

Jesus, the Judge Judged in Our Place

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[0 : 00] So we're in our third installment tonight of our Doctrine for Life series. Our subject is we're looking into various motifs and themes in Paul's theology, particularly five of them.

So this is our third one. And we'll just spend a little bit of time recapping at the beginning before we dive in. One of the reasons that we're doing this, and we've been talking about this every time, is that we believe that everybody is a theologian.

Anybody who says Jesus is Lord has entered into the realm of doing theology. And so it's not the case whether you're a theologian or not, and whether or not you ought to do it as a Christian.

It's really the case of whether or not we're being obedient to pursuing it and being good at it. John 17, when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, he's praying to his father, and he prays a prayer in such a way that he says that the knowledge of God is eternal life.

And all we're saying theology is, is knowing God, knowing more about God, and in light of knowing God, knowing more about everything, knowing all things in relation to God is to know more about everything.

[1 : 21] And so one of the things that is at the heart of that is actually just knowing ourselves. So when we do theology, we're actually learning and knowing about ourselves as we learn and know about God.

And that last part, knowing ourselves is at the heart of what we're talking about tonight. The third theme, motif, idea that Paul has all over the place in his 13 letters is the doctrine of justification.

And so you may ask, why do we split hair sometimes over understanding what it is to be justified and sanctified and regenerated?

And you might have heard, if you've been in the church a long time, you've heard all these words being used, and it just sounds like hair splitting sometimes. It sounds like we're talking about how many angels can fit on the head of a needle.

And sometimes it is that, but really what we're doing is we're exploring who we are. And we're exploring and answering the question, what is it that made you change?

[2 : 24] You see, some of you grew up in the church, you were baptized as covenant members of a congregation in the free church or some other denomination. You can't remember a day when you didn't believe in Jesus, right?

For others of you, you were converted radically maybe, you were an atheist, you didn't believe in God at all. You know, I don't think you'll mind me saying this, but most of us know Siraj's story.

It's a story of incredible turn. There was a turn that occurred and incredible changes. So when we talk about the doctrines of salvation, like justification or sanctification or any of those things, what we're doing is saying, what made me like that?

What made me leave that life behind and come to this life, this life where I come to this place every Sunday and I do all these strange things like read my Bible and pray and all these things.

What made me like this? And so when we're doing theology today, a lot of what we're doing is asking, who am I and how have I become this way?

[3 : 30] So let's begin. We talked about two things so far in our series, two themes that Paul picks up on a lot in his letters.

The first theme is this, that Paul reads all of history as one big story, one grand narrative, one drama of redemption. And if you've been here the past couple of times, you've seen this picture.

The drama of redemption is represented in four segments. The first one is God created the world. You can see in the first picture it's supposed to be a representation of the Garden of Eden of some sort.

The world fell in Adam, Adam's sins. You can see the desolate aspect of the second picture. Christ redeemed that world from sin, the third picture.

And then the final picture is the final redemption, Christ coming and renewing that world. So Paul reads all of history as a creation, a fall, a redemption, and a new creation.

[4 : 30] All of history is one story. So that was the first thing that we talked about. You can see it like this. The introduction, if we think about it in terms of a story, every good story has an introduction, a conflict, a resolution, and a conclusion.

The introduction is creation. The conflict is sin. The resolution is redemption in Christ. And the conclusion is new creation. The second thing we talked about in our first meeting together was that when Jesus came, He brought part of the new creation into the world we live in now.

And so you can see in that little box, there's an aspect of the world we live in now that's already new creation. And that aspect is us. It's believers in Jesus.

Those of us who have accepted Christ by faith, we've been changed. Our spirits have been resurrected from the dead. Paul talks about being resurrected with Jesus.

You've already been resurrected from the dead. You've already experienced an aspect of new creation. But your body is still weak and the world is still broken and you still commit sin.

[5 : 38] So there's aspects of the new creation that are not yet realized. And so we live in this tension in that box there between a redemption that's partially and fully accomplished.

A redemption that's both a resurrection spiritually and physically. So that was the first thing we talked about. Then on the second meeting, one month ago, we talked about the gospel.

What is Paul think the gospel is? He thinks that the most important thing in 1 Corinthians 15 is that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He was raised.

Now you see in the blue, all the blue parts of that verse are historical. They're historical.

And then the green part there is about us. And so there's a division in this verse between what the gospel is and how the gospel is applied.

[6 : 38] We can call the division the difference in the gospel accomplished, the gospel applied. The gospel accomplished is history. Jesus died and resurrected.

Gospel accomplished is finished and final. The gospel applied, the aspect of it that is for our sins is ongoing. God is still taking that historical gospel and applying it continually anew in every generation by the Holy Spirit.

And so we can ask how is this gospel really for us? You can see I just wrote there gospel accomplished, Christ died, gospel applied. The gospel is for us, we talked about last time, because God unites us by the Holy Spirit to Christ's death and resurrection.

And look at this verse with me and we'll kind of see a little bit of what that means. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ. So that's the language we see all over the New Testament.

It appears 92 times in Paul's letters that we are in Christ. He's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us. And here it is again in a different phrase in him before the very foundation of the world that we should be holy.

[7 : 54] So in other words, the way that the gospel is applied, the gospel accomplished, Jesus died and rose again in history is applied to us is that the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ. We become his body. He is the head. We are the body as Paul talks about in Ephesians. We are in him even before the foundation of the world.

So that reference right there is that part of the idea of union with Christ is the idea of election being predestined unto faith. We were united with Christ before the very foundations of the world.

We were united with Christ when he died on the cross and when he rose again so that Paul can say in Romans 4, 29 that when Jesus was raised, you were raised.

And he's talking about that moment in 30-something AD that when Jesus was raised, you were part of his body already because of election. So there's an idea of our union with Christ that transcends our own life in 2015 and from the time we were born that goes back all the way to eternity.

[9 : 03] That's how the gospel is for us, that God applies it to us from all of eternity for those that are elect in him. You can see some of the ways that this is expressed in Paul.

This idea of union between husband and wife, we looked at that one last time, between the vine and the branches, between the head and the body, father, son, master, slave, cornerstone and temple.

These are all the metaphors that Paul uses to display the fact that we are united with him from all eternity. He's the head, we are his body. We are his bride and he is the bridegroom.

And all of these ideas are at the center of what it means to be saved. What is it to be saved? And this is really what we're talking about today. What about justification?

So when we think about justification, we think about salvation, most of us are usually tempted to think salvation is justification. If you've grown up in the church at all, you've been around terms like this.

[10 : 05] Maybe you're a visitor and these words are all brand new and that's fine too, that's great. A lot of times when we think about theology, justification is the very center of what theology is, of what salvation is about.

But what I want to suggest to you today is that for Paul, that idea of union with Christ is actually at the center. That union with Christ encompasses the whole scope of salvation and justification is one part but it's not the final end.

Now we get this idea a lot because the reformers, the reformation of the 1500s, a lot of which took place in Scotland, justification that doctrine was at the very center of it, of the discussions.

And Martin Luther, the great German reformer who nailed his 95 theses on the wall at Wittenberg in 1517, we often think that this guy found justification in Paul and he pushed justification for it as the center doctrine of the reformation.

Justification was incredibly important in the reformation and Luther did emphasize justification a lot but John Calvin later on would come back and write about how he actually read in Paul that union with Christ is at the center.

[11 : 26] The center of Paul's idea of what it means to be saved is being united to Jesus by faith like a body is united to its head. And then here's a quote from Calvin.

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, he means by that that we're not united to him. And we are separated from him.

All that Christ has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us. So Calvin thinks that as long as a person is not united to Jesus as part of his body, both in election, both in Christ's life and death and both by faith in your own life, that there is no justification to be had.

That justification actually flows out of this union, this marriage to your groom who is Jesus, this body that's joined to its head, this vine, you are the vine and he is the branch.

And in all these ways, that justification actually flows out of that. In other words, we could say it like this at the very bottom. Christ being in us, being united to us, enables the fact that Christ was for us.

[12 : 38] In other words, by in we mean union and by for we mean that he was our representative on the cross, that he did this for us. He has to be in us before he can be for us is how John Calvin put it.

So what is justification? We've been talking about it, I've been using the word and maybe some of you are thinking what do we really mean by it? And that's a huge question. What is justification and how does it fit?

So the background to understand just the doctrine of justification is this, is to think about sin. When Adam sinned, Paul says that sin brought two consequences to all of us, to all of humanity.

The first is legal guilt. So it's the idea of we're in the courtroom and that God is the judge and you are on the dock and you are guilty before him for your sin in a legal capacity.

So if you go out and murder someone and you appear before the court here in Edinburgh, it doesn't matter how many times you say you're sorry, you're still guilty.

[13 : 43] There's no amount of you saying you're sorry that can change the fact that you're guilty of murder. Justice still has to be served even if you hate what you did, right?

And that's what we're talking about with legal guilt, that no matter what you do, no aspect of merit, no matter what you do, you cannot escape the fact that you're guilty, that I'm guilty, that every human being is guilty before God.

The second aspect and consequence that sin brings into the world is brokenness. So it's not simply that we're guilty before God in a legal capacity, it's also that our sin has caused the brokenness of the entire cosmos.

The world doesn't work anymore like it ought. It's not working according to the created order of Genesis 1 and 2. Everything is broken.

So not only are you guilty before God, but you keep on sinning. You don't merely incur a guilt from one sin, but we can't stop sinning. We do it basically every day in our thought life and our actions and all sorts of ways.

[14 : 50] Not only that, but the natural world order is a disaster. Earthquakes in Nepal. War.

We have refugees now coming from Syria. All these are aspects of the brokenness of the world, and that brokenness starts at a personal level and it extends to its corporate bounds.

Now Paul says that by union with Christ, being united with Christ and His death and His resurrection brings two solutions.

It brings a solution to both of those problems. The first solution that it brings is legal forgiveness. That aspect of being in the courtroom before God, of being guilty, justification is dealing with the legal aspect of our sin.

That we deserve guilt, that we deserve eternal wrath and eternal punishment, but we get in Christ, in union with Christ, a legal forgiveness. We are united to His death and resurrection in such a way that God comes out of whatever you call the top of the court.

[16 : 03] What do you call that? The bench, right? The bench, yeah. You come out of the bench and you step down and God Himself sits in the dock for you. He takes on the place of the guilty in the courtroom.

That's what justification is dealing with. It's a legal type of forgiveness. Sanctification, which is what we'll talk about next session, next month, it deals with that personal brokenness.

So in justification, your sins are forgiven, your guilt is dealt with, and that's fully in final. It's once for all. It's done. It's over.

Never again will God see you as guilty. It's done. In sanctification, God removes from you your ability not to do good.

So in other words, He gives you a new heart. He makes it where you're a person that can actually pursue holiness like Jesus. And that is not a final thing at the moment of justification.

[17 : 08] It is a process that you will never accomplish in this life. Those are the two aspects of guilt. And justification and sanctification are the two solutions that Jesus has given us that flow from our union with Him as His body.

Now we're going to look at a verse here. Again, what is justification? Here's a definition for you more precisely. It's a legal transition from a state of being in wrath to a state of being under grace in the sight of God.

In the eyes of God, you were under wrath. Now you're under grace. You were condemned in God's courtroom of justice. And now you are finally and fully forgiven.

And here's a verse from Colossians 1 that explains it. He has, God the Father, has delivered us from the domain of darkness, condemnation, wrath, and transferred us, that's the movement from state to state, from the state of wrath to the state of grace, to the kingdom of the beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul uses the phrase forgiveness of sins all the time in his letters in place of justification. He uses them to synonymously. By justification, we've been delivered from the domain of darkness to the domain of the kingdom of the Son to light.

[18 : 38] Now we've been talking about this the whole time, that justification flows out of union with Christ, our union to God as head. And here's a verse that explains how justification is because of our union with Him, our union that occurs before the foundation of the world, our union that occurs in time when Christ died and rose again, and our union that occurs by the Holy Spirit giving us the gift of faith, which we'll talk about in a minute.

Philippians 3, Paul says, he basically says before this, my goal is that I may gain Christ and be found, and there's our language of union, in Him.

It's the language that appears 92 times in Paul, not having a righteousness of my own. So now he's talking about justification. He's talking about not having his own righteousness, but Jesus' righteousness, that transfer between you and Christ of righteousness, of condemnation for righteousness.

Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, justification that depends on faith.

And then for Paul, flows out of being found in union with Jesus in Philippians 3, 8 and 9. In Galatians, he says, may I be found justified in Him when He's talking to the Galatians.

[20 : 03] So you see, he's saying he's grounding that idea of justification in Christ, being united to Jesus' body. Now this is a long quote, so bear with me.

I'm going to explain it as we go along. Calvin said it best. Calvin always says it best. And here's what Calvin said. Therefore, that joining together of head and members.

So there's the idea of union with Christ. That joining together of head with the body, Jesus and the church, that indwelling of Christ in our heart, that's union with Christ, that He indwells our heart.

In short, and now he just, he labels it, that mystical union, by mystical he means spiritual, by the Holy Spirit, are accorded by us the highest degree of importance.

So that Christ, having been made ours, that's union with Christ's language, makes us sharers with Him. And here, and now he switches to talk about justification.

[21 : 02] All that union talk, and now we're talking about justification. In the gift, the gift, the whole chapter that this quote comes from is about justification. He calls it the gift. The gift, justification, which He has been, which has been endowed in us.

We do not therefore contemplate Him outside of us from afar in order that His righteousness may be imputed to us, but because we put on Christ, we are engrafted into His body.

In short, because He, I can't see that. Okay, to make us one with Him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with Him.

The fellowship that we have of righteousness, of being justified, of being forgiven, of being counted not guilty before God our Father, is because we've been engrafted into the body of Christ.

Because we've been united to Jesus. Now the title of our talk tonight was this, Jesus, the Judge, Judged in Our Place.

[22 : 09] Why and how is all of this possible? What is the ground of justification? What is the ground of our union in Christ and with Christ?

It's Jesus who was the judge, judged in our place. What do we mean by judge? Jesus, who is God in the Trinity, is the judge of the living and the dead.

We know this from all over the New Testament. One place is 2 Timothy 4. It appears all over Revelation that God is judge and that Jesus has been appointed the judge who will return again to judge the living and the dead.

But when Jesus, who is the judge, became a man, the incarnation, immediately in that moment we were condemned.

You see, if we didn't already know it, we were definitively and finally condemned because the very fact that the judge had to become a man to be judged meant that we were in condemnation.

[23 : 14] The judge could not remain on his throne and judge us because we would always be found guilty. But in the very fact of the incarnation, the judge became the judged.

You see, the judge became the one that was judged for us. So it's a very literal God coming down from the bench, sitting in the dock in the incarnation.

The judge becoming the judged so that we could move from a place of condemnation in the dock to sitting with him on the bench to being an heir and a brother or a sister, being a family member with Jesus.

His judgment on the cross is our very righteousness. You see? So the ground of us being united to Jesus, the ground of being justified in Jesus is the fact that the judge had to be judged.

He had to be judged so that we would never have to be. So we ask this question again, this is the question I just answered. What is the ground or the cause of this gift of grace that is union with Christ and that is justification?

[24 : 32] First, it's Christ's righteousness. It's Christ's very righteousness that he accomplished in the gospel. Secondly, it's our union to that death by the Spirit.

It's being elected in Christ. It's being united to him in space and time. It's being part of his body. And thirdly, it's by a gift of faith.

So you may have been wondering in all this talk, where does faith come in? Well, Calvin and other guys throughout history have shown us in Paul that faith flow is a gift of our being in union with Christ just as much as justification is.

And in fact, faith is the instrument for our justification as a gift of our union. So you see down there in Ephesians 3.17, Paul says, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

How is it that you're not united to Christ? What does the Holy Spirit do to accomplish this in your own personal life? He gives you the gift of faith. He makes you to believe in him and to believe in Jesus.

[25 : 38] Now what is faith? This is one of those words that's so difficult to define, isn't it? You have faith. You believe in Christ. But if I was to ask you out in the street, what's faith?

Give it to me quick. You might have a tough time with it. It's a tough word to define. It took me forever. I was thinking about it all day today trying to figure out what I think faith is.

And so I went to look at what Paul says faith is. Paul first says that faith is belief in something that's unseen. But it's not just any belief in something unseen because there are people, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, that have believed in things unseen and they've believed in things unseen and they've believed it in vain.

So it can't be simply belief in something you don't see. Belief in the supernatural, all these things. Secondly, it's got to be entrusting oneself to Christ in love and hope.

It's literally a total giving oneself over to. I once heard it described by a guy in the States that I used to listen to and he used to say, what is faith?

[26 : 49] Faith is you've been walking up a mountain. If you've ever been on a big hike or something or you've run a marathon or anything like that, you know that there comes a point in it where your mind tells you you cannot go anymore.

Right? Now your body can, it always can, until you collapse. But your mind is telling you that there is no way that you can keep going. The pain is too bad.

What faith is, is faith is when a hiker and a runner or somebody like that comes up that's in miserable pain behind another and that person says, look, just jump onto my back.

Just jump on my back. Relieve everything that's hurting in your body by jumping on to me. You're literally completely entrusting yourself on to Christ.

It's a complete and total trust. It's a complete saying yes, yes to. There's no no about it. And Paul says it like this in Romans 4, in hope Abraham believed against all hope.

[27 : 57] So in hope, in a complete just saying, okay God, a complete falling over onto God's shoulders, onto his back and being held up.

He believed against all hope and that against hope that Paul's talking about there is that God kept telling Abraham the world is going to get changed through you through the covenant I'm making with you. And guess what?

Abraham couldn't have a kid. His wife was barren against all hope. He was 80 something years old and God said, you're the one. And Abraham said, I'll believe you against all hope because we cannot have children.

That's what it looks like. And the third thing is this. It's a it's a persevering love. So Paul uses the language of standing in faith, walking in faith, holding fast to faith.

Justification is fully final. When you've been forgiven of guilt before God, the father, there is nothing else to do.

[29 : 00] Faith is a continual standing in a continual walking in a continual holding fast to the promises of God. It's persevering.

It goes to the end. So how do faith and justification relate? Well, I want to use the example again of Abraham. And this is one of the last things we'll look at.

And then we'll look at some practical implications. Romans four. So let me just say what we're doing today is not opening up the Bible and picking a big text and saying here we're going to expose it and we're going to talk about it.

What we're trying to do in these five months that we're doing this once a month is give you the themes and the tools to read all the letters of Paul and to pick up fresh insights and to read them well.

Right. And that's why we're doing it like this. We're looking at themes. And so we're just explicating simply those themes. Romans four is one place that I would send you and say, Hey, you want to you want to you want to think more about this idea of justification?

[30 : 04] We'll go to Romans four, the whole chapter is about it. And it's about Abraham. And one of the big questions that Paul is dealing with in that chapter is, what's that?

Is this are the Old Testament saints, all the people, the characters of the Old Testament that believed in God, are they saved by Jesus?

What were they saved by? Jesus hadn't come yet. Right. That's an important question. I'll ask that question. What were the Old Testament saints saved by if they believed in God, if they believed in God?

There was no Messiah yet. And what Paul is telling us there is that by justification, by the righteousness of faith of Jesus, given to Abraham, he was justified.

That Abraham was justified by the very same gospel that we are. And one way that God demonstrated that to him, that it would be death and resurrection that would accomplish this is through what happens in Genesis 15.

[31 : 09] So some of you will remember that text. God comes down and makes a covenant with Abraham. And he tells them, look, I'm going to multiply you. I'm going to make you a big nation through you.

All of the peoples of the earth will be saved. And then do you remember what he does? Abraham doesn't believe it. He doesn't have the faith. And so what God does is he says, okay, I want you to take some birds and some goats and some cows and cut them in half and line them up in two strips like a runway.

Right. I want you to do that. And so Abraham does it. He cuts these animals in half. And what we were starting to get a glimpse of is an ancient Near Eastern covenant making ceremony.

They were very typical. What a king would do with somebody that he was making a covenant with is they would cut up animals. They would cut animals in half. And then both the parties making the agreement, the covenant, the contract, they would walk back and forth between these pieces together.

And what were they saying? They were saying, if I ever break the covenant, may what happened to these animals happen to me? In other words, they were pledging themselves to death if they were to break the conditions of the covenant.

[32 : 29] Now what happens in Genesis 15? Right when it's time at sunset to do the covenant making ceremony to pass between the pieces, the text says that a smoking pot, some type of pot of incense, comes to Abraham and he falls asleep and that the pot in the form of fire passes back and forth in between the pieces and Abraham never does.

What was happening in that moment? God was making a covenant with Abraham and when it came time to make the covenant, God puts Abraham to sleep and says, no, you don't pass between the pieces because if you do, you will be condemned forever because you cannot keep this covenant.

What actually happened is God passed between the pieces and says, whenever Abraham and his people break the covenant, may I be the one who gets cut in half. May I be the one who gets broken into pieces.

May I be the one who atones by death for the sins of Abraham and all of his descendants, which includes us, Paul says in Romans 4.

So in the very beginning of our history, which began with Abraham, who is our forefather in the faith, justification, faith was always connected to an atonement for sin, a death and a resurrection, a covenant where one party had to die so that the other party could live and that's exactly how it played out in history.

[34 : 09] That's exactly what God did in Jesus Christ. That's exactly the ground of your justification. That's exactly the reason why you can walk out of this door, the door tonight and be very sure if you're a believer in Christ that you are not destined to wrath.

So three implications briefly of what justification means for us and then we'll be done. The first thing is this, these are very practical. You are adopted into a new family when you were justified.

If you're a believer in Christ, you've been forgiven before God, you're adopted. You're an adopted son or daughter. No matter what your family life has been like in the past, how horrendous it might have been or how wonderful, how wonderful your family is God's family.

He says in Titus 3.7, our Savior so that being justified by his, it should have just said, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The language of being an heir in the Bible is the language of being a firstborn son. Only firstborn sons in the Bible were heirs to their father's wealth.

[35 : 27] But in Jesus Christ when he came, he opened the doors that all men, all women, all children, firstborn, secondborn, thirdborn, however many born you are, you if you believe on Christ's aren't adopted son or daughter because of justification.

The church is your family, God is your father. That means that secondly, you have a commitment to the unity of the church. So one of the things that justification does for us is it tells us, look, if you're justified by faith, if you have faith in Jesus Christ, you better be committed to the unity of the church.

Why? Because of an extrinsic and not an intrinsic gospel. What we mean by that is, it's the same thing we talked about this morning if you were here. We don't go out into the world into the non-Christian pluralistic, polytheistic culture and condemn it.

We don't go out and despise it, but we also don't assimilate into it. We never give ground to idolatry, to polytheism, to pluralism. We never, but we also don't go out and point our fingers and despise it.

Why? Because the gospel that we believe in is completely outside of us. The only reason that we stand in these doors and the only reason that we are justified is by grace.

[36 : 51] And so because of that, we are committed to being a people of unity that doesn't look down on others at any level. We don't look out into the world and despise and we don't look within and hate.

And so that's part of what the gospel did. The gospel opened up for the church a whole new world and it's hard for us to understand how radical this is in 2015 because this is just who we are in our society now is accepting.

We hate racism. We hate all these things. But in the ancient Near East when the gospel came into the world, that was not the case, okay? Every tribe, tongue, language, people group, that was radical, radical.

Jew and Gentile is radical stuff. And so what justification brings for us is that in the church, we have to be committed to unity.

Committed to unity. We don't have time to look at practically what that means but it's something for us to think about. Lastly, and this is the most important thing to walk away with in terms of justification, your righteousness is sure in Christ.

[38 : 05] There is absolutely nothing you can do to earn your salvation and there's nothing you can do to demerit your salvation if you are justified by faith. You will, Paul says, persevere to the end.

Now at the same time, a qualification is in order because what Paul does all the time is say, there's nothing you can do to demerit your salvation. Don't doubt.

Have hope. Be certain. But at the same time, he says, you better persevere in your faith, right? It's a both and for Paul. It's not an either or.

There is therefore now no condemnation for you if you are in Christ Jesus. None. It's gone. Gone and can't be gotten back, he says.

So we can live in that light without anxiety. If you lie in the bed at night and wonder about your salvation, where do you go?

[39 : 07] There is therefore now no condemnation for you if you are in Christ Jesus. Believe in faith. It's Jesus that did the work, not you. And you can't do the work by worrying.

So persevere in faith. Minister with a hopeful certainty. That's Paul's message. All right, so we'll close with this.

So so far, let's just summarize very briefly. We've looked at these three themes in Paul. These three themes that are all over Paul's letters. The fact that he sees all of history as a grand drama of redemption that happens in two stages.

The coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. That we live in a world that is both now and not yet. Now the coming of Christ has brought newness to this world.

But not yet, it hasn't brought it all. You still hurt. You still don't like work. You still commit sin. All these things. There's a newness that's yet to be had. Secondly, we are united with Christ's body if you're a Christian from all of eternity in his death and resurrection and by the Holy Spirit's work of giving you the gift of faith.

[40 : 17] And then from that faith, God gives you the gift of justification, which is legal forgiveness of sin. And next time we'll talk about sanctification.

Now just to close with this, the Bible is a means to a bigger end. The Gospel is a means to a bigger end.

Justification is a means to a bigger end. None of these are the end all be all of Christianity. They're all means to get us somewhere else and that's back to God.

The end game of Christianity is God himself. And so one of the examples we might think about this is, if you think about the Reformation again, and you know this look around, the Reformers, the tradition that our church is brought from, did not like images in the church.

They did not like icons of Jesus or saints or any of that sort of stuff. They really didn't like it. And the reason they didn't is because they said, like Luther said, we are prone to idolatry.

[41 : 28] Our hearts are constant idol factories. And when you put a statue of Jesus on the wall, you may not worship it on day one, but in year five, somebody's going to worship it.

They're going to worship the material images sitting up there because we're prone to idolatry. Now we don't have images largely in our tradition. But what we do often have still being prone to idolatry is a temptation to make a doctrine like justification, to make the Bible itself, to make theology, to make knowledge, to make all these things, idols in and of themselves, images that we put out and we measure people's Christian life by the quantity of time that they spent in the Bible last week.

And what God is saying to us and what Paul is trying to say to us is, no, those are all excellent means to a better end. That we use theology, we use justification, we use the Gospel, we use the Bible to get to God, to get to what is bigger and more final, to get to what Paul is talking about, the conclusion, the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth.

When we make a good thing, an ultimate thing, it always becomes an idol. So as we're doing this series, I just want to conclude with measuring ourselves and saying we're not doing this because theology is an end unto itself.

No, no. That's called intellectualism and we're not about it. We're doing this because knowing these doctrines is to know God more and to know yourself more and it's to participate now in the new creation in a way that couldn't have been otherwise.

[43 : 20] So next time we're going to ask this question, what's this all for? What is Paul's big point? And Paul's answer is the new creation.

So next time we're going to look at the new creation. All right, let's pray. Our Lord and our God, we ask that you would help us to invest ourselves into Paul's theology, to invest ourselves into Paul's theology because we want to know you because we want more of you because we want to taste and see that the new creation, that the Lord, that Jesus, that fellowship with him is good.

And so we ask that you would give us the gift of longing for more and more truth that we would know ourselves and that we would know you. We ask for this in Christ's name.

Amen.