**Union With Christ**

Ephesians 1:1-14

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 **Jeff:** Our gracious God, we give You thanks that You are God, that You have revealed Yourself in the way in which You have. Father, we recognize that what You know of Yourself is impossible for us to know, for it is immense and infinite, and we can’t even describe it without using created language like that. And yet we know that You are far more and know Yourself in a way wholly other than we do. And yet we are delighted by the fact that You have condescended and revealed Yourself to us in ways that are accommodated and suited to us, and You’ve revealed Yourself truly . Lord, we are so thankful that when we view You we will see You as You are. And yet, Lord, we know even that way will be a way that only a created person can meet You and greet You. And yet we know that it will be true and right. And Father, we ask that You will prepare us for that even now as we study Your word that You’ve revealed about Yourself.

 And we pray that not only would we be prepared in our minds to see you, but we also pray that our lives will be conformed to Your word, and more importantly to a Savior who has embodied Your word. And as we are found in Him, may we pray that our lives would be shaped in His likeness.

 Father, as we bow before You today we recognize that there is only a fraction of the Word in every one of us, and yet we long for more. And so we pray, we ask, we beseech You, that You would continue to work in us that which is pleasing in Your sight. And Lord, we pray that You would make us men who are adept in the very basics of the Christian life. Make us believing and repenting men. And Lord, we pray that You’ll make us models of those too, pillars of truth, that we might not only find a great deal of strength not only in ourselves, but that You would use us in the lives of others, that they might be helped as well.

 Father, we are thankful for the way in which You have preserved our lives. And Lord, we are thankful for the many blessings that You give to us, even and especially the ones that go unnoticed by us. Yet there are blessings that we encounter day in and day out for which we pause now and give You thanks, whether that be family or friends or the fellowship of the church—the communion of the saints, the means of grace, and certainly Your word.

 Lord, bless us now as we gather together, as we think about things that pertain to Your counsel and Your will and Your work in our lives. We ask, Lord, that You will do these things not just for our good. But we pray that You will do these things to Your abounding glory. We ask it in Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

 **Brave Men:** Amen.

 **Jeff:** All right. Well, today what we’re going to do is finish up in talking about union with Christ; I wanted to talk about some of those things. We talked about justification the last time we were together. I want us to talk about the *ordo* this time; we’re going to start with justification. I have a few more thoughts that I want to work through with you. But then I want us to move to the other parts of the *ordo.* And so first of all, let me have us turn our attention to Ephesians chapter 1 and really use that as our base text.

 Just so you know, somebody mentioned to me that he would like to hear something on identity, and so I think we’re going to move to that next time. And if you have any topics that you would like to chew over, let me know and we’ll try to work on some of those into future lessons. So let’s turn to Ephesians chapter 1, and let’s read the first fourteen verses.

 *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God:*

 *To the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful to 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 heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him from 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 Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace through which He has 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 to the praise of His glory.*

 *And then also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.”* This is the word of the Lord.

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

 **Jeff:** One thing before I get started. I mentioned to you that we would be doing a series on being men and masculinity and that sort of thing, not just identity. And so we have those topics coming.

 Let’s take a look at union with Christ. Remember, we are looking at union with Christ from a particular vantage point. We’re looking at union with Christ from the vantage point of experience. And we want to know what difference it makes. How does the rubber meet the road? Yes, I understand that the work of Christ—the *historia salutis*—has been applied to me; I understand that. But the question is: Is the *ordo salutis*—that is, the gospel applied to me—is it just a series of doctrines that I need to know? For instance, when you think about the *ordo salutis,* one of the things that you think about is predestination. You think about election. You think about the call, you think about regeneration—effectual calling, as it is put in the Westminster Confession. You think about conversion and repentance and faith. You think about justification, and on and on and on.

 And the question that you might want to ask yourself is: Is this just a series of doctrines that I’m supposed to understand to the best of my ability but which has no bearing on my life? In other words, is justification something I just understand, but that doesn’t really help me? I think the answer to that is no; it does help us, and I think it helps us a great deal not only to understand these things, but I think that if we truly want to experience the power of the gospel t these things need to be understood in an experiential and a very practical way. So that’s what I want us to think about as we finish up this series.

 And there is so much more that we could say; I’m only going to say a few things about each one. But I do want to revisit justification by faith, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. And we’re going to touch on those things to a greater or a lesser degree.

 I do need to mention one thing though. I want to mention that conversion fits in there. Remember, I’m basically taking for granted what we already looked at. For instance, we are looking at those things that constitute communion with Christ. The aspects of union with Christ are things like calling and regeneration. Those things establish our union with Christ. But remember that when I talked to you in the first lesson I said to you that communion with Christ—and this is from the Larger Catechism—communion with Christ picks up with these topics. And these are the things whereby we have communion; that is, we enjoy an experiential relationship with the Lord. So I want us to think about these.

 But before justification there is what we call conversion; conversion is repentance and faith. And again this is just a lot of review. Now I’m going to bring some of these things in as we make our way through these concepts.

 So I want us first to think about justification by faith. But let me ask you: Are there any questions that you might want to ask, or other things you want to say before we head into this? No? Okay.

 All right, let’s think about justification by faith. And I have a very specific question that I’m going to ask you in regard to this particular point. What does it mean to be justified? To the best of your ability, if somebody asks you what justification means, what would you tell him? What answer would you give to him? Yes?

 **Don Rimbey:** Forgiveness?

 **Jeff:** Okay, forgiveness of our sins. What else? Go ahead.

 **Don Bishop:** A legal declaration whereby God in Christ declares and sees us as righteous.

 **Jeff:** So it’s a legal declaration about us. But that legal declaration is made about us because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. And that legal declaration is what?

 **Ron Baling:** Not guilty.

 **Jeff:** Not guilty.

 **Don Maurer:** Righteous.

 **Jeff:** Forgiven, not guilty and righteous. There are two aspects to that, aren’t there? There’s the aspect of forgiveness of sin. But if that’s all there is, we’re in some trouble, aren’t we? Because if all you’ve been is forgiven of your sin, but you haven’t been made righteous—constituted righteous, having the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account,--you are in big trouble because you are basically back to where Adam was in the garden. You’re forgiven of your sins with a clean slate; all right, let’s give this thing a try again. And we all know where that’s going to end up if that’s where we are.

 So it’s not just that we’re forgiven of our sins; it’s Romans 5:19.

 **Transcriber’s Note:** Romans 5:19, NKJV. *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”*

 **Jeff:** Made righteous, constituted righteous. We have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. And so the declaration is not guilty; righteous. Okay? So that’s what it means to be justified.

 Now let me ask you a question. What does it feel like to be justified?

 **Brave Man:** Relieved.

 **Don Nemit:** Unburdened.

 **Jeff:** Unburdened; relieved.

 **Ted Wood:** Peace with God.

 **Jeff:** Peace with God, right? Somebody said “Free.” What else? No, that will be good. Then let me ask this. How many experience that regularly? And what I mean is,--and let me just ask the question; let’s put in the negative,--how many of you still feel guilty?

 **Bob Busteed:** I wish I didn’t. *(Laughter)*

 **Jeff:** That’s all right.

 **Bob:** I don’t think I should have said that.

 **Jeff:** Well no; you’re not guilty. If you stand in Christ, you are not guilty.

 **Bob:** You are being declared righteous in Him.

 **Jeff:** Yes, that’s right.

 **Mike Davis:** I think that I feel guilty if I don’t repent. *(Unclear)*

 **Jeff:** Okay, so we’re getting into the weeds now, because what we’re talking about here are two different things. We’re basically talking about my sense of guilt for my current actions which are sinful. Or we’re talking about my sense of guilt for past sins, right?

 Now I know Colossians 3 tells me that I’m forgiven *all* my sins, right? So there is one sense in which if I am genuinely in Christ there is an arbitrary distinction between the sins I’ve committed now for which I feel guilty for which I repent, and the sins I committed long ago.

 Maybe there’s no way to repent of those. For instance, maybe there is a sin against somebody who has now passed for which I can’t go back and repent, that sort of thing. But if I am forgiven of all my sins in Jesus Christ, there’s an arbitrary distinction between what I need to repent of now and what I may not be able to repent of in the past.

 So I basically have this at issue: I have past sins that I may or may not be able to make right. I have present sins for which I’d better repent of. There’s a sense in which I need to repent of these sins, but I’m forgiven in Christ. So the question that Calvin asks is this: Why do I need to repent? And his answer is that it is more for me than it is for God. I need to repent because I need to remind myself that I’ve been forgiven, and I need to have that sense of being forgiven. And that’s really what we’re driving at, because I feel guilty for past sins and I feel guilty for present sins, but I’m forgiven all my sins in Christ.

 And so the question becomes: What is it to feel justified when some people really feel plagued about sin incidents? And that is an affliction of the conscience. Okay?

 **Brave Man:** Where does Jesus fit into all of this?

 **Jeff:** You’re anticipating. *(Laughter)* Get ready! You’re gearing up for the day!

 **Brave Man:** I’m thinking about it.

 **Jeff:** Yeah. Well there’s a lot of truth to that, right? You know, it would be wrong of us to say that no one here is plotting, right?

 **Ted:** Plodding or plotting?

 **Jeff:** Plotting.

 **Ted:** We are plodding; yes we are. *(Laughter)* And we’re plotting; we’re all thinking about it.

 **Jeff:** You know, You know I have hearing aids. *(Laughter)* And he’s looking at me like “I know.”

 **Ted:** In our sin we plot in advance. We sit there and think about the business meeting coming up. We’re trying to anticipate what that person who is giving us a rough time will say.

 **Jeff:** Yes.

 **Ted:** I mean, it just happened to me yesterday.

 **Jeff:** Yes. Sometimes the things that we plan to say are not all that nice, right?

 **Ted:** Oh, absolutely, because they are mostly for my justification.

 **Jeff:** Right. Now I want to wipe off the table. Let’s say that you are already doing that. Let’s say we’re anticipating sin in the future. Let’s say that Ted is sitting here; we’ll use him as an example. He has a meeting today. I don’t know if he does, but he’s thinking about what he’s going to say to that crabby old lady who always gives him grief, right? I’m not talking about your wife. *(Laughter)* All right now, listen. Let’s put future sins up here. Now what I want to say is that when you think about past sins, present sins or future sins, what I’m not saying is that there is no requirement for repentance; there is. We need to repent of our sins. But what I’m dealing with, what I’m trying to get at, is not so much that we need to or don’t need to; I think we need to repent of our sins. My issue is: Why do we feel plagued in our consciences about those sins for which we have repented? Not the ones we are plotting; we need to repent of those. But our present sins that we’ve repented of and our past sins that we’ve repented of, why is it that we still feel guilty if we have been justified, if we are declared not guilty?

 **David Pinyot:** Because we have a spirit of the world who constantly plagues our consciences about what we’ve done and giving us guilt.

 **Jeff:** Okay, that’s a great segway, because think about the conscience. The etymology of conscience is *with knowledge. Sciencia* is knowledge; *con* is with; *with knowledge.* So when we talk about conscience we’re talking about operating at a certain level of knowledge.

 For instance, let’s take the person who is superstitious. Let’s take somebody whose an animist, who believes that there are spirits in the wind and spirits in the trees. And if they hear a rustling in the leaves they think the spirit is angry with them when the wind is picking up.

 And we would say to them, “Look, you need a little knowledge,” right? And that may be something that we would talk about with somebody in the secular world. But we talk about this as well, and I’m going to bring up a controversial topic. But Romans 14 and 15 talk about the stronger and weaker consciences. And for instance I would say that when you talk about alcohol, there are weak conscience folks who say no; even to taste it is a sin—tea-totaling. And then there are strong consciences who would say no; use control, right? The alcohol is not in control; I’m forbidden to be drunk. But I am permitted to have a drink.

 And so you have strong and weak consciences on that kind of issue, right? And so the strong conscience is going to say that with the person’s weak conscience, he is operating on a level of knowledge that needs to be upgraded, right? They’re operating on a level of knowledge that means that they need to be taught. Their consciences need to be instructed so that they can operate in a more responsible way, so they can think in a more responsible way about a particular issue.

 So when we think about conscience we think about operating with knowledge, okay? And we think either about our consciences operating with little knowledge or more knowledge. That’s basically what we need to think of when we think of conscience.

 Now if I still feel guilty about past sins and present sins for which I have repented of, then I am operating with a weak conscience. In other words, I’m operating with a weak understanding of justification by faith.

 Now did the Corinthians understand that? If I go to someone with a weaker conscience regarding justification by faith, that means that he is not understanding something about justification. And this is where faith comes in, because think about faith. What are its constituent parts? You know as well as I do that it’s cat spelled with a k. So it’s knowledge, it’s assent and it’s trust.

 And think about that for just a minute. If the conscience is operating with a certain amount of knowledge, then faith which begins with knowledge is then connected to my conscience. In other words, think about it this way. I’m justified by faith. That means that my experience of justification comes through faith. If I’m operating with weak faith then I’m going to be operating with a weak conscience, with an understanding about justification that needs to be increased because I may go around always feeling guilty of sins for which I’ve repented because I have a lack of understanding of what justification means regarding me.

 **Ted:** Right.

 **Jeff:** That is because I need faith; I need a new conscience. So my faith needs to be instructed so that my conscience can operate at another level. Now let me ask: Is everybody following this? Yes? Okay, go ahead.

 **Ted** With conscience, where do regret and consequences come in? I certainly feel and have regret for failures with other people and hurting other people.

 **Jeff:** That’s a really good question; let me start with this really quick, and I’ll say something right after that. But let me say this really quick. Okay, I want you to think about this. If strengthened faith increases my ability to operate with a stronger conscience, then what do I need to do? I need to inform myself about what I possess in Christ: I possess justification. That means that I need to inform myself about what justification means.

 Now that also means that I need to say it to myself even if I don’t believe it, because even some Christian people will say you know, I want to believe that, but I don’t know. It just seems that I’ve sinned a lot. They have that struggle. You need to say to yourself that if I have faith, I believe that applies to me. And that’s where this idea of the assent to the doctrine comes in. At that point I have to cast myself on the Word and trust Him for it.

 So this is how faith is strengthened so it is strengthened in my conscience. That happens, and as that happens we grow in our ability to operate with a stronger conscience.

 Now Ted raised a great question: What about regret? What about consequences?—those kinds of things. Did you want to say something?

 **Ted:** I’m thinking right now; I’ve been thinking of many instances. I’m 76 years old and I’m still burdened about the day when we told our kids that we were getting a divorce. My son was barely seven years old. He was crying and he said, “Please don’t do it, Daddy; please don’t do this!” And I know that my sin made that happen. I believe that I’ve been forgiven; otherwise I would go crazy.

 **Jeff:** Yeah.

 **Ted:** I have to believe; I have no other option.

 **Jeff:** Yes.

 **Ted:** But there is that painful memory. And I know I’m not just speaking for myself, because I think some of you hide and pretend that things didn’t happen in your lives. *(Unclear)* My past, I’m going to be burdened with that; that is one of the consequences of sin. I’m going to be burdened with that till the day I die, and it wears on me.

 **Jeff:** Yeah. Do you know what, though? You’re talking about the consequences, and those are real, right? Every time I think about something like that I think about David and Bathsheba, only because here’s a guy who has an affair, kills the guy’s wife, (sorry; kills the gal’s husband!), commits adultery and commits murder. And then he’s confronted by the prophet. He’s confronted with the parable of the guy that takes a ewe lamb from the family that doesn’t have anything else. The guy who takes it is a rich guy.

 David says, “That guy needs to be repaid fourfold.” And David is repaid fourfold, right? There is a curse that is applied to him that happens in a fourfold manner. And then the curse immediately begins to unwind itself.

 Think about it. Amnon rapes Tamar his sister; sexual sin. And then what happens? Absalom kills Amnon. So there’s sexual sin and murder. That happens right after David and Bathsheba’s adultery and murder. And so God is showing us in His word that the curses is working itself out.

 Now here’s the deal. David is an unrepeatable figure in history. In redemptive history we’re never going to see another David. David is the lesser, right? His greater Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is never going to be a lesser David.

 But what happens to David is not only what happens to us in terms of consequences. So we may not say that we experience the same thing as David, because David’s experience as a redemptive/historical figure occurs in that time in redemptive history. We’re not like that; we’re not David.

 However, we do things that bring consequences, and those mirror David’s curse. That’s the kind of thing that we experience. So that is what you’re saying, right? You’re going to live with the consequences of your sin, and other people will as well.

 Now here’s the beautiful thing about it. The beautiful thing about it is, as David is weaving through this narrative one of the things you need to think about is that when Absalom declares himself king, and David says, “Hey, we better get out of here or we’re going to die,” do you remember? David does some interesting things. Somebody raids the ark. And he says, “No, no; we’re not going to do that. That isn’t a magic box. That belongs in God’s house. And if God shows me His favor He’ll bring me back to it. I’m not carting Him around like He’s a magic talisman.”

 I mean, all of a sudden David who is living with his consequences is again thinking rightly, right? For instance, what else does he say? Somebody tempts him. Ahithophel, whose counsel is like God, is with Absalom. And what does he do? He prays that God would darken Ahithophel’s counsel. And he is again operating as a man under God’s own heart. He’s living with the consequences of his actions. But that doesn’t mean that he can’t be a faithful, devoted, pious man of God. He is! All his actions indicate that. He just has a sin that everybody knows is a blemish on his life. Everybody knows it, and everybody knows a lot of the things that he’s doing. But they look at him even in the midst of that and they say, “You know what?” The worst person is going to say, “He deserves so and so.” But a brother is going to say, “He did wrong, but he’s responding in all the right ways. Now it’s a shame what he did before. That would be vicious and I would never say that to him because that would be ungracious. But he is responding in all the right ways.”

 And if we are in the midst of consequences, then the only thing for us to do is to exacerbate our consciences by dealing with them in terrible ways, or to help our consciences by living in faith and handling them in the right ways. Those are the only options for us; those are the only options. Does anybody else have questions or comments?

 **Don Rimbey:** We also have Satan, the *diabolos.*

 **Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. I mean, think about that. Satan accuses us. Why? Because he knows this is the very place where we struggle most. You did this! And the striking thing about this is that I think about *Pilgrim’s Progress,* where Christian leaves the Palace Beautiful. And he has all of these beautiful relationships with Christian people. And he leaves them and encounters the Valley of the Shadow of Death and the Valley of Humiliation. And the first person he encounters there is Apollyon. And what does Apollyon do? He accuses him. And he says, “You were never faithful to your new Lord; you were always unfaithful!” He accuses him.

 And that’s what Satan does to us? Why? Because he attacks us at the very point where we are susceptible: at our justification.

 Why? Our justification is unshakable. It’s the Judge’s declaration that we’re no longer guilty on the basis of His Son. But that’s not the problem. The problem is my experience of having been justified. You see, my problem is isn’t whether or not I’ve been justified. If I’m in Christ I’ve been justified. My problem is experiencing the benefit of it.

 And that can only happen by faith. That’s why we talk about justification by faith. But faith is a subjective, existential, experiential conversion point for us. And it can be strong or weak. And so it’s in my best interest to increase the strength of my faith. How? By calling out to God and being strengthened by faith, by taking the constituent elements of faith: growing in knowledge, assenting to everything I believe if I have doubts about it, and throwing myself upon the Lord and trusting Him for all these things so that I can live with a strengthened conscience, so that I can experience the benefits of justification by faith.

 **Jim Hamilton:** *(Unclear)*

 **Jeff:** Well let me say this. This is a very good point, and here is what I want to guard against. I never want us to feel good about repentance, because it isn’t repentance that saves us; it’s Christ who saves us through our faith and repentance. In other words, faith and repentance are the vehicles or the means by which we experience all of that which is there in Christ. So I should never stop at feeling good about repenting, because repenting is what gets me to the benefits of Christ.

 So I would say this to you. To the person who stands back and says, “I’m going to repent of this sin, but I’m going to hold onto that one, and I’m going to feel good about having repented of this sin, but what am I going to do about this sin?” That’s not the question. The question for that person is: Am I feeling good about repentance? Or do I possess the Christ who justifies? And if I possess the Christ who justifies, then I don’t want to hold onto these things for which He had to go to the cross and die. I want those things as far away from me as possible.” And that means that I repent of all.

 We just read *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices* last night in our group. And Thomas Brooks said that the person who doesn’t repent of all sin doesn’t repent of one sin. And we talked about the nature of that saving us. But Brooks said that all sin attacks God at His glory. And if I repent of one sin but hold onto one sin I’m still attacking God at His glory, right; I’m still offending His glory. So there needs to be at least a desire to repent of all sins so that I can lay hold of Christ. Does that help?

 **Jim:** Yeah.

 **Jeff:** Okay. Anything else?

 **Ted:** It seems that when I do my devotions and I try to go through the memory of my sins from the day before, it never ends. So to say that I have to repent of every one of my sins is an existentially absurd statement.

 **Jeff:** But there’s an attitude, right? And yet that attitude, which you have just expressed, is that I need to repent of all of my sin that is possible. I want you to think of it like this.

 We have a tendency to think that the Old Testament system of sacrifice was a system that was set up to forgive us of all of our sins on a daily basis, and that’s not true. Do you realize that those sacrifices which were to be offered day in and day out were for unintentional sins? In other words there was an assumption that the sacrifice was a believer who didn’t intend to sin. Do you know when high-handed or rebellious sins were forgiven? On the Day of Atonement.

 **John Gratner:** Yom Kippur.

 **Jeff:** That’s when high-handed, rebellious sins were forgiven. In other words, the sacrificial system did forgive all sins: unintentional sins and high-handed, rebellious sins. But on a daily basis the sacrificial system was set up to forgive unintentional sins daily, and high-handed, rebellious sins yearly. And the point of that is this: The attitude of the worshiper was such that he didn’t say, “I’m going to do high-handed and rebellious sins against the Lord. I need to rebel against Him every day and then come to Him at the end of it.” No, that was not the intent, because a believer’s mindset is not like that.

 So back to you again, Ted. The idea is that I want to be forgiven of all my sins, though it’s impossible for me to even know all of my sins. But I want to be forgiven of all my sins, and I know that’s the mindset. And if I don’t have that mindset, if I have the mindset that I can hold onto some sins, then I haven’t repented of all of my sins; I don’t have the attitude of repentance. That’s the idea. Anything else? Don?

 **Don Maurer:** We all know that at times Martin Luther said some things that make us cringe.

 **Jeff:** Aha!

 **Don:** And one of the things he said was that I could commit adultery 500 times a day and it wouldn’t affect my justification.

 **Jeff:** And he was right about that in one sense.

 **Gary Craig:** In one sense.

 **John:** And there’s not enough time for that. *(Laughter)*

 **Jeff:** Did you ever hear of Winston Churchill? They offered him whiskey at a dinner to him and his men. The minister said, “I’d rather commit adultery!” And Winston Churchill said, “I didn’t realize there was an option.” *(Laughter)*

 All right, let me talk about adoption. This is from the Westminster Confession; there’s only one paragraph about adoption. *“All those that are justified God vouchsafeth in and for His only Son Jesus Christ to make partakers of the grace of adoption by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace, with boldness are able to cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’, are pitied, protected, provided for and chastened by Him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.”*

 Notice this: the kindness of God. Judges don’t normally adopt defendants. We just talked about justification: the declaration of “not guilty.” I don’t know any judge who after declaring a person “not guilty” then says, “Hey, let’s get out those adoption papers and bring in the whole family!” And yet that is exactly what God does. God declares us criminals not guilty and then says, “Now I realize you’re orphans,” right? “Thankfully your father Adam has died. Now let Me be your Father.” And He adopts us.

 And so that’s the astounding thing about this, right? But the other is how passive it is that we are in this benefit.. Notice again that He makes us partakers of the grace of adoption. They are taken into the number. It doesn’t sound like we have any choice about this, right? We enjoy the liberties and privileges of children, and so on and so forth. Thankfully there’s a sense in which we are totally passive in this.

 And yet there are liberties and privileges that we need to exercise in order to enjoy our adopted state! I mean, think about it for a minute. If you adopt a child, and that child comes in and he never really embraces the family, and so embraces the liberties and privileges, he will always see himself as the outsider. He always acts as the outsider. He just can’t wait until he turns 18 and can get out. They are not enjoying the privileges and liberties of adoption. And that can be us sometimes.

 What are the liberties and privileges of adoption? Well there’s another place in the Confession of Faith in chapter 20, which says that *“the liberty which Christ purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin.”* There it is: there’s your justification. *“Freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan and the dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death and victory of the grave and everlasting damnation, as also in their free access to God and their giving obedience to them, not out of slavish fear, but in childlike adoption and with a willing mind.”* That is adoption.

 Now here’s what it says, and this is fascinating: *“All these things were common to the Old Testament believer.”* But there is a new dimension added for the New Testament believer. *“Under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.”*

 In other words, think of it. There is a sense in which my freedom from guilt is enlarged, having been delivered from the ceremonial law, having understood that the fullness of each sacrifice came with remission in Jesus Christ. I have the greater ability of freedom from guilt under the New Covenant. And these liberties and privileges are supplied that I might implement them.

 And here’s what we need to understand: we talk a lot about faith. It’s not the experience of faith that I’m after, just like it’s not the experience of forgiveness that I’m after! It’s what faith experiences; that’s what I’m after! I’m not after the experience of faith; I want what faith grabs hold of. And faith lays hold of the liberties and privileges.

 What are those things? Well let me just bring this back really quick. I have access to the throne of grace. I can cry out, “Abba, Father!” I am *pitied, protected, provided for.”* I’m even chastened by my Father. I need to lay hold of these things, not to run from them.

 Ho? Instead of embracing it,--and I want to say this:--embracing it means embracing the ecclesiastical aspect. We can always talk about the importance of the church. What about the importance of the church when I fall? And what about the leadership? What about their entering into my life? And so the point is that I am to lay hold of these liberties and privileges, and I want to experience that by faith. Anything else?

 **Don Bishop:** You mentioned about the church.

 **Jeff:** Yeah.

 **Don:** I had to say it or he’ll bring this up.

 **Jeff:** Yes, because Ted is always banging that drum. *(Laughter)*

 **Don:** We often say in some of our churches that we kill our wounded.

 **Jeff:** Yes, that’s right.

 **Don:** Understanding that we are all capable of sin. That’s so true.

 **Jeff:** The flip side of that, though, is that there are churches that can act like discipline is vengeful rather than redemptive. And then on the flip side of that, there are people that can actually see redemptive discipline being carried out and see it as vengeful, right? There is not enough formal and informal discipline being practiced today so that people have a right understanding of it. When somebody hears “excommunication,” they immediately think: Oh, that’s so heavy-handed! The leadership ought to pray.

 **Don:** They don’t understand that we are engaged in this for the reclaiming of the sinner.

 **Jeff:** That’s right. You’re gonna go to your room and we’re going to exclude you from the family. And the hope is that you’ll miss being with us. *(Unclear: he mentions disciplining his son who was in a wheelchair.)*

 So I’m going to say one thing to you about this: sanctification. Look at Romans chapter 6; take a look at Romans chapter 6 really quick. This language is important. He says: “If you want to begin to understand your sanctification, you’ll need to understand where you’ve been taken from and where you have been set down. You’ve been set down in the kingdom of the Son of His love. Listen to what he says; this is in 6:5: *“For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.”*

 Now I want you to listen for all of the covenant language *“We know that our old self was crucified.”* God down to verse 8. *Now if we have died with Christ, we know that we will also live with Him.” Look at verse 9: “We know that Christ being raised,”* and so on. *“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* In other words we know, we believe, we know. Now on the basis of what we know, we reckon it to be true. Count it to be true; impute it to your mind.

  *And in doing that, that’s coming to grips with our definitive sanctification. We’ve been brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.*

And in doing that, that’s coming to grips with our definitive sanctification: that we’ve been removed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Then he says this. Having reckoned that, having considered that, now in verse 13: *“Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.”* In other words, come to grips with where you are now; you’re in the kingdom of light. Now having reckoned that, present yourselves—your members, your hands, your feet, your mind and so on,--present those things in service to God, rather than in service to the old kingdom in which you used to live. That’s progressive sanctification.

 Can I say this? You’ll get better at it as you go. The more you live in the kingdom of light, and the more you act in the way a kingdom of light subject acts, the better you become at it. That’s progressive sanctification, progressive holiness. Yes, John?

 **John:** It’s worth remembering that for all those in the kingdom of light and in the kingdom of darkness, Jesus made all of us out of dirt, and He’s aware of that. And in loyalty to Him, and reckoning ourselves that we will be in resurrection with Him, is the setting all things right. When we do the last sin before passing on, He said, “Do you know what? I’m still coming for you because I love you that much. I’m going to come and lay down my life and bring you into the kingdom of life from the kingdom of darkness. I’ll set all things right. I know what you are made out of. But I love you and I made you. *Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”*

 **Jeff:** Yeah. And the beautiful thing about that is that we go back to dust, right? And other Westminster Confession says, as well as the Larger Catechism, that our bodies rest in their graves as in their beds. The pile of dirt rests in its grave as in its bed, and it’s still united to Christ. So our souls are with Him and our bodies are in the grave. That pile of dust is not forgotten. But it will be reunited with that soul when He returns, and we will be with Him forever.

 Anyway, why don’t we pray? Father, we thank You for the day and for the blessing of life. Lord, we pray that we would come to know these things and not just know them intellectually, but know them so we embrace them so that they become ours and part of the fabric of our being. Help us, Lord, not to aspire to experience faith or repentance, but help us to aspire to experience live in You. And that means all of those benefits that we read about in Ephesians 1. Help us to experience justification and sanctification in ways that we haven’t up until this point. And Lord, we pray that having experienced them that we would grow, and that we would be a glory to you and of use to others. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen. *(Applause)*