

**TRIUMPHANT LIVING**  
**Taught by the Rev. Ted Wood**  
*“Motivated by Gratitude”*  
**December 6, 2013**

Lord, God, You confound the proud in the imaginations of their hearts; therefore, give us the Light of Life that our eyes may be opened and that we may not be proud but transformed from one degree of glory to another through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bruce asked me to speak about gratitude because this was part of his series on The Power of God and I think in preparing for this lesson, and I'm just going to plow through these scriptures as that is the way I normally do it, I read one of the transcripts that Sig had just sent me, one from September, and I'm reading that transcript and I'm saying, "This is unbelievably good teaching."

The teaching that we are getting is just steps above what one normally hears. That is not to be critical of what one normally hears but I was just struck by it as I read it and thought this is just amazing stuff that I'm reading and that Bruce is sharing. So I have been thinking about that and asking myself, what is the difference because we say, if you go to a church that preaches the gospel and I promise you, I've said this before, there is not a very liberal church that would not say they preach the gospel.

That is almost a meaningless statement. After you get saved people will say, "Be sure you go to a church that preaches the gospel." If you asked, "Pastor to you preach the gospel here, he would say yes." He may be Satanism but he would say, "Yes, I preach the gospel. So, that is a meaningless statement.

So I have tried to get my hands around what is the issue, and here it is I think...I've given it under the two kinds of teaching in the churches...this is unrelated to the subject in part because I just was struck as I listened to Bruce teach.

The two kinds of teaching in churches...that which begins with the character of God, that is Who He is; and moves to who man is and what he needs. One teaching that begins with the character of God and Who He is and then moves to man. The other begins with man's needs and moves to God as the One Who meets man's needs.

I think there are variations of this...those are kind of two polar sides of the question...but the issue is you are going to start at one of those two ends. As you are hearing the teaching, you need to think about where is this starting? Is this starting with God and Who He is, or man and what he needs? I will tell you the churches that preach or begins with man and what he needs will always have more people in attendance. I've heard, "Why can't we get a church like them, they get 3,000?" Well what is the message? Look at the Sermon series...is it about victorious Christian living? Well, that is about your victorious Christian living, isn't it? Or how to be a more effective husband, or a boss, or a worker, or how to have joy in life, or how do you deal with confusion?

I was watching Christian TV the other night and they were advertising a book and every one of the issues had to do with my needs, "Forty Answers to Questions About Life." Every one of them had to do with your needs. That will always draw the crowd. Do you know what people will do? They will not be turned off by the teaching that begins with God, they will just find it irrelevant: "I like Bruce's teaching, it's OK, but I just don't

know if I want to get up a 6:00...” There is nothing compelling about it for them. If you want to start off with God and you find the solution in every issue in Who He is, then you are going to come here because this is where you are going to get it. I was just struck by the power of his message, and the difference.

When Bruce talked about when you are discouraged to think about the power of God, His sovereign power, His ruling power in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:13-15. In verse 13 he talked faith keeps us from fainting and then in verse 14 he talks about the resurrection keeps us from sinking, and then gratitude keeps us from griping. He asked me to speak about gratitude. When I went to do a word study and that is always where I begin, I went to a word study and I go to the concordance and see what the Bible says. The word “gratitude” is not very often used in the Bible...I think I only found two references to it in the scripture. It is really more of a modern word. Perhaps a better word would be “thanks” or “thanks giving.” So that is what I concentrated on and I found in the ESV, in the source I used for looking up verses, I found 146 verses that dealt with that. I went through each one of them and tried to categorize them as the different reasons for giving thanks to God.

The whole heading for this might be “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:18: “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God...” Well, it is God’s will for you to give thanks, it is God’s will for you to have gratitude; but what are we supposed to have gratitude for? What are you thankful for? The habit at Thanksgiving time is to have everyone...you sit at the table and you are not too sure who are the believers and who are not and all this kind of stuff, and you kind of have a meeting at that Thanksgiving meal where we all can say something that sounds a little more spiritual and we might say, “Now let’s all go around and share what we are thankful for” and they go around the circle and they talk about what they are thankful for.

But I would like to play that game here and I would like to ask you what you are thankful for, what do you have gratitude for, what is the gratitude directed toward? What do you thankful for? If you would just like to shout it out...what do you think?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *John 3:16.*

So you are thankful for....your salvation.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Ephesians 1, He chose us...*

He chose us; OK...this is a bad group because this group has already been prepped. {LAUGHTER} Salvation, election, and what else are you thankful for?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *The Body of Christ...*

OK, the Body of Christ. That is the 3<sup>rd</sup> thing.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Well, I’ll be honest, I’m thankful for my wife and for my children and for my grandchildren...*

Oh guys, lighten up, you’re very spiritual. {LAUGHTER} [UNCLEAR] some session with you to bring you a little higher. {LAUGHTER} Your wife, your children and your grandchildren. I’m thankful for those as well, right, even when I’m not... {LAUGHTER}

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Genesis 1:1...."in the beginning, God...*

Yes, right, OK.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I'm thankful to God for Who He is...*

Thankful to God for Who He is....yes.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *God's faithfulness...*

God's faithfulness, what else?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *God's patience...*

I was expecting a more carnal answer to this. {LAUGHTER} I was expecting something like, "I'm very thankful for my job, that I have a job." And I'm telling you something, if you were without work and the minute you go for that last interview and they call you up and they say, "We want you to come aboard," you are going to be thankful out of your skin. You are going to go, "Thank you Jesus, Thank You, Thank You." That is fine. We are thankful for the work, thankful for our families, we're thankful that we have the income that we can do what we want to do. Things of that sort. If you look at the scriptures, you really do not find any of those things in scripture. So you folks have ruined the study because... {MUCH LAUGHTER}

Help me out, Sig, give me something carnal, please. {MUCH LAUGHTER}

**SIG:** *At our Thanksgiving table and I was at my cousin's house and her kids are there, my son and wife were there...my cousin is divorced and she had another divorced woman there with her two kids, and I was like the only man in the room other than my son and these younger boys. She had us go around the table and say what we're thankful for and I always get a little lump in my throat saying this is a chance to share about Christ. How can I really say anything else? But everybody said they were thankful for a person and that was universal..."I'm thankful for my dad, I'm thankful for my kids, for this or that and that was it. The tongue was set from the first person and everybody had to be thankful for a person. I understand that, if you do not have a relationship with Christ what else would you be thankful for? No one mentioned their job or the fact that they needed more money this year than last year, or whatever, it was usually someone in the room....If I didn't say I was thankful for my wife and my son, .....{LAUGHTER} [UNCLEAR]*

Sig, if you were thinking about being thankful for a person, you could have said, "I'm thankful for Jesus." And then everyone would have gone, "Ya, that's right..."

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I have one more that is carnal I guess. If somebody says, "What are you really thankful for spiritually?" I would have to add to any list, I would have to say, "I'm thankful for Bruce Bickel whose 14 or 15 years of telling us about the attributes of God to the men in this room. It is one of the greatest spiritual experiences I have had in my lifetime.*

Yes, me too, it has been extraordinary. I wonder why I stayed away for so long. I thought, OK, several years ago, they were teaching on the Attributes of God and I said, "Boy that has got to be a boring subject. I'm going

to go because people have been bugging me about going.” And after the first meeting, I thought, “Wow, I’m in another world.” It was great.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I would like to say one thing more. The thing that goes off like a light bulb in my head is that through all the years of being a Christian and the ups and downs and things like that [UNCLEAR] revelation of what He is trying to do with your life, what really does amaze me and what I am most thankful for is His blessed patience. No matter all the time, I’ve walked away or fought Him on something, or just all the times He has been patient with me. That is what I’m thankful most...unlike any other being, I don’t know how you would say that, but anyone else, He is the most patient and the most loving of anyone I know.*

Right. Exactly. As I have worked up...as some of you know, I have worked up for myself a daily prayer, scriptural and ancient to kind of start the day with...because as I have shared I am not good at coming up with prayers on my own in the sense of getting on your knees and saying, “Lord, thank you for Diana, and the client needs this to be done today and...” Before you know it, my mind is just gone; so I need a discipline to hold me to that. In that discipline I have drawn on Psalm 103 which is about forgiveness and this is going to key-off on what you say.

Listen to the words of this Psalm. You are talking about the patience and forbearance of God and it says, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our inequities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love to those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a Father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him, for he knows our frame and he remembers that we are but dust; but the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.”

Now, you get down on your knees and you confess your sins, Psalm 51...go through that...and then you hit this. He does not give us what we deserve, He remembers our frame...that means He knows what we are made of... we are but dust. That is all true, but on the other hand, the thing that far outweighs that is the steadfast love of the Lord. The loving kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. From age to age and that blows your mind; when you get down on your knees and you think of some way that you have profoundly screwed up and some way that you have profoundly sinned, and He says He does not hold it against us because He has compassion for us as a Father does for his children.

Yes, Tom.

**TOM:** *Yes, it is interesting to me that in Romans 1 we have all the big list of catalogue of sins but was it the first thing that Paul says, “Neither were they thankful...” and that is very interesting to me.*

Yes, right. “Neither were they thankful...” I think the problem of disbelief is not so much that they are against it as that they find it irrelevant. That men find God irrelevant. The Holy Spirit regenerations makes God absolutely relevant to you. That is where...my gosh this is what life is about...and actually in that first point... gratitude is for Who He is and there is no one like Him, He is over every other power. “Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods.” That is in Psalm 95 and again in Revelation 11:17. “We give thanks to you Lord, God Almighty, who is and was for you have taken your great power and began to reign.”

All of a sudden what you realize in this thanks giving that you are so thankful there is something that makes sense out of the universe and there is something in charge of that and in control of that. God fits everything together so that no matter how desperate your life is or how broken up or shattered, God is there putting it all together because He is over all these things. So we are thankful that God is Who He is and that He is over all things.

Gratitude for what He has done. “Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name. Make known his deeds among the peoples, sing to him, sing praises to him, tell all of his wondrous works.” Then again in Psalm 9: “I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.”

It is interesting that of all of those 146 verses in the scripture that I reviewed, the item that ranked second in the items you are thankful for was this: thankfulness for God’s great deeds. I’m just wondering what you think those great deeds are that God has done. In the Psalms...in the Old Testament it is very clear what they are giving thanks for and it was not about what went on in their lives. What do you think the great deeds, the mighty acts, the wondrous works that God had done...what do you think they were in the Old Testament? When they talk about gratitude for God’s mighty works, what were those mighty works? Do you know? Deliverance from Egypt, the whole history of Israel, what God had done throughout history.

When I am asked to describe myself, I say I am a student of God, the Bible and history. I love history. That is my prejudice and some of you cannot stand it but I love it. I am grateful, as Israel was grateful for the mighty acts of God throughout history, from the creation all the way through to the time of Babylon and deliverance from Babylon, Egypt, etc. I am grateful for God throughout the history of the Church. That is why I read the early Church fathers. The other day I was reading something by someone who had written it in 200 A.D. I love it because God was in a mighty way preserving and protecting and carrying the Church up generation after generation and at any moment, the Church could have been made extinct by the powers of this age at any moment. But God throughout history did that and that is our family history. I would want you to be interested in that family and to see how they were looking at things.

You are not finding in 200 A.D. or during the Diocletian persecutions...you are not hearing people talking about the four spiritual laws. {LAUGHTER} I mean there is something more profound going on there and that is why it’s important to read this stuff and how they’re dealing with it. It is interesting as I was just reading a fellow who was writing about the time around 350 and he was in Persia, not in the Roman Empire, and in Persia there were many, many Jews, of course...the Babylonian captivity... and they were taken to that area and they settled there. At that time the debate was going on between Christians and Jews about Jesus Christ, and the Jewish rabbi, in this discussion that I’m reading...written about 1,700 years ago...is saying, “You Christians are not blessed by God because you are being persecuted. If God really cared for you all these bad things would not be happening to you.” Now they were not being persecuted in the Roman Empire but they were in Persia and the Persian authorities were persecuting Christians.

Yes?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I’m reading “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.”*

Yes, powerful, does that blow your mind?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** It is unbelievable. *How could the Jewish rabbi say that with the history of the Jews?* {LAUGHTER}

Well, that's interesting because that's what this Christian writer comes back...he says, "Rabbi, I don't know how you can say this." He went through the history in Egypt and he rattled off this whole history, and he made the point that actually persecution means blessing...that when you are persecuted then you know that you have God's blessing in His care. That is a sign of it. Of course, that is a total flip flop of the world, because we are swimming in a culture that says if things are going bad you are cursed. He says, "No, that is not the reality," and they are saying, "Yes it is reality, just look. Do you like being laid off; do you like being put down because of your faith? Do you like losing your job, do you like illness, do you like all those things? And we are saying, "No, we don't like them." "Well, that means you're cursed."

We're saying, "No, we don't like them and we say "No, we are not cursed." "When I am weak, then I am strong" You can't believe that unless you have been born again. You need a brand new mindset, a whole new way of thinking. God has to explode your mind in a way and, therefore, the world looks at us and they say "You guys are fools." And we say, "No, you guys are fools." You are either on one side of that track or another. It is very radical. That is what they did. The Jews went back and looked at all the mighty works of God, the same way we look at the mighty works of God throughout the history of His Church.

Yes, Sig.

**SIG:** *[UNCLEAR] makes me a little bit uncomfortable about being persecuted being a blessing...I mean that's God's choice and that is the way He displays His power...that is what you're saying? But why would the Jews say that? Why would the rabbi.....*

The Rabbi said that he was mistaken and the Christian writer, the apologist...I can remember the guy's name right now...but he was correcting him. We see the exact same thing that this rabbi is saying on Christian TV today right here in Pittsburgh. God does not want you to be in a bad place in terms of this world—in your health, finances, etc. God does not want that and, therefore, if you'll do these things or send in this seed...plant the seed...then God is going to bless you. We get the exact same thing today. It is a heresy, it is an evil, evil teaching because it is simply not true. We're telling people things that are not true, so the rabbi is really no different than what you hear on Channel 40.

**SIG:** *I know but I was just trying to balance out...how do we really look at that and think that God's blessing us because my life is very difficult? [UNCLEAR] so I've got to shift something in my thinking and I understand that, but unless I'm really weak and incapable then God will be strong. So it would be better if I were successful in business or could take care of our families or live like gypsies, or.... As a community of Christians, they couldn't build a building like this...you have this gigantic...and there are thousands of people attend...it would be better if we didn't have that kind of money to do that kind of thing?*

Well, what you do is you are equating that with what is actually going on in the heart. You could be a prosperous businessman and still be made weak by the Lord. The Lord could weaken you in that whole process. Help! {LAUGHTER}

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I....what you are saying there is just...thinking about submission and although what you just said about someone being wealthy but still being able to submit to the Lord just as Jesus*

*submitted to the Father and that submission, as believers, that is what we are all called to do, and although we may have wealth we still want to submit and be able to encourage and love and do what the Bible says to do—I don't want to talk about status because we are all equal in the Body of Christ...*

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Well, not really, I mean the toe isn't as noble as the eyes...*

Yes, but you...the thing is, in fact, earthly strength and wealth does put you at a disadvantage. I have come to that conclusion. People say, "No, you're wrong Ted." It really just depends on how you think about it. That's baloney...I mean it is kind of like you see a very shapely gal go by...I mean I'm tempted but it is really how I handle it in my heart. I don't want to deal with that temptation. Get it out of the way, I don't want that to ever walk by me, if I had the choice. {LAUGHTER} Dick Clouser...or somebody over there said they would like that. {MUCH LAUGHTER}

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I think it goes back to give thanks in **all** circumstances, so it is either the plus or the minus, the health or lack of health. It is in **all** circumstances that you are giving thanks to God.*

Right, yes. Exactly. I'm just saying that I think that worldly power and prestige and wealth are a greater problem than you would think it is. It is more tempting, it is more compromising to your soul, and when God takes away your wealth, your prestige and your security, when He takes that all away intentionally He makes you more dependent on Him. That is just a fact of life. It may make you bitter and it may cause you to not believe; that is the down side of it.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *What about the Book of Job?*

Yes, the Book of Job, right. In the end Job had to be broken.

Were you going to say something Bill?

**BILL:** *In my understanding of the scriptures that is just what you are saying. There are more and more warnings against wealth than against being poor.*

Yes, right..

Bill...the other Bill.

**BILL** *As I'm getting older and I look back on my life and I've seen places where I've grown is when I've suffered the most. I thank God for [UNCLEAR]sometimes [UNCLEAR] of who He is. He has blessed me and I have been blessed with His grace again and again. The thing I'm most thankful for is the fact that He has chosen me to let me know Him. And that is the thing that we need to pursue.*

Yes, excellent.

Were you going to say something?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Yes. Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad,..."*

Yes, right. None of us want to hear that. I don't want to go through the dying process, OK? I don't want to hear that either. But, nonetheless, that is the way it works. We believed it when our coaches said it in high school...no pain, no gain; and now we don't think it applies. {LAUGHTER} But it still does. And the coaches I had in high school that I respect and look back on now had the greatest influence on me were the ones that were willing to make me work really hard in a lot of pain and difficulty to get there.

Yes?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *[UNCLEAR] and sufferings as well as the glory. And Jesus said to the young rich ruler who asked "What must I do?" "Sell everything that you own, give to the poor and follow me." It is about giving something up, it is not about what I get but it is about what I give up. I'm grateful that I see because he didn't see obviously. He was blind, but why is it that I see and have heard here time and time again?*

You see because of grace. Amen. Thank God. There is no other answer. You are not any more privileged, brighter, insightful; you are as dumb as the Pagan but God has given you grace and that has made all the difference.

We also are thankful to Him for His unfailing, unending love. "Give thanks to the Lord for His steadfast love that endures forever. I bow down and give thanks to your Name for your steadfast love and faithfulness for you have exulted above all things Your Name and Your word. You have exulted above all things Your name and Your Word. Therefore, I give you thanks." You know, His steadfast love assures me, it is the only thing that assures me that I am not consumed in His wrath. I deserve God's unmitigated wrath and destruction, no hope; but His steadfast love and mercies which endure forever is the only thing that guarantees me or assures me that I have any hope. The gratitude...think about this...the gratitude for [UNCLEAR] is righteousness...I will give to the Lord thanks due to His righteousness. So, the Psalmist is saying, "I'm thankful to God for His righteousness." That means that God is always right. I'm thankful that God is always right. We think that God drops the ball sometimes. We think that God messes up. We think that God missed that one. God is always right! I thank Him for His righteousness. That's what I thank Him for.

I'm thankful for being **in** Him...we talked about that. For my life being His life. I never looked at this Psalm this way but listen to it. "The Lord is my strength and my shield, in Him my heart trusts. I am helped, my heart exults and with my song I give thanks to Him." I'm thankful that it is not my strength but that it is His strength. I'm thankful that it is not me being the defender but that it is He being the defender.

I'm thankful that the Lord "is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and they are saved." That's what I'm thankful for. I want to keep thinking I'm strong enough but I'm not, I have no strength at all.

The gratitude...we talked about this for salvation, for the rescue from destruction and his deliverance. "Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord." You are being pursued by the enemy, you're running back to your fortification, a very common image of Israel. The enemy is pressing on you, you're racing to the walled City, the gates are closed. You have the wall on one side and the enemy on the other and destruction is certain. Then the gates open and God lets you through and you are saved.



How often...that is a dream that I have often times and I'm being chased by the monster and you cannot get away. Don't you have that sense? There are times in your life where you have been pursued by the enemy, whatever that enemy is, and then God at the last minute opens the door and there is a way of escape that you just sail through it. He opens up the gates as the enemy pursues us.

"I will give thanks to you, Lord, though you were angry with me, your anger turned away that you might comfort me." The first thing He does is that we think about Him comforting us, but the first thing He does is that He turns away His anger. I remember the only time in junior high school or high school that I ever got sent down to the principal's office. We were in line going to an assembly—this was back in the day when chewing gum was a great offense—and the teacher said, "Nobody talking in line," and he came up to me and he says, "Ted, do you want to be sent down to the principal?" I said, "It's up to you." {MUCH LAUGHTER} Profound ignorance. A deep miscalculation. And I got sent down to the principal. I had never been down there before but I had heard horror stories...but I know some of you went down quite often.

So I didn't know what to expect and when I sat there waiting because he is never there and of course the secretary says, "Sit here and he'll see you when he comes in. So, finally he shows up and he says, "Ted, what are you doing here?" And I said, "Mr. Jones asked me to come down here because I talked in line." He said, "OK, just sit here a little longer and when the bell rings, you just go...." {LAUGHTER} "I give thanks to you, Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away that you might comfort me." So the anger was turned away at that time but we can see how many times we should have given thanks. "Give thanks to the Lord for I will remember the fortunes of the land as at first says the Lord God."

"For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first." Boy, this is a powerful idea and the fact is, in your Christian life you are going to have to give up a lot of stuff. God is going to take a lot of stuff away from you. We see that...I could do Mark 10:29-30: "...Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.." So he is saying that everything you have lost in this life will be restored to you.

Yes. [UNCLEAR]

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I would like to pursue this just a little bit further. When we think that God has dropped the ball and we start to say, "Whoa is me" and beyond giving thanks and showing gratitude for that situation that has just occurred it strikes me that maybe we should also spend some deep time thinking about why has that happened in a positive sense. What are the positive things that could be forthcoming or could be creating the necessity for God to do this. Would you comment about that and what should we be thinking deeply about that in a positive way? Beyond giving thanks?*

Well, I think what you need to do is to ask God to tell you what you are to learn. Because often we think what we're supposed to learn and you find it in business all the time. People who are just new in business or not very mature in terms of business sense, they're taking one lesson out of a bad situation. No, that is not the lesson you are supposed to get but this is the lesson you are supposed to get. It is important that we find out really what He wants to tell us. God is always talking to us about reality. This is reality...this is Who I am...and this is reality. How are we going to make your reality co-inside with Who I am? I think that is what I would say.

Don, did you have something?

**Don:** *Yes, in reference to what you just read in Mark 10:30, I was just wondering how that applies, for example, to someone like Pastor Sieve and [UNCLEAR] in jail and probably going to die soon. Is Christ maybe talking about a deeper relationship with Him...is that the more in this life 100 fold? Perhaps?*

For him personally? The Lord is going to fulfill His promise with Pastor Sieve but I'm not too sure I'm following you completely, Don.

**DON:** *Well, He promises in this life [UNCLEAR]. He is not experiencing any of that.*

Well, I don't know the answer to that, it is a good question. You've found me out on not having thought it through very well; but the thing is this life is eternal life and then the age to come so there has to be some...we really see life as beginning at the moment of regeneration...that is when we see life as beginning. Before that we were dead in our sins, we were slaves of sin, and after we become regenerate then we have life. So things follow. Now in that life thing may happen in this age or in the age to come. We don't know. I don't know if I'm getting it very well and I would have to think about that a little more.

**DON:** *The present fulfillment in this life is what I'm wondering about and that is a difficult question to answer.*

It is...Bill, yes?

**BILL:** There is something in Luke 14:33: "So, therefore any one of you who does not renounce all that he has, cannot be [UNCLEAR]" so the person who has all of those things that you just mentioned before in the scripture, in this life, that knows that his relationship with Jesus is more important and it wouldn't matter if he lost all those things in this life and I think that is what.....

That's good but remember getting there...most of us and I would say maybe all of us...don't get there. God has to kind of pull us kicking and screaming in that direction. We way underestimate how intoxicating and addictive this life is. We just need...here is the answer Brother...it's a Nike commercial...just do it, that's the answer. No it is not the answer because you are not going to do it and then what happens when you don't do it? When you don't do it, you either feel guilt or you feel shame or you hide it. Or you say things that are not true...like how are you doing Brother? "Oh, I'm victorious in Jesus"...well boloney you are not victorious in Jesus. Jesus is victorious but you are not very victorious. {LAUGHTER}

Yes?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Philippians 3:7 While Paul is being imprisoned [UNCLEAR] and he had lost everything and he says, everything that led prior to that [UNCLEAR] says, "In deed, I count everything as lost, whatever gain I had I count as lost for the sake of Christ, in deed, I count everything as lost 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 and be counted by him as not having a righteousness of my own, come from the Law but come through faith in Christ."*

Yes. God got him to that point. I don't know if anybody in this room will get to that point, in terms of your experience. But Paul has set an example...This is what you can expect if you follow me," says Jesus, "This is what you can expect." When we get discouraged we need to encourage each other and say, "OK, Brother you are on the right track, you're headed in the right direction and everything that is happening is to shape you in the image of Christ and to make you to reflect the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

There are some other verses here about gratitude, gratitude for His Word, gratitude for His name, for His grace, for His provision, and gratitude for the fellow redeemed, those of us who are elect. You can study those but I went over this the other night when I was in Columbus staying with some friends and I said, "Well, what do you think of this?" They said, "When we worship, we want to worship God the way He wants to be worshipped." And the fellow said to me, "We need to thank God the way He wants to be thanked." So, these give you some of the verses that we are studying and they direct us to where and how to be thankful.

Let's conclude in prayer.

Lord, God, we thank You for Who You are, that You are the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. And like You there is no other God. We thank You in Who You are we find our identity. We pray that You give us grace to rejoice and be thankful for the difficulties and the hardships and the pains that You put us through because we know that You are shaping us into Your image, and we pray this in Your name. Amen.