

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Union With Christ – Part 5
Taught by Bruce Bickel
May 24, 2013

Gracious and merciful Heavenly Father. Thank you that you have pitched your tent and feel at home with us, and now we can abide with you. Father, guide our Spirit today. We celebrate a dear friend's life, a dear friend's ministry and his impact upon all of us. We pray, Lord, that you would be our teacher today, that you'd open our eyes that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. And all the Brave Men said...

Audience Members: Amen!

It was in the summer of 1995 that a very close friend of mine came to see me and asked me to do something. That was when Dick Johnson and I sat down and talked about having some sort of a study for men. That began in September of 1995. We had our first meeting over at World Vision headquarters. There were about six of us. Frank was one of them. A couple of other guys were there. There were about six of us. We began to meet at World Vision Headquarters. It was the genius, it was the idea of Dick Johnson to have the Brave Men meet. We didn't know it was going to be Brave Men. We didn't know it was going to be anything like we have now. All Dick just said was, "Bruce, would you consider coming and teaching a group of guys if I could get them together? You come and teach and I'll do all the rest." Well, we now see what has happened. Sig, how many men have come through this in the past 18 years?

Sig: 550 that we've kept record of.

We've had 550 men in the 18 years that Dick Johnson proposed this teaching session for men have come through the doors of either World Vision or Christ Church at Grove Farm.

Today, we want to recognize Dick because it's a milestone in his life. As you know, he mentioned before, he's retiring from World Vision. We have some of his friends here from World Vision who are just going to give us a few comments about Dick's life and his ministry with World Vision. Dick's had a tremendous impact upon all of us. You know, one of the things we need to realize is we all know this. We all know this is the work of the Holy Spirit, so we're not highlighting Dick Johnson. But at the same time, we need to know this; in God's providence, he uses human instrumentation. The greatest illustration of that is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He uses human instrumentation to fulfill what his ordained promises are. Dick has been the one that God used to help create this ministry known as the Brave Men. It far exceeds anything that he and I and Frank and a couple of others sat down talked about. We were just three guys, four guys, five guys, just coming together and saying we'll just see what the Lord does. We've just tried to be aggressive responders over the years.

Dick, today we just want to say thank you. We want to recognize the way that the Lord has used you powerfully. I don't say this tritely, but whatever rewards I have in heaven, you're going to have one more because you're going to credit for all the ones that I've done, because you started this whole thing, not me. We're very, very grateful for that. I'm going to ask if Chris and John and Dave would come up and just give a few words of testimony about Dick's ministry and the impact upon World Vision.

Chris: Thanks, Bruce. Good morning. I'm privileged to be here. I appreciate it. It's interesting how...I didn't know that Dick started this. I knew that you guys certainly did it together. Who Dick is, is Dick is a guy that...we had a celebration for him yesterday, and there was a song that was sung regarding pioneer. That really is Dick. It's a guy that says, "what can I do next?" and always pushing to do better. God has put it in his heart, how can we do this thing better. I've been at World Vision now for three years, but he started what we call our GIK ministry. I'm sure many of you are aware of that. It's working with corporations to get donated products to serve the most, the least and the lost and the most vulnerable people on this planet. That's what our ministry is. Over 25 years of working at World Vision, he created this thing from nothing, and now we've received four billion dollars' worth of donations to serve the poor. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] In the three years that I've worked with him, I've just appreciated the man of God that he is, his willingness to challenge me, to challenge our organization to be better, to serve the poor better, to serve our donors better. As much as we have a ministry to the poor, we also have a ministry to the rich, because it's all of God's economy. Dick has always kept that in his foresight. I'm just grateful for the man that he is and for my friendship with you. Thank you. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

John: Good morning. I'm John G. and I see most of you every week. For those of you who don't know, Chris alluded to starting Brave Men, or Bruce did. There is a whole lot more that Dick has initiated really on his own. I'm not going to go into a great deal of it here, but really just a fascinating person that you just don't meet every day. In a few days, I'll be here in Pittsburgh for, it will be two years, and I feel a little bit cheated honestly for not being able to spend more time with Dick. It's wonderful to be with him. You just don't really know. One thing I wanted to say was if you do find out about what Dick has done, and you work for World Vision, it's really interesting living in Pittsburgh because you can't go anywhere and meet somebody and the conversation surrounding what you do comes up. I meet somebody in a grocery store, "I work for World Vision." "Oh, Dick Johnson." I go to church. "Where do you work?" They tell me. "I work at World Vision." "Oh, Dick Johnson." The funniest thing was...I couldn't even believe this...I'm at the YMCA in Sewickley in the steam room. I walk in the steam room, there's another guy there. It's cloudy. We can't even hardly see one another. We start talking. It's just two guys in the steam room and we start talking. I said, "Where do you work?" He said, "Well, I make donuts in the Strip District." Well, okay, and he said, "What do you do?" I said, "I work at World Vision." He said, "Dick Johnson." {LAUGHTER} Even the guy making donuts knows Dick. I'm thankful for you, Dick. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE]

Dave: I'm Dave from Denver, Colorado. I met Dick 11 years ago when he interviewed me for the position. Thankfully, I was hired. I've gotten to know Dick for 11 years rather than just the three. I liken Dick to what it talks about in 1 Samuel in regard to David. It said, "All those who were in distress and debt and discontented, they gathered around him." Dick is like that because people sense his compassionate heart and his father's heart. You're just drawn to him. I have had the opportunity over the years, if I have a problem and I need to talk to somebody at World Vision, I can call Pittsburgh. I can talk to Dick. You'll never be turned away. You'll never be thought less of. You can share anything you want because he has a compassionate heart and he has the heart of a father. That's why all of you guys are here. You sense something of that and you want to participate in that. Again, I want to say as well, Dick, thank you so much. You have meant a tremendous amount to me, but beyond that, you will never know, and we will never know till way down the road, the impact that you've had. You mentioned how much money has been raised, or how much product has been received, and how many people have been touched. You're well-known and will be throughout eternity I believe. Thank you [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE].

Thank you, brothers. Chris, John and Dave, we appreciate it very much. I know Dick does not like to have his name mentioned or call attention to him, but I do want to take you to a passage of Scripture that reminds me of something that we need to honor today. Go to the book of Acts please. It's the story of the stoning of Stephen. We're told that after Stephen had preached his magnificent sermon, that the response of the audience was they gnashed their teeth and howled at him. How would you like to have that be a response to your sermon? But that's what they did. Then they picked up stones and they stoned him.

We're told that as Stephen was being eliminated by the angry crowd, we're told that he looked up to heaven and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. Most of the time, we see in the Scripture that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. The one who sits at the right hand of the authority has the authority to speak on behalf of the authority whom he represents, whom he's sitting beside. When we see that Jesus is at the right hand of the father, he has the authority to speak on behalf of the Father, his authority. There are only a couple of times in the Scripture we see that Jesus standing. This is one of them.

We're told that Jesus was standing at the right hand of the Father and Stephen saw him. Jesus looked down and said, "Well done my good and faithful servant," words to that effect. He acknowledged that. By his standing, what he was doing was giving approval for what Stephen was doing at the moment. Stephen basically was forgiving the people who were stoning him. That's when Jesus stood up as the representative of God the Father saying, "The Father and I affirm what you are doing. We're going to stand up and affirm that." Most of the time we see Jesus seated, but here's one of the times we see him standing. That's because he's saying, "The Father and I approve of what you're doing."

I don't want to embarrass Dick, but I'm going to ask Dick if you'll just remain seated. The rest of us want to stand because we just want to say, "We affirm and approve what you have done in us all these years." Let's just pray as we stand and recognize what Dick Johnson has done for the Brave Men here on Friday mornings. Would you pray with me? Gracious Heavenly Father, we're overwhelmed with the impact that you have chosen to use your servant, Dick Johnson, to impact all of our lives. We thank you for the gift that Dick has been to all of us. Most of all, Father, we thank you for his being an aggressive responder to what you prompted in his heart in 1995 to begin to pursue something that none of us would have any idea would come to this fruition, the magnificent ministry that you have through your Holy Spirit over these many, many 18 years. Father, we just thank you for his responsiveness, his following you. We pray now as he goes off into his retirement, to the new phase of his ministry in life, that you would guide him with clarity, he would discern you with clarity, and he and Jackie would understand the ministry that you're giving them. Father, we stand in recognition of the approval that we give and the affirmation we give and just to say thanks to Dick Johnson for his ministry to us. And all the Brave Men said...

Audience Members: Amen!

Amen! Please be seated. I want to thank the World Vision brothers for the donuts. Is this the donut guy who made them in the steam room? {LAUGHTER} Different donuts. Well let's turn in your outline to outline number 5. We're continuing our study on the theme of union with Christ, what it means to be in Christ. We've been on this for several weeks, and I think we'll be on it for a couple more. We're looking at this concept of what it means to be in Christ. Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" over 127 times to describe somebody who has a saving relationship with God the Father through God the Son. He doesn't use the vernacular, "Christian." He uses the phrase, "in Christ."

If you were to walk down the streets of our country, in the United States, and asked somebody, “Are you a Christian?” you would probably get as many answers as to why they think they’re a Christian as people you ask. If you asked somebody this, “Are you in Christ?” they’re either going to know what you mean or they’re going to think that you’re some sort of a zealot and have no idea what you’re talking about.

What does it mean to be in Christ? It’s so easy to say, “I’m a Christian because I was born here,” and you’ll come up with all these other revelations as to why somebody believes or thinks that they are a follower of Christ and they call themselves a Christian. If you ask them this, “Do you understand what it means when the Scripture says 129 times that you’re in Christ and Christ is in you?” That’s the concept of what we’re looking at about this union with Christ.

That’s our outline on lesson 5. We’ve been looking at the four issues of what the Scripture teaches us about our union with Christ. First of all, that we are in Christ. Secondly, that Christ is in us. Thirdly, that we are like Christ. And we are with Christ. Those are the four major themes that you see in this understanding of the union with Christ. We are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ and we are with Christ.

Last week we looked at the idea that we are in Christ. We saw that in God’s eternal plan, he chose us before the foundation of the world. The whole concept of salvation, of God’s redemptive work, rests in this concept of God’s plan in us; God’s eternal plan in us. The inception of salvation started in the heart of God when he chose us before the foundation of the world that we would be in Christ. He chose us in Christ. He didn’t choose you separately from being in Christ and then say, “Oh, I know he’ll come to saving faith. I’ll now put him in Christ.” His view of you from eternity past was one way. He’s always viewed you as being in Christ. If you’re in Christ today, that started in the heart of God. It’s not something you and I did. You see, that’s the inception of our salvation, started when God thought of us as in Christ.

The continuation of our salvation continues on, as we saw last week, when we see that Christ is in us and we are in Christ. The continuation is that Christ is in us. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. The continuation of our salvation is a result of, the instigation of our salvation because of the mercy and grace of God.

Then we see the final consummation of our salvation is that you and I are being conformed to the very image of Christ, from one stage of glory to the next. When the Lord returns in all of his glory, we’re going to see ourselves just as he is. Now can you visualize that? That when the Lord returns, you’re going to look at him and you’re going to see some representation of yourself because you’re being changed from glory to glory, one stage of glory to the next.

As Ted helped us understand a couple of weeks ago, that word glory has the word weight. It means it has value. It was a term that was used in the Hebrew and Greek culture to weight and balance, the value of something. When you put it on the scale, it had more weight, it had more value. That’s what the word “glory” means. You go from one state of being valuable weight to a greater state of being valuable weight in the glory of God, and you’re being conformed to the image of Christ.

As you begin to see this union with Christ really is a summary of all the redemptive work of Christ. The inception of our salvation, the continuation of our salvation, and the final consummation of our salvation, all is wrapped up in that one little phrase, “you’re in Christ.” You’re in Christ.

Let's take a look now...what does it mean, as we're taking a look at this, as we've seen that in God's eternal plan, we are in Christ. We saw in Ephesians 1:4 that he chose before the foundation of the world, in Christ, to be conformed to his glory. Let's take a look about what does it mean during Christ's incarnation on earth, what does it mean that we are in Christ. I want you to really understand this and stick with me today. This is really significant stuff. If we understand this, it's going to radically transform the way that we live our lives.

First of all, based upon God's eternal plan, which we've already see last week, and just reviewed, from the time of his birth, from the time of the birth of Christ, and all during his lifetime, God thought of you and me as being in Christ. In other words, he's never thought of you separate from being in Christ. Because of our being in Christ, in our union with Christ, and his being our representative (you see that in Romans 5—you're either in Adam or you're in Christ), he's our representative. That means this—that whatever Christ did during his lifetime—now get this—whatever he did during his lifetime, God counted it as something that you and I did also. Do you understand that? Whatever Jesus did during his lifetime, because you and I are in Christ, he viewed us as having done that also because we're in Christ. Do you understand that? Now see, there's a point of emphasis. {LAUGHTER} There again, it's twice. {LAUGHTER} "Verily, verily, I say unto you..." {LAUGHTER} It means pay attention. Pay attention. Thank you for the affirmation. Appreciate it.

But look at this, guys. I mean, I can't even grasp this; that during Christ's lifetime, because of God's eternal plan, having chosen us before the foundation of the world to be in Christ and to be conformed to his image, that means during Christ's lifetime, everything that Christ did during his lifetime, God viewed you and I as doing that with him, because you're in Christ. Now that's just overwhelming. That's what it means that we are in Christ. It's something that we did also. You see, God thought of us as going through everything that Christ went through because he was our representative.

Now let me take you to Romans 5 so you'll understand where I'm getting this. Go to Romans 5:19, "For as through the one man's disobedience (that would be Adam) the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." You see, during Christ's lifetime, everything that he went through, God viewed you and I and as going through that with him, because he's our representative.

There are only two kinds of people in the world, brothers—you're either in Adam, he's your representative, or you're in Christ and he's your representative. That's what we call federal headship. Humanity has a head. It's either or Adam or it's Christ. Because of God's eternal plan, having chosen us before the foundation of the world, in Christ. Remember you were chosen in Christ. He didn't choose and then make you in Christ; he always viewed you, he viewed me, as being in Christ. That's how he chose us. He chose us in Christ. God thought of us as going through everything that Christ went through because he was our representative.

Now get this. When Jesus perfectly obeyed his whole life, God thought of us as having perfectly obeyed also. That's where you understand the implications of justification by faith alone. What is justification? It's getting credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of the person and work of Christ. Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven?

Audience Members: Yes.

Absolutely you do. I had a chance last week to preach at another church on Memorial Day. I asked the question of this congregation there in this worship center or this auditorium. It was an auditorium, not

a worship center. I said, "Do you have to be perfect to get into heaven?" I just saw heads go back and forth like that. I said, "Of course you do!!" I mean, they were shocked; I could just read their faces, because I was saying, "Can God be trusted?"

In Isaiah 48:9 it says, "He holds back his wrath so as not to cut us off." That little phrase, "to cut you off" is a Hebrew idiom that means to have a relationship with you. Why do you think God holds back his wrath? It's because he demands perfection. Of course, you have to be perfect to get into heaven. That's how we can answer this. It's because of our union with Christ and being justification by faith alone, you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience in Christ. When Christ was living in his incarnate life, everything he went through, God viewed you and I as going through the same thing. When he perfectly obeyed, we perfectly obeyed.

Who then is the source of your righteousness? Christ is. Who's the source of your sanctification? Christ is. He's our sanctification. He's our righteousness. It's not you and me. He is because he's viewed you strictly as being in Christ ever since eternity past before the foundation of the world. That's how he views you. How do you view yourself? How do you view yourself?

This isn't to develop a sense of ego or pride. This ought to develop tremendous humility in us. Remember, humility is this—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 it. You see, that's one of our greatest weapons in our Christian faith is our humility. It drives you to your knees and says, "Lord, I can't be all that you want me to be, but you're going to be all you want me to be in me because I'm in Christ. You are my sanctification. I have been set apart to be used for the kingdom of God because you have been my and are my sanctification. You are my sanctification." It's not something that we do; it's something that he is. He is our sanctification because you're in Christ. That's how he views you.

Now what we do is we participate and develop our maturity. Remember this—we don't become more spiritual. Spirituality is an absolute. It's defined by the person and work of Christ. That's spirituality. You and I become more mature. That's what we do. He is our sanctification. We work on our maturity. That's how we become more expressing our sanctification through our maturity. We don't become more spiritual.

You ask somebody...Oprah Winfrey is spiritual. Tom Cruise is spiritual. There's this wonderful affirmation, oh, when somebody's kind, they're what? They're spiritual. No they're not. They just might be kind. But they're not spiritual. Christ defines spirituality, we don't. We become more mature. That's part of our sanctification process is our increasing maturity. Because we are in Christ...now listen to this...if during his lifetime he perfectly obeyed, and Christ views you and me as perfectly obeying, guess what the other side of the coin is. Because we are in Christ, God could also think of our sins as belonging to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God.

You see, just as much as he viewed us as being absolutely perfectly holy, therefore we can be perfectly obedient, because Christ was obedient. Therefore, he viewed all of our sins as belonging to Christ. There's an exchange. His perfection was given to me. My sin was given to him. That's called imputation. That's justification.

Look at the implications of justification. Go to Romans 5:1-2 again, "Therefore, having been justified by faith." You see, brothers, you're accepting what the Scripture's teaching us by faith. If your heart has

not been regenerated, this will make no sense to you at all. But if you are in Christ today, you're beginning to get a glimmer of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Notice this, "Therefore, having been justified by faith." What's the first thing? "We have peace with God." Why is it you have peace with God? Because you're in Christ. You're in Christ, guys. You have peace with God. People are looking for ways to achieve peace with God. You don't achieve peace with God; you receive peace with God. You do that because you're justified. Justified means declared sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient because you're in Christ. All of your sins were imputed to him, and all of his holiness and righteousness and obedience was imputed to you. Imputed righteousness.

There's more, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace." Why is it you have God's grace? It's because you're in Christ. "In which we stand." Notice you stand in grace. You don't move in and out of it. You're not in grace one day and out of it the next day. You're standing firm in grace because you have peace with God. Why do you have peace with God? Because you are in Christ. Why are you in Christ? Because in God's exalted plan before the foundation of the world he chose you in Christ to be conformed to the image of his son. You see, that's the inception of our salvation. We have this idea that salvation is something that I do. Salvation is something that God gives.

Years ago, there was a movement in Christendom called "I found it." I found it. Really, it should have been "He found me." He found me. I didn't find anything. He found me. When did he find me? Before the foundation of the world, he began to view me as in Christ. The manifestation of that now is an expression of our maturity in Christ.

These sins, which...now notice this...these sins which we had not even yet committed, but God knew about them in advance, and thought of them as belonging to Christ. Thus it was right that Christ should die for our sins. Go to 1 Peter 2:24. Guys, this is just humbling. Let me read that again. These sins which we had not even committed yet, God knew about them in advance, and God thought of them as belonging to Christ because we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Thus, it was right that Christ should die for our sins because our sins were imputed to him. His righteousness was imputed to us.

Go to 1 Peter 2:24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Here's a real critical ingredient to this thought pattern, folks, is this. It was just not our sins that belong to Christ, but we, ourselves, belong to Christ. You see that? It's just not your sins. It's you, personally, belong to Christ.

Remember the old Gospel hymn, *When I Was on the Cross, You Were On My Mind*. You were on my mind. Can you even grasp the magnificence of this? I can't. Sometimes it's difficult being a pastor and a teacher, as Bishop Rodgers will concur with me, I'm sure. Sometimes we teach things that we don't understand. We don't understand them fully, but what we try to do is communicate them to the point of understanding because we accept these things by faith. It's faith in the person and work of Christ.

We teach things that we don't understand fully. Don't put the expectation on Pastor Rodgers or myself or the other people—Don or Ted—or other people who teach—Carl, other pastors here—that we understand all of this in the depths that we do. This is just...we're just scratching the surface of all of this. Yet, we have a responsibility to teach the truth. Brothers, this is the Scripture; this is what the Scripture says. This is not something we're making up. We're exploring the heart of God. When we do that, in our finite minds, we're always going to be failures at that. So we have to accept it by faith.

Not only do your sins belong to Christ in eternity past, but you do. You do. That ought to transform the way that we live our lives, the way that we impact one another. The way that we seek to love him, to express our obedience.

When Christ died, Christ thought of what? Thought of us as dying. Our old self was crucified with Christ. Go to Romans 6:6, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him* (in Christ), in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." You see, when Christ died, God viewed you as dying to sin. That means you don't have to live your life like you used to.

One my mentors, Eric Alexander, from Glasgow, Scotland, we were talking about forgiveness. I was just saying, "How is it that God constantly forgives me for the same repetitious sins? The same thought patterns? The same things just come up over and over and over again." He said, "Bruce, every time you ask for forgiveness (1 John 1:9), he is faithful...when we confess our sins, he's faithful to forgive us and cleanse of all unrighteousness. It essentially means this. The chain of that sin has been broken. It's been paid for. Just don't resurrect it again. He said, "We're in the resurrection business because we go back and resurrect something that's already been paid for." Double jeopardy. It's already been paid for because when Christ died, we died to him with and all of our sins. Christ's Father has looked at those things as having died with Christ. What you and I do, what I've been doing, Eric helped me understand, is I'm just resurrecting something that's already been paid for.

Every time I confess it again, the chain has been broken. The chain's broken Do you understand that? You don't have to live like you used to. We've been set free of that because you're in Christ. In the same manner, God thought of us as being buried with Christ. He thought of us as being raised with Christ. He thought of us as being taken up to heaven with Christ. You see, that's how God views you. Whatever happened to Christ because you're in him, he views it as having happened to you. When he died, you died. When he was resurrected, we were resurrected.

In 2 Corinthians, when a person becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person. The old has gone, the new has come. You see, that's your own personal resurrection. You've gone through a death, burial and resurrection because it happened to Christ, it happened to you. You and I don't view ourselves that way. We're always looking at what the world says about us. You see, the real battleground, for me, as I think about it, for us as men, is who do we believe? Do we believe what the world says about us or do we believe what God says about us? The world's going to say, "Your enough is never enough."

Perfect example is your resume'. All your resume' ever does is reveal what you have not accomplished. It never reveals what you have accomplished. An HR representative takes a look at your resume, and the first thing the she or he says is, "Oh, he doesn't have." Doesn't have what? The right degree, the right experience, the right certificate, whatever it is. They're always looking for what you don't have.

Brothers, when we're studying this concept of union with Christ, we're finding out what it is we do have. It's all because you're in Christ. You have everything that is in Christ belongs to you because he views you that way.

A wonderful summary verse of this first portion of our study today, and we'll close with this, is go to 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God." Where does your wisdom come from? It's because you are in Christ Jesus. Do you ever wonder why Christians have such great wisdom? It's because they're in Christ. We think differently because we are

in Christ. He is the source of our wisdom. It's not our education. It's our relationship with him. It's our union with Christ that gives our wisdom. But what else? Wisdom from God and righteousness.

The word righteousness means worship rightly directed. Our lifestyle becomes an activity of worship. You see, worship is not something we do on the Lord's Day at 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning. Righteousness is a style of life. It's a way of living that is a worshipful lifestyle because you look at your life and say, "My life is going to be an expression of worship correctly directed." Your whole life takes on a phrase of righteousness, and it means worship rightly directed. Your lifestyle is a worship rightly directed lifestyle because you're in Christ.

And sanctification. He is our sanctification. Are you sanctified? Yes, because you are? In Christ. You and I become more mature and we express that sanctification through our maturity and our obedience, but he is our sanctification. Guys, you are sanctified. Just like the articles in the temple. They were set apart for a specific purpose. They had nothing to do with it. They were chosen and set apart. We were chosen and set apart. Now we become more mature in the expression of that by our obedience and the things that we do and the duties we have a follower of Christ. But you've been set apart for something holy. Your lifestyle is a holy lifestyle. That's why I appreciate so much what Tom made for us, this little card. We'll make sure you World Vision guys get one of these.

You see, our ministry is who we are where we are. Because you are sanctified, you've been set apart for holy purposes, and that reason is because you are in Christ. Do not let the world say that your good is not good enough. Your good will always be good enough because your goodness is found in? Christ Jesus. He is our wisdom, he's our righteousness, and he is our sanctification. "But by His doing, because you are in Christ, he is.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this wonderful day of remembering our dear brother, Dick. We thank you for his impact upon us. We thank you for the fact that you were pleased in eternity past to plant something in his heart that came into eternity present in the summer of 1995. Father, we celebrate the ministry of the Holy Spirit in these wonderful 18 years together, and if it pleases you, we would like to be around another 18 years, just to sense the presence of your holiness in our midst. Father, continue to be our teacher, and if we said things that are inconsistent with who you are in all of your glory, your majesty or your attributes, we pray, Lord, that you'd be gracious to us. Forgive us and remove those thoughts from us because we just want to be committed to the God of biblical revelation not the God of human imagination. Father, be with our dear brother, Ian, on his trip. May he sense your presence, your protection. May your angels surround him and guide him with all protection as he travels the river. We pray that it would be a time of great introspection in his own life, and most of all that you'll surround him with your grace and he'll feel your presence. May it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen!

One other thing—hang on a second. Hang on one second, please. Sig started something this morning by the raising of hands. I want to give you another illustration of...do you know why, at the end of a service, the pastor holds his hands up when he gives the benediction? Here's how that came about. During the Puritan era, when the congregations were small, at the end of their sermons, the pastor would go around and he would pat everybody on the head. He would say, "Bless you." This was his benediction. He would just walk around and touch everybody's head. Well now, with too many people, I don't have time to touch your heads, so I raise my hands and say, "Bless you." {LAUGHTER} That's how it came about. That's why pastors raise their hands when they give the benediction. Blessings! Have a good day.