

Free To Be the Real You

Fresh Start Podcast Transcription

Galatians 2:20—*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God*—In the King James version, it speaks of living *by* the faith of the Son of God. Isn't that interesting? We know the Son of God is not lacking in faith.—*who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

I am happy to bring this message today. I think it will be a great followup to the one I gave in January—Grace and Truth: It's Both or It's Neither. If you haven't heard or checked that one out, please do so because I believe this will be a great follow-on to that message.

With any message, if you're like me, you don't just want to give a message. You don't just want to be a dispenser of information. You don't want to just quote Bible verses and hopefully have some mental assent, and then everybody leaves the meeting unchanged. You don't want that. You want there to be inspiration. You want there to be transformation. You want it to come out of revelation. So, there's something that's going on in me that's stirring this message today. A message like this can take different directions. Link gave me the title: *The Fruit of the Spirit and Our Union Life in Christ*. That's descriptive, no problem. He gave me freedom, as always, to change the title. I decided to make it a subtitle; *Free to be the Real You* being the real title. Because I believe this is an identity issue.

Part of what has been stirring in my heart lately is an observation (benevolently, I trust). Doesn't describe everybody, but over the last 30 years, it seems that repeatedly I come into contact with hearts, and here is the observable phenomena that emerges (really, it's in the form of a question): Is our faith cultural, or is it compelling? Is it contagious? Is it convincing?

Now, I came from an Episcopal background. Nice people. (No shame, no blame, Mom.) Nice people, no life. Lot of ritual, lot of form, nice people. I'm so glad that Skip Edwards (who is in Heaven now, dancing on streets that are golden) invited Mindy and me to a gathering on Sundays at Ron Colly High School and it was a church called Trinity Church. I'm so glad that we were invited in the summer of '77 and our life has never been the same. Because we were introduced to a Christianity, if you will, a faith, if you will, that was alive; that was not just cultural, but it was compelling. It was convincing. It was transforming. I thought, I want to be a part of this. We drove—no hero here, I don't need a badge, I don't need any special

ceremony—some Sundays, we put 100 miles on our vehicle making two round trips to go to the morning service and the evening service, if we didn't stay over and go to Bishop's Cafe in between. Or, if somebody didn't invite us over, like Elmet and Karen Larson or someone like that to, hang out at their home while we were waiting for the next service in the evening. But that was nothing! That was no sacrifice. We were so hungry. We were so desperate. It was like community was a bonus, the relationships were a bonus, but the word of God coming alive, Christ-centered, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, all the gifts are for today. Having services like this, where there's freedom and opportunity and invitation because of our hearts, because of our posture, for God to manifest His presence. It's sweet, it's wonderful. This is part of who we are. This is part of the assignment God has entrusted to us. It wasn't just an assignment to the church that was then called Trinity. It's for us. It's available to all of us.

Now this church, this gathering, happens to be called All Nations Church. But it's the same opportunity. Lordship salvation is the only salvation. The fullness of the Holy Spirit, union life in Christ, go into the city, go into the world, coming together like this and having a sense of anticipation: What does God want to do today? Not worshipping worship, not worshipping what He's going to do, but worshipping the King. Having hearts that are open. Forgiven and forgiving and ready for more. We have a little taste of that today, about who we are.

So, there are distinctives with churches around the city and around the world, and different assignments and different opportunities and different stewardships. But, I am so excited to be a part of a stewardship where normal Christianity is really what I am going to be sharing about today. You know, it can get cultural without even intending to. I came out of a mainline religion culture. But, you know, Evangelicals can embrace a cultural Christianity, too, and pretty soon, young people are living off of the faith of their parents. Like Pastor Murdoch taught us again and again over the years, God doesn't save on the family plan. Our faith is individual. Our journey is specific; it's personal.

Are we cultural? Have we just developed another culture here? Are we just part of another culture here? Is that what we want? I don't think so. I believe that God wants us to be salt in the city. In the early days that we met in this building, Dave G— brought us a message, *Getting the Salt Out of the Salt Shaker*, we being the salt. Into the city, into the nations; salting the city, salting the nations; a light to the world. Being contagious. We can't make it happen. We can't put it on. We don't want it to be a performance orientation, but where is the overflow? Where is the heart? Where is the passion? Is it just mental assent? You know this idea of accepting the Lord—you know, you hear it, and it's so painful to hear. No shame, no

blame, but when I hear somebody talking more about Saviorship than Lordship—I just pray a little prayer of mental assent which sounds like a Hell insurance policy: “You don’t want to go to hell, do you? Okay, pray this prayer and you’ll go to Heaven.” Well, what kind of change is that going to produce? But it just points out the need: is there a sense of need? Being rescued is not relevant if you don’t need to be rescued. I needed to be rescued, how about you? You know, the person that’s drowning who thinks they can swim to shore is probably going to be put out a little bit if somebody tries to rescue him. They might even be offended: “Don’t you think I’m a good swimmer? Don’t you think I could have made it back to shore? I didn’t need your help!” Or, they might say, “Well, that was nice of you to come out, but I could have made it.” That is not a heart that’s convinced of need. That is not a heart that is convinced of rescuing.

We do need the Savior! And when He rescues us from an impossible situation of sin that we could never pay for, we want to give our hearts and lives to Him for the rest of our life! And that’s where the Lordship of Christ comes in. It’s not a commitment to a commitment. It is a heart of gratitude. It’s following up with what I shared last time—that sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee didn’t need to be coached. She didn’t need anybody to coach her in her prayers or how she anointed Jesus or Paul. She knew Who He was. She recognized the Savior. She needed saving and she knew it. She expressed her gratitude by washing His feet with her hair and her tears and expensive perfume that she couldn’t even afford. Extravagant love! Is our life extravagant? Or is this just another club? Is this just another cultural club? Is this just a community that’s doing nice things around the city? Some good things around the nation? But what kind of a difference are we making? What kind of a force are we? What kind of a transformation is really going on?

I don’t know about you, but I want to be a part of something bigger than I am. That’s His mission, by the way. His mission is bigger than I am, it is bigger than you are. So, we take a look at these verses and I pray they will take on new meaning today. Not just mental assent: “Oh, yeah, that’s good doctrine, Steve. That’s solid, Steve,” and you walk out of here and it doesn’t change a thing. No, no, no, Heaven forbid! May there be transformation today. May there be revelation today. These are timeless truths. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is normal Christianity. It requires sacrifice and sellout. We’re in touch with our need and we realize we are hopeless, doomed and damned without Him. That is normal. It’s not, “Well, you want to go to Heaven, don’t you? Pray this prayer of accepting Jesus.” Okay, now what? See, it’s cultural. See, it doesn’t change a thing. I prayed that prayer after a Billy Graham movie years ago and it didn’t change a thing. It was a point of reference that I went back to, but it

didn't change a thing. It was part of God's pursuit. It was part of the process and it's amazing what God can do on less light than what I'm sharing with you today. I mean, people can get saved on a whole lot less light than what I'm presenting today, but now that I've seen the salt and the light, I'm not going to share anything less than what I am sharing. It would be wrong if I did.

2 Corinthians 5:17: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone; the new has come.* What does that mean to you? I don't know about you, but I see myself in there. The old Steve is dead. The old abusive, possessive, insanely jealous, treating my wife terribly, wild man in college, always on my mind—that was the old spiritual condition. He is dead. Dead, dead, aren't you glad he's dead? Honey, aren't you glad he's dead? Yes. I know you are.

But you know what? It wasn't just so Steve could have a better life. It wasn't just so Steve felt better about himself. It was because the Lamb was worthy of the reward of His suffering. He was worthy that I am now a worshiper of the King. That's what it's about. That's what it's about; do you want to be a worshiper of the King? You know, we have a nice target. The target is, "Well, we've got to get that person saved! They're going to hell!" Okay, that's not a good place to go. We can't even imagine how that's going to be. Can you imagine, forever and ever and ever separation from God? Eternal torment, weeping and gnashing of teeth forever. Forever. Forever. I can't imagine it. But, is that what that's about? Saved from that? No. That's part of it. Saved from ourselves, saved from Satan's grasp, yes, yes, yes. But, most importantly, saved, delivered to be a worshiper of the King. Because He is worthy. He deserves more worshipers.

The old is gone, what is that? Well, maybe you don't—I say this benevolently—but, if there's not much of the old gone, maybe the old isn't gone. [laughter] Because "the old" is the old man, it's that old spiritual condition. Outside of Christ, separated from God. When he's crucified with Christ, he's gone. Now, that doesn't mean you don't have temptation. That doesn't mean you don't have tendencies, strongholds, belief systems, and we're going to talk about that. Because you could have strongholds of belief. You know, it's kind of like you come into the Kingdom, you're a brand new babe in Christ, "Lord, what would you have me do?" You've got an attitude that you'll do anything, but there's a lot of renewing that needs to happen. There's a lot of updating that needs to happen in your mind and heart. There's a lot of patterns of thought and belief systems that need transforming, if I can say it that way. It's kind of like when the Israelites took the Promised Land, they didn't take it all at once. But, when God

takes our hearts, He goes to work. He's going to take you seriously. It's going to be a Holy Spirit invasion. Do you want that? He's going to make issues. Are you going to listen? Are you going to walk in the light? It's going to be a progressive takeover of a good kind. All motivated by love.

What was true of the old? Dead in trespasses and sin. Dead, dead means separated, not ceasing to exist. We were separated from God and wanting what He wanted, because we were nicely (or not nicely) doing our thing. We were following the ways of the world. What does that mean? We don't want to confuse that. God so loved the world. That's people. That's with eyes of pity and destiny and heart and compassion. We're talking about "the ways of the world" being the world system; the mindset of the world, which is "me first." Living to get your appetite satisfied. Appetite for food, sex, knowledge, pleasure and status satisfied on your terms, not God's terms. Simply stated: The world's system is "me first." You were following that. I was following that. Maybe nicely, maybe not nicely. You were gratifying the cravings of your flesh. What's that? Not just your flesh and blood, but it's that inclination.

See, even when we're born again in the Spirit of God; even when Jesus moves in, the old man is dead (our old, previous, spiritual condition) that's the old identity. The old identity is gone; we have a new identity. But the flesh is that temporary part of us that isn't a curse, but it's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to work out in God's gym, God's laboratory, and apply what He wants you to apply to get to know Him better. Some things are going to come quickly, some things are going to take a long time. Don't be concerned if it takes a long time. It's training, it's molding, it's shaping, it's grooming. He wants to groom you for him. The flesh is that inner inclination, that temporary part of you. By the way, you won't be taking that to Heaven with you. Relief. Thank you, Lord. But, for now, it's with you. It isn't who you are at the core. It isn't your true identity. That's key. The old man was your previous identity; the new man in Christ is your new identity. The flesh is that temporary part of you that is not an identity issue. It's attitudes, it's beliefs, it's leftovers that you have opportunity to renew. Actually, if you see it that way, it's a positive, because it's opportunity. It isn't, "Oh, I'm stuck with the flesh. Oh, I thought I was saved. I thought I shouldn't be tempted any more, I should just automatically obey." No, you're not a Jesus robot. There's opportunity, you still have a free will. The Holy Spirit won't choose for you.

Darkness. That's not very complimentary. We were darkness. That's what the Bible says. We were alienated, we weren't just rebelling at times. I was. But the Bible says we were enemies. Enemies of God. I'm just quoting Him. I'm just agreeing with Him. What is the status of the

old? Dead. Cemetery dead. **If** you've surrendered to the King on His terms. –There's a big "if." You'll hear it loosely said in mainstream religions, cultures, denominations: "Everybody's God's children. We're all God's children." We're not all God's children; we're all God's creation. There was a day when I was a child of wrath! I wasn't a child of God, I was a child of wrath. My father was the Devil, if I agree with God. That's not very complimentary, but I'm going to agree with God. The more I agree with God, the more hope I will have by putting my hope in Him. I need to get all the hope out of me, because as long as I put any hope in me, it will be a form of pride and it will keep me from entering into the fullness of His life. The old man is dead. Doesn't always feel dead; doesn't mean I don't get tempted. Doesn't mean I am perfect; doesn't mean I always choose rightly. But my heart is a new heart set on pleasing the King.

How about you? The new has come. The new has come. A new creation. What does the Bible say? A new creation made alive with Christ. As we move into Ephesians 2. Raised up with Christ. Seated in Heavenly realms in Christ. Isn't that significant? Standing, seated, walking—they all apply at different times. Seated. Royalty seated. We are royalty in Him. It is finished. There's nothing more for you to do or perform, there's nothing more you could do to get Him to love you any more or to be more righteous. His righteousness is our righteousness. We'll talk more about that. This isn't a mental brainwashing exercise today. This requires revelation to the heart with participation, cooperation, and maybe some rejection of some beliefs that have got to go today. –Some belief systems that are in the way of receiving the Truth. May they be exposed today. We're God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. We're the light of the world, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. A people belonging to God, called out of darkness into His wonderful light. Hidden with Christ. I love that, "...hidden with Christ..." Colossians 3:3. Delivered from darkness, transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. Reconciled through Christ, holy in His sight, free from the power of sin. Notice, not free *from* sin. Not free from the potential of *sinning*, but free from the power. Here again, it's interpretation. If you don't know who you are, then you'll misinterpret the temptation. We'll talk more about that as we go.

The power of a premise. If I think that old man is still alive; if I don't see the difference between old man and new man and if I make the flesh synonymous with the old man, I set myself up to perform. Because then my focus will be, "I've got to keep that old man in the grave! I've just got to appropriate and keep him in the grave!" as opposed to, "He's dead. I'm alive. I'm new. The flesh is a separate issue. It's an opportunity to apply. It's an opportunity to renew. But, I'm operating from the power of a premise of "new." New creation. We'll talk more about what that really means.

Do you know who you are? Now, here's where the belief systems come in that can be so powerful, because what we believe has great power. You know, we're not lacking in faith. It's who or what we're putting faith in that is the issue. What you believe has great power. Do you know who you are? Are you the sum total of your life's experiences? As you can imagine, over the last 30 years, I've had wonderful opportunity after opportunity to hear stories and hear perspectives of people who have decided what was true about them based on what somebody else said was true about them. –Based on what they did or didn't do, based on what's been done to them. These have been devastating things, at times; traumatic things, at times. So, with great compassion and understanding I say this. I realize it's a process to be free; it isn't just, "One, two, three, boom! You're free." No, it's a process of renewing and God is with us in the process, because this process is a breaking process, as you will see. It's a breaking process, it's a worship process. It's a submission process. It's a letting go process. It's getting off the throne of our life process. It's making an exchange from playing God to letting Him be God in our lives. It's a process of breaking. We don't just wake up in the morning and say, "I think I'm going to be broken today." You don't choose brokenness. It's a process. But, here's one thing to keep in mind: You're never more fully alive as when you're Biblically broken. Now, a natural view would be, "Man alive, I'm wounded, I'm crushed, I'm broken, I don't even know who I am." That's not brokenness. When you feel like a non-person, that's not brokenness. Biblical brokenness is submitting to the sovereignty of God, giving thanks in and for all things and inviting Him to do whatever He wants to do, no matter what the cost, no matter what the shame, no matter what the loss, no matter what, no matter what, because you want Him more than you want to be free. You want Him more than you want anything else. Now, we don't come to that overnight, do we? But as we come to that, that's the destination. We're going on right away, by the way. Not right away, but by the way, that's our destination. We'll talk more about that at the end, how fruit relates to this.

Are you what you've done? What you haven't done? What's been done to you? What's been said about you? Your parents? The shame of your family? Whether it's poverty, or somebody got in trouble with the law and went to jail, that's still in jail today? Maybe your father is in jail, maybe you never met your father. Maybe you were abandoned at an early age. Is that who you are? Fatherless? Your answer is not *a father*. Your answer is *The Father*. He will define you. I didn't learn how to father our children and be a husband to my wife through my earthly father. No shame, no blame; I just didn't learn it from Don Peterson. I learned it from The Father. Because, as I surrender to the Father and the Lord and the Savior in living my very

life, He, the Father, lives in me, to father our children through me. –To carry the Father’s heart for my wife and whomever. Because I’m a son who knows the Father’s heart and lives and gives the Father’s heart away.

Do you believe you’re the sum total of your life’s experiences or some defining part thereof? If so, you’re really believing in yourself. You’re putting confidence in that temporary part of you that I was talking about earlier called the flesh. Not flesh and blood, but that inclination to do and say things. Belief systems, habits, et cetera, rooted in trying to satisfy God-given appetites: food, sex, knowledge, status, pleasure, apart from God’s design; God’s terms. That inclination is the flesh. To satisfy that is sin, outside of God’s design. Putting confidence in the flesh, really making ourselves the final authority for deciding what’s true about us, we are putting our hope in ourselves.

So, how are we free? I don’t want this just to be a message of building awareness, building identification, building understanding, then walk out the door and say, “Well, that’s great, Steve, I understand things a whole lot better, but, what do I do?” Well, here is the “do.” And it isn’t just 1, 2, 3, the Nike approach, “Just do it,” and everything will be fine. It’s going to be a process. Here is where it starts.

Psalm 40:5 *Why so downcast, oh my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God.*

1 Peter 2:23-24 Nobody has been more rejected than Jesus. You know, I may not understand your rejection but He does and He cares. I care, but I couldn’t possibly understand what you have experienced. Maybe a little bit, but still falling short. But, just think of Jesus. *Mocked and reviled but answered not in return but entrusted Himself to Him Who judges fairly.* There it is in 1 Peter 2. He settled it at the extreme. He went to the cross before He went to the cross. He went to the cross in the garden of Gethsemane. He was submitted to His Father. He came to planet earth submitted to the Father’s mission. He doesn’t just show up and see what happens. Submitted on the mission. Submitted to His Father on a mission.

Do we have that kind of a mission mindset? Or we just get up every day and see what mood we’re in, how it’s going to go? See what we can get by with, pleasure, pain, principle? Or are we on a mission, submitted to our Father? Reject rejection. Receive your acceptance from Jesus.

I love the King James rendering of Ephesians 1:6: *To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein we are accepted in the beloved.*

Now, the person that's been used and abused and treated terribly, somehow, some way, sometimes they want something of value, just innately in themselves. Redemptively in themselves. They hear, "I'm accepted in the beloved" and, "Ooh, doesn't He accept me? Isn't there anything in me that He accepts?" Yes. If Jesus lives in you, He does.

So, God loves everybody. God doesn't accept everybody. Hear it loud and clear, near and far. God doesn't accept everybody. He only accepts those who are in the Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life. We are accepted in the acceptance of Jesus Christ. We are wrapped with His acceptability. We have no acceptance without His acceptance. We have no forgiveness without His forgiveness. But we have His love, but His love has made provision to save us, but His love will not save us without our participation.

That's where some religious cultures have missed the mark: "Just because God loves us, somehow, it's all gonna work out, right? Unless you're really bad." –There's no biblical basis for that. God is Love. God has given His life, what more could He give? But we've got a part to play. Not earning it, but first of all if we know we need rescuing, that helps. And when you know He's rescued you or paid that debt of sin you could have never paid, that helps. Because then you are surrendered to the King and you've got in your heart whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever you want. That makes all the difference. And we realize, like you've heard me say, I deserve to be burning in Hell today and that's not false humility. Apart from Jesus, I deserve to be burning in Hell. I'm so glad Jesus set me free! Amen! For angels to hear, for demons to hear, for fellow believers to hear, for the lost to hear, for those who don't know Jesus: I'm so glad Jesus set me free! Hallelujah! I am grateful.

It isn't a cultural thing. It's not a meeting thing. I'm the same person in every situation. In every situation and every situation I'm so glad Jesus set me free. Here, not just on Sundays. He that's been forgiven much, loves much. [laughter] I've been forgiven much. Abandon yourself to His love. His love, perfect love. A love that says: *I not only love you, but I care about you, John. I care about the details. I not only want to provide, I not only will provide, I want to provide. Whatever that might include. I'm the God of the want-to, I'm the God of care, I'm the God Who sees, I'm the God Who sees. Who saw the mistreatment of Hagar when Sarai sent her away. The God Who sees and cares.* He's that kind of a God, Who loves and

sees and cares and wants to take care of us. But He's not going to choose for us and He's going to allow us to live in this world that's a war zone and things are going to happen that are going to hurt and be painful and we won't always understand, but that brings us back to Him. If you haven't read books like *Lord, I Want to Know You* by Kay Arthur, if you haven't sought and found the tapes by A.W. Tozer on the attributes of God, and any books that he's written on the attributes of God, that would be a wonderful, steady diet for you to consume. Because then, in the midst of things that you don't understand, you come back to God. Lord, I'm banking on You. [laughter] I don't know what's going on here, but I'm banking on Your character, I'm banking on Your attributes. That's the backdrop, that's the forefront, You're my only hope! I don't know, but I submit to You. You rescued me a long time ago and I didn't deserve it. I can entrust my heart to You. Agree with God. Receive your sonship and your daughterhood. Receive His Abba Father.

You know, you don't have to be without a Daddy. Your daddy might be gone from planet earth one way or another, abandonment or in Heaven or maybe you don't know where daddy is. But you know, the best Daddy there is is available to you all the time. Until He's your Daddy, you're not free. No matter how wonderful your daddy was or is. Unless your Heavenly Daddy is your Daddy, you're not free. You're really not free to be who God invested you to be. Because you're going to be trying to prove yourself. You're going to be trying to get somebody else's acceptance, you're going to let somebody else have more power than they should. But when you know the Father's heart, wow. It doesn't demotivate you, it doesn't make you passive. You're more motivated than ever to step into the flow and live a wholehearted life for the glory of God and for the benefit of others. Agreeing with God about how uniquely made you are in Christ.

Notice what it says in Romans 12. In the first part of that it talks about, don't think too highly of yourself. Have a sober judgment of yourself. Agree with God about yourself, and then it goes on to talk about different gifts and the differences that make us up as a body and my takeaway from that is, there's different parts. Let's celebrate every part. I need other parts around me. You know, culturally, whether it's church or otherwise, there's kind of this mindset that we should be well-rounded as individuals. Well, I want to learn and grow from those around and be more sensitive for sure, relational. But you know, passion is passion. My stewardship, my passion is going to be different from yours, maybe. Maybe we will share some of the same things, but let's celebrate. Let's celebrate how we're made differently. Let's celebrate how we're gifted differently. Let's see that we need each other for this body. This

body and the Body to make a difference in the world today. Celebrating diversity with humility, releasing divine synergy. That's God's design.

And here we are at the conclusion. Rather than, "Well, I just need more love. I need more joy. Lord, give me more patience. Lord, give me more of this, give me more of that." That is not a Biblical perspective. It's sincere; no shame, no blame. The fruit of the Spirit, for those that are in Christ, for those that are born again of the Spirit of God, not cultural Christians, but convinced, compelled, contagious, sold-out, let it be no matter what the cost, "Lord, what would You have me do? I'm learning, I'm going!" And if you do go in the ditch of despair, get off the track, you don't isolate. Say, I need a fresh start, I need help. I don't know how it's all going to work out, but I'm not going to pull away. Rather than judging all of you as imperfect, (and we are), it's like, "I even need the imperfect body of Christ to see things that I need to see. I need everybody anything. I need what God allows in my life and brings in my life. Imperfect church, whatever the case may be, to show me things in me that I need to see, expose blind spots, sensitize me, have His way with me. Isn't that wonderful? God's design is perfect." When we isolate, we hurt ourselves against [inaudible] and then we don't see. But, the fruit of the spirit is love.

Love really describes it all, by the way. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. Gentleness. Goodness. Depending on your translation, meekness could be a part of it. Keep in mind what meekness is. Meekness isn't weakness. Meekness isn't "I'm going to try to control the outcome." I'm going to submit to the sovereignty of God. I'm going to participate, do my part, but I'm not going to control the outcome. The outcome is His. I'm not going to be outcome-based, I'm going to be obedience-based. Self control. Against such things there is no law. Now, those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires. Now, keep in mind that's not a final amen, it is finished, crucifying the flesh. Crucifying the flesh is a daily walk. The old man is dead, cemetery dead. The flesh is a daily walk. Not focusing on the flesh. I'll come back to a point on that as we conclude.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. I want to close with this, to put a practical test or example in front of you, in the form of a temptation. How do we respond to temptation? A temptation is a proposition to satisfy a God-given appetite in a non-God-approved way. –For food, sex, knowledge, status or pleasure. It's a proposition to satisfy that in a non-God-approved way. We all have that. If you're human, you have it. It's not sin; it's temptation. But what we

typically do, which exposes where we are in terms of what I've been talking about, what we typically do is we believe into our temptations. We believe into the fleshly lusts and desires. We believe into it and we—at least in part—believe that at least some of that is who I am. And as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. So, we will tend to live out of who we think we are.

So, here is the solution. Instead of saying No to temptation, no this, no that... I'm not saying don't resist it. I'm not saying we should visit the scenes of temptation. I'm not saying we should make provision for the flesh. I'm not saying we shouldn't run from youthful lusts. Let's say we've got a temptation in front of us. How about this. How about "yes" to the divine yes in us. The One Who is the yes and amen to all the promises of God, Who lives in us as our righteousness, as our holiness, as our self-control, as (fill in the blank). Yes to Christ in me, the hope of glory, in the face of temptation. Because if you focus on the temptation and try to overcome the temptation and beat yourself up because of the temptation, it will eventually wear you down and the enemy will get in there and he will lie to you and you will believe that's who you are. "See, you haven't changed! You're the sum total of your life's experiences! Or, some defining part thereof [inaudible] Who are you kidding, you're just a hypocrite. You don't feel like coming on Sunday mornings? Don't come. You don't feel like raising your hands? Don't raise your hands. You don't feel like worshiping? Don't do it, because you'll be a hypocrite if you do." I want to expose that as demonic logic. Jesus is worthy that we come whether we feel like it or not. Jesus is worthy that we give Him all the praise and honor whether we feel like it or not. In fact, that's a greater test, isn't it? That's a greater sacrifice. Bringing your sacrifice to the Lord. You don't feel like it, do it anyway as unto Him. [applause]

So, in conclusion [laughter] union life. Christ is my Lord. My Savior. My Father. My Friend. My Sufficiency. And I don't think we can come to the end of it, because of Who He is. Who is He? More than a Savior that saved you from Hell. More than a Savior Who gave you a ticket to Heaven; that's not even Biblical. He is The Savior. He is The Lord. He is Father. He is the Son of God. He is the Sufficient One. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is Life. Is He your life? Ah-hah, this is not cultural Christianity, is it? This is not "Pray the prayer, you're in. Don't you feel better?" Forget it. That's not it. That's not the real thing, is it? When you surrender to the King, the refining has just begun. Bring it on, Lord. Bring it on.

Lord, thank you for these wonderful people. Thank you for the opportunity we have, Lord, not to settle for cultural faith, cultural Christianity. Oh, no, no. Heaven forbid! You haven't called us to that. You've called us out of darkness into Your glorious light. You've rescued us from a destination and a damnation that was impossible for us to recover from and you did it. We've

been set free! Do we get it? Do we understand? Oh, Lord, no shame, no blame, turn on the lights, Lord! My words are inadequate. It's not a human persuasion thing. It's Your word, it's Your Spirit. But I pray that we will cooperate, open our hearts to you, and receive you as our life, and sufficiency, and see that the fruit of the Spirit comes out of this life. It's the bi-product. It's the evidence of this union life. Add the increase to it, Lord, as people come forward for prayer for this and for other things. Bless them, bless our day. As we take in new members after the service, bless that opportunity as well. May it mean more than ever, not just filling in some blanks, not just being a part of a church because that's the right thing to do, but what does it really mean to be a part of the body of Christ? I pray this has breathed fresh life and perspective into what it really means. Thank you, Lord. Add the increase we pray. We love you and praise you in Jesus' name, Amen.