

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Union With Christ – Part 6
Taught by Bruce Bickel
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Let's go quietly before the Lord and know that he is God and set our hearts right for how the Holy Spirit will teach us today. Let us pray.

[MUSIC]

Gracious and merciful Heavenly Father, we stand in awe of your faithfulness to us every day. Great is your faithfulness. We just thank you, Father, for your Holy Spirit being our teacher. We pray with humility that he would guide us into all truth. Father, of all the tendency at our human levels to always ask for answers, we just pray that you would give us a vision of who you are and more clearly we would see your face in the Scripture today, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Audience Members: Amen!

We're continuing our examination of this very wonderful theme of union in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? You'll find that on lesson five on your handout. We've been looking at the four major biblical references to dealing with the concept of union with Christ. They are that we are in Christ. We're looking at that right now. What does it mean to say when the Scripture says that we're in Christ? You'll recall the Apostle Paul has used about 129 times that phrase, "in Christ," to describe a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son, as activated by God the Holy Spirit. He really doesn't refer to the word "Christian" as a single person. In the book of Acts, he refers to the church at Antioch as a group of Christians. It's a group of people.

When he begins to talk about somebody in their personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father, he uses this phrase, in Christ, with Christ, of Christ, really describing what we're summarizing as a union with Christ and what does it mean. The four major themes we're looking at are we are in Christ. Secondly, we'll look at Christ is in us. What does it mean that Christ is in us? He is the vine, we are the branches. We are grafted into him. What does that mean when we say that Christ is in us? Is that something that gives us an ego-centered strength, or is it a humbling aspect? We'll talk about that in future weeks.

Then we need to talk about we are like Christ. What does it mean that when we are in Christ, Christ is in us, that we are like Christ? What does that mean for us practically speaking as we live out our lives in a holy state that we are like Christ? We need to understand what that means. Then lastly, we'll look at the doctrine of understanding that we are with Christ.

Last week, we introduced the idea of we are in Christ. We saw, first of all, that it has its origin, the whole concept of the origin of our union with Christ has to do with God's eternal plan. You'll see that in Ephesians 1:4, when God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. You see, we were chosen in Christ and it was in Christ that we were destined and appointed to live a life for the praise of his glory. That was because God viewed us as being in Christ.

Then last week we looked at what does it mean that during Christ's lifetime and during his incarnate life, what does it mean that we are in Christ? If you recall from last week, we looked at the idea that

from the time of his birth and all during his lifetime, God has always thought about us as being in Christ. He's never thought about us as being apart from Christ. He's always viewed us as being in Christ.

That means this—that when Jesus perfectly obeyed the law, God viewed you and I as perfectly obeying the law. That's what that means when it says that we are in Christ. It's how God views us. It also means that because we are in Christ, God can look at, thinking of all of our sins as belonging to him; the doctrine of imputation, the whole issue of being justified by faith alone, as we saw in Romans 5.

As a result of our justification, we have peace with God. As a result of our peace with God, we have access to God. As a result of our access to God, we have hope with God. As a result of our hope with God, we have confidence before God. And then lastly, we understand the love of God. Those are all consequences of our being in Christ because God has viewed us from eternity past as being solely wrapped in the arms of the righteous one, and he views us in Christ. He views us differently. That's what justification is. It's his statement of how he views us.

The real battleground for us as men is who do you believe? Do we believe what the world says about us? Are we getting it through our heads that we ought to take a look at how God views us? How you think about yourself is going to determine how you act. Character precedes conduct. Who we are determines what we do. How do you view yourself? Do you view yourself as the world says that your enough is never enough? Or are you beginning to understand just a glimpse of this magnificent doctrine of union with Christ that you always have enough?

As Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1, he's given us everything that we need for life and godliness. Now do we really believe the word "everything?" Do I really believe that I've got all the resources that I need to live the life that is consistent with God's glory because that's my destiny because I'm in Christ? Do we really believe that I've got everything?

The greatest anecdote for worry is worship. A lot of times we create worry as a choice that we make, when there's really no reason to it. If we're thinking correctly...now I'm not belittling the fact that we're human beings and we have emotions. I'm not suggesting that. All I'm trying to say is that when you're in a fit of worrying, the best thing you can do is worship. Pick up the book of Psalms. Read a Psalm or two and just praise the Lord. Watch what happens to your Spirit internally during a period of worship when you're trying to overcome your worrying aspect.

The greatest anecdote for worry is to worship. You can do that personally. Just pick up the Psalms. Read one. The book of Psalms teaches how to worship God. Just read it. Let the Holy Spirit just teach you how to worship him in those moments, and just praise the Lord in a very personal worship way and watch what happens, what that does to your worry.

The other thing that's so important for us understand is this. The greatest anecdote for griping is gratitude. The greatest anecdote for griping is gratitude. Just be thankful. Just think of all the blessings you have. That's why we're spending so much time talking about what it means to be in Christ. You see, it's the result our in Christ that we have, the capability and the privilege of receiving all the benefits of our salvation. You see, all the benefits that are associated with our being in a relationship to Christ are a result of this union. Not only do we have the responsibilities of this union, but we have all the benefits and the blessings of this union in Christ. It all started in the heart of God. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. That's when it began.

As we looked at this last week, we also saw this—that these sins which we had not even yet committed where God knew about them in advance and thought of them as belonging to Christ, thus it was right that he should die for our sins. (1 Peter 2:24) You see, God foresaw the sins that we would commit and saw you in Christ before the foundation of the world, and that’s why it was fit for him to die for us.

Bishop Rogers and I were talking last week about something that we are both very concerned about. Bishop Rodgers, I don’t mean to put you on the spot, but I’m going to do that. We talked about penal substitution. Would you just address for a moment? You and I had just a little brief discussion about that.

Bishop Rodgers: *Well, as I was learning to overcome my theological education {LAUGHTER}, what astonished me is that unless you’re a sinner saved by grace alone, by Christ alone and the cross alone, that you cannot not only not agree with the atonement, the penal substitutionary aspect of Christ’s death, but you actually hate it. People write books. New Testament scholars write...if I had known, I would have brought one here to read a paragraph to you...they actually hate the doctrine that Christ died for your sins because it humbles us. They think it’s unfair. Of course, it is one sense unfair because he takes us on by grace. It’s not just neutral, let me tell you. In the liberal world, it’s a terrible doctrine. They really do scream and shout. One feminist theologian said it’s child abuse and it’s blasphemous. That’s what I’m trying to tell you. It’s a warfare.*

That’s why it’s so important, friends, that we understand what Bishop Rodgers is saying about our understanding about the atonement. You see, it was perfectly righteous, in the heart of God, to die for our sins, even those that we had not even committed yet, because of this whole union with Christ, that he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. If you have saving faith today, it’s because he viewed you as in Christ before the foundation of the world. That’s the wonderful, glorious, compassionate, loving, merciful doctrine of election.

If you ask me what is the most important doctrine in Scripture, there are many that I could say, but I would have to say, you’ve got to put election up there at the top because this is where it all begins. Chose us, in Christ—not in you, not in me, not in my response—but he chose you, in Christ, before the foundation of the world. That’s where it began. What you and I are now living out, in our normal lifestyle right now, brothers, is God’s eternal decree of what he decreed before the foundation of the world that you would be a believer now in 2013 attending a group on Friday mornings to study the Scripture. What a magnificent thought. Do you realize that that started in the heart of God? This is not by chance. You’re not here by circumstance. You’re not here by chance. You’re here by divine providence, by divine sovereignty.

Don: *I was just going to talk about what Tom had already said about the child abuse or whatever. I was going to make that comment, too, about how blasphemous that was.*

Well you know, we talk a lot about capital punishment. The atonement is what? Capital punishment. Now I’m not saying we need to have that in society. That’s not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is you’ve got to look at the cross as capital punishment. Somebody paid for my sin. You hear people say, “That’s not fair.” The liberal theologians will say, “That’s not fair. God isn’t fair.” You see, when people don’t get what they want, their normal response is, “Well that’s not fair.” That’s the human response. They just wipe everything out, throw the baby out with the bath water because they say it’s not fair. Well, I’ll tell you what’s not fair. It’s not fair that somebody paid for my sins. That’s not fair. It’s righteous and it’s just, but that is certainly not fair. We’re not talking about fairness; we’re talking about righteousness. We’re talking about God’s sovereign plan.

Brothers, I hope you begin to understand the significance of what it means when he says that you are in Christ. God has viewed you singly as in Christ. Now when somebody says something about you, or Satan throws his fiery darts at you and goes before the Father and says, "God, look at this person over here. Can't you see what they're doing?" his response is basically a very loving, "I don't see that. I don't see that in that person because he's my son (or she's my daughter). You see, Jesus is in way. I see Jesus in that person because that person was chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ." Brothers, this is just such a radical thought. It transforms our lives when you begin to realize that you are not here just by accident. You're here by a sovereign decree before the foundation of the world. This is something that God has ordained that we're just discovering. God has decreed because you are in Christ and I'm in Christ by his grace.

As a result of that, we're coming together to sit at his feet and have is Holy Spirit teach us. So the implications are rather severe. When Christ dies in his lifetime, God thought of you and I and dying with him. We were buried with Christ. We were raised with Christ. We're taken up with Christ. You see, that's how God views you. God's perspective of Christ's incarnate life, whatever happened to Christ, God views as happening to you and me. Do you understand that? Whatever happened to Christ, God views that as happening to you and me. When he was obedient, you're obedient. When he prayed, we prayed. You see, that's what it means to be in Christ.

That does not remove us of our responsibilities. It ought to be the most humbling thought that we can have is to realize that whatever Christ went through, God viewed me as going through that also. When he died to sin, what did I do? What did you do?

Audience Member: *Died to sin.*

Died to sin. You don't have the live like that anymore, brothers. You don't have to make those choices. You've got the power of the resurrection. When he was resurrected, we have that same power because you're in Christ. He views us that way. The critical issue for us is who do I believe? Do I really believe what the Scripture says about me? Or do I believe what the world says about me? The world is always going to say this, guys, "Your enough is never enough. Your enough is never enough." The Scripture says your enough is always enough because I view you as in Christ. That's justification. That's justification.

The first consequence of justification in Romans 5 is peace with God. What does that imply? That once you were at war with God. Do you realize that? People don't like the hear that. If you don't want to agree with that, then you can say God's at war with me, if you don't like to say that I'm at war with him; he's at war with me. So take your point. The point of this is at one time, we were at war with God, committing cosmic treason against the holiness of God's name and his character. It was in that moment that he died for us. The first that happens with justification is you have peace with God. We confuse often times the peace of God with peace with God. You can't have peace of God until you have peace with God. Yet we flippantly say, "Well may the peace of God be with you." That can't happen until you have peace with God. Now you're eligible to claim the peace of God.

Sig: *Wasn't it true, too, that God was never satisfied with the animal sacrifices?*

Correct.

Sig: *And yet...so there was something missing, even though that went on for hundreds of years.*

We shouldn't say it's missing. Remember, that was his sovereign decree. There was a reason for that. It was all to point to the sacrificial atonement of the person and work of Christ which is complete. It wasn't anything missing. It was by design, sovereign decree, that it was to get people to think, "Well, we've got to do this all the time, all the time, all the time." But you see, with Christ's sacrifice, there's no need for that anymore. It was designed to point to the completed atonement of the person and work of Christ. So you're right, there was something missing in the sense that it wasn't complete, but we shouldn't say it was something that God was faulty in creating. It was by design that he created it that way to point to person and work of Christ. It's what Paul says, "The law was a schoolmaster to lead me to Christ." To lead me to Christ. So you're right in that sense, but we should never say that God did not do it completely. It was perfectly in his will, in his sovereign providence, that it was orchestrated to point us to a completed sacrifice in Christ, which is what Bishop Rodgers is talking about. That's what people find offensive because it's so humbling to us; that somebody would die for me. I needed somebody to die for me.

Audience Member: *They find election just as offensive.*

Oh yes. I get blasted...

Audience Member: *It's part of the same thing.*

I get blasted a lot because, "Do you believe in election?" I get blasted quite a bit from that.

Ted: *You get blasted by Christians, per se.*

That's correct. The non-believers could give a rip about it {LAUGHTER} because they don't believe it anyway. It's the professing believing church that nails you on that one because, "It's unfair! You mean God's not loving?" It's like in evangelism. Where does our weak, modern evangelism start? It starts with you. God loves you. Well yes, he does, but you've got to understand what did it cost him to love you? You've got to understand how bad you are before you can see how good he's made you. And yet, in our evangelism, we start off with, "God loves you." Certainly, I'm not refuting that, but that's not where you start. If you start there, they'll never understand their need for redemption, they'll never know their need reconciliation, they'll never know their need for a Savior, if they think that, "I'm okay the way I am and I'm loveable the way I am. You're not loveable. You're at war with him. That's why you have to be justified by faith alone.

Don: *And that's the same thing, what you were were saying, being at war with him [UNCLEAR] there are Scriptures that say that the unbeliever is an enemy with him.*

Yes. Absolutely.

Don: *There are Scriptures like Psalm 5:5 that say that God hates evil doers.*

Yes.

Don: *We have to take that into consideration.*

Be careful. That's not fair now, Don. {LAUGHTER} Be careful. It's not loving.

Don: *Right. Well, we have to take all of what Scripture says [UNCLEAR].*

Amen to that. Look at Romans 5. Here's the condition in which you discover God's love. Let me give you this. There are four characteristics that you'll see in Romans 5:1-11. First of all, you're without strength. That's when he died for you. Do you realize that you're without strength to do anything spiritually approving of God's love and grace? You're without strength to do anything. Secondly, you're godless. Thirdly, you're a sinner. And fourthly, you're an enemy.

It's at that point that he died for you. That's how you understand his love. If you don't understand those four conditions of who you are, you're never going to understand God's love. If you don't understand his wrath, you'll never understand his love. Isaiah 48:9 says, "For my own name's sake, I hold back my wrath so as not to cut you off."

The one thing that God does to establish a relationship with us...that little phrase, "so as not to cut you off" is the Hebrew idiom who literally means this—in order to have relationship with you. Notice what God does. In order to have relationship with us, something we can't do ourselves. "It's for my sake," he says, "that I hold back my wrath so as not to cut you off, to make it possible to have a relationship with you, I'm going to do what you can't because of your war-like condition against me, I'm going to hold back what you deserve because I love you." If you don't understand that, you're never going to understand the quality of his love.

Bill: *Do you want remind us of your teaching on the Beatitudes in regard to our ability with your definition of blessed?*

Oh. Sure. Happiness has to do with happenings in your life. Happiness is based upon the happenings in your life. Something good happens, we are happy. Something deleterious happens, we are sad. Happiness is a human condition that is based upon the happenings of your life. When Jesus uses the word "blessed" it's the Greek word makarios. It literally means this—happy in spite of circumstances. You are happy, emotionally, in spite of the happenings of your life. There's a huge difference between being happy and being blessed, or being blessed. You see, blessedness is managing the happenings of your life with grace. That's what it means to be blessed—managing the happenings of your life with grace. That's why Jesus says eight times in the Beatitudes when he was introducing the kingdom of God concept as basically saying this is how you enter into kingdom and this is how you live as a kingdom citizen, eight times he uses that word "blessed." He's saying, "You're going to be happy in spite of circumstances when you manage the circumstances of your life with grace." That's what it means to be in Christ. Why is that possible? It's possible, brothers, because he chose you before the foundation of the world in Christ.

Audience Members: *None of those situations are possible without God's intervention.*

Absolutely. Absolutely. You see, the whole thing starts, we have to start, this all starts in the heart of God, in the counsel of his own will. People always ask the question, "Why this?" Well the only answer I come up with is because it happened in the counsel of God's own will. That's why. Do I understand that? No. Do I accept that? Absolutely. Because I don't need to know why. I just need to know that it is. So we trust God and walk by faith. That's what it means to be in Christ as we are studying what it means that we are in Christ.

Let's take a look at during our lifetimes now. We took a look at what it meant to be in Christ during his lifetime, that God viewed everything that went through that we go through them. There's another side of that coin we need to look at. When Christ went through all of his sufferings, who else went through

them? We did. We need to understand that as part of our relationship to Christ, the suffering elements of the Christ-like life.

As he went through all these sufferings, God viewed us as going through all the same sufferings with him. You and I now suffer in our soul and in our Spirit because of the condition of this world. We are still suffering in that. We need to understand the other side of the coin is part of our responsibility and part of our privilege is maintaining the management of the sufferings of our life to be blessed. So there's the other side of the coin. It's not all roses, guys. When you're in Christ, it means God views the sufferings that he went through, we also went those, and we're still going through them.

That's why Paul says, "I complete the sufferings of Christ." Did Christ go through all the sufferings that he ever could? No. He still has a body, and that body is still suffering, isn't it? We are still suffering. That's part of our union and the fellowship we have with Christ. It's the fellowship of his sufferings. The real issue is when you're suffering for the cause and the glory of Christ, what is our response? You see, that's where we have to go from feel-act-think to think-act-feel (our little card) so that we will manage the sufferings of our life with grace and be blessed. That's part of our union.

Audience Member: *So we shouldn't be shocked...*

Absolutely. Should not be shocked. I mean, we shouldn't be shocked that the world's throwing darts at us because we have a radically different value system than the entire system of this world. We shouldn't be shocked. We just need to maintain that by grace so that our life will be blessed in the midst of those circumstances. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You see, when you recognize your absolute spiritual bankruptcy, that's when you begin to manage the happenings of your life with grace, because you know that you need that.

The other thing this important about Romans 5, if you look at those first 3-4 verses, it says, "in the grace in which we stand." We stand in grace. That means this—you're not in grace part of the time and you're out of grace part of the time. It doesn't mean that. It means you're standing in grace. The word "stand" there means perpetual residence. It's the idea of having a perpetual residency in a source, a resource that is not yours. That is the grace of God.

Do you have all the grace...you have all the grace you'll ever need. Why? Because you're standing in it because you've been justified because before the foundation of the world he chose you in Christ. That's how he views you. That's the wonderful doctrine of justification.

Audience Member: *What was that source [UNCLEAR] that you mentioned?*

In Romans 5:1-11, there are four conditions of which you and I discover God's love. You've got to understand these conditions to understand the validity and the source of his love. The first one was this—you're without strength. Well let's go to that. Let me show you. "1Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace (that's where you have access) in which we stand." (Romans 5:1-2)

Now where are you standing? Because of your peace with God, you have access to God, and therefore, you're standing in the grace of God. That means this—because God chose you before the foundation of the world that you're in Christ, you don't move in and out of grace. You have a perpetual residency in the resources of grace. How do you define grace? We could use the acrostic for GRACE—God's

resources at Christ's expense. God's resources at Christ's expense. That's what you're standing in. Brothers, you and I have all the grace we'll ever need to manage the happenings of our life with grace, and therefore, be blessed.

Let's read on to see these conditions, "3And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6For while we were still helpless (there's your word without strength) at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (there's your second characteristic)." We were without strength. It means you had no ability to do anything spiritual, to do anything to please God. You're without strength. You're a spiritual bankrupt. You have no resources, humanly, that can do anything. That's what it means to be without strength. You are weak, without strength. And you're godless.

"7For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners (there's your third description)." So you see, three words so far. Here's your condition—at war with God, without strength, godless, sinner and there's one more. "

Christ died for us. "9Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." Why is it that we're exposed to the wrath of God? It's because you are without strength, you're godless and you're a sinner. That's what wrath is designed to do. "10For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (there's your fourth word)."

Four descriptions of who we are apart from Christ. Let me just show you a cross reference. Those four characteristics are without strength, godless, sinner and enemy. That description is summarized for us in Ephesians 2:11. Take those four words and here's a description of a person who is found in that condition—without strength, godless, sinner and enemy. "11Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision (that would be reference to the Jewish nation, where male circumcision was a sign of their national righteousness), which is performed in the flesh by human hands—12remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." That's the condition of a non-believer. Without hope.

Why is the world so hopeless? It's because they're without God. It's a logical conclusion. They have no hope because they have no peace. They have no peace because they don't have any access. You see, that sequence in Romans 5, the blessings of justification, are critical. We have peace with God, therefore, we have access to God, therefore we have hope in God, we have confidence in God and you experience the love of God. You see, certainly you experience the love of God. It's because I realize that when I was without strength, I was godless, I was a sinner and I was an enemy. That's when he loved me.

Then in Romans 5, you'll notice he goes from the lesser to the greater. If he would do that for you, and you were in that condition, don't you think he's going to love you more in your new condition? You're a child? We say, "How do I experience God's love?" My goodness, look what he did for you when you were in that condition. If he loved you in that condition, don't you think he's going to love you in your new condition? When he now calls you child? Calls you son? Calls you daughter? He goes from the lesser to the greater. It's a wonderful illustration. You see, you and I get so wrapped up in the "me" of

all of this. It's really in the "in Christ" of all of this. God views you as in Christ. So yes, you experience God's love, but it's a result of the degree that understand God's love is the degree of the condition from which he rescued me from redemption. Redemption is being rescued through the payment of a price. The atonement. That's why we have the blessings of our salvation.

During our lifetimes now, the riches of our life in Christ can be viewed from a couple of different perspectives. We're talking about our being in Christ from our lives now. In our life...we talked about during Christ's incarnate life, now let's talk about our life now, where we are practically. First of all, we have died and been raised with Christ. That's how God views you. You have died and have been raised with Christ. We have new life in Christ. All our actions can be done in Christ, and all believers together are one body in Christ. Let's take a look at those individual insights.

First of all, dying and raising with Christ. We have died and been raised with Christ. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus has real affect and impact upon our lives. It has a tremendous impact and real consequences in our lives. Take a look at Colossians 2:12, "having been buried with Him in baptism," that means the identification with his death, "in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." You see, that has tremendous implications in our life when you realize that you died to the sin...when Christ died to sin, who died with him?

Audience Member: We did.

We did. When he was raised, who else was raised? Raised into what? Into a newness of life. That's how God views you now. He doesn't view you as your old sins. He views you now as being raised with Christ. Because he died, or we died, and we rose with Christ, we have power to overcome our personal sinful habits. Romans 6, let's go there. Specifically let's look at verses 12-14 and 19. The word "therefore" is critical. You ask yourself whenever you see word "therefore," what is the therefore there for? It's there for to remind us of the instructions and truth we received beforehand. Romans 6:12 starts with the word "therefore."

Notice Romans 6:11, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin." Why do you consider yourself dead to sin? Because you are. You are. Why is it that you are? Because you died with Christ. You are in Christ. When he died to sin, you died to sin. You're dead to sin. It doesn't mean you live sinlessly perfect. We'll talk about that and a moment. But you are dead to the concept of sin ruling your life. It's about the concept of reign in your life. Notice the next part of Romans 6:11, "but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Why are you alive? Because you're in Christ. Do you see that little verse? Romans 6:11 is so powerful.

Now he says "Therefore." That means based upon what I just wrote to you in verse 11, now notice this, "do not let sin reign in your mortal body." You don't have to let it reign anymore. It doesn't control you anymore because of why? You died to sin, you've been resurrected from sin into newness of life. You don't have to live like you used to anymore. You have all the resources not to make those choices. Why is that? Because you're standing in grace. Do you see that? Tremendous implications. When Christ died, God viewed you as you dying to sin. When he was resurrected into newness of life, he viewed you as being resurrected to newness of life. And now because you stand in grace because you have access to God because of peace with God, you've got all the resources not to have sin rule your life anymore. It doesn't mean that you're always going make the right choices. It means that it doesn't reign in your life. We'll see that in just a moment.

Go to Romans 6:19. Now Paul, I appreciate what Paul helps us in our weak understanding in verse 19, "I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh." He understands that. He's saying, "Look, I just gave you some pretty heavy stuff. It's really deep. But I'm speaking in human terms because I understand the weakness of your flesh. You can't really understand this totally right away. "For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification." In other words, you're going reveal the fact that you've been set apart to be holy. That's what you reveal. You reveal your sanctification. It results in it. It doesn't achieve it; it results in it, in the sense that you're expressing your sanctification, your holiness. That's because, you see, he says, "in human terms, I understand your weakness. But just as you used give yourself and the members of your body to be slaves of unrighteousness, view yourself now as dead to that and give all of your resources and your members of your body to be slaves of righteousness." Huge contrast. You don't have the live like anymore. You see, the cycle has been broken. Why has the cycle broken? Because you died to sin and you're resurrected in newness of life.

God has broken that cycle of sin in your life and you don't have to let it reign anymore. You and I just need to think that way. The problem is we don't think that way. We're always looking for the next pill to correct me and give me some anecdote for it. You just got it folks. It's dealing with the mind. It's dealing with your heart. He's changed your attitudes. You don't have to let that reign. You've now got different desire in your heart to want to be this, and therefore, you begin to express your sanctification. Just such practical instruction for us here.

Audience Member: Bruce, it's interesting when he says, "when you were slaves to sin, you were freed from the control of righteousness," and that's unbelievable.

Now you're freed to be righteous. Exactly. Another thing that's so important for us to understand about during our lifetime, what it means that we are buried with Christ and raised with Christ. Let's go to Colossians 2. We have come now into what I would call fullness or completeness of life.

Sig: I think you just answered my question. There seems to be a parallel or a connection to what you said earlier about who are you going to believe. Are you going to believe the world or are you going believe what God tells us? When he talks about our evil desires, I realize it's really more up to me, what am I going to believe? Am I going to believe that a certain, like looking at a woman and thinking, "Oh, that's really going to satisfy me," as opposed to understanding I've got to get control of that. That's not the end in itself; that's not going to take care of what I really need. And now when [UNCLEAR] Romans, it's like these desires, [UNCLEAR] "therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies so that you obey it's evil desires." It's my choice. It's the way I think. I was trying to make that connection.

That's correct. That's why our card is so important to us. You've got to think right before you act right, before you act right, you feel right. Romans 12, "Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." You see, that's why I've said I don't know how you manage this. But one of the ways that I'm learning to manage this issue right now, I'm not letting sinful thoughts control me and reign over my life because I know that I'm dead to them. First of all, I remind myself, "Hey, you're dead to that stuff. Why are you resurrecting it? You're dead to it." The second thing I then have to say, it's kind of like this, "Lord, I have a problem. I need help. Will you help me?" First of all, I've got a problem. You've got to realize that. That's not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of integrity, "I've got a problem with the way I think. Lord, I need help. I can't do it in my own resources. Will you help me?"

The next thing I then say is, “Lord, if you don’t remove that thought from my mind, it’ll be a disaster. You’ve got to remove that thought from my mind.” You see, that’s the grace in which you stand. You have the grace to do that. Now that’s a battle of the mind. You have to do that. But it’s a matter of you have a new will. By condition, you have a new desire. You need to exercise that desire.

One of the things we need to understand also is Colossians 2:10 because we’ve resurrected to a newness of life. Look at Colossians 2:8-13, “⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” It’s exactly what Sig was suggesting. Don’t be taken captive by the philosophies of this world. “⁹For in Him (the contrast) all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Him (notice—there’s your phrase, “in Christ,” union with Christ) you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

That little word “complete” there, sometimes you might see, your translation might be “fullness,” “complete.” It literally means this—you’ve got all the resources you’ll ever need because you stand in grace. God’s resources at Christ’s expense. You’ve got everything you’ll ever need because you’re complete in Christ. A new job is not going to complete you. A bigger salary is not going to complete you. A new car, a new home, a new relationship is not going to complete you. Where is your completeness found? In Christ. That’s our union in Christ.

For years, when I was single, I know the well-meaning Christian community always had my best interest in mind. They would say to me, “Bruce, when are you going to become complete? You’re single. Ask the Lord to give you a woman to complete you.” A woman is going to complete you? A man is going to complete a woman? Scripture says, “Look, you’re already complete.” And yet, I heard that...and I was motivated, “I’ve got to go get complete because there’s something lacking in me. Who do I marry?” I had some disastrous relationships {LAUGHTER} as a single guy because “She’s the one who’s going to complete me? She’s got bad handwriting. How about this one?” {LAUGHTER} “No, her feet aren’t pretty. How about this one.” Whatever it was. All these things; you conger up all these ideas. But the idea was this—I was being told by the Christian community, “Bruce, until you’re married, you’re not complete.”

What does that say to the ministry of young people who are single? It’s a degrading thought. But yet in our mindset, we have this philosophical cultural Christian attitude of completeness is when you’re married. You see, the Scripture says, “because you’re in union with Christ. You’re in Christ, you are complete in him.” You’re complete in him. You’ve got all the resources you’ll ever need. You have the fullness of life because you died and are resurrected with him. You see, the completeness is already there. You’ve got all the things that you’ll ever need. You and I now just manage those happenings of our life so that our life is blessed.

We are raised to a fullness of life. And then one more thing—we become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). You’re familiar with that? When a person becomes a Christian, they become a brand new person; the old is gone, the new has come. That’s an expression of our completeness. The result of this is this—go to Colossians 3:1-3. Now here’s the summary of what we’re talking about, during my lifetime, what is it I need to do to understand what it means that I’m in Christ? We saw what it means to God. We saw that during his lifetime what it means that we are in Christ. Whatever Christ went through, we went through. Now here comes our responsibility’s side of this. What is our responsibility when I view myself

as being in Christ? I'll try to give you an understanding of what that means. Now here's the summary statement. Look at 3:1-3, "¹Therefore (based upon all the things we talked about so far) if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Guys, it all starts with how we think.

Think on those thoughts that are heavenly. Set your mind on the things above. That's why I say, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner. If you don't remove that thought from my mind, I'm going to pursue it. If you don't do that, Lord, I don't have the resources. I'm standing in your grace. Your grace is sufficient. I have a problem. I need help. Will you help me? Remove that thought and replace it." Sometimes what I have to do is I have to change the music I listen to. Sometimes I have to flip just to get more...I put on a CD of hymns just to get my mind refreshed because it's been polluted by the system of this world. Sometimes I just need help in doing that. One of the ways I do that is I listen to the great hymns of the church. Just listen to those wonderful hymns of the church because it just helps me set my mind straight.

You see, brothers, that's our responsibility because we are in Christ. God views you as being in Christ. We have responsibilities of that. I need to view myself in Christ and have responsibility to set my mind on the things above, not the things of this earth. We'll continue this next week. Let's pray.

Father, it's overwhelming the implications of what it means that we have a union with your Son, and this union began in your heart in the counsel of your own sovereign providential will before the foundation of the world, that you chose us in Christ, that we might today be in Christ and that we would live a life in Christ for your glory, and may it be so. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!!