

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 18, Pictures and Themes [Marriage, New Clothing, Indwelling]

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 18, Pictures and Themes [Marriage, New Clothing, Indwelling], Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's session focuses on the concept of union with Christ in the writings of Paul. He examines several metaphors Paul uses to describe this profound connection, specifically exploring the imagery of **marriage, new clothing, and being filled with God's fullness**. The session also discusses the Pauline teaching on **indwelling**, emphasizing how the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – resides in believers. Finally, Peterson frames the understanding of union with Christ within the broader narrative of the **biblical story, from eternity past to the new creation**.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 18 – 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
_Session18.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 18, Pictures and Themes [Marriage, New Clothing, Indwelling]

Briefing Document: Union with Christ in Paul - Pictures and Themes

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert Peterson in Session 18 of his teaching on "The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ," focusing on Paul's descriptions of union with Christ through the metaphors of marriage, new clothing, and being filled and dwelling.

Key Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Marriage as a Picture of Union with Christ:

- **Definition:** Paul explicitly presents union with Christ as a marriage between Christ (the groom) and believers/the church (the bride) in Ephesians 5:22-32 and implicitly in 1 Corinthians 6:15-17, where being "joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:17).
- **Distinction:** This marital union emphasizes intimate joining without the absorption found in mysticism; the distinct identities of Christ and the church remain.
- **Intimacy:** Marriage, as the closest human relationship and involving sexual union (1 Corinthians 6:16), serves as Paul's most intimate picture of union with Christ.
- **The Holy Spirit:** Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 6 likely refers to the Holy Spirit as the means by which believers are spiritually joined to Christ. As Feast notes, a sexual union with a prostitute is unthinkable because the believer's body already belongs to the Lord through the Spirit.
- **Grace:** God's grace is central to this metaphor. Jesus initiates and sustains the relationship, lavishing love, provision, and care upon his bride, the church. "Christ...himself is the savior of the body...who loves his bride and gives himself unto death for her...He lavishes upon her provision and care" (Ephesians 5:23, 25, 29). The church does not earn Christ's love but is the recipient of it.

- **Purity and Submission:** Paul, like a father, betrothed the Corinthians to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2) and desires to present them in purity. He warns against spiritual adultery and emphasizes the church's submission to Christ as a loving husband (Ephesians 5:23-24).
- **Profound Union:** Campbell's conclusion is highlighted: "the metaphorical joining of husband and wife and their becoming one flesh indicate a profound union between Christ and the church. The metaphor is personal and implies a bond of intimacy that goes well beyond the other metaphors that Paul uses in portraying union with Christ."

2. New Clothing as a Picture of Union with Christ:

- **Direct Metaphor:** Paul directly speaks of believers "putting on Christ" as they would new clothes in Romans 13:14 and Galatians 3:27.
- **Indicative and Imperative: Indicative (Galatians 3:27):** "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." This signifies a once-for-all union with Christ established at baptism.
- **Imperative (Romans 13:14):** "put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires." This exhorts believers to live in accordance with their union with Christ.
- **New Christian Lifestyle (Indirect):** Texts like Ephesians 4:21-24 and Colossians 3:9-14 use the imagery of taking off old clothes (old ways) and putting on new ones (holiness, compassion, patience) to describe the transformed life resulting from union with Christ.
- **Eschatological Change (Indirect):** Passages like 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 and 2 Corinthians 5:2-4 use the language of a change of clothing to point to the future resurrection where believers will be clothed with immortality and eternal life.

3. Filled and Dwelling as Pictures of Union with Christ:

- **Fullness of Christ/God:** Paul speaks of the church as "the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23) and desires believers to be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). This theme appears explicitly and implicitly in Ephesians and Colossians.
- **Status and Task:** Christ grants fullness to the church both as a given status ("you have been filled in him," Colossians 2:10; "the church...is his body, the fullness of him," Ephesians 1:22-23) and as a task to be performed and a goal to be attained

(praying to be "filled with all the fullness of God," Ephesians 3:19; attaining "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," Ephesians 4:13).

- **Distinctions in Fullness: Christ's Fullness vs. Church's Fullness:** The whole fullness of deity dwells bodily in Christ (Colossians 2:9), and out of this fullness, he gives fullness to the church.
- **Church's Fullness as Status (Indicative) vs. Task (Imperative):** Believers already possess the status of divine fullness in Christ, but they are also called to live in a way that reflects this status.
- **Already and Not Yet:** Christians already have the status of divine fullness in Christ, but they have not yet fully attained a lifestyle corresponding to this status. This motivates the pursuit of holiness and love.
- **Indwelling:** This refers to the reality that the Trinity makes its home in and with God's people, both individually and corporately. Paul mentions indwelling in at least 16 places.
- **Expressions:** Paul uses various expressions like "the Spirit is in you," "Christ lives in me," and believers being a "dwelling place for the Father."
- **Indwelling by the Trinity:** While Paul often speaks of the Spirit's indwelling (being the "prime mover in the application of salvation"), he also ascribes indwelling to the Son ("Christ in you," Colossians 1:27) and the Father ("a temple of the living God," 2 Corinthians 6:16).
- **Trinitarian Mutual Indwelling:** The Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (one God in three distinct but inseparable persons who mutually indwell one another) logically implies that believers are indwelt by the entire Trinity.
- **Significance:** Indwelling defines the church; God's presence through the Spirit is what makes a church a church.

4. Union with Christ and the Biblical Story:

- **Eternity Past:** God chose his people for salvation *in Christ*, planning to save them by joining them to his Son.
- **Creation:** Humanity was made in the image of God, which is ultimately the image of Christ, preparing the structure for union.
- **The Fall:** The fall resulted in separation from God, which union with Christ is intended to overcome.

- **The Incarnation:** The incarnation of the Son as the God-man is indispensable for union with Christ, as his humanity serves as the "bridge" between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5). We are joined to the incarnate, crucified, risen, and ascended Christ through the Spirit.
- **Christ's Work:** Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Spirit were necessary for believers to be joined to him.
- **The New Creation:** Union with Christ begins now in regeneration and will be ultimately manifested in the new creation of the cosmos and the resurrection and transformation of believers.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson highlights the richness of Paul's understanding of union with Christ through various vivid metaphors. The imagery of marriage emphasizes intimacy and grace, while new clothing underscores the transformative nature of being united with Christ in both status and lifestyle. The concept of being filled with Christ and God points to the divine fullness bestowed upon believers, a present reality and a future aspiration. Finally, the doctrine of indwelling reveals the profound presence of the Triune God within believers and the church, a central aspect of union with Christ that underpins the entire biblical narrative of redemption.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 18, Pictures and Themes [Marriage, New Clothing, Indwelling]

Union with Christ in Paul: Pictures and Themes

Study Guide

I. Marriage Metaphor

- **Definition and Scriptural Basis:** Understand how Paul explicitly (Ephesians 5:22-32) and implicitly (1 Corinthians 6:15-17) uses the marriage relationship to describe union with Christ and the church.
- **Key Aspects: Intimacy:** Recognize marriage as Paul's most intimate analogy for this union, highlighting the closeness and personal bond.
- **Distinction Preserved:** Understand that the marriage metaphor emphasizes deep connection without erasing the distinct identities of Christ and believers, contrasting with mystical absorption.
- **Role of the Holy Spirit:** Explain the likely connection Paul draws between being joined to the Lord and becoming "one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17) with the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- **Grace:** Appreciate that the marriage is initiated and sustained by Christ's grace; the church is the recipient of his love and care, not earning it.
- **Ethical Implications:** Identify the ethical constraints (sexual morality, spiritual faithfulness, submission) that the marriage metaphor implies for the church in relation to Christ.
- **Paul's Pastoral Role:** Understand Paul's perspective as a spiritual father betrothing the Corinthians to Christ, desiring their pure devotion.

II. New Clothing Metaphor

- **Direct Usage:** Explain the two passages where Paul directly uses the image of putting on new clothes to symbolize union with Christ (Galatians 3:27, Romans 13:14).

- **Indicative and Imperative:** Distinguish between the indicative statement in baptism (already having "put on Christ") and the imperative call to live out that reality daily.
- **Indirect Connections: New Christian Lifestyle:** Recognize how other passages using clothing language relate to putting off old ways and adopting new godly qualities (Ephesians 4:21-24, Colossians 3:9-14).
- **Eschatological Transformation:** Understand how the change of clothing metaphor also points to the future resurrection and transformation of believers with immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53-54, 2 Corinthians 5:2-4).

III. Filled and Dwelling Metaphor

- **Fullness Language:** Identify the four instances where Paul speaks of the church as the fullness of Christ or God, or believers being filled in or with Christ or God (Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 3:19, Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 2:9-10).
- **Two Aspects of Fullness: Status Given:** Understand how Christ grants fullness to the church as a present reality and status due to his triumphant Lordship.
- **Task to be Performed/Goal to be Attained:** Recognize that the church is also called to grow into the fullness of Christ as a continuous process and future aspiration.
- **Christ's Fullness vs. Church's Fullness:** Explain the distinction between the inherent, complete fullness of deity in Christ and the fullness the church receives from and in him.
- **Already and Not Yet:** Connect the concept of fullness to Paul's "already and not yet" framework, where believers possess divine fullness in status but have not yet fully manifested it in their lives.
- **Indwelling: Scriptural Basis:** Identify several of the 16 passages where Paul teaches the doctrine of indwelling (examples: Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:17, Colossians 1:27).
- **Trinitarian Indwelling:** Explain that Paul attributes indwelling to the Holy Spirit (most frequently), the Son (Christ in us, living in us, dwelling in our hearts), and the Father (believers as a temple, dwelling place).

- **Significance:** Understand that the indwelling of the Trinity is a key aspect of union with Christ, a "substantial and graciously effective indwelling" that defines the church and each believer.

IV. Union with Christ and the Biblical Story

- **Eternity Past:** Understand that God's plan for salvation, including the choice of his people, was intertwined with the plan to unite them to Christ.
- **Creation:** Recognize that humanity's creation in God's image (understood as the image of Christ) laid the groundwork for future union in redemption.
- **The Fall:** Understand the fall as producing separation from God, which union with Christ is intended to overcome and bridge.
- **The Incarnation:** Explain the necessity of the incarnation for union with Christ, as Christ's humanity serves as the bridge between God and humanity.
- **Christ's Work:** Recognize that Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, along with the sending of the Holy Spirit, are essential for believers to be joined to him.
- **The New Creation:** Understand that union with Christ begins in regeneration and culminates in the new creation with resurrected and transformed believers.

Quiz: Short-Answer Questions

1. According to Paul, how does the marriage metaphor illustrate union with Christ, and what is one crucial aspect this metaphor emphasizes without implying?
2. In what two ways does Paul directly use the metaphor of new clothing to describe union with Christ, and what do these two usages indicate about the Christian life?
3. Explain the two primary ways in which Christ grants "fullness" to his church as described by Paul, and provide one scriptural reference for each.
4. What is the "already and not yet" distinction in relation to the church's fullness in Christ, and how does this motivate believers?
5. While Paul mentions the indwelling of all three persons of the Trinity, which person is most frequently associated with indwelling, and why is this the case?
6. According to the text, how did God's plan in eternity past relate to the concept of union with Christ for his chosen people?

7. How does the creation of humanity in God's image connect to the idea of union with Christ in Paul's theology, as explained in the lecture?
8. What role did the fall of humanity play in necessitating union with Christ, and what primary consequence of the fall does this union address?
9. Why was the incarnation of the Son of God indispensable for union with Christ to occur, and what aspect of Christ is highlighted in this context?
10. Briefly describe how union with Christ relates to both the present reality of regeneration and the future hope of the new creation.

Quiz Answer Key

1. Paul uses the marriage metaphor to illustrate the intimate and profound bond between Christ (the groom) and the church (the bride). This metaphor emphasizes deep connection and intimacy without implying a loss of distinct identities, unlike some forms of mysticism.
2. Paul directly uses putting on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27) as an indicative of being united with him and in the imperative (Romans 13:14) as an exhortation to live according to Christ's nature. This indicates that union with Christ is both a definitive act and a lifelong process of living out that reality.
3. Christ grants fullness to his church as a *status given* (e.g., Ephesians 1:22-23, the church as his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all) and as a *task to be performed/goal to be attained* (e.g., Ephesians 3:19, to be filled with all the fullness of God).
4. The "already and not yet" distinction means that believers in Christ already possess the status of divine fullness (indicative) but have not yet fully attained a lifestyle that perfectly reflects this exalted status. This motivates believers to pursue holiness and love as they grow into their identity in Christ.
5. The Holy Spirit is most frequently associated with indwelling because the Spirit is the "prime mover in the application of salvation," meaning the Spirit is the one who unites God's people to Christ and takes up residence within them.
6. In eternity past, God's plan for salvation involved not only choosing a people for himself but also ordaining that they would be saved by being joined to his Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, union with Christ was a central component of God's eternal purposes.

7. The creation of humanity in God's image, which the New Testament reveals to be the image of Christ, prepared the necessary "structures" for God to later join humanity to his Son in redemption. Being made in his image meant a pre-existing connection to the one in whom redemption would come.
8. The fall resulted in a fundamental separation between humanity (Adam and Eve) and God, breaking the initial union and fellowship. Union with Christ is God's redemptive means of overcoming this separation, bridging the gap created by sin and restoring fellowship.
9. The incarnation, where the eternal Son became the God-man, was indispensable because Christ's humanity serves as the necessary "bridge" between God and humanity through which the Holy Spirit can unite believers to him. We are joined to the incarnate Son, not the pre-incarnate Son.
10. Union with Christ begins now in regeneration, as believers are made new through their connection to the risen Christ by the Holy Spirit. This union will ultimately be fully realized in the new creation, where believers will receive resurrected and transformed bodies suited for eternal life.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze and compare Paul's use of the marriage and new clothing metaphors to illustrate the concept of union with Christ, discussing the unique insights each metaphor provides into this relationship.
2. Discuss the significance of the "fullness" language in Paul's writings regarding the church's union with Christ, explaining the dual aspects of fullness as both a present status and a future goal for believers.
3. Explain the doctrine of Trinitarian indwelling as presented in the lecture on Paul's theology of union with Christ, emphasizing the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this indwelling.
4. Trace the theme of union with Christ through the overarching narrative of the Bible, as outlined in the lecture, highlighting the key events and their relationship to this central concept.
5. Critically evaluate the "already and not yet" framework in Paul's understanding of union with Christ, using the concepts of fullness and indwelling to support your analysis of its practical implications for Christian living.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Union with Christ:** A central theological concept describing the believer's spiritual and vital connection with Jesus Christ, encompassing identification with his life, death, and resurrection.
- **Mysticism:** In the context of the passage, refers to the idea of adherents being absorbed into the deity, a concept contrasted with Paul's understanding of union with Christ that preserves distinct identities.
- **Indicative:** In grammar, a verb mood that states a fact or reality. In theology, refers to statements in Scripture that declare what God has already done for believers in Christ.
- **Imperative:** In grammar, a verb mood that expresses a command or exhortation. In theology, refers to instructions and commands in Scripture for how believers are to live in response to God's actions.
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the "last things" or the end times, including Christ's return, resurrection, and the new creation.
- **Fullness (of Christ/God):** Refers to the complete and perfect being, attributes, and glory of Christ or God. In relation to the church, it signifies the spiritual completeness and maturity believers attain through union with Christ.
- **Indwelling:** The doctrine that the Holy Spirit, and by extension the Father and the Son, reside within believers and the church as a whole.
- **Regeneration:** The act of God whereby a spiritually dead person is made alive in Christ, experiencing a new birth and a new nature.
- **Incarnation:** The theological doctrine that the eternal Son of God took on human flesh and became the man Jesus Christ.
- **Justification:** The act of God declaring a sinner righteous in his sight through faith in Jesus Christ.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 18, Pictures and Themes [Marriage, New Clothing, Indwelling], Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Union with Christ in Paul

1. How does Paul use the metaphor of marriage to describe union with Christ?

Paul employs the intimate picture of marriage to illustrate the profound union between Christ and believers. He explicitly presents this in Ephesians 5:22-32, depicting Christ as the groom and the church as his bride. This metaphor emphasizes a deep, spiritual intimacy, mirroring the closest human relationship and even sexual union, as highlighted in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 where being joined to the Lord makes one spirit with him. Importantly, this union, while intimate, does not erase the distinct identities of Christ and the church, avoiding mystical absorption. The marriage metaphor also underpins ethical behavior, prohibiting spiritual unfaithfulness and requiring the church's submission to Christ as her loving husband. God's grace is central to this relationship, as Christ takes the initiative, loves, and cares for his bride, who is the beneficiary of his affection. Paul, acting as a spiritual father, betrothed the Corinthians to Christ, desiring to present them in purity at his return, warning against spiritual adultery.

2. What does Paul mean by believers "putting on Christ" like new clothing?

Paul uses the metaphor of "putting on Christ" in Romans 13:14 and Galatians 3:27 to directly signify union with Christ. In Galatians 3:27, he states indicatively that those baptized into Christ have already "put on Christ," indicating a once-for-all union established through baptism. In Romans 13:14, he uses the imperative, urging believers to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and live in a way that reflects his life, abstaining from fleshly desires. This signifies that while union with Christ is a definitive event, its implications are to be lived out throughout the believer's life. Indirectly, Paul also speaks of putting on new clothing to represent the new Christian lifestyle, characterized by holiness and godly qualities (Ephesians 4:21-24, Colossians 3:9-14). Furthermore, the language of changing clothing points to the future eschatological transformation when believers will be clothed with immortality and resurrected bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53-54, 2 Corinthians 5:2-4).

3. What does it mean for believers to be "filled with all the fullness" of Christ or God according to Paul?

Paul speaks of the church being "filled with all the fullness" of Christ or God in several passages (Ephesians 1:22-23, 3:19, 4:13; Colossians 2:9-10). This theme highlights the exalted status and potential of the church through its union with Christ. Christ, in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, grants this fullness to his church in two ways: as a status already given and as a task to be performed. As head over all, Christ fills the church, his body, in a special way with his Spirit, grace, and gifts, making the church his fullness. This is a present reality and part of the believer's identity. Simultaneously, being filled with fullness is also a goal to be attained, as Paul prays that believers would be filled with the fullness of God and that the church would reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. This "already, not yet" aspect of fullness motivates believers to pursue holiness and love, living in accordance with their exalted status in Christ.

4. What is the significance of the concept of "indwelling" in Paul's understanding of union with Christ?

Indwelling is a crucial aspect of Paul's teaching on union with Christ, referring to the special relationship where the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—takes up residence in and with God's people, both individually and corporately as the church. Paul mentions indwelling in at least 16 places, using various expressions. While the Holy Spirit is primarily identified as the one who indwells believers, facilitating their saving union with Christ, Paul also speaks of Christ living in believers or dwelling in their hearts, and even of believers being a temple for God the Father. This Trinitarian indwelling underscores the profound and intimate connection believers have with God through their union with Christ. It signifies that God's very presence defines the church and empowers individual believers, reflecting the Orthodox theological understanding of the mystical union as a spiritual conjunction of the triune God with the believer.

5. How does Paul connect union with Christ to God's plan in eternity past and at creation?

Paul teaches that God's plan for salvation, even before the creation of the world, included choosing his people to be saved in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). This implies that union with Christ was not an afterthought but an integral part of God's eternal purposes. Regarding creation, Paul suggests that humanity being made in the image of God laid the groundwork for this union. The New Testament reveals that Christ is the true image of God (Colossians 1:15, 2 Corinthians 4:4). Therefore, at creation, God was preparing the structure for humanity to be joined to his Son in redemption by creating them in his (Christ's) image. This foundational connection highlights that union with Christ is central to God's design for humanity from the very beginning.

6. How does the fall of humanity necessitate and relate to union with Christ according to Paul?

The fall of humanity, as depicted in Genesis, resulted in a profound separation between humanity and God. Adam and Eve, who initially enjoyed fellowship with God, became estranged from him due to their disobedience. In terms of union with Christ, the fall produced this critical severance. However, God's plan for redemption, centered on union with Christ, is the means by which this separation is overcome and bridged. Union with Christ, planned in eternity and prepared by humanity being created in Christ's image, is God's way of bringing fallen humanity back into fellowship with himself. Through union with Christ, believers are no longer separated but intimately joined to God.

7. Why is the incarnation of Christ essential for union with believers, according to Paul?

Paul emphasizes that the incarnation of the eternal Son of God as the God-man is absolutely indispensable for union with Christ to occur. There could be no union until the Son took on human flesh. Christ's humanity serves as the necessary bridge between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5). Paul highlights the "man, Christ Jesus" as the one mediator. Believers are not joined to the pre-incarnate Son in heaven but to the Son who became human, lived, died, and rose again. Furthermore, Christ's saving work—his death, resurrection, and ascension, including the pouring out of the Holy Spirit—was essential for the Spirit to apply this work to believers and unite them with the Savior. Thus, both Christ's person (as the incarnate God-man) and his redemptive work are foundational for union with believers.

8. How does union with Christ relate to both the present reality of regeneration and the future hope of a new creation?

Paul connects union with Christ to both the present experience of regeneration and the future anticipation of a new creation. Regeneration, or being born again, is possible now because Jesus is alive, and believers are joined to him through the work of the Holy Spirit. This union is the basis for receiving new life in Christ. Looking to the future, Paul teaches that the ultimate manifestation of union with Christ will be the new creation of the cosmos and the transformation of believers in resurrection. Just as union with Christ brings spiritual life now, it will culminate in resurrected bodies and persons suited for eternal life in the age to come. This future hope is intrinsically linked to the present reality of being united with the risen Christ.