

**TRIUMPHANT LIVING**  
**Union With Christ – Part 4**  
**Taught by Bruce Bickel**  
**May 24, 2013**

Lou, you want to play something for us, and let's go quietly before the Lord and know that he's God; see what he might have in store for us this morning. Let's prayerfully go before him in his presence.

*[MUSIC]*

Lord God and merciful Heavenly Father, the reason it is well with our soul is because of the person and work of Christ. Father, we know that if your Holy Spirit does not be present with us this morning, be our teacher, nothing of eternal consequence will ever happen, so we're just trusting you, Lord, and we thank you that because of our relationship of being in Christ, that our soul is well in your eyes, you've justified us by faith alone, and therefore, we have peace, access and joy to the Heavenly Father. Bless us now, Father, as we trust your Holy Spirit to be our teacher, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We've been studying the last several months now this all inclusive theme of our salvation, what we're calling union with Christ. The apostle Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" about 127 to 129 times to describe a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son. As we've been saying, he doesn't use the term "Christian," he uses the phrase "in Christ," "with Christ, "through Christ" and so forth. We've been examining the realities of what does that mean to have union in Christ.

This is something that really ought to be the heart blood of all the church, but we never hear it preached, and it's really tragic that we don't do that because it is the all-encompassing description of our salvation. It includes the inception of our salvation, the continuation of our salvation and the culmination of our salvation. All three of those are wrapped up in that little phrase, that little concept, "in Christ." What Ted and I have been doing the last couple of weeks with Don is we've been trying to explore this concept. We don't mean to be beating a dead horse, but it's so expansive and so deep that we're just touching the truth of it.

In the last couple of weeks, we've looked at the nature of this union that we have with Christ. We saw in recent weeks that it's a spiritual union. We saw that it's a mystical union. We saw that it's a vital union, it's a life-giving union. We saw that it's an organic union. We saw that it's a very personal union. And we saw that it's an indissoluble union. All those are words which we've described and dealt with before in previous teachings that you could go back on the web page and follow and get that information.

Once that union is established, that union is established because of God the Father through God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It's a great mystery, but it has two elements to it. One element is the work of the Holy Spirit. If you go to Ephesians 2:5, you'll see the work of the Holy Spirit and God the Father. Remember this--what the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies. What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies.

In Ephesians 2:5, we see this, "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Now that phrase, "together with Christ," is the concept we're looking at. What does it mean to have a union with Christ? What does it mean to be in Christ? What does it mean to have this togetherness with Christ? That's what Paul is talking about when he

writes to the church at Ephesus when he's saying that this is established because of something that God has done. What God has ordained--you'll see in Ephesians 2:5, "even when we were dead in our transgressions."

Now a dead person can't do anything. Something supernatural has to happen. Notice you'll see in the New American Standard it says "God made us alive together with Christ." There's the concept of this inclusion or the institution of our salvation is really that something God ordained, that the Holy Spirit applied, because the Son accomplished it.

The first aspect of this union with Christ is something that God does through the work of the Holy Spirit. The second part of this union, as a result of this, our faith comes into operation. As a result of this, because we are made alive, we now have a faith. A dead person does not have a faith. You have to be made alive because you're going to have a faith. The very first thing that we have to understand in this union reality that we have with the person and work of Christ is God does something to us, he made us alive in the midst of sinfulness so that we now have a faith.

What is the first evidence of your salvation?

*Audience Member: Faith.*

It is your faith. It's the fact that you believe. Belief does not save anybody. Christ saves you. The first evidence of your salvation, that you've been made alive, is that you believe.

Let me just show you a cross-reference. Go to 1 John 5:1. The New American Standard records it this way, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Now that's a good translation, but we lose some of it from the original passage in the Greek text. The Greek really ectao tao d'genetai. It really means this—having been born of God, you believe. In other words it means this—something happened in your life, in your past life, where you were in your sin, and you've now been made alive by God through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the first evidence of that is you believe.

Having been born of God in the past, the evidence of that having been born of God is what? Belief. Faith is the first evidence of your salvation; it is not the cause of your salvation. God himself is the cause of your salvation, which we just saw in Ephesians 2:5, that when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, god made us alive. That is that supernatural work called regeneration. The first evidence of your being regenerate, or the first evidence of your being in Christ, is your faith. It's the fact that you believe.

When we look at this duality of the union with Christ we see first of all the Holy Spirit's work in regenerating us. The second aspect of our union with Christ is our faith. Our faith comes into operation and it strengthens or it sustains this union. It does not create the union. God creates the union; our faith sustains the union. Our faith then strengthens this union. It's through faith that we become aware of this union. You see, you would not be aware of this union of what it means to be in Christ if you had not been made regenerate by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit establishes it, but faith strengthens it. That's the duality of our in Christ relationship, this union. The Holy Spirit establishes it, but faith strengthens it. Faith draws on the fullness of the work of the Holy Spirit more and more. There's the combination that yes, there's an active faith in it, but the real ingredient that starts this union with Christ is what God did to us, for us, through the person and

work of Christ. God made us alive and now our faith comes in and it's through our faith that we begin to strengthen and sustain this understanding of our union with Christ.

Now notice that this union is not established through the church. This union is not established through the sacraments. It is not established through baptismal regeneration. In other words, baptism does not establish this union. It is the Holy Spirit who establishes this union.

They stimulate the ordinances; they stimulate our awareness of this union. That's why we need to take them so seriously. We need to take the Lord's Supper more seriously than we do. It stimulates our understanding of this union that we have that God did something to us; he made us alive, and now our faith strengthens that. The reason that we observe the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the union that we have with Christ. Taking the Lord's Supper, it does not establish the union; the Holy Spirit does that. The sacraments, the ordinances, remind us of it. That's the critical ingredient of why we need to have them and take them so seriously. They stimulate the awareness of this union, but they do not bring them into being. God is the one who brings it into being.

Let's take a look at a couple of the consequences of what it means to be in Christ. This is the great theme of preaching, in my mind, to believers because it's an endless subject. As you're seeing right now, we're just touching...this is like the tip of the iceberg. We could preach on this subject for years and years and years because it is so expansive because it includes everything about our salvation. But there are a couple of consequences I just want to quickly go over to help us understand the consequences of this union with Christ.

First of all we need to have some objective consequences, some objective ones. What do I mean by that? They must be understood first because we do not base our understanding of this union with Christ on feeling but on fact. There are some objective facts that we need to understand, not feelings. There's nothing wrong with feelings. This is not a feeling that we have. These objective consequences of our union with Christ are very, very truth-oriented and they're factual. They apply to our standing or our position before God. These are facts.

Go to Romans 5. Here we see a description in Romans 5:17, we see the understanding of what we call federal headship; the federal relationship of our representative. Adam was the representative of mankind, and the second Adam is Christ. He's the representative of God's regenerated people. Notice how we see this beginning at verse 17. "For if by the transgression of the one (that would be Adam), death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) He's basically saying this, that Adam was the federal representative of all humanity. When Adam sinned, who sinned?

***Audience Members:*** *We did.*

All of us did because he's our federal headship representative. Christ is now our federal headship representative. When Christ was sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient, what are you? Sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient because of justification by faith alone. When Adam sinned, we sinned. When Christ died on the cross and paid for our sin, guess what happened? You died, I died and he paid for our sins. Christ is our federal head just as Adam is to all mankind.

There are two kinds of people—those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ. There's no in-between, because you have one federal headship. Adam is your federal head or Christ is your federal head. Adam's sin is imputed to us. In other words, when he sinned, we sinned. The same thing applies

to that relationship with Christ. Christ is our federal headship. Go to Romans 6. We're joined to Christ federally. He's our representative. When he was crucified, who else was crucified?

**Audience Member:** *We were.*

You and I were because just as when sin entered Adam, all man's sin, when Christ was crucified, all of God's elect were crucified with him. He's our federal head. That's what it means to be in Christ. When we say Christ was crucified, we need to say this, positionally, objectively, I don't have this feeling per se, but objectively I was crucified because I'm in Christ. That's what Paul is teaching us. It's a statement of fact; it's not a statement of feeling.

Go to Romans 6. Let me give you a couple of verses. Look at verse 4, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." When he died, who died?

**Audience Member:** *We did.*

You and I did. When he was raised, who was raised?

**Audience Members:** *We were.*

You and I were. Those are facts. Notice past tense verbs. The verb tense says "was raised." That's not something that you feel, per se, this is an objective consequence of being in union with Christ. When he died, we died. When he was crucified, we were crucified. When he was buried, we were buried. When he was raised, we were raised. That's positionally what Paul is telling us. It's a statement of fact, not feeling.

How about Romans 6:5, "For if we have become united with Him," there's our union with Christ, "in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection." When Christ was resurrected, who was resurrected?

**Audience Members:** *We were.*

Positionally, you and I were. These are not feelings, guys. These are facts that the Scripture teaches us about our position of this union in Christ.

How about Romans 6:8, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." That's part of the description of our union with Christ. When he died to sin, you died to sin. You don't have to live like you used to anymore. That's because there's got to be evidence of our salvation. You see, that's where our faith kicks in and we understand that the Holy Spirit has done something to me. He's made me alive, given me regeneration through the work of the Holy Spirit. Now all of a sudden, I believe that. That sustains me. I strengthen that because of my faith. Therefore, you understand positionally that you've changed differently.

Romans 6:11, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." You see, we need to take a look...that doesn't mean, guys, that we live a sinlessly perfect life. We're not talking about that. We're talking about positionally how does God view you. He views you as dead to sin.

I was talking with a pastor friend of mine about this. He gave me an illustration. Any time you come up with an illustration other than the Scripture, there's always some degree of concern about it. I'm going to give you an illustration, but give me some license because...try to figure out how to teach us to the point of understanding. I was asking, "How do you teach this?" He gave me this illustration. Just let me use Dick Johnson as an example.

Let's just say there's a conversation between God and Satan. They're talking about Dick Johnson. It could be any one of us. Satan says, "Hey, God, look at Dick Johnson. Look what he's doing. Look how sinful he is." God says to Satan, "I don't see that in Dick." He says, "Now wait a minute! What do you mean? He's been doing this for years. This is just something that's been going on and on. You're telling me that you don't see that sin?" God says, "I don't see that in my son." "What do you mean you don't see it? How oblivious can you be to his sinfulness? Look at rotten he is. Look at the thoughts he just had. How can you say that you don't see that? Look at his life! He's got a life of just heinous sinfulness." God the Father says, "I don't see that." Satan says, "What do you mean you don't see it in Dick Johnson? Look at how sinful he is. Explain to me why you don't see it." God just quietly says, "Because Jesus is in the way."

You see, that's positionally what it means to be in Christ. God looks at us radically different positionally because Christ is our federal head. When he died, Dick Johnson died to all of his sin. I did, too. God looks at us positionally radically different. That's objective consequences of being in Christ. This is not a feeling; it's a fact.

When God takes a look at us, he says, "Christ is in the way." That's being justified by faith alone. God gives us the credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of the person and work of Christ. That's what we call imputed righteousness. Just as the sin of Adam was imputed to us when Adam sinned, who sinned? We did. That's original sin. We got credit for, if you would, the imputation of his sin was credited to our account. The same thing happens when you are in Christ, you are imputed with the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of the person and work of Christ. You get credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. That does not mean, brothers, understand this, it doesn't mean that you and I can be sloppy in the way of our obedience. If that doesn't make you want to be obedient, I don't know what will. If the grace that you have does not cause you to be obedient, then you don't have grace at all. Grace motivates you to obedience because you understand this union with Christ. You understand that fact that I get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience, and when Satan looks me and points his finger at me, there's now no condemnation for those of you who are?

***Audience Members: In Christ.***

In Christ. God says, "I don't see the sin of Dick Johnson because Christ is in the way." That's justification. That's what it means to have this union with Christ. That's an objective reality, folks. That's not based upon feeling; that's a fact of how God states facts about he views you and me right now. That ought to be our motivation for obedience. You see, obedience is a love response. It's a love response to realizing what God has done for me, how he views me in Christ now because of this union. My motivation to be obedient is a love response to see what God has done for me. That's where our faith kicks in. It's because of this federal relationship that we have with Christ. God views us radically different, positionally. Those are all objective facts.

We are complete in him. That is a forensic statement. What do I mean by forensic? It's a statement of law. It's a statement of fact that if you were in the court, they would bring up evidence. It's a forensic

statement. God makes this forensic statement and says you are justified by faith alone in Christ alone. Our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. It's all of grace. That's objective realities of our union with Christ. We are complete in him. This is a truth about ourselves. Whatever the Scripture is saying about Jesus, he's saying about who?

**Audience Members:** *Us.*

About us. Do you understand that? That's what it means to be in Christ. This should not give us pride. Humility is seeing that which is perfect and realizing I can't achieve it. That's humility. Seeing that which is perfect and realizing I can't achieve that, and so we walk by faith. You see, we should not have enough ego, so much ego and so much self-centeredness and so much pride, that we can't ask for forgiveness when we need to. That's humility.

But at the same time, we need to have enough humility to give forgiveness when we ought to. You see, that's the humility that we have because we understand this person and work of Christ in our union. We are complete in him. This is a truth about ourselves. Whatever the Scripture is saying about Jesus, he is saying that about you, and he's saying that about me, if we're in Christ.

Is this difficult for us to understand? Absolutely is it. But if you really want to understand the joys of your salvation...that's what we're spending so much time on this concept of union with Christ.

**Tom:** *Bruce, when Dick or any of us [UNCLEAR] have a sinful thought, it doesn't mean that Satan's trying to war for us, it means we're still working [UNCLEAR]...*

We work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Yes, we're still working at it. Remember, you wouldn't even have that thought, the awareness of it, if you weren't in Christ. If you did not have this union, you wouldn't give a rip about it. But the fact that you do is an indication. We're still in progress. Revelation doesn't come; it's progressive. It doesn't come all at once. That's why we're learning things as we go about our union with Christ. Yes, we're in the process.

Let me take you to 1 Corinthians 1:30. If you want to know what God says about you, here's a wonderful summary statement. The little card we gave you, brothers, that Tom made for us? Think-act-feel, feel-act think—that little card? If you don't have that, we'll bring some more of those. It's so critical that we think correctly. If we don't think correctly, we don't act correctly. Once you act correctly, you're more likely to feel correctly. Here's a summary statement about what God says about you and about me because of our union with Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing..." Who's doing?

**Audience Members:** *Christ.*

What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applied. "By his doing you are in Christ Jesus"—that's our union with Christ; that's what we're talking about—"who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." That's how God views you. He views you as being wise because you are in Christ. He views you as being righteous because you are in Christ. He views you as being sanctified because you're in Christ. The word sanctified means to set apart to be holy. Who accomplishes your salvation? He does. He accomplishes that because you're in Christ.

Sanctification is the consequence of being in Christ. It's something you and I work on, certainly, but it is something that he accomplishes for us. You and I don't do that. That's a result of a consequence of being in Christ. It's part of our union. You've got the wisdom from God. You think differently. You've been equipped to radically think differently than the system of this world. God views you as righteous. The word righteous means right wiseness. You have the ability to make right decisions now that you didn't have before. You're sanctified. You've been set apart to be holy. And redemption—you've been rescued through the payment of a price. Been rescued, brothers, from the payment of a price.

That's a summary statement that God gives us about how he views you objectively. This is not about our feelings. This is about facts and the fact that this is how he views you. We need to look at ourselves that way, not with a sense of pride. This is what motivates us to want to be obedient because we understand we are now in a love response seeing the magnificence of this union in Christ, what it does for me, how God views me and it radically changes my desire, my ability to want to be obedient. If the grace that God gives you doesn't cause you to be obedient, then you don't have grace at all. You've got something other than that, but it is not...grace is what motivates you toward obedience.

The way that we express our love to God is through our obedience. Obedience is a love response. It's a love response. It's not something I do to earn anything. You've been given all the merits in the person and work of Christ. Remember humility is seeing that which is perfect and realizing I can't achieve it. That's our humility. One of our greatest assets of our being in Christ in this union is our sense of humility, because I see that which is perfect and realize that's not me. But yet, I realize this objectively. God says, "I don't see him because Christ is in the way." He sees us in Christ. He sees us through Christ. Do you understand that? You see, this has already happened to us. This is not something that "is" happening. This has already happened.

Notice 1 Corinthians 1:30 again, you are in Christ, "who became," past tense...for us. This is an event that's already occurred. Past tense reality. That's who you are today and that's how God views you. Brothers, if that doesn't change the way that we want to live our faith life, I don't know what will. It's understanding the magnificent mercy of God. That's why we say that we are M8's here at the Brave Men on Friday morning. An M8—a mission minded-member of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace.

***Audience Member:*** *Never going to remember that. {LAUGHTER}*

We ought to get tattoos, don't you think [UNCLEAR]? {LAUGHTER} An M8 motivated by what?

***Audience Member:*** *Mercy.*

Mercy. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us, "Therefore since through God's mercy we have this ministry." Why is that you and I have any ministry at all to the world? It's because of God's mercy. Do you think God really needs us, per se, to do something? Absolutely not. He permits us, he's ordained us, to be the means by which he gives his life away. We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God and not from us. He just wants to us give his life away, but he's got to get us to the point of thinking correctly about how we view ourselves.

I'm not talking about self-esteem. Please understand that's not what I'm saying. This is not about self-esteem. The problem with self-esteem is you're thinking too much about yourself and not enough about who God says you are. Your esteem, your worth and your value is based upon who God says you

are objectively. Not yourself feelings, but objectively. That's a consequence of our being in union with Christ.

There are some spiritual consequences. Well, let me say one other thing about 1 Corinthians 1:30. All our sins were imputed to Christ, and all that is in him is put in my account, imputed to me because of this union. That's what you see in 1 Corinthians 1:30. We're adopted because of this union, we're joint heirs because of this union, and all of these are objective results of our union with Christ. When you think about this, it's going to generate some feelings, hopefully. But these are not feelings that generate anything. These are facts of who God says you are positionally because of his federal headship.

What are some spiritual consequences of this? First of all, our fellowship with him. Let's look at John 1, the wonderful ingredient of our Christian life called fellowship. John 1:16, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." That's the fellowship that we have. You see, as a result of this union, there are some objective consequences of how God views us positionally, statements about us. Now there are certain things that you and I express that are spiritual consequences, and that's our fellowship with him.

Read John 17, Jesus' wonderful high priestly prayer. You'll see the whole description there of fellowship with God as a result of our union. Another consequence would 2 Corinthians 3:18. We are changed from glory into glory. Because we are joined to him, we are like him. That is what is happening to us. Tom, here's what's happening to us. We're being changed from glory into glory.

Look at 2 Corinthians 3:15-17, "<sup>15</sup>But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart." In other words, when the Scriptures are read, they don't see it. They don't see it. "<sup>16</sup>but whenever a person turns to the Lord," there's your contrast. Whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away, and guess what happens? You begin to see things that you didn't see before. "<sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty." That's when you're set free from yourself and your blindness, is when you turn to the Lord. But notice, the process of that liberty is this, "<sup>18</sup>But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

That's what's happening to us now spiritually. You and I are being transformed from one stage of glory to the next because of this is union that we have in Christ. We'll talk about this later as we get into we are to be like him. We'll talk about that and that in the next couple of weeks, what that means, that we are to be like him. We need to understand that this is one of the spiritual consequences that in our life because he is our sanctification. You and I are being transformed from one stage of glory to the next because of this union in Christ. That's a result of the veil of blindness, deceit, destruction being removed from us and we see and we've been set free, and that's what's going on to us right now, being transformed from one stage of glory to the next. That does not give us a sense of pride, brothers. That ought to give us a tremendous sense of humility. This is what's going on in me as a result of God's grace. Do you see that?

When we talk about one stage of glory to the other, to be in his likeness, that's likeness to his human nature, not his divine nature. We need to understand the difference. In other words, it's how he lived among us. When we are being transformed from one stage of glory to the next, it's not talking about his divine or his divinity; it's talking about his human nature about how he lived his life among other people. That's what we're being transformed to do, to live our life among other people like he did. Please don't get that confused with we're taking on his divine nature. That is not what the Scripture is saying.



The more we know of this fellowship with our union with Christ, the more we will know of the sufferings of the Lord. Now we need to understand this—the more you know of the fellowship of the Lord, the more you're going to be involved in his sufferings. We suffer in Spirit because of the sinfulness of mankind. It's an agony of the soul because we are in union with Christ. You see, the more you understand the fellowship of the union with Christ, one of the things you're going to understand is the sufferings of Christ. That's part of one of the spiritual consequences is the sufferings of Christ. The deeper you grow in your grace of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more you're going to understand his sufferings. The more you're going to be deeply hurt in your soul and your Spirit because you see the heinousness of sin in this world.

You take a look at the world and see it's going down the tube. That ought just grieve our souls because that's part of the suffering of Christ. There's a sense of agony as we see that we live in a country that has no moral compass anymore. We just don't have a moral compass. That ought to grieve us because that's part of Christ's suffering. We suffer in agony of our soul because of our union with Christ.

The union of Christ, in summary, basically says this. This is true of me. That's what it's saying. Whenever you read anything about the person and work of Christ, the union with Christ, in summary, says this. This is true of me. It's true of me. All the things that the Scripture says about Christ are true of me. That's what is our motivation to be an M8; to be a mission minded-member of a movement, the kingdom of God, motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. We r being transformed from one stage of glory to the next, to live a life like he lived in his humanity among other people. That's what's happening to us as a result of our union. There are some objective realities that are facts, and there are some spiritual realities that the process of what we're going through right now, continuing in this transfer from one stage of glory to the next.

That's all part of our introduction. {LAUGHTER} Go to handout number five.

**Ted:** *Bruce, I would just like to, this glory to glory, because I think a very concept. I didn't understand it very well. I may be wrong on this, but the Hebrews word for glory comes from the root word for weight.*

Weight. Correct.

**Ted:** *Not as in wait upon the Lord.*

It's a heaviness.

**Ted:** *A heavy weight. Before we are put in Christ, we have no weight. We're as dust. We're as nothing.*

Correct.

**Ted:** *Everything we live for, thought about, believed in was ephemeral; it was passed away. But as we are in Christ, Christ gives us, makes us weightier and weightier. We have greater and greater weight. That's the experience of the Christian—more and more of who we are has greater and greater consequences.*

Amen.

**Ted:** *I mean significance in consequences.*

That's a good point, Ted. The concept of weight here was used in weight and balances. When you weight something, you find out its value. They would put it on a scale. If it had more weight, it was more valuable. That's the idea of glory to glory. We become more valuable, we have more weight to us. We become weightier, we have greater influence, because the scales are tipped from here, like this, and you take on more weight. That's the idea that Ted is suggesting, the Greek word. It's the word weight. Not wait, but weight. You take on more value, more weight, more significance, more meaning because of the weightiness that you have. That's the idea of being transformed from one stage of glory to the next. Good point.

**Audience Member:** *Galatians 2:20 is kind of a nice counterbalance of that [UNCLEAR] summary verse [UNCLEAR] everything that we said.*

Please read it. Galatians 2:20. Its' no longer I that live...Christ, isn't it? Isn't that what it is? Let's take a look at that.

**Audience Member:** *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me," So it really goes to what you're saying. It's not our obedience, but it's the motivation that we have for that love, driven by faith.*

Amen. That's a great summary in Galatians 2:20. We'll talk about that a little bit later as we work through our outline here.

Go to Lesson 5. We talked about our union with Christ. We want to look at...the four major themes that we want to look at in the next couple of weeks are this. What does it mean that we are in Christ? We've been touching on that rather significantly in the last several weeks, but we'll want to summarize that. Then we want to talk about what does it mean that Christ is in us. Then we want to look at we are like Christ. We just touched on that a moment ago, about the weightiness of our glory. Then we are with Christ—what does that mean? Those are the four main elements of our relationship of this union with Christ that we want to explore.

Let's take a look at the first one, that we are in Christ. God's eternal plan—we need to take a look at this, first of all. What does it mean that we are in Christ? Where did this begin? God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. That's where it began. That's Ephesians 1:4. It was in Christ that we were destined and appointed to live a life for the praise of his glory.

Go to Ephesians 1:4. This is where the inception of our salvation starts. Ephesians 1:4-5, <sup>4</sup>"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup>He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." That's where it all began. Your salvation began right here in the heart of God. We need to explore that. What does it mean? It was in Christ that we would destined to live a life for his glory.

Later, God was pleased to save us, to regenerate us, and called us because of his own purpose and because of the grace which he gave us in Christ before the beginning of time. Now, why did he do this? The answer is according to the good intentions of his will. That's the answer. Sometimes, when somebody says, "Well, why does God do that?" sometimes the best answer you can say is just according to the kind intention of his will. That's it. Is this something that you and I are going to

understand completely? Absolutely not. But we need to understand that your and my salvation began in the heart of God, not in our response, because we were chosen in him, in Christ.

Let's explore that for a moment. Go to 2 Timothy 1:8-9. When did this begin? <sup>8</sup>"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner (Paul), but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God." Notice that. He's saying, "Help me suffer according to the power of God." What do we say? "Lord, by the power of God, remove all the suffering from me." He's saying, "Teach me how to suffer according to your power," not remove the suffering according to your power, but teach me how to suffer according to your power.

Here's the reason why, <sup>9</sup>"who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus..." when you believed. It doesn't say that does it? "From all eternity." When was this granted to you? Before the foundation of the world. That's the beginning of your salvation. From all eternity past. That's when you received God's grace. When did you receive the first dose of God's grace? In eternity past.

Now you see, folks, if you're not in Christ, if you're in Adam today, this is going to make no sense at all. You understand that? A person who's in Adam, they're going to say, "This is the most ridiculous stuff. You're telling me that God chose me before I was even born?" "Yes." "That's absolutely ridiculous." That's the veil. Until that person turns to Christ, they're bound by their own limitations. There's no liberty.

You see, if you're in Adam, there are only two kinds of people in the world, guys. You're either in Adam or you're in Christ. You either don't understand this or you do understand it. If you don't understand it, what's your response? What did the Scripture say? Turn to the Lord! Come to Christ! Ask him to remove the veil. Repent and believe. You see, that's the command of the Gospel is to repent and believe. If you don't understand this, then come to saving faith. Ask the Lord to save you. It's the one thing that you can't do for yourself. Turn to the Lord and...that's when the veil is removed and liberty becomes part of your life; you begin to understand these things.

Since we did not exist before the foundation of the world, Scripture teaches us that God the Father ordained, that looking into the future, and knowing that we would exist, thought of us in a special relationship with Christ. Now, we need to understand this. He did not first choose us and then decide to relate us to Christ. Rather, while choosing us, before the foundation of the world, he at the same time thought of us as belonging in Christ in a very special way as being in Christ. In other words, he thought of us, about us eventually having the right to share in the blessings of Christ's work. When God thought of you, he thought of you as what? In Christ. That's how God has thought about you from eternity past. Do you understand that? That's how he views you right now.

He views you as in Christ because that's how he thought of you since inception, since his very first thought of you, he viewed you in a special relationship, that one day you would receive all the blessings and the benefits of Christ's accomplished salvation because he thought of you and his very twinkling thought of you was you are in Christ. He thought of you then as in Christ. How does he think of you now? In Christ. You're either in Christ or you're in Adam. It's one of the two possibilities. There's no other option. You're either in Adam or you're in Christ.

If you are in Christ then you need to understand when did that begin? That began in the counsels of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He viewed you before you were even born as being in Christ. What you and I are now doing is experiencing the reality of that, that we're in

Christ today. Do you understand the significance of that? I just wish every church in America could hear this. Not because I'm teaching it, but because of the truth of the Scripture. How many of your churches have ever heard this stuff in your church? Not too many, I would say. This is the heart of salvation. This is the message of the Gospel. It starts in the heart of God, when he viewed us as being in Christ.

Let me read something from John Murray, who has a wonderful book called *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. I want you to hear what he says about what I just said, or what I just said about what he's going to say, or what he wrote about what the Scripture said.

**Audience Member:** *Before the foundation of the world.*

Before the foundation of the world. Here's what he says in his wonderful book called *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, "Union with Christ is a very inclusive subject. It embraces the wide span of salvation from the ultimate source in the eternal election of God to its final fruition in the glorification of the elect. With regard to the one, the inception of salvation, union with Christ involves the election of all believers in Christ. There was no election of the Father in eternity apart from Christ, and that means that those who will be saved were not even contemplated by the Father in the ultimate course of his predestinating love apart from union with Christ." He never thought of you apart from being unified with Christ. That's been his thought of you since inception. Union with Christ. "They were chosen in Christ, not chosen because of who you and I are, but we were chosen in Christ. Concerning the continuation of salvation, union involves the establishment of fellowship with the risen Christ. By the actual partaking of Christ, the saving grace, life and power of the Savior becomes operative in the believer." That's Romans 6:4, 11, which we read. "This present aspect of union involves effectual calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification and perseverance. Finally, with respect to the consummation of salvation, union with Christ involves the believer's bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:22-23) and glorification (Romans 8:7) with Christ."

Now notice, he gives a wonderful summary of all of salvation. It's inception, its continuation and its consummation. It all starts because God thought of you this way. He thought of you from eternity past as being in Christ, therefore, certain things are going on in your life right now because of the continuation of your salvation in Christ, and the final glorification will be when you have a resurrected body and you are resurrected in Christ. God has never viewed you any other way if you're in Christ today than realizing that he viewed you in a very special relationship as begin in Christ, and you and I are now experiencing the realities of that as we continue working out our salvation with fear and trembling. Do you see that, guys?

I trust that I'm teaching this somewhat to the point of understanding. I mean, this is just phenomenal. I mean, take a look at yourself. This is not about self-esteem. My goodness. I remember, I was teaching this in my church in Kansas years ago. A woman came up to me and said, "Pastor Bruce, that was a marvelous sermon. You're really teaching us about self-esteem, aren't you?" {LAUGHTER} I went, "Uhhh." If I did, I asked her for forgiveness. I said, "If that's what you got out of that, I need to ask your forgiveness. If I did that..." I'm not talking about self-esteem. I'm talking about being in Christ. I'm talking about this union of how God views you. Guys, you've got to think correctly of yourself.

Now that does not mean that you and I can be licentious. Licentiousness means this—it doesn't make any difference what I do. Legalism says it makes a difference what I do. Grace says it makes a difference what I did for you. There's a difference. You see, it's all of grace. We are saved by grace, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone for the glory of God alone. God has never thought of you any other way if you're in Christ today than you're in union with him. Therefore, you derive and

are worthy of all the benefits and the blessings of his accomplished salvation. He did not make salvation possible for you. He accomplished it for you in eternity past.

**Tom:** *Doesn't that bring us back to 1 John 5? Then if we are in Christ, we show that with love to the brethren.*

Absolutely. We'll get into that, what it means to be like him, how we relate to one another.

**Audience Member:** *There's not time today, but next time, do you plan to talk about the difference between the [UNCLEAR]...*

About what?

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR]...*

Okay. We'll get into that, but not today. Guys, bring...

**Don:** *It seems like one of our responses to what you're saying here is that we should be acting, really have overwhelming gratitude...*

Amen! What's the response to this?

**Audience Member:** *Obedience.*

It's just grateful obedience. It's a love response. It's gratitude. You see, that's why we're motivated by gratitude, not by griping. We're not grippers, complainers or blamers. We're motivated by gratitude. When you understand this to any degree at all, your heart just ought to overflow with thank you. That's why so often all the Scriptures end up with being thankful, because it's an expression of understanding our union with Christ.

Bring lesson 5 and we'll continue as we work our way through this. Thank you for your patience in helping us go through this. This is just such a wonderful concept. I don't mean to be beating a dead horse, but we're just touching the tip of the iceberg. There's so much more for us to understand. May God give us the grace to understand this to the point of understanding. Let's pray.

Father, is overwhelming. As Don just said, our response should just be gratitude. Father, help us get over our conceitedness, our ego-centeredness, thinking that we need to achieve our self-worth, rather than to receive our self-worth because of your grace. Father, just give us a heart of obedience. Father, if the grace that we have does not motivate us with gratitude to be obedient, then we don't have grace at all and we need to come to saving faith, to turn to the Lord and have that veil removed. If there's one here today who's in that situation, Father, would you cause them to turn to you and remove that veil. May it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!