**Identity**

Various Scriptures

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**Jeff:** Okay. Why don’t we pray before we get started? Our gracious God, we thank You and praise You. We delight in You and draw our attention to You this morning because we know that from You comes every good and blessed gift from above. And Lord, we know that in Christ we have good gifts; we have the best of gifts. We have them through the Beloved who is our Savior and our Lord, and we thank You for Him. Lord, as we turn to You in Your word we recognize that it is Your word. The world will tell us something else, but we know that this word is Yours and Your Spirit bears witness to that fact in our hearts. And Lord, there is sufficient evidence to believe it, and we ask, Lord, that as You turn our hearts and our minds and our whole selves toward it we pray that You would enable us by Your Spirit living in us to conform our lives to it. Lord, we know that’s a process and we oftentimes fail. But we oftentimes succeed, and that is by the help of Your Spirit. So we pray that You would continue to bless us as we seek after You in Your word.

Lord, we are thankful for Don’s recovery. We pray that he would continue in that same track, and ask, Lord, that You would return him to us next time in health. Lord, we pray that Your hand would be upon us as we study. Give us insight and wisdom. We also pray that You would make us useful vessels in the world around us both in our families’ lives and in the lives of those with whom we have to do in the world. And Lord, we pray these things in Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well today I want us to start to think about identity. We talked a little bit about that in terms of what we were going to do in terms of our studying together. And I want us at least to think about that this morning. I’m sure we’re going to go beyond this. I guess it depends on you to some extent and how much interest you have in pursuing the topic. I’m at least going to talk to you about some of the different and various ways in which we think about identity; in fact, let me just throw it up here.

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I’m going to talk about some of the various ways we think about identity, at least in our world today and the culture around us. Then I want us to think about this, and this is going to be a very brief point: what Christian identity is not. And then I want us to think about what Christian identity is; those three things this morning.

But I want us to set it in context by thinking about Isaiah 43:16-21 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. So if you have your Bible, take that out and we’ll turn over to those passages. In Isaiah 43 let me read just a few verses to you: verses 16 and following.

*“Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea*

*And a path in the mighty waters,*

*Who brings forth chariot and horse,*

*Army and warrior,*

*(They lie down, they cannot rise;*

*They are extinguished, quenched like a wick):*

*‘Remember not the former things,*

*Nor consider the things of old.*

*Behold, I am doing a new thing,*

*Now it springs forth;*

*You will not perceive it.*

*I will make a way in the wilderness*

*And rivers in the desert.*

*The wild beast will honor Me,*

*The jackals and the ostriches,*

*For I give water in the wilderness,*

*Rivers in the desert,*

*To give drink to My chosen people.*

*This people I have formed for Myself,*

*That they might declare My praise.’”*

And then 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17: *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*

**Jeff:** And so those passages help us to set this topic in context. So let me speak first of all about various views of identity. I think that before we talk about identity we need to talk about what identity is. What is identity?

Now I actually wrote the first part of this; it’s kind of funny. I actually wrote the first part of this and then got rid of it, because I thought to myself that this is way too philosophical a discussion to think about in terms of what identity is at 6:30 in the morning, and so I tweaked it.

**Ted Wood:** And what would your reason be?

**Jeff:** Well you know, I’ll tell you what I read recently, and it mirrors us as Christian people. So I was reading a book called *What Is the Meaning of This Text?* This is an older book, and the review was written by Verne Poithras. Does anybody know who Verne Poithras is? A few of you.

So this is something that you need to know about Verne Poithras. Verne teaches New Testament exegesis at Westminster Theological Seminary. The guy has a Ph.D. in mathematics, writes on science and writes on linguistics. I mean, the guy is like a walking brain; he is just amazing; he’s that sort of guy.

So he writes a review of the book *What Is the Meaning of This Text?* And he gives a charitable and a really kind review. He says that one of the great things about this book is that (the author) patiently walks through deconstruction and patiently walks through post-modernism. He talks about authorial intent, and on and on and on, right?

And then right in the middle of the review its almost as if he says with a slight bit of exasperation: *“This is all well and good. But does a Christian really need this amount of painstaking research to know that deconstructionism is wrong?”* He doesn’t say it that way. But I thought to myself that this is the kind of Christian perspective, isn’t it? Shouldn’t the Scriptures be sufficient to tell us that deconstructionism is wrong? It was refreshing to read that from a guy who has such a level of intellect, who could understand these things. He’s saying that this is just foolish. And I think the average Christian knows this by simply reading the Scriptures.

But I’m willing to talk about this as far as we want to go. Let me put it this way. If you were to look up a definition of identity, it would say something like “being by nature what is.” Or if you looked up the Latin it might say something like “to be identical with,” or “the same as.”

Now in my mind the question that immediately pops into my head is the same as one, right? And I think about what I am asking when it comes to identity; forget Christian identity. When it comes to personal identity what am I talking about? In other words, what is being the same as, or what does being identical with mean?

There’s a sense in which I need to take on board the fact that I am not a being, even though I am a being. I’m becoming, because I’m never static. I never just am, as if I were an is. I’m becoming; I’m getting older, right? As every day passes I’m changing.

And yet there’s a sense in which, when we talk about identity we talk about the me that you see, the me that I think about and am. And there I’m using a “to be” verb as if I’m static, but the me on the inside, what really is. And yet the question that we have to ask is: Is there really a me beyond what you see and I think about?

I think that’s the trap of our world. The world has to find itself, as if there was somebody underneath what we see and who they think about. And so I think that identity can get us caught up in a philosophical trap that I want to avoid.

So when I think about identity, I’m going to be really simplistic about this. I’m thinking about when the child comes out of the womb and they throw it up by the leg and they go, “It’s a boy!” One of the things that we could say is that this is a boy or this is a girl, and then we work from there when we think about identity.

Okay. So let me think with you about identity in a very straightforward and what I think is a common sense way. When we meet with somebody—and oftentimes we meet with young people who put a lot of emphasis on externals,--I don’t know if you’ve met a person like this in a while. But for instance I’ve met people who have tattoos or they’ll have piercings, or they’ll dress in one certain way, for instance all in black or in gothic kind of dress. And they’ll say things like this. They’ll say, “You know what? This is me. And you wouldn’t know me without this.” Or “This tattoo of mine captures who I am; people wouldn’t know me without it.”

I don’t know if you’ve ever met a person like that; maybe you haven’t if you’ve never acted with young people these days. But young people focus a lot of their identity on external dress or a hair style, or tattoos or piercings.

I don’t know if you remember this; this is a younger thing. But this is where this is in terms of the focus of conversation. How many of you know a singer by the name of Billie Eilish? Okay, she’s kind of an object of controversy to say the least. And so Billie Eilish always wore sort of grunge kind of clothes; that’s all she wore.

Well at one point she dressed up for an event. She put on a dress, cleaned up her hair and looked very nice. And I’ll never forget that there was an incredible pushback from her fans because she changed her clothes, because she wasn’t Billie Eilish. And I guess that’s what I mean when I say that people put an incredible amount of emphasis on identity as clothing or piercing or tattoos.

And I guess what I’m saying to you is this. I guess I’m going to generalize a lot when we talk about identity. But here is what I’d say to you. I’d say that part of the problem with our current generation is that they put identity value in the cheapest thing they can possibly put it into: clothing, or a tattoo or a piercing. And to do that you might as well put up your hand and say, “I’m the most shallow person in the room,” okay?

Now I think that for us we’re all a little older. And we would say to ourselves: Yes, that’s just incredibly stupid. But I think that what we need to remember is that is where the generation is younger is; that’s where our grandkids are, that’s where our kids are, that’s where the younger generation is. So externals equal identity. Please?

**Ted:** Isn’t that true of all generations?

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Ted:** I think that when I was growing up it was a black shirt or it was a white shirt.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Ted:** When I meet with clients they have blue jeans or pajamas on and they see my face. I’ve got the tie and I wear my vest.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Ted:** When I go to church I’m trying to foster what I think is right. The guys wear ties to church. I’m trying to get young people to wear them because it’s a sign of reverence.

**Jeff:** That’s a really great point, Ted, because that’s exactly where we’re at. There’s a sense in which we are right there. I remember when I got called to my first church; I was dressed like this: (formally.) When I would go to morning pastoral meetings the pastor had a polo shirt on with khakis. And he said, “What you need to know is that we don’t dress like that down here.” And I said, “I want you to know that I do.” *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** I think that shows a lot of self-respect.

**Jeff:** Well you know, what I said was that the pastor had lost enough respect. I want to do any little thing that I can do to reclaim it. But Ted, you’re right. The way we dress does mean something.

**Ted:** It sends a message.

**Jeff:** You’re right. I’m open to this discussion. No, I’m not open to this discussion; I’m not even throwing it out or we’ll be on this for three weeks. But there is a sense in which there may be a difference between dress as signaling certain virtues and dress as identity, so there is that.

**Ted:** May I make a comment about that?

**Jeff:** No! *(Laughter)* What about internals? The reason I bring this up is because sometimes we think to ourselves that we would never think about clothing. But for instance, I’m a friendly person. I’m not saying that about myself; I know I’m not. But the person says, “I’m a friendly person.” And he says, “That’s my identity to others. People know me as a friendly person.”

Let’s say that the person says, “I’m a compassionate person; I’m really known by my compassion.” Or “I’m a zealous person; I’m known by my zeal.” And the question that I have for you is this: Can attributes change?

Now I think that if we’re talking about God I think that we would obviously say no; God does not change in His nature. And His attributes are consistent with who He is in His nature; God does not change; He is immutable.

But I do. I mean, have you ever met that person you knew in high school, the meanest person in the world? And then thirty years later you met him or her and he or she was the nicest person in the world. You’re like “I don’t remember you this way.” You may not say that, but you think that. “Really? What happened to you?”

People change; attributes change. And so what may define us or describe us, or what we may consider as our identity, can go away; it can go away with age. For instance, just in the aging process you can become a pretty grumpy person. And you were never grumpy, or at least not that grumpy, right? So internals are not reliable when it comes to identifying who we are as identity.

Today I would say to you that identity is bound up with sex. This is what Freud said. And I think this is a good place for us to just stop for a minute and think about, because when we do think about personal identity today this is what people are thinking. Some people in the younger generation may be thinking about clothes and others may be thinking about identity as attributes. But in terms of our general culture sex is the identity marker for our world, at least the Western world.

Let me talk to you about that a little bit. Freud talked about stages of development. He talked about the oral stage with children. What he said was that each of these stages is the child seeking sexual gratification. And so the oral stage is that sexual stimulation where the child seeks to gratify himself.

And then after that there’s the anal stage, and after that there’s the phallic stage. And then after that there’s the genital stage. And what differentiates the phallic stage from the genital stage is this. The phallic stage is when the child basically seeks sexual pleasure as he stimulates himself or she herself. And the genital stage is when that interest turns to a partner and they seek someone else to do that to.

And so what Freud does is, he basically says that all of human life can be bound up with the question of sexual gratification. Now I don’t know if you know this or not. I didn’t know this until a short while ago. But one of the things that I realize now is that there was a pivotal thing that happened that allowed Freud to come on to the scene and to define things in this way. And believe it or not, it was a doctor who was contemporaneous with Freud; I can’t think of what his name was.

But what he did was that he came out and said that masturbation does not negatively influence children. I don’t know; you probably do remember this. Prior to this masturbation was said to affect children in their growth cognitively, even physically; it had adverse effects psychologically and physically.

And when this study came out and said that masturbation does not negatively affect children, Freud came onto the scene in full force with his sexual view of man. Okay, so now here’s the interesting thing. The interesting thing is that Freud’s stuff is a bunch of garbage. But the base line is accepted as truth.

For instance, he talked about the id, the ego and the super ego. What he talked about was that the id, for instance, is my basic instincts, my basic desires. And what are my basic desires? My basic desires are to satisfy my sexual urges.

And then the ego. The ego is like sort of a governor. The ego tries to govern the desires of my id with the consequences that I might face in society. And then the super ego is basically when the ego embodies or imbibes all of the basic rules of society, and that is what governs the id. But now the super ego basically embodies everything that society has taught and instructed in various ways.

Now we are all sexual beings. But here is what Freud said. He said that primitive man needs to be able to gratify his every desire, and that was great. But now we have society and all of its norms. And this is what he says: Society and all of its norms are actually good, because it probably curbs a lot of bad things that could happen. But he said that means that individuals are always going to live unhappily. So every individual is unhappy because you and I have deep urges that we cannot satisfy in our current society, and that’s probably good.

But then he goes on to say this. Because we’re fundamentally unhappy people we need things like religion to give us hope, drugs and alcohol to take away the pain of not being able to satisfy our urges, and really sophisticated people who will tap into science and art to try and soften those edges. But these are the common medicines that we use to medicate ourselves so that we can mitigate the unhappiness in our lives.

Now I want to tell you something. Again, it’s all garbage. But I would say to you that there are a lot of people out there who would say, “You know what? I can see a little bit of truth in all this.” Right? And I think this is where we are; this is where we live. In our society we basically see each other as sexual beings, or at least that’s what Freud says.

I’m going to leave this. But before I do I want to say one more thing. Freud basically says a couple things about religion. He says it’s good to the extent that it helps us to mitigate some of the painful aspects of life, not being able to fulfill our deep-down desires. We would call that sin, right?

But he goes on to say that it’s a neurosis, it’s an illusion. And it probably should be replaced by science.

Now when you look at our current culture what do you have? You have an increase in sex education at a lower age, right? In our secular age we’ve adopted that. And secondly, a lot of the more progressives are trying to eliminate religion. Why? Because they don’t want it to be any part of the super ego. They don’t want it being part of the rules that govern individual desires. Why? Because that is a rule that creates a fundamental unhappiness for people because they can’t satisfy those deep-down desires. And so there’s a real push, however subtle, to get rid of religion because it fundamentally cripples or hampers us from being happy people. That’s the way our world looks at it.

We think that’s crazy. But if you were raised in a secular home which is not a stretch today,--think about it!—and you were taught this, then you would think to yourself that yes, religion does have this oppressive element to it. We know that isn’t true. But we need to think from the perspective of those who are in the world learning this stuff as gospel. Before I go on does anybody want to chat about this?

**Don Bishop:** Thinking about Freud, I don’t know when it started, but most of Christian counseling is Freudian.

**Jeff:** Yes, for sure.

**Don:** I went to a Christian school. My cousin’s wife is a psychologist, and what we studied was from Freud. I didn’t realize that until I studied Jay Adams.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Don:** Jay Adams brought it back to what is Scriptural.

**Jeff:** Okay. When I was in seminary I had a professor who brought Jay Adams in, and I’m very thankful for that. *(Unclear)* Along with not shaving and—

**John Gratner:** Freud makes a category error that we often make as well. Man was not primitive.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**John:** We think that way way too often, and also when we come to the Bible. We look especially at the Old Testament and think of humanity as being primitive and that we are advanced. Just as an aside, if you’ve never thought about this before, just think on this for a second. We realize that the primary writer of the first five books from which we take so much of what the New Testament uses as a foundation, and then from which we’re applying the answer, was written by one of the finest graduates of Pharaoh’s university. Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s household and was taught all of the things—the languages, the cultures, the sciences. Don’t forget: these are the people who built the Pyramids, and that was a long time ago. This was not a primitive people, nor did they evolve from God’s creation.

**Jeff:** You bet.

**John:** And so when we think about these things, well Solomon tells us that there is nothing new under the sun. So you can’t do it right if you start at the wrong place, and that was one of Freud’s issues. But let us be sure that we don’t make the same mistake in trying to come to an answer about this from the wrong starting point.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And you’re right to point that out, because a good bit of evangelicalism is coming to the identity issue from a very bad position, from the identity of science.

**Ted:** Freud’s modern attack on Christianity is that it is a quasi-religion.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Ted:** We have our technology, but we are not any better psychologically.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jeff:** All right. Why don’t we go to what Christian identity is not? I didn’t do this until I was preparing this lesson. The Internet defines Christian identity as *“The interpretation of Christianity which advocates beliefs that only the Celtic or Germanic peoples such as the Anglo-Saxons or the Aryan race, that they are part of the descendants of the ancient Israelites are therefore God’s chosen people. It is a racial interpretation of Christianity. It is not an organized religion, nor is it affiliated with a specific Christian denomination.”*

I didn’t realize that. So we’re not talking about that? *(Laughter)* You know, I just feel that in today’s world it’s good to point this out. Are we talking about Christian identity? Are we talking about identity in Christ? That’s not what we’re talking about, and so we have to point that out. So I think that’s a strategy to try and take a basic Christian principle and mar it. When the subject of identity with Christ comes up, you don’t even know if you’re talking nonsense to somebody else.

But anyway, all right; what is it? There are ways to think about Christian identity, and I want us to think about a few of these. And we use these phrases more often than we think. We identify ourselves in ways that we don’t think of as identity. So for instance somebody says, “I am gluten free.” The phrase itself: “I am gluten free. This is what I am,” right?

Or “I am a heterosexual.” You name it, whatever you want to put behind that phrase. “I am” is an identifier; it identifies us.

So there are various ways that we can think about identity even as we think about Christian identity. But it is important for us as Christians to remember that the most important thing about us has nothing to do with us. In other words, when I say “I am,” and I say “I am a Christian,” what I am saying about me in one sense has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with Christ.

Now I want you to think about that for just a second, because I love theology. But there is a tendency where we can get ourselves off track. I want you to think about what we often talk about when we talk about union with Christ.

We often talk about the *ordo salutis,* or the order of salvation. Now what is the order of salvation? Well it’s predestination, election, calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. What have I left out? Christ. In other words, I’m talking about all of the benefits that I possess in Christ, but I’m not talking about Christ.

So when I talk about identity and I talk about union with Christ, oftentimes with those who think theologically their minds go to the golden chain of salvation, all of these benefits. And yet we can talk about all of these benefits. You can go and get John Murray’s book *Union With Christ,* and you would expect to find a lot about Christ in that book. But if you read it you would read about the benefits that you possess in Christ. And there is a place for talking about that.

But what I want us to think about when we think about identity is that I want us to think about that by being in Christ I am a new creation. I want us to think about this from a couple perspectives; see if you can wrap your mind around it before we actually get into some of these other things.

I want you to think about some people. You know, it’s interesting to me that in Ephesians Paul begins the book with union with Christ, and that these are all the benefits you possess in union with Christ. And then at the end of the book he says that marriage is a lot like union with Christ. And you know, when he equates marriage with union with Christ it’s really suggestive. And one of the things that I have a tendency to think about is that relationship.

I know a guy who told me that when he was looking for a spouse he wrote down a list of things that he wanted in his spouse. Girls sometimes do that with men. I think their lists might be longer than ours. *(Laughter)* You know: Don’t smoke, don’t chew, don’t go with girls who do, right? *(Laughter)*

But the thing about it is that you don’t go over that list every night, right? But when you meet that girl that has to be you on her picture, and you look at that picture, right? All of those attributes on that list are not that person. Think about trying to explain that. You’re trying to explain your wife to a friend. “I met her; she’s a great woman. She’s a fantastic cook and she’s a great homemaker and she’s a wonderful mother to our children.”

And then you say, “When you meet her you’ll see,” because nothing that I’m going to say is going to actually capture her; you understand what I mean. And so I think that when we think about iden4tity, I think what we need to do is to remember that our identity is rooted in our union with Christ, and Christ is our identity.

And so for instance, if someone were to say to you, “You know, I want to know more about this union with Christ,” I would say to you, don’t go and get John Murray’s book yet. Go and get a good book on the Person of Jesus Christ and read about Christ. Read Warfield’s *The Lord of Glory,* or something like that. Read through the Gospels and unpack who Christ is. That is the Person who is your identity.

Okay. Now it’[s interesting. When we see this unpacked in Scripture, sometimes we see it in metaphors. So for instance *“I am the vine and you are the branches.”* There’s a sense in which we are in union with Christ. Or think about when he says that we are a temple in 1 Peter chapter 2; in the same chapter we are a spiritual house. These are some of the metaphors he uses to communicate who we are. We’re the body of Christ; He is our Head.

And these are in one sense not just metaphors. And what I mean by that is that Christ sees Himself reciprocally in those positions with us. So for instance when He confronts Paul on the Damascus road in Acts chapter 9 He says to Saul who becomes Paul, *“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?”*

Saul isn’t persecuting Christ. Christ is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Who is Saul persecuting? He’s persecuting Christians. And yet Christ says, “Why are you persecuting Me?” And so the reciprocal nature of the union is viewed in that we’re the body and He is the Head. Or when we experience persecution He can say, “Why are you persecuting Me?” He sees us as His own. So there’s a sense in which we need to see that.

But then we need to say that in Christ I am a new creation. And the question is, what does that mean? What does it mean to talk about the union that we have with Jesus Christ?

Well, you can think about this in a number of different ways. You can think about this in terms of a predestinarian union, a mystical union, an experiential union.

And what do we mean by those things? Well obviously, when I talk about a predestinarian union, I mean that from the foundation of the world God decreed that I would be in union with His Son. Or when I talk about a mystical union or a spiritual union, what do I mean? I’m talking about the Spirit who regenerates and unites me to Christ.

But what am I talking about when I’m talking about an experiential union? I’m talking about that I am a different person not just objectively, but subjectively as to my experience because I am united to Jesus Christ. And that is in part what we enter into when we think about 2 Corinthians 5:17: I am a new creation.

Now you have a tendency to think to yourself—maybe you don’t!—but I have a tendency to read a verse like that in the abstract. Oh, I’m a new creation in Christ! I don’t have any categories to compare that to, right? That sort of thing.

But think about the way he contextualizes that verse. Go back to verse 16 for a minute, and check this out. Now let me read this to you and just comment on at least one aspect of what I think he’s telling us here.

*“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

Now let me stop there. What is he saying? The word for *regard* is a couple of different words for *know.* In other words, there was a time when I knew Christ. Let me read it; listen to this: *“We regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded—*or knew—*Christ according to the flesh, we* know Him *that way no longer.”*

In other words, can I say it like this? This is at its fundamental level. It means that at one time I thought about Christ at a horizontal level, a fleshly level. I had a perspective on Christ that was according to the world.

No longer. What’s my perspective now? My perspective now is a vertical one. I understand Him not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Colossians 3:1-2 says that I am lifted up into the heavenlies and seated with Him. So there’s a sense in which when I am a new creation in Christ there is a change in perspective. I have a new perspective on the Person of Christ, and that can’t be overlooked.

When I think about this I can’t just be abstract about it. “I am a new creation in Christ and I have no idea what that means.” No! We have an idea what that means. That means that in one sense that I have a new perspective on Him. I no longer look at Him through fleshly eyes, but I look at Him through Spirit-regenerated eyes. I see Him as He is; I see Him with a vertical perspective.

So I think that’s crucial when we think about our union with Christ and our identity in Him. Part of that is that I see Him differently.

Now what does that mean? I’m behind on my slide so that’s what that means. *(Laughter)* But there’s something else. In our union with Christ we possess all that belongs to Christ. Go with me to Ephesians 1.

In Ephesians 1 verse 3 look at what it says. It says: *“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.”*

Now consider this. When I think about this aspect of the order of salvation, when I think about the golden chain, all of the things that I possess in Christ, now is when I’m new here. In other words, my identity is wrapped up in Christ. But being in Christ means having access to all that belongs to Christ. And therefore I begin to think about having His righteousness through justification. I think about being adopted through His adoption as Mediator. I think about my holiness through the lens of His holiness, and so on. These are the things that belong to Christ that are mine.

This is why I would say this to you; I want you to think about this. I think I might have even said to you the last time we were together. But I said to you that there is a difference between Lutheran theology and Calvinistic theology at just this point.

In Lutheran theology God creates faith. Faith then justifies, and then justification is the portal to this simple union. And the question becomes: How do I possess the righteousness of Christ outside of union with Christ? That’s the major question when we think about Lutheran theology and soteriology.

And Calvin comes along and says in Book 3.11 of his *Institutes:* Let’s understand something. So long as I remain outside of Christ I Possess nothing of Christ. And I think what he’s saying, at least in response to the Lutherans, is that as long as I remain outside of mystical union, I don’t possess the righteousness of Christ. So as much as he loved Luther, Calvin believed that Luther followed the ball on this one; he didn’t get it right.

And he didn’t get it right for a reason; there were reasons why Luther formulated this the way he did. But my point is that I’m with Calvin on this. It’s by the effectual call of God, the regenerating work of the Spirit that I experience union with Christ, and then 0-possess everything that Christ possesses. So by union with Christ I know Christ and I have what Christ possesses.

I’m going to move to marriage as a symbol for just a second, because I want you to think about this in terms of identity. Did you ever hear of the husband who says this? He’ll say something like this. He’s trying to help other people to know who he is and he’ll say, “I’m Alice’s husband.” He’s situating himself in union with his wife in order to identify himself with others.

And when we think about sort of the down-to-basics, practical thinking about union, when we say, “I’m a Christian,” that’s exactly what we’re doing. When he says, “I’m Alice’s husband,” that’s the equation. I am Christ’s. I’m Christ’s wife; I’m Christ’s bride; I am a Christian. Every time you say “I am a Christian,” what you’re doing is, you’re identifying yourself; you’re saying who you are as to your identity.

And this takes us back to the very beginning. Who you are as to your identity really has nothing to do with you; it has everything to do with Christ. Does that make sense to you?

**Ted:** But the analogy breaks down in marriage, because not everything I am is my wife.

**Jeff:** It always breaks down in marriage. *(Laughter)*

**Brave Man:** It’s a mystery.

**Ted:** Paul sees it as a mystery.

**Jeff:** Well you know, what’s funny is that Paul uses analogies about marriage, and he even uses them in his strange ways, right? For instance in Romans chapter 7, listen to this.

*“Or do you not know, brothers, (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?”* Now think about that. The law is binding only as long as he lives. And then he’s going to give a marriage example. But you think to yourself that the law of marriage is only binding as long as the spouse lives. But if you apply this, the law of marriage is only binding as long as you live.

It’s strange, right? Once you die then you’re not married anymore, right? We usually think about that as once our spouse dies we’re not married anymore. And he uses this because he’s using it theologically; he’s making judgments for it. But anyway, any questions about that?

**Jordan Obaker:** So if this is how Christians should think about their identity, how should Christians think about the identity of non-Christians? It’s all well and good for us, but when we think about someone who may be—

**Jeff:** That’s a great question.

**Jordan:** How would the Bible explain what their identity is?

**Jeff:** There are two basic ways that you can identify people. You are either in Christ or you are in Adam.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** So when you think about those who used to talk about covenant keepers, there are also covenant breakers. We talk about believers; we talk about unbelievers. We’re talking about the same thing. Romans chapter 5 says that you’re either one of two people. There were only two people who were given the divine mandate to take dominion. Adam was given the divine mandate to take dominion; he failed. Christ was given the divine mandate to take dominion and He succeeded. So you are in one of these two camps.

So when we talk about possessing all the riches that are in Christ, when you’re in Adam you possess all that is common to him. So you can do this reciprocally.

**Don:** When you get down to basics, you’re self-centered. When you’re in Christ you’re Christ-centered.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** And with the person in Adam, we can’t get angry with those who are in Adam. They can’t help but act the way they do.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** And Christians can’t help but act the way they do.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** The issue is between Spirit and flesh.

**Jeff:** Yes. You know, that’s very true. We hold people accountable for their actions, Christians or non-Christians.

**Ted:** And we expect a mutual effort to improve society.

**Jeff:** Yeah, right. Anything else? So I think that at its core we need to keep in mind that the world is going to talk about sexual identity for all. We need to think to ourselves when they talk like that to go back to this. They are in Adam, so they are looking for identity markers in their own sin. And they are finding them in a variety of ways.

We have to be careful to always remember that our identity is in Christ, and we possess all that Christ possesses as His body, as His bride, as His temple, and so on, and so to conduct ourselves after that.

All right, let’s pray. Gracious God, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Lord, we pray that You would strengthen us in our understanding of these things and that it will make an impact not just in our thinking, but in our doing. And Lord, we pray and ask that You will do this for Your glory, for our good and for the good of the world around us. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.