

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Union With Christ – Part 9
Taught by Bruce Bickel
July 5, 2013

Brothers, let's just have a moment of silence and go before the Lord and know that he is God. Let's just rejoice in silence for a moment and let the Lord read our own hearts and prepare us for what he might have for us this morning. Let's go into the throne of grace and just be quiet for a moment.

Father, we just come into your presence with great thanksgiving and joy.

[SILENCE]

Father, it's with great anticipation that we sit at your feet once again, trusting your Holy Spirit to be our teacher. Father, we do reflect upon our history, the nation, our country. We thank you for all those who made the sacrifice to give us the freedoms that we do have. Shall we never take them for granted. It's just my own insight, Father, my own opinion, that you're not real pleased with our country right now, so we just pray that the church would be revived, that true revival would occur inside the church, and that the church would be begin to make a stand for that which is right, for that which is righteous, for that which is holy, and that we might influence our country. Father, we pray that you would prevent the country from influencing the church, and may we be detectable disciples, those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, help us understand the significance of this study we're involved in, the Union With Christ, that we might be ones who will bring glory to you wherever we are because our ministry is who we are where we are. To that end, we just thank you in Christ's Name. Amen.

We're continuing our study on the theme of union with Christ, what it means to be in Christ. As you've heard me say in recent weeks, Paul uses 129 times the expression, "in Christ," to describe someone who has a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son. We're beginning just to touch a glimpse of this a little bit--what the Father ordained, the Son accomplished, the Holy Spirit applies.

Last week, we talked about what it means that all of our actions could be done in Christ, when we walk by faith. Today, we want to look at item number three, which is Christ is in us. We've see that we are in Christ, now we want to take a look at what does it mean when we say Christ is in us.

Let's open your Bibles to Galatians 2:20 as our launching point. The four majors themes we've been looking at are we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ and we will be with Christ. We're now at Christ is in us. I call your attention to this wonderful verse, Galatians 2:20-21, where Paul says, "20I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

Paul says, "I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." That's where we get the idea that Christ is in us. When you looked at John 15, which launched our study on this concept of union with Christ, "If you abide in Me, I will abide I you," there you see the duality of this unique relationship that we have in our union with Christ; that we abide in him, we pitch our tent, feel at home with him, and he pitches his tent with us and feels at home with us. If we abide in Him, He will abide in us.

Now we need to understand why Paul makes this statement, "I have been crucified with Christ." We need to back up a few verses, so let's go back to Philippians 3. I think we'll see some understanding of why Paul makes a statement such as he did when he says, "I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live." Some of the Judaizers were coming along after Paul and were basically saying when you really merge yourself with the eternal essence, you become one essence and you no longer have a personality, you no longer have your personhood; you're now just merged into the eternal essence. That's not what Paul is saying. It's very possible that the people who heard him say this, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," could take that to the extreme like the mystics. That's not what we're talking about.

To help us understand why Paul would make such a statement, let's go to Philippians 3 and look at verses 5 and 6. Well, let's back up to verse 1 and take it in its context. Here he's talking about righteousness through faith not through the law. ¹Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ²Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless." (Philippians 3:1-6)

What Paul is basically saying here is this is who I used to be. He's drawing a tremendous contrast between who, "I used to think of myself in terms of my fulfilling the righteousness of the law. If anybody could pat themselves on the back and say, 'Look, I'm the perfect candidate to be one who could be in Christ,'" he said, "This is the way I used to think." But now he makes a radical statement in Galatians 2:20 when he says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I've died." What's he saying? He's saying, "I died to that old mentality that says that I can earn my salvation, I can achieve righteousness on my own stead." You have to understand the context of what he's saying in Philippians 3 to understand the value of what he's saying in Galatians 2:20. He's saying, "This is what I used to be."

Look at Philippians 3:9. Well, let's pick up at verse 7; we'll just continue. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith."

There's your contrast between Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 3 when he says, "This is what I used to be. I used to be one who would think that I could achieve my righteousness through the law." You see, he was preaching to a group of people in the church at Galatia who basically were still locked into thinking that you could achieve your righteousness through obedience to the law. The Judaizers would come along after Paul and basically try to sell their wares and say, "He's teaching you a false doctrine because look, he's violating the law, he's getting rid of the law." What Paul is saying is, "Let me tell you how I used to be. If anybody could pat themselves on the back and say I'm the one who could really earn my own righteousness through obedience to the law, that was me because when you looked at me compared to the law, I was blameless. I'm absolutely blameless. I'm the perfect candidate to be able to be the model for this old way of living."

But now, in Galatians 2:20, he's telling that same group of people, who he wrote to in Philippians, he's basically saying this, "This is what I used to be, but this is who I am now because all of that was crucified with Christ." He's not saying that he, himself, personally was crucified, as the mystics would say. The mystics would come along and say, "Look, when you were crucified with Christ, if that's your belief, then you now need to merge yourself with the eternal essence, and you lose your personality, you lose your personhood, because you become merged with the eternal essence." That's what the mystics teach.

Paul is not teaching that. Notice Galatians 2:20, "This life that I live in the flesh." He's still saying, "I still live in the eternal existence in the flesh. I still make decisions. I still have choices to make. I still have activities that I do. I have my personality." What he's saying is that, "my old way of living," which we just read about in Philippians 3, "that is what was crucified. That old style, that old mindset, that mindset that said I can earn this by keeping obedience to the law, that was crucified with Christ and now I live a different life in the flesh, that's still me, still my same person. I still make decisions. I have a personality. It's just that my mindset of obedience to the law has been crucified and now I realize that it is Christ who lives in me, that fulfills my righteousness." That's what we're talking about righteousness that comes through faith, not through works. It's the whole concept of justification by faith alone, "Therefore since we have justification by faith alone we have access to God."

He's drawing a tremendous contrast between his former way of life and his current way of life, and he uses the illustration that that was all crucified. When Christ died at the cross, that old way of living was gone. That's why he can write a statement such as 2 Corinthians 5:17. When a person becomes a Christian, they become a brand new...?

Audience Member: Creature.

Creature. He says, "That old creature was crucified. It was dead. It was buried. It's been resurrected and there's a new way of life." Paul is drawing a tremendous contrast pointing to himself as the example of this is what I used to think and this is who I am now as I now understand I'm living in the flesh a life of faith.

Go back to Galatians 2:20. The word "flesh" here means earthly existence. It's not like the mystics who say you merge with the eternal essence. Go to Philippians 4:13. You can see his humility as we understand Paul is saying that Christ is in me. We've talked about this before last week. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." In order for somebody to say that, you have to go through what Paul went through, and that was what? Recognizing that my old way of life was crucified. You see, we need to go through that spiritual crucifixion, if you would, to the old way of living, to think that I can make a difference.

That's why if you walk down the streets of Pittsburgh, and if you ask somebody "Are you a Christian?" you will probably get as many answers to that if you were to say, "Tell me why you are" as the number of people you would ask. You might get such things as: "Well, I tithe." You might get, "I'm born in America." "My parents are." "I walked an aisle." You might get all sorts of answers.

Now I'm not saying those are not...those may be valid; they may be Christians. I don't know that. But if you ask them this question, "Are you in Christ?" If you ask somebody the question, "Are you in Christ?" that's a radically different concept than "Are you a Christian?"

You see, the word “Christian” is used three times in the New Testament to always describe a group of people, never an individual. But when you ask the question, “Are you in Christ?” it really means this. Is your life in Christ and is Christ in you? Are you abiding him? Is he abiding in you? That’s what Paul is saying. He said, “In order for that to happen, to live a life by faith in flesh...” Look at Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

Now for that to happen, brothers, you have to go through an understanding of what it means to be crucified with Christ. You are dead and buried to your old way of living. That has been crucified. You’ve been dead, it’s been resurrected, you’ve been resurrected into a new way of life, a new way of living. Now you live by faith rather than by works.

Paul is using himself here as an example to help us understand the contrast between how he used to think and what he thought of himself, and now how he views himself as related to the crucifixion of his old way of living. You see his humility when he says in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

He is in us and he remains in us through faith. Look at Ephesians 3:14-19. Well, let’s back up to verse 14. “¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

You see, our strength comes from the realization that I need to be crucified to my old mentality, my old way of living, and now I walk by faith and a life in the flesh. You’re still living in the flesh. You have an eternal existence. You still make choices. The question is why do I make the choices I make? What’s the basis of my choice selection now? Paul says, “When you understand that you’ve died to your old way of life of earning your salvation, of earning your righteousness, rather now you receive it through justification by faith alone.” He says that is a radical change in your life and it’s viewed as a crucifixion.

Go to 1 John 4. You see, to overlook this truth of the crucifixion of our old way of life, would be for us to reject the great spiritual strength that we have within us because of the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit. That’s what you see here in Ephesians 3:17. Go to 1 John 4:4. Now, what are the implications of Christ being in us? Just practically speaking. We’ve seen that we are in Christ. Now what does it mean that Christ is in us and Paul’s talking about the strength that he receives because his old way of living was crucified, he now lives a life in the flesh by faith, and Christ lives in him. We’ve seen the other verses that help us understand that the strength that God gives us in our inner being, that we understand the love of God. Now we come to 1 John 4:4, “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

To understand this, let’s go back to 1 John 4:1-6. He’s talking about testing the spirits. “¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses...” Now the word “confess” is the Greek word homologeo. It means to agree with what somebody else has already said. It’s not your own opinion. Your opinion and my opinion is irrelevant. The real issue is do I agree with what’s already been said in the Scripture about the person and work of Christ? That’s what John is referring to. “²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit

of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴Little children..." That's a Greek word there—those two Greek words for children in the book of 1 John. One is the little word [pidea], and that means little ignorant ones under instruction. Little ignorant ones under instruction. The other one is the word [teknia]. It means beloved, or little children, chosen of God. This what he's saying. Notice the tenderness. "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them..."

Who have you overcome? The false spirits. Do you realize that? Because Christ is in you, and you are in Christ, you have the strength now because you've been crucified to your old way of life, you now have the strength to overcome all these false spirits that come out into the world. He says you "have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

One of the things, brothers, I appreciate so much is your faithfulness to be here every Friday. Do you know what you're telling me when you show up every Friday? You're from God, because you listen to this. Even in my own infallibility, my fallibility, and all the other stuff that people say we have, in all the midst of that, you come here every Friday and you're giving an indication to me of something; that you're really from God. That's a great encouragement for me. Not everybody comes to this. But you guys do—week after week after week. He's saying, "You know, we've overcome the spirit of this world."

Now let me show you a couple of other verses to help us understand practically what he means. Let's go to John 16:33. I want to explore this for a minute.

Ted: Bruce, I might suggest we're not coming here out of our faithfulness, but because of God-given desire.

Well, that's from God. That's from God

Ted: Yeah, from God. It's completely from God.

Absolutely right. The reason you're here...Ted's right. That's a desire that you have that you didn't have before you crucified your old way of living. One of the first indications of a true, authentic crucifixion of your old way of living is the increased desire to come to hear the Scripture. That's what John is saying. That person is the one who's from God because something happened in their life.

Let's go to John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me (there's our phrase, the union with Christ) you may have peace." Where does peace come from?

Audience Member: God.

It comes from God. It doesn't come from governments. It doesn't come from the system of this world. Now that doesn't mean that we don't have a responsibility to achieve peace the best we can through our human abilities. I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is peace is found in a person. It's not found in legislation. It's not found in democracy. It's not found in nationalism. It's found in a person.

We express that peace by the way that we set up a system to live. I'm very grateful for our country. But you're not going to find peace in this world. You're going to find it in your union with Christ. "I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace." Peace is found in a person. "In the world, you will

have tribulation.” What does the world offer you? Tribulation. What does Christ offer you? Union with Christ offers you peace. “But take heart, I have overcome the world.” That’s what Jesus is saying, “The reason that you can have peace, in me, is because I’m in you, you are in Me, and I have overcome the world.” What does that mean about you? If he’s overcome the world, and you’re in Christ and he’s in you, what have you overcome?

Audience Members: *The world.*

You’ve overcome the system of the world. We don’t need to be fearful of the world’s system. Now that doesn’t mean we sit back and do nothing. I’m not saying that. All I’m saying is you don’t need to fret, you don’t need to worry, you don’t need to be exasperated, to be anxious about what’s going on in the world because you have peace in Christ. He’s overcome the world. You’ve overcome the world. We just need to act like it. That’s what the church needs to do.

You see, the church has lost sight of the fact that we’ve overcome the system of the world. The church has bought into the cultural changes of the world. That’s why, you see, we have created what I would call a moralistic therapeutic deity. That’s why a moralistic society never works, because you don’t have a standard. Doctrine precedes your practice. If you don’t have your doctrine of the church right, you’re not going to have practice inside the church right. Doctrine precedes practice.

Look at 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for four things” your happiness, well-being and wealth. It doesn’t say that. Notice the first thing that Scripture is profitable for what? For doctrine. The first thing is standard. That’s what the word standard means. It’s doctrine. It’s for teaching. The very first thing that you and I teach the Scripture is so that you and I will understand the standard. When we don’t understand the standard, our conduct changes. One of the standards is this, “I have overcome the world.” You’ve overcome the world. Not in anything that you have done personally; it’s because of your what? Union with Christ. Union with Christ.

Let’s go back to 1 John 5:5. Well, let’s go to verse...let’s go to verse 1. {LAUGHTER} In fact, let’s start in Genesis 1. {LAUGHTER} To be accurate, we’ll just start in Genesis 1 and read the whole book.

Sig: [UNCLEAR] *be more specific.* {LAUGHTER}

Don’t want to take things out of context.

Sig: *How did that sermon go, by the way?*

It really was terrific. They all walked out. {LAUGHTER}. 1 John 5:1, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...” That’s the Greek phrase *ectao tao d’genetai*. It means this—having been born of God, you now believe. Which comes first? Faith or life.

Audience Member: *Life.*

Life comes first. I’ve told you about being on the ordination counsels. I think I’ve been in four or five in my life, where you take somebody who’s been called into the Gospel ministry and you ask them questions to just make sure they understand the doctrines. I ask very few questions. One of the questions I ask is this, “Which comes first—faith or life?” Do you realize out of four that I’ve asked that question, three have said faith. They said you’ve got to believe before you have new life. What that says is they don’t understand the Gospel. They don’t understand the doctrines of grace. They don’t

understand that in Romans 5:10 I was God's enemy. You see, they don't understand that because they've bought into this idea that you start off by saying, "God loves you and has wonderful plan for your life." Now I'm not saying God hasn't used that phrase. I'm not saying that. But you start off with the character of God. If you start off with love of God, people might never realize how bad off they are. They'll think that I'm good and I'm okay the way I am and God loves me just the way I am.

I hear this all the time, "God loves me just the way I am." Oh really? Then why did he die for you? If you're so good the way you are, why did he go to the cross and pay for your sins? You see, we've bought into this because we've moved away from the standard. Doctrine precedes our practice. One of the doctrines we need to understand is this—Jesus says, "I have overcome the world. If you're in me and I'm in you, guess what you have overcome? You have overcome the system of this world and all of its intricacies and all of its debaucheries and all of its heresies. You've overcome that." Now just act like it church. You see, the church needs to act like we've overcome the world. We act like now we need to be a part of the world to get the world to draw into us. You see, it's the other way around. The church needs to have its revival inside the church so that we change culture, rather than embracing culture and bringing it inside the church.

Look at 1 John 5:1, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God..." The word "believe" there is a very, very active word. It's a Greek word that means four things. It's the acronymic DART—depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. It doesn't mean give mental assent. Somebody might say, "Well I believe in Jesus." Well that may mean they just have demonic faith because the devils believe don't they. They give mental assent, but do to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in the person and work of Christ? No. The word believe that...it's very, very aggressive. Our concept of the English vernacular of the word believe is you just sit back on your haunches and clean out your belly button and have naval operations. You just kind of sit back and do that. No, this is very active. You depend upon, you adhere to, you rely upon and you trust in the person and work of Christ. It's very, very aggressive. It's a very, very active word.

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments." Why do you want to obey his commandments? It's because you've got a new desire to do that. It's because you were crucified to your old way of life. You've now got a new desire because you're living your life in the flesh as Paul says in the faith of Christ.

³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world..." your obedience. It doesn't say that. "Our faith." Faith is forsaking all, I trust him. Forsaking all, I trust him. And then verse 5, ⁵"Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

I just wish the church would understand this. We've overcome the system of this world. They don't control us. It's not our job to bring the world into us. We're to act out the doctrines that God gives us in the Scripture, the standards, set that standard and we take that into the world. You see, we've got to reverse it. The church needs to understand that doctrine precedes practice.

So many times when I'm in churches, they say, "Why are you always teaching doctrine?" Why don't you teach me how I can feel good?" Well, let me teach you doctrine and you ought to feel good. I'll say this—when you understand the doctrines of grace, your feelings change because you've been crucified to

your old way of life. That's exactly what Paul is telling us. We need to understand, brothers, that we have overcome the system of the world.

Let me ask you a question. Let's make some application. Doctrine precedes practice. We just understood one of the doctrines is this—I have overcome the world. You have overcome the world. You find peace in Me. What's one of the applications in your personal life? What are you going to do about that? Remember, when you study the Scripture, you don't want to ask yourself the question, "What does it mean to me?" Quite honestly, it doesn't make any difference what it means to you, or to me. The only difference it makes is the one who is the Author. The question is this...ask yourself the question, "What am I going to do about what I just learned?" That's the question you ask.

When you're in a Bible study, when you ask the question, "What does it mean to you?" you're sent into a pity party. People just share their ignorance. Ask the question, "What am I going to do about what I just learned?" Okay, brothers, we've got a few minutes. What are you going to do about what you just learned about the fact that Jesus says, "I have overcome the world. I'm in you, you are in me. You have overcome the world." What are you going to do about that?

I can out-wait you. {LAUGHTER} One of my preaching mentors years ago said, "Don't be afraid of silence when you ask a question. It worse on them than it is on you." {LAUGHTER}

Sig: *The first thing that comes to my mind, of course, I play off of what you've taught us, is that I'm not going to believe, I mean, this is the thing I've had to work through in my own life, is I'm not going to believe the things that other people tell me about my limitations. Like, "You can't do that. You don't have the credentials," or "How can you say that? What do you know? You're not a theologian. You didn't go to seminary. How do you know that?" So much of the time, I hesitate to say things that I know about Christ because I'm afraid I don't have the credentials or I don't have the authority. But now, like I said before, what you've taught me is, you have taken away all my excuses, because of Christ.*

Amen.

Sig: *There is no reason to not say or do anything, even in a small way. I don't mean in a braggadocios or arrogant or pushy way, but just to be able to acknowledge Christ before anyone who comes across my path.*

Amen. Excellent. Thank you.

Audience Member: *Obey.*

Okay. Obey. Very simple. Obey.

Audience Member: *It reduced an anxiety that I may have had, even before this conversation this morning, just anxieties about things that...*

There you go.

Audience Member: *...it seems, I guess, that are flushing out. Anxieties.*

Anxiety is basically that the needs that I have will not be met because I can't control them. That's anxiety. The feeling that I have that my needs will not be met because I can't control the environment.

What you've just said, brother, is a wonderful statement about our realization that we've overcome the world. That removes some of the anxiety. Who creates anxiety? We do. The system doesn't create anxiety. We create it because that's our choice response to what's going on around us. Excellent.

Audience Member: *I was going to say, I mean, the world tries to replace the teachings of the church and says that they are higher and more knowledgeable and a better way to go, that I will not be afraid to say what I need to say, which is burning inside me.*

Amen! Do you realize there's a difference between uncontrolled anger...sinful anger and righteous anger? Sometimes we need to be more angry than we are. We think the Christian life is all passivity—you sit back and do nothing. No, I think there are times that we need to be angry. Righteous anger. We need to be angry over the right thing at the right time and the right way. Maybe part of our response to what's going on inside the church is we need to be angry. We need to be angry at the sin inside the church. That's a righteous anger. Anger at the right things at the right time in the right way. That's righteous anger. Good. Anybody else?

Dan: *The question was what are you going to do about it? My initial thought there is I'm not going to do anything. As Philippians 2:12 says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," but it is him that is working that out within us.*

Amen.

Dan: *[UNCLEAR] I don't want to do anything, but I want him to do everything. So that would be kind of my feeling about that.*

That's a good description of what we've been talking about for 18 years about being an aggressive responder. We need to be an aggressive responder to what we see the Lord doing in us. Dan's brought a very good point. We don't create something to do; we become an aggressive responder to what we see the Lord doing around us. Remember, Jesus says this in John 5 and John 8, "I initiate nothing on my own. I only do those things I see the Father doing."

I had two guys come in to visit me in the office the other day. I said, "What are you coming in here for?" They set up an appointment, and they said, "We wanted to find out how do you start a ministry." I said, "Well tell me what you're doing." "Well, we're not doing anything. We want to start one." I said, "Well, if you're not doing it, how can you start one?" "Well, we've got an idea." We spent the next hour trying to help them understand that you don't start anything. What are you doing now? What these guys are doing now is powerful ministry. It's just they've bought into the idea they now need to start a 501c3 so that they be full-time. I said, "You are full-time what you're doing. You've got a tent making operation doing wonderful things, just continue doing that and see what the Lord does."

There's a difference between initiating. Now that doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. What I'm saying is Jesus was an aggressive responder to what he saw the Lord doing in his life. Every time I drive through the Ft. Pitt tunnel, the only prayer I say as I come out of the tube is this, "Lord, let me have insight, the wisdom and the discernment to see what you're going to do in my life today so I can be an aggressive responder." That's what Dan is saying. It's exactly what we need to do, because I know this—he's overcome the world and I want to find what he's doing, because if I join that, it's already been blessed. I don't have to create something and ask him to bless it. Huge difference. Huge difference.

Audience Member: *Would that include love the Lord God with all your heart, mind and soul and Spirit, [UNCLEAR] love your neighbor, love yourself.*

Absolutely.

Audience Member: *Obey.*

Obey. We just obey. Why is it you obey? Because you now have the desire to. You didn't have that desire before. You've got to understand that. Before you were in Christ, you didn't have that desire. The reason you're here today is because there's something going on inside you that gives you a different desire to want to come and hear. That's because it is from God, as the Scripture says.

Audience Member: *Stay away from any kind of thinking or attitude that becomes works based.*

Very good. You've got to fight that system of the world. You've overcome it, in your own life. Don't succumb to the tendency to say that you've got to work your salvation, or work your way into God's presence, by having more merit.

Whatever you do, whatever you and I do...face it guys. The best things you do are still tainted, aren't they? Everything I do, as good as it is in the eyes of the world, it's still tainted. That's why we need to be justified by faith alone. We get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ.

But brothers, the doctrine today that we need to understand is this. He's overcome the world. You and I have overcome the world. Let's go to Romans 15:18 as we wrap this up. Now here's our attitude. This balances out the humility that we have. There's a tendency to think, "Well I've overcome the world. I'm better than somebody else. I've got it all. I've got my act together." We need to understand what Paul writes in Romans 15:18, "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed."

What he's saying is this, "I'm not going to talk about what I do. I'm going to talk about what he's done in me." That's what it means when we say Christ is in us. Often times, people ask me, "Bruce, how many people have you led to Christ?" I say, "None that I know of." I've been there and been the OB/GYN who's presided at the new birth, but I've never led anybody to Christ. Somebody planted a seed, somebody watered the soil, I just happened to be there at their new birth. But I did not lead them to Christ. I just happened to be there to be the official to watch the new birth occur as he was pleased to do something. You see, Paul is saying this, "I'm not going to boast about the stuff that I do."

There was a gentleman years ago when I was involved with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I met with him one day, and I heard for the first hour, "Well I led this person to Christ. I led this person to Christ." Now I understood what he was saying, and the Lord used him mightily. That's not what I'm saying. My point is this—Paul is saying this, "Because I've been crucified with Christ, my old way of life, even of giving myself my own credit, has died, been resurrected to a new way of life. If I'm going to boast about anything, I'm only going to talk about what I see that Christ has done in me." That, for him, was to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.

There's our balance point. Yes, we've overcome the world. We have peace in the person and work of Christ, not in the system of this world. But at the same time, there's a tremendous sense of humility. Humility is seeing that which is perfect and realizing I can't achieve it. Paul is saying that, "I see that

which is perfect and I realize I can't achieve it, so I'm only going to talk about the things that I see God doing in my life, rather than what I've done for him."

Brothers, the doctrine is this—you've overcome the world. He's overcome the world. You've overcome the world. Let's just pray that the church will act like that. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your mercy and your grace. Once again, Lord, if we've said anything that's contrary to your nature or your attributes your glory or the revealed Word, that you would remove that from us. Help us understand, Father, what it means that you are working our lives consistent with your character and your nature, your righteousness, your holiness. Father, may we have insights today to see what you're doing around us that we might be aggressive responders and do it for your glory. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!!