

**TRIUMPHANT LIVING**  
**Taught by Bruce Bickel**  
**Session: April 5, 2013**

Brothers, let's go quietly before the Lord and know that He is God as our brother take us to the Throne of Grace by setting some music before us to help set our hearts right for the day.

Gracious and merciful Heavenly Father, we thank you that Christ has paid it all and that we can stand on the promises of God. Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth fulfilling His job description, and may You be pleased to open our eyes that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Turn in your Bibles please to John Chapter 15. The last couple of weeks we have been looking at the concept of what it means to abide. You recall that the word "abide" is the Greek word "mano" which literally means, "to pitch your tent and feel at home." It was used as a nomadic expression of the herdsmen in the mid-biblical times when they would take their flocks and look for a place to camp out and pitch their tent and when they found that place of comfort, of relaxation and rejuvenation that became their home. Hence, from the word that we see from the classical Greek word, mano re-describes for us our relationship to Christ in the sense of the summary statement—to pitch our tent and feel at home with Christ. Now that has several implications which we have been examining. Today we are going to branch out and do something which will bring us to a much greater understanding of this concept of abiding.

Turn with me to John 15 as we have a couple of verses I want us to read to set the tone for us. I am reading from the New American Standard version of the Bible, the NASV, John 15:1-5.

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. Abide **in** Me, and I **in** you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide **in** Me. 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."

Now there are two things here that we need to understand. First we have a responsibility and our responsibility as described in this passage is to abide, not bear fruit. The consequence of our responsibility of abiding will be the production of fruit. Often times we look at this passage and we begin to think what is it that I need to do so that I can bear fruit? The answer is: abide. You see that is our responsibility, it is a command that tells us what we need to do. We recently looked at some verses that help us understand the concept of abiding and I'll do some quick review.

Jesus tells His disciples to abide **in** Him; in John 15 we see that abiding **in** Christ depends upon our holding to His teaching of the Scripture. It also depends upon our obedience to Him, we saw that. We've also seen that Christ abides **in** us by His Spirit and by faith.

As we've seen in John 15:7-16, some of the results of abiding **in** Christ is answered prayer; we also see freedom from persistent sin; it does not mean that we live sinlessly, perfect lives but it does mean that when you understand the concept of abiding and you pitch your tent and feel at home, you have a new desire and a new

disposition of not wanting to continue in those sins you have done in the past. We are not talking about sinless perfection, we're talking about the fact that you have a new disposition because you understand the concept of feeling at home with Christ. That's what we mean when we talk about abiding.

When we talk about abiding, we need to understand that our responsibility is to abide and we have been talking about the tension that exists between our obedience and our feeling at home with Christ. There is a degree when you understand that the fruit of the Spirit, as we see in Galatians, Chapter 5, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc... against such things there is no law. There is a sense where the concept of the word "abiding" means you have developed your relationship to where you feel comfortable with Christ. That does not mean that you are sloppy in your obedience, it does not mean that you are sloppy in your attendance of the Church or the disciplines of the Christian life. But it does mean that there has to be a degree of what I am going to call "comfortableness in the mercies of Christ." You feel comfortable in it. It does not mean that you sit on your butt and do nothing; we're not saying that, we're not talking about the concept of letting go and letting God. We are not talking about that.

We are talking about the relationship you have with Christ and you have come to a point where you feel comfortable in your insecurities, in your inadequacies, and your lack of effectiveness; because that is when you have to trust Christ. It is really not your own abilities that you are trusting in but you come to feel comfortable in your lack of abilities, your lack of concern that you have for certain things and you realize that Christ is going to make up the difference. There is a degree where you feel comfortable.

Our responsibility in John, Chapter 15 is one thing and that is to abide. That means you and I do not become obedient to abide, we abide to be obedient. You see, abiding is the obedience. You don't do something to abide. You don't get up in the morning and say, "I've got to do 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 so that I can abide today." No, you see, that is the reverse. You are not obedient to abide, you abide by being obedient. You abide to be obedient. Our act of obedience is abiding and that has tremendous implications for us.

Let's just take one illustration. We've talked about feeling comfortable in our inadequacies. Why is it that we are worried and we are frustrated? We are frustrated with all the things of life often times because we lose control. Sometimes we don't feel comfortable in our own inadequacies. Now I'm not saying that you do not work at your inadequacies, that is not what I'm saying. But I think there comes a point in your relationship to Christ that you realize that it is not about your inadequacies, it is about His adequacy. He alone is the one who is adequate. You begin to feel comfortable in yourself. That does not mean that you are not working in developing your mature faith. I'm not talking about that. But there comes a point when you recognize that it is not about **my** inadequacies, **my** worrying, **my** frustration, and **my** consternation; it is really about my understanding about how comfortable I feel in **His** adequacy. That is what it means to be "mano," that is what it means to abide.

Yes, Don.

**DON:** *Yes, Bruce. I don't know if this is a good analogy but I know later in that chapter that Christ said, when we abide with Him and we love Him, that He and the Father will make their home with us.*

**BRUCE:** Amen.

***DON:** I know, remembering my father; he commanded respect and if I didn't show it, I would pay dearly. We know that God is Holy, that Christ is Holy. Yet on the other hand I knew that my father...I mean he was a wonderful father, I could go to him, I could kid around with him, I felt at home with him. Is that what you are saying...that you can feel comfortable with Christ...there is that reverence and fear, but there is also that feeling of being "at home" where there is joy and comfort in His presence?*

Absolutely. There is a balance here of feeling comfortable and showing respect, dignity, and honor. That is what it means to "mano." In other words, what I'm suggesting, Brothers, is that we worry about many things unnecessarily and why is that? It is because we look at our own inadequacies and say, "I can't do it, therefore, what is the world going to say about me?" And we become frustrated because we think it all depends upon us. What I'm suggesting is that we understand "abiding" to the degree where you feel comfortable in His resources, in spite of your own inadequacies.

I gave you the illustration a couple of weeks ago when I just really hit the wall. I was just totally out of it and I was on my way here and I just had to say, "Look, I really don't know what I'm going to do; I have to feel comfortable in who you are and not what I don't feel about myself." What I'm suggesting is: why is it that we worry a lot? It's because we don't think we can handle something. What I'm suggesting is that when you understand what it means to "abide," you understand that, yes, I cannot handle it but He can. And that is what it means when He says in John 15, "...you cannot do anything apart from Me."

There has to be a degree when you and I feel more comfortable in His resources than in our lack of resources so there is a degree of comfortableness; that is when you develop your respect, your honor that you have for the Father because you understand that He is the resources behind your adequacy. As we saw in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians: "...who alone can live a life like that?" Our adequacy comes from God. So part of abiding means this: that you begin to feel adequate in His resources.

Yes, Ted.

***TED:** I would say it is not only that He can, but that He is. It is not so much that He can if, [UNCLEAR]. He is.*

Yes, absolutely. It is not a cause and affect relationship: He does not do this if we do that. That is not what we are talking about. He is. Look at this verse again. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides **in** Me and I **in** him..." John 15:5.

We're going to talk today about something that is going to take us a couple of weeks to go through because it is really very important; you don't hear much about it in the Church, and that is "union with Christ." What does it mean to say, "I am **in** Christ?" Paul uses those words 127 times in the New Testament to describe a person who has a saving relationship to God the Father, through God the Son, and he uses the phrase "**in** Christ." That is what we mean by "union with Christ." Notice here in verse 5: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides **in** Me and I **in** him..." Do you realize what it means that Christ is abiding **in** you? We don't talk about that very much. We're always talking about what is it that I need to do for Him. We need to understand who He is **in** us. What does it mean that Christ is abiding **in** me? He says that, "...you abide **in** Me and I abide **in** you, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." That's talking about what we would call the "union with Christ." I want to begin to explore that a little bit today and take us in to that over the next couple of weeks because this is such a vital concept for us to understand, the idea of what it means to "abide."

Go to Galatians, Chapter 5:22. I want you to see one of the things which we need to learn in order to abide, to feel comfortable with. Here is one of the things I'm suggesting, Brothers, when we understand what it means to be **in** "union with Christ;" it means that I am **in** Him and He is **in** me, you are **in** Christ and He is **in** you: that's "union" and we're going to explore that in a moment. But here is one of the consequences of that union **in** Christ; it is the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, this is what He produces within you because of Who He is. We need to understand what that means to us.

Galatians, Chapter 5:22, 23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law." When we say there is "no law," it means that we are no longer under the law as a means of earning our salvation. It does not mean that we are not obedient to the law, that is not what it is saying. When Paul writes that you are no longer under the law, he is saying that you are no longer under the system of having to do things to earn your salvation by being obedient to the law. You and I are now obedient to the personal work of Christ because He accomplished our salvation. Please understand that we are not eliminating the law, we are just saying it is no longer the rule by which you earn your salvation, to achieve your salvation; it is a system that no longer holds you bound for your salvation.

Notice those verbs...those words: "the fruit." That means: when you are **in** Christ and He is **in** you, this is the fruit of your life. This is who you are. He is describing who you are in these words. Listen to these: you have love, you have joy, you have peace, you have patience, you have kindness, you have goodness, you have faithfulness, you have gentleness, you have self-control, against such things there is no law. That is the consequence if you look at John 15. He says, "You abide **in** Me and I **in** you and you will bear much fruit." We just described what the fruit is going to look like. That means: when you need the resources of fruit, what do you do? You don't manufacture something that you go do, you realize this is who I am because I am **in** Christ by "union with Christ" and these are the resources that I now have and I feel comfortable that I have all the love that I need. It is just that I need to trust Him to be the love for me in those situations when I can't or don't have it.

When you pray for patience, does God give you patience or did He give you time to be patient? Which is it? You say, "Lord I need patience and I need it right now." {LAUGHTER}. Does He give you patience right now, or does He give you the opportunity to be patient? And how do you become patient? That's when you're trusting the abiding **in** Christ because He is the resources for your patience. There are times, Brothers, when you and I don't have the patience and what do we do? We have to realize that He has the patience for us because He is **in** you. It is **in** your "union with Christ" and you are **in** Him. This is a description of the fruit that we have when we abide, and sometimes we just need to feel comfortable in all of these graces and all of these fruits because that is who Christ is **in** us—in our union. Do you understand that? We worry so much about not being able to love somebody, not to be joyful, not to be patient, not to be gentle; you have all the resources you need because He alone is adequate. It's just that we don't think that way because we have not yet begun to feel comfortable **in** our "union with Christ" and what that means. Do you follow that?

I want to take you to another verse to help us understand this union with Christ because we are going to try to explore this for a couple of weeks to help us understand what it means to "abide." Let's go to Romans 5.

Tom, do you want to say something or are you just waving at me? {LAUGHTER}

**TOM:** *I like what the NIV says, it uses the term “remain.” It says, “...it is your choice not to remain.” He will produce fruit in you but you have to have the Word remain in you. [UNCLEAR] Just because you ask for patience, He isn't going to give it to you....He is not a servant, but you have to be disciplined.*

We have to be abiding.

**TED:** *But that comes naturally.*

Yes, that's right...it's natural, it is fruit.

**TOM:** *Not that He is offering a choice...I think...as much as He is there...and we just have to learn to trust Him. It's faith in Him.*

Yes, that's right. That is why we need to understand this concept to be **in** union **with** Christ. What does it mean to be “**in** Christ?” He is what we are not. He is what we are not. He is the love, the joy, the peace, the patience, the kindness, the gentleness.....He **is** that. Now **where** is He? He is **in** us and we are **in** Him and the most natural thing in the world is....you are going to be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness...that's a consequence of you remaining **in** Christ, you are abiding **in** Him. You and I have to feel comfortable with Who He is **in** us. We don't understand that very much and we have to explore it.

Go to Romans 5 and let me give you a quick understanding of the concept we're going to look at for a time. We are no longer in Adam, we are now **in** Christ. Now that is what it means to be **in** union **with** Christ. Go to Romans, Chapter 5:18. Here is a contrast; there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are in Adam and those who are **in** Christ. There are two representatives: (1) the representative of humanity is Adam; and (2) the representative of God's redeemed people who are **in** Christ. You have two representatives and the whole understanding is: there is a federal head or the representative of society and you are either in Adam or you are **in** Christ. Here is how Paul describes it.

Romans 5:18. “So then as through one transgression” (that would be Adam) “there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness” (that is Christ) “there resulted justification of life to all men.” The contrast is in Adam—condemnation; or **in** Christ—justification.

Romans 8:1 says, “Because we are justified by faith, there is now no condemnation for those of us who are **in** Christ.” There is your union.

Let's continue on to Romans 8:19, “For as through the one man's disobedience” (that's Adam) “the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One” (that's Christ) “the many will be made righteous.” There is your contrast. What do we mean by you are either in Adam or **in** Christ? That is what we are talking about, the concept of the union **with** Christ. I want us to begin to explore this, and if you want me to give you some notes, I didn't come up with a handout for this, but I can create one for next week; we'll be on this for a couple of weeks. What does it mean to be **in** union with Christ, or the term “**in** Christ?” You are in Adam or you are **in** Christ.

We are **in** Christ and what does that mean? This is what we have been talking about when we say “abiding,” and we have to learn to understand, Brothers, what it means if Christ is abiding **in** us. Therefore, the most natural thing in the world is what, according to John 15? You are going to bear fruit. You are going to bear

fruit. Fruit has many definitions to talk about; but the one I want to talk about first of all is just those fruits of the Spirit that we need to feel comfortable, those are the resources that you have...because Christ is **in** us. The whole concept of “union with Christ” really has its source in the concept of the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world. That’s where it starts. We need to understand this and I’m going to give you many verses to go through all this, and you might want to track them down but I’ll create an outline for you.

It all starts with the election of God the Father before the foundation of the world. It has its culmination in the glorification of the sons of God in eternity. It starts with election and it ends with glorification. There is where you begin to understand the concept of union **with** Christ. It is not confined to space and time because it has the expanse of eternity. On the one side we see the electing love of God and on the other side we see the final glorification of the resurrected body. Now that is when you begin to understand our “union with Christ.” It started back in eternity past where God chose us **before** the foundation of the world. That is when our union with Christ started. Now we need to understand what that means.

Let me give you a definition of what we mean by this. It is a phrase used to summarize several different relationships between the believer **in** Christ through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. Now that is a critical thing. We receive every benefit of salvation because of this “union with Christ,” not because of something we did. These relationships include the fact that there are four things. First, we are **in** Christ. Second, Christ is **in** us. Third, we are **like** Christ. Fourth, we are **with** Christ. Those are the four things we need to understand when we begin to talk about being **in** Christ.

The **union of Christ** has four elements to it. Let me give you those again:

- (1) We are **in** Christ. What does that mean? We’re going to talk about that.
- (2) What does it mean that Christ is **in** us? That’s part of our union.
- (3) We are **like** Christ. What does that mean?
- (4) We are **with** Christ. What are the implications of that?

Those are the four primary elements of what it means to be **in** union with Christ, to be **in** Christ. Let’s take a look at this.

First, we are **in** Christ. What does that mean? We have to look back at God’s eternal plan and how He looks at us. One of the real issues of our struggle in life is, who do I believe? Do I believe what the world says about me or do I believe what God says about me? Let me tell you what God says if you are **in** Christ because that is the first element of our union concept. God chose us **in** Christ before the foundation of the world. It starts there. Ephesians 1:4. Let’s go back and read it...we ought to read these verses as we go through. Go to the book of Ephesians 1:4.

Notice the number of times you are going to see the words “**in** Christ” and whenever you see the words “**in** Christ” we are talking about our union **with** Christ. “God chose us **in** Christ before the foundation of the world.” We see that in Ephesians 1:4. “Just as He chose us **in** Him before the foundation of the world...” There is something about it that you were **in** Christ before you were born, do you understand that? He didn’t choose you because you would **come in** Christ; He chose you when you **were in** Christ before you were born, before the foundation of the world. That’s where the union begins. This is a divine plan, this is beyond our comprehension and you will have no understanding of what I’m talking about unless you are **in** Christ. But

notice this: you **were in** Christ when He chose you. That's how God saw you, He didn't see you separate **from** Christ, He saw you as **in** Christ when He chose you. That's what this scripture says. "Just as He chose us **in** Him before the foundation of the world." That's a critical concept; it was **in** Christ that we were destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory. You were **in** Christ for a reason; He didn't say I know that he is going to come to Christ so, therefore, I'm going to have him live for my glory. He chose you before that so you would do that. Do you see that? This is phenomenal stuff when you begin to look at the implications of this.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Bruce, it really turns everything we normally think about upside down.*

Yes, it does. Absolutely. That's why, Brothers, we are going to take some time over the next couple of weeks and talk about what it means to be **in union with Christ**. We'll go slow, we'll take our time and look at the verses and I'll try to deal with your questions because this stuff...the Church never talks about it and it ought to. This is how we understand what it means to abide and bear fruit. It means this: later we see in the Scripture that He saved us and called us because of His Own purpose. He predestined us to adoptions as sons through Jesus Christ according to His kind intention of His own will. In other words, He didn't seek anyone else's opinion. Sometimes, you have to ask yourself: "Why did that happen?" The only answer is, it was the kind intention of His Own will. That's part of the unrevealed will of God that you and I just have to trust and let it be mysterious, and we need to let it be glorious because it's something we just don't understand.

Yes, Bill.

**BILL:** *To get back to the verb tense, going on in Ephesians 1:4: you can see that this has already occurred in the blessings we've had. They have occurred; not only are we the elect before the beginning of time, we also were blessed before the beginning of time. These are [UNCLEAR] and blessing is not just being the union in Christ but it is also the revelation that we received, what that union means.*

You just said what I was going to say. Thank you. You're always one-step ahead of me. All I can say, Bill, is give me time please. {LAUGHTER}. Patience, yes, give me patience right now, Bill. {LAUGHTER}. Bill is absolutely right. That's why I made the statement that we receive the blessings of our salvation because they are all **in** Christ. They have already occurred. Let me show you what I mean by that.

"Later He saved us and called us according to His Own purpose and because of this grace which He has given us **in** Christ before the beginning of time." Here is another verse. When did you get these blessings that Bill is referring to? Go to 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:9. When did the blessings that you have occur? Not today. They occurred in eternity past when He chose you before the foundation of the world.

Look at 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:9. "...Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His Own purpose and grace which He granted us **in** Christ Jesus from all eternity,..." When did the blessings that you are now experiencing begin? In the past, before the foundation of the world. They were **in** Christ and now you receive all of those blessings because you are now (in the year of 2013) **in** Christ, but those blessings were given to you when He chose you **in** Christ before the foundation of the world. Before eternity. Do you understand that? The blessings that you now have in salvation were something that God chose before eternity. That is because you are **in** Christ.

We need to understand...Bill's point is exactly right. The blessings that you and I now receive of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. when did you get those? In eternity past and in the counsel of God's Own will

when He chose you **in** Christ to live a life for His glory. That's why the most natural thing in the world is that you and I are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness...all those things. That is the most natural thing in the world because that is who you are, because that is whom God said you were when He chose you **in** Christ. Everything deals with our being **in** Christ; it is not dealing in me; it is not having a degree; it is not memorizing scripture although that is going to help us in our maturity. It has everything to do with being **in** Christ and His union. Those blessings were **in** Christ; they are not blessings that you and I earned. We receive the blessings of our salvation because in the counsel of God's Own will, He chose us in eternity past before the beginning of time. That's when the blessings occurred. Do you see that?

Since we did not exist before the foundation of the world, these verses indicate that God was looking into the future and knowing that we would exist, thought of us as being in a special relationship with Christ. Now notice, He did not first choose us and later decide to relate us to Christ. He did not do that. Rather, while choosing us, He at the same time thought of us as belonging **in** Christ. He did not chose us so that we would become in Christ, He saw us as being **in** Christ when He chose us. That is what it means to be **in** Christ, and all of that is for His glory. You and I receive the blessings of that unique relationship. He viewed us in a very special way as being **in** Christ; therefore, He thought about us as eventually having the right to share in all the blessings that Christ accomplished. You and I now share in all the blessings that Christ accomplished because when He chose us, He saw you and me as **in** Christ. He did not see us separate from being in Christ; He did not choose us so that we would come in Christ. When He chose us before the foundation of the world, He saw us **in** Christ; that is how He views us. He views us as being **in** Christ.

Throughout Christ's lifetime, while He was alive on earth and His incarnation, from the time of His birth to the time of His death and ascension into heaven, God thought of you and me in one way: as being **in** Christ. That is the only way God ever thought of you, you are **in** Christ. Think about that. The only thing that God has ever thought about you from eternity past was this: he is **in** Christ. He is **in** Christ. That means this: that whatever Christ did as our representative, you are **in** Christ versus being in Adam, and God counted it as something we did too. Do you see that? Whatever Christ did during His lifetime, God saw you and me doing the same thing because you are what? You are **in** Christ. Do you understand the implications of that? My goodness, if you are looking for self-esteem... {LAUGHTER}...where do you need to go? Self-esteem is not me thinking better of myself. Self-esteem is, do I view myself as God sees me? Self-esteem in my judgment is the disease not the cure, because if we have a self-esteem problem we're thinking too much about ourselves. Christ is the one who gives us our esteem. What He is saying here is that during His lifetime, whatever Jesus did, God saw you and me as doing it too because He is our representative.

He sees us as doing the same thing, and that is why it is so natural for you and me to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control, long-suffering, against there is no law. That is the most natural thing in the world, because you are **in** Christ. That is Who He is and if that is Who He is, that is who you are, because God views you as being **in** Christ. Are you tracking with me here? This is really deep, heavy stuff but it can be life changing. When you understand the implications, it will really help us to understand "to pitch your tent and feel at home with Christ."

Yes, Don.

**DON:** *Does the imputation come down...*



Yes, we'll get to that... {LAUGHTER}. Guys, this is just the introduction. {LAUGHTER}. Give me time here. We're working our way through this.

Yes, Ted.

**TED:** *When Don asked you about imputation, the picture is bigger than that. Imputation has to do with imputed righteousness, but we are talking about **all** of us being **in** Christ.*

Yes, absolutely. Everything about you. Imputation is a part of that but it is not the totality of it. The totality is the unique way in which God looks at you. The unique way in which He looks at you from eternity past.

Now God thought of us as going through everything that Christ went through because He was our representative. Let me give you some examples that I wrote down. When Jesus perfectly obeyed God for His whole life, God thought of you as perfectly obeying Him in all of your life. You get credit for it because He sees you that way. Do you understand that, guys? When Christ was absolutely perfectly obedient, God saw you and me as doing exactly the same thing...being perfectly obedient because you are **in** Christ. As we read in Romans 5:19, "But as one man's obedience, many will be made righteous." Notice this: Christ is the source of whose righteousness? Mine! Christ is the source of your righteousness...not you; and that is because you are **in** Christ. When God saw Christ being righteous, He saw you as being righteous. Christ is your righteousness, it is not us. That is what I'm trying to help you understand...that you can feel comfortable in that. Just exhale and realize...God is going to do some wonderful things and bear fruit because the most natural thing in the world is: you bear fruit because you are **in** Christ.

- (1) Now, because God thought of us as being **in** Christ, notice this: He would also think of our sins as belonging **to** Christ. Do you realize that? He viewed all of your sins as belonging **to** Christ. The ones you have committed, the ones that you will commit, and the ones that you don't know you'll even try to commit. He saw them all as belonging **to** Christ. That is because of that unique special relationship in which He called us, a saving relationship. "God made Him Who knew no sin to become sin for us." (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21).
- (2) Isaiah 53:6: "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." See, He not only saw you as being perfectly obedient **in** Christ, He saw all the sins you committed as being **on** Christ. A little word, "huper" which means "on behalf of" in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:2, "... and He made Him Who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf." A little word we have, huper, it is a wonderful Greek word; and if you ask me one of the most important words in all scripture, I would say it is that word ("huper") because He is our representative. Representative for my righteousness, which He is the source of; and representative for the One who dealt with my sin. He became sin on behalf of me and that is what it means to be **in** Christ. Those sins which we had not even committed yet, but God knew about them in advance and He thought of them as belonging **to** Christ. The ones that you haven't even committed, He sees them as belonging **to** Christ.

Therefore, it was right for Christ to die for our sins, it was right for Him to do that because it was just, it was Holy, it was right. People say it is not fair, that He didn't die for everybody. Let me just give you a crass example. Fairness, as you know, is not one of the twenty-eight (28) attributes of God. So when someone says that God is not fair, the first thing you ought to say is, "Isn't that wonderful?" I'll tell you what is not fair. It is

not fair that God used me as seeing all my sins **in** Christ. That is not fair. It is not fair that somebody died for my sins; but it is righteous, it is Holy, it is glorious, it is according to the counsel of God, but it is not fair.

Let's just say that you had a building that was on fire and it housed ten convicted criminals awaiting sentencing. We have a tendency to think in our sinfulness that we are the accused awaiting trial. That is who we think we are. But I'll tell you what we are: we are the convicted awaiting execution. We are not the accused awaiting trial. We are the convicted awaiting execution. Now, let's just say that you had ten people who were criminals who already had their sentence... "the wages of sin is death"... upon them and they were awaiting their execution; the building caught on fire and an EMT or fireman ran in and he pulled out four of those ten. Now, what are you going to say about that? "That's not fair." A human is going to say, "That's not fair" because they are saying, "He didn't save them all." Well, if he saves one, what are you going to have to say? "That is an act of courage; that is an act of grace; that is an act of mercy that he even saved one?" But we have a tendency to think it is not fair. We are not talking about fairness, guys, we're talking about God's righteousness, we're talking about His Holiness, we're talking about His glory. This is beyond our human understanding apart from the very grace of God.

So, Lord, I just pray that you'll teach us to the point of understanding today, even as we discuss these things.

Do you understand what I'm saying? It is not about fairness; it is about righteousness. Christ is our righteousness and God views us **in** Christ. He views us as being absolutely sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient—that's justification. He gives you credit for that because He is our representative. When you are **in** Christ, you have a new representative, it is no longer Adam. The new representative is now Christ and because you are **in** Christ, God views everything you do in your life and sees you as doing it through Christ because Christ is **in** you.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Bruce, just as a point of clarification, when you're talking about us abiding in Christ...and I think about something you said a couple of weeks ago that made me stop and dwell on it...when you said that Christ has overcome the world. I think about that and I think about the implications of that. To me that would follow with abiding in Christ because He has overcome the world. The whole thing about self-esteem and who do I look to, whatever matters to me, is the fact that Christ has overcome the world is much more of that peace and patience and understanding of what you are describing today...*

Absolutely, that is part of our union **with** Christ. Jesus says, "Do not fear because I have overcome the world." Now the word "world" there means the world's system; the system of this world. You and I are so frustrated and fearful of the system of this world and we need to realize that we are super Nikaos, a Greek word that means "over-comer." "We are more than conquerors through Christ." If He over-came the world and you are **in** Christ, what have you done? You have over-come the world. That is part of our implications of our union **with** Christ. We think we are victims. We are never victims; we are just vessels in the circumstance. We have this treasure on earth and vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God and not from us. You are never the victim of circumstances; you are just the vessel in the circumstance because you are **in** Christ. If Christ has overcome the system of this world, whatever that means, guess what Brothers? You, if you are **in** Christ, have over-come the system of that world because God views you as what? Not being independent of Christ, He sees you as being **in** Christ. When you are **in** Christ, you have over-come what He gets, and you receive all the blessings of what Christ has accomplished; those are yours and those are mine because we are **in** Christ.

One of those blessings is this: you have over-come the world. That's why we ought to be the bravest, the most courageous people in living the lives we do for the glory of God; because we know this: we have already over-come the world **in** Christ. We don't live like that, we take the back seat and let the Church be influenced by society when, rather, we ought to be at the point of this and influencing society from the Church because we have over-come the world. We don't think that way. We have to think right and act right. You should not fear the system of this world. Yes, our country may be going down the tubes and we need to correct that as much as we can, but don't fear that. You know there is a difference between nationalism and spirituality. We have to be careful that we don't mix the two. We don't make nationalism a religion; we have to be careful of that. We don't do that because we know this: that Christ has over-come the world and I have over-come the world because I am **in** Christ. Yes, I'm going to do everything I can to resurrect my country, to be what it needs to be but I'm not fearful of what's happening because I know this: Christ has over-come that already and I am **in** Christ, and so are you. We should not be fearful and that is where we have peace and joy.

Yes.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *I think it is interesting that Jesus says, "I am the true vine" implying there are other vines. [UNCLEAR].*

Yes, that's right 1<sup>st</sup> John 4. There is only one true vine.

The important thing is, first of all, how does God view you? He views you as being **in** Christ. Let me give a couple more things before we wrap this up.

Forgive me as I'm looking at my notes which I wrote last night about 1:00 in the morning.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Bruce, you know, Jesus is doing great. {LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE}.*

Thank you Ted.

Just a couple of other things. So is it right that Christ should die for our sins because God views us as being **in** Christ. Go to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree..." Now notice, it is just not that our sins belong **to** Christ, it was that **we** belong to Christ, **we** belong to Him not just our sins, but **we** belong to Christ, we ourselves. That means this: from God's point of view, when Christ died He thought of you as what? Having died. Do you understand that? When Christ died, God viewed you as having died to our sins. In other words, our old self was crucified with Him. Your old self was crucified **with** Him, because when Christ died, God thought of you as dying also because you are **in** Christ, you are in union **with** Him. That's Romans 6:6.

"I have been crucified with Christ." Galatians 2:20. Now in the same way as God saw Christ dying, He saw you dying to your old nature; in the same way God thought of us as being buried **with** Christ, raised **with** Christ, taken up to heaven **with** Him in His glory.

Ephesians 2:6: "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms of Christ Jesus." Where are you right now? You are in the heavenly places, seated at the right hand of God. That is how God views you, and you and I have the audacity to say, "I don't feel good about myself. Woe is me, the world doesn't think much of me." Listen folks, if the world doesn't think much of you, they don't want to be as royalty, because you and I are royal citizens of the Kingdom because He saw you as dying to your old self, He

saw you buried, He saw you raised, and He saw you elevated and ascended to heaven at His right hand because you are **in** Christ. That is why when we pray we have an intercessor. Christ is at the right hand of the Father saying, “Father, he is one of ours.” That is why one of the results of abiding **in** Christ is answered prayer. When you feel comfortable in the resources of Christ, you ask those prayers that are consistent with His nature and His will and, therefore, God acts upon them; because the intermediary says, “Father, he is one of ours, he’s **in** Christ.”

Yes, Carl.

***CARL:** Bruce, I think that is one of the reasons we need to recognize our position in Christ and not our position in the world. Because when we understand our position that we are seated in the heavenly places, then we can overcome any condition because He has already overcome, and as long as we understand that He lives in us, and then we can overcome the things of this world. Because the world doesn't hold us, Christ does.*

Yes, Amen.

You see the important thing here, Brothers, in this introduction—we’ll pick this up again in the next couple of weeks—is that all the blessings that you and I have received were given to us in eternity past when God chose you **in** Christ. He chose you **in** Christ before the foundation of the world. Everything goes back to that electing doctrine that we talked about...the electing love of God. It all starts right back there and it ends up in our being glorified in our glorified bodies when our resurrected bodies are taken to be **with** Him in eternity. It starts with the election and ends with glorification. Everything and all the blessings in between are because you are **in** Christ. That is the union that we have **with** Christ.

Well, this is just some introduction and we will pick this up over the next couple of weeks. I’ll create an outline for us that will help you understand this more fully. So forgive me for not doing that; I just began to do this last night and it took me four or five hours to come up with what I just gave you and I’ll give you an outline for it. So forgive my lack of preparation but thank you Jesus that you did it in spite of me. Let’s pray.

Father, we have touched on some things that most of us have never really pondered or thought about, and I pray that if I have said anything that is contrary to what You intend us to understand about Who You are and about our position in Christ, would You remove that from us and help us to understand only those things that are directly from You and Your Spirit. Father, we are absolutely dependent upon You to teach us to the point of understanding, not agreement, but understanding, and may that be the work of the Spirit. So, Father, we thank You for the resources we have in Christ, thank You that You chose us before Him and the foundation of the world, and all the blessings we received back in eternity past and which we are just now experiencing in Your grace. Thank you, Father that we have grace in Christ but it is God’s resources at Christ’s expense. May it be so for Jesus that we abide in You and feel comfortable and at home being in Christ positionally. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.”