

“The Foundations”

Devoted To God

Various Scriptures

Rev. Jeffrey Stivason, Ph.D.

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Pastor Stivason: Well, good morning and welcome to you. Thank you for your welcome to me. I appreciate being here. I'm very delighted that Bruce asked me to come, and I think Bill put the bug in his ear; at least that's what I've heard. And I'm thankful to Bill for that. So I appreciate that very much, Bill.

I don't know how I'm going to follow that introduction. (*Laughter*) But let's try to do that with prayer. I'll invite Don to set the tone for us before I pray. So let's ready our hearts, shall we? (*Music*)

Father in heaven, we are so thankful for the many, many blessings that You often bring into our lives, noticed and unnoticed. We're thankful most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ and for all of the blessings that flow from Him. Father, thank You for our being united to Him and our having communion with Him. Father, thank You that because of that union and communion we have a desire to gather together in places like this and listen to Your word. Father, thank You that You work in our hearts and in our lives and bring about what You've promised and what You started. And each day, Father, we remember that it is another day You are bringing to completion that good work that You started. So Father, as we anticipate that great and wonderful day when You will return in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing the victory. We pray, Father, that until then, or when we meet our own demise, that You will help us keep an eye toward the Lord Jesus Christ and that consummation and glory which will be. And Father, as we ready ourselves now, and bow our heads and our hearts before You, we ask that You'll bless us. We know that the faith is a mind-renewing faith. And we know that we are to be renewed in our thinking. We are not to be pressed into the world's mindset, but we are to be thinking Your thoughts after You. And so, Father, we pray and ask that You'll enable us to do that more and more, and to do that this morning. Father, we gather together and think upon these things and lift our voices to You in praise and adoration, and certainly in thanksgiving as we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Pastor Stivason: well, as we start this morning, let me just say a couple of things to you. We're going to be thinking today, and for the next several weeks, about being devoted to God. And the title comes from this particular book by Sinclair Ferguson that Sig has already mentioned to you. And I'll talk to you in just a minute about how we're going to work through that particular book. But for now that's what we're going to be thinking of.

And I want to mention a little bit of my methodology now that I won't mention later and that I'll assume. I taught this class for my church school several weeks ago, and one of the things that I did was just to follow through the book. And so the very first lesson was the very first chapter. And again I'll talk to you about how we did that.

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But what I decided to do for this particular group, because of my own experience with my own church school, is to re-work a little bit of this first lesson, because a lot of what Ferguson is going to do is not sequential. It’s not step by step by step.

One of the things that you’re going to learn about this particular book—and it’s a strength of the book; it’s not a criticism—one of the things that you’re going to learn about this book if you read it is that Ferguson takes the ingredients and he pours them into the bowls. And as he goes along he tells you, as he’s stirring the pot up, he tells you about each ingredient. He says, “Let me tell you a little bit about the dough now, and what’s in it.” And in one chapter he’ll pull something out. In another chapter he’ll pull something else out.

And so I thought that it would be really helpful for you right up front if I just give you some of the more important ingredients that we’re going to be looking at. We’ll certainly focus in on some of the chapter this morning. But I want us to think about some of the ingredients that we can take off the shelf later, and say, “Ah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I’ve heard that before, and I see how that fits now.”

The other thing I want to say to you is this. The reason why I chose to do this particular book with my church school—and I’m delighted to do it with you—is because I think that sanctification is a neglected part of the Christian life and an unknown part of the Christian life, at least in one sense. You say to me, “I know that word, and I’m concerned with it.” And yet I often think that when someone asks me, “But how do I do it?”, that’s the key.

Participant: There you go.

Pastor Stivason: That’s the key. So remember, this is not a step-by-step process, a how-to sanctification. And yet it is if you think of it in terms of this bowl having all the ingredients in it. And I need to focus on each one of these ingredients. And better than a step-by-step process, I know that they’re all at work, and I need to be focused on any one of them at any given time. So that’s all I want us to think about just a little bit.

Well that’s just an introduction to the class itself. And let me give you an introduction to myself. I was taking a class at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary at one time, and I had Dr. Charles Partee. And it was really interesting to me because at the opening of the class Dr. Partee said to us, “Who am I?”

“I don’t know. We know your name. We know you teach this class.”

But he really impressed this upon me. He said, “You really don’t know me. And you ought to want to know me because I’m teaching you.”

And after I got out of the class and found out that he was a Barthian, I thought, “I’m glad I know who he is,” right?

Transcriber’s Note: Barthian, a disciple of Karl Barth, the founder of neo-orthodox theology.

Pastor Stivason: I’m glad I know what to look for. There were many good things that I learned from Dr. Partee, many wonderful things. But there were things that I needed to be careful of as well, especially as a Reformed thinker coming at it from the Princeton tradition.

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And so you want to know me. Whether you want to know me or not, you want to know me. And so I’m going to give you two slides that will tell you something about me.

The first is my education. By that education you ought to see something very important. You ought to say, “Oh, except for this one, you ought to see that this man comes from the Reformed tradition. He’s a Calvinist. He’s Reformed. He believes in the sovereignty of God. Why did he go to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary?” Maybe that’s the question you would ask yourself after looking at that list.

I’ve written at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I’ve written on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and I’m working on shaping that up into a book. But it’s not the rah, rah, Bonhoeffer that you often think about today when you see Bonhoeffer. It’s a little more critical, looking at him from his philosophical moorings.

And when I was at Westminster I wrote on Benjamin Warfield and his view of Scripture. And I have a positive view of Scripture, like Warfield does. I believe that it’s the inerrant word of God because it’s from an infallible God.

So that ought to tell you a little something about me. And then you may want to know something about my pastoral experience. I was in a community church for about four years. I planted the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church when I was there for about nine or ten years. And then after having planted that church I came to Grace, and I’ve been here in Gibsonia about ten years. Do you have any concerns? (*Laughter*) Okay, no concerns. If you have questions, you can ask me later.

Participant: Family?

Pastor Stivason: I do have a family. Hey, Sig, that’s good. I have a family. I have a wife and I have two children. My son is nineteen years old and he’s off to college this year. And my daughter just turned twelve. And if I’m a little slow this morning, it’s because I’m recovering from that. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Not the Penguin game.

Second Participant: Amen.

Pastor Stivason: No way! I’m not recovering from the Penguin game. (*Laughter*) No way! C’mon, that gives you energy. It doesn’t matter if you go to bed at two o’clock in the morning. (*Laughter*) I mean, whatever. Do what you’ve got to do, right?

All right. I know Jordan’s right with me. He has a smile on his face, okay.

All right, so what are we studying? Well, we’re going to study the book *Devoted to God* by Sinclair Ferguson. But I want to say a couple things about this. You’ll find the structure for our lessons in the Appendix. Yes?

Participant: Why don’t you give us a pre-primer on Sinclair Ferguson? Not everybody is familiar with him.

Pastor Stivason: Sinclair Ferguson is the most wonderful scholar and pastor that you’ll ever find. Do I sound biased? (*Laughter*) I had Sinclair Ferguson at Westminster Theological Seminary. Sinclair Ferguson has pretty much spent half of his life in the academy, teaching systematic theology. The bulk of it was at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. And he has spent the other half of his life in the pastorate.

And you don’t often find that combination, where somebody can work in the academy and do real scholarship, high level scholarship, and then transition over to the pastorate,

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and have this warm sense about him in every sermon. That kind of sums up Sinclair Ferguson’s ministry. But he was most recently down at First Pres. In Columbia, S.C. before he retired, and he went off to Scotland—defected, kept his citizenship in Scotland, you know? (*Laughter*)

One time he was asked, “Why didn’t you ever become an American citizen?” And he just looked at them and he said, “Because I’m Scottish.” (*Laughter*) So anyway, anything you choose to read on Sinclair Ferguson will be profitable for you not only intellectually, but it will be profitable for your heart. Well that’s a great question. Thanks, Bill.

The structure that I’m going to use for our lessons is in the Appendix of this book. You’ll notice that in the Appendix there is a list of Scripture texts. Now those Scripture texts are the texts that Ferguson deals with in each chapter. So 1 Peter is the text for chapter 1, and so on.

So in the main what we’re going to do with this particular lesson and these particular lessons that we’re going to be engaged in is that we’re going to look at those Scripture texts. We’re not necessarily going to look at Ferguson and say, “What does he say here?”, or “What does he say here?” No, what we’re going to do is that we’re going to take his texts, and we’re going to take some of the ideas in his book, and we’re going to develop our own lessons. And we’re going to use Dr. Ferguson as a support for what we’re doing. So if you read the book, you won’t say, “Well I’m just getting what I’m getting in the book from the lectures.” You’ll be getting something different. You’ll be getting some additions.

We will be dealing with Dr. Ferguson, sometimes more heavily and sometimes not, but hopefully always in a supplemental way with what we’re doing. So that basically gives you an idea of what we’re doing with the book, and how it’s going to supplement, and how I’m going to work with the lessons that are there.

How about today? Let me get into today, Well today we’re going to define some of our terms. I think that’s really important. We need to know what it is we’re thinking about as we head into this particular lesson. And some of those terms are going to be oh no! What is that? But I’m going to try to explain them to you and they should not be intimidating. For instance, we’re going to be thinking about the *duplex gratia Dei*. Well we’ll think about what that means. It’s very simple, not hard. It’s just a fancy name. And we’ll talk about what that is.

But then, after we define our terms, we’re going to talk about three points. And actually, we’re going to talk about four, because I’ve included something on the chapter. And if we have time, we’ll look at the foundations that he gives to us in the chapter. But if we don’t, that’s fine. If you have the book, you can look through it yourself, or I can just move through them quickly here.

But we’re going to think about what it is to be in Christ and think about sanctification. Specifically, we’re going to think about what it means for Christ to be in us and for us to be in Christ. And then we’re going to think about what it means for us to be in the world, for Christ to be in us and for us to be in Christ. And we’re going to think about each one of those topics from the perspective of holiness or sanctification. So that’s our road map for this morning. So why don’t we get started?

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Before I do, let me just simply say this. I invite interaction. I ramble on and you can see that. And my wife always says, “Hey, hey, hey, now take a break.” (*Laughter*) But if you want me to do that, if you want me to take a break, I’m going to invite some interaction at certain points, and hopefully you’ll be up for that. But if you have something you want to talk about and ask me, you know, please feel free. Just wave your hand at me or jump in. Yes. Go ahead.

Participant: Why wouldn’t you start by defining the term *sanctification*?

Pastor Stivason: Yeah. How about we do that? We’ll do that. (*Laughter*) I think that’s a great idea. (*Laughter*) So without further ado, (*laughter*, what is it? I warned you. Sig’s not paying him. (*Laughter*) I’m not paying him. I’m taking free support, but I’m not paying him. (*Laughter*)

All right. Sanctification or holiness, what is it? Well that’s the very thing that we want to talk about. But oftentimes, what do you think about when you hear about sanctification? You think about growing in grace. Maybe that’s one way to think about it. You think about it in terms of being separate from something. I think those are the two most common ways of thinking about sanctification. Do you have another one that you think about when you think about sanctification? Yes?

Participant: Becoming like Christ.

Pastor Stivason: Yes, becoming like Christ is another one. And you get the idea. Our outline entails that for us. That’s in our thinking. What else?

Participant: Made one with God.

Pastor Stivason: Okay. Made one with God.

Participant: Being set apart from a common or secular purpose to a spiritual purpose.

Pastor Stivason: Okay, being set apart. But you added the idea of being set apart to something. Anything else? All of these are wonderful and accurate.

Okay. Let’s just think about this for a minute from the perspective of the book. When we think about sanctification, one of the things that we think about is being set apart. And in fact that’s one of the two primary ways that we think about sanctification. You open up any systematic theological textbook and you’re going to find that this is one of those ways of being set apart, to be separate, to be cut off.

However, that’s only half the story. It’s the negative side of things, as you pointed out already. And we need to remember something that Ferguson points out to us. And he puts it in a very interesting way. He says that if we only think about that negative side, if we only think about sanctification as being cut off from something, then we only get half the story. “It doesn’t meet the sniff test.”

Now what does he mean by that? He’s got this great quote, and it says this. “For anything to be true of God as He is in Himself,” in other words, when you think about God as He is in Himself, think about God as He is before creation was. That’s how you want to think about it. *“For anything to be true of God as He is in Himself, it must be true quite apart from His work of creation. It must be true of God simply as He always existed as the eternal Trinity.”*

In other words, let me put it like this. There is a distinction in the Godhead. The Father is different from the Son. The Son is different from the Spirit, and so on. But there is no

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separation. Why? Because separation implies that there is distance. And anybody who studies the doctrine of God knows that theologians will talk about a *circum cession*. They’ll talk about an interpenetration of the Three. They all share the one essence. And yet the mystery of the Trinity is that They are all distinct Persons. And Their Personhood cannot be transferred from one to another. In other words, the Father can’t become the Son, the Son can’t become the Father, and so on. And yet there’s this wonderful interpenetration in the Trinity despite the distinction of the Persons. But there is no separation.

Participant: I don’t want to hog all the discussion. (*Laughter*) But to me, in my mind, I’m easily confused.

Pastor Stivason: Okay.

Participant: We started with the term *sanctification*, and now it seems like you’re using the term *holy*.

Pastor Stivason: Yes I am.

Participant: I don’t see in the Scripture where God is sanctified either in the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit. But I do see that They are all holy.

Pastor Stivason: And how would you make the distinction between sanctification and holiness, because I see them as one and the same thing.

Participant: Well, I’m not so sure it is.

Pastor Stivason: Okay.

Second Participant: It’s the same word.

Third Participant: I think that sanctification is a process. As it applies to us, we can think of sanctification as a process, whereas God wouldn’t be in process.

Pastor Stivason: Yes. And so as applied to us, it’s different. But we’re going to see something really interesting in just a minute about the Son. But when we think about holiness, when we think about sanctification, I see them as one and the same thing. I see them applied differently to the human condition. And so there’s a need not only to be definitively holy, which is what God is. God is definitively holy, and so are we, if we’re in Christ. But there’s the need for us because sin remains to be progressively sanctified.

First Participant: I don’t see that progression in Scripture, or a process in Scripture, when it uses the word *sanctification*. I see a process called *maturity* in the Scripture. I don’t see a process of sanctification. The reason I say that, and I asked about starting with defining what sanctification is, in the Old Testament the priests were told to sanctify certain items to be used in worship.

Pastor Stivason: Absolutely, to set them apart definitively.

First Participant: Like tongs. What did those tongs have to do with their own sanctification?

Pastor Stivason: Those things were to be set apart definitively for the use in God’s worship.

First Participant: Right.

Pastor Stivason: However, let’s go back a little bit. Let’s think about this just for a second. When we think about the Greek Scriptures, when I think about holiness, I think about *haggios*. What are you thinking about in addition to that, because you’re the one

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who told me that when you see this in Scripture, you don't see that anywhere. And when I look in the Scriptures and I see *holiness* or *sanctification*, I see holiness as a reference to God, and I see sanctification in reference to people. But I see the same Greek word *haggios* for both.

First Participant: Well, okay. That's what John Rodgers was talking about in the Greek.

Pastor Stivason: Yes.

First Participant: Okay, I'm more simple-minded. I don't have that—

Pastor Stivason: Okay. That's okay. I think we should come to some kind of a conclusion.

First Participant: I don't have a good knowledge of the Greek, although I should. But in the English I go to a concordance like Strong's and I look up the word *sanctification*.

Pastor Stivason: Yes.

First Participant: And I find that it's a work by the Father, by the Son and by the Holy Spirit. I don't see where it's a work by any man.

Pastor Stivason: Right. But when we think about *haggios*, we think about it as applied to God, and we think about it as applied to man. And so the application of that term is certainly used differently. But when we think about the term as applied to God, we need to think about what holiness is. Holiness is a communicable attribute. It's communicated from God to us. So how does it apply to us? And how does it apply to God?

And what Ferguson is saying is look. If we're going to apply it to God in the way that it applies to us, we're in some trouble if we only talk about it as being cut off, because God is not cut off from anything prior to the creation. He's not cut off from Himself. He's distinct; the three Persons of the Trinity are distinct, but not cut off from one another.

So how do we talk about sanctification or holiness as it pertains to God? That's the thrust of his book. Yes?

Participant: Even as Jim had mentioned, that we think of sanctification being a process, so thinking about sanctification, being sanctified, it's being two parts. The first part is that whenever we are born again and made new creations, we're sanctified. We're actually sanctified; we're set apart in that moment. That's something that God does. And then in regard to sanctification being a process, we have the Holy Spirit in us and we are able to obey the Lord because of what He has done. And I just wanted to read a verse from Romans in the ESV. And it says that *“just as you once presented your members as slaves unto impurity and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification.”*

Pastor Stivason: Yes.

Participant: And I believe that's a verse that was referring to the sanctification process, rather than being—

Pastor Stivason: Yes, absolutely. Most of the verses in the Scriptures pertain to the definitive aspect of having been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the

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kingdom of light. Definitive and progressive sanctification are things that we’re going to talk about as we go on. They’re part of the ingredients in the bowl.

But then there’s that progressive element too. In other words, we become what we already are. I want you to think of sanctification like this. You’re forcing my hand. *(Laughter)* So let me give you an illustration that I was going to give you later.

So I want you to think about a zygote. A zygote is the smallest stage of human development in the mother’s womb.

Participant: Yes.

Pastor Stivason: Okay, now how many chromosomes does that zygote have?

Participant: Forty-six.

Pastor Stivason: Forty-six. I don’t know who said it, but forty-six—twenty-three from Mom, twenty-three from Dad, forty-six chromosomes. Now we would say about that zygote, not just because we’re Christians but because we’re human beings, we would say that that zygote is as human as it ever will be. And yet that zygote is becoming the human that it is.

Participant: That’s right.

Pastor Stivason: So the human, the being and the becoming, are together. That’s what it is to be a Christian. When you are saved, you have all the Christian DNA that you will ever have.

Participant: That’s correct.

Pastor Stivason: And why is that? It’s because you are in union with Jesus Christ.

Participant: Right.

Pastor Stivason: I’m still on my hint a little bit. But we possess His righteousness, not our own righteousness as we stand before God. Therefore you have all the righteousness that you will ever possess. And yet you are growing into that likeness, that righteous likeness of Jesus Christ day by day by day. Okay? So that’s that idea of progressive and definitive gathered up into one. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. I read the first chapter, and I thought that what he said was fascinating, because you could go back to what you were talking about and what Dr. Ferguson was talking about in terms of the holiness of God before creation. I’d never thought of it in those terms.

Pastor Stivason: Yes. In other words, you know, we need to think about God prior to the creation, because we know what the communicable attributes mean prior to creation. But what do the incommunicable attributes mean prior to creation? Well when you think about them, you think about analogy, right? Go ahead.

Participant: Let’s pretend that there might be one or two people here who don’t know the incommunicable attributes.

Pastor Stivason: Let’s pretend?

Participant: Yes.

Pastor Stivason: Let’s pretend. So the guys who know what an incommunicable attribute is, help out the guys in here who don’t know, because I know that you guys study under Bruce Bickel. And the guys that know, I know you know this.

Participant: The twenty-eight attributes?

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Pastor Stivason: The incommunicable attributes.

Participant: Self-sufficiency.

Pastor Stivason: First of all, define it. What’s an incommunicable attribute?

Participant: Things that we do not share with God.

Pastor Stivason: Things that we do not share with God. And self-sufficiency is—

Participant: I’m just thinking of the Westminster Catechism, question 4. “*God is a Spirit, incommunicable—infinite, eternal and unchangeable,*” and the rest are communicable—“*His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice and truth.*”

Pastor Stivason: Okay. The incommunicable attributes of God are attributes or things about God that are not shared by us. The communicable attributes that He has are shared by us—things like love and the rest of those things that you mentioned. Okay, go ahead.

Participant: Self-existence.

Pastor Stivason: Yes. Self-existence. Would it be communicable or incommunicable?

Participant: Incommunicable.

Pastor Stivason: Incommunicable.

Participant: So I don’t know if you know, but when we talked about this in church, I was struggling with sort of the same topic before creation, but I’ve not had time to think about it.

Pastor Stivason: Oh great, Jordan, that’s great. Now I have you armed with a question. You see, Jordan was a guy I always had to keep my eye on. *(Laughter)* He’s always coming up with a question.

Jordan: You know, maybe I’ll see if I can help to clarify anything. There well may be some confusion here.

Pastor Stivason: Then please come up and sit with me. *(Laughter)*

Jordan: But at least the way that I understand why we’re talking about this in terms of the definition,—

Pastor Stivason: Yes.

Jordan: We’re not yet talking about sanctification or holiness itself.

Pastor Stivason: That’s right.

Jordan: We would probably all agree that the definition of it is that God is holy. And since God doesn’t change, we have to think about God both prior to creation and after the creation.

Pastor Stivason: That’s right.

Jordan: His holiness does not change in the terms of how you define it about God. And I think what you’re getting to with this is that you would say that prior to creation, God was not cut off from anything. It was just Him existing in the Trinity, with no separation. So if we only think of holiness as being cut off, that’s an incorrect way of thinking about it in that sense, because if you’re thinking about holiness and sanctification as how you apply that to God and how to apply it to us, you have to consider both what it means from the realm of time, prior to creation and post-creation. Is that it?

Pastor Stivason: That’s exactly it. And in fact, when you think about the positive aspect, it’s the very topic of the book. It’s the devotion to God that he’s going to be

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talking to us about, and what that means and looks like. And so when he talks about that part of holiness that is a part of God prior to creation, that which God possessed in terms of the word *holiness* as it describes Him prior to creation, it would be devotion, because He’s not cut off from Himself. But each Person of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is devoted to one another, right? Fully devoted, exhaustively devoted. And so He takes that idea and he says, “Let’s think about what it means to be devoted to God, because that is most like what God is like prior to the creation.” That’s the idea, okay? Yes?

Participant: If the Greek uses both *sanctification* and *holiness* as the same word, I wonder if the Hebrew does the same, or whether it separates it?

Pastor Stivason: The Hebrew—

Second Participant: *Kadosh*.

Pastor Stivason: Yes. The Hebrew is I think very much like the Greek in that the Greek translates the Hebrew, or it is the carry-over.

Okay. So let’s think a little bit then about our first point. (*Laughter*) Let’s think about the summary of salvation for just a minute. And I want to throw up two things. These are some words that may be unfamiliar to you, but I’ll try to explain them in this way—the *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis*. The *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis* are two ways of thinking about the gospel, and so they’re important.

When we think about the *historia salutis*, what are we saying? It’s simply this. It’s the history of salvation. And when we think about the *ordo salutis*, we think about the order of salvation.

Let’s take the *historia* for right now. When we think about the *historia salutis*, we think about those things that pertain primarily to Jesus Christ as He accomplishes our salvation. You guys have that bracelet that you gave to me that Bruce gave to you. And what is it? It’s that God allocates, it’s that Jesus accomplishes, and the Spirit applies. But it’s the *accomplishment* of salvation that we ought to have in mind when we think about the *historia*. We think about the humiliation of Christ—His coming to earth, taking upon Himself human flesh, living an obedient life even to the point of death, Him being killed, buried. Rising again begins what? His exultation. So you can sum up His life under the two estates of *humiliation* and *exultation*. But that’s what we think of when we think of *historia*.

Now when you think of *historia*, you go on from there. *Historia* encompasses His incarnation all the way up to His resurrection, to His ascension into heaven and His outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And this is a side thing. And if you put up your hand for this, I’m going to totally ignore you. (*Laughter*) I just want to be candid right up front. But one of the reasons why folks that are a little bit more bent in the charismatic direction have things a little messed up is because they don’t include the outpouring of the Spirit in the *historia*, in the history of salvation, that which Jesus does to accomplish our salvation. Instead of putting it in His envelope, they put it in our envelope and say, “oh no, no, no! This is something about salvation applied rather than salvation accomplished.” And that’s free; no charge for that. (*Laughter*)

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So those distinctions are important. When you think about the gospel like I just described it, what do you think of? Well, hopefully you think of something like 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1-3. Can somebody go to 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 quickly and just read that? We'll get a taste of what that is.

Participant: 1-3?

Pastor Stivason: Yep.

Participant: *“Now I would remind you, brothers, that the gospel I preached to you, which you received and in which you stand and by which you are being saved,—if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain—for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”*

Pastor Stivason: Okay. So he says, “This is the gospel that I received.” And what does he talk about? He talks about historical events—what Christ did, how He accomplished our salvation. And so when we think about that, we think about the *historia salutis*. And here's a good summary of that.

Now why do I make such a big deal out of this? It's because now we need to think about Christology and sanctification as it relates to Christ? Why? Because I need you to think with me about union with Jesus Christ as being the primary means by which we have every blessing.

Participant: Amen.

Pastor Stivason: Oftentimes, we say, “Pastor, I understand that. That's justification. I am justified in Christ. And therefore I'm not only forgiven of my sins by the passive obedience of Christ applied to me, but I'm counted as righteous because of the active obedience of Christ applied to me.”

Now I want you to think about that just for a minute. That's right. But how many times have we ever thought about the other blessings that we have received being in Jesus Christ first? For instance, I'm going to throw this out. Think about adoption. Christ was in His mediatorial office, not in His essence as the Son of God. But what does Psalm 2 say? Psalm 2 says that the Father says to the Son, *“Today I have become Your Father”*, “in terms of Your mediatorial office.” So adoption is one of the benefits that we receive as a result of being in Christ. Why? Because Christ received it first.

What about holiness? I mean, holiness is not a difficult one. Holiness is an easy one. Why? Because Philippians 2:8 says that He was *“obedient even to the point of death.”*

Now you and I both know that when we think about justification, we think about two aspects, the two that I just mentioned, forgiveness and righteousness, being counted as righteous. Where do you think those come from? Those come from the holiness of Jesus Christ. The benefits of justification that we receive flow from His holiness.

So when we think about this idea of sanctification, we need to think of it in terms of, or rooted in Jesus Christ. Our holiness flows from the holiness of Jesus Christ. It's by Him that we're enabled to be holy, okay? So that's a crucial thing. I think it's foundational, and something I think that if we forget it, we're going to lose our mores, because we're going to think of sanctification as something that we do in our own

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strength, and not something that we do in Jesus Christ because He accomplished it first for us. So that’s first.

Well, let’s think about this second point for a minute: *Christ in us, us in Christ*. This is the *ordo salutis* that I mentioned earlier. Again, these are just ingredients he’s going to pull out later. But I’m wanting us to think about them now, to get ourselves kind of rooted in some of these things.

What’s the *ordo salutis*? The *ordo salutis* is the order of salvation. Now you guys know this, because we oftentimes think of it as the golden chain. Have you ever heard of that? Of course you have. What’s the golden chain? For somebody that doesn’t know the golden chain, what is it? Somebody help somebody else who doesn’t know what that is?

Participant: Romans 8:29.

Pastor Stivason: Yes. Somebody find Romans 8:28 and 29. And as somebody finds that, let’s talk about it a minute. What is it? Somebody who knows what it is let somebody else look it up and tell us what it is. What is it?

Participant: It’s foreknowledge, predestined, called, justified. He skips over sanctified, and glorified.

Pastor Stivason: Yes. That’s very good. And it’s because glorification is the culmination of sanctification is why sanctification isn’t included in that verse. But that’s very good. That’s the chain. What is it now? If you only had one sentence, and you had to tell somebody what the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation is, what would you say? One sentence.

Participant: God does the saving.

Second Participant: I would say that everything that is in Christ is in us. *(Laughter.)*

Third Participant: It’s His chain of events that makes it happen.

Pastor Stivason: All of these things are right. But what am I looking at?

Participant: What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished, and the Holy Spirit applies.

Pastor Stivason: It’s the application of the *historia*! It’s the application of what Christ did! Absolutely! That’s all we’re talking about when we’re talking about the order of salvation. We’re talking about the Holy Spirit taking what it is that Christ has achieved and bestowing it upon us. And In Him we have “*every blessing in the spiritual places*”, right? All right. So who’s got Romans 8?

Participant: I do.

Pastor Stivason: Please read it.

Participant: “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.*”

Pastor Stivason: All right, there it is. You have the pieces of the order. You have predestination all the way up through glorification, and there you have it. That’s the golden chain that cannot be broken.

Now here’s what I want you to grab hold of. Jesus accomplished all of those pieces, and they’re applied to us. He is the Elect of God. And it’s because He is the Elect of God

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that we are the elect of God. He’s the predestined One; we are predestinated. He’s the justified One. We are justified in His justification, and so on. So we are receiving the outflow of the benefits He has received.

Now when you think about the *duplex gratia Dei*, the twofold grace of God, I’m going to narrow it down just to justification and sanctification for a minute. We oftentimes think about justification, right? Oh, I’m justified by faith, as if to say that I can be justified apart from holiness. And the old Reformers—and this is Calvin’s expression—the twofold grace of God says no to that. You cannot be justified, in other words, you cannot have justification in Christ and not be sanctified. No no no, no no no! If you are in Christ, and claiming to possess the blessing of justification, then that means that you have all of the other ones as well.

Okay, all right, all right. I have adoption. I’m adopted too. Okay, more than that! Okay, I will be glorified.

No, no, no, no, no. Try a little harder.

Okay, I will be sanctified. I am sanctified in that I’ve been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. But I am also to be progressively becoming what I already am in Jesus Christ. That’s the idea. If you meet somebody who says, “I’m justified, but I’m just not—you know, I’m a carnal person,” no no no! That violates the whole understanding of what it means to be in Jesus Christ.

Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not talking about incidences of sin.

Participant: Right.

Pastor Stivason: Who is an incidental sinner? Woo-hoo! Yeah. (*Laughter*) But who is a patterned sinner? You know what I mean? Who is a patterned sinner trained in deceit, or whatever it may happen to be? No no no! “Brother, come alongside of us. We need to help you,” that sort of thing, right? We need to help you.

So in us, in Christ. I’m at time, but I’m going to run through these really quickly. We’ll pull them up later. Let me just give them to you now.

We’re going to talk about two ages. In Jesus Christ we’re going to talk about how He has brought the age to come into the present evil age. And as we stand in Him, guess where we are? We’re in a very uncomfortable spot, men. We’re caught between the ages. We are in the present evil age and in the age to come by virtue of being in Jesus Christ.

That means what? That means that there are two aspects. That means that because we’re in the present evil age, we need to cut ourselves off from things. But it also means that because we are in Jesus Christ, despite the fact that we’re in the present evil age, we need to be devoted to God. Those are the two aspects, our negative and positive aspects.

So there are two aspects, and that’s where we started. But then there is this last thing. There are two actions. This is conversion—faith and repentance.

Did you ever wonder about Revelation 2:4, where Jesus says to John, “You’ve lost your first love?”

Participant: Yes.

Pastor Stivason: And then He says this to him. He says, “Go backwards,” and you go, what? He can’t go backwards! “Remember the works you first did.”

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Oh, okay! But wait a minute! That’s not opposition from people who are opposed to you? No. That’s not endurance? No. That’s not animation, zeal? No. What is it? Twice after that He says,. “Repent.”

They say, “Wait a minute!” (*Unclear*) Well, you only get it when you remember that repentance is turning from anything, especially sinful things, and turning to Jesus Christ.

What are the very first works that you do? You turned to Christ.

Participant: Yes.

Pastor Stivason: You weren’t just opposed to people who opposed Christ, as if to say, “That’s what it means to be a Christian.” No, no, no. What it means to be a Christian is to have my eyes set upon Jesus Christ.

Okay, so I’ve taken three extra minutes. We didn’t do the foundations. You can go back and look in Ferguson for that. But go ahead, Sig.

Sig: Is that repentance you just talked about, a turning away from anything, is that different from being born again?

Pastor Stivason: Being born again gives rise to it. Let me put it this way. Conversion—faith and repentance—are the fruit of regeneration.

Let me put it like this. The guy is sitting there, right? He’s in church. He doesn’t want to be there. He’s there because his wife wants him to be there. (*Laughter*) He’s in church. He typically goes out of that building with “whatever. What’s for lunch, honey?” That sort of thing, right?

All of a sudden, at a subconscious level, something happens to him. I’ll tell you what it is. It’s the Holy Spirit making him alive.

Participant: That’s right.

Pastor Stivason: Resurrecting his dead spirit. And all of a sudden, he goes, “I believe what he just said. And I care about it!” That’s faith, right? That’s kat, spelled with a k—knowledge, assent to the knowledge I Just had, and I want to trust in that.

It’s also “Oh, no! I took something from work that I shouldn’t have taken! And I feel bad about it,” right? That’s repentance!

Participant: Yes, right.

Pastor Stivason: “I’ve got to take it back!” You see, that’s faith and repentance. That’s the conscious fruit of the subconscious work of the Holy Spirit. Does that help?

Sig: Excellent.

Pastor Stivason: Okay.

Participant: I’m scared to ask this question.

Pastor Stivason: Okay, don’t ask it. (*Laughter*)

Second Participant: Good answer; I like that.

First Participant: How elementary is this concept that we’re dealing with? I mean, is this what ought to be as a church society, especially that we being Brave Men should know?

Pastor Stivason: Oh man, this is rock bottom stuff.

Participant: So this is foundational.

Pastor Stivason: This is foundational. We think that justification by faith is foundational. But Calvin would have said this. How can you think that justification by

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faith is the only foundational thing? It's the *duplex gratia Dei*, the twofold grace of God. You possess forensic benefits and renovative benefits simultaneously. It's bedrock.

Participant: Okay.

Pastor Stivason: Did you want to follow up?

Participant: It's just that I guarantee that if you go to any person in most American churches, they wouldn't be able to give you any of this.

Pastor Stivason: Brother, I'm gelling with you, right? This is why this is so important. In the world in which we live, we as men need to know this so that we can lead our families in what it means to be sanctified, to be holy.

Participant: Here, here.

Pastor Stivason: We need to be able to say, "I'm holy, and I'm becoming holy. And here's what that means. This is what it looks like." Absolutely. Yes?

Participant: What happens in us is drawn from our union with Christ.

Pastor Stivason: Yes.

Participant: How do we deal with regeneration? How is that analogous to the work of our Lord?

Pastor Stivason: Yes. So when you think about somebody like Richard Gaffin from Westminster, who really focuses in on this particular aspect of the *ordo* in his book *Redemption and Resurrection* says that regeneration is best seen in His resurrection. In Jesus' resurrection from the dead we see our spiritual resurrection, which is basically what we see in Ephesians 1, right? That same power that brought our Lord Jesus back from the dead brings us. Great question.

All right. Thanks a lot for your attention. Good to be with you. *(Applause)*