

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 17, Union with Christ in Paul, Being in the Father and Son, Pictures and Themes**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on the Holy Spirit and Union with Christ. This is session 17, Union with Christ in Paul, Being in the Father and Son, Participation in Jesus' Narrative, Pictures and Themes, Body, Temple, and Marriage.

Welcome to our next lecture on union with Christ in Paul.

Let's ask God for his help. Precious Father, thank you for choosing us in Christ before eternal ages. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your death and resurrection in our place in the first century.

Thank you, Spirit of God, for linking us to Christ, that he might be ours, we might be his, and we might receive all of his saving benefits. Give us insight into those benefits, we pray, through Jesus Christ, the mediator. Amen.

We're studying Paul and some of his ideas in terms of his language and his literature, and we're up to a little-known use of in Christ language in the Thessalonian letters, being in the Father and the Son. 1 Thessalonians 1:1 reads, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ, peace to you, grace to you, and peace. And Second Thessalonians 1, the first two verses, reads in very similar fashion, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. After including Silvanus and Timothy, Paul's companions in planning the Thessalonian church, as co-senders of this letter, Paul describes that church in a unique manner. Only in these two places in his epistles does he describe believers as, quote, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, close quote, where the preposition in goes with both Father and Son.

This unique phenomenon has elicited various responses. Some have rejected the possibility that Paul writes of union with the Father and the Son as non-Pauline. It is better, however, to allow the letters themselves to define what Paul is and what is not Pauline.

It is plain to me that Paul uses in Christ language of both Father and Son. In the first verse of each Thessalonian letter, actually the first two verses of the second letter, F. F. Bruce agrees that since the quote, in the Lord Jesus Christ, here denotes union

with Christ, then in God the Father must be understood in the same way. Bruce's commentary in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Bruce's reasoning convinces me and others, including Gene Green, Gordon Fee, and Leon Morris, in their respective commentaries on the Thessalonian epistles. Nevertheless, we must recognize the uniqueness of Paul's opening words in his two Thessalonian letters. Fee, speaking of 2 Thessalonians, is accurate.

“Paul has here repeated the unique feature found elsewhere only in 1 Thessalonians of designating the church as existing simultaneously in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The first verses of both Thessalonian letters impact our understanding of union with Christ. As Gene Green explains quote, the Church of the Thessalonians finds its unique identity in its union or relationship with God the Father and the exalted Lord Jesus.”

In these verses, Paul teaches a doctrine of union with God the Father and his Christ. With distinctive genre and idiom, Paul overlaps John's teaching in Jesus' prayer on behalf of the believers in John 17.

John's report of Jesus' words to the Father that they also may be in us, the believers, verse 21, is akin to Paul's epistolary address, the Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Both have an exalted view of Christian's union with the Godhead that should both humble and amaze us. It is astounding that God should express his love for his people by joining them to the Father and Son.

And as a systematic theologian, I cannot help but add and the Spirit. Participation in Jesus' narrative is another Pauline distinctive. Uniquely in scripture, Paul teaches that Christians take part in Jesus' story.

They do not participate in every aspect of his narrative. They do not become incarnate in him, live a sinless life with him, pour out the Spirit with him, or make intercession with him. But they do share in many of his redemptive experiences.

Specifically, they die with him, are buried with him, are raised with him, ascend with him, sit down with him in heaven, and amazingly, in a sense, they will even come again with him. Conclusion to a study of participation in Jesus' narrative in Paul's letters. Paul teaches that when believers in Christ are united to him by faith, they participate in his story.

They are united to him in everything from his death to his second coming and beyond. This theme appears in at least 12 texts—Romans 6:1 to 14.

Romans 7:4 to 6. Romans 8:15 to 19. 2 Corinthians 4:8 to 14. Galatians 2:17 to 20.

Ephesians 2:4 to 10. Philippians 3:8 to 11. Colossians 2:11 to 15 and 2:20 to 2:23. Colossians 3:1 to 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:9 and 10. And 2 Timothy 2:11 to 13.

In case somebody wants a repetition. Romans 6:1 to 14. Romans 7:4 through 6. And 8:15 to 19. 2 Corinthians 4:8 to 14. Galatians 2:17 to 20. Ephesians 2:4 to 10. Philippians 3: 8 to 11. Colossians passages, 2:11 to 15. 2:20 to 23. 3:1 to 4: 1 1 Thessalonians 5:9 and 10 and 2 Timothy 2:11 to 13.

Christians share in many events in Jesus narrative, including his suffering. Romans 8: 17. Philippians 3:10. His death--Romans 6:3 and many other texts. Romans 6:3, 6, 8 and 7:4. And I'll stop giving those passages. There are too many.

His burial. Romans 6:4. Colossians 2:12. They share in being made alive with Christ. Ephesians 2:5. Colossians 2:13. They share in his life, understood as eternal life. 1 Thessalonians 5:10. 2 Timothy 2:11. They share in Jesus' resurrection. Romans 6:4 and 5:8, 7:4, etc.

They share in being seated in heaven. Only Ephesians 2:6. They share in being hidden in God. Only Colossians 3:3. They share in his return. Colossians 3:4. Romans 8:19. They will share in his glory. Romans 8:17.

And they will share in his reign. 2 Timothy 2:12.

You say, wait a minute. That is more events than you mentioned. Well, Paul uses overlapping words to communicate four different aspects of his story. So, suffering, death, and burial all speak of the death co-crucifixion with Christ.

Being made alive, life, and resurrection speak of being joined to the resurrection of Christ. Being seated in heaven and being hidden in God both speak of sitting down in heaven with Jesus. And these three pictures all speak of his second coming, his return, his glory, his reign.

Paul thus teaches that believers share in everything from Christ's sufferings to his second coming and reign. This is because we share in him. In being joined spiritually to him, we participate in his story.

His story, as it were, becomes our story. A few qualifications are in order. We do not share in his incarnation.

The Son of God's becoming the Son of Man is unique and non-repeatable. Neither do we share in his sinless life, although its effects are imputed to us in justification, 2 Corinthians 5:21. We do not share in his pouring out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That is a unique and unrepeatable event performed by Jesus.

Neither do we share in his intercession when he prays for us and presents his finished work in the Father's heavenly presence. These events of Christ are his alone and are not shared. If we do not share in his sinless life, the question comes, then to what does his suffering refer in the chart that I just communicated with you and the text on which it is based? We suffer with him.

Doesn't that refer to his lifelong suffering? It refers instead to being united to Christ in his crucifixion and as a result suffering in the Christian life. This is the same idea Paul refers to in Colossians 1:24,.25, though he does not use union with Christ language. Quote: now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church of which I became a minister.

Paul is saying he suffers for and with Christ, but he, of course, acknowledges and everywhere preaches that Christ's sufferings are unique in that they are redemptive. Paul's sufferings and those of other believers are not redemptive, but they are part and parcel of what it means to be joined to Christ in his death and, therefore, in our Christian lives. So, our union with Christ, saving events, began with the sufferings on the cross and ended with his return and reign.

As we said previously, Colossians 3:4 ascribes to believers a second coming, so to speak. I say so to speak because Christ alone is the redeemer, and we are the redeemed. Nevertheless, our union with him is so intimate, definitive, and permanent that there is a sense in which we will return and reign with him.

This is because our identity and existence are bound up in him and our union with him. In other words, our true identity as his sons or daughters is revealed only partially now. On that day, however, when Christ returns, it will be fully revealed.

Or, to use Paul's expression quote, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, Romans 8, 18, and 19. We will only be revealed, only have a revelation, another word referring to the second coming and the one Paul actually uses in Romans 8:18, and 19.

We will only have a revelation when Jesus has his revelation in his return. It's no accident that Romans 8:18 refers to the glory to be revealed to or in us. Colossians 3:4 says the same.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Union with Christ in his second coming is inseparable from glorification. What is the upshot of Paul's teaching that we participate in Christ's narrative? It powerfully communicates that Christ's redemptive deeds are the only antidote to the poison of sin.

Altogether, there are nine redemptive deeds, two essential preconditions, Christ's incarnation in sinless life, the heart and soul of his redemptive accomplishment, his death and resurrection, and five essential results of his cross and empty tomb, his ascension, session, giving the spirit, intercession, and return. That's basically the outline of my book, *Redemption Accomplished by the Son, the Work of Christ*. It deals with the nine redemptive deeds of Christ and then six biblical pictures, the main ones that interpret those deeds like redemption, reconciliation, penal substitution, victory, and so forth.

We must get this right. The center of his saving accomplishment is his death and resurrection. Jesus' death and resurrection are the only remedy to the disease of sin.

This is true in all of sin's aspects, with the results of the past, present, and future. Christ's cross and empty tomb saved us from sin's penalty in justification, which is a subset of union with Christ. Quote, there is thus now no condemnation, the opposite of justification, for those who are in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1. Condemnation is the Pauline opposite of justification.

The latter is God's declaration of righteousness based on Christ's atonement, based on Christ's righteousness in his life and death. Condemnation is God's declaration of judgment based on sinners' thoughts, words, and deeds. Justification and condemnation are the verdicts of the judge on the last day.

But by virtue of the already not yet pattern, those verdicts are announced ahead of time based upon a person's relationship to Christ. Of course, the words of Romans 8:1 apply only to those who have trusted Christ's propitiation and righteousness for their standing with God, Romans 3:25, 26, Romans 5:18, 19. So, in terms of the past, Christ's death and resurrection are the basis for God saving us from sin's penalty in justification. In terms of the present, Christ's death and resurrection save us from sin's power in progressive sanctification, which, like justification, is a subset of union with Christ.

Romans 6:4. We were buried thus 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. If God saved us via Jesus' death and resurrection from the past effects of sin, that is sin's penalty in justification, and if he continues to save us in the present by overcoming sin's power through Christ's death and resurrection, the Savior's atonement and resurrected life will save us from sin's presence in the future in glorification and final sanctification, which, you guessed it, are subsets of union with Christ. Since then, we have been justified by his blood.

Romans 5:9. Much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. And then on to verse 10. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the

death of his Son, much more now than we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

So, being joined to Jesus' redemptive deeds, the center of that is we're joined to his death and resurrection, and they are God's antidote to the terrible poison of sin in all of its dimensions, past, present, and future. Christ's death and resurrection are the antidote to the past penalty of sin, to the present domination or tyranny of sin and its power, to the future very presence of sin, and respectively in justification, progressive sanctification, and then final glorification and final sanctification, it is the work of Christ dying and rising again that overturns the verdict, the power, and the presence of sin. And, as I said, when we dealt with each of them, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that justification, progressive sanctification, and glorification are all subsets of union with Christ.

When we say then that Christ's death and resurrection are the only answer to sin, we mean in union with his son. Union with Christ is another way of speaking of the application of salvation, which is salvation, which is Christ's death and resurrection, and more—Union with Christ, next in Paul, pictures and themes.

These include the body of Christ, the temple, marriage, new clothing, and then not a picture but a theme, filled to all the fullness. What does the Bible mean when it says believers are filled to all the fullness of God? Another theme is indwelling, which we've talked about numerous times but which we want to bring together—Union with Christ, in Paul, pictures and themes.

Here, we explore six more pictures and themes. What we've done is we've gone through a representative selection of Paul's union with Christ texts. Then, we stepped back and thought about his ideas in terms of his language and his literature.

Now, we're looking at his pictures and other ideas that don't fit neatly under the heading pictures. Specifically, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, marriage, new clothing, filled to all the fullness of God, and indwelling the body of Christ. Paul employs this image, one of his favorite pictures of the church, many times.

Romans 12:4 and 5. 1 Corinthians 6:15 and 16. 1 Corinthians 12:12 to 27. Ephesians 4:4 through 6, 11 and 12, 15 and 16. Ephesians 5:23 and 29 to 30. Colossians 1:18. Colossians 1:24. Colossians 2:18, 19. And Colossians 3:15. In case somebody wants to jot them down for sure, Romans 12:4 and 5. 1 Corinthians 6:15 and 16. 12:12 to 27. Ephesians 4:4 to 6, 11 to 12, 15, 16. 5:23. 5:29 through 30. Colossians 1:18. 1:24. 2:18, 19, and 3:15.

The body of Christ picture powerfully communicates union with Christ in many theological and practical ways.

Headship and Christology. Christ is the head of his body, the church. Colossians 1:18.

The head body image is organic and implies union between Christ and us. He is the church's head, its source of life. Here, Colossians 1:18.

He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. This is an allusion to Genesis 1:1 and in the immediately preceding verses, Paul had taught that Christ is by him, by Christ all things were created. And he even says all things in heaven and earth, alluding to Genesis 1:1 again.

So, Christ was the creator of all things, and now he's the re-creator of all things. And we shouldn't miss this language. He is the beginning, not in the beginning God created, but now Christ is the beginning.

The meaning is he is the beginning of God's new creation. As the risen one, he gives life to his people. And as the head of the church, he gives life to the church.

He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. Colossians 1:18. As the risen one, Jesus is the beginning of God's new creation, the giver of eternal life to his people.

That head, ascription of headship to Christ, not only speaks of him as giver of life to his body, but also as authority. Christ, as head, is the supreme authority over his body, his people, and the church. So, headship means source of life and authority figure.

Indeed, he's the authority figure as the son of God—the body of Christ and its members. Christ is the head of the church, his body.

Ephesians 5:23. Compare Colossians 1:18. And you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27. The very concept of the body of Christ expresses incorporation into him. The apostle communicates clearly the idea of one church by simply using the phrase one body in Ephesians 4. This is remarkable, and perhaps we take it for granted.

The body of Christ image has become so fixed and so commonplace that Paul, when he rehearses the unities of the church, could simply say, there's one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who's over all and through all. He begins his list with these words: there is one body. He doesn't say one body of Christ, doesn't say one body of Christ, the church, because he doesn't need to.

That is, body is sufficient itself. It communicates the idea of one people of God, organically connected to Christ, their head, their source of life, and their authority. That is, body to mean church had become common Christian parlance.

The metaphor of believers as the body of Christ is more than a metaphor. There is a spiritual reality behind it. We are truly and spiritually joined to Christ.

By virtue of our union with him, becoming one with a prostitute, Paul teaches, implicates Christ in sin. It joins his members to the prostitute. First Corinthians 6.15, which we'll explore further when we treat the marriage metaphor for union with Christ.

I am still thinking about the body of Christ, headship and Christology, the body of Christ and its members, and the Holy Spirit. Paul uses the images of being baptized and drinking a liquid to communicate that possession of the spirit is essential to union with Christ. Christ baptized us, he says in First Corinthians 12.13, in one spirit, into one body, and we all were made to drink of one spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13. Interpreting the two statements in verse 13 together, Champa and Rosner conclude, quote, the drinking or drenching with the spirit is the experience of the spirit that is also referred to as the baptism by or of the spirit here and elsewhere, close quote, their commentary on First Corinthians in the pillar New Testament commentary series. The Holy Spirit is the bond of living union with Christ and, thereby, with other believers. The spirit is the nexus that links believers to Christ and one another in one body.

Yet there's more to the body imagery. It has a corporate, and it has both corporate and vertical functions, just as our bodily members are part of us in our human bodies, so believers belong to Christ.

This metaphor is ideal for teaching the relationship of believers, the members to Christ, their head. It stresses the corporate aspect of union, but this is always based on the vertical aspect of union with the head, Christ. Corporate and horizontal, just as our bodily members are a part of us, so believers belong to Christ and to each other.

This idea is also corporate, even as a human body, although it has many members with various functions, is still one body. So it is with the church, the body of Christ. Romans 12:5 says that very thing.

Paul encourages various members of Christ's body with different gifts to serve the Lord appropriately. Romans 12:6 through 8. Paul discusses the interdependence of the various bodily members in the church in Romans 12:14 through 26. To summarize, those who consider themselves inferior to their fellows are mistaken.

Every part of the body is important because Christ has set the members in the body just as he desired. Furthermore, those who consider themselves superior to other members of the body are also mistaken because, whether they realize it or not, they need the other members of the body. Romans 12:21 through 26.

So, a word to those who think they're inferior, Romans 12:15 to 20. A word to those who think they're superior, Romans 12:21 through 26. Of course, the goal is to promote harmony in the church, the body of Christ.

This image, the body of Christ, is both corporate and individual. Union with Christ is the link between individual salvation. I am joined to Jesus when I believe.

It's the link between individual salvation and belonging to the church. When I believe in Jesus, I'm joined to him and to every other member of his body. It is a divine and human work.

Both the head and parts of the body work together to produce growth. Oh yes, even our working involves his working. Through us, we strive by his power, and we struggle by his strength.

Colossians 1, the last verse, and he gets the glory, to be sure. But we're involved. Ephesians 4:12, 4:16, Colossians 2:19. Conclusion.

If I were to sum up the most basic message of the picture of the church as the body of Christ, it would be these two points. Number one is the supremacy of Christ. He's the head of the body, head of the church's body, and he himself is its savior.

Ephesians 5:23. Christ, preeminent in creation and redemption, is as risen one, the source of eternal life for his church. Colossians 1:18. Second, Herman Ritterbaugh says so well, quote, the most typical description of the church in Paul is that of the body of Christ. It describes the Christological mode of existence of the church as the people of God. It speaks of the special bond with Christ that the church has as the people of God.

The second picture is the temple. Church is the temple of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is found in these places: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22. The first point, and I admit I was taught by this, I did not realize this, I was so familiar with this temple imagery and took it so much for granted that believers' bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit that I missed the point that Ciampa and Rosner correctly call audacity. They highlight this notion against the backdrop of the magnificence and magnitude of Solomon's temple. Quote, we should not miss the audacity, if not patent ludicrousness, of Paul's claim the early Christians were a tiny Jewish sect.

To Paul's mind, Solomon's temple's denouement was not the return from exile, nor the building of Herod's temple, but the existence of a small squabbling band in Corinth of mainly Gentile believers in Israel's murdered Messiah. You yourselves are God's temple, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. It is an audacious statement, and we shouldn't miss the Old Testament background against the glory of Solomon's temple. These believers, these messed up Corinthian Christians, we hope most of them are Christians, are the temple of God, and it's exactly what Paul says.

And remember, what makes a temple a temple is the presence of a God, or in this case, the living and true God. The Holy Spirit joins believers in Christ. Quote, in Him, in Christ, you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit, Ephesians 2:22. Quote, the universal presence of images of the deities in Greco-Roman temples would have made the principle more vivid to first-century readers than it is to 21st-century American readers anyway.

Still quoting, the image of the god or goddess, small g's, usually dominated the temple either by size or by number of idols or both. Paul declares that the very person of the Holy Spirit of God, by parity of reasoning, stands to the totality of the bodily, everyday life of the believer in the same relation of influence and molding of identity as the images of deities in those pagan temples. Tony Thistleton, the first epistle to the Corinthians, New International Greek Testament Commentary, and as you might expect, it is erudite.

I wouldn't recommend it for beginners, but for advanced students, Thistleton is so thoughtful. Corporateness. Indeed, quote, God's presence constitutes the temple status of His people, and without it, they are no temple, as Thistleton again declares.

Surely, the temple imagery is corporate. As a matter of fact, 1 Peter 2, in that place, Peter calls believers living stone, so even this image could be used to speak of individuality. But Peter quickly adds that the living stones are built into a temple where God is worshipped in His Son by the Spirit.

Conclusion of the temple imagery in Paul for union with Christ. Paul employs the building slash temple imagery in a variety of ways. He uses it once directly, Ephesians 2:19 to 22, and three times indirectly, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, 6:19, 20, 2 Corinthians 6:16, to portray God's people audaciously replacing the divinely commissioned, magnificent temple of King Solomon.

Christians are God's temple. The Holy Spirit builds this living temple and occupies the place of God in it. God's presence is what makes a temple a temple, though He dwells in His people individually, and I do not mean to minimize that.

It is a glorious truth. The emphasis in the temple imagery is on His dwelling in them communally as God's temple. Paul portrays this temple composed of God's holy people, His saints, where the Trinity is worshipped as in the process of being built before our eyes.

Ephesians 2 and verse 22. Marriage. Paul paints the image of Christ and His church as a groom and bride in three passages.

1 Corinthians 6:15 to 20. 2 Corinthians 11:1 to 5. Ephesians 5:22 through 32. Let us look at these briefly.

1 Corinthians 6:15 to 20. Paul's most intimate picture of union with Christ, the marriage union between husband and wife, appears in these three passages. And this, 1 Corinthians 6:15 to 20, is the most intimate of those passages, for it concerns the human body and sexual union.

Paul rebukes some men in the Corinthian congregation who used theological arguments to defend their use, that's the right word, of temple prostitutes. As people of the Spirit, they claim the use of their bodies as a point of Christian freedom. Note the radical dichotomy in their thoughts between Holy Spirit and human body.

Much more Greek than Christian. Biblical. The offended apostle, that's the right word, makes three appeals to the idea of union.

First, Paul argues that from creation God ordained that the two, Adam and Eve, would become one flesh. 2 Corinthians 6:16, citing Genesis 2:24. The first pair sets the pattern for human life.

God wills for men and women to marry and, within marriage, to enjoy exclusive sexual intercourse. Second, contrary to that exclusivity, Paul addresses a different union. Quote, do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? 1 Corinthians 6, 16, for Corinthian men to have sex with prostitutes violates the oneness and permanence God ordained for marriage.

Paul offers a high view of the body and its behavior to a church needing his message. The 21st-century American church and the worldwide church need the same message. Sexual intercourse with prostitutes then is not inconsequential as some Corinthian men claimed.

The powerful emotional, psychological, and physical unity of sex is reserved for those who have covenanted lifetime fidelity to each other. Third, not only do sexual relations with a prostitute violate the creator's marriage ordinance, Champa and Rosner insist it also violates a believer's spiritual marriage to Christ. Quote: Genesis

2:24 draws attention to the spiritual marriage of the believer to Christ, a union that Paul assumes calls for faithfulness and purity.

Paul stresses two mutually exclusive alternatives in 1 Corinthians 6:16, and 17, cleaving to a prostitute and cleaving to the Lord. Thus, the Genesis text is used not only to prove the seriousness of sexual union with a prostitute, but to introduce the notion of the believer's nuptial or marriage union with Christ. Paul's argument is weighty because he piles up three appeals to union in verses 16 and 17.

Although this passage lacks the word marriage, bride or groom, Paul describes the relation between Christ and his own as a spiritual marriage. This is most clear when Paul says, He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him, which parallels, "He who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her." Both speak of persons being joined and becoming one with the one to whom they are joined.

Here, the similarities end. In one case, one is joined to a prostitute and becomes one body with her. In the other case, one is joined to the Lord Jesus and becomes one spirit with him.

If he concludes, Paul refers to the Holy Spirit and union with Christ. And this makes believers' union with prostitutes even worse, because believers' bodies belong to Jesus who purchased them. 2 Corinthians 11:1 through 5. Let me read this text.

I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me, for I feel a divine jealousy for you since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. Paul defended his apostolic ministry against enemies.

Why does he have to spend so much time doing that? Ironically, he asks the Corinthians to put up with a little foolishness on his part in verse 1. His speech is ironic. They put up with it readily enough when these super-apostles preach a different gospel than his, verses 4 and 5. Yeah, Paul is ticked off because the gospel's at stake and the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians. Paul speaks paternally as he who betrothed them to one husband, even Christ, verse 2. Biblical, cultural context, and historical context are important.

According to ancient Eastern culture, it's the father's role to promise his daughter in marriage to a potential husband. Furthermore, the father assumes, quote,

responsibility for her virginal fidelity to her betrothed in the period between the betrothal and the marriage. Paul Barnett's Second Epistle to the Corinthians is another very good commentary.

Likewise, Paul, their spiritual father, desires to present the Corinthians in purity to Jesus on the day of his second coming. In lovely language, Paul articulates union with Christ as a marriage of Christians, the bride, to Jesus, their groom. Paul powerfully applies union with Christ as marriage between believers and Christ.

The apostle fears, lest, quote, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, the Corinthians' thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Close quote, verse 3. Professed Christians must be faithful to Jesus, their betrothed spouse. In Harris's words, there must be no adulterous flirting with a false gospel.

That's a quote. We, too, must be on guard against seduction by imposters so we do not commit spiritual adultery. Instead, we are to love and live for our divine husband until he comes again to take us home.

The final text under the marriage picture is Ephesians 5:22 through 32. If 1 Corinthians 6:16, and 17 is the most intimate of Paul's passages depicting union as the marriage of Christ and believers, and 2 Corinthians 11:1 to 3 makes the most powerful application, then Ephesians 5:23 to 32 is the most direct. After citing Genesis 2:24, Paul writes, "this mystery of two becoming one in human marriage is profound, and I am speaking, saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

Ephesians 5:32. Remarkably, here, Paul employs the picture of marriage between Christ and his people as a model for proper relations between husband and wife. I cannot improve on the three conclusions for union with Christ that Constantine Campbell draws from this text.

First, the marriage of Christ and his own does not obliterate distinctions between the two. Christ and his bride are intimately joined, but the marriage metaphor does not confuse the two. Second, as a human bride submits to her loving husband in marriage, so the church submits to Christ, her loving head.

"Christ is the head of the church. The church submits to Christ."--verses 23, 24.

The union neither undermines Christ's lordship nor gives the church license to disobey her lord. Third, quoting Campbell again, the marriage is prepared, instigated, and sustained by Christ, with the bride identified as the recipient of his care. Christ is the savior of the body, 5:23 of Ephesians, having loved her and given himself for her, 5:25.

He makes her holy in order to present her to himself without blemish, 26 and 27. He sustains her through provision and care, verse 29. Moreover, all of this puts the spoil, spotlight, on God's marvelous grace shown to his bride.

The church does not own Christ's love. She is entirely the beneficiary of her suitor's advances in her direction. We'll begin the next lecture by summarizing the thrust of this metaphor of union with Christ as marriage.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on the Holy Spirit and Union with Christ. This is session 17, Union with Christ in Paul, Being in the Father and Son, Participation in Jesus' Narrative, Pictures and Themes, Body, Temple, and Marriage.