

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14, Foundations for Union with Christ in Paul, 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on the Holy Spirit and Union with Christ. This is session 14, Foundations for Union with Christ in Paul, 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians.

We continue in our study of union with Christ in the crown of that doctrine in the New Testament, which is the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Just really briefly, I'd like to read and mention a little tiny bit in 2nd Corinthians 12:1 and 2. I must go on boasting, though there is nothing to be gained by it. I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who, 14 years ago, was caught up to the third heaven.

Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. God knows. Paul goes on, and he teases us because he says this man, it apparently is Paul himself, this man heard things that could not be uttered.

So, Paul tells us that this man went to paradise, to the very presence of God, to the third heaven where God dwells and heard these things that can't be uttered, and so he can't tell us what they are. My whole point is not that, however. It is that the words, I know a man in Christ, mean something like this.

I know a Christian man. In Christ, it has become such common parlance that a person in Christ could mean a Christian person. It shows how common those words have become.

That's all I want to say about 2 Corinthians 12:1 and 2. We wish we knew more about what Paul heard, but those were things that cannot be told which man may not utter. He's a teaser is what he is. Galatians 2. Oh, my word.

Galatians 2:15 through 21. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

So we also have believed in Jesus Christ in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. Because by works of the law, no one will be justified. That is

the most emphatic verse in the New Testament in the Bible on how justification is by grace through faith and not by works.

Over and over again Paul says it. But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners. Is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not.

May it never be. Perish the thought--megenoita in the Greek.

If I rebuild what I tore down, I will prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law, I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, 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 do not nullify the grace of God.

For if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. In context, Paul speaks against any attempts to be justified by works of the law. Three times in verse 16.

Salvation is only by faith in Christ. In Christ, Jesus functions to mark the goal of faith in verse 16. Faith in Jesus Christ believed in Jesus Christ, faith in Christ.

Christ is the personal object toward whom trust is extended. Verse 17 is one of only two places, along with Romans 3:24, where Paul links in Christ with justification. He rejects the charge of Judaizers that Jewish believers become sinners, which is what Judaizers considered Gentiles to be because they did not follow the law.

Paul rejects the charge of Judaizers that Jewish believers become sinners by associating with Gentiles. Paul contrasts Christ being a servant of sin, a concept he rejects, of course, with believers being justified in Christ. Campbell is insightful, and I "by raising the question of whether Christ is a promoter of sin, Paul implies Christ has acted in the event of justifying sinners. The best sense is made of the question of whether Christ promotes sin by regarding him as actively involved in the event of justification. Consequently, the preferred reading of in or by Christ here is to ascribe the notion of agency. Christ brings about justification. It is by him we are justified."

Because Paul has been spiritually joined to Christ in his death, that is because he died with Christ; the Apostle no longer lives, but Christ lives in him.

Of course, I'm referring to verse 20. Through the law, I died to the law that I might live to God. Verse 20, I've been crucified with Christ.

No, it's no longer I who lives, 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. Because

Paul has been spiritually joined to Christ in his death, that is, he has died with Christ and in Christ.

The Apostle no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. Verse 20, Paul is not denying his personality, but rather that the old Paul who was in Adam has died with Christ. The new age has dawned in Christ's resurrection, and all believers now enjoy the life of the age to come.

That is called eternal life. Here again, Paul asserts that he is indwelt by Christ. This passage wonderfully correlates co-crucifixion with Christ and his indwelling of believers.

Jesus not only died and was raised outside of us, but he came to make his home with us and made us his own people. F. F. Bruce captures the idea of verse 20 in its context. Quote, a change of lordship from law to Christ has taken place, but that is not all, says Paul.

I have been crucified with Christ, the Apostle writes. Those who place their faith in Christ are united to him by that faith, united so closely that his experience now becomes theirs. They share his death to the old order under law, and under law, there in verse in this passage.

And in Paul, compare four, four, and his resurrection to new life. They share in Christ's death to the old order, which certainly includes the law in verse 19. Through the law, I died to the law, and they share in his resurrection to new life, a wonderful and warm union with Christ's passage.

Many believers have memorized Galatians 2:20 and that is a great idea. Galatians 3:13 and 14. The context starts with verse 10.

For all who rely on works of law are under a curse, for it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them. Now, it's evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith. Skipping the 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of a law by becoming a curse for us.

For it's written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. In context, Paul speaks against any attempt to be justified by works of the law. Excuse me, and my eye had committed the scribal error of looking in the wrong place.

Galatians 3:13 and 14. Let's try that again. In a context that speaks of the blessing promised to Abraham, the curse breakers deserve its punishment.

The context speaks of the blessing promised to Abraham, and deliverance from the curse lawbreakers deserve its punishment. Paul makes a powerful statement of penal substitution. Christ took the curse, the penalty that we lawbreakers deserved.

In his crucifixion, he became a curse for us. Why? To redeem us from the curse of the law. 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

And here's the means by which he did that. By becoming a curse for us, as it is written in Deuteronomy, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree. Christ took our curse, our penalty.

He died in our place to redeem us from the threat, the penalty, the curse of the law—verse 13. The result is that we receive the blessing God promised to Abraham.

Verses 8 and 9. That blessing was promised. The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, in you shall all the nations be blessed. So, then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

And that's the purpose of Christ being made a curse for us. So, in verse 14, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, and in verse 13, it becoming a curse for us, as the Old Testament demonstrates. So that, verse 14 of Galatians 3, in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Probably in Christ Jesus, verse 14 is used instrumentally. It is through the saving accomplishment of Christ that God blesses the Gentiles. Moreover, through faith in Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit promised in the Old Testament, verse 14.

Indwelling is here referred to as receiving the spirit. Galatians 4.6. Adoption, the doctrine of adoption, is mentioned in many places in the New Testament. In Paul, it's debated whether it's also in John.

I think it's in John 1:12 and 1 John 3:1. Wrote a little book on adoption some years ago. Adopted by God. But surely Paul is the theologian of adoption, there's no question.

And he has two main places in which he opens up that doctrine in an extended context. One is in Romans 8, verses 14 through 17, actually, with some references shortly thereafter as well.

The other is Galatians 4:1 through 6. And that, too, could be extended back to Galatians 3, verses 26, all the way through 4:7. In a famous adoption passage,

Galatians 4:6, Paul rejoices that believers are no longer slaves of sin but sons and heirs of God. Let me read Galatians 4:4 through 7. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

So you are no longer a slave but a son. And if a son is an heir through God, All this is made possible because the Father sent his Son to accomplish his work of redemption, verses 4 and 5. Paul singles out one of many wonderful results in verse 6. Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Father, Father, Abba, Father.

Here, the Trinity appears in a single clause. The Father sent the Holy Spirit, even as he previously sent his Son. The Holy Spirit is affectionately called the Spirit of his Son.

The antecedent of the pronoun his is Father's. The Spirit is, this Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father's Son. The Father sent the Spirit into our hearts, that is, to dwell in and be with us always.

The Spirit bears witness to the one who sent him. In our hearts, he cries, Abba, Father. The Spirit witnesses with in-believers that they belong to God, that they are his children.

Compare Romans 8:16. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. As I said earlier, Abba means, is an affectionate term of address that children use for their father. It is not baby talk, it does not mean dada, but it means pop, dad, daddy, father, whatever affectionate term you use for a loved and kind Father on earth.

Paul uses that term for our Father in heaven, and Jesus, of course, taught us to do that. Galatians 5:22-23, the great fruit of the Spirit passage. First, there are the works of the flesh, Galatians 5.19 and following.

Works of the flesh are evident, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like that like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things, there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Paul virtually defines belonging to Christ as co-crucifixion with him to sinful passions and desires, verse 24. Compare Galatians 6:14, but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

So, a good cross reference is 6:14. The apostle refers to believers as those who belong to Christ. Richard Longenecker correctly asserts that those who belong to Christ Jesus are those in Christ Jesus. Longenecker's commentary on Galatians.

This passage contrasts the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Verse 24 is the only place the passage mentions union with Christ. Christ's people participate in his narrative.

Here, they died with him to their flesh. Paul means that our sinful impulses were put to death with the Son of God and no longer have the right to dominate us, as we saw in Romans 6. Sinfully, we may yield to their power, but this is unnecessary. Christ died to break their stranglehold over our lives.

When we let them control us, we forget who we are. We suffer from spiritual amnesia if you will. We are those who belong to Christ and have died with him to our flesh.

Again, Longenecker is on target and I quote, the self-giving of Christ through death on a cross is the central soteriological theme of Galatians. Compare 1:4, 3:1, 3:13, 6:12, 6:14. Identification with Christ in his crucifixion means a new type of existence for the believer. For now, Christ lives in me, Galatians 2:20. Identification with Christ in his crucifixion has implications for issues having to do with libertinism.

So here at verse 24, for Paul to claim identity with Christ in his crucifixion means one cannot espouse a lifestyle that expresses either a legalistic or libertine orientation. For in being with Christ, both the demands of the law and the impulses of the flesh have been crucified as well. For being crucified with Christ, both the demands of the law and the impulses of the flesh have been crucified as well.

Compare Romans 7:1-6, Colossians 2:13-15, Ephesians 1:7-10. As a matter of fact, Ephesians 1:3-14, one long sentence in Greek is loaded with union with Christ. And I'm choosing a couple of verses that may not be commonly referred to in this regard. Ephesians 1:7-10. In him, that is the beloved one Christ, and we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven, and things on earth.

Once more, the apostle combines a word indicating salvation with union with Christ. In him we have redemption, verse 7. Redemption means the deliverance of slaves by the payment of a price. In this case, Christ's blood, his violent death on the cross.

It results in redemption, in release for the slaves, and, "the forgiveness of our trespasses," which had held us in bondage. In him, we have redemption. In him, he probably has the nuance of a locative used figuratively.

We belong to Christ's realm and are no longer in the realm of spiritual bondage, having been redeemed by his death. Later, I'm going to talk about the actual nuances of Christ's language, and we'll see the predominant usage seems to be this one of transfer of realm from the realm of Satan or the world to the realm or kingdom or domain of Christ. We belong to Christ's realm now and are no longer in a realm of spiritual bondage, having been redeemed by his death.

Paul expands his purview temporally and cosmically when he says, God made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose, which he sent forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him. Verses 9 and 10. This use of in Christ in conjunction with God setting forth his plan to unite all in Christ is one of a handful of times Paul uses in Christ to show union with Christ directly.

I've said previously, and I'm really dependent on the work of Constantine Campbell here, whose book on union with Christ in Paul is the standard. All references to union with Christ, first of all, in Christ, in him, in whom they do not always refer to union with Christ. When they do, they all have a basic sense of speaking of a relationship with Christ, all right? But beyond that, they have a dozen different nuances.

I've been appealing to some of them along the way in my representative choice of passages, choice of representative passages, but most don't have; everyone has an indirect reference to a relationship to Christ. Half a dozen of them have a direct reference to union with Christ. The last use of in him is also locative, used figuratively to speak of Christ as the focal point or goal.

That is in verse 10, God's plan is to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. God's plan is to bring together all things in heaven and earth in Christ as goal. O'Brien says it well, quote, Christ is the one in whom God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe.

He's the focal point, not simply the means, the instrument, or the functionary through whom all this occurs. Christ is the mean, it's the instrument. I don't like the word functionary, but he is the mediator.

Oh, but he's also the goal. The emphasis is now on a universe that is centered and reunited in Christ as the focal point. Paul's doctrine of Christ is huge.

He's God's agent in creation. Colossians 1, 1 Corinthians 8:6. He's God's, like God, he does the work of providence. Colossians 1, right in there, verse 17, right around in there.

He's the only mediator, and he's also the end, the goal of God's plan, as we see here in Ephesians 1:9 and 10. That is, Christ is all in all, creator, sustainer, redeemer, consummator, the heir of all things. Ephesians 1:11 to 13.

Again, choosing just one little part of this packed passage. Ephesians 1:3 to 14 is loaded and permeated with references to union with Christ and everything from pre-temporal election to Christ being the cosmic goal of God's reconciliation of the universe. Ephesians 1:11 to 13.

In him, that's Christ again. We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory. In him, we have received an inheritance, we have obtained an inheritance, is another expression of salvation in union with Christ.

In him, it is locative, used figuratively, to show the domain or realm to narrow the goal. In the previous verse, the goal was to bring all things, the universe, together in Christ. Here, Paul narrows the focus to believers.

Believers' inheritance is the whole world in the new earth. All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas of the world or life or death or the present or the future, all things are yours, 1 Corinthians 3:21, 22, as we've previously seen. So, he moves from saying Christ is the goal, the universe is the goal of redemption, and Christ is its focus.

Now, he gets to a smaller set of that and says believers are the goal of God's saving purpose. And Believers will inherit; they have an inheritance, and the inheritance is the Holy Trinity and the new earth. Wow.

When the apostle says we, he means Jews, Jewish believers, were the first to hope in Christ; he uses Christ to express the truth that Christ is the object of Christian hope or faith. The same is true for the second use of in him in Ephesians 1:13. You, dot, dot, dot, believed in him.



Christ is the object of saving faith. Is there not an underlying notion of a relationship with him? Of course, it is. But now the nuance is, means, or object, excuse me, of saving faith.

He also means, but here it's an object. One believes in him. When the apostle says we Jews, he just said that.

The first use of in him in verse 13 is the figurative use of the locative to show realm, domain, kingdom. The Father seals believers with the Holy Spirit in Christ's domain. God makes us part of Christ's realm permanently because the spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Or as 430 says, God sealed us until the day of redemption. Here's that sealing doctrine again in Paul. Often neglected, little known.

If we put together 2 Corinthians 1:19 to 22, Ephesians 1:13, 14, Ephesians 4:30, we get this. The father is the sealer. He's the one who seals us.

The persons who are sealed are believers. That says that right here. In him, you also, when you heard the gospel and believed, were sealed.

Father's the sealer, believers are sealed. What is the seal? The seal is the Holy Spirit. The seal on us is a person of the Godhead.

In him, you also, when you heard the order of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. That is promised in the Old Testament, and now he's come at Pentecost. In him, you were sealed by the Father with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee, and so forth.

Sealing is the gracious work of the Father by which he gives us the spirit as his mark of ownership. But the main thrust in these three passages, Ephesians 1:13, 14, Ephesians 4:30, 2 Corinthians 1:19 to 22, is preservation or security. Objects were sealed in both testaments to preserve them, to keep them safe.

People are sealed. All believers are sealed by the Father with the seal of the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption, and nothing can break that seal. Nothing can overpower the Holy Spirit of God.

Furthermore, the Father seals, seals believers, seals them with the Spirit, and seals them, you guessed it, verse 11, in him, verse, I'm sorry, 13, in him, you were sealed. Divine passive, the Father sealed believers with the Holy Spirit, and he did so in Christ. Our union with Christ is firm.

Oh, I do agree. In him speaks of that realm of Christ. But again, underlying all those usages that pertain to union with Christ is the relationship with him.

God put us into Christ's realm. The Father put us into the Son's realm through the Son's atoning work and through the Spirit applying salvation to us, and we are safe in Christ. Safe to sin? No.

Safe to love, serve, and enjoy God forever. Ephesians 2:4 through 10, marvelous passage. Oh my.

After speaking of our three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, as succinctly and compactly as any place in scripture, Ephesians 2:1 to 3, we read in verse 4, 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, raised us up with him, and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith, and this salvation is not your own doing, is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we should walk in them. The apostle teaches that believers were united to Christ in his resurrection and session, that is, his sitting at God's right hand after his ascension. God not only raised us up with him, verse 6, but seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Every blessing of salvation is in Christ Jesus. This implies they are joined to Christ in his ascension as well. Joined to Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, ascension implied, sitting in heaven as well.

The only place it says that is here. God seated us with Christ in heaven. Twice in the context, Paul teaches that we were spiritually dead, that is, devoid of the life of God, verses 1 and 5. We needed to be made alive, and that is exactly what God did.

He made us alive together with Christ, verse 5. Regenerating us by spiritually reuniting us to the risen Christ. Christ's life thus becomes ours, and we become alive spiritually. Peter O'Brien underscores these truths taught here in Ephesians 2:4 through 10.

“Paul's readers have come to life with Christ who was dead and rose again. Their new life then is a sharing in the new life which we received when he rose from the dead. It is only in union with him that death is vanquished and new life, an integral part of God's new creation.”

Paul regards God's making the spiritually dead alive as the epitome of grace. That is why he injects an aside at the end of verse 5. Did you notice that? Even when you were dead in trespasses, God made you alive together with Christ. He says, by grace, you have been saved and raised us up with him and so forth.

The ESV rightly separates those words, by grace you have been saved, with dashes. Paul can't help himself. The epitome of grace is God making the dead alive.

As a matter of fact, studying 1 Corinthians 15 for a number of months for a book project is exactly right. The most extreme demonstration biblically of sovereign grace is in God's raising the dead at the end of the age. Nothing could be greater than that.

Oh, my word. And here, raising the dead spiritually while they're alive, moving them from spiritual death to spiritual life in regeneration, is likewise a great work of grace. Paul thus regards God's making the spiritual death alive as the epitome of grace.

That's why he injects this aside at the end of verse 5. By grace, you have been saved. Grace is God's helping those who cannot help themselves. It is his saving those who are hopelessly lost.

In a word, they are spiritually dead. Paul repeats God raised us up with him and then adds, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus—verse 6. In Christ, Jesus is used in a sense we have seen as common sense, a locative sense, which speaks of location and is used metaphorically to speak of Christ's realm.

But concretely, this time, we are seated in heaven with Christ. If it is objected that the verb seated with already expresses this idea, it is to be remembered that repetition is a normal function of human language. Yes, the biblical writers repeat themselves.

Perhaps sometimes for emphasis, but I think maybe most of the time because that's how their mother spoke. Here we share in Christ's victory over the prince of the power of the air and his demons. Our union with Christ is so vital that it is life-giving, dynamic, and unbreakable that it is as if we ascended with him and sat down in heaven with him.

This is well brought out by Frank Thielman. Quote, the most unusual element about all three verbs, made alive together with, raised up with, and seated with, is their past tense. Here, the Christians' lives, resurrections, and royal positions in Christ are events that have already happened.

Here, salvation is something that is emphatically present for believers. They have already been made alive with Christ, already raised with him, and even already

seated with him in heavenly places. Their resurrection has, in some sense, already taken place.

Compare Colossians 3:1. Close quote. Frank Thielman's good commentary on Ephesians. God lavished his love on us when we were spiritually dead.

He joined us to the risen, ascended, seated Christ, so that we share in his victory over the powers, the evil powers. What is God's purpose for doing these things?

Ephesians 2:7 says that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, it is used to show the recognition or revelation of something.

In this instance, God's kindness. We truly know Christ now, but we have not seen anything yet. "What God has done for us in Christ is a reality, but only in the coming ages will it be fully seen for what it is."

O'Brien reminds us that the apostle uses the language of creation to speak of the new creation. Quote: We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, and we should walk in them.

Verse 10, the new creation, though only to be fully manifested when Christ returns, began with power when he was raised from the dead. For believers to experience salvation now is for them to be recreated in Christ Jesus. This familiar phrase is used instrumentally.

The Father planned the new creation, and it is put into effect through Christ Jesus, namely by him and his saving work. In our next lecture, we will continue working through Ephesians and its testimony to the marvelous doctrine of union with Christ.

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