**Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14, Foundations Union, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians,   
Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

**1. Abstract of Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14, Foundations Union, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**  
  
This source is a transcript of a lecture by Dr. Robert A. Peterson, session 14 of his series on **the Holy Spirit and Union with Christ**, focusing on the foundational aspects of this doctrine in the Pauline epistles of **2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians**. Peterson examines specific passages within these books, such as **Paul's vision in 2 Corinthians, justification by faith in Galatians, adoption in Galatians, the fruit of the Spirit, and redemption and the uniting of all things in Christ in Ephesians**. Through these scriptural analyses, the lecture explores the **various facets of believers' union with Christ**, including concepts like co-crucifixion, indwelling, inheritance, and being seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of this central theological concept within Paul's writings.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of   
Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology 🡪 Theology, Peterson 🡪 Holy Spirit and Union with Christ).**



**3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14, Foundations Union, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians**  
  
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**Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Union with Christ in Paul's Writings (2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians)**

**Overview:**

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and arguments presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 14 of his teaching on "The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ." This session focuses on the foundations for understanding union with Christ as presented in the Pauline epistles of 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians. Dr. Peterson analyzes specific passages to highlight the significance and various nuances of this central New Testament doctrine.

**Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:**

**1. 2 Corinthians 12:1-2: "In Christ" as a Common Identifier:**

* Dr. Peterson briefly touches upon 2 Corinthians 12:1-2, where Paul speaks of a "man in Christ" being caught up to the third heaven.
* The key takeaway here is that by the time of writing 2 Corinthians, the phrase "in Christ" had become a common way to refer to a Christian. Peterson states, *"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."*
* This highlights the early and widespread understanding of believers having a fundamental connection to Christ.

**2. Galatians 2:15-21: Justification by Faith and Co-Crucifixion with Christ:**

* This passage is presented as a crucial text for understanding justification by faith alone. Peterson emphasizes that verse 16, *"Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ... because by works of the law, no one will be justified,"* is the most emphatic statement on this in the New Testament.
* He highlights the contrast between justification by works of the law and justification through faith in Christ.
* Central to the theme of union with Christ is Galatians 2:20: *"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."*Peterson explains that this verse indicates a spiritual joining with Christ in his death, signifying the death of the "old Paul who was in Adam."
* He notes that believers are now indwelt by Christ and live by faith in Him.
* F.F. Bruce is quoted: *"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 his resurrection to new life."*
* Verse 17, along with Romans 3:24, is identified as one of only two places where Paul directly links "in Christ" with justification, reinforcing Christ's active role in bringing about justification. Peterson quotes Campbell: *"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."*

**3. Galatians 3:13-14: Redemption from the Curse "In Christ Jesus":**

* Dr. Peterson focuses on Christ's act of penal substitution, taking the curse of the law upon himself.
* Galatians 3:13 states, *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'"*
* The result of this redemption, according to verse 14, is that *"in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."*
* Peterson suggests that "in Christ Jesus" here is likely used instrumentally, signifying that it is *through* Christ's saving accomplishment that God blesses the Gentiles and we receive the Holy Spirit through faith (indwelling).

**4. Galatians 4:1-7: Adoption as Sons Through Christ and the Spirit:**

* Paul's teaching on adoption is highlighted, particularly in Galatians 4:4-7.
* Verse 4-5 states, *"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."*
* Verse 6 emphasizes the role of the Spirit in our adoption: *"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"*
* Peterson points out the Trinitarian aspect of this verse: the Father sent the Son and the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, signifying indwelling and our new relationship with God as Father ("Abba," an affectionate term).
* Through Christ's redemption, believers are no longer slaves but sons and heirs of God.

**5. Galatians 5:22-24 and 6:14: Belonging to Christ and Co-Crucifixion with the Flesh:**

* The contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit is noted.
* Galatians 5:24 is presented as defining belonging to Christ: *"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."*Richard Longenecker is quoted asserting that "those who belong to Christ Jesus are those in Christ Jesus."
* This signifies a participation in Christ's narrative, specifically his death to sinful impulses.
* Galatians 6:14 reinforces this: *"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."* This cross-reference further emphasizes the believer's identification with Christ's crucifixion.
* Peterson argues that this identification with Christ's crucifixion means believers cannot embrace legalistic or libertine lifestyles, as both the demands of the law (in a legalistic sense for justification) and the impulses of the flesh have been crucified in Christ.

**6. Ephesians 1:7-10: Redemption and God's Plan to Unite All Things "In Him":**

* This passage combines the concept of salvation with union with Christ.
* Ephesians 1:7 states, *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."*Peterson notes that "in him" likely has a locative sense, figuratively indicating that believers belong to Christ's realm, having been redeemed from spiritual bondage by his death.
* Verses 9-10 reveal God's cosmic plan: *"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."*This use of "in Christ" is seen as a direct reference to union with Christ and as Christ being the focal point and goal of God's plan to reunite the cosmos.
* O'Brien is quoted: *"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... he's also the goal."*
* Dr. Peterson emphasizes the vast scope of Paul's Christology, where Christ is creator, sustainer, redeemer, consummator, and the heir of all things.

**7. Ephesians 1:11-14: Inheritance and Sealing with the Holy Spirit "In Him":**

* This passage further explores salvation in union with Christ, focusing on inheritance and the sealing of believers.
* Verse 11 states, *"In him 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."*"In him" is again seen as locative, figuratively showing the domain or realm, but now narrowed to believers as the goal of God's saving purpose.
* Verse 13 describes the sealing with the Holy Spirit: *"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."*The first "in him" is interpreted as the realm of Christ where believers are sealed.
* The second "in him" refers to Christ as the object of saving faith.
* The Holy Spirit is identified as the seal, God's mark of ownership and a guarantee of our inheritance.
* Dr. Peterson highlights the security and preservation implied by this sealing, emphasizing that nothing can break the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Father is the sealer, believers are sealed, and the Holy Spirit is the seal, done "in him" (Christ).

**8. Ephesians 2:4-10: Made Alive, Raised Up, and Seated with Christ:**

* This "marvelous passage" describes the radical transformation of believers through union with Christ.
* Verse 5 states, *"even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."*
* Verse 6 continues, *"and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*Dr. Peterson emphasizes that believers were united to Christ not only in his death and resurrection but also in his ascension and session (sitting at God's right hand).
* Every blessing of salvation is "in Christ Jesus," implying our being joined to him in all these aspects of his saving work.
* The act of making the spiritually dead alive is highlighted as the epitome of grace.
* "In Christ Jesus" in verse 6 is again seen in a locative sense, speaking of Christ's realm where believers are now seated in heaven with him. This signifies our share in Christ's victory over spiritual powers.
* Frank Thielman is quoted emphasizing the past tense of the verbs "made alive together with," "raised up with," and "seated with," indicating that these are already present realities for believers in Christ.
* Verse 10 describes believers as God's *"workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,"* indicating that the new creation is effected through Christ. "In Christ Jesus" here is interpreted instrumentally.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Peterson's analysis of these Pauline passages underscores the foundational importance of union with Christ in the Christian faith. He demonstrates how the phrase "in Christ" and related expressions carry various nuances, all pointing to a fundamental relationship and participation in Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly session. This union brings about justification, redemption, adoption, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a new identity, and a share in God's cosmic plan. The session emphasizes that believers are not merely associated with Christ but are vitally joined to him, resulting in a radical transformation and the experience of God's grace in profound ways.

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**4.** **Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14, Foundations Union, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians**

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**Study Guide: Foundations for Union with Christ in Paul**

**Quiz**

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the significance of Paul's phrase "in Christ" as seen in 2 Corinthians 12:1-2, according to Peterson?
2. In Galatians 2:16, what is the emphatic point Paul makes regarding justification?
3. Explain the connection Paul draws between being "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20) and the believer's present life.
4. According to Peterson, what is the main point of Galatians 3:13 and how does it relate to the blessing of Abraham?
5. What does Paul mean by adoption in the context of Galatians 4:4-6, and what is the role of the Spirit in this?
6. How does Paul virtually define belonging to Christ in Galatians 5:24?
7. In Ephesians 1:7, what does redemption signify, and how is it connected to union with Christ?
8. Explain the cosmic significance of God's plan to "unite all things in him" as mentioned in Ephesians 1:9-10.
9. According to Ephesians 1:13-14, what is the role of the Holy Spirit as a seal for believers who are "in him"?
10. In Ephesians 2:5-6, what does it mean that believers were "made alive together with Christ" and "seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"?

**Quiz Answer Key**

1. Peterson highlights that the phrase "in Christ" had become common parlance to refer to a Christian person. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-2, Paul uses it to describe the man he knows, essentially meaning "a Christian man," illustrating how integrated this terminology had become in describing believers.
2. In Galatians 2:16, Paul emphatically states that justification comes not through works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. He repeats this point to underscore that salvation is solely by grace through faith in Christ, and not by any human effort to adhere to legalistic requirements.
3. Paul's statement "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20) means that the old self, the person "in Adam," has died with Christ. The believer's present life in the flesh is now lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved and gave himself for them.
4. The main point of Galatians 3:13 is that Christ redeemed believers from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for them through his crucifixion. This penal substitution allowed the blessing promised to Abraham to come to the Gentiles through faith in Christ Jesus.
5. In Galatians 4:4-6, adoption signifies that believers are no longer slaves to sin but have become sons and heirs of God through Christ's redemption. The Spirit of God's Son is sent into their hearts, enabling them to cry "Abba, Father," signifying their intimate relationship with God.
6. In Galatians 5:24, Paul virtually defines belonging to Christ as co-crucifixion with him to sinful passions and desires. This means that those who are Christ's have put to death their fleshly impulses and no longer allow them to dominate their lives.
7. In Ephesians 1:7, redemption signifies the deliverance of slaves from bondage through the payment of a price, which in this case is Christ's blood, his death on the cross. This redemption, which includes the forgiveness of trespasses, is obtained "in him," indicating that it is found in union with Christ.
8. God's plan to "unite all things in him" (Ephesians 1:9-10) has a cosmic scope, aiming to bring together everything in heaven and on earth with Christ as the focal point and goal. This highlights Christ's central role not only in redemption but also in the ultimate harmony and reunification of the entire universe.
9. According to Ephesians 1:13-14, the Holy Spirit is the promised seal given to believers who have heard the gospel and believed "in him" (Christ). This seal, given by the Father, is the guarantee of their inheritance until they acquire possession of it, signifying preservation and security within Christ's domain.
10. That believers were "made alive together with Christ" and "seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6) signifies a spiritual union with Christ in his resurrection and ascension. It means that believers share in his new life and victory over spiritual death and are now, in a spiritual sense, in a position of authority and blessing with him in the heavenly realm.

**Essay Format Questions**

1. Discuss the significance of the phrase "in Christ" in the Pauline epistles examined (2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians), illustrating its various nuances and its central role in understanding salvation and the believer's identity.
2. Analyze Paul's argument in Galatians concerning justification by faith versus justification by works of the law. How does the concept of union with Christ reinforce his understanding of salvation?
3. Explore the interconnectedness of co-crucifixion with Christ (as seen in Galatians) and the believer's present life and freedom from the dominion of sin and the law.
4. Compare and contrast Paul's presentation of adoption in Galatians with the themes of union with Christ discussed in Ephesians, highlighting how both doctrines illuminate the believer's relationship with God.
5. Examine how the concept of union with Christ in Ephesians contributes to an understanding of the believer's present blessings (redemption, forgiveness, the seal of the Spirit, being made alive and seated with Christ) and their future hope in God's cosmic plan.

**Glossary of Key Terms**

* **Justification:** The act by which God declares sinners righteous in his sight, not based on their own works but through faith in Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice.
* **Redemption:** The act of Christ paying the penalty for sin through his death, thereby freeing believers from the bondage of sin and its consequences.
* **Union with Christ:** A foundational doctrine in Pauline theology that describes the believer's spiritual and vital connection with Jesus Christ, encompassing their participation in his death, resurrection, and ascension.
* **Adoption:** God's gracious act by which he brings believing sinners into his family, granting them the status, rights, and privileges of sons and daughters.
* **Holy Spirit (as a Seal):** The Holy Spirit given to believers as a mark of God's ownership and a guarantee of their future inheritance and final redemption.
* **Co-crucifixion with Christ:** The spiritual reality that believers have been crucified with Christ, signifying the death of their old self and their liberation from the power of sin.
* **Indwelling (of the Spirit/Christ):** The presence of the Holy Spirit or Christ living within the believer, empowering and guiding them in their new life.
* **Penal Substitution:** The theological concept that Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners, bearing the penalty and curse of God's wrath that they deserved.
* **Regeneration:** The work of the Holy Spirit by which a spiritually dead person is made alive in Christ, receiving a new nature and the ability to believe.
* **Locative (use of "in Christ"):** A figurative use of the preposition "in" to denote the sphere, realm, or domain in which believers exist through their relationship with Christ.

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**5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ’s Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 14, Foundations Union,   
2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**  
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**Frequently Asked Questions on Union with Christ in Paul's Writings**

**1. What is the significance of the phrase "in Christ" according to Paul, as discussed in 2 Corinthians 12:2?** In 2 Corinthians 12:2, Paul uses the phrase "a man in Christ" in such a common way that it seems to function almost as a synonym for "a Christian man." This illustrates how pervasive and fundamental the concept of being united with Christ had become in the early Christian understanding and language.

**2. How does Paul argue for justification in Galatians 2:16, and what role does "in Christ" play in this context?** In Galatians 2:16, Paul emphatically states that justification comes "through faith in Jesus Christ" and "not by works of the law." The phrase "in Christ" here marks the sphere or realm in which this justification is found and received. It highlights that faith is directed toward Christ as the means and object of our being declared righteous by God.

**3. What does Paul mean when he says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"?** This profound statement in Galatians 2:20 speaks to the believer's radical union with Christ in his death and resurrection. It signifies that the old self, identified with Adam and subject to sin and the law, has died with Christ on the cross. The new life that believers now live is not their own but Christ's life dwelling within them, lived out through faith in the Son of God. This indicates a deep spiritual joining and transformation.

**4. How does Galatians 3:13-14 explain Christ's work in relation to the curse of the law, and how does this connect to the blessing of Abraham and the Holy Spirit?** Galatians 3:13-14 explains that Christ redeemed believers from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us on the cross, a form of penal substitution. The purpose of this was so that "in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." Here, "in Christ Jesus" likely functions instrumentally, signifying that it is through Christ's saving work that the promised blessings, including the Holy Spirit, are received by faith.

**5. According to Galatians 4:4-6, what does it mean to receive "adoption as sons," and how does the Holy Spirit relate to this?** Galatians 4:4-6 describes God sending his Son to redeem those under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. As a result of this adoption, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" The Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts signifies our status as God's children, enabling us to relate to God in an intimate and filial way.

**6. How does Paul describe the practical implications of "belonging to Christ Jesus" in Galatians 5:24 and its connection to the "fruit of the Spirit"?** In Galatians 5:24, Paul states that "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." This signifies a decisive break from the dominion of sinful impulses through union with Christ's crucifixion. This death to the flesh enables believers to live by the Spirit and manifest the "fruit of the Spirit" (love, joy, peace, etc.), contrasting with the "works of the flesh." Belonging to Christ implies a participation in his death to sin and a corresponding life in the Spirit.

**7. How does Ephesians 1:7-10 illustrate the concept of union with Christ in relation to redemption and God's cosmic plan?** Ephesians 1:7-10 highlights that "in him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." This "in him" indicates that redemption is found within the sphere of union with Christ. Furthermore, God's eternal purpose is to "unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth," revealing Christ as the focal point and goal of God's cosmic plan for unification and restoration.

**8. According to Ephesians 2:4-6, what does it mean for believers to be made alive, raised up, and seated with Christ in the heavenly places?** Ephesians 2:4-6 teaches that God, out of his great love and mercy, "made us alive together with Christ," "raised us up with him," and "seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," even when we were spiritually dead. This emphasizes the vital and unbreakable union believers have with Christ in his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. It signifies that believers already share in Christ's victory and have a present reality in the heavenly realm through their connection with him.

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