

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 15, Foundations Union, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 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 15, Foundations Union, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's session focuses on the **foundations for union with Christ** as presented in Paul's letters to the **Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians**. The lecture examines specific passages to illustrate the **believer's incorporation into Christ**, receiving salvation and spiritual blessings through this union. Peterson highlights themes of **identification, incorporation, and participation** within Christ, emphasizing how believers are brought near to God, become part of God's temple, and are empowered for spiritual life and future glory through their connection with Him. The session underscores that **union with Christ is central** to understanding the application of God's grace and the believer's complete inheritance in Him.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 15 – 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).



**Peterson_HolySpirit
_Session15.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 15, Foundations Union, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Union with Christ in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and key ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 15 of his teaching on "The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ." This session focuses on the foundations for union with Christ in Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Peterson argues that union with Christ is the most comprehensive way the New Testament describes the application of salvation and explores its various facets as presented in these Pauline epistles.

Main Themes and Key Ideas:

1. The Dire Need for Union with Christ (Ephesians 2:11-16):

- Paul's description in Ephesians 2:11-12 highlights the desperate condition of those separated from Christ, particularly Gentile unbelievers.
- Prior to union with Christ, Gentiles were "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12).
- Separation from Christ means separation from eternal life and forgiveness.
- Salvation and being brought near to God occurs "in Christ Jesus" through "the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13).
- The phrase "in Christ Jesus" is locative and metaphorically indicates the realm of Christ, a stark contrast to the realm of separation.

2. Reconciliation and the Creation of One New Humanity (Ephesians 2:14-16):

- Christ himself is "our peace, who has made us both one" (Jew and Gentile) and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the Jewish law (the law of commandments expressed in ordinances).
- Christ's goal was "to create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:15).

- This "one new man" represents the unified body of believers, both Jew and Gentile, incorporated into Christ. Campbell's interpretation emphasizes "incorporation into Christ" through the phrase "in himself."
- Christ reconciles both Jew and Gentile "to God in one body through the cross" (Ephesians 2:16), thereby killing the hostility.

3. Incorporation into Christ and the Metaphor of the Spiritual Temple (Ephesians 2:18-22):

- Through Christ, both Jew and Gentile believers "have access in one spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).
- Believers are no longer strangers but "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).
- The church is repeatedly identified as a spiritual temple (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 6:16).
- Christ is the cornerstone, the apostles and prophets are the foundation, and the whole structure "being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21). This implies incorporation into him.
- The temple is a "dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22), highlighting God's presence through the Spirit.
- Paul emphasizes incorporation in three ways: the building grows *in whom* (Christ), it is being built *in him* (Christ) into God's dwelling place, and this holy temple is *in the Lord* (Jesus Christ).

4. The Indwelling Trinity (Ephesians 2:22, 6:10-12):

- The Holy Spirit works to build believers into a dwelling place for God.
- While indwelling is usually ascribed to the Spirit and sometimes to Christ, Paul explicitly ascribes it to God the Father in Ephesians 2:22 and 2 Corinthians 6:16.
- The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) indwells the people of God individually and communally.
- Ephesians 6:10-12, a spiritual warfare passage, enjoins believers to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" and "put on the whole armor of God."
- Campbell notes that this armor recalls descriptions of Yahweh and his Messiah in battle in Isaiah, suggesting that believers "are to put on the armor of the Lord

himself... which evokes a sense of union with him in the matter of spiritual warfare."

- Being "strong in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:10) means being strong due to union with Christ and his great strength.

5. Union with Christ as a Commonplace Designation (Ephesians 6:21-22):

- Paul often includes references to union with Christ in the initial and final greetings of his epistles.
- He describes Tychicus as a "beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:21), where "in the Lord" functions as a common way to refer to believers or Christians.
- Peterson reiterates that "the most comprehensive way the New Testament designates the application of salvation... is union with Christ."
- Through spiritual union with Christ, believers receive all his saving benefits: regeneration, adoption, conversion, justification, perseverance, and all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

6. Paul's Personal Testimony and Striving in Christ (Philippians 3:4-14):

- Paul recounts his impressive Jewish pedigree and performance under the law, which he now counts as "loss for the sake of Christ" and even "rubbish" (Philippians 3:7-8).
- His desire is "that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ" (Philippians 3:8-9). This highlights union with Christ in justification.
- While accepted by God in Christ through faith, Paul emphasizes his ongoing striving to live a Christian life: "I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12).
- His striving is not for God's acceptance but for the "prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), where "in Christ Jesus" is likely used causally.

7. God's Provision in Christ (Philippians 4:19):

- Paul expresses confidence that "my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

- "In Christ Jesus" here likely qualifies "riches in glory" and marks association, indicating the close link between God's glory and Christ in Paul's thinking.

8. Transfer to Christ's Kingdom and Redemption (Colossians 1:13-14):

- God the Father has "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).
- The phrase "in whom" in verse 14 has a locative use, referring to Christ's realm or kingdom where believers possess redemption and forgiveness.

9. Christ in You: The Hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27-28):

- The "mystery" revealed to the saints is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).
- This indwelling Christ is the source of our hope for future salvation and assures us of final glorification.
- Paul's goal is to present every believer "mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28; cf. 1:22), with forensic overtones of presentation before Christ the judge and savior.
- Believers work hard for God, empowered by the indwelling Christ: "I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (Colossians 1:29).

10. Fullness in Christ (Colossians 2:9-13):

- Colossians 2:9-10 is a key unit highlighting both Christ's union with God ("in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily") and our union with Christ ("you have been filled in him").
- Peterson, quoting Campbell, identifies "in him" in verse 10 as expressing direct "union with Christ," one of the "half-dozen places" where this nuance is particularly strong.
- Believers are filled because of their union in Christ.
- The context (circumcision in Christ, burial and resurrection with him, being made alive with him) further emphasizes the realities believers share with Christ through union and participation.
- F.F. Bruce states that "Christians, by their union with him, participate in his life. If the fullness of deity resided in him, his fullness was imparted to them."

- Having Christ, believers are complete and have all they need, negating the need for false teachings and special ceremonies.

11. Life Hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-4):

- Having been raised with Christ through union (Colossians 2:20, 3:1), believers should "seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" and "set your mind on things that are above" (Colossians 3:1-2).
- "You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3), emphasizing our union with Christ in his death and resurrection.
- This union motivates believers to pursue Christ in their lives, drawing strength for everyday earthly living.
- Paul teaches that believers have participated in Christ's narrative: dying, being buried, rising, ascending, and sitting down in heaven with him.
- At Christ's return ("when Christ, who is your life, appears"), believers "also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4), signifying our future manifestation in union with him.

12. Future Revelation in Union with Christ (Colossians 3:4, Romans 8:18-19, 1 John 3:2):

- Our union with Christ is so comprehensive that we will, in a sense, come again with him at his return. Our true spiritual identity, now hidden, will be revealed.
- Romans 8:18-19 speaks of creation eagerly waiting for the "revealing" (apocalypse/revelation) of the sons of God, made possible through union with Christ.
- 1 John 3:2 echoes this, stating that "when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is."
- Ultimately, believers have all they need in union with Christ and are secure in him.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's analysis of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians reveals the profound and multifaceted nature of union with Christ in Paul's theology. This union is presented as the foundational reality for salvation, reconciliation, incorporation into the people of God (the church as the spiritual temple), participation in Christ's life (death, resurrection, ascension), empowerment for spiritual life and warfare, the source of hope for future glory, and the key to understanding God's saving work in Christ. The pervasive language of being "in Christ," "with Christ," and "Christ in you" underscores the intimate and vital connection between believers and their Lord.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 15, Foundations Union, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians

Study Guide: Union with Christ in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **Separation vs. Union:** Paul emphasizes the dire state of humanity, particularly Gentiles, as being separated from Christ and the saving benefits He offers. Union with Christ is presented as the solution to this separation, bringing believers near to God.
- **Incorporation:** This theme highlights how believers are joined to Christ and to one another, forming one new entity. This is often illustrated through metaphors like the body of Christ and a spiritual temple.
- **New Humanity:** Through Christ's work, the division between Jews and Gentiles is abolished, creating a new unified people of God, the church. This new humanity is incorporated into Christ.
- **Indwelling:** The presence of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – within believers and the church is a crucial aspect of union with Christ. This indwelling empowers and transforms believers.
- **Spiritual Warfare:** Union with Christ equips believers for spiritual battle. They are called to put on the "armor of God," reflecting the strength and victory found in their connection with Christ.
- **Identification with Christ's Story:** Believers are not only joined to Christ but also participate in His life, death, resurrection, and future glory. This identification shapes their present lives and their hope for the future.
- **"In Christ" Language:** Paul frequently uses phrases like "in Christ Jesus," "in him," and "in the Lord." These phrases often denote the realm of Christ, agency through Christ, and, in some instances, express the intimate union believers have with Him.
- **Fullness of Deity in Christ:** Paul affirms the complete divinity of Christ, and believers, through their union with Him, are "filled" and made complete.

- **Hope of Glory:** Christ's indwelling presence in believers is the guarantee and source of their future glorification and participation in His return.
- **Motivation for Christian Living:** The reality of being united with Christ serves as the foundational motivation for believers to live lives that are pleasing to God, striving for maturity and reflecting His character.

Quiz:

1. According to Ephesians 2:12, what was the state of the Gentile believers before being brought near to Christ? Explain the significance of this description in understanding the need for union with Christ.
2. How does Paul describe the breaking down of the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians 2? What was the means by which this was accomplished, and what was the ultimate purpose?
3. Explain the concept of "incorporation into Christ" as discussed in the provided text, using at least one of the metaphors Paul employs in Ephesians 2 to illustrate this idea.
4. In the context of Ephesians 6:10-12, how does the concept of union with Christ relate to the believer's ability to engage in spiritual warfare? What does it mean to "be strong in the Lord"?
5. According to the text, what does Paul mean when he describes Tychicus as a "faithful minister in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:21)? How does this illustrate the commonality of union with Christ among believers?
6. In Philippians 3:7-9, what does Paul consider to be of surpassing worth compared to his former achievements? What is the righteousness he now seeks, and how is it obtained?
7. Explain Paul's apparent paradox in Philippians 3:12-14 regarding his acceptance by God and his continued striving. How does union with Christ relate to both aspects?
8. According to Colossians 1:13-14, what two "kingdoms" are contrasted, and what is the significance of the transfer between them for believers? How does "in whom we have redemption" relate to this transfer?

9. What is the "mystery" that Paul speaks of in Colossians 1:27, and how does the phrase "Christ in you, the hope of glory" explain the believer's assurance of future salvation?
10. How does Colossians 3:1-4 connect the believer's present life and focus with their union with Christ in His death and resurrection? What is the significance of the statement "your life is hidden with Christ in God"?

Answer Key:

1. Before being brought near to Christ, the Gentile believers were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. This description underscores their complete destitution and highlights that union with Christ is essential for accessing life, hope, and relationship with God.
2. Paul states that Christ himself is our peace, who made both Jews and Gentiles one by breaking down the dividing wall of hostility in his flesh through abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. This was accomplished through his death on the cross, with the purpose of creating one new man in himself and reconciling both groups to God in one body.
3. Incorporation into Christ refers to the spiritual joining of individual believers to Christ and to all other believers, forming a unified entity. In Ephesians 2, Paul uses the metaphor of a spiritual temple built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, illustrating how believers are joined together "in him" to become a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
4. Union with Christ is fundamental to spiritual warfare because believers are called to be "strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." By being united with Christ, they have access to his power and are, in a sense, putting on his own armor, enabling them to stand against spiritual forces of evil. To "be strong in the Lord" means to draw strength from their union with Christ and his great power.
5. When Paul describes Tychicus as a "faithful minister in the Lord," he is using a common Pauline way of referring to a believer or Christian minister. The phrase "in the Lord" signifies someone who is in union with Christ. This illustrates how pervasive the concept of union with Christ was in Paul's thinking as a primary way to identify God's people.
6. Paul considers the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord, for whose sake he counted his former achievements (pedigree, adherence to the law) as loss

and rubbish. The righteousness he now seeks is not his own based on the law, but the righteousness from God that comes through faith in Christ.

7. Paul acknowledges that he has been made Christ's own through salvation ("Christ Jesus has made me his own"), yet he continues to press on toward the goal. This is not striving for initial acceptance but rather striving to live out the implications of his union with Christ and to fully attain the resurrection. Union with Christ provides the basis for his acceptance and the power for his ongoing pursuit of Christlikeness.
8. The two kingdoms contrasted are the domain of darkness and the kingdom of God's beloved Son. The transfer from the former to the latter, through God's saving work, is crucial because it is in the kingdom of his Son that believers have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. "In whom we have redemption" signifies that redemption is found within the realm and through the person of Christ, to whom believers are transferred.
9. The "mystery" in Colossians 1:27 refers to God's great work in Christ, particularly as it extends to the Gentiles, which was not fully revealed until Christ's coming and the outpouring of the Spirit. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" explains that Christ's indwelling presence within believers, both Jew and Gentile, is the assurance and foundation of their future glorification.
10. Colossians 3:1-4 calls believers to set their minds on things above where Christ is seated, because they have been raised with Christ through their union with him in his death and resurrection. The statement "your life is hidden with Christ in God" signifies that the believer's true life and identity are now bound up with Christ in the heavenly realm, secure in God, and will be fully revealed when Christ returns in glory.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of the "in Christ" language in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians as it relates to Paul's doctrine of union with Christ. Discuss the various nuances of this phrase and how it contributes to understanding the believer's relationship with Christ.
2. Compare and contrast the different metaphors Paul uses in Ephesians and Colossians to describe the concept of incorporation into Christ and the formation of the church. How do these metaphors illuminate the nature and implications of union with Christ for individual believers and the community of faith?
3. Discuss the relationship between union with Christ and the believer's participation in Christ's life, death, resurrection, and future glory as presented in Philippians and Colossians. How does this identification with Christ's story shape the believer's present identity and future hope?
4. Examine the role of the Holy Spirit in Paul's understanding of union with Christ in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. How does the indwelling of the Spirit contribute to the believer's experience of being united with Christ and empowered for Christian living?
5. Explore the practical implications of union with Christ for the believer's life, as evidenced in Paul's exhortations and teachings in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. How should the reality of being united with Christ impact a believer's conduct, attitudes, and engagement with the world?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Union with Christ:** The spiritual joining of believers to Jesus Christ, through which they share in his life, death, resurrection, and all his saving benefits.
- **Incorporation:** The concept of being included or integrated into Christ and, consequently, into the body of believers.
- **Redemption:** The act of Christ paying the penalty for sin through his death, thus setting believers free from bondage and its consequences.
- **Justification:** God's act of declaring believers righteous in his sight, not based on their own works, but through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Sanctification:** The ongoing process by which believers are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Reconciliation:** The restoration of a broken relationship; in theology, it refers to the bringing of humanity back into a right relationship with God through Christ's atoning work.
- **Indwelling:** The presence of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) within believers.
- **New Humanity:** The unified body of believers, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, created in Christ, signifying a new creation.
- **Cornerstone:** The foundational stone of a building, used metaphorically to refer to Christ as the essential foundation of the church.
- **Spiritual Temple:** A metaphor for the church as the dwelling place of God through the Spirit.
- **Hope of Glory:** The confident expectation of future glorification and participation in Christ's eternal glory, based on union with him.
- **Locative:** Expressing place or location; in Pauline studies, it refers to the use of "in Christ" to denote the realm or sphere of Christ's influence and being.
- **Eschatology:** The theological study of end-times events, including Christ's return and the final state of believers.
- **Christology:** The theological study of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Soteriology:** The theological study of salvation.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 15, Foundations Union, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Union with Christ in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians

1. What is the fundamental need of humanity that necessitates union with Christ, according to Ephesians 2:11-13?

According to Ephesians 2:11-13, the fundamental need of humanity, particularly highlighted through the example of the Gentiles, is the state of being **separated from Christ**. This separation means being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and being without God in the world. Union with Christ is essential to overcome this separation and gain access to his eternal life and forgiveness, along with all other saving benefits.

2. How does Paul describe the reconciliation achieved through Christ in Ephesians 2:14-16, and what is the result of this reconciliation?

In Ephesians 2:14-16, Paul describes Christ as the one who has made both Jew and Gentile **one** by breaking down the dividing wall of hostility through his death on the cross. He abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances to create in himself **one new man** in place of the two, thus making peace. The result of this reconciliation is that both groups are reconciled to God in **one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility and forming a new humanity, which is the church.

3. What are the three main themes of union with Christ that Paul emphasizes, drawing from Old Testament foundations?

Drawing from the Old Testament, Synoptic Gospels, and Acts, Paul emphasizes three main themes related to union with Christ: **identification**, **incorporation**, and **participation**. God identifies his people with himself, incorporates them into the community of God, and they participate with God in his redemptive story. In Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, the theme of **incorporation** into Christ is particularly explicit.

4. How does Paul use the metaphor of a temple in Ephesians 2:19-22 to illustrate the concept of incorporation into Christ and the role of the Trinity?

In Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul uses the metaphor of a **spiritual temple** to illustrate incorporation into Christ. Believers, both Jews and Gentiles, are described as fellow citizens and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with **Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone**. The whole structure, being joined together in him, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. This passage also highlights the role of the Trinity, as believers have access to the Father **in one Spirit** through Christ, and the temple becomes a dwelling place for God **by the Spirit**, signifying the indwelling presence of the entire Trinity.

5. According to the sources, how does union with Christ relate to spiritual warfare, as discussed in Ephesians 6:10-17?

Union with Christ is crucial for spiritual warfare, as highlighted in Ephesians 6:10-17. Paul urges believers to **be strong in the Lord** and in the strength of his might. This strength comes from their **union with Christ**. Furthermore, putting on the whole armor of God is likened to putting on the armor that the Lord himself wears in battle, evoking a sense of union with him in this spiritual struggle against cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil.

6. In Philippians 3, what contrast does Paul draw between his former confidence in the flesh and his present identity and pursuit in union with Christ?

In Philippians 3, Paul contrasts his former confidence in his Jewish pedigree and performance under the law with his present perspective, where he counts all those former gains as **loss and rubbish for the sake of Christ**. His current identity and pursuit are centered on **gaining Christ and being found in him**, not having a righteousness of his own but the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. He now strives to live a Christian life not to earn God's acceptance, which he already has in Christ, but to make his heavenly calling in Christ Jesus his own, pressing on towards the goal of the resurrection.

7. How does Paul describe the transfer from the "domain of darkness" to the "kingdom of his beloved Son" in Colossians 1:13-14, and what is the significance of being "in whom we have redemption"?

In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul describes salvation as a transfer initiated by God the Father, delivering believers from the **domain of darkness** and transferring them to the **kingdom of his beloved Son**. The phrase "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" signifies that this redemption and forgiveness are found **within the realm or domain of Christ**. This locative use of "in whom" emphasizes that believers receive these saving blessings because they are now located or placed in Christ's kingdom.

8. What does Paul mean by "Christ in you, the hope of glory" in Colossians 1:27, and how does union with Christ relate to the believer's future glory?

In Colossians 1:27, Paul refers to the mystery revealed to the Gentiles as "**Christ in you, the hope of glory**." This signifies the intimate indwelling of Christ within believers, both Jews and Gentiles, which serves as the **source and assurance of their future glorification**. This union with Christ guarantees their hope of sharing in his glory when he appears, as their lives are hidden with Christ in God, and they will appear with him in glory at his return.