

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Taught by Bruce Bickel
Session: Union With Christ, Part 8
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Remember the phrase “Union with Christ” is a description of the multiple relationships that we have with the personal work of Jesus Christ our Lord that allows us to have the rights to and the privileges of all the eternal blessings that He gives us. In other words, it is because of the salvation that He accomplished that you and I have all the blessings. We have been examining that.

Today we want to take the “one another” aspect of it, and that is all of our actions can be done in Christ. The big phrase that we are looking at in the last several months is this phrase **in** Christ. What does it mean to be **in** Christ? Every action in our lives can be done **in** Christ, we are told in the Scripture, if they are done by faith in the power of His Kingdom and for His glory. So with that in mind, let’s ask the Lord to be our Teacher. Would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, we want to sit at Your feet again this day trusting Your Holy Spirit to be our Guide, to be our Paraclete, to be our Counselor, to be our Friend, but most of all to be our Teacher and Instructor. We pray that He would fulfill His job description of guiding us into all truth, and that You would be pleased to not necessarily to give us answers but to give us hope; hope in the personal work of Jesus Christ our Lord in Whose name we pray. Amen.

I call your attention to a particular verse, Philippians 4:13. It may be familiar with many of you. Paul writes, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” In other words, there is a dynamic that occurs because we are in a shared life experience.

Hold your finger there and go to 2nd Corinthians 4:7. This is one of the best descriptions of what a Christian is. Paul writes, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.” The NIV says something very similar, “...to show that the all surpassing power comes from God and not from us.” That is what Paul is talking about and because of our union **with** Christ, we are in a shared life experience. Notice that Paul writes, “...we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” The treasure is the message of the gospel of the personal work of Christ and the shared life experience that we have.

One of the definitions of a description biblically, when we talk about the phrase **in** Christ is, that a Christian is somebody who shares the life of God. We are in a shared life experience. It is because of that experience that you and I understand that we can do all things **in** Christ and, consequently, Paul says, that he “can do all things in Christ” because of this union **with** Him.

Look at the remaining verses. If you want a description of what I would call normal Christian living, let’s look at the rest of 2nd Corinthians 4:7. It starts off that we have “...this treasured earthen vessel so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;...” In other words, God just wants to put His life on display, and He does that through His grace. You can use the acrostic grace, GRACE, “Gods Resources At Christ’s Expense.”

What we're talking about now, when Paul says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me..." he is talking about the source of his resources. He's saying the resources for my life are really not my own anymore because I died with Christ, I was resurrected with Christ, I now live **in** Christ, and He lives **in** me and because of this union of being **in** Christ, I now have the strength of God sharing His life with me through the work of the Holy Spirit. He says the real issue here is that God just wants to put His life on display through His grace. Let's read the rest of this because here is normal Christian living. Here is the way in which God does that... beginning at verse 8, "...we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not despairing persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed..." Now notice this, those are normal descriptions of normal Christian living. You and I are going to go through the same hassles as everybody else goes through in life. That is a description of the normalcy of Christian living. The key word there, is the word "but." Notice the contrast "...afflicted in every way **but** not crushed; perplexed..." (did you ever get perplexed in life? Absolutely we do, **but** you don't get to the point of despair.) Now what is the reason for the "but?" The reason for the "but" is your union **with** Christ, you are **in** Christ and you have the resources of His life, which are His grace, which is God's resources at Christ's expense. What Paul is teaching us is that you do not need to have the resources of your own life to live the Christian life because God gives you His grace. His grace is sufficient whenever you need it.

Let's read on...now notice the contrast as we get down to verse 10, "...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus," (that is part of our union **with** Christ because we are **in** Christ and Christ is **in** us; and there is a point that every time we go through the normal hassles and difficulties of life, we die a little bit...it takes its toll on us physically, there is some damage done to us but notice...) "...so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." In other words as you and I go through the normal hassles of life, yes, it has its toll on us, we die a little bit because we are **in** Christ, we die a little bit but what happens is what comes out of us is the power of the life of Christ...the resources of His life. You can see from this passage that what God really wants to do in the normal situations of life is just put His life on display.

Look at verse 11: "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." The second time He says the same thing. God just wants to put His life on display. How does He do that? He does that when you and I walk by faith and realize that "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." That is what Paul is saying. That's why we say that all of actions can be done **in** Christ when they are done by faith for His glory and for His Kingdom.

Then we read verse 12: "So death works in us, but life works in you." See brothers because of God's grace, that is the means by which He just wants to put His life on display; and He is going to do that through guys like you and me who go through the normal hassles of life and our response is different than the rest of the world because of God's resources at Christ's expense, because of His grace.

We're talking here about resources. Where do the resources come to have the right response? You don't have to depend upon yourself anymore. You and I go through situations in life that are very, very difficult and very painful, very harmful, very hurtful; but why is it that you and I have a different response than the rest of the world? It's because of our union **with** Christ. You and I have resources that the normal people do not. We need to walk by faith and have those resources.

Let me take you to another verse. Go to 2nd Corinthians 12:9. Here is the way that Paul says it, "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weaknesses.' Most gladly, therefore, I will

rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” You see, what is the emphasis? The emphasis, he is saying, is this: I know that God’s grace is sufficient...it is not about me and my resources but it is about Him and His resources. It is about God’s resources at Christ’s expense. Brothers, we need to understand something dis-logically. Grace is applicable at the moment of application not contemplation. You do not need grace when you are sitting here worrying about it...”I wonder what is going to happen tomorrow when I go into that meeting?” You don’t need God’s grace right now when you’re worrying about it; often times we create our own situations of worry, stress, and anxiety because we are thinking, “I wonder what I will do tomorrow when at 10:00 that meeting occurs, what am I going to do?” We conjure up all kind of what-ifs, how-comes, and why-fors. We play the “what if” game. What if she does this, or what if he does that? What if this doesn’t happen, what if it does happen? We sit here and we fester these ideas and what Paul is saying is, “Look, God is going to give you the grace because you are **in** Christ.” You are **in** Christ and you have all the resources at my expense, He says. You are going to get My grace at the moment of the need of application...it is when you need it that you are going to get it and not the moment of contemplation. See the difference? You are going to get it when? Tomorrow at 10:00...that is when you need it. You and I walk by faith between now and 10:00...certainly we walk by faith and reminding ourselves to trust His grace. But that is why Paul says that all the things that you and I do **in** Christ can be done **in** Christ when we are trusting Him and walking by faith. In other words, the Holy Spirit is standing by.

Look at 2nd Timothy 4:17. “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the gentiles, might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.” You see, it was at the moment of application that God gave Paul the grace to do what he needed to do. That’s the principle for us to understand in this. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” You do not necessarily need that strengthening right now, you need it at 10:00 tomorrow morning and that is when you are going to get it. That is what it means to walk by faith and to trust in His resources. God’s resources at Christ’s expense.

How about another verse to help us understand this? Let’s go to 1st Timothy 1:12. “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service.” Why is it that God considered Paul faithful?” It is the same reason He considers you faithful’ and that is what? You are **in** Christ. That is the reason He considers you faithful; not because of what you have done, what you are going to do what you think you ought to do. It is because of this union **with** Christ. He views you as being **in** Christ, therefore, He views you as what? Faithful. Why is it that He views you as faithful? Because Christ Jesus was faithful and you get credit for everything Jesus did because you are **in** Christ. Do you understand that? You see it is not about you, guys, it is not about me. It is about the fact that He views us so radically different; He views us as no longer in Adam, He views us **in** Christ and that the reason He considers you faithful and the reason He puts you into service is because you are **in** Christ. If you are not **in** Christ, then it is up to you. You have to earn that and you will be up and you will be down, but that is not what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, look... everything I can do I can do it **in** Christ when I do it by faith.

Definition of faith for an acrostic might be...just as grace is God’s resources at Christ’s expense...I would say faith would be this: forsaking all I trust Him. Forsaking all I trust Him. Now that doesn’t mean that you don’t work your tail off; I’m not suggesting that at all. It does not mean to be irresponsible. I’m not saying let go and let God, I’m not saying that. But what I am saying is this: when it comes time to trust the resources for me to have an aggressive response that honors God, I have to trust His resources and not mine. I need to forsake myself.

Notice what Paul says again in 1st Timothy 1:12. “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service.” Why is it that you and I have the privilege of serving the Lord and trying to build His Kingdom? It is because of one thought: I am **in** Christ. You see that is the key consideration that we need to talk about this morning as we talk about God’s grace. It is because you are **in** Christ. The Holy Spirit was given us to be the source of our power, the source of our counseling, to be our Paraclete, the one who comes along side of us—that at that moment of application is when you are going to need God’s grace.

We construct an awful lot of worrying because we have the fear of the unknown and that is what causes so much worrying of people in anxiety. Just the fear of the unknown. That is a normal response. But we do not have to fear the unknown because we know this: when the unknown comes, what are we going to get? Grace. Why is that? Because God views you as faithful; therefore, He sets you into His service. Do you see how this works? It is not really about us. That is why Paul says, “I want to boast in my weakness.” When I held elder training in churches and when I had the three year elder training program in my own couple of churches that I served as senior pastor, we had a three year elder training program for men who desired the office.

There are 28 qualifications for an elder. One of them is this: I just desire the office. Now if you don’t desire the office, then you are not qualified. Has God given you a desire to hold that office? Well, then let’s go through this three year training program to help you understand what it means to be an elder. So we went through that. One of the things when I announced this was, “The number one qualification for an elder is weakness.” Weakness. Because I want men who understand this: it is not about me...I’m weak...but my strength is going to be in His grace. Because when you are weak, you are going to be on your knees and you are going to be praying. You are going to be seeking the Holy Spirit guidance and you are going to walk by faith and trusting in His grace. See the number one qualification for an elder is weakness. That does not mean that you sit back and do nothing. What I’m saying is that you recognize this: that God has viewed you as faithful and He has equipped you; therefore, you are trusting His resources and not your own resources. It is not about who you are and what you do, and what you have done; it is about the attitude of the heart that says in my weakness I can accomplish everything because I am **in** Christ and He strengthens me. Where does this put the emphasis on your decision-making? It is upon the grace of God and not upon our experience from our life in the corporate America.

You don’t pick elders because they are leaders in corporate America. You pick them because they are weak... they are weak in understanding the resources of their own life. My resources are weak compared to this job description. There is no way I can fulfill that by itself in my own strength...I’ve got to be on my knees, I’ve got to be trusting Him, I’ve got to be forsaking all of my own resources and trusting Him...because the demand of an elder of a church is so high that I cannot do that in my own strength. But I know this: “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.” The key there is **in** Christ. The key is **in** Christ. It is not your abilities; it is the ability to forsake all and trust Him and have Him to be the resources of your life.

Go to Philippians. We’re back at Philippians again. I want to show you why Paul says this. He says in Philippians 4:14, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Now go to Philippians 3:9. This is why Paul can say that...well let’s go to verse 8...well let’s go to verse 1...{LAUGHTER}...I’ll tell you what... let’s go to Genesis 1:1 {LAUGHTER}.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *The greatest verse in the Bible.*

That's right, it is. Amen to that. If you don't understand Genesis 1:1, nothing else makes any sense. I'm filling in at a church next week and the secretary of the pastor called and said, "Dr. Bickel, we would like to have your text and your sermon title, what's it going to be? What are you going to talk about?" I said, "the title is going to be God." She said, "Do you have a text?" I said yes, "Genesis 1 through Revelation." [LAUGHTER]. She's writing this down and she said "Could you be a bit more specific?" {MUCH LAUGHTER}.

Anyway, go to Philippians 3:9. Now here is why Paul can say Philippians 4:13. He can say, "...all things I can do in Christ because He strengthens me..." and here is the reason why Paul can say that. Start at Philippians 3:8. "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him..." See, you have to give up to gain' there are certain things you have to give up to gain. "...so that I may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law..." In other words his personal obedience. "...but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,..." "Forsaking all, I trust Him." That is why Paul can say such a powerful statement that is such a wonderful summary of the statement, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." He does that because of Chapter 3: 8-9.

Take a look at this, there is a great description of contentment in Chapter 3:8-9. Definition of contentment...of course Paul writes to Timothy and says to be content with food and clothing...that's contentment. Do you realize anything about food and clothing is a gift, not a right? Your job is not a right, it is a gift. Your car is not a right, it is a gift. Your children are not a right, they are a gift. Food and clothing...I'll be content. Can America be content with just food and clothing? We have no concept of contentment in our country, do we? Because our great cancer is greed. We want more, we think contentment is more. Paul is saying this, "No, contentment is understanding what it means to be in Christ." And notice how he says this in verse 9, "...and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own Law..." In other words, it is derived by my works. My contentment is not derived by my works. It is not by what I do. My contentment is not because the world says you are doing such a great job. It is not about me and what I do, it is about Him and what He gives. So the first thing about contentment is that we see it is not merited by works.

Secondly, we see it is appropriated by faith. "...may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith..." Your righteousness comes through faith, justified by faith alone. Remember, justification is receiving credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ; therefore, since we have been justified by faith alone we have peace with God, access to God, hope in God, confidence in God, and understand the love of God. Because of this: because righteousness comes by faith not by works. So here we are describing a very good definition of contentment; it is not merited by works, it is appropriated by faith; notice where it comes from...it comes from God. "Not having a righteousness of my own derived through the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." Notice, the whole issue here in verse 10, here is your consequence, the cause and effect "...that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;..." In other words, the whole concept of contentment leads to us having a greater knowledge of God and entering into the fellowship of His suffering. So here is in our definition of contentment and the reason Paul can say, "...contentment is understanding that all of my works can be done in Christ Jesus through faith" is because that when you are in Christ you have a righteousness that is not of your own. You don't earn it.

Go to 1st Corinthians 1:30. It is a wonderful summary verse of the whole concept of what it means to be in Christ. “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus,...” (union with Christ) “who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...” Notice it is because of the relationship and union with Christ that you are wise, that you are righteousness, that you are sanctified, and that you are redeemed. That all comes from God, you see, Brothers. That is not something that you and I earn; it is something that God gives us. That is why Paul, with confidence, can say, “...it is really not all about me. If I’m going to boast about anything, I’m going to boast about how weak I am because I really cannot fulfill what God has asked me to do. That is why I have to trust His righteousness, His wisdom, His sanctification, and His redemption...so that I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.”

This is not easy, Brothers. This is just not some: think right, act right...we are not talking about something that...what is the phrase...positive mental thinking? This is not positive mental thinking, we are talking about transformation. There is a difference between positive mental attitude (“PMA”) and transformation. Transformation changes you from the inside out because of God’s grace and the response then is how we act. Notice the four things. This is the description of who you are if you are **in** Christ, in verse 1:30. You are wise, you have all the wisdom that you will ever need to confront anything that you have ever had to deal with because you are not the source of it. Yet you and I sit here and worry about all the things that I am going to have to do because I don’t have the wisdom to do it and yet he says that because you are **in** Christ, you have wisdom from God. This is what God is saying about you right now, “You have my wisdom.”

I have a young friend who is going through a very, very difficult time with her teenage son. It’s really quite difficult and they have called me for some advice, which I have no knowledge of. All I can do is listen and I just let them talk. They are their best counselors because they are counseling themselves when they talk. My role was just to “ummh, I see, that’s a good point, I understand” because they are talking themselves, they are counseling themselves. And I showed them this verse. I said to them, “I want you to know this, I do not have any answers for you, and I’m sorry. If you are coming to me for answers, I’m just not your guy. I don’t have answers for that. But I do know this. You are **in** Christ, therefore, you have all the wisdom of God that you will ever need. Because He is the source of it, not you. So the next time that happens with your teenage son that you do not know what to do, don’t run to the latest book, just say, “Lord give me the wisdom that I know that I have because I am **in** Christ. Would you give me the wisdom to know how to respond?” So we just talked about that. The Scripture says, if you seek wisdom, ask for it...God wants to give it to you. You have wisdom. This is who you are; you have all the wisdom you’ll ever need...you don’t need it right now, you need it tomorrow at 10:00. That is when grace is applied to you. Grace is available at the moment of application and not contemplation. So we hung up the phone and I thought, Lord forgive me if I just was no encouragement to them at all; override what I did if I was not an encouragement to their hearts, then just wipe it out of their minds...because in my weakness I can’t give them any answers.

She called me about two days later and said, “I want to tell you something that happened with my son. I got to thinking about what it meant to be **in** Christ and who God says I am at the moment of my difficulty...that I have His wisdom from God and I just said, Lord give me an aggressive response to respond to what You are doing right now. Give me Your wisdom.” She said she did something that was radically different than anything she had ever done with her son. She said they sat down and had a three hour conversation.” She said, “He had not spoken to me in three weeks. And something happened and he just listened and we just sat there and talked for three hours.” I was just blown away and I said, “That is absolutely terrific.” I had never thought of that. But you see, I was not the one who needed the wisdom of God and the grace of God at the moment of application, I was not the one who needed it. I didn’t need it to give her counsel, I just needed to take her to the Scripture and

say, “Look this is who God says you are.” You’ve got all the wisdom of God that you are ever going to need. That doesn’t mean you are ever going to be perfect. It doesn’t mean you are ever going to do everything right. It does mean this, you can be content to know this: I am **in** Christ and I have His resources...this is who He says I am...I have all of His wisdom. He also says you have all the righteousness of Christ. You gain wisdom from God and righteousness. The word righteousness means right-wise-ness. It means the ability to make the right decision. Because of the wisdom of God, you have the ability to make the right decision biblically. The world might not say it is the right decision, or the counselor might not say it is the right decision—whatever that may be; all I’m saying is you have the ability now to make decisions differently than you did before because you are **in** Christ, and you have the wisdom of God, and He is not only your wisdom but He is also your righteousness and He is your ability to make the right decision.

Next, He is your sanctification. You are sanctified. You have been set apart for service, we just read that. Why is that you have been set apart for service? Because He views you as faithful because you are **in** Christ. The only reason that you and I are permitted to be in any type of ministry is that God views you as faithful, not because you and I earn that faithfulness title but because He views you as being **in** Christ. The way that God treats you and the way that He treats me is based upon one central thought—He views you as being **in** Christ. He views you as **in** Christ. When did that start? Before the foundation of the world and His electing love. He chose us **in** Him before the foundation of the world to be Holy and blameless. When did this begin? In the counsels of God’s will and the purpose of His own heart. He has viewed you as only one way—He has viewed you only as being **in** Christ, from the inception of His mind about you when He knew that later on you would be born, He viewed you as being **in** Christ. That works itself out in our salvation, but He views you now as being **in** Christ and that is why He says, “I view you as faithful and I’m going to set you apart for service.” He is your sanctification. Sanctification is not something you do; sanctification is something that you are. You are sanctified because you were chosen before the foundation of the world to live a life that is Holy and blameless. Your sanctification starts in God’s mind and counsel of His own will and not in the conduct of your life. You and I express that sanctification by our obedience.

For we do not make ourselves more sanctified. He says, “You **are** sanctified.” That is why that little card we have, “Ministry is who we are, where we are.” Why is that? It is because you are sanctified, because you are **in** Christ. See that? You just go and express your sanctification. That is why ministry is where you are, based upon who you are.

I think I told you this, recently I had a friend mine in church come up to me and said, “Bruce, have you ever thought about going to the missionary field?” {LAUGHTER}. I said, “I beg your pardon?” She said, “Have you ever thought about being a missionary?” I said, “Well, where do you think I’ve been the last 25 years?” She said, “Well, you have just been at PNC.” {LAUGHTER}. I said, “Well, I happen to be in the most difficult third world spiritual country in the world.” {LAUGHTER}. Talk about difficulty. The nice thing about going...she said, “I mean have you ever thought about going to Africa? Did you ever want to go to Africa to be a missionary?” I said, “No, that’s too easy.” {LAUGHTER}. Because they **want** to listen, where I go people do not want to listen. There is a huge difference. People don’t want to listen where I work. But when you are a missionary in the foreign field, there are certain people who want to listen because God has raised them up to be a part of the elect who will want to listen. Now, I’m sure that some of those at PNC... perhaps, maybe {LAUGHTER}. The point is this. We had this idea that missionary work is something that I do. Brothers, missionary work is someone that you are. Do you understand that? That is because He views you as faithful and puts you into service and your ministry is who you are and where you are. Wherever you go, you are in ministry, because He views you as faithful and sets you apart because you are **in** Christ and, therefore, we

forsake all and trust His resources and we trust God's grace and His resources at Christ's expense. So we see this wonderful definition of contentment in Philippians 3:9.

Let me give you a few other things that we can do **in** Christ. In other words, all of our actions can be done **in** Christ. Just some examples here; go to Ephesians 6:1. Here are some other things that can be done **in** Christ; I'll just give you a list of other things that the Scripture says that can be done **in** Christ. Paul says that "...all things can be done **in** Christ who strengthens me..." That is the totality of your life.

Let me give you some specifics. It is in the Lord that children are to obey their parents. Ephesians 6:1. "Children obey your parents in the Lord..." You do not obey your parents in your own strength; you obey your parents **in** the Lord. In other words, He is the resource of your obedience. Everyone of these little phrases means, He is the resources of the obedience and not yourself. The little teenage boy does not think in his mind, "Oh I have to be obedient to Mom and Dad..." What I'm trying to help you understand is this: when you become **in** Christ, you are going to have the resources to obey your parents because He is going to give you that grace at the moment you need to do it. Right now, you are on your own and until that changes, I cannot offer you anything. All I can offer you is what it means to be **in** Christ. See, the reason kids obey their parents is because it is done **in** the Lord; that is the resources to be obedient. Have we taught our kids that? Do we teach them that? We just say, be obedient. That is what the Scripture says, "Obey me." We have to give them a reason, give them a hope, give them a resource. Help them to understand what it means to be **in** Christ as a teenager, so that when that moment of grace is needed, they can be obedient to their parents even when they fight them. So you can be obedient to your parents **in** the Lord.

Another one, wives submit to their husbands **in** the Lord. Look at Colossians 3:18. "Wives, be subject to your husbands" according to society, according to my denominational standard...NO, it says, "Wives be subject to your husbands as is fitting **in** the Lord." What gives a woman the grace to be submitting to her husband, regardless of what American culture says? They are **in** Christ. If they are **in** Christ, it can be done; apart from Christ they're lost. Why do you think marriage is in such shambles today? Because we have many marriages who think that they are **in** Christ and they may not be. They are not relying upon the resources of God's grace. The reason a woman can be submissive is because it is done **in** Christ. That is what Paul is saying when he says, "In all things can be done in Christ, because He strengthens me." One of those is for wives. She can be submissive and do it graciously because she knows this: He is the reason that I can do it, He is the resource of my submission...not myself.

How about another one, all believers are to be strong. Look at Ephesians 6:10. We are just trying to highlight some verses that show you the totality of what Paul says in Philippians 4:13 that "All things can be done **in** Christ." How about 6:10 of Ephesians. "Finally, be strong in the Lord" in the strength of your experience, training, and obedience...it doesn't say that does it? It says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." That is what Paul is saying in Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me..." when we do it by faith. Forsaking all, I trust Him.

How about rejoicing? Go to Philippians 2:1-2. Do you have a tough time rejoicing? "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Here is how we can just be encouraged, if there is any encouragement... where does your encouragement come from? Do you look to the world for that? You might get some, you might get some affirmation. But when we talk about encouragement...the word encouragement means to edify

or to build up. Where are you really going to get it built up in this world? Paul says it is because you are **in** Christ. See that? “Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ...” Let Christ be the source of your encouragement. That is what I tried to show these parents. I can’t give you encouragement. All I can say is go to Christ and let Him be source of your encouragement. That is the role of the Holy Spirit. He’ll do that for you.

You have to walk by faith. That is why we do not walk by sight, but we walk by faith.

How about living a Godly life. 2nd Timothy 3:12. “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” What gives you the grace to live a Godly life? It is the fact that you are **in** Christ. He is the resources of all of our responses. That is why you and I can be an aggressive responder to what we see God doing around us. I’ll give you a couple more.

How about having good behavior...just generally good behavior. These are all just expressions of what Paul is saying in Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things...” I’m just trying to give you a list of some of the “all things.”

Let’s go to 1st Peter 3:16. “...and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.” Good behavior. Can we just be decent, good behaving people? Absolutely, because you are **in** Christ. Now the world may revile that, that world may slander you for that, but let them do that. You and I can just have the grace to live a decent, good life. Good behavior. It is one of the things you can do **in** Christ. So when things are difficult around you, remind yourself of this: I just need to be a man of good behavior. Good behavior. It is a wonderful little encouraging verse. 1st Peter 3:16. “...and keep a good conscience so that in a thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ...” Where is your behavior done? It is in the strength of your relationship to Christ. It is not the resources of your own life, He is the resources. “...in Christ will be put to shame.” And one more.

We’ve talked about this before. Go to John 15:5. We can actually abide in Him. “I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit for apart from Me you can do nothing.” Do you really believe that? Do you really believe that you can absolutely do nothing apart from being **in** Christ? That’s what he’s saying. That means when I tied my shoes today, I did that **in** Christ, because if He had not given me life, I could not have tied my shoes. Right? I cannot tie my shoes apart from Christ because He has given me life for another day. You cannot drive your car without being **in** Christ, because He gives you life for another day. Do you see how we need to look at things?

Now what does this do for us, when you look at this fact that you have all the resources of Christ’s life? It ought to produce in our hearts, I think Brothers, not a sense of pride or ego, but a sense of humility and gratitude; because as we look at the Scriptures, we have just seen that which is perfect and realizing that I cannot get it. I cannot achieve it. I see that which is perfect in the Scripture, to walk by faith in the totality of my life and I cannot do that every time. That is humility. I see what is perfect and realize I cannot achieve it; Therefore, I forsake all and I trust Him.

The second thing is gratitude. We are motivated not by guilt but by gratitude. Why have You been so gracious to me? To help me understand this: that today “I can do all things **in** Christ Jesus who strengthens me.” I am just so grateful that I do not have to go through life relying upon my own strength. I can no rely on the personal work of Christ and the fact that before eternity, before the foundation of the world, Lord you began to view me in one way only, “I view you, Bruce, as **in** Christ, and today I view you as **in** Christ.” How can that not change

your life, when you realize that He has never thought of you apart from this phrase: **in** Christ. He has never thought of you any other way. It has just worked itself out in the timing of His own life because what God ordained, the Son accomplished, the Holy Spirit applied. That is our pilgrimage and it started in the heart of God. Do I understand this? No. I trust it but I do not fully grasp it, and I never will until I stand with Him in glory and I see Him face to face and realize that whole wonderful process is beginning to conform us to the image of Christ.

Brothers, we ought to be the most gratefully, motivated people in the world because we understand this: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens **me**.”

Let's pray.

Lord, we attempted to really explore Your heart. Forgive us for our ineptitude and our inability to do so. Father, just help us through the Holy Spirit understand what you have taught us today. If we have said anything that is inconsistent with the revelation of Your Word, the character, nature, or Your personal attributes, would you remove those from us so that only those things that are consistent with Who You are will be the things that will change us and transform our lives. Father, help us realize that we do not have to live life in our own strength, that we can actually, because we are **in** Christ, we can do all things, whatever that may be, the known and the unknown, we can all do them **in** Christ Who will strengthen us. And may it be so that we have a heart of gratitude and humility. And all the Brave Men said, Amen.