

EQUIP

UNION APPLIED



15 MAR 23

Session 3: Union and Justification

A scenario

Karen is a Christian in her late twenties. She was raised in a Christian family, taken to church and made a profession of faith as a teenager. However, for the last few years, she has become anxious about dying a facing judgement. She thinks back to the videos she watched about the return of Jesus when she was younger, and fear paralyses her. Sometimes she will wake in the night terrified, thinking Jesus has returned. She knows Jesus died for her sins, but it doesn't feel real. She doesn't know where to turn. She prays to God but wonders whether he hears or cares.

Defining justification

Rom 3:10, 23–25

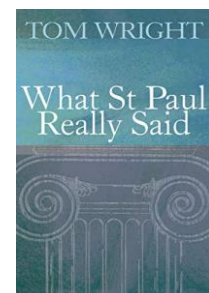
“For so you have heard, and it is always preached, that this one article preserves the church of Christ; when it is lost, Christ and the church are lost ... this article is the sun, the day, the light of the church and of all believers.”¹



Justifying justification

Arbitrary justice?

“Righteousness is not an object, a substance or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom.”²



Union and justification

Two figures: Rom 5:12, 18–21



Just as if I'd never sinned

Rom 6:3–6

“By virtue of our union with Jesus Christ, we are incorporated into the (sin-bearing, guilt-negating, wrath-absorbing, death-defeating, curse-annulling) crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus Christ, through which our sins are forgiven and we are freed from the sentence of guilt, condemnation, and death which stood against us.”³



¹ Martin Luther, cited in Johnson, *One with Christ*, 88.

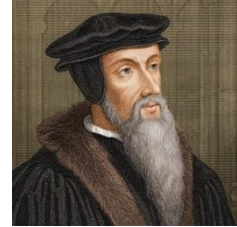
² Tom Wright, *What St Paul Really Said* (Oxford: Lion Books, 1997), 98.

³ Johnson, *One with Christ*, 103.

Just as if I'd always obeyed

1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9

“First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us.”⁴



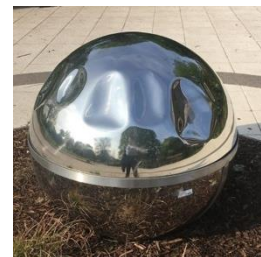
Session 4: Union and holiness

Another scenario

Joey is a Christian in his mid-thirties. He knows the gospel and he committed himself to Jesus many years ago. However, he keeps falling into behaviours that make him feel bad about himself. Each evening he binges on mindless social media feeds and sometimes drifts onto websites he knows he shouldn't. Each time he does, he feels like a hypocrite and wonders whether he's really a Christian at all. He feels spiritually empty—he made a profession of faith, but it doesn't seem to change anything all these years later.

Holiness image problems

Gen 1:26–27 → Col 1:15 → Rom 8:29



Definitive-ly sanctified

1 Cor 1:30; 6:11 | John 15:3

Here this rich and godly Bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil and adorns her with all His good. It is now impossible that her sins should destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up in Him, and she has that righteousness in Christ her husband of which she may boast as of her own, and which she can confidently set against all her sins in the face of death and hell, and say, “If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in Whom I believe, has not sinned, and all His is mine, and all mine is His.”⁵

God *does* want you to be the real you. He *does* want you to be true to yourself. But the “you” he’s talking about is the “you” that you are by grace, not by nature ... God doesn’t say “Relax, you were born this way.” But he does say “Good news, you were reborn another way.”⁶

Progressive-ly sanctified

2 Cor 3:18 | Eph 4:15 | John 15:4–5

Rom 6:1–2, 12

“Certain sins become more difficult we understand our new position in Christ. If we are heirs to the whole world, why should we envy? If we are God's treasured possession, why be jealous? If God is our Father, why be afraid?”⁷



⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1.

⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman, 55 vols., American Edition. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955), Kindle location 4561–4566.

⁶ DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, 100.

⁷ DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, 84.