

What does Jesus have to do with you?

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[0 : 0 0] So, like I said a minute ago, we're doing this thing once a month called Doctrine for Life and the focus this semester, five month long focus, is Paul's theology.

The Apostle Paul who wrote the epistles, the letters in the New Testament and the question that we're really trying to get at today is the question you see in front of you on the screen.

What does Jesus have to do with you? What does a man that lived 2,000 years ago have to do with you?

A lot of you will have many answers to that question, very good answers to that question. And so what we're trying to do is get into Paul's text a little bit tonight and really get at what I think Paul is showing us is the very heart of his message.

The doctrine from which all other doctrines flow in Paul. So the first thing that we need to do before we answer that question is to begin with a review of last time.

[1 : 0 1] Sorry, I gotta find the clicker. Here it is. So this is what we talked about last time. Last time we were together, we looked at Paul's view of history and we said this that all of history in Paul's view is God's history.

It's the story of what God is doing in this world redeeming a people and a creation for himself. So this is this illustration up above and if you remember, if you were here last time, you remember that we took all of history according to Paul in a fourfold sense.

There was a creation, the first picture there, a pretty garden. There's a fall, the second picture, the sin of Adam and Eve that was imputed to us, that brought sin into the world.

And then the third picture, there was a redemption, the work that Jesus did, an aspect of renewal. And then there will be a final renewal, a new creation.

So we said that Paul and the rest of the Bible presents this fourfold narrative of all of redemption, of all of history, and that this history is our history if you're a Christian tonight.

[2 : 1 3] This is the picture that we read all of history through including our lives. And we also said this, that the Bible sees this history from the fall to redemption in two stages.

It talks about there's this age, so the Old Testament a lot of times will talk about an old age, and then the coming of a Messiah and then an age to come.

So within this fourfold picture of history, when we're talking about fall and redemption, there's a twofold picture of history. And that's this age and an age that's yet to come.

And we talked about last time how we all live in that. You know what it's like to feel the weight of this twofold stage of history. You feel like you're redeemed in Christ.

You know you're forgiven. You feel the joy of what it is to be a Christian. Yet life is hard. You suffer. German planes crash into mountains because of people's sin.

[3 : 1 5] We feel the weight of what it is to live in an age that has the redemption of Christ already happened in history, but still has not yet aspects to it.

Not yet new creation. Not yet a place without death and tears. So here's a passage, and especially focused on the red portion, one of the passages we looked at last week from Ephesians 1.

When God the Father raised him, Jesus from the dead, and seated Jesus at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

So there's Paul presenting to us this twofold idea of history, two stages, two ages. But it's a little bit more complicated than that. So what Paul, we learned later teaches us is that Jesus' resurrection brings that ages that is still to come partially realized even now.

And I just described that to you. Forgiveness. A renewed heart. Joy. The love of being in the Christian community.

[4 : 29] All these things are aspects of a new creation that have been realized in this age. And so you can see that little box there in the middle between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

There's a tension in that box where we live in that box as a people who have realized what it is to be redeemed, but not completely.

Not realized fully. A difference in this age and the age to come. So we could look at the drama of redemption, that fourfold thing, and our twofold this age like this.

There's an introduction to history that's creation. There's a conflict of history. That's sin. There's a resolution in history that's redemption in Christ, the coming of the Messiah.

The resolution of history introduces an already and not yet aspect to the conclusion of history, which is new creation.

[5 : 28] So a fourfold drama of redemption, a fourfold philosophy of history with two stages that we're living in now. A this age and a not yet age. An already redeemed, not yet new creation.

So that's what we looked at last time. That's the Bible's presentation of how we should think of history and time and ourselves within it. This is your history.

This is God's history. This is the history of what God is doing. So now we're building on that today. We're moving on and building on that foundation to ask, how does this story, the fourfold story we just presented of redemption relate to us?

Really what does it mean? What is at the back of that to us? Or how does what a man did 2,000 years ago reach across time and space and make any difference for you in 2015?

That's really the heart of the question that we're getting at today. So we're going to answer it through asking two other questions. Little complicated but not too bad. First question we're going to ask is what's the most important idea in Paul's theology?

[6 : 46] Now I had no idea that Derek was going to preach on 1 Corinthians 15 this morning and we're going to go back to that passage again. And it's going to be in total complementarity to what Derek said this morning, which is great and God's sweet providence.

And after we look at that, then we're going to ask how does Paul think this idea relates to all of us? So what's the most important concept or doctrine in Paul?

We read it this morning. Let's read it again. 1 Corinthians 15, 3 and 4, I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Now what we're going to do is we're going to take each of those highlighted color portions and I'm just going to say a little bit about them. So just focus one at a time and we'll go back and look at the verse again. So focus on the first one first, the one in red.

For Paul, this idea of first importance, which is literally something like the foundation of all things or the first of all things that come after, it is the highest concern.

[8 : 01] So it's not a term related to quantity, if you know what I mean by that. In other words, sometimes when we're trying to describe quantity, we say first, second, third or a chronological sequence of events.

We say first this happened, second this happened, third this happened. But when he's using the word of first importance here, it's not in relation to chronology or quantity, it's in relation to quality.

Quality is how he means it here. That's the sense that we get from the words here. The qualitative highest concern for Paul, first importance, it was received from him.

It's not something he made up, it's something that was given to him. So then look secondly in the blue, what is it? What is it?

What is that quality? It's Jesus' history. It is Jesus' life.

[9 : 06] Christ died. Christ was buried and Christ was raised. And so that idea that is of highest quality, highest concern for Paul is this life of Christ in history.

That's the gospel. So immediately what Paul does for us is he says this, the gospel is what Jesus did.

The gospel is what Jesus accomplished already. And that's going to be important, that distinction, that the gospel is what Jesus did.

And you'll see why in a moment. Thirdly, Jesus' history fulfilled the Old Testament history. So when it's talking about in accordance with the Scriptures, you see that twice in the yellow, what Scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures, there aren't New Testament Scriptures for Paul at this point.

They're being written. He's writing them among others. He's talking about the Old Testament. And so we see how this fits in with our picture of the drama of redemption that the whole of history from creation forward, according to the Scriptures, is about this gospel, what Christ did in history that he lived and died and was buried and he resurrected.

[10 : 34] And then lastly, he did it, Paul says, for our sins, for our sins.

Now you weren't alive when Jesus died. It's been a long time since then, hasn't it? We have to make a distinction in this text between what the gospel is and what the gospel is for.

So what Paul is saying is that the gospel is Jesus' death and resurrection and life and all that he is doing.

And what that gospel, that history is for, is it's for us. There's an aspect then that the gospel is accomplished in history by Jesus and then it's applied throughout history for all of us.

And so we have the gospel in its twofold sense, the gospel accomplished and the gospel applied. The gospel accomplished.

[11 : 38] Jesus died and rose again. The gospel applied, that gospel is for us, given to us, even in our present day lives.

Okay. All right. So if that's the centerpiece of Paul's highest concern, the most high piece of quality that Paul's concerned about that Derek gave us this morning in his preaching, how does Paul think of the relation between Jesus, the gospel itself, Jesus' life, death and resurrection and our sin.

In other words, what is behind this word? What does this word mean for our sin? And here we go. This is where we're maybe moving into really interesting and new territory for some in reading Paul and seeing some new insights is when we hit this verse in 1 Corinthians 15.

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. So what he's talking about there is by one man Adam, death came.

But by the one man Jesus, resurrection and life has come, the defeat of death. That's the first verse. And then verse 22. As an Adam, all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

[13 : 10] So for the rest of our time, just a few minutes, what we're going to do is look at those little two words. In Christ.

In Christ. In Christ is a phrase that appears 92 times in Paul. What's it mean?

What's it mean? Paul ends tons of his sentences with that phrase in Christ. What's it mean that all will be or all are in Christ?

What does that, what does he mean by that? Or he says it another way in Romans 8. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs, see there? With Christ. Provided that we suffer with Christ.

[14 : 07] In order that we may also be glorified with Christ. So Paul sometimes in the very same way, instead of using the phrase in Christ, uses the phrase with Christ.

And he uses the phrase with Christ 11 times in his letters. Now what I want to tell you in just a summary fashion right now is that this language of in Christ and with Christ is what we all, is what is often called a doctrine in theology of union with Christ.

Union with Christ. And what I want to develop is that this doctrine of union with Christ is the way that we connect to the gospel.

Jesus died for our sins throughout all of history to us in 2015 and to the remainder of the age.

That this doctrine union with Christ is how Paul makes this connection. And because of that, this doctrine is the center of Paul's idea of what it is to be saved.

[15 : 18] What is salvation for Paul? It is to be united with Christ. United with Christ. So let's look at a little bit more of what this union with Christ, what it means in Paul.

He defines it all over the place. So let's try to get at it. Here's a summary statement. Basically what I just said. Paul teaches us that everything that ever happened to Jesus is yours because you are one body with Him by the Spirit.

And here are the three ways that we're going to look at how he defines it briefly. The first is in an all-encompassing way. The second is in a historical way.

And the third is in a present way. And those will make sense in just a moment. Let's read Ephesians 1, 3 to 4. What does union with Christ mean for Paul? That's the answer.

That's the question to keep in your head. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ, there's the language, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us, and here it is again, the in Christ language, in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

[16 : 40] The first point to be made is this. If you're a Christian tonight and you want to know how what Jesus did 2,000 years ago relates to you, the first way through union is this, that you are united to Jesus before the foundation of the world.

In other words, long before you ever existed, long before perhaps time began, God named you.

He said, Suraj and Colin and Scott united to Christ.

That's what we mean by election or predestination, not precisely, but basically. God elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

You have been united to the Son of God for all of history, is what Paul says. He has always been for you because he determined you before time.

[18 : 00] You see, there's a union through election that you have with Jesus. Take comfort tonight, especially if you're suffering with the fact that God names you before time began.

That's the first aspect. There's a union from all of eternity to eternity, all encompassing a union with Jesus himself.

The second aspect is this. There's also a sense of union that Paul uses with Christ's life, with Christ's very life, his history, his life, death and resurrection.

Let's look at this verse in Romans 6. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into what?

Into his death. We were buried with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

[19 : 14] For if we've been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. What Paul's doing there is he's taking every aspect of Jesus' life.

You see, Jesus died, Jesus was buried, and Jesus was raised. The same thing he did in 1 Corinthians 15 and saying, you died, you were buried, and you were raised.

Actually everything that Jesus lived, you've lived it, is what he's saying. So all that language in Paul that's sometimes confusing where it says things like, take up your cross, you've died with Christ, all these things, and you're like, what does this mean?

I haven't died, I haven't done anything like this. What he's saying is that when Christ lived, because of your union with him from all of eternity, you lived in him representationally.

Christ as your substitute, as your representative did all this for you in a way that it's as if you did it, you see.

[20 : 31] So when we connect the dots then to what we talked about last week in Redemptive History and we asked the question like this, what is exactly that tension in our this age, not this age thing going on?

What exactly, how do we actually exactly get at that? Well this is how we get at it. We live in a world that's broken, that's still sinful, people still die, people still cry, people still have to eat, people still starve to death.

All of these things, the resurrection of the body has not yet happened for us. But Paul says it has, you see. You've already died with Christ.

You've already been raised with Christ. Because when Jesus was raised with Christ, if you're united with him for all of eternity, it happened to you too.

And so those things, those moments of joy and glory that you feel in this life are aspects of a new resurrection life, a new creation entering into the now, the this age for Paul.

[21 : 46] You've shared in Christ death and now you share in Christ resurrection life. That's what he gives us in the second aspect of union.

The third aspect of union. Okay, you say, yeah, so I've been united with Christ if I'm a Christian today for all of eternity from before the foundation of the world.

I was united to Christ when he died and when he rose again in 30-some-odd AD. You're telling me all this, but you know what?

I know what my life has been like and there have been plenty of moments in this life when I was definitely not united to Christ. I didn't even believe in Jesus for the first some-odd years of my life.

So if I've been united to Christ for all of eternity, if I've been united to Christ in his death and resurrection 2,000 years ago before I was ever even born, then how can I make any sense of the fact that there's been plenty of time in this life?

[22 : 54] I used to be an atheist, maybe some of you are thinking. I used to not even believe in a God. So how do we make sense of that? So the third aspect that Paul gives us is that there's a doctrine of union, an aspect of union with Christ that has to be realized in this life now.

The same thing that Derek talked about this morning, that that gospel has to be received. It's the same thing there in total complementarity. The doctrine, our union being with and in Christ also, even though it's been from all of eternity from 2,000 years ago, also must be realized now in your life.

Faith, conversion, all these themes that you're very familiar with. So this is what, look at what Paul says in Romans 16 and 7, the first verse.

This is his closing of this letter and he just throws this out there. It's really interesting. He's Andronicus and Junior, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners.

They are well known to the apostles and they were in Christ before me. Now you see how he puts that time marker on it. They were in Christ before me.

[24 : 09] Right now, look, if we were, if God's people were elected in Christ before the foundation of the world, there's no such thing as before me, right?

There's no such thing as being united with Christ before anybody else. It's from eternity. Or if all of God's people are united with Christ at His death in history, then there's no temporal difference between you and me or between Andronicus and Junior and Paul.

There's none. But what Paul says is there's an aspect of that union that has to be realized in your life right now that must be received for it to be full and final.

He goes on and so what Paul's describing there is, he's basically saying, look, I didn't believe in Jesus. There was a time when I was not a Christian and at that time I was not in union with Christ.

Yet, at the same time, he was in union with Christ from all of eternity, except it wasn't yet realized. The Spirit had not yet done his work to make it happen in this life, you see.

[25 : 22] And so he goes on in Ephesians 2 to describe it like this. And I was, Paul's saying, or we were, by nature in our lives now, at one point, children of wrath, like the rest of mankind, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

You were once dead at some point in the past however many years since you've been born, but now you have been united with Jesus and made alive together with him.

All right. So what we have then with Paul is this doctrine, union with Christ.

It has three dimensions to it. These are not three different unions. There are three different aspects of the one union. From all of eternity, if you're a Christian tonight, elect.

You are named by God before the foundation of the world to be in Jesus. In history, when Jesus lived, died, was buried and raised again, that was you in some, and representationally in union with him.

[26 : 48] You've already died with him because he already died. You've already been raised with him because he's already been raised. Then is already realized for you in that sense.

And you got to believe it in this life to be united with him. There was a moment when you were a child of wrath and now you're a child of grace made alive with him.

So how does this story of redemption relate to us? What do we learn from this doctrine? Well, before I say this, one of the things I want to say is what do we learn?

If you want to read Paul's letters well, then take this doctrine home with you and look for it all over the place because it is everywhere in Paul.

And once now that you've seen it, maybe some of you will say, yeah, yeah, I got this one. I was 10 years old, a long time ago. And some of you want some of you, this might be something new.

[27 : 49] And for those that are, when you go back and read Paul's letters, I think what you'll find is that, man, Paul uses this language in every chapter. This is all over the place.

This makes so much sense. So test it out. Maybe you don't think that. And if you don't, then text that, ask, question, and file a complaint. And we'll talk about it.

So what do we learn? We are united to Jesus Christ from all eternity to His death and resurrection and history. And all of this is by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives now.

Whatever Jesus has accomplished, it's for us. It's for us through union. All right. Now we'll close in just a moment, just a few more minutes, and we're really early.

So congratulations for everybody to get out early. Here's an example in Paul of where another place that we can go and see this, marriage.

[28 : 48] What is marriage according to Paul? This is one of his principal examples of this doctrine. This is an interesting passage, a difficult passage to understand.

Let's read it together now, now that we've got this doctrine of union with Christ under our belt. In the same way, husbands love your wives, should love their wives as their own bodies.

All right, stop. Don't read any more. Husbands love your wives as your own body. Now that's a weird sentence, isn't it?

There's a lot of ways you could take that. What is he talking about? How is it that a husband should love their wife as he loves his body? Is Paul talking about my physical body?

Now let's think about this. Another metaphor that Paul uses to describe union with Christ that you'll be very familiar with is the church.

[29 : 45] The church is one body, one living organism. And who is the church's head? Jesus Christ.

When Paul talks about the church, he refers to it as one. And with Jesus as the head and the people as the body, doesn't he? All he's doing there is taking the doctrine of union with Christ that we just described and giving you a metaphor for it, of how it's worked out in the real world.

The church is union with Christ, lived out. He is the head, we are the body. Now let's take that metaphor and apply it to the marriage.

If Jesus is the head of the one body of the church, then what does that mean that the church is? It is Jesus's body, isn't it? The church is Jesus's body.

Just like in marriage, when a man and a woman are united in marriage, Paul's considering them to be one body, one flesh.

[30 : 46] In other words, one union. And so when he says in the very first sentence, husbands love your wives as your own body, he's just saying, husbands love your wives because she is your body.

You see? Just like Christ loves the church because that is his body. It's a picture of what it is to be united to Jesus.

So all these metaphors that we live in our daily lives that are real to us, marriage, the church community, all these things are drastically perceived differently when we understand a doctrine.

This is how theology is. Doctrines are for life as our title is because we realize that marriage, church, all these relationships and I would even argue creation itself is one living organism in different spheres, one body that are all representation, symbols of the one union that we have with Jesus as believers.

You see? Now let's go on to the second sentence. It gets even, he keeps doing it. It's all over the place in this passage. He who loves his wife loves himself. There it is again, right? You see the same theme.

[32 : 03] For no one ever hated his own flesh because husband and wife are one flesh. One must not hate wife.

But nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church. See there's the comparison. Union, two metaphors of union going on there. Christ in the body of the church, the husband and the wife who is his body, one body because we are members of his body.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife a quote from Moses and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery Paul says is profound.

And I am saying that it refers to Christ in the church. Now what we should say then because Paul says it is that the doctrine of union with Christ and you may have been thinking this the whole time, it's like, whoa, this is profound.

I don't understand. How is it that we can be united to Jesus for all of eternity and yet not united to Jesus for at a point in time in our own lives?

[33 : 11] Like, there are questions there that I have no answer to. And Paul points to that fact. The mystery of marriage, the mystery of the church being Christ's body is the same mystery of the mystery of how we can be united to a man that lived and died 2,000 years ago for all of eternity.

That is a mystery and Paul's answer to that mystery is that it is by the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit does the work of accomplishing it and it is not for us to understand or grasp holy.

It's a profound mystery, says marriage is a profound mystery. There's a lot of sense to that if you're married, you know, we could take that in many other ways as well.

There are other expressions in Paul and in the Gospels. Vine unites to its branch. A head is united to its body.

A father's union with his son. A master's union with his slave in Ephesians 6. The union of the temple and the cornerstone.

[34 : 20] Right? All of these metaphors you read in the New Testament are explications and symbols and illustrations for you to see more and more that union with Christ is the base foundation of the reality of your salvation.

And that the age that we're coming to, the new creation, the age that is not yet is the moment in time when union with Christ is no longer in any sense metaphorical or any of these things.

It's where you are going to live with Jesus in absolute union. Revelation 19 to 22, you're going to feast with him at the table.

And so one last one we'll look at and this is literally the last one. The Lord's table. What is the Lord's table? The Lord's supper?

The sacraments mean for us today. Look at Paul's language and I'm not going to go into any detail explanation of this passage.

[35 : 29] It's a hard one. But look at the language he uses. The cup of blessing that we bless. Is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

A union with the blood of Christ? We could say that. The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread. But we who are many are one body.

We all partake of the one bread. There's a clear emphasis of the doctrine of union with Christ. So I think one of the things Paul is saying to us is that when we go to the Lord's table on Sundays, when we take the Lord's supper, what God has given us there is a representation in the flesh eating and drinking what it is to be united with Jesus Christ.

It's teaching us and showing us what it is to feast with Jesus as his people, as his one body. It's pointing us forward to when that union will one day be fully and finally realized in the new creation.

What do you take away? Your union with Christ is the centerpiece of salvation. Now I say that because a lot of times, and this is what we're going to look at next time, a lot of times we think of justification, the forgiveness of sins as the final point of all salvation.

[36 : 56] And I think what Paul is telling us is that union is the centerpiece which includes justification, forgiveness of sins, and sanctification, the pursuit of holiness.

And so next time what we're going to look at is how does this idea, a doctrine of union, being united with Christ for all of history relate to ideas like justification, sanctification, forgiveness, and holiness.

All right. Man, we got 15 minutes. I could keep going. I'm not going to though. Let's pray. Our Lord and God, we ask for help.

Lord, some of the things in Paul are hard. We know that Jesus because Peter said it, and it's harder for us because we're not even apostles.

And so we ask for help. We want to take just even a sentence or two of what Paul's taught us today home with us, Lord, and remember it and be able to read other parts of the New Testament through the lens of this doctrine of union.

[38 : 09] And so God asked that you would just by your spirit bless us with it, even if it's not all sinking, it didn't sink in all for me or for anybody here probably. Just bless us with a mind to see it in the text next time we read the text.

And to love Jesus all the more for it and to love other people all the more for the way we're united to them in the church. Oh, God, we ask that you would just apply it to us.

Apply these texts to us that they would truly be text for us because Jesus was a savior for us. And we ask for this in his name. Amen.