

# “The Family of God”

## Ephesians Overview

Ephesians 1

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**Jeff:** Okay. Let me tell you what we’re going to be doing from now on. *(Laughter)* With regard to Ephesians, I started with the idea that we would just plow our way through, and as we got through we’d get through it. And then I talked to Sig a little bit after the last meeting together. And we thought (and I agreed with him), that maybe we should have some sort of structure, that maybe we should do it in some overview format. And we could pause along the way any time we wanted to pause. And so I thought that was a good idea, and that’s the way I’m going to approach it.

So here is what our class overview is going to look like. We’re going to continue to work on *the blessings of life in Christ*. Now I’ll tell you something in just a minute. But then the next week we’re going to ask the question *where have you been?* Then when we hit chapter 3, think about the idea of *you belong here*. Chapter 4 is *your new you*. Chapter 5 is going to be *strutting yourself*, or if that’s a bit too racy for you, *walking the walk*. And then chapter 6 is going to be *don’t forget your coat out there*. So it’s all family kinds of things that you probably had growing up, especially #2, *where have you been?*

Probably Don has heard that more than any of us. *(Laughter)* I digress on that. But did you notice how he slipped it in there, that there is a Scripture text that he knows, but he doesn’t know where the location of it is? *(Laughter)* And I thought to myself, what a humble thing for him to throw out there! *(Laughter)* You know, just to kind of let us know that he needs a GPS once in a while too. And then this: “Where is it, Jeff?” *(Laughter)* Right? He really did; it was a zinger. *(Laughter)* Anyway, that’s the way we’ll be working through it.

Now here is the point that I would make. If we stop along the way at any point and we get distracted, and we don’t finish in six weeks, then that’s absolutely fine. I am happy to stop and explore any area of Ephesians that you want to stop and explore. But at least this gives Sig a framework so that he can feel better about it. *(Laughter)* He needs that, he needs that structure, you know?

All right, so here’s our structure. This is the structure from which we’re going to deviate. *(Laughter)* Now we’re going to take the whole chapter today, and we’re going to look at these points. But what I did was that I put point 1 in from what we’ve already looked at. So we’re going to jump over point 1 together and start on point 2.

But let’s read the text together, and let’s read it in its entirety, Ephesians 1. Don do you have it?

**Don Maurer:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Why don’t you read Ephesians 1?

**Don:** Okay. “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.” Oh, wait! Sorry; wrong book. *(Don clears his throat. Laughter)* Batting a thousand here today!

**Jeff:** There he goes.

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**Don:** Oh, my my my!

**Kevin Cohn:** Do you have it, Jeff?

**Don:** I have it. *(Laughter)* All right, here we go, here we go.

**Ted Wood:** That was the PCA version. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** I heard that, Ted. All right.

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and 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 with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him from before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, just as in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him.*

*“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the inheritance of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

*“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”* This is the word of the Lord.

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

**Jeff:** Okay. So one of the things that we’ve been thinking about as we think about the book of Ephesians is really how it has a family feel to it, or there’s a sense of family. And we’ll get the sense of that as we go further into the book. And I think that it will become more and more apparent to us, that this is a book that was written not just to people with whom he was unfamiliar, like the Romans. But this is a book written to people, but also

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more broadly than that—written to people specifically in Ephesus that he knew quite well.

You remember the background for just a minute. He was there almost three years teaching. He had developed relationships with these people, so he knew them quite well. And so he’s writing to a people with whom he has a certain amount of personal affinity. That comes out in this book.

But not just in this book, because Ephesians is thought to be a circular letter, which meant that it would go from one church to the other seamlessly. In fact we find copies not just with Ephesus at the top, or to the Ephesians, but we find the same letter to other churches, which means that the church was meant to have this letter. And it was meant to feel the same sense of security and family that one must have felt in Ephesus.

So in one sense we might describe this letter as a way to live, or the already but not yet. In other words, this is how you are already to live and feel, but not yet.

The question that I want to pose to you as we transition to our second point is what about security? And I want you to think about this for just a second, because it’s a question that’s raised. And then Paul comes back to it again and again. It’s the question of what does it mean to have a sense of security? I want you to think about that for just a minute.

When you were a child and your mom or your dad were about to cross the road, one of the things that they would likely do is that they would reach out their hands. And they expected you to reach up and grab their hands. Boy, I wish Sig were here. I mean, a joke for him, right? *(Laughter)* About what his mom might have done. *(Laughter)* I’m sorry, Sig. *(Laughter)* So they would expect you to reach your hand out and take their hands and then cross the street. And I don’t know about you, but whenever that would happen I would always get a sense of security. When my hand was enclosed in my mother’s hand or in my father’s hand, you had that sense of security.

But it’s not just a sense of security that Paul wants us to understand. Paul wants us to understand that we *are* secure. There’s not just a sense of security that we ought to have, but there *is* security. And that security that he’s describing, about being in the family of God, is rooted and grounded in what he’s going to talk to us about next. And that is that we are rooted and grounded in the triune God.

So we are secure. And we already have a sense of security. But we can never treat the one as if it were the other, because we may have those times where we don’t feel secure or have that sense of security. But that doesn’t mean that we’re less than secure.

And so I thought about this. I think the Department of Homeland Security was developed or established in 2002. Dave ought to be able to tell us that. But in 2007 I found this quote and I’ve hung on to it ever since. It comes from a psychology website that evaluated the Homeland Security website. Listen to this. It says, *“The Department of Homeland Security site is just one example of a national warning system that in the end stirs up more anxiety than it quells, loaded with scientific terminology, yet woefully bereft of any tangible data.”*

Now I put that up here because we’re heading into Ephesians 1. *(Laughter)* And this may be a description of my class by the time we’re done. I hope not. But I realize that

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we’re heading into a chapter that’s going to talk about predestination and election and all of those things. I hope that it’s more than just scientific theological data that’s woefully bereft of anything useful. We’ll see.

So let’s talk about *blessed security*. And the question is, how do you help someone who is in the midst of distress? How do you help someone who has some anxiety about the present situation? How do you do that?

**Don:** Refer them to Sig. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** Refer them to Sig, that’s right. You see, he takes one day off after having been back consistently, and we’re just really going after him. (*Laughter*) I hope he listens to this and feels the lack of mercy. (*Laughter*)

How do you help someone in distress? How do you help someone in need? Well, you invite them to Brave Men. (*Laughter*) Well, I want you to think about this just for a minute. I want you to think about John’s Gospel. And I want you to think about John 13-17.

Now John 13-17 is the Upper Room discourse on the night that Jesus was betrayed. Now one of the things that we know about John’s Gospel, compared to the Synoptic Gospels, is that John provides for us some information that the other Gospels don’t provide. But one of the things that he does and one of the things to which he is attuned is Jesus’ care for the disciples. He almost immediately talks about them as being in distress, as being sad. And he mentions that throughout; he comes back to it. He recognizes it. It’s not that he’s oblivious to it. He certainly is in tune with it.

But one of the things that He does is that He teaches them theology. He’s teaching them about the relationship that the triune God had with one another before time began, and that relationship now as it’s expressed to creation.

Now one of the things that Jesus does is this. He says, “Not only has the Father sent Me.” He talks about the Father; He extols the Father. He talks about how the Father is going to be glorified in Himself through His disciples in post-glory work.

But He does something else. He tells them that He is going to send the Holy Spirit. And the Father is going to send the Holy Spirit to them.

Now the question is, how does this make any earthly difference in terms of their own sadness, in terms of their own distress and turmoil? And the answer to that is found in the theology that Jesus is teaching them.

Now what do I mean by that? Well, I want you to think about this just for a second. When you think about Father and Son, and you think about Their relationship and the Holy Spirit, you think about Them having what we call a perichoretic relationship. Now that word means *to dance around*, to go in a circular fashion.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Don Maurer requests that Jeff spell perichoretic.

**Ted Wood:** Got it, Don?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** He can hit the pause button. (*Laughter*) So it means to go around or dance around, right? Now here’s the question. What does that really mean? Well, it means interpenetration. What does that mean? It means that They know One Another in

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exhaustively. They know each Other exhaustively. There’s no potential knowing in and among the Persons of the Trinity; they know One Another actually.

Now that does not mean that what’s described is an Aristotelian God who sits there and meditates on Himself with no potentiality in it. That’s not it at all. This is not Aristotle’s God, but it is the triune God of the Bible.

Now what does that mean? That means that we’re told that the Father is unbegotten, that the Son is eternally begotten, and that the Spirit proceeds.

Now let me just say this to you. In terms of prior to creation, where did the Spirit proceed? In other words, where was He sent by the Father? And the answer to that is to the Son. And where did the Son send the Spirit? To the Father. And that’s why Augustine talks about the Spirit as the eternal bond of love between Father and Son, because He proceeds from Father to Son and from the Son back to the Father.

And what Jesus is saying is this. The same Spirit who unites Us, Father and Son, in a bond of love is now being sent to you. And you by virtue of possessing Him are in union with Us, Father and Son.

Now I don’t know about you, but that’s rich in terms of its ability to minister to somebody in distress. And I want you to understand something. John 13-17 is not just Jesus taking and applying the doctrine of the Trinity. But Paul does the same thing to the Ephesians.

When we open up to Ephesians chapter 1 and we look at it, we notice immediately that he is inviting us into the context of the triune God. So we divide up chapter 1, at least the early parts, verses 1-17. We find that the Father allocates some for redemption. We find that the Son accomplishes the redemption of those whom the Father allocates for redemption. And we find that the Spirit takes that redemption that was accomplished by the Son and applies it to those allocated by the Father, set apart by the Father. That is going to be the framework for understanding at least the first part of Ephesians.

Now I realize that this is the part where we may pause and you may have some questions. You might want to wrestle around it. I don’t know if that’s the case. Having studied under Bruce Bickel, this may be old hat to you. I may be anticipating absolutely nothing. You may yawn mostly, whatever. But there are enough new guys for whom maybe this isn’t the case. So we’ll take it as it comes, all right? Okay, so—

**Ted:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Ted:** You shouldn’t apologize.

**Jeff:** No.

**Ted:** Your take on this is different from John’s. I mean, I’m totally off.

**Brave Men:** Bruce.

**Ted:** Bruce’s yes.

**Jeff:** I’m just talking about the essential kind of theology that’s grounded in our understanding of God.

**Ted:** And that’s why, for me, where I come from growing in my faith, Ephesians is actually a more important document than Romans, because Romans is kind of the

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working out of a lot of this, while this is the foundational stuff. You don’t get more foundational than this.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right; I totally agree.

**Bill Obaker:** Couldn’t you just sum it up by saying that, “They work in perfect harmony and love”, that “They always have and They always will”?

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Bill:** So They have different functions, in a sense. They’ve always existed together and always will.

**Jeff:** If I had my board I would write up on here—and the Bishop is going to have to help me on this one—*Trinitatus ad extra Indivisa sum*. Is that right?

**Bishop Rodgers:** That’s right.

**Jeff:** So the external works of the Trinity are indivisible

**Bishop:** *Trinitatus opera*.

**Jeff:** Yes, I forgot the *opera*. *Trinitatus opera extra indivisa sum*. The idea then is that there is a harmony in the working out of the work of redemption. But there is also *the doctrine of appropriation*. In other words, it was appropriate and appropriated for the Son to be the Person of the Trinity who dies in the Incarnation. The Father doesn’t die; the Son dies in the Incarnation. There were heresies in the ancient church that talked about the unity of the Godhead to the extent that they actually argued that the Father died. That was called *Patripatianism*. But that was a misunderstanding of the Trinity as well, seeing there being one Person and one God. And He takes a different mode, depending on where you are in the history of redemption. But yes, there’s a perfect harmony amongst the Persons of the Trinity in the work of redemption.

**Bishop:** The fact that the Father doesn’t die does not mean that He is not pained as He gives up His Son to go to the cross, that He’s indifferent. But He doesn’t die.

**Jeff:** Yes. I think it’s really important for us to remember, when we think about the kind of God that we have, I think that one of the things that we have a tendency to do is that we latch onto something in the Westminster Confession. For instance, it says that God is without passions. And we say that God is an emotionless God. And I think that’s where we find ourselves running up against an Aristotelian conception of God, where God has created, but He’s indifferent to His creation. He can’t even think about His creation because He can only think about that which is perfect, that which has no potentiality to it, which is Himself. And so He’s really indifferent to anything but Himself.

And we have a tendency to think to ourselves that this is the kind of God that we have in the Bible. You know, He is a God who has no potentiality in Him; He must sort of meditate upon Himself, and so on. And that’s not accurate, because God has no passions, and I think I’ve explained this to you before. The root or idea of passions is to be a patient. In other words, if we have passions, it’s because we’re patients.

Now what do I mean by that? Well, let’s say that Sig listens to this recording and comes walking into the door. Now I’ve heard rumblings that he’s going to bring a baseball bat the next time he comes. (*Laughter*) And when he walks into the door with a

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baseball bat, I immediately become terrified, right? And I start saying, “Paul put me up to this.” (*Laughter*)

Now what happens? I am a patient. I am worked on from without, right? Sig has come in with a baseball bat, and I am upset. And what the Confession is saying is that God is not that kind of God. God doesn't react to things external to Him. Things external to Him don't surprise Him because He has planned for those things external to Him to happen.

However, what the Confession does not affirm but the Westminster divines do, is that God is a God of affections. In other words, when we think about the difference between affections and passions, they use the same instrument, our emotions. But when you think about affections, they arise from within.

So for instance, you know that it's the best of all things to be an affectionate person, right? If I love my wife I love her not because she made my favorite meal, but because the love for her arises from within and gets expressed without. And see, that's the kind of people we ought to be, because really, when you think about the love of God, the love of God arises from within and is exercised without.

Now think about that in relation to us. We were sinners, enemies of His, unworthy to be loved. And yet His love came from within and was exercised without. That's the kind of people that we ought to be. Don, go ahead.

**Don:** The doctrine of the Trinity can be rather overwhelming, especially when we talk in the terms you referred to. Some of the terms may be overwhelming to some of us. But what it comes down to is that the necessity of the Trinity, and one of the practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity, is how can God express His love? I mean, if God is solitary, love has to have an object.

**Jeff:** Yes, right.

**Don:** And there is love between the members of the Godhead, infinite love. Like you said, that's how God expresses it from within, and then without. Otherwise, of God is just one Person, that couldn't be done. It would be almost a necessity for Him to create because He would be lonely.

**Jeff:** Yes. And that's the Unitarian problem, isn't it?

**Don:** Yes, it is.

**Jeff:** The Unitarian problem is that you have a single person, God, up there with a lot of love to give, but no one to give it to. And he's twiddling his thumbs and he says, “I just have to create because I've got to be able to show my love.” The Trinitarian God is so much different than that, because He's expressing the love that He is. Yes?

**Bill:** “*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.*” That kind of clears it up for me. And it's the difference between our God and Allah. Where is the love?

**Jeff:** Yes. But the difference is that as soon as you bring creation into it, you have to ask the question. Did God have to create in order to express His love, or would He have been able to express His love without the creation? That's the big question Don is raising. And what we're saying is that He didn't need to create in order to express His love to His Son. He expressed His love in the midst of the three Persons in the Trinity prior to creation. So when He created it was natural for Him to express that love.

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**Bill:** But He gave His son after creation, so it was something that He had done after all creation.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. Anybody else? Yes?

**Bob Busted:** I want to address the Bishop’s question and see what you have to say. How do we know what actually went on before creation? (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** Bob, that’s a pretty good question. All right, so one of the things that we have to do is, we have to look at the Scriptures and then ask ourselves backwards, right? What does the Bible say, if anything, about the triune God prior to creation? And admittedly the Bible doesn’t say a lot. But we have to affirm what it does say.

Now what we have to remember is this. We have to remember that everything that we read about God we read through temporal lenses. I mean, we have our creational lenses on. So we have to ask ourselves what does the bible say about God? What does the Bible affirm about God that would be true prior to creation? And that’s the question.

Now when you think about it like that you have a tendency to say, “Well, doesn’t the Bible have a lot to say about God prior to creation?” Actually, yes and no. In other words, prior to creation there was no covenant in God. There was nothing to covenant over, right? For instance, even the covenant of redemption that is in the triune God is a decree that is about creation.

So even prior to that, the question becomes what does the Bible affirm about Him before He created, right? And there are some theologians out there who say this. Karl Rahner is a Roman Catholic theologian who basically says that there really is no ontological Trinity, in our understanding anyway, prior to creation. Everything we know about God can only be known in terms of what He has done in creation. So that’s the way we have to understand God.

Now I think that once we do that, we open up the door to saying that we begin to chisel away at the Creator/creature distinction. But there’s a difference between the God who created and the creation that He created. So I think we have to affirm that there are things that the Bible teaches that we can know about God prior to creation.

For instance, we can know that He is triune. We can know that the Father is unbegotten. We can know that the Son is eternally begotten. When you think about this, you think about this always in relation to time. But don’t think about it in relation to time. There’s no causation there in terms of temporal causation. We think about the Spirit proceeding. And we think about there being an incommunicableness to the Father’s place or role and the Son’s role and the Spirit’s role. In other words, They can’t swap roles. The Son can’t become the Father and the Father can’t become the Son, and that sort of thing. So there are basic things that we can know and affirm prior to creation about God from the Scriptures. Yes, Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** I’m of that school that believes that there is also submission within the life of the Godhead.

**Jeff:** Are you really, Bishop? (*Laughter*) All right, let’s move on. (*Laughter*)

**Bishop:** That’s why sons aren’t fathers.



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**Jeff:** I am of the school that doesn't see it that way. (*Laughter*) But I just want to say that I know my place. (*Laughter*) And I have more respect for my father in the faith than to wrestle with him over that.

**Don:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Don:** Doesn't Ephesians 1:4 in part answer that question? *“Just as He chose us in Him from before the foundation of the world.”* That's what He was doing before creation.

**Jeff:** Yes, but the question then becomes that because the decree has an eternal character to it, does that mean that God lacked freedom to create or not to create?

**Don:** Well, of course not.

**Jeff:** Right.

**Don:** I don't get it.

**Jim O'Brien:** Neither do I.

**Jeff:** Well, what you're saying is, if this is what God was doing before creation, He was dealing with creation. What I'm saying is, if the decree has an eternal quality to it, does that mean that was the only thing He was doing prior to creation?

**Don:** Well, of course not. I don't know. But no.

**Jeff:** I agree. All right? Good? All right.

**Don:** As good as it can get. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** I want to go back a bit to the idea of *the Trinitarian roles* here. But before I do that, I want you to notice that there's a Christological sphere in which we understand these things.

Now you know, in my mind this is a helpful illustration. I hope it's helpful to you. I used to drive over to Westminster and I would get there a little early for class. And when I'd get there early there was usually a Korean student who was early as well. And we would talk; his English was pretty good English. We would talk and then what would inevitably happen is that another Korean student would walk into the room. And then the two Korean students for a time would include me. But before long they would be talking Korean with one another.

Now they'd be talking Korean. But every once in a while, you know, I would hear something that I recognized. I would hear a name, Dr. Gaffin, and then (*mock laughter*), you know. And you would be able to tell that this is sort of the focus of the conversation with a professor in his class, and so on.

Well, that's the way of it when you look at Ephesians chapter 1. And the reason I say this is because I don't want us to get so overwhelmed with the language that we can't at least we can't put our finger on the pulse of the conversation. The pulse of the conversation is Christology.

Now how do I know? What's the word that you can recognize or the words that you can recognize to go, “Oh, that's Christological, or a conversation having to do with Christ's death?” Well, it's the idea of *“in Christ.”* *“In Christ”* is used eleven times in fourteen verses. And in the book of Ephesians, which is a six-chapter book, it's used almost forty times—*“in Christ,”* or some variation of that prepositional phrase—the idea. And by that I mean *“in Him,”* or something like that.

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The point is that we experience all of this Trinitarian blessing in Jesus Christ. I want you to think about it from the perspective of John chapter 1. Remember what it says in verse 18. It says that *“the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father.”* And that’s just an accommodated way of telling us that the Son who is in a triune relationship with the Father and the Spirit, He came to us to reveal—or the Greek is to exegete, to explain, to read out of that Trinitarian relationship, knowledge of the Father to us. In other words, it’s Jesus who explains God the Father to us, and His relationship to the Father and the Son.

So it’s in Christ that we understand the Trinity and the work of the Trinity on our behalf to the extent that we do. I love the way Warfield puts it. Warfield talks about the Old Testament and the Trinity in the Old Testament as being a dimly lit room. And the New Testament with Christ’s coming is like a light that is now flooding the room. And the things that are there are always there. But we can see them with clarity now.

And so when we think about the book of Ephesians and its Trinitarian structure, we can never do it apart from our understanding that Christ is the One who came with the light to bring light into a darkened or dimly lit room. Does that make sense? Is there anything you have questions about or want to wrestle with? No? Okay.

All right. So what does that mean? It means that it’s in union with Christ that we receive the blessings and the benefits of the triune God who has accomplished salvation on our behalf.

Let me press this a little further, and let’s read a couple of texts together. When you think about this—and let me put it like this,—when you think about possessing the blessings of salvation, sometimes we think about them in terms of a door prize. You know, we come and we get our salvation, and we now leave and we can come and go as we please. And the Bible doesn’t present it that way. The Bible says, for instance, that if I am in union with Christ by faith then I possess not my righteousness, but His righteousness. In other words, the righteousness that I possess as a believer is the righteousness that is Christ’s and is found in Christ and is mine by virtue of my union with Christ.

In other words, let me put it this way. If I am in union with Christ, and so now the fruit of conversion begins to blossom in my life,—and the fruit of faith is part of that fruit, right?—now what happens as part of my union with Christ? I am justified by faith. In other words, I am declared not guilty, not on the basis of my own righteousness, but by virtue of being united to Jesus. I am declared not guilty on the basis of His righteousness. And I receive it through the instrumentation of faith.

So whatever I possess, whatever benefit or blessing I possess as a result of having come to Christ, are blessings I possess in Him and not apart from Him. And you’ll notice this. One of the neat things about the order of salvation, one of the neat things about it is that the New Testament takes great pains to show us that the things that we possess as constituent elements of salvation were earned by Him first. For instance, no one ever thinks about this. I’m adopted in Christ. But my adoption is rooted in Jesus’ adoption.

Think about it. *“Jesus was declared to be the Son of God,”* right? That’s what Psalm 2 tells us. That’s what we read at the baptism of Jesus. That’s what we find in Romans 1:1-4.

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**Transcriber’s Note:** Romans 1:1-4, ESV. *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of Holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

**Jeff:** We find that Jesus as the Mediator was declared to be, or adopted as, the Son of God. Now that, like anything else, can lead us into heresy. There are people who believe that Jesus was a mere man and adopted to be the Son of God because of His virtuous behavior.

But that’s not what orthodoxy teaches. Orthodoxy teaches that an ontological Sonship stands. In other words, Jesus is the Son of God. And as the Son of God He takes on Himself human flesh to be what? A Mediator. And as Mediator He is declared to be the Son of God. And so it’s in terms of His mediatorial relationship, His role with us, that He is adopted.

And so where does our adoption come from? It comes from our union with Jesus Christ. And so all of the benefits that we have as a part of being saved are had in Christ. Does that make sense?

**Brave Man:** No.

**Jeff:** No. I heard no. *(Laughter)* You’ve got to tell me now what doesn’t make sense. Go ahead.

**Brave Man:** I was always under the impression that the adoption references were really to Non-Jews, with the idea that the Jews were the chosen people of God; they were His pocket change. And being outside the fold God was adopting us. But you’re saying it’s deeper than that?

**Jeff:** Well, what I’m saying is this. Romans 9 says that the Jews had the benefits before we did, and adoption is listed under those benefits. But that adoption is not the same adoption, for instance, as the *ordo salutis*. If I had my board up here we’d be able to parse these things out a little better. Where’s my board? Where is it? *(Laughter)* Oh, now it’s behind the coats. *(Laughter)* Before it was against the wall; now it’s behind the coats. All right, we’re being told something, Kirk. All right, you’re going to have to write a letter. *(Laughter)* All right. Well, you know what? We’ll fix them. Where are the markers? *(Laughter)* Against the wall. Yes, Ted?

**Ted:** It’s interesting that you asked the question and somebody said “No,” or maybe they were thinking no. But I guess what I’m thinking is that I’m theologically trained; I’m interested in it; I read it all the time. So this stuff you’re talking about is familiar to me. It’s not as if I’m not getting a lot of it. But for a lot of folks they may think, well what is this? Is this basically a lot of theory? And all I want to say is that the older I become, the more important what you’re saying has become. You really don’t resolve a lot of your own sense of inadequacy, failing, meaninglessness of life, without this. So I would just say hang in there. It may not be applicable to you today. But I promise you that it will be as you mature in the faith.

**Jeff:** It’s very much like growing up. I’ll respond to your question. I forgot it; let me go back to it. But it’s very much like growing up. When we’re young and we’re teenagers

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we don't have the sense of what our parents are doing for us. But when we get to be about 30 years old we go back to our parents and say, “You know what? I get what you were doing. You weren't stupid,” right? (*Laughter*) Hold on just a second.

Let me come back to you real quick. I don't want to lose your question. So you asked by saying, “I thought the adoption was for the Gentiles,” right? And so when we read in Romans 9 that it was the Jews who possessed the benefits, among them is adoption. I'll do my best to explain, so ask questions to follow up. But what we need to remember is that God chose the Jewish people through Abraham out of the human race, and in that sense adopted them to be, to function as a type of His true Son who was coming, Jesus Christ.

Now for instance with Jesus in Matthew chapter 2, we're told that He is the Son who is called out of Egypt. Hosea 11 is what was quoted there. He's the Son who is called out of Egypt. He's the faithful Son who was called out of Egypt. So Israel was a type and Jesus is the fulfillment or the antitype of Israel. In that sense they were adopted. Remember, the gospel was given to Abraham all the way back in Genesis chapter 12. Galatians 3 tells us that. *“The gospel was preached to Abraham.”*

And it's interesting. In verse 8 of Galatians 3 the gospel that was preached to Abraham is the part about the Gentiles coming in.

**Transcriber's Note:** Galatians 3:8, NKJV. *“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’”*

**Jeff:** So the gospel is preached all the way back in Genesis chapter 12. Now those who believe that gospel experience the *ordo salutis*, right? They are the ones who were elected. They are the ones who are effectually called and regenerated. They are the ones who experience faith and repentance. They are the ones who experience justification and adoption. In other words, they are adopted into the family of God, not in an external way like Israel being selected out of the nations. But they are selected out of the mass of sinful humanity to be God's own in Christ, by virtue of the gospel itself. So that's the difference between adoptions when you think about it. Does that make sense? Yes? Okay.

**Jim:** I don't know if you have time.

**Jeff:** Go ahead.

**Jim:** I'm the guy who said no. (*Laughter*) I've not heard this, of Jesus in some mediatorial sense being adopted. I'd never taken the language of declaration as being a declaration of adoption. It's more the announcement of a fact—

**Jeff:** Well, think about the text that it's often used with. Psalm 2: *“Today I have become Your Father.”* “Today You have become My Son,” right? So the idea that stands behind the declaration is an adoptive declaration.

**Jim:** That's helpful. I've spent a lot of time in Psalm 2. And that's a baffling statement.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don:** Is it today in eternity, or at a certain time?

**Jeff:** Well, you have to think about it in terms of both, right? I mean, it's clearly used. The fulfillment is the day that Christ is baptized, and the voice comes from heaven and

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says, “Today You are My Son,” right? In other words, in a mediatorial sense God is declaring at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry that “You are My Son today.” And there’s that sense in which there’s an adoptive sense to it. And it’s adoptive in the mediatorial sense.

Gerhardus Voss talks in his book *The Messianic Consciousness of Christ* about those who fall into the error of adoption. And he says that the reason why they fall into the error of adoption is that they see God saying, “Hey, I like this Guy. I’m going to adopt Him as My Son.” The reason why they have that error is that they do not see the ontological Sonship, or the Sonship that was from all eternity, standing behind that declaration.

**Ted:** Explain the word *ontological*.

**Jeff:** *Onto* simply means *being*, in other words, as Christ was from all eternity apart from creation. Who He was beforehand is who He is as Mediator. But remember, He takes upon Himself and adds something to Himself that He was not, and remains what He was when He takes on human flesh and becomes our Mediator. When He becomes our Mediator He is fulfilling the role of the second Adam to accomplish our salvation. So He is becoming, as it were, the Son of God who takes the place of the son of God, who was Adam. And He does the obedient thing.

**Ted:** I mean, it’s important to understand and to separate the ontological from the existential. It’s your being versus your experience. And what Jeff is saying is that Christ’s being, His ontology, who He actually is—

**Jeff:** Well, I would even go so far as to say that it’s not necessarily existential, but it’s ontological versus economic, or His work. So who He is as He is prior to creation, and economic—what He’s doing in His role as Mediator.

**Ted:** Yes. And the reason this is important is because we live in a culture today that says that the reality is economic or works. So in the end it’s what I’m experiencing or I’m working versus actually who I am, and the works proceeding out of that.

**Jeff:** Yes. So what you need to remember is that I’m not teaching heresy. (*Laughter*) What you need to remember is that Jesus prior to creation is the Son of God from all eternity. Do you see how before creation you have to use temporal language? When I say “before the world began,” there’s that sense of temporality, right? But prior to anything He is the Son of God. But as Mediator, as to His work redeeming us, He becomes in that role the Son of God, declared the Son of God.

All right. Well, we’ll pick up here next time.

**Bishop Rodgers:** It seems to me essentially is that what God shows Himself to be as our Savior He is in Himself forever. I mean, He adds things, but does not change who He is.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right. In the early church, you know, the question was this. Did God change when He entered into creation as Mediator?

**Bishop:** Right.

**Jeff:** And the answer is that “*He became what He was not while remaining what He was.*” And that’s an important distinction; it’s not a throw-away line. That’s an important

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distinction that we need to hang on to, because He becomes what He is not—that’s the Incarnation,—while remaining what He was,—God before creation.

How does He change? He changes in His relations. And we can talk about that more. Hopefully, you’ll forget that. *(Laughter)*

All right. See, this can be an overview if you want it, or we can go as deep as you want. But next time when we get together I want you to know that I’m going to get back on track, and it will be for you to pull me out. *(Laughter)* As long as we get started, I’ll always start where I’ve left off. It’s going to be an overview of Ephesians. We can skate and enjoy our time, or you can make it as miserable as you possibly can. *(Laughter)*

All right, let’s pray together. Father, thank You for this day, for our time together. We pray that You’ll bless us and strengthen us by Your grace. Father, we’re thankful for Your word. And Lord, we realize the depth of it. And we’re thankful that there is such a depth to it. And Lord, thank You for that, because we know that there’s a depth to You that we’ll never fathom. And even in what You’ve revealed there is a depth to which we’ll never get to the bottom. And we just strive as finite creatures to understand the Infinite. And yet, Father, we also take heart and real gladness in the fact that the Bible has a really simple message. And that is that we’re secure in the family of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. So we rejoice in that. And we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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