**Union With Christ**

Ephesians 1:1-14.

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**Jeff:** Our gracious God, we praise You and we thank You. We know that we are sitting here and in our churches and in devotions with our families because You first loved us. You loved us and drew us out of a world of darkness, out of the kingdom of sin, and You drew us into Your own blessed kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of Your love. And You set us down and made us princes. Father, we delight in You because You first loved us. And now we love You with fullness of heart, and yet our love could always increase. And so we ask first and foremost that You would increase our love for You.

Lord, we ask that You would help us as well. We know that this life is not always on the mountaintop, but oftentimes has valleys that characterize it. And Lord, as we walk through the valleys of this life we pray that You would cause our eyes to not look downward but to look upward, and so to see the Son. And Lord, we pray that as we make our way through the Valley of Baca in this life that You will always direct our attention away from ourselves, away from our circumstances, and help us to know that our joy is in You.

And Lord, we ask that You will bless us today as we gather to study Your word. We know that Your word is true and is the rock upon which we stand. But it is the foundation upon which we build our entire lives. And we ask, Lord, that You will continually make it firm; not that it isn’t. But make it firm in our own thinking. Lord, help us to embrace it more and to be devoted to what it says even further today than we were yesterday.

Our Father, we pray that You would work in us that which is pleasing in Your sight. Our Father, as we turn our attention to You today, we ask that You would delight to renew our minds, to cause us to think differently—not just about ideas, but about ourselves. Help us to see ourselves as less than others, that we might see others as more. And Father, we pray that in this way we would see them as Christ saw the world. Father, we pray as well that You would help us to see our brothers and our sisters first and foremost in Christ rather than seeing their sins.

Our Lord, we ask that You will bless those among us who are sick and ailing, those who are in need of surgery. We think of Bruce and ask that You would be keeping him. And Father, we pray that You will turn our hearts toward You and our attention, our entire selves, because we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. So as I was thinking about what I wanted to talk to you men about I struggled, because there are a number of things that I’d like to talk to you about. I think there are a couple of series that I would like to hit before we actually tune into a book I hope to receive some suggestions from you if you’d like to hear a particular topic or maybe a series on a topic.

But one of the things I think to myself that we need to hear as men, since this is a men’s Bible study, is what women ought to be doing. No, I’m just kidding! *(Laughter)*

**Ted Wood:** Notice the pause long after you said that.

**Jeff:** Is that right? What did I say?

**Ted:** What women ought to be doing. No, I’m just kidding! *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** All right. So I thought that maybe after this series that what I would do is, maybe I would do a series—I don’t know what I would call it,--about what wives ought to be doing. *(Laughter)* But I’ll start doing a series on being men, something along those lines.

But one of the things that I want us to do is that I want us to think about a topic that I think is important to us. And I’m going to come at it from a little bit of a different perspective, as you will see. But before we get into it and before we unpack how I want us to think about it, why don’t we actually read a text that will get our minds thinking about the topic itself? And the text that I want us to read is Ephesians 1:1-14.

Now the reason I want us to read this text, even though we’re not going to go through it expositionally per se, is that—

**Don Maurer:** Aw!

**Jeff:** What?

**Don:** I said, “Aw!”

**Jeff:** I thought your time was finished. Did you want more? *(Laughter)* The reason I want us to go through reading this text is because it will key up in our thinking the idea that I want us to be thinking about today, and that is *union with Christ.* I want us to think about this for the next few days.

Now what I want you to listen for in this text is prepositional phrases like “in Christ” or “with Christ” or “through Christ”; anything like that. So be listening for those things as we read the text. Don, go ahead and read. Oh, you didn’t bring your Bible today!

**Don:** Well, you know, I didn’t know what you were covering. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** You know, I used to take a systematic theology class when I was in college, and we took our first test. And the professor stood up in front of us after that first test and said, “The tests are good; I want you to know that up front. But no one quoted Scripture.” *(Laughter)* He said, “Systematic theology is about Scripture; I think you ought to be quoting Scripture.” $That was what I thought of.

**Don:** I could have called you.

**Jeff:** No, no.

**Don:** The guilt rests upon me.

**Jeff:** Okay. Ephesians 1: *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,*

*“To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:*

*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Christ Jesus, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He blessed us in the Beloved.*

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him—things in heaven and things on earth.*

*“In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be for the praise of His glory. In Him also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, for the praise of His glory.”*

**Don Maurer:** This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Now if you heard all of these “in Him” phrases there, then you can see why I chose this particular text. It highlights for us this idea of union with Christ, being united to Christ. Now what I want us to do today is that I want us to cover three basic topics. I want us to think about how often the Bible speaks about union with Christ. The Bible speaks often of this union. I want to describe this union, and I want us to think about the payoffs of this union. So let’s think about these things today.

And the first thing that I want us to think about these things today. And the first thing I want us to think about is that *the Bible often speaks of this union.* Now I want us to think about three things when we think about this particular topic. First of all I just want to cover a little bit about my own experience here.

I don’t know about you; I don’t know what your experience would be. I thought about this as I was preparing and I thought: You know, most of you men will probably say to me, “I have always thought for the longest time about my Christian experience as being a life united to Christ.”

Now some of you will not have thought that. In fact it has been my experience that most people don’t think that way. I didn’t think that way. I went through college and seminary and got into the ministry and happened to be reading a book on union with Christ. And I actually said to myself, “I don’t know if we covered this adequately when I was in seminary.” So I went back and I discovered that we did; it was in my notes! I mean, it was there right in front of me, in black and white. And the notes were good notes! And it was an entire section of the fundamentals of salvation! And I still didn’t think of myself as united to Christ until I started reading this book. And then I start to realize that I am missing something in my thinking about my own spiritual experience.

It’s been interesting because it has been my experience that my experience is not alone. I once gave a book to a gal about union with Christ. And she came back and she said to me, “I always thought that this was just a Presbyterian thing.”

I said, “No, it’s a Biblical thing; it’s in the Bible.” But I think we have the tendency to not think about our own experience of the Christian walk as being in Christ. I think that we have this sense that Christ is outside of us, that He did something for us; He gave us something. But I don’t think we have the tendency to think about being united to Him. And that’s what I want us to think about a little bit as we think about this topic.

Here’s the interesting thing. Do you realize that when you think about Paul’s purpose alone, do you know how many times in Paul’s thirteen letters, do you notice how many times he uses “in Christ”—just the preposition “in Christ?” Not any other Greek preposition, but “in Christ.” How many times does he use “in Christ” in the thirteen letters? Do you have a guess?

**John Gratner:** Thirty.

**Jeff: Thirty?**

Ted: I guess it has to be close to a hundred.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Don Bishop:** Ninety.

**Brave Man:** Ninety-one.

**Jeff (laughing):** Ninety-one. Is that the English frequency with which you said that?

**Brave Man:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay. So just with the Greek use of “in Christ,” it’s 73 times. Now that’s not counting (other Greek prepositions); that’s going to be more. And the English probably reflects that difference. But just that prepositional phrase alone is used 73 times in thirteen letters.

So it’s there in Scripture; it’s everywhere in Scripture. In fact I was teaching about this once years and years ago. And I ran into a lady who was in the class many years later. And she said to me, “You know, I never thought about union with Christ. And now I can’t open the Bible without seeing it.” And that’s really true. And it’s not just in the New Testament; it’s in the Old Testament. It’s in the images and types in the Old Testament that we really don’t think about.

In Psalm 125 He surrounds Jerusalem, right? And there’s an Old Testament image about being united to Christ, and so there’s the idea there.

And it’s not just the Bible that speaks about union with Christ. Good theologians speak about union with Christ as well. Let me give you a sampling of this.

This is probably one of the most famous lines that Calvin ever uttered if you’ve read the *Institutes.* He says, *“First we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from Him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us. Therefore He had to become ours and to dwell with us.”*

That’s a very famous line out of the t third book of the *Institutes.* And frankly every word of that ought to be dear to us; that’s an excellent statement.

But there are others. John Calvin also said about the indwelling of Christ in our hearts that *“This mystical union is accorded by us the highest mystery of influence.”* Now let me just stop and ask the question: What does he mean by “mystical union?” That’s something that we should probably think about, because we’re going to see that language. Mystical union is not whew!; it’s not that. Mystical union means “below the level of consciousness.” That is, we are united to Christ before we know we’re united to Christ. We’re united to Christ, and then what happens in our subconsciousness begins to bubble up within our consciousness. Okay, and we’re going to see that in some of the language that we’re going to reference today. So there’s a sense in which the mystical union has reference to what happens to us—what Christ does in us—before we are actually aware of it. Okay?

Now let me just say, if I don’t say it later or it doesn’t come up later, that we can’t point to someone who is not professing Christ and say, “I believe that Christ did something in them twenty years ago; it just never manifested itself in their own consciousness.” That’s not what mystical union is about. Mystical union means that if somebody is manifesting characteristics of having been united to Christ, that means that God did something in them before they recognized it, before it bubbled up into their consciousness. And so we need to recognize that it is God who is first a work in us before we recognize that He was at work in us.

**Don Rimbey:** Hey, Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Don:** Would that be consistent with the passage in John 6 about God drawing us to Him, or a similar concept?

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm. Yes, absolutely. Jonathan Edwards said, *“By virtue of the believer’s union with Christ he doth really possess all things.”* And we saw that in the Scripture reading I read. Look at what verse 3 says: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Now listen to this: *“who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.”* Every spiritual blessing is ours in union with Christ. That’s what Edwards is saying.

Thomas Goodwin: *“Being in Christ and united to Him is the fundamental constitution of the Christian.”* Wow! I mean, that’s amazing when you think about the level of importance that these theologians throughout history have placed on union with Christ.

I was in a conversation with someone not too terribly long ago. And this person was saying to me, “You know, I know about union with Christ. But do you know what? I never thought of myself in that way. And I don’t try to tell others to think about themselves in union with Christ because I’m not really sure why it matters or what it means. And so again, it’s the fundamental constitution of the Christian.

Union with Christ is right at the center of the Christian doctrine of salvation. Lane Tipton was my doctoral professor; a great guy. If you ever get a chance to listen to anything from him or read anything from him, he’s fantastic. *“There are no benefits of the gospel apart from union with Christ.”* Yes?

**Ted:** I think that most evangelical teachers and preachers say that there are no benefits from the gospel apart from Jesus dying for your sins and shedding His blood.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ted:** And that misses the central part of everything.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** It wearies me to go to evangelical churches where all they talk about is the blood and the death of Christ, but not union with Christ.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right. And you’re going to love this one. There’s a third thing that I want us to think about: a couple of crucial distinctions. Now this is probably going to be the most stretching part of what we’re going to do today, okay? But if you’re ready for it, then you’ll be quiet long enough to be stretched a little bit. But there are a couple of distinctions that will be important for us as we think about union with Christ, but not just as we think about it. But a couple of important distinctions will help us to actually answer the question. Why does it matter?

But the first question that we have to kind of wrestle with, or the first distinction that we have to wrestle with, is the *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis.* Those are two different ways of talking about salvation, about the gospel. However, they are uniquely different, even though they talk about one central thing—the commonality of the gospel.

Now what do I mean by this? I mean that the *historia salutis* talks about the history of salvation. That’s what the *historia salutis* is. And the *ordo salutis* talks about the order of salvation.

Now what’s the difference? Well, when we think about the *historia salutis,* or the history of salvation, we are thinking about what Christ did in history to accomplish our salvation. That’s what we’re thinking about.

Now when we think about that, theologians and especially confessional theologians have reduced that to two estates. In other words, we think about Christ’s humiliation—His descent from heaven in coming to earth, His living out the perfect life and so on, His death on the cross, His burial. And then we think about His exaltation: His resurrection from the dead, His appearances in His glorified state, His ascension into heaven. I’m going to give you these in just a minute. But that’s what we think of when we think of the history of salvation: what Christ did to accomplish my salvation.

So what was the estate of Christ’s humiliation? I will just use the *Westminster Larger Catechism* as an example. *“The estate of Christ’s humiliation was that low condition wherein He for our sakes, emptying Himself of His glory, took on the form of a servant in His conception, birth, life, death and after His death, until His resurrection,”* because at the Resurrection begins His exaltation.

Okay. So what was the state of His exaltation? His resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of the Father, His coming again to judge the world. Nevertheless, all of that is what He did to accomplish salvation.

It’s sort of like Ted was saying. As Ted was saying, where do we stop? Most people stop with this right here. They don’t even talk about His life, which is the basis of our righteousness. They mostly talk about the death of Christ, which is for what? His curse-bearing and so the forgiveness of our sins.

But if you only talk about the death of Christ and the forgiveness of our sins, think about that. Where does that leave us, theologically and practically speaking? If we can think about it like this, it leaves us in a place where Adam was in the garden, only with another shot, because it doesn’t put us in a righteous position; it only puts us in a forgiven one, so that we can go back into the Garden of Eden and reset and do it all over again; failure all over again. Those are the implications if we only talk about the death of Christ. That’s why we need to talk about all of the life of Christ and what He did to accomplish our salvation, because for instance, why talk about the birth of Christ? Why make that a big deal?

Well, one of the great theologians in the ancient church said that *“what is not assumed is not redeemed.”* In other words, if Christ didn’t take upon Himself the likeness of human flesh, human flesh is not redeemed. And so all of these things have their place and importance in our thinking about the accomplishment of salvation. Salvation is big; it’s all of Christ’s life, both His humiliation and His exaltation, okay? So when we think about the *historia salutis*—the history of salvation,--we’re thinking about what Jesus did to accomplish salvation.

Okay now: another distinction. Before I go to that distinction, let me just tell you that I’m passing over the *ordo salutis* because I’m going to get to it. But just so you know, the *ordo salutis* is everything accomplished in Christ, that applied to us. The *ordo salutis* is the order of salvation. All things that Christ accomplished on my behalf are now applied to me by the Holy Spirit. We’ll get there, just so you have the distinction now. So the *historia salutis* is what Christ accomplished. The *ordo salutis* is that applied to the individual.

When we talk about the gospel, I’ll say this. I’m getting ahead of myself. Another distinction is *union and communion.* This is an important distinction that we need to make, because when we think about union with Christ we only talk about union with Christ. And yet when you think about good theologies or confessional language, you always make a distinction between union and communion.

Let me give you an example of this. This again is from the *Westminster Larger Catechism,* Question 65. *“What special benefits do members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?*

Answer: *“The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy union and communion with Him in grace and glory.”* Now you think to yourself: That’s a synonym, right? This is just heaping up words here to say the same old thing. And you’d be wrong if you thought that; it’s not a synonym. This is a point that’s being made that needs to be more taken up by us if we’re to understand the difference between what happens in us when we’re unconscious of it, and what happens in us when we’re conscious of it. This is where that comes in, that which is important for us in our thinking: that God does something in us before we recognize that He has done something in us.

Let me give you a for instance. I don’t know if this is your experience or not. But it has previously been my experience to have sat in church services and to have been bored stiff. I mean, I did not want to be there. I was there because I knew it was the right thing. My parents brought me to church from the time I was seven up through. And you know, here I am at eighteen years old; I’m graduated from high school. I don’t want to be there. But I’m there because I’m thinking to myself: That is where any good, upstanding citizen ought to be. So I’m there most of the time, not all of the time.

But anyway, I’m sitting there. And I distinctly remember leaving the church not feeling the same way as I once had. In other words, I could tell that a shift had taken place in my thinking with regard to the importance of being there, with regard to what was being said from the pulpit. There was a shift that I had undergone. And I didn’t make that shift happen. That was a shift that God did below the surface before it came to my attention. That’s the difference between union and communion.

Now let me show you a little bit of this. What is the union which the elect have with Christ? This is Question 66. *“The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God’s grace.”* Notice that it’s the work of God’s grace. *“Whereby they are spiritually and mystically”*—there’s that word *mystically* again,--spiritually it is done by the Spirit. Mystically it’s below the level of consciousness; it’s happening in my subconscious.

Think about an iceberg. The iceberg has the clip. And then below the water it takes on all the rest of the iceberg. And we’re told that below the water is how much of the brain we don’t use. Well, guess what? God is using that part of it. Below the water is where He works at the beginning. *“Mystically, yet really and inseparably joined to Christ as their Head and husband, which is done in their effectual calling.”* In other words,--and we’re going to look at this,--effectual calling is when God calls us below the level of consciousness into a relationship with Himself. And in John chapter 6 He draws us into that relationship with Himself before we are even cognizant of it.

**Ted:** We have that union before we have the communion.

**Jeff:** We have the union before we have the communion, because the union is what He objectively does in us.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Jeff:** The communion is our subjective experience of what He has done objectively in us. And so Question 69, a few questions later, is: *“What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?”*

And here it is. *“The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ is their partaking of the virtue of His mediation in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else in this life manifests their union with Him.”* In other words, justification, adoption, sanctification—all those things—all of those things are one. Those things are the *ordo salutis,* the application of the history of redemption. In other words, that’s the application of Christ to me.

And so now, when I think about communion with Christ, I ought to be thinking about those things that manifest themselves in the *ordo salutis;* that’s the idea. All right. I just want to give you time to ask any questions or follow up with anything you want to follow up with, because what we’re going to do is that we’re going to go to the union aspect of this, and we’re going to talk about it. I want to talk to you then about how I want us to approach it. Yes, Don?

**Don Maurer:** Jeff, would union and communion be the same kind of distinction that we would make between justification and sanctification? Sanctification is inevitable with justification, but they are distinct. And the same is with union and communion. If you have union with Christ you’re going to have communion with Him, right?

**Jeff:** Yes, you will.

**Don:** They are inseparable, but they are distinct.

**Jeff:** Yes. Ted?

**Ted:** I’ve found that this doctrine—this teaching—is the only thing that keeps me sane, because everything else is a matter of looking at my performance or my thoughts or anything else. I have no confidence, except that I’m in union with Him.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** Do you find that to be true?

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Ted:** That’s why it’s so important to me. And if we don’t believe that we go along as Christians trying in some way to say that we’re doing better than we actually are. We’re looking at ourselves, rather than looking at Him.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

. *(Unclear)* I read t3his: Here I am. Here is a book. When I am meeting Him, every place He goes I go. It was a very powerful image that he talked about.

**Jeff:** Yeaned when I was preaching—What else do you have?

**Ted:** That’s it.

**Brave Man:** Jeff, is union with Christ predestination, meaning that I’m united to Christ before I even exist?

**Jeff:** An eternal justification?

**Brave Man:** I don’t know exactly what I’m asking. Were we united to Christ before we existed? That’s predestination, right?

**Jeff:** Yeah. I’ll give you how I would frame it, and then you can push me back if you would like. By decree all that is in Christ, all that is of Christ, is mine.

**Ted:** Mm-hmm.

**Jeff:** But I don’t move from being under wrath to being under grace and so in union with Him until history. In other words, as Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, we were all dead in our sins and transgressions before we made that move into Christ, before He made us alive in Him, which is what Ephesians 2:4 says. So by decree all that is of Christ is mine if I am the elect. And yet I have to be born into this world, born into sin, and come to that point in time where I move from wrath to grace. Is that—

**Brave Man:** I think so. It is inevitable though, right? I am created and I come to Christ.

**Jeff:** If I’m in Christ by decree I will be in Christ in history at some point, at whatever time that decree is appointed. Yes?

**Ron Baling:** What does Paul say? There is support for that in Scripture.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ron:** You must be born again.

**Jeff:** That’s right. What was decreed has to actually happen. Anything else? I’ll say this to you. One of the examples that I think is a helpful one is in Ephesians 5, where it says that the relationship between husband and wife is a visible example of union with Christ and the union that Christ has with His people. And that’s why anybody who is married has to recognize that if you’re the husband that you play Christ in this relationship. If you’re the wife, you play the church, which is why the husband is the head and the wife submits. The husband loves, the wife respects; you know that relationship.

Oftentimes when I do a wedding I tell them this. I say, think about being in a movie theater. You’re in a movie theater and you’re all the way back, and your hand is up; you’re back here. What’s my hand going to look like on the screen?

**Jim Hamilton:** Big.

**Jeff:** Big and monstrous, right? But the closer I move to the screen, the more the shape on the screen begins to look like a hand. And by the time I get it up here, oh, there it is! And by the time I get it up to here, it looks like a hand. And now, if I lay my hand on the screen, here’s the point.

The point is that now my hand looks like the hand on the screen. But Christ never actually becomes *(unclear)* But because of my being united to Him, my life conforms to His image. And so there’s always going to be a difference between Christ and me. I’m never going to get lost in Christ. I’m never going to lose my identity in Christ. But my life is going to look more and more like Him.

Back here, my life looks monstrous apart from Him. But the closer I am drawn to Him, the more my life looks like Him.

Now let me just say this to you, and here is something that Ted said earlier. There are going to be times, s even though I am united to Christ and in union with Christ, that my life looks pretty monstrous.

**Ted:** Yep.

**Jeff:** Think about David’s life. His life looked pretty monstrous though he was united to Christ. But communion with Christ is a different scenario. The point or the goal of union is communion. And yet my communion may have ups and downs and breaks within it.

This is why Ted would say that it’s union with Christ that keeps me sane. Why? Because I know that there are times where I may stumble and where my life looks monstrous. I rest on the union that I have with Christ, though the communion may be broken at this time.

Okay, that’s huge when you think about it, because if you don’t have union with Christ as a ballast, what you begin to do is, you begin to say, “I think that I may be so bad that I don’t have my salvation anymore.”

**Ted:** And then you start to lie to yourself. You try to find reasons why you really do have salvation in spite of your thoughts, your feelings, your actions and everything else.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I’m really good; I’m better than some people, right?

**Ted:** Or just the fact that because of abiding sin I think about myself all the time. Everything is kind of registered with me.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. Okay, so let’s describe union; what is it? Well we just saw it. But let me throw this up on the board, and then I’m going to put some Scripture references up here so that you see them. But we are justified in Christ.

Now this is bigger than what we’re going to talk about today. But the idea of justification means what? Romans 8:1: *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Justified in Christ Jesus; no condemnation. I am adopted in Christ. You read that in Ephesians 1:4 and 5; we were adopted in Him.

Now let me tell you what that means. That means that you are now part of a family, a body, a kingdom that we call the church. That means that I have siblings in my union with Christ. I am not in Christ alone. *(Jeff sings):* “I come to the garden alone.” *(Laughter)* No, no, no! You don’t come to the garden alone. You come to the garden with a bunch of other siblings in Christ, right? That’s the idea. And so you are adopted in Christ; you share a family.

*Sanctified in Christ.* 1 Corinthians 6:11 says: *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* And so we are justified and sanctified.

I should say this. Sanctification is positional and it is developmental. That is, when you think about sanctification definitively, you should think about being moved from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of His love. The reason I say that is because there are places in the New Testament that talk about our sanctification as having been completed. And so it is a realm change; we’ve moved from one realm to the other.

However, I’m becoming a new citizen of that realm, which means that I’m getting used to, getting familiar with, getting to know the requirements of that kingdom. And my life is expected to comply with those requirements. That’s the progressive aspect of sanctification.

Then we die in Christ: 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and Revelation 14:13.

**Transcriber’s Note:** 1 Thessalonians 4:17, NKJV. *“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

Revelation 14L:13: *“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”*

**Jeff:** And I just put this up there. But here’s the beautiful thing. The beautiful thing about it is that when I die, my body means something to the Lord. And so my confessional documents say—and I’m talking about the *Westminster Larger Catechism* again,--that I am absent from the body and present in spirit with the Lord. But my body rests in the grave as in its bed, and still united to Christ. And so my whole person is still united to Jesus Christ. I’m present with Him in spirit. My body is still united to Him. And on the last great day my body and soul will be reunited. So I die, and my whole death experience is in union with Christ.

And then I’ll be glorified in Christ. Romans 8:30 says: *“And those whom He predestined He also called; and those He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified.”* So there’s a portion of the *ordo salutis* there. So that’s the *ordo salutis.*

Now what’s the payoff? I went through this rather quickly. And I did this because in some sense I think that if you have some familiarity with the order of salvation you already know a good portion of those things and what they mean for us. But what is the theme of our union or communion? What’s the goal? In other words, what do we hope to attain?

There was a movie out in 1983. I think it was called “Tender Mercies.” Robert Duval played a washed-up song writer, and he got taken under his wing by a widow named Rosalie and her young son; I think his name was Sonny. And in one part of the movie Mac the songwriter and Sonny get baptized. And they’re on their way back in the truck, and there’s this conversation that takes place.

And I think Sonny says something like “Well Mac, we actually did it.”

“Yep, we did.”

“Do you feel different?”

“Well, not yet. Well maybe a little bit. Do I look different?”

“No, you don’t look any different.” And what are they asking? They’re asking, what difference in the world does this make? Does it make any difference at all?

You know, we just walked through some theological concepts—justification, sanctification, glorification. And the question is: What real difference does any of this make? We can talk about them; we can discuss them. They’re all important; they’re all Biblical. But what real difference do any of those make?

What I want us to think about in just thinking about this short series is that I want us to think about union and communion. And I want to compare them to His presence and the sense of His presence. In other words, union is comparable to His presence. He is there even if you don’t have a sense of His presence.

Now you say to me, “How do I even start from that basis?” Well let me give you an example. Let’s say that you’ve made a profession of faith to your elders or your leadership board, and you joined the church and were baptized.

That’s a good place to start. Your profession of faith was judged to be credible, and you were given the sign of a disciple: baptism. Now you may have grown up in a Presbyterian context, and you may go to the elders and say, “I was baptized when I was an infant. And that way I’m professing the faith that was held out to me in my baptism.” And so you are not re-baptized. You are making a credible profession of faith to your elders, so either one.

What I’m saying is, start with the presence, whether you feel it or not, whether you have a sense of it or not.

And then let’s talk about communion, because communion is where the rubber hits the road. It’s what it means to have a sense of God’s presence. And sometimes I think that’s where we get hung up the most. We get hung up the most when we ask: What does this matter? And what difference does justification make in my life? What difference does sanctification make? Oh, I’ve got to become more like Christ. But what difference does it make? What about glorification, and so on? In other words, how do these things really meet me where I live? That’s what I want us to talk about, at least for one more session as we think about these things.

But more than that, I think that in looking at these things, what we are looking to do is to become more Christlike—the hand moving closer to the screen. In other words, it is one thing to say that the presence of God and the union with Christ that I enjoy is always there. But I always live my life with my hand being on one side of the screen, and I never move closer to the screen. That’s when I need to start to ask myself: Do I really enjoy the presence of Christ to begin with? If my life never changes, if my life never moves, if I say, “I joined the church in 1973 and haven’t attended since,” come on! That’s when you say, okay. You made a profession thirty years ago, maybe longer.

**Brave Man:** Fifty.

**Jeff:** Fifty years ago, thanks. *(Laughter)* And so the whole idea of thinking through this is not to increase our theological knowledge—though that may happen,--but what I want us to do is to talk about the rubber meeting the road and communion with Christ. So let me end there and ask if you have any questions.

And I’ll also place in your mind that we’re going to hit this for another time or two, another week or two. And then I’d like to move to another series. If in that time after this next series—and that’s the one on masculinity,--if in that time you have an idea of where you would like to go with a series or a study, let me know and I’ll see if I can accommodate that for you. Any questions about this so far? No? Okay, let me pray and we’ll close out.

Father, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Thank You, Lord, for that union and the communion. We pray, Father, that You will help us to not just rely upon the union but enjoy the communion. We ask, Lord, that You’ll send us forth in the midst of this day with Your blessing, that we might be a blessing to others. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*