

“The Grammar of Union”

Devoted to God

Galatians 2:20

Pastor Jeff Stivason

June 9, 2017

Jeff: Don, why don't you lead us into prayer? (*Music*)

Father in heaven, we are so thankful for the many blessings that You grant to us. We know that You are a good Father. We know that every good and blessed gift that comes down from above is from Your precious hand. And we know that You give these gifts because we are precious in Your sight, because we were redeemed, purchased by the blood of Your own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we know that we are precious to You, and any evidence that we need is simply to look toward Christ to know that we belong to You and that we are loved by You. As we gather here this morning, we are mindful that what You did in us is not only definitive, but also carries with it ongoing effects. And Father, as we think about growing in grace, as we think about progressing in holiness, as we think about living the life that You have carved out for us, that You have made us to live, we not only rejoice, but seek Your help in the doing. I pray that You will lift us up and uphold us, that You will bless us and strengthen us by Your grace. Father, as we gather today, we pray these things in Christ's blessed name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: So you guys did watch the Pens versus the Wounded Animals game last night? (*Laughter*) I did, too. I stayed up a little too late. My wife wanted me to stop every time they got a goal. She wanted me to stop running through the house screaming back and forth. (*Laughter*) She said I was scaring the dogs. (*Laughter*) But anyway, regardless, whatever. So I think that before we start, I have been really impressed with this guy over here. **Transcriber's Note:** Referring to Sig.

Jeff: And how he really carries the day and sort of carries the Bible study along, keeping up with me to get my material to him on time. I think we ought to give him a hand. He does a great job. (*Applause*) Not too much, now; that's it. (*Laughter*) All right, that's enough.

All right. So I want to say one thing before I start. We were just talking over in the coffee corner over here, and somebody said something to me about getting converted while I was in prison. That's not true. But I do think it's probably important for you to know my conversion account and my testimony. And so at some point I'll try to put that in there so that you understand where I'm coming from in that regard. But not now. Let's get to the lesson, and I'll try to put that in at some point, either today or in the days ahead.

Last time we talked about what it meant to be a Christian. And the very first session that we were together we talked about some very basic things. We talked about how sanctification is in Christ because He is the One who accomplished all things for us, and all the gifts that we have are first rooted in Him. And so we talked about sanctification being in Christ.

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And then we talked about how sanctification is not only in Christ, but as Christ dwells in us and we in Him, we receive that which He gives, the benefits which He accomplished on our behalf. And so sanctification, being one of those benefits, we now possess holiness.

And then we talked about the terrain and the time frame of sanctification. And we talked about how it is in this world and this present age, and so on.

But then we moved on to talk about something pretty specific. And I said to you in our very first session that we ought to think about sanctification not in terms of a process. That’s not the way I want to think about it. We ought to think about it in terms of a mixing bowl and all of the constituent ingredients. And what we’re going to do throughout our time together is to pull out an ingredient, to look at it, take it and turn it over in our thinking, to understand it more and how it fits in with the process of sanctification and what Christ has done for us.

And last week we looked together at the transformation of our thinking. And what we basically said was this. We basically said that we’ve been delivered into a new mold of thinking. And we saw that in Romans 6:17. And you remember that I talked to you about the divine passive, and how we are delivered over to this form of doctrine. But being delivered to that form of doctrine is only the beginning. It’s what Christ has done. We need then to grow into it ourselves. And so the added admonition in Romans 12 was don’t be conformed according to the pattern of this world. Don’t allow the world to pour you into its form, “*but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” And so that’s what we looked at the last time. We looked at the renewal of our thinking.

Well what we’

Re going to do today is that we’re going to look together at language. We’re going to look today at expressing our new thinking, because that’s important. We have a new thought pattern. Now we need to be able to express that new thought pattern.

How do we express it? What do we say about it? And that’s what Ferguson is basically talking about in this chapter. So let’s get started and let’s look at this particular chapter. But I’ve structured it around *speaking*.

And one of the very first things that I want to look at, then, is that I want to look at *our union with Christ*. This chapter is very important when it comes to understanding union with Christ. We’ve been talking about it. I want us to just re-visit it one more time. And there are some important things that I want us to say about it.

The first thing that I want us to say is *what it is*. We need to understand the nature of our union with Christ. What is it when we talk about union with Christ?

Now I want to make sure that I say this to you, because it’s really important. Oftentimes, when we talk about theology, we want definitions. Give me the definition. But to define something means to know it in exactness or with exactness. And I’m not so sure that that’s always the best when we’re talking about the ineffable. When we talk about the ineffable, we talk about that which is beyond our comprehension. Sometimes the best we can do is to describe it. And that’s the way it is with the nature of union with Christ.

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So let me do my best to describe that union that we have with the Savior. And I would put it in four different terms, and I’m not alone. Theologians do this all the time.

The first way in which we would describe our union with Christ is a *predestined union*. In other words, this was a union decreed before the foundation of the world. And you know that; that’s in the Scriptures. Ephesians talks about that and 1 Timothy talks about that. So it’s not a mystery.

The second way in which we ought to talk about it is that it’s a *spiritual union*. And put simply, I want you to think about this as being a Spirit-wrought union. In other words, this union is something that the Spirit of God works in us. And again, you know that. That’s not a surprise.

Mystical is another word that’s often used to describe this union. And you have to understand *mystical* like this. *Mystical* comes from that idea of the fact that this is a mystery. But it’s a mystery that’s revealed. It’s a mystery that’s not fully understood. But it is a mystery that has been revealed and can be known to some extent.

And how do we know it? Well, we turn to the Scriptures to know it. What do the Scriptures tell us? Well, for instance, the Scriptures give us analogies. And they say things like this. Paul says, you know what? You know that union with Christ that you have? Well think about your wife, right? And we say, “What do you mean?” I’m talking about union with Christ. I’m not talking about the wife.” And you know as well as I do that in Ephesians 5 he articulates our union with Christ through that analogy.

So it’s mystical, but it’s revealed, and it’s known through description to some extent.

And then it’s *experiential*. Union with Christ is experienced by us. Now that’s important and I want us to focus in on that just for a minute before we move on to the next thing. And I want us to say that this is experienced in us by the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces.

And what is that fruit? Well it’s faith and repentance. You know, not too awfully long ago I said to you that you’re sitting there in church, or you’re sitting there listening in a Bible study. And all of a sudden somebody begins to talk about the gospel. And this time you want to listen. You actually want to hear what this person is saying. And all of a sudden you find yourself believing what they’re saying. And it’s meaning something to you. And then all of a sudden the guilt feelings come, that sort of thing. That’s faith and repentance. We’ll talk more about that later. But as we hone in on the experiential aspect of our union with Christ, the fruit or the evidence of it is faith and repentance.

And that’s discernible to you and to me. I mean, somebody’s going to be like this. Somebody’s obviously going to say to you, “What’s the matter with you? You got religion!” And do you know what the appropriate response to that is? “No, religion got me,” right? (*Laughter*) Religion got me. So experiencing the union is important.

Now the question that we’re going to ask is this. How do we enter into that union? And how do we express it? And you’ll find that the two are intimately linked in just a minute.

But before we get to that point I want to show you something. I thought you might be interested in this because we’ve talked so much about the basics, about monergism and the indicatives and all of these things. I want to show you something.

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This is the Westminster Confession of Faith. Who has used The Westminster Confession of Faith Study Guide by G. I. Williamson?

Transcriber’s Note: Five men raise their hands.

Jeff: One, two, three, four, five. So you know what Williamson does when he gets to saving faith and repentance. When he gets to saving faith and repentance, he says this. He says that these two things don’t belong here. And so what he does in his commentary on the Westminster Confession is that he takes faith and repentance and he moves them up here between effectual calling and justification.

Transcriber’s Note: In the Westminster Confession, the chapters on faith and repentance come after those on effectual calling and justification.

Jeff: Because if you’re thinking about the order of salvation, you know as well as I do that that’s where they belong. And the question is this. Were the divines, were the Westminster pastors who made up the Westminster Confession from 1643-1647, were they that dumb? *(Muffled laughter)*

Participant: No.

Jeff: No, I don’t think so. Then the question is why did they wait and put saving faith and repentance after all that stuff? Why did they do that?

Participant: Because it had something to do with the fact that those two might be experiential versus the other one might be more—I mean the origin of it.

Jeff: Well, I think you’re right. And I would put it this way. I would put that experiential element that you just articulated this way. I’ve just given you a snapshot of it. But if you look at the Confession, the Confession is going to be broken up in at least this section, in terms of the covenantal phrase “*I will be your God, and you will be My people.*” In other words, how is it that God is our God? It’s through effectual calling, justification, adoption and sanctification. How is it that we are His people? Through the response that He has enabled on the basis of these things.

That’s a wonderful thing when you think about it, isn’t it? The way they organize the Confession and the way they’re teaching us is by a covenantal phrase from the Scriptures. It’s really awesome. Anyway, I digressed. I thought you’d be interested in that. So we’re thinking today—yes, please?

Participant: Could I go back—

Jeff: You may.

Participant: I’m not Bruce, although I play him on TV. *(Laughter)* I’m interested in the term *mystical*, because this is a term we don’t find used almost at all. Yet it was used by the Reformers quite a bit. I think about the prayer book, *The Book of Common Prayer*. In the marriage service it talks about that “*this signifies the mystical union betwixt Christ and His church.*”

Jeff: Yeah.

Participant: But we don’t use that term *mystical*. But it’s a very rich term.

Jeff: It is a rich term, and it’s our fault, bad for us for not using it, because it is a valuable term. And the problem is that we don’t always use it in the right way.

Let me tell you something. I—no, I’m not going to digress into that. *(Laughter)* No, I was going to take myself far afield.

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But let me just say this. I think you’re right, and I think we ought to use it. The problem is that I think the reason we don’t use it is because we don’t explain *mystery* to those with whom we’re using it. And so they are left with this feeling that mystery is a big question mark. And what the Scriptures talk about when they talk about “*the mystery revealed*” is something that is revealed—not fully understood, but certainly revealed. And, in this case, as Ephesians 5 says, described by analogy. And so it’s an important word, and it’s a word that ought to be used. But it’s one of those words that if we’re wise in our presentation of it, we’ll be careful about how we contextualize mystery before we do it. Don?

Don: I think we have an overreaction to the word *mystical*, because when the word *mystical* comes to a lot of people’s minds, it conjures up visions and weird experiences, and things like that.

Jeff: Absolutely. It’s like many other words, isn’t it? I mean it’s like the word *meditation*. No one likes the word *meditation* today, right? It’s what C.S. Lewis says. The devil takes a perfectly good word and ruins it. (*Laughter*)

Participant: The Bible is full of visions and weird experiences.

Second Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Yes. So is Sig’s life, I hear. (*Laughter*)

Sig: Boy, you’re really getting into this, aren’t you? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I’m feeling right at home. (*Laughter*) Anyway, sorry about that, Sig. (*Laughter*) Anybody else?

Participant: Three points, three points.

Jeff: (*with laughter in his voice*): Three points!

Participant: We’re five-point Calvinists. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: That’s the final shot. All right, dead or alive, what are words for? So there was a poet by the name of Emily Dickinson. She wrote a poem. It was a very short poem. It’s a poem that I really like because it illustrates what we’re talking about here.

*“A word is dead when it is said, some say.
I say it just begins to live that day.”*

The question is this. Is a word dead? And I would argue that a word is not dead, and especially when it comes to God’s word. And I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 1:9 for just a minute. And what we’re doing here is just situating in our thinking something very important about our relationship with Jesus Christ. In fact, we’re situating two things very specifically. When somebody gets to 1 Corinthians 1:9, just read the whole verse.

Participant: “*God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*”

Jeff: All right. Now the first thing I want you to notice is this. When we think about entering into this relationship that we have with God, oftentimes we think maybe like Calvin does, that effectual calling and regeneration are one and the same thing. However, as theologians have refined theology borne out of Scripture, what we’ve come to realize is that effectual calling is separate from regeneration. They’re intimately connected, but they are distinct from one another and yet inseparable. That might be a better way to talk

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about it. And here in this particular verse, what do we find? We find that the call of God goes forth. The call of God goes forth much like a subpoena or a summons, only stronger. This subpoena, this summons, cannot be resisted. It is irresistible. And part of the reason why it’s irresistible is that it’s accompanied by the Spirit. And that means that the Spirit does the work by bringing God’s word into our lives and bringing about that spiritual resurrection, all right?

So this word of God is not a dead word. It’s a living word. It’s an active word, “*dividing soul and spirit and joints and marrow.*” It’s a word that pierces our innermost heart.

You know, I want you to think about that. I want to just pause for a minute and say to you that this is one of the great things we need to understand when it comes to bringing somebody to church, or telling someone the gospel. They are in a very dangerous spot, especially if they claim to be atheists or agnostics, or somebody who has no time for religion. They are in a dangerous spot because they can’t defend themselves, poor guys!, because this is a living and active word that penetrates, and they can’t defend against it. It’s a living word.

Now the other thing that this particular passage that we read bears out is something really fascinating. It talks to us about how to appropriate or speak about this particular way of God’s doing. It uses a preposition to do that. If you look at verse 9, “*called us into fellowship.*”

Now I want you to think about this. If you have the Ferguson book and you’ve read it, you’ll know that one of the interesting little tidbits in that book is that the preposition *eis*, which is oftentimes translated *into*, is a word that the apostle Paul made up! Don’t you love that? He made it up to help us to try and understand something about what it is that God does inside of us, such that we merge inside of Him in that way that I talked to you about earlier.

Participant: What was the word he made up?

Jeff: *Eis*.

Participant: What would it have been in his language?

Jeff: He made it up, though.

Participant: Oh, okay.

Jeff: Yes. And so it’s a word he makes up to try to communicate something about this union we have with Christ. The typical word for *in* is *en*. And so this is a different word.

You know, think about this for just a minute. What do prepositions do? I’m trying to keep this at a minimum. But prepositions talk to us about time and location. They refer to time and location. And they help us to understand time and location between, for instance, subject and object.

Just think about this. The dog is in the trash can, right? (*Laughter*) Where is the dog? (*Laughter*) Location wise, using the prepositional phrase, he’s in the trash can, right?

At midnight the dog was in the trash can. That’s a picture of my dog last night. No, just kidding. (*Laughter*) But when? At midnight. That’s your other prepositional phrase. So it helps us to understand time and location. And when Paul communicates something

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about our union with Christ, he does it by way of these prepositions to help us to understand things like time and location, placement in the Lord.

Now I want you to think about the verse that we’re going to think about today. It’s Galatians 2:20. Let me read it, and I just want you to note the prepositions that emerge here. “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”

We’re going to look at some of those prepositions today as we think about this particular way of speaking about our union with Christ. And what we’re going to do is take our grammatical pulse as we do this. And we’re going to do that by looking at four different prepositions. One of them is included in the particular word itself. But we’re going to take it in the English and look at four prepositions.

And the very first preposition that we’re going to look at is *for me*. And the one that describes *for me* is the word that we might describe with this prepositional phrase in terms of *substitution*.

Now I just want you to think about this for a minute. When we think about the gospel, this becomes a crucial word, a very important word. It means that Christ stood in my place. He stood in my place.

Now when you look at the Scriptures, there are many, many, many ways that we might think about this in terms of analogy or description. But one of the ways that Ferguson points out is the word *archaegos*. Now *archaegos*, as translated, is used four times in the Scriptures, in the New Testament. And all four times it’s used with reference to Jesus. And this word *archaegos* has the idea of *leader* or *pioneer*. He’s the One who cuts the path for us.

Now He doesn’t cut the path that we might follow Him easily in our own strength. No, that’s the wrong way to think about this. He cuts the path for us, and because He cuts the path for us, He does two things for us. Who knows the song “Rock of Ages?”

“*Rock of Ages, cleft for me.*”

Be for me what? Remember that line?

Participant: Be for me the double cure?

Jeff: Be for me the double cure. What is he talking about?

Participant: “*Be of sin the double cure.*”

Jeff: “*Be of sin the double cure.*” What is he talking about?

Participant: Water and blood?

Jeff: The water and the blood? Okay. What else?

Participant: Guilt and power.

Jeff: Guilt and power? Those are good words, right? Guilt and power. When he talks about guilt, what’s he talking about? He’s talking about forgiveness from sin and guilt, isn’t he? And when he talks about power, what might he be talking about? I think he might be talking about righteousness, the righteousness of Christ that becomes ours, because you see the double cure is Christ’s obedience for me, not just His *active obedience*, in keeping the law and doing all those things, but His *passive obedience*, which means his obedience even to the point of death on a Roman cross. And so His

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active obedience in terms of my salvation is imputed to me and appointed to me and reckoned to me, that I might have the righteousness of Christ as I stand in Christ. But that passive obedience, that going to the cross, is for the forgiveness of my sins, because as He goes to the cross He takes upon Himself the curse and all of the consequences of it on my behalf.

I want you to think about this. Hold on just a second. I want you to think about this. In today’s day and age what we have is a partial gospel. We have a truncated gospel. If you talk to somebody about the gospel and you say, “What did Jesus do for you?”, what do they say? They’ll say, “Jesus died for me.” Is that all Jesus did? Did He just die for you?

If He just died for you, then let me tell you what happens. Your sins are wiped away, and now you are in a state of neutrality. You are no better than Adam in the garden, right? But if He didn’t just die for me, if He lived a perfect life for me, and I’m in union with Him, not only are my sins forgiven, but now I’m counted righteous by virtue of possessing His righteousness before God. Go ahead.

Participant: I was just going to clarify *active* and *passive* obedience. Passive obedience would be death on the cross.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Active obedience would be His life, His acting out. Is that correct?

Jeff: That would be absolutely—

Participant: And when we’re in Christ we have both of those things active in us.

Jeff: Yep.

Participant: One to remove the sin, and the other to live His life actively through us.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Okay.

Jeff: So when we express our thinking about what it is that Christ has done for us, one of the important ways of expressing that is in the idea of *substitution*. We want to speak about Christ as our Substitute.

But there’s something else. We have *faith in the Son of God*. Now I want us to think about this. This is another way of expressing this union experientially.

Now I want us to think about this for a minute. What is this faith? You men know what faith is, right? I’ve said it to you and I’m sure Bruce has said it to you a number of times. I always tell my kids that faith is *kat* spelled with a k. There’s *knowledge*. I mean, we’re not saved apart from knowledge. Somebody has to give us some kind of knowledge about the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. We have to *assent* to that knowledge, right? We have to agree that this knowledge is correct.

Now you can have that much of the definition of faith and not be saved. Do you remember what James says? James says that “*even the demons believe, and they tremble.*” So that’s not saving faith. What is saving faith?

Well this is one of those simple examples, but saving faith is this.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff points to a chair.

Jeff: You know this is a chair, right?

Participant: Mm-hmm.

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Jeff: That’s knowledge, right. This is a chair. And I’ve not sat in this particular chair. But knowing chairs and knowing the construction of chairs, I agree with your assessment that this chair is a chair. And what do chairs do? They hold people up. I see that evidence right in front of my face. And so you say to me, “Sit in the chair.”

I say, “Not on your life!” I am lacking faith to sit in the chair. But if I say, “Of course I’m going to sit in the chair,” and I sit in the chair, I’m expressing the fullest definition of saving faith.

So you can say this to somebody. “Do you believe this about Jesus?”

“Yes, I do. I believe that.”

“Well, do you trust Him?”

“Not right yet.” Or they don’t give the fruit of it, the evidence of it.

So when we talk about faith in the Son of God, that’s what we’re talking about. That’s faith. But here’s something that we need to understand when we think about faith, because this is super-important. Faith becomes an important factor in me having a sense of assurance.

In other words, somebody says, “You know what? I really don’t feel near to God. I just don’t feel close to God these days. I feel like God is distant from me.”

Well, let me just ask this. I always ask this because I always assume this prior thing. I assume who has moved in this relationship. (*Laughter*) He, right? He has moved in this relationship. And so I ask him, “Well, are you, as James says, drawing near to God, because what does James say? “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*” Are you drawing near to God? Are you exercising faith? Are you growing in your knowledge? Are you growing in your agreement with Christ? Are you trusting more and more what He says in His word?

You know John Newton, that famous hymn writer of “Amazing Grace,” that wonderful hymn? Do you know what he did? Before he was even converted, do you know what he did? When he was still the captain of the slave ship, he started reading the Bible. And he determined this. He said, “*I’m determined to believe whatever I read in this book, and I’m going to see where that leads me.*”

That’s so important because our faith becomes the barometer of how we feel in our relationship to God. Look, I hate to say this, but I want to tell you something very clearly. If you’re feeling spiritually dry, it’s probably your fault.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: It’s probably your fault, because you need to draw near to God in faith. Do you ever read *Pilgrim’s Progress*? Who has read *Pilgrim’s Progress*?

Transcriber’s Note: Only a few hands go up.

Jeff: Shame on you for not having read *Pilgrim’s Progress*!

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Put *Devoted to God* down and go buy *Pilgrim’s Progress*. (*Laughter*) Right, Jordan? You need to go buy that book and read it. There’s a character in there, Little Faith. And Little Faith stumbles along the path, and he just doesn’t know. He’s just not sure about his salvation and he’s always getting himself into these messes. And yet he

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still has the ticket of pardon in his breast. He’s exercising faith, but he always feels like something is missing in his life. And he feels like that because of his little faith.

If you feel like Little Faith, then maybe it’s time to exercise faith.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Because the Christ who saves us didn’t move. He didn’t change. Don?

Don: And I think that underscores to me the importance of the means of grace. If you don’t avail yourselves of those, then you’re not going to draw close to God.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. Absolutely. All right. So this next prepositional phrase is *crucified with Christ*. Now here is something that we need to understand. At this point Paul is not talking about something that we do. He’s talking about something that Christ did on our behalf, which means that this is a mindset. This is something that we need to take on board in our thinking, and this is the way we express it. We are crucified with Christ.

Now you say to me, “Yeah, but I’m not sure how important a mindset is for all this.” Can anybody say game seven of Washington Capitals vs. Pens? Yeah, the better team was clearly the Washington Capitals. They should have won that series. I hate to say it; I love the Penguins. But they were clearly the better team. Do you remember game six? I can’t remember which Capital it was who said this to one of the Penguins. He said, “You guys gotta play us for another game. I’ll bet you’re really looking forward to that.”

And then it came to game seven and what happened? (*Laughter*) What happened? I want to tell you what happened. It was a mindset. They can’t beat us!

Transcriber’s Note: He laughs excitedly.

Jeff: All right, I was more excited about that than you are. (*Laughter*) But they can! It’s in their heads!

Participant: Right.

Jeff: It’s not in their ability or their stats. It’s in their heads! And that’s a wonderful thing with regard to hockey. (*Laughter*) But it’s a wonderful thing with regard to us.

Listen to this. Watch this. A Bible study. You might not be able to read this; it’s a little fuzzy. Well I haven’t actually died to sin, but I did feel kind of faint once. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Who’s speaking in that cartoon?

Jeff: This lady right here. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Okay, all right.

Second Participant: When will he say, “Shut up?” (*Laughter*)

Third Participant: Jeff, for the sake of the transcript, what’s going on here?

Jeff: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah! (*Laughter*) Sorry, Don. There are two couples in the picture sitting around. One has a Bible, and the lady who is sitting on the couch is pointing to the others and saying, “Well I haven’t actually died to sin. But I did feel kind of faint once.” (*Laughter*)

Don: Thank you.

Jeff: Yeah, you bet. Sorry about that. So let me just remind you, men of the way that we men sometimes feel. Sometimes we feel faint towards sin. But what Paul is telling us when it comes to our thinking and in our speaking about our relationship to Christ with

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regard to our being under sin is that we are dead to that. We are not slaves to that any longer.

Participant: It’s a fact.

Jeff: We need to keep that in mind. That’s right; it’s a fact.

And then there’s this. *Christ lives in me.* Now I want you to think about something. I thought about this and I debated on whether or not to bring this into the equation. But I think it’s helpful. It’s going to be a little bit more technical, but I think it’s actually helpful.

So as we think about Christ living in us, and as we think about the benefit of that in terms of our experience, let me put it like this. And let me begin with Christology. Let me begin with thinking about Christ.

The orthodox way of thinking about Christ is that He is one Person with two natures. Now you know as well as I do that the one nature is human and the other nature is divine. When we think about those two natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ, we need to understand that they are distinct-not confused, but inseparable.

There’s a creed. It’s called the Chalcedonian Confession. It was written in 451. It describes this. So they are distinct, inseparable, and yet not confused.

Now let me tell you how practically this works out and where we get ourselves into bad theology. Somebody will say to us, “What about the impeccability of Christ? What about Christ’s sinlessness? How did Christ remain sinless in the temptation?”

And here’s what we usually say. We usually say that the divine nature did something to the human nature to enable Him to withstand temptation. And here’s what we usually think, at least in our minds. We usually think that poof! There was a little hole that was popped between the two natures, such that the divine leaped into the human so that the human was able to withstand the temptation. And so the Person of Jesus remained sinless.

And I want to tell you something. That would be wrong.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: That would be wrong. There’s a particular heresy that goes along with.

Participant: Eutychianism.

Jeff: That particular heresy says that there’s a commingling of the human and the divine. I want you to think about what that would produce. Think about a glass of water with a drop of ink in it. Are you going to use that to write with? No. Are you going to take a drink out of it? No. It’s not water, it’s not ink. What is it? It’s some third thing; it’s a *tertium quid*.

Participant: It’s a what? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: It’s not human, it’s not divine, right? It’s a third thing. So here’s the deal, here’s the deal. The deal is that the two natures are inseparable and yet not mixed.

So you ask—I know this is the question you’re asking. You’re saying, “Well then, wait a minute! How in the world did Jesus withstand the temptation and so remain sinless?”

I’m glad you asked. Here’s how He did it. He did it by virtue of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, taking the gifts and the graces of the divine nature and bestowing them upon the human nature in that relationship in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Participant: Amen.

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Jeff: Now that becomes the model for our thinking with regard to how it is that we can withstand temptation. We’re not human and divine. But the same Holy Spirit who took from the divine nature and bestowed upon the human nature, such that in the Person of Christ He could withstand temptation, that same Holy Spirit takes what is Christ’s and bestows it upon us that we might withstand temptation. And we’ll look at that next time in Romans chapter 6.

But when we think about Christ living in us, that’s the way we ought to think about it. We ought to think about the Holy Spirit taking from what belongs to Christ and bestowing it upon me.

Now that’s a mindset. And it’s a reality that we experience by faith and repentance.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: If we find ourselves doing this, we need to ask ourselves a serious question. This is Calvin and Hobbes, Don.

Don: Okay.

Jeff: And Calvin comes up to this little girl and he says, “What are you doing, Susie?” And Susie is on her knees and she says, “Drawing on the sidewalk.”

And Calvin says, “Wow! Can I, too?”

And she says, “Sure, here’s some chalk.” And he gets down on his hands and knees and he says, “Gosh, I’ve never been a vandal before.”

And she looks up at him and says, “This isn’t vandalism. It washes right off.” And he pitches the chalk over his shoulder and walks away. (*Laughter*) He’s got the wrong mindset.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: And he’s giving himself to the wrong conduct. This cannot be us. The mindset will give rise to conduct. This cannot be us.

Participant: So going back to Christ and how He was perfect and how He was made perfect, not a combination of the divine nature and the human nature, how much of that was the fact that He had the ability since He didn’t have this sin nature within Him from natural birth, because He had an unnatural—

Jeff: Yes. You know, the interesting thing—and that’s a great question. I want you to go back to Adam in the garden. Do you have an answer to that?

Second Participant: “*As a man thinketh, so is he.*”

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. That’s a great point. However, when we get back to the garden, it becomes a little trickier, because in the garden Adam does not have a sinful nature, and sins.

Participant: That’s right.

Second Participant: But he didn’t have the Holy Spirit either.

Third Participant: Correct.

Transcriber’s Note: A collective sigh of disagreement. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: OH, there’s debate and controversy here. I love it! I just love it! (*Laughter*) Especially when it doesn’t come from me. (*Laughter*) All right, I’ll tell you what. I’m going to let you guys battle that out, (*laughter*), because in the remaining two minutes I want to get through this. So let me just go through these last two slides.

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The breath that inspires. Sometimes as believers we live below our privileges. And the great example that Ferguson uses is one I’m sure you’ve heard before. It’s the Emancipation Proclamation.

You remember that Abraham Lincoln basically gives the Emancipation Proclamation. And basically, what year was that? Do I have that written down?

Participant: 1865.

Jeff: There were two, but I think 1862 was the very first one. And he basically says that by January 1, 1863 that all of the slaves better be set free. And yet, even after the second issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, what happened? Many of the slaves in the South continued to live as though they were slaves, even though they were free.

And the point is that we’ve heard that we’re free. We’ve heard that we have a different mindset. We’ve been delivered to a form of doctrine. There’s a way of talking about it. And we ought to talk about it that way. And yet we often still live below the privileges, and that ought not to be.

Like begets like; like father, like son. Look, we need to follow the Father as He’s been revealed to us in the Son, as the Holy Spirit has spoken about Him in the Word.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: We need to spend our time following the Son around, because in following the Son around, we’ll become more like the Father. And this means that we need to keep in mind that being/doing distinction. And all I’m saying here is what we’ve been saying. There’s an *indicative*—what God has done for us—and there’s an *imperative*, what we do as a result of that. We remember who we are in Christ, and we do as a result of who we are.

That’s all I have for you today. But next week we’ll go on to Romans chapter 6. We’re at time. But if you have any questions, I’ll be glad to take them. And if you have to leave, now is the time. (*Applause*)

Participant: Getting back to Brian’s question,--

Jeff: Yes, oh yes.

Participant: It wasn’t like Super Man calls on his super powers to avoid temptation, right? He remained fully human, but because of the Holy Spirit He was able to withstand temptation.

Jeff: Through the regular means; through prayer, He appeals to Scripture, He prays and fasts. You know, those kinds of things are the basic things that He does to appeal to the Holy Spirit. Very much so.

The question, though, was about Adam prior to the Fall. And here’s the difficulty. The difficulty is this. How was it that a basically sinless man without a sin nature gave into temptation? And, you know, there are two treatises written on this, one by Augustine and the other by Jonathan Edwards, and they’re both mountain volumes. And they’re struggling. The question is how did he do it?

And you know, in my mind the best answer is the one that the Westminster Shorter Catechism gives, “*left to the freedom of his will, he fell.*” It’s simple and without pronouncement, as it were. I think that is one of those mysteries that remains a mystery, at least in my way of enunciating it, so far, anyway.

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Participant: And then, of course, it goes back even further. How did the devil become the devil? How did Lucifer become Satan?

Jeff: Right.

Participant: Heaven was perfect and there was no sin. Where did that iniquity come in? *(Unclear)*

Second Participant: Freedom.

Jeff: Yes, left to the freedom of their own wills. There may be a good answer. But I don't know how that all works out. Anything else?

Participant: We have to be careful, too. People who don't believe in Christ may point to that and say, “Well, how come the devil became the way he did?”

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And we have to watch.

Jeff: Yes, and I think the strategy, then, is let's not talk about the things that are unrevealed. Let's talk about the things revealed and how you stand on those.

Participant: St. Augustine once said that sin is so ridiculous that it cannot possibly have arrived on its own. Sin is bizarre.

Jeff: Yes. And I note that his view of evil is no thing, the absence of good. That's a good way to think about it. Okay. See you later. All right. Have a good day. Thank you.

Men: Thank you. *(Applause)*