce the idea of corporate solidarity.

The following verse makes it clear that by being made alive, a quotation, Paul has in mind the resurrection, since those who belong to him will be made alive, that is raised, when he comes, close quote. I could do much more with 1 Corinthians 15, but we do want to get Paul's themes and ideas and even their contribution to systematic theology in a future lecture coming soon. But I cannot resist the last verse in 1 Corinthians 15: Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

This is one of many places where the apostle expresses Christian's actions as being in the Lord, meaning for Christ. The labor referred to here is Christian labor, service done for Christ. Because Jesus is alive from the dead, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be unwavering and steady.

They can stand fast, regardless of circumstances, and having this anchor, the crucified one, is the living one. As a result, they can be fruitful in the Lord's work, knowing it will not be in vain. Speaking of Christ, of Christian labor, Barrett, C.K. Barrett is pithy, quote, since it is done in the Lord, it can no more perish than he, close quote.

Barrett's useful commentary on the first Epistle to the Corinthians. And believe it or not, I'm on to 2 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation.

If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. Paul begins by praising God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Significantly, the Apostle describes him as the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Verse 3. These words form the basis for the following teaching. The merciful and comforting Father comforts believers in their suffering to prepare them to comfort others in their suffering.

It is God's comfort that comforted believers pass on to others. Verse 4. So far, the only mention of Christ is as God's Son. Now, things have changed.

Paul views Christians' affections Christologically. As we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort, too. Verse 5. It is important to declare what this verse does not mean.

Of course, believers do not participate in Christ's redemptive suffering. That remains utterly unique. The mediator alone makes atonement.

We do not make atonement. Also, the combination of present sufferings and future comfort, while not excluded, are not primarily in view. Rather, Paul has in mind the combination of present afflictions and present comfort.

A common pattern is present sufferings and future comfort, but here, his major thrust is present afflictions and present comfort. If you will, bringing the future comfort into the present. That is, union with Christ in his death and resurrection involves not only present sufferings and future glory but also present sufferings and present glory experienced as the Father's aid and encouragement.

And this aid and encouragement are to be shared. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

As surely as the Lord Jesus died and was raised, we can be confident of believers sharing in his affliction and comfort now. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes did commentaries on 2 Corinthians and Hebrews and a little work on the book of Revelation.

And there's sound; he is unusual, he was, and he's with the Lord now, according to New Testament scholars. As a matter of fact, it's even hard to confine him to discipline because he was aware of the history of the interpretation of the New Testament and the Bible. Whoa! And also, was a very capable theologian.

So, his commentaries include the history of interpretation. In terms of critical scholarship, serious interpretation began at the Enlightenment and the previous stuff is just worthless, at least in general. Not so for Hughes.

We can learn much from the fathers, from the medievals, and certainly from the reformers, John Edwards, and so forth. Hughes eloquently summarizes, for the Christian; however, as Paul explains elsewhere, there is such a thing as the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Philippians 3.10. That is a sharing or participation with Christ in suffering. But Christ, let it be remembered, is no longer suffering in humiliation, for he is now exalted in glory.

If we are called to fellowship in the sufferings of the Christ of humiliation, it is the Christ of glory who mediates an abundance of comfort to us, one and the same Christ. Though the emphasis, close quote, is on present suffering and comfort, the passage is not devoid of the hope of future comfort, for it draws attention to God who raises the dead. That's a quote from 2 Corinthians 1:9. 2 Corinthians 1:17-22, I mentioned this passage earlier and I don't have a whole lot here, but it is fascinating because it pictures Paul in the defensive mode, fending off attacks as to his integrity.

1 Corinthians 1:15, because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first so that you might have a second experience of grace. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to see you from Macedonia and have you send me on

my way to Judea. Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say yes, yes, and no, no at the same time? That is exactly what his enemies are saying because Paul changed his itinerary.

And they're saying, look, he changes his itinerary and that's the same thing he does with his teaching. He just changes it all around. He tickles the ears of his hearer.

He's a false apostle. Well, can Paul take criticism? Yes. Does he like critical criticism? No.

Would that keep him up at night? Don't think so. Can he take criticism of the gospel? You better believe it not. And he comes out fighting.

And surely, as God is faithful, 1:18, our word to you has not been yes and no. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who we proclaim to you among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not yes and no, but in him is always yes, for all the promises of God find their yes in him.

That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to the glory, to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, who has also put his seal on us, and who has given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee and accused by enemies of vacillation in both ministry and message.

When he does not return to Corinth as planned, Paul defends both. He explains he changed his plans to visit Corinth to spare them, verse 23. More importantly, he maintains that his message has always remained stable and has not changed.

His message, his plans might change, his itinerary might change, but not the message. No. That is rock solid and unchanging.

Methods, I am all things to all people, and by all means, I might save some, 1 Corinthians 9. Methods are changeable. Message, unchangeable. Because it was given to him by the risen Christ, Galatians 1, he didn't make it up.

This is because his message is centered on Christ and the gospel, verses 19 to 20. These two uses of in him are instrumental. God makes his promises and fulfills them in Christ, that is, through the person and work of his son, Jesus Christ.

Due to the stability, Christ brings to the gospel, it is in him or through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory, verse 20. 19, in him our amen is always yes, not yes and no, not vacillating, and all the promises of God find their yes in him, both which we have explained as through him. Showing instrument or means.

Paul is not a vacillator. On the contrary, he and all Christians have a tremendous stabilizing force in their lives, verses 21 to 23. The Holy Trinity makes believers stable.

The Father stabilizes us through the ministries of the Holy Spirit. Four times, Paul speaks of the Spirit. The Father anoints us with the Spirit, seals us with the Spirit, gives us his Spirit in our hearts, and gives us the Spirit as a down payment or guarantee of our final inheritance.

God's giving us the Spirit in our hearts is another way of talking about indwelling, a correlative, an inseparable companion to union with Christ. Paul writes it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, verse 21. Here's a third in Christ reference in these six verses.

In this case, "the verse expresses the status of believers who are confirmed as being in some way defined by or belonging to Christ." Constantine Campbell's excellent work, *Paul and Union with Christ*. 2 Corinthians 5:16 to 21.

I hope I did enough with those stabilizing influences. Maybe I'll just do a little bit more. After saying God's promises, the gospel especially, are stable in verse 20, Paul says in 21 God, the Trinity, especially the Father, stabilizes us.

That's what he does, not only by his speaking in his word but by his acting. Specifically, he establishes us with you in Christ. There might be a wordplay here because Christos means anointed one, and his very next words are, and has anointed us.

God has established believers in Christ by giving them the Holy Spirit. There's the Trinity. The Father stabilizes the people in union with his Son.

That is, speaking of believers as those who belong to Christ by giving them the Spirit. In four ways, he speaks of giving them the Spirit. He anointed us.

He poured out his Spirit on the church once and for all at Pentecost. And believers, ever since, receive the Spirit when they are converted. He's also put his seal on us.

Although it's little known, in three passages, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as God's seal. We saw it already in 1 Corinthians, sorry, Ephesians 4:30. Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. Oh, that's wrong.

I've got to turn there, I'm sorry. I'm scrambling my eggs here a little bit; sorry about that. In three places, Paul speaks of the seal of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal. Ephesians 1:13 and 14. In him, you are also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

In Christ, the Father seals us. It's the divine passive. In Christ, you were also sealed by the Father with the seal, which is the promised Holy Spirit.

There's the Trinity. The Father is the sealer, the Spirit is the seal, and God seals believers in Christ. Likewise, yes, it's Ephesians 4:30. I had to write first, but I apologize for the wrong quotation.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by which, with which it should be, as I said before. We're sealed for the day of redemption. There, the major sense of sealing comes out.

It's preservation. God seals us now with the Spirit, guaranteeing our final salvation. He seals us, marks us as his own, and gives us a person of the Godhead to protect us and our salvation until or for the final day of redemption.

So, Paul's message is unvacillating because God's word is solid, 2 Corinthians 1:19. And Paul and all other believers, in fact, are also solid, stabilized, because of the Trinity. Not only speaking 1:19, but acting, especially in giving us the Spirit. God anointed us and sealed us with the Spirit.

It doesn't say the Spirit, but it's implied. And given us His Spirit in our hearts. And the fourth is as a down payment, a guarantee, a... I'm having a problem remembering things today.

Of course, that has nothing, in my case, to do with age whatsoever. I know this word as well as my own name. But it is? Arabone, of course.

Aramaic loan word, arabone. Down payment. Deposit.

Looking forward to the final redemption. When God will give us the rest of the inheritance, or the promise, that which is promised by the... If I can use a contemporary illustration, earnest money that you put down on the house. For references to God's blessing us with the Holy Spirit.

Show our stability, ordained by God and given to his people. 2 Corinthians 1:17-22. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

I'm not getting old. That's all a myth, I'm telling you. 2 Corinthians 5, 16-21.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, and behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.

Not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting them with the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God is making his appeal through us, and we implore you, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God.

For our sake, so that in him... For our sake, God made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Paul speaks of believers' change of status. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

In Christ characterizes the new domain in which Christians find themselves. This is Christ's domain, his realm. Being under his realm means being part of God's new creation.

The apostle continues to describe this state of affairs. The old has passed away, he says. Behold, the new has come.

Paul brings together in Christ and reconciliation in verse 17. He seems to make in Christ, in verse 19, parallel to through Christ, in verse 18. It goes like this: 18, God through Christ reconciled us to himself.

19 that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. Through Christ, in Christ. 18 and 19 of 2 Corinthians 5. In Christ, then, is used instrumentally in verse 19.

God was making peace between the world and himself through Christ's person and work. Paul also combines in him and justification. For our sake, verse 21, he, God, made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Although all uses of the Christ language communicate a relationship between Christ and believers, most uses do not directly indicate union with Christ. But this seems to be the case here. And I'm quoting Constantine Campbell, who, more than any other person, taught me what it means, what union with Christ in Paul means.

“The phrase could indicate union with Christ. Believers are made righteous by sharing in the righteousness of Christ. He's referring to verse 21.

The strength of this reading comes from the apparent symmetry in the verse in which Christ becomes sin for us and believers become righteousness in him. Since Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin, in quotation marks, thus sharing the plight in the plight of the sinful. So, sinners are made righteous by sharing in his righteous standing. The internal logic of the verse itself must finally be conclusive. In him indicates union with Christ.”

In our next lecture, we will keep on studying the union with Christ in the Pauline epistles.

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