

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Union With Christ – Ministry Without Masks – Part 2
Taught by Bruce Bickel
August 30, 2013

Don, you want to set the tone for us? Let's go quietly into presence of the Lord and know that he is God. Let's prepare our hearts for what he might have for us.

[MUSIC]

Once again, Lord Jesus, we come this morning with a great sense of anticipation and awe that you would be pleased to be our teacher. May your Spirit guide us; guide us unto all truth. Father, once again, would you be gracious to us and allow us to...open our eyes that we might behold you in all of your glory and the face of Jesus Christ, and we pray this in His Name. Amen!

We're continuing our study in Triumphant Living, based upon God's covenant relationship with us through the doctrines of grace. I invite you to open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 3. We're looking at verses 12-16. This on your handout will be lesson 6.

The key for us to understand in verse 12 is the word "therefore." Notice chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians, beginning at verse 12, "Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech." The word therefore refers back to the previous. It's talking about the permanence of the covenant of grace. In other words, there's absolute glory and permanence in the covenant of grace. Covenant is God's relationship with is people. The word therefore refers back to the permanence of the covenant of grace.

Based upon that permanence, the fact that it doesn't change, and that is God's sovereignly ordained arrangement, Paul has said that God always leads in triumphal procession. It spreads through us everywhere the aroma, the knowledge of Christ. That's what gives us our great hope, our great sense of confidence. Basically what he's teaching us is this is an illustration where Moses came down off of Mt. Sinai after having received the Ten Commandments. When he was in the presence of the Lord, his face shined with glory. When he came off the mountain, he wore a mask, a veil, because he began to realize that glory of God was fading the longer he was away, off the mountain. He didn't want people to see the faded glory, so he put this veil on his face to hide it.

It's basically...that's what we do sometimes is we wear masks to hide our things. What Paul teaches us here is two important things about what I'm calling ministry without masks. Remember, ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you. If you don't understand what God has given you, then you don't have any ministry. What you might have is just a well-ordained program that you've created, but there may not be any glory or value in it.

The point that we need to understand here is two things about this illustration of Moses that we can apply to ourselves. First of all, when you remove God, all you have left is Moses. When you remove God, from us, all you have is ourselves. That's contrary to the covenant of grace, because there's grace and permanence, and there's permanence in the grace. The second thing is this—all the glory was because of God, not because of Moses. All the glory was because of God, not because of Moses.

Those are the two that's that we need to say, "How do we apply that into our lives?" First of all, if you remove God from us, all you have is yourself. The contrast here is am I trusting myself and all of my

efforts, or am I trusting God and his grace, the permanence of the covenant of grace? When you put the veil on, basically what you're saying is I need to hide the fact that I'm not as close to God as people think I am and therefore I want to act differently and I'm going to have a ministry with masks. We need to remove those masks.

Paul tells us there are two areas in which we can have ministry without masks because we have this hope in the permanence of the covenant of grace. That's verse 12, referring back to the word therefore, you'll notice what verse 10 says, "For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses *it*." He's talking about the glory of the Ten Commandments versus the glory of the cross. There's glory in the permanence of the covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace means this; that we're trusting God's presence in everything we do, and we don't need to wear a mask because we're involved in ministry. Two areas in which we do not need to wear masks. The first one would be this—in our speech. Notice, he tells us that in verse 12, "Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech." The word "boldness" means absence of fear in speaking. Absence of fear while you're speaking. It doesn't mean boisterousness. It doesn't mean intensity. It doesn't mean loudness. It doesn't mean volume. It means when I speak I can be speaking gently, but I'm speaking without fear. That's what Paul is saying.

The reason that you and I can speak without fear is because we understand the covenant of grace. There's permanence in that. There's glory in that. And We don't need to wear a mask when we talk. In other words we don't need to cover up things to make sure that we get the right response that we want from somebody. Remember, the word here means speaking without fear. It doesn't mean volume. It doesn't mean intensity. It means that when somebody asks you a different question about your personal relationship with Christ, you can speak gently, you can speak quietly, you can speak graciously, but you can speak without fear. Why is it that you can speak without fear? It's because you understand the permanence of the covenant of grace You're trusting God in the midst of your speaking.

Now it's when you put the mask on that you begin to say, "Well let me water that down a little bit because I want to make sure I get the right response because I want them to like me, to think that I'm spiritual," or whatever it is, so you put up a mask. Paul says you don't need to do that.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations of what I mean. Turn in your Bibles to Acts 9:27-28. Right after Paul's conversion, we find this account of his ministry in Damascus. I'm going to give you an illustration of his speaking with boldness. It doesn't mean intensity, although there may be certainly have been intensity, but it's talking about he spoke without fear, because he understood the presence of God in grace. He understood the presence of God in grace.

Here's what we find in Acts 9:27-28, "²⁷But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus." Now notice, "spoken out boldly." That means without fear, "in the name of Jesus." "²⁸And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord." There's what you see Paul doing after his conversion. Notice the reference there, boldly, means he's speaking without fear.

There were tremendous consequences to the possibility of Paul speaking boldly. There will be tremendous consequences to our speaking without fear because one of the likelihoods is people are not going to like what you have to say when you speak biblical truth. You'll notice what Paul is doing, he's speaking about the person and work of Christ. He's not talking about the latest political event. He's

talking about the person and work of Christ, as we see here, “speaking out boldly in the name of Christ.”

What was it that he was preaching? Well, I would take you to 1 Corinthians 1:23, and here’s what Paul says. What was he speaking out boldly?” “But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness.” Let me explain what that means. He’s speaking out boldly about the person and work of Christ. Very, very boldly, without fear, about the person and work of Christ to a group of people, that both cultural entities would reject.

When you look the it this way, the message was stumbling block to the Jews. What does that mean? It meant that their outward righteousness was not the mere performance of outward acts. In other words, their acts of righteousness were look longer valid. In other words, when they looked at righteousness they looked at outward acts. He was saying that is a no. That’s not going to be a well-received message to a group of Paul who have been taught that their outward acts mean that they are righteous. It would also means this—the real issue is a right attitude toward God, not your righteous external conduct.

Now to the Jews, that would be a stumbling block. Imagine telling the Jewish culture, in his time, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away their sin. That’s what he was saying. When he was preaching Christ and Him crucified, he was saying all the sacrifices of your bulls and your goats don’t take away sin. How is the group going to respond to that? They’re going to response, they going to say that’s an offense. That’s going to be an offense. That’s a stumbling block. They don’t want to hear that.

There would be more. How about when he started talking about the person and work of Christ, he was basically telling the Jewish culture that the Passover, the great commemoration of their deliverance, was only a type pointing to the person and work of Christ, and that the Passover was vanishing.

Walk into the culture and start talking about that. How can you do that? You can’t do that if you ‘re wearing a mask. You cannot do that if you are worried about the person’s response. Now again, it does not mean that you and I intentionally go in to offend people and to be a stumbling block. That is not what I’m saying. What I’m saying is this...because you understand the covenant of grace and that God always, always, always leads in triumph, you are trusting Him in your efforts to speak without fear and you are trusting Him for the results. When you and I put the mask on, it is in our speech when we are trusting ourselves to get the result that we want. Paul was speaking out boldly to a culture that was saying, “Look, all of your traditions are false. They point to something else. They are pointing to the person and work of Christ, to the Messiah, Who is here.” To them, to the Jewish culture, that was going to be an offense. That would be like somebody coming to the United States, maybe a trite example, and saying, “Your Fourth of July means nothing...” or whatever other nationalistic thing that we might celebrate as American citizens. They would say, “The Steelers are no good...” or whatever you want to say. {LAUGHTER}

In order to say that, you have to speak boldly. {LAUGHTER} Because I’m in danger. {LAUGHTER}. Do you understand the point? Truth does have its power, doesn’t it? Do you understand what I mean, guys? What Paul is saying is, “Look, you do not intentionally go out to be a stumbling block, but when you are talking about your faith life, you talk about the person and work of Jesus Christ, and you do that with great boldness without fear, you do it with confidence because you know this--that God always leads in triumph. It is our understanding of who am I trusting? The veil would be a symbol of my trusting myself to cover up the response I do not want to get from somebody, so I am going to change what I say in

order to get the response that I want. That means you are trusting yourself. That's ministry with a mask. Paul was saying, brothers, you do not need to do that. You do not need to do that.

Let's give some practical examples in our own life. Now I'm not suggesting that you lead with things in your conversation with people about the person and work of Christ, that things are controversial. I'm not saying that. But when those controversies do come up, you do not avoid them. Just a couple of examples. How often have you heard people say (whispering), "I don't like the doctrine of election." You cannot talk about election. That is not fair. So what do we do, we do not preach election in the pulpit because it is an offense to people. "You mean God chose me, before the foundation of the world, and did not chose somebody else?" Well, that is what it means. "Well that is not fair." You see, that is a stumbling block to people.

Now I am not suggesting that you lead with that, but I am saying this: when the subject comes up, you talk about it with boldness, without fear. Without fear because you know truth is going to do its own work. You don't have to worry about getting a response. The thing you and I have to do is to make sure that when we are preaching it boldly with the truth that we do it with grace. That we are doing it graciously. This does not mean that we are angry or that we are loud, or that we are intense in our doctrines of grace when we teach it. It means that we can do that with tenderness, and mercy and compassion, but we do it with boldness because we are not speaking with fear.

I was in a Bible study a couple of years ago downtown when somebody asked me about the doctrine of election and I started teaching about it. Four people got up and left. Now did I like that? Of course not. That is not what you want to happen; but you have to speak boldly without fear and all I could do was... I've never seen them since. Well, I've seen one...I saw the one young girl and she said I can never come back to your Bible study because my mother is not a Christian and you are telling me that she was not chosen by God. I said, "Well, you don't know; the battle isn't over yet." She said, "Well, that just doesn't seem fair, and I cannot come back to listen to that anymore." So she hasn't been back in 17 years.

My point is this: you do not necessarily lead with those things. Here is the way Charles Spurgeon said it. He said, "You don't take people to the university of election and predestination until they finish the college of repentance and faith."

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: *Amen and Amen.*

You see, those are smoke screens. When somebody says, "I don't like that doctrine," ask them, "What do you do about the person and work of Christ?" Ask them what they think about the person and work of Christ. Get them back to the real issue, which is the person and work of Christ. Get them back to that subject because that is just a smoke screen that to them is a stumbling block. Just as when Paul was preaching Christ and Him crucified, it was a stumbling block to the Jews.

Notice the other thing he says here, in 1st Corinthians 1:23. "...and to Gentiles foolishness." Now what does that mean in that culture? We saw what it meant...that it was a stumbling block to the Jews because he was saying, "Your external acts of righteousness are not the right attitude anymore; the real issue is your attitude with God." That to them was a stumbling block.

How about to the Gentiles, the non-Jewish people? Remember, the word "Gentiles" means someone who does not know God. Someone who does not know God. Here is why it was foolishness to them. To the Greeks or the Gentiles, it meant that the removal of the only sense of consolation they had by

telling them not to worship the sun, the moon, Diana, Jupiter or Zeus; to the Greeks that would be absolutely foolishness. “You mean you are removing every consolation of my comfort that I had by telling me that those are all false gods? And Paul would say absolutely.

Now he did that with what? Not with anger, but with grace. He did it without fear. He did it without fear. And the point that Paul is teaching us about having ministry without masks is, when you put the mask up and you begin to explain your person and work of Christ or go through the doctrines of grace, that people are offended by, you do not put up a mask to change what you’re going to say just to get the response you want, because when you do that, you are speaking, basically saying, “I am trusting myself.” What you are basically saying is, “I’m more fearful of the response than I am in God’s grace.”

So we can speak boldly in our speech. So the first thing that Paul teaches us is that ministry without masks is that it is in our speech. It’s how do we talk?

Let me give you another couple of examples. I’ll get into this more later when we get into Chapter 4. Unfortunately, in our culture, Christianity has been relegated to a teaching. It is not a teaching. Christianity is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We have relegated Christianity to a system of morality or a philosophy of behavior. How do we define Christians today? Well, you’re anti-this, you are anti-that, you are anti-Obama, you are anti-health care, you are anti-this. We’ve turned Christianity—the message of Christianity—into a political, moral issue and it is not. It is not a moral issue. It is not a political issue.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. That’s how Paul defines it. The glory of God. We do not talk about the glory of God; we talk about anti-abortions. We have made it political. We have made Christianity in America a moral issue. It is not a moral issue. It is a message of transformation that is centered on the Holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ, and repentance in faith. We have turned it into a system, a philosophy of moral conduct. We do not do this, we do not do that, we do this, and we don’t do that. Now people are evaluate...“Oh, you’re a Christian. You’re anti-abortion aren’t you? That means that you are a Christian?” “No, I’m a Christian because I am committed to the person and work of Christ.” You answer that question with boldness, without fear, because you understand this: God always leads in triumph. You realize this: it is truth that sets people free, not moral conduct. Not some philosophy of behavior. We have relegated the message of Christianity to a moral teaching that says “if you do this, you are a follower of Christ.” That has nothing to do with it.

Now there are transformational issues that do change your conduct, but that is the result of your being redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, and being converted by the grace of the Holy Spirit. What the Father ordains, the Son accomplishes, and the Holy Spirit applies. We have relegated the message of the gospel to a philosophy of moral conduct and behavior. That is how we define it.

Paul tells us in 1st Corinthians 4—which we will get to in a couple of weeks—that the gospel is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. How much do we talk about the Glory of God the Father? How much do we talk about the glory of God the Son? How much do we talk about the glory of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever thought about the glory of the Trinity? That is the message of the gospel. It is about the God the Father in His glory. We don’t teach that. We talk about your “felt needs.” You want comfort, you want greater relief from your pain? Then let’s have this moral conduct. If you do this, then God will do that. You see, we have completely made it a philosophy of teaching. It is not about teaching. It is about a person.

Paul says that when you speak boldly, you speak without fear because if you do not do that you are going to wear a mask. Wearing that mask in your speech, brothers, you are basically saying this: I am trusting me because I want the result I want; therefore, I am going to wear this mask and I am going to avoid the doctrine of election because it might be an offense to people, it might be a stumbling block to people. Well, no kidding! Who wants to hear that they are not the captain of their own soul? That is an offense. It was an offense to me when I heard it because I thought I was the captain of my ship. But I realized that I wasn't.

How about another issue?

Ted: *No, please stop!* {LAUGHTER}

OK, let me put up my mask! {LAUGHTER} Do you feel much better? I'm so glad. I just want to make sure you feel good, Ted.

Let's take another issue that we avoid because we wear our masks, because we do not have confidence in the covenant of grace. We have more confidence in ourselves to get what we want, rather than speaking boldly truth of the Scripture, allowing the Holy Spirit to accomplish what the Father has ordained and the Son accomplished. You see, that is the point of all this. When you wear the mask, you're basically saying that I am trusting me to get what I want. Remember this, when you remove God, who is left? You...me...and that is absolutely nothing. Where does all the glory come from? It doesn't come from my creativity; it comes from the presence of God. That is what you learn from this illustration of Moses.

Let's just take another example. In Romans 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God..." Now what does that imply when you say we now have peace? What does that mean? That previously that you were what? You were at war with God. People do not want to hear that they are at war with God. They say, "I'm not at war with God." "Well, then he is at war with you. You may not think you are at war with Him, but He is sure at war with you." That is an offensive message. Now I'm not saying, guys, that you lead with that. Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm saying that when it comes up in conversation, you do not need to avoid it. You can do it graciously. You can do it without fear because you know this: God always leads in triumph.

We need to help people understand that right now in their sinful condition, they are at war with God. They are God's enemy That's what Romans 5:10 tells us. People will say, "You mean God doesn't love me the way I am?" No, he does not. He does not love you the way you are. If He did, why did He for you? People say, "Well God just accepts me the way I am." I'm sure glad God never accepted me the way I was! Because there was no reason for Him to accept me that way. What He did is he changed me, to make me acceptable by justifying me by grace; by giving me credit for the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and all of His righteousness, which to the Jews, is and offense; and to the Greeks it's foolishness. And to the Americans it is an offense. Because, what do you mean, "I was born in America, I'm an American."

I have to tell you a cute story. When I was visiting one of the Indian reservations, I went to Mt. Rushmore, and I was in the gift shop. I heard this conversation. This guy said, "I want the American version." She said, "Well, sir, that is English." "No, I want American." She said, "Well, we have it in French. We've got it in..." This was a video of the creation of Mt. Rushmore and the four figures and the story of that. He said, "I want the American version." And she kept saying, "Well sir, then you want the English. Here this..." He said, "No, you don't understand, I'm an American. I am an American." I was

with one of my assistants traveling with me. I said, “Excuse me.” I went up to this guy, and I said, “Are you from West Virginia?” {MUCH LAUGHTER} He said, “Yeah, and I am American.” I said, “Thank you sir, I understand why you want that.” {LAUGHTER}

My point is this—you see, we do not need to be fearful in our speech. You do not need to cover things up. So when someone asks you a question about it, just be gracious and make sure that you have your facts biblically correct. You can do that with gentleness, you can do it with grace, you can do it with compassion, and you can teach the wonderful, compassionate, merciful, glorious doctrine of election. You can do it with boldness, without fear. You see, it’s not intensity; it is without fear of not being accepted. That is what it means: without fear of being accepted or rejected. It is when you and I fear being accepted or rejected, what do we do? We put up the mask of beginning to say, “I’m going to change this a little bit so that I am accepted, so that I am respected,” and therefore, we put on the mask. What you are basically saying is this, “It is more important that I trust myself and my abilities than I trust the covenant of grace.” God always leads in triumph. We do not need to do that with our speech.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *Doesn’t Christ accept us just as we are and then changes us into who He wants us to be? [UNCLEAR] just as I am. [UNCLEAR]*

Well, we need...in one sense, He does accept us the way we are in the sense of who we are in all of His creation, but He does not accept us in our sin; He does something to us. We need to help people get off the idea that says, “I’m okay the way I am.” We need to help people realize that you do not lead with the fact that God loves them. That’s one of the consequences that justification does. You experience God’s love. You have to help people understand this—they have to understand, first of all, that God is Holy. That’s where it starts. The gospel starts with the Holiness of God and then it talks about the sinfulness of man. Then you talk about the person and work of Christ, and then you talk about repentance and faith. You lead with the character of God boldly and without fear. Yes, God accepts the way we are in the sense of in our sin He creates us that way, but He does not deal with us according to our sin; He deals with us according to the righteousness of Christ.

We need to help people to understand that transition from, “I’m not OK in my present condition.” You see, the real issue is we have made Christianity a moral philosophy, rather than realizing that the real issue is this—it is the total depravity of man. That’s the issue. When people say, “God accepts me the way I am,” He does not accept you in your total depravity; He changes that through justification by faith alone. We need to explain how that happens. So you are right in the one sense...correctly. He does accept us that way, but He doesn’t...

I have a friend who wrote a song that goes something like this: “God loves you just the way you but not so much to let you stay that way.” God changes us and He does that through the person and work of Christ and the clear biblical message of the gospel of the person and work of Christ. That is where the transformation comes about.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *The difference is that when you come to Christ, it is not something that you have to do to change. He does the changing.*

Amen. You do not change your conduct. He changes that for you. He changes you. That’s what justification does. Remember, “...if while we were God’s enemy...” The thing that really struck me as a teenaged boy, was that when I read that verse, I went to my dad and said, “Dad, am I God’s enemy?” Now I will always appreciate the boldness of my father, because he didn’t say, “Bruce, God loves you

just the way you are.” He said, “Bruce, yes you are His enemy.” My response was, “Well that’s not fair.” No, my response was, “Dad, I do not want to be.” He said, “Let me show you how you can’t be.” You see, that’s boldness. My father could have put up the mask and said, “Son, God just loves you the way you are. You’re a good guy. Look, I’m chairman of the official board of the Methodist Church and mother is a choir director. You’re okay the way you are.” But my dad had the boldness, and he was so very tender and gracious. I’ll never forget it. He came over and put his hand on my shoulder and he said, “Yes, you are His enemy. In your unregenerate state, Bruce, you are the enemy of God.” My response in my heart was just fearful because I said, “I don’t want to be an enemy.” Then he said, “Let’s talk about the rest of the verse.”

Then he began to help me understand the clarity of the gospel of Christ; that God was going to do something in my life when I accepted that by faith and I would be justified and I was no longer His enemy. The next verse he showed me was Romans 5:1. He said, “Bruce, when you are no longer an enemy, you now have peace.

Audience Member: *There is no condemnation.*

Peace. “There’s no condemnation.” (Romans 8) It is a very tender issue. You have to be very, very careful because we do not want to be one-sided; we need to be truthfully-sided. Decide on truth but you can do it with boldness.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *The Father sent Jesus Christ into the world in order to find the lost, and that’s His role. The Father sent Him for that purpose, but then Jesus Christ makes us acceptable. We’re only acceptable **in** Christ Jesus; and it is when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, by faith [UNCLEAR] within our hearts, we are transformed and now we are acceptable unto the Father.*

Yes, we are acceptable **in** Christ, not outside of Christ. That is the thing that we have to realize.

TED: *Just to clarify that, we accept Him because He causes us to accept Him. When you asked that question, you asked that question because God gave you the ability.*

Amen! I had a desire to ask that question.

Ted: *And then God gave you the desire to not be an enemy. He said, “That is not what I want, that is not what I desire...” and, therefore, you were on the road to salvation.*

Amen.

Audience Member: *There is also the shoes of peace in the believer’s armor.*

Excuse me?

Audience Member: *The shoes of peace. You’re at peace with God.*

Yeah, amen. You see, we need to help people recognize this. The only way I can say it is right now they are God’s enemy. I cannot say it any clearer than that because that is what the Scripture says.

BISHOP RODGERS: *If you have a son who is dealing drugs, you love your son, but you’ll hand him over to the authorities that he might be punished.*

Correct.

Bishop Rodgers: *You have to realize that God, there is certain sense in which God can love the sinner, but still be under His wrath and condemnation. I think we sentimentalize, but we don't recognize.*

That's right. We have to be very, very careful that we do not....

DON: *I think the problem is, in many so-called evangelical churches, you get this message...I mean they downplay people being under the wrath of God, that God loves everybody. Well, of course, God loves me and everything like that. That's the problem. I was at a church a few weeks ago that I would consider a mega church and probably "seeker sensitive." Nothing of the wrath of God or anything was preached like that. I think that is the problem in many evangelical churches that may be well-intentioned, but do not present the gospel of fear, like you said, for fear of offending people.*

Let's go to Roman 5 again. The end result of being justified by faith alone is that you understand how God loved you. You understand how He loved you and what it cost Him to love you. So let me just read Romans 5 very quickly, about the first 4 or 5 verses of Romans 5, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith..." that means access; first of all you have peace with God, then you have access to God, "...into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in the hope of the glory of God." The third thing you have is hope in the glory of God.

The first thing you have is peace with God, access to God, hope in the glory of God, and then in verse 3, "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations..." That is where you have confidence in God in the midst of your tribulations, "...knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and 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." The end result of your justification is that you understand the love of God for you. You don't start with the love of God for me, because...you need to understand what is it that God did for you through the person and work of Christ. Now you understand the depths of His love for me. There is a difference in thinking that I am acceptable the way I am. You need to understand justification by faith alone, and then you begin to understand, you come into the understanding of the God's glory; yes, this is what it cost Him to love me. That's where my desire changes.

All I'm saying, guys, is that you can speak with boldness when you talk about these issues with people, but you can do it with grace and you can do it clarity and you can do it with compassion. Paul is saying, "Just don't put the mask up on there and trust yourself to get the response you want." That means the onness is on us to make sure we are teaching biblical truth. It is truth that sets people free. It is our responsibility not to give a quick answer, but really to study, to learn, to get counsel from people on how to handle these issues so that you can make sure when you are put into a position, you can speak without fear. That is the whole thing. You can speak without fear. Do you understand that? Because you are trusting grace. You are trusting the covenant of grace, you are trusting God and not yourself.

What Paul is illustrating here in the life of Moses is when you remove that mask, and you remove the presence of God, all you have left is Moses. And when you remove that mask, all you have from us...we are left by ourselves, trusting ourselves.

The second thing he says, “Not only boldness in our speech, but you’ll see in your notes, openness in our lives.” Verses 13-16. Openness in our lives. How often is it that we will wear a mask when somebody says, “Bruce, how are you doing?” Answer, “Oh, I’m just great, I’m doing fine.” When down deep inside I might just be agonizing over some pain in my life. Now I’m not saying that when somebody walks up to you in the street and says, “How are you today? My name is Joe Smith and I want to get into a relationship with you,” I’m not suggesting that, I’m not saying that you should become ooey, gooey and open yourself up to everybody. But I am saying this, there is a degree of accountability in the Church of Christ, that we do need to hold each other accountable. One of the great protections we have is that you and I were never designed to live the Christian life alone. Sometimes you need to have a close band of brothers; kind of like what we do here for each other in volume. We come together and we try not to wear a mask with each other. All I’m saying is that we need to be open in our lives.

Now our dear brother was just very, very open to us; he exposed himself. Often times we don’t do that. We put up a mask and say, “Everything is okay.” He just said, “You know, I’m managing it, but it is not okay.” Now that is part of the openness that we need to have as brothers in the Kingdom of God to support each other. We now can pray for each other. All I’m trying to say is you do not need to be this way with everybody, but I do think that...Jesus had James, Peter, and John. There were a couple that He went to. I think all of us need to have a couple of men we go to just so you can be open and talk about the tremendous fear that I have of going home tonight and talking about this issue...whatever it may be. Sometimes, we just need the support of each other. What Paul is saying is that there needs to be an openness in our minds with each other as brothers at certain depths of relationship so we can live with the Body of Christ together and protect each other. You do not need to hide behind your mask saying, “I’m okay.”

Let me give you a couple of personal examples in my life. For years people used to come up and say, “Bruce, you look like you are in pain.” And I would say, “No, I’m fine,” as I would move gently back and forth because I didn’t want them to think that I could not manage it. When they said, “You act like you’re in pain,” “What do you mean, don’t you think I can handle this? Aren’t I tough? Can’t I suck it up? Aren’t I strong and encouraging? Don’t I have the strength to do this? What do you mean?” So I would wear the mask and say, “I’m fine,” when down deep I was saying, “Man, it really hurts.”

Now quite honestly, my life since my injuries have been pretty much pain management. On a scale of 5 to 10, my absolute best days are a 5. Now that has been like that for the last 43 years. Now, for the first 30 of those years, “I’m fine,” because I wanted to say, “He’s tough. He can manage it. He’s got strength. Isn’t he spiritual? Look how he is handling this.” You see, it was all about me. It was all about me and how I was perceived. Now when people say, “Bruce, you look like you are in pain.” I say, “Thanks for noticing.” Because I am.

One guy said to me the other day, “You’ve got pain on your face.” I said, “Does my face give you pain?” {LAUGHTER} “or are you seeing my pain on my face?” He said, “No, your face does not give me pain, but you are wearing your pain.” I said, “Yes, I do. I wear my pain on my face, and you can tell.” If you look at my face you can see if I’m in pain. All you have to do is to look at it.

I’ve kind of had to set myself free from that years ago because I realized what I was doing was just putting up a mask that said, “Look it is about me because I want you to understand this: Yeah, I went through hell with those injuries, but I can handle it because I’m tough. I can do the extra pushup.” You see, my whole life, athletically, was this— do one more pushup because I thought this, “I can make the difference.” And I didn’t realize...when I began to realize this, that I can make no difference in any

situation at all. I cannot make a difference in any situation at all. When I realized that, the mask came down because then it was not trusting me and what I thought I should be doing, but trusting the covenant of grace and what God said He would do because God always, always, always leads in triumph.

TED: *Otherwise, it is Bruce always leads in triumph.*

Absolutely. It's all about me. See, for years, that was my life. It is all about me and the image I wanted to project of being a tough guy who could handle it. When I began to tear that down is when I began to realize the difference between wearing the mask and not wearing the mask.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *How do you boldly [UNCLEAR] of the world...how do we boldly keep the mask off in our work place [UNCLEAR].*

That is a great question—and I'm not sure I have an answer for everybody—But I would think, to some degree, of male accountability with each other; some degree of male accountability. In other words, one of the great pieces of advice my dad gave me before I went to Vietnam and when I became a mid-shipment at the Naval Academy was this. Bishop Rodgers, if you remember there is a white line and if you step across that you are no longer a civilian, but you are a mid-shipman. Just before I stepped across that white line, I said to my dad, "Dad, what is your last piece of advice?" He said this, "Wherever you go son, ask the Lord to give you one brother to hold your spiritually accountable." So I stepped across the line and that was the first thing I said, "Lord, just give me one brother to hold me accountable." There is a whole story to that.

I think that is part of the solution. Just ask the Lord to give you somebody to hold you accountable so that you do not have to wear the mask. I have a couple of brothers in my life and we talk about the failures we have about getting older, the things that don't work anymore that used to work. {LAUGHTER} I don't talk about that with everybody, least of all with Becky. {LAUGHTER} But there is nothing wrong with talking about it with somebody where I can take the mask off and just be open, and we can talk about that and realize celebrate that, celebrate getting older; celebrate our age and the grace of God that we have experienced.

All I'm suggesting is...I would think just some degree of accountability. Ask the Lord to give you somebody to hold you accountable so that you can pull that mask off. When you learn to do it with somebody you can trust, then it becomes easier in the vine of other people you relate with. I think accountability is part of that. Great question. Yes, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *To just capsulize on that, that is why the Lord's Prayer says, "Our Father" we come together to seek...*

Yes. Not *my* Father, it is *our* Father. Amen.

Well brothers, just in summary...when you wear the mask you in your speech or not being open in your life, you are basically putting the mask on and saying, "It is all about me. It's all about me and how I want to be perceived." When the mask comes off, remember all the glory is because of God and not because of us.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the illustration in life of our brother, Moses. There is much we can learn from our great historical, biblical brothers. We pray, Lord, that you would help us to be bold in our

speech. Give us the grace to accompany the truth. May we speak with grace and truth, and may we find somebody in our life with whom we can be open so that we do not wear the mask of making life all about us, when really it is about you and your glory. May we understand this: that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not about us; it is about you, it is about the glory of God and the face of Jesus Christ. May it be so that we will speak boldly when you give us opportunity for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said... amen!!!