

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Taught by Bruce Bickel
“Union With Christ” Q & A - Part 2
Session: August 16, 2013

Gracious and loving heavenly Father, it is amazing that You love us and that You have loved us before eternity past. Your grace was given to us before the foundation of the world. Father, we thank You for Your mercy, we thank You that You do not treat us as our sins deserve; that You offer us an east-west forgiveness that has no end. May we rejoice in Your goodness and just come to You when we are weary and heavy-laden because we know that You alone are the source of our rest. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

You know sometimes men, we are caught up in the doing rather than the being, and often times we just think that we have to do something and just wonder what the Lord is doing around us. You know, to help us understand the magnificence of a sovereign God and what He has been doing here in the eighteen years that we have been meeting...I do not want you to lose sight of the fact that the Lord really is in control of what is going on here. It really is not about us and to give you an illustration of that, there are things going on behind the scenes in this world that a sovereign God controls about which you and I have no idea. But now and then He comes along in His mercy and He just gives you a little glimpse of what He is doing. And these are little words of encouragement. Sometimes you just need a word of encouragement in the weariness of life. Dick Johnson and I just had one occur here recently that I want to have Dick share with you because it really shows this: that God really is in control of Friday Men's Group...it is not us, it is not Sig, it is not me, it is not Bishop Rodgers or anyone else but we are just the vessels. A sovereign God is behind all the things that we are doing, and this is a significant time that we are together, men. Dick would you just tell us about that please?

DICK: *I was just sharing with Bruce this morning that we had hired two years ago a site manager for a division and he lived in Wisconsin with his family. He came down to Pittsburgh and they had not relocated, and one of the reasons why he moved down to Pittsburgh was that his mother was dying. So, he moves down and takes the job and his mother dies in the first month that he is here.*

And then his daughter had a pregnancy out of wedlock and she was up in Wisconsin, and he was down here and his wife went back and forth. So he just had many burdens that he was dealing with and I was talking with him a couple of days ago. He resigned and, as a matter of fact, yesterday he was leaving to go back. I had invited him to this men's group and maybe two or three months after he moved here, he started coming. He had a shiny head as well, {LAUGHTER}, so he would sit right over in this area over here. I was talking to him yesterday and he said, "Dick, it really was a difficult two years and I really thought the Lord was bringing me down to Pittsburgh to work for World Vision. I thought that was one piece of the equation and then I thought by being able to take care of my mother who was dying, that was really the reason that God was bringing me down here, then his family situation really created a real challenge." But he said, "You know, the reality of it was that thinking back and praying about it...I really did not know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I had been going to church for 30 or 40 years, but coming to this Bible Study and coming to know Christ as my Lord and Savior; and maturing in my faith, I have matured in the last year and a half more than I had in the past 30 years."

He had tears coming down his face and I had tears coming down my face. We just hugged each other and said this was God's sovereign plan for him to be in a fellowship of men, to grow in his faith, and God matured him in

his faith; and I said, “John, I want you to keep in touch with me and he said, ‘I’ve got www.bravemen.org {LAUGHTER} and [UNCLEAR] every week.” But just to hear what God is going to be doing in his life, with his family, and with the community that he is going back in to Wisconsin, it was just a great encouragement. I was sharing that with Bruce this morning. Men, thank you because you are the vine of fellowship that brought him along as well so I appreciate it. APPLAUSE.

I am just so grateful that it is not up to us. It really is not up to us. One of the great freeing truths that I learned years ago is that I really cannot make a difference. When you realize that you really cannot make a difference, is when you are really free just to trust the Lord and His sovereign grace just to do what He is going to do and we do not have to know about.

Let me just take you to Psalm 143, please turn there with me. I will read this to us just as we go into our time of questions and answers. Our Q&A today is based upon our understanding that we need to ask ourselves the question every time we come into the presence of the Lord through the Scripture...we know that we are always in His presence because He is omnipresent; but when we come into His presence in a special, personal way through the Scripture, our response needs to be very simply this: “What am I going to do about what I just learned?” That is why we want to have a Q&A today because we just finished a several month series on Union **With** Christ, where we discussed what it means to be **in** Christ, and to have Christ **in** us, for us to be **like** Christ, and for us to be **with** Christ. Now the real issue is, “What am I going to do about the truths I just learned from the Scripture?” And that is why we want to have the Q&A. So when we open up the time for questions and answers this morning, this is not a time for us to figure out the eschatology of the 2nd coming of the Lord, and is He going to come next Thursday and 4:00 or is it going to be Monday at 2:00. We do not know that. We just want to ask our selves the question related to, “What am I going to do about my understanding of what it means to be **in** Christ?” And to do that I just want to take us to Psalm 143 to prepare our hearts for a time of worship.

Let us hear the Word of the Lord.

I am reading from the New American Standard. Psalm 143.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplications! Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness! And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous. For the enemy has persecuted by soul; He has crushed my life to the ground; He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead. Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; My heart is appalled within me. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands. I stretch out my hands to You; my soul longs for You, as a parched land.”

“Answer me quickly, O Lord, my spirit fails; Do not hide Your face from me, or I will become like those who go down to the pit. Let me hear Your loving-kindness in the morning; For I trust in You; Teach me the way in which I should walk; For to You I life up my soul; Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I take refuge in You. Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground, For the sake of Your name, O Lord, revive me. In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble. And in Your loving-kindness, cut off my enemies and destroy all those who afflict my soul, For I am Your servant.”

Matthew 11:28-30. “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and you learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

May God be pleased to open our eyes that we might behold Him more clearly, even as we ask our questions and seek Him for our answers through the Scripture. May God be pleased to do so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We are **in** Christ, Christ is **in** us, we are **like** Christ, and we are **with** Christ. We have learned much in the last several months about those wonderful truths in Scripture. What are you going to do about what you just learned? Perhaps there is a question that you might have on that subject matter which we may be able to help you with. There are many resources that we have here in this room. I mentioned before that we have one of the best theological minds that I have ever come across in Bishop Rodgers. He has been so faithful in being with us week after week. Take advantage of the brothers and sisters who are right beside you...brothers, not sisters. {LAUGHTER}. Take solace in the brothers who are with you because we have many resources. Let's just learn from one another. How may we help you grow in grace?

Yes, Dick.

DICK: *Bruce, following up on the question I asked you last week about maturing [UNCLEAR], I came across this week in some Bible study, two words: discipline and discipleship and there was a reference around "discipline" of being in the midst of believers in terms of fellowship, being disciplined in prayer, and being disciplined in work, being disciplined in studying the Word. How, in your life, in terms of that maturation process of discipline, as you observed it in order to grow as a follower of Christ. Can you share that with us?*

Well, I'm not sure I'm an example of discipline per se, but there comes a time when you understand what obedience is. John 14, Jesus says it very clearly, "If you love Me, you are going to obey." So, it all starts with a love relationship that we have in the personal way with the personal work of Christ. In other words, discipline is not something that I choose to do per se, it is really a desire that comes out of my knowledge of God's love for me and my love for Him. In other words, discipline, basically, is an expression of your love. If you don't understand what God has done for you, you are not going to have that desire to give back to Him in the love response. Obedience is a love response and that is why it is so important; now I don't mean ooey, gooey, or mushy, or wishy-washy when I say this.

But there comes a time when you really have to fall in love with Christ. You fall in love with Christ. In other words, He becomes the focus of all of your life existence and you are totally focused upon that. It doesn't mean that when you are out on the golf course you're thinking about Jesus all the time and I'm not saying that. What I am saying is that your mindset changes. Remember the little card we gave you? Think right, etc.? Everything in life starts with a feeling. Everything in life starts with a feeling. We have to take those feelings and learn to manage them. One of the ways in which we manage them is understanding this: how I know what God has given me, therefore, my desire is to give back to Him in a love response. Discipline really is an expression of our love. It is an expression of our love for God and the only way that I know to deepen my personal love for God in my personal salvation relationship with Him, is to be in the Scripture. It is to be in the Scripture, because that is God's primary means by which He reveals Himself to us.

Let me take you to a passage in Scripture to help us understand Dick's question about maturity. Go to Colossians 1. What I'm saying is the desire to be disciplined is a love response in obedience. And the degree to which I understand how much God has loved me, will be the degree to which I will have the desire to give back to Him by my personal discipline, which manifests itself in obedience. So there is this desire...do I really love Christ? Do I really love Christ? How are you going to develop that love for Christ; you certainly need to put

yourself in the positions where God exposes you to His grace. Remember grace is: God's Resources at Christ's Expense? The primary entity in which that happens is the church. So, we come together in the church as one of the manifestations...this is an expression of the body of the church. So we come together on Fridays and the desire is, hopefully, we are going to develop a greater love for the personal work of Christ; and as we do that, it will give us a greater desire to want to be obedient and to become more disciplined. So then we just discern the difference between the urgent and the important.

The urgent things are what people want you to do. The important things are the things you know you should do. What's the difference? Many people want me to do many different things but I realized that if I am guided and controlled by what they want me to do, I'm going to miss the important things. The important things are my developing my personal relationship to Christ. So that means there are certain things I can say, "Yes, I could do that but I'm not going to do that because I need to do this." That is a love response. The whole basis, in my experience, has been the degree to which I understand God's love for me, I manifest that back to Him by saying, "What I'm going to do and in the choices I make are an expression of my love for You." I think it really is based upon our loving Christ, singularly and most importantly first. It is developing a love for Christ.

Here is how we do that. One of the things that concerns me in our pragmatism in the church today, is the difference between church growth and church expansion. Modernists, who basically want to talk about methodology in ministry, have basically defined church growth as numbers. I can take you to a church out West who has 36,000 members, they have 12,000 who worship on the Lord's Day. What happened to the 24,000 others? Where are they? See, the modernist would say that is church growth. I don't mean to single out somebody but let me just give you Carl Jones' history. Ten years ago, he started with five people and no church. Now they have about 140 members in a church, and the average attendance is somewhere above 130. Which is the better illustration of authentic biblical church growth? I would say it is Carl Jones' church rather than the church of 36,000. We modernists, in this world today, have defined church growth strictly in terms of numbers. Here is the best church growth prayer we can have and if you ever want to know how to develop your own relationship to the Lord, pray this prayer.

Look at Colossians 1.9. "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according too His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patients, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For he has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Now in my mind, friends, that is the best church growth prayer that you can pray, because it has to do with maturity. Church expansion has to do with increased numbers. We saw that in the Book of Acts; 3,000 were added at the Day of Pentecost...why were they added? What was their response? It was response to a sermon. What we have now in our culture today is a response to pragmatism as opposed to a response to proclamation. What causes authentic general biblical church growth is proclamation of the personal work of Christ and people are "pick to the quick" and they respond to that and the question is this: "What shall we do?" That should be our response to every sermon we ever hear. "What am I going to do with what I just learned?"

For me it is understanding the sufficiency of Scripture. What has really helped me in my own personal discipline is realizing this: Scripture is sufficient for everything I will ever need. I start with that premise. Now

that doesn't mean that I am going to find every answer in my life that I have. Remember the secret things belong to God and so I don't look after the secret things. But I really trust the sufficiency of Scripture to help me manage my life and make those choices. For me, Dick, the real issue has been two-fold: the sufficiency of Scripture and realizing how am I expressing my love to Christ. I know that He loves me. *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*" How simple that is but *how* powerful that is. How do I express that? For me, I have to go back to the sufficiency of Scripture and say, "That's where I am going to find out how to do it."

Yes, please.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *Bruce, I guess one thing that I think I have learned to be careful with is when you are reading Scripture, it is very easy for you to read something into it, rather than actually looking at it and seeing what the original message was intended for and how it would apply to your life. Instead, you might be tempted to apply it to certain situations...well, try to interpret it based on your personal circumstances.*

Yes. We can make Scripture fit anything we want. That is the danger, so we have to have what we would call a "hermeneutic" which is the science of biblical interpretation. Basically, there are three things you want to look for: (1) look at the historical background, what is going on historically; (2) you want to look at the grammar, the verb tenses, the word, the six literary forms, causes and effects, repetition...you want to look for those things; and (3) you want to look at the context...where does this verse fit in the context of the whole passage, the whole book and the whole Bible? Where does it fit? So those things can be very, very helpful in our understanding of how we interpret the Scripture. So, historical background; grammar...sentence structure, word meaning; and lastly context, where does this verse fit in the context of everything else? Those things can be very, very helpful.

Bishop, do you want to add anything to that?

BISHOP RODGERS: *The only thing I would add is that you have to read the whole of Scripture in the light of Jesus Christ as its center. If you have not made that link, then you have not understood what that passage contributes to your understanding of Christ and to your life.*

BRUCE: Amen. In everything, look through the light of the image of the personal work of Christ because that is what God is doing through us in the Scripture revealing Christ in Him. That is why it is so important that you understand Christ in the Old Testament. One of the great courses that I had the privilege of teaching several years ago in China for the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in China was, *Christ in the Old Testament*. It was so wonderful just to see that the Old Testament really talks so much about the personal work of Christ. If you read it strictly looking at it under the nation of Israel, you missed the whole point. The whole point is Christ is in the Old Testament just as much as in the New Testament. Bishop Rodgers gave us a great point. You have to look at this through the lens of: "If I don't understand what it means to look at this in the light of the personal work of Christ, I've missed the big picture."

Yes, Bob.

BOB: *Bruce, back to Dick's question about discipline. We understand the importance of the words but tell us what about the actions of the Holy Spirit as it relates to disciplinary [UNCLEAR]...what role does the Holy Spirit play in that process, along with the Word?*

Well we need to understand how Jesus described the job description of the Holy Spirit. He said, the Holy Spirit's job description is to guide you into all truth. Where are you going to find truth? In the Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture. Those two things go hand in hand. He is our teacher; He is the One Who is going to guide us into all truth. He is not necessarily cause us to jump up and down and have a great ecstatic experience. That may happen when you study the Scripture but that is not His role. So often people tell me, "Boy, it was obvious the Holy Spirit was here today." And I would say, "Based upon what?" Look at the response of the audience; they are so excited and jumping up and down. You can have the same thing at a Steeler pep rally. Does that mean the Holy Spirit is there? The Holy Spirit's job is not to create enthusiasm, it will happen but that is not His function. We have relegated the Holy Spirit to give something to us rather than doing something for us. What He does for us is that He guides us into all truth. That means you have to go to the Scripture. That is the definition that Jesus gave.

When you look at John 13, John 16, and 17, basically here is what the Holy Spirit does. He convicts us of our sin; convinces us of our sin; converts us from our sin; completes us with a new life; comforts us in a new way of life; and controls the decisions we make in our life. Those are the five things that he does. Convicts us of our sin; convinces us of our sin; converts us from our sin; comforts us in a new way of life; and controls our decision-making. Now how does that process happen? Because His job description is simply this: He guides you into all truth. Where are you going to find the truth, you go to the sufficiency of Scripture.

Any question you are going to ask Him, He is always going to come back to that simple answer. The sufficiency of Scripture. Do you really buy that? Many times people will say the issue is the authority of Scripture. That is important because it does guide our life, but there is something bigger than the authority and that is sufficiency. Is the Scripture sufficient for everything that I need? My answer to that question is: that is the beginning of our discipline. You start with that premise because when I look at the Scripture, I am looking at the big picture of really revealing the personal work of Christ to me through every verse I read. You have to look behind the words and see Christ behind all the work.

Yes, please.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I'm all for [UNCLEAR] the tension is between law and grace and in terms of the Holy Spirit, when the discipline comes...I'm reading from 1st John 4:18-19. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love draws our fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love, because He first loved us." And it is the Holy Spirit that plants that love in our hearts and love becomes the motivation for discipline, which is also John 14. Love becomes the motivation, not fear, and as we grow in our walk, we begin to make that sacrifice...we begin to celebrate our obedience even when obedience is what we want to do in our flesh but we just rejoice in being able to make some sacrifice.*

Amen. Well, said.

Sometimes men, because we are **with** Christ, sometimes we have to act out what we want to become. In other words, I do not feel like doing that. Now one of the things we need to understand is this: when you act **like** Christ, you begin to become **like** Christ...you begin to be conformed **like** Christ. When you act **like** Christ, you begin to be conformed **like** Christ. Sometimes the battleground is in the mind because I don't feel like wanting to do that. There has to be desire that is a result of my love for Christ that puts me in a position to now wrestle with my feelings and transform the way that I think and I begin to think differently. Sometimes we just have to act out what you want to be.

Let me give you an illustration from Matthew 5 and Luke 6. The contrast between the system of the world and the Kingdom of God. Here is your contrast; we have done this before.

“Jump for joy when you are persecuted, love those who hate you.” “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who will wound you and forgive those who hurt you.” There are your two contrasts.

“Jump for joy when you are persecuted.: You don’t feel like doing that when you are persecuted, but sometimes because of your love for Christ you just have to say, “I don’t feel like that but Lord give me the grace to **act like** that.” The Holy Spirit is the resource for us; we are not our own resource. One of the great difficulties is that we think we are the resources for our own life. It is because of the work of the Holy Spirit Who has implanted within us this love for Christ and that now becomes the basis of our desire. So you fight through those feelings and you say, “I’m going to jump for joy in spite of the persecution.” Now when you do that, that is part of the process of how you begin to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is a discipline that we have to exercise. It all comes from our love for Christ. But sometimes...that is why we gave you this card...everything in life starts with a feeling. Sometimes you just have to deal with that and ask “How am I going to manage that?” You have to go back to your love for Christ. Develop your love for Christ because the Scripture is sufficient to help us do that. 1st John 4:19 is a very good passage to help us understand that we love Him, because He first loved us.

Yes, sir.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *James 1:2-4. “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

Amen to that. That is the Scripture. That is the sufficiency of Scripture. You see, God is sovereign, we just need to fight through our minds and trust that. We have to fight through our minds and trust the sovereign God.

Yes, Brian.

BRIAN: *I have really been struggling with a response recently...doing a lot of studying on this. In one sense I know that I am **in** Christ and that Christ is **in** me. He was [UNCLEAR] sinful so I can become His righteousness [UNCLEAR]; but I so often on this [UNCLEAR] because I don’t feel like being Christ-like. And it hurts my [UNCLEAR] and, you know, the question really is...and I think I know the answer...it is simply diving into the Word and watch the Word and just letting God’s Word lavish all around you so you can ooze out Christ even whenever you don’t want to.*

Yes, Bishop, please, help. {LAUGHTER}

BISHOP RODGERS: *Well there is a side to all of this that I find difficult to put into words, but as I look at my life I am a mystery to myself because God has kind of guided me against my will as much as through my will to get me to where I am now. It is kind of a mystery of grace. You somehow realize that many of the key decisions of your life are a mystery to yourself because God has been working in your life.*

BRUCE: Amen. That’s wonderful. That is a great thought. I’m not sure I can add much to that. {LAUGHTER}. The point...look...you just have to realize that Christ is a better Savior than you are a sinner. Do you understand that? Christ is a better Savior than you are a sinner. Everything, Brian, that we do in life is going to be tainted. My very best efforts of

teaching or preaching, or whatever it may be during the gospel of Christ...witnessing or serving...is tainted. Because it is not absolutely pure and righteous, because that is who I am yet. I'm being conformed to Christ but everything I do is tainted because there is some motive behind that, that rears its little head and that is sort of the mystery that the Bishop is talking about. But you have to...the bottom line is I just walk by faith. Remember, the acrostic for faith: Forsaking All, I Trust Him...Forsaking All, I Trust Him. Sometimes it just comes down to...I'm just going to trust You because I know this: You have paid for it at the Cross. When You were on the Cross, I was on Your mind. I just have to remind myself of that. Life is a mystery and He is guiding us; but remember, He is a better Savior than you are a sinner.

Yes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *[UNCLEAR] My very best [UNCLEAR] I have suffered. [VERY UNCLEAR].*

Amen to that.

Yes, sir.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *We cannot do it on our own, we get side-tracked. The Lord has shaken me [UNCLEAR], you know, and I have to wake up early and I have to read this Word every day and if I do not read the Bible every day, I know that I will get side-tracked, so I make it a priority, but it is just back to discipline. I know that the first thing I have to do in the morning is open this book and I know if I do not, I will get side-tracked. It is just discipline...making it a priority and everything else seems to fall in place. I can't tell you how many times...this morning I was praying and thanking God for making [UNCLEAR] my life. I can't tell you how many times the sermon on Sunday and the words you are saying just matches up and confirming it...as long as I stay in the Word. I'm just telling everybody here that as long as we stay in the Word, we keep from being side-tracked.*

Amen. Very good. Thank you. Excellent.

Yes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I think my brother [UNCLEAR] said it well. Yesterday I was studying and he said there is no mo-jo about it [UNCLEAR] and he said people tend to over-spiritualize [UNCLEAR] and for me...my brother and I [UNCLEAR] household so we really did not know what Christianity was and we [UNCLEAR] when we read the Bible [UNCLEAR] the Bible changes everything, and it does. But he said the way it does it is the daily discipline in the Word. [UNCLEAR] It is [UNCLEAR].*

Amen to that. Thank you, a good application.

Yes, Carl.

CARL: *Bruce, I want to add to what [UNCLEAR] was just saying. We have to remember that the Bible is not the Post Gazette and it is not something you just read over and put down. We have to study it daily and as this gentlemen just said a minute ago, all Scripture is from the inspiration of God so we have to remember that it is written for a purpose; and a lot of the time as Bishop Rodgers just said, there are the mysteries that we cannot make clear but the one thing we can make clear is what He has written to us when He says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom..." We have to first seek the Kingdom but also we have to make sure that we understand that we are wrestling...our flesh is trying to do one thing while our Spirit is trying to do something else. It wrestles a fight within us and that is why Paul said, "I keep my body under subjection on a daily basis." You have to fight that good fight and you have to make sure that you are keeping your body under because your flesh, in and of itself, wants to do what it wants to do; whereas that spiritual battle, that spiritual weakness [UNCLEAR] and that spiritual battle goes on in high places that causes us to say, "You know what, we are not the little red choo choo that says, I think I can, I think can." We let Christ and the hope of glory in us order our steps.*

Yes, Amen. Go to 2nd Timothy 3:16. [UNCLEAR] what Carl was teaching us. "All Scripture is inspired by God..." (it literally means God breathes, and when God speaks, things happen) "...and profitable for four things..." There are four things and notice them in order; this is not some random order. There is a divine order of a sovereign God who is saying, "I am giving you My Scripture for these four things to happen to you to apply in your life."

The first one is this: "...profitable for teaching..." That is the word "doctrine," that is the word "standard." In other words, the reason you and I read the Scripture is that you may be reading a passage of Scripture one day and say, "I never knew that." That is doctrine. In other words, He is setting a standard and we do not change the standard culturally. That is a standard that was created in eternity past and will last through eternity future. So the first thing, you might be reading the Scripture and find a doctrine that you did not know of previously. It is interesting in my life...when I went to the Naval Academy—it is not known as a spiritual Mecca—but it was the four years of my Naval Academy experience that really taught me to love the Scripture. That is a mystery; I went there to become an admiral and I came out being a preacher. {LAUGHTER} I don't know how that worked, it just happened. But the first thing was that I began to understand that there is a standard that God has established for His Kingdom but the world does not change, should not change, and does not have a right to change. It is not my role to change that to make it fit into society.

The first thing you do in studying the Scripture...you might come across something that you never knew before and that is doctrine. Notice that. The first thing is to reveal a standard.

The next thing is for reproof. That means to reveal an error. You may be reading a passage a second or third time and say, "You know, my understanding of that was wrong." We are saved by grace and not by works. I always thought it was by works, that I had to work my tail off to earn my salvation. Now I understand that it is by grace, not by works. It is not my efforts, it is His grace. The second thing Scripture teaches us...first of all to reveal the standard; the second is to reveal the error in your thinking. It is to reveal an error. That's why you don't want to ask the question, "What does this mean to me?" You want to ask the question, "What am I going to do about what I learned?" You might have been you were in error and exposed in your thinking and that is reproof.

The next one is this: "for correction,..." Well, that means to reveal the correction in your error of your understanding of the standard. Reverse it: standard, reveal the error, and this reveals the correction. You might be reading a passage of the Scripture one day and you can say, "Whoa, now I know how to correct the error of my thinking because I violated the standard. See how it works? These are in progression, they are in succession.

The next thing is this: for training in righteousness. Righteousness means right wise-ness, making the right decision. This reveals the steps to prevent you from violating the error again.

There is a wonderful sequence and that is why in the Scripture one of four possibilities is happening every time you read the Scripture. You might be exposed to a new standard that you were not aware of through the Holy Spirit guiding you into all truth. It may be that you are going to have the Holy Spirit reveal an error in your thinking—"I have always thought this but now I see that the standard says that." He guides you into all truth.

Next, to help you correct the improper thinking of the violation of the standard. And the last thing is to prevent you from making the same mistake again and train you in righteousness. Another consequence...the last verse. "So that" (there is a cause and effect relationship...these four things happen in verse 16) "...so that the man of God may be equipped" (the word here is adequate) "...for every good work." How does God equip you to do everything in your life that He needs you to do? It is through the authority of Scripture. It is the sufficiency of Scripture because He reveals the standard, He reveals the error, He reveals the correction, and He reveals the steps to keep you from making the same mistake again so that you are equipped for everything that you need to do. That is discipline. That is why you spend time in the Word.

Yes, Bishop.

BISHOP RODGERS: *After some time looking at a number of congregations over the years and being in several seminaries, I can just say, that if you do not have Christ at the center and Scripture as your standard, you haven't got a prayer buy to wander off into the boonies. It cannot be done. There is no anchor. Look at the mainline churches, it is simply irrefutable.*

BRUCE: Absolutely, Amen. It cannot be done. Sufficiency of Scripture and the personal work of Christ.

Yes, please.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I have a question about the word "Scripture." Did Paul know that he was writing "Scriptures?" It says here Corinthians [UNCLEAR]?*

BRUCE: You can ask him when you see him. {MUCH LAUGHTER} Scripture means the body of work we call the 66 books of the Bible...that would be the Scripture and that includes everything...Old Testament as well as New. Did Paul know that? I don't know but he was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so the Scripture refers to everything; but remember this: it is all centered on the personal work of Christ.

Yes, Don.

DON: *Peter referred to Paul works as Scripture in 2nd Peter 3:16. He said "...wicked men twist and distort Paul's writings as they do the other Scriptures". So Peter—he was an apostle who wrote infallibly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—regarded Paul's writings as Scripture.*

Amen. Good point.

Yes, go ahead.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I was just going to say the word "reproof," in my translation, it is a word that is kind of hard to put your teeth into, but I think what it means is to recognize an action that is sinful. You know, what is sin? Sometimes we have legislation that authorizes certain activities and they are sinful. Sometimes it is not easy to recognize what is sinful, but it also uses the sense of rebuking those that are in sin. This word "reproof" in my translation is something that has a pretty significant meaning.*

Yes it does, it is very significant because it is revealing something in error in the process of the violation of the standard. You have to go back to the first one...profitable for doctrine, for teaching. Let me just show you something else.

Go to Acts 2. The Day of Pentecost, the beginning of the Church, the latter part of the Scripture. Acts 2:41-42. "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." That is church expansion, not church growth. Here is church growth. Verse 42: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching..." Now Don just said what Peter said was that Paul taught the Scripture because it was the apostles' doctrine. Now what is the apostles' doctrine? Let me just give you a quick summary. "...they gave themselves to the apostles' doctrine..." (Or teaching). Not to any other possibility, but they gave themselves specifically to the doctrines that the apostles taught. How can we summarize that? You do that in two ways: by the five soli(s): by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone; that is known as the five soli(s). That is the apostles' doctrine. When you look at everything the apostles taught, it is summarized in the five—soli(s), meaning alone.

Historically that means the doctrines of grace. That is what they taught. Now Luke, who wrote the Book of Acts, does not say they taught every possibility, he says we studied only certain things and that is what the apostles taught us; and the apostles taught us this: that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. Another way of looking at that would be the same thing as total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. That is the apostles' doctrine. Those two things are saying the same thing, and that is a summary statement. Luke does not say that they taught everything but he says, "We gave ourselves to specifically one focus and that was what the apostles taught, and the apostles taught us the doctrines of grace." That is what they gave themselves to and that is what we need to give ourselves to.

Wow, the time is going by.

Thomas, wrap it up.

THOMAS: Early in my Christian walk, I was impressed by a pastor, who was just expounding on this one book of the Bible, and I was just amazed and I asked him later and said, "Pastor, how did you learn so much about this book?" He answered, "After you read it 67 times, you begin to understand what it's about." {LAUGHTER}

Yes, that's right.

Well, brothers, let's pray and we will continue this next week and continue our study on Triumph Living in the new covenant. We will pick it up in 2nd Corinthians, Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. We'll have a new handout for you. Sig will get that to you this week.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the mystery of life; we do thank You as a Sovereign God, control our lives and we are not the captain of our own ship. Thank you Father that You control our lives. May we just understand the significance of the personal work of Christ as revealed in the sufficiency of Scripture and may we be committed to falling in love with Christ in the sense that we are devoted to Him and may He guide us, and may Your Holy Spirit guide us into all truth. All the Brave Men said, Amen.