

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
A More Glorious Obedience – Part 1
Taught by Bruce Bickel
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...and do something significant in ministry for the group. Get us a clock. {LAUGHTER} Anyway, a clock; we need clock. Now listen, we need to thank Sig. He does a great job. We do appreciate you. [AUDIENCE APPLAUSE] Lou, you want to take us in a moment of silence to prepare that we might know that he is God and be in a moment of silence. [MUSIC]

Great is your faithfulness, loving God. We just sit in silence, Father, just pondering the magnificence of your grace, the marvelous grace of our living Lord. We pray, Lord, that you would open our eyes this morning that we might understand the glorious arrangement we have through the doctrines of grace. To that end, we just thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to 2 Corinthians, working our way through this verse by verse, looking at triumphant living, based upon the theme in 2 Corinthians 2:14-15, ¹⁴"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing."

Our series title is called Triumphant Living, because it's based upon the grace of God. Today, we're going to talk about something that's really wonderfully important, and that is just the gloriousness of grace itself. There's a much more glorious arrangement than used to exist, and that is the glorious arrangement of grace.

We need to understand grace in terms of two other words—justice and mercy. Justice is getting all that you deserve. Justice is getting all that you deserve. The Old Testament and the New Testament basically say the same thing. The Old Testament says this, "The soul that sins shall die." The New Testament says, "The wages of sin is death." It's the same standard. The Old Testament standard has not changed with the New Testament standard. It's all of grace. It's one covenant of grace, has different expressions. Notice the old and the new. The old basically says this, "The soul that sins shall die," and the New says this, "The wages of sin is death." That's justice. Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Have any of you ever sinned? Why are you alive?

Audience Member: Mercy.

Mercy. Because you didn't get all that you deserve. Now we will have a death because we live in an unredeemed body, and that will die. Everybody has experienced God's mercy; it's just they don't know that, because they're not getting what they deserve. The moment a person takes its first breath in sin and not done by faith, they deserve to die. But God in his mercy, you see, does not give us all that we deserve. Then you come to grace. Grace, grace of our loving Lord. Marvelous grace. Grace is not getting what you deserve. You're getting what you don't deserve.

Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve. I want to take us to a passage today that Paul takes us away from last week. The last couple of weeks we've been talking about obedience that we had in our own strength, walking in our own strength, thinking that I had the resources to be obedient.

We began to realize there were certain indicators of trusting yourself as opposed to trusting Christ, and those were, you'll see on your handout today, those were measuring by externals, maintaining by rules, marked by spiritual death and motivated by guilt. Those are the four areas that are really indicators that you're really trusting yourself. They don't have anything to do with salvation, per se. It doesn't indicate that you're saved or not saved. What we're saying is there's a tendency in our humanness to revert back to thinking that I have all the resources that I can handle things myself. Those barometers or indicators that are little red flags that say you might be trusting yourself more than you should, and that would be, first of all, would be measuring by externals, and then maintaining by rules, and then marked by spiritual death, and then motivated by guilt.

Today we come to a passage where Paul makes a transition from that mindset to now understanding a more glorious arrangement of obedience through grace, through the grace of God. We pick this up today at 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, ⁷“But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading *as* it was, ⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? ⁹For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. ¹⁰For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses *it*. ¹¹For if that which fades away *was* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory. ¹²Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech, ¹³and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; ¹⁶but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.”

Paul gives us some wonderful instruction here on the much more glorious arrangement known as the glory of gracious obedience. Paul basically says here, there's a contrast between that arrangement that came through the law, which he refers to as that which was fading away, and that which is more glorious, which is now the understanding of obedience through grace.

Both of these are from God. The old covenant and the new covenant are both from God. They're both glorious. We need to understand that. They have their own particular position in that whole covenant of grace. One was to fade away to introduce the other one. That's what Paul is talking about. He's referring to Moses, when Moses came down off Mt. Sinai, where the law was instituted. His face was shining because he'd been in the presence of Lord. After a while, he put a veil on his face because the glory was fading. In other words, one of the contrasts that we have between the old covenant and the new company is one of permanence. One is fading and one is permanent. That's the contrast that he's talking about.

The Gospel of grace is more glorious, he tell us, because the arrangement was external, not like the old covenant, it was external, this is internal. The old covenant was external and temporary. This is now internal and permanent. That's the difference. One was external and temporary, and now the other one is internal and permanent. That's the difference that he's talking about.

Let's take a look at this new arrangement known as the arrangement of gracious obedience. He described it in terms of the fading from the face of Moses, which was the old arrangement, and the new arrangement was one that was internal, where God writes the law of God on your heart. Now we need to understand that obedience is required in both arrangements, in the old and in the new. The difference is where are the resources to be obedient? That's what Paul is talking about now. One fades away because it was temporary. The other is permanent because it's internal. As we've seen in Ezekiel

36, God writes the law of God on our heart, which now makes it permanent because it's written in your heart, as opposed to being external and only temporary. The real contrast is that which is external and temporary versus that which is internal and permanent.

Notice the difference. The new arrangement is a glory which does not fade. The more glorious obedience is one that does not fade. For the mediator of the new covenant is Christ himself. Look at Hebrews 7:24, "but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently." In other words, Christ fulfilled the priesthood of God permanently, on a permanent basis. Our contrast is one of temporary versus one of permanence.

Now consider the implications for us, of a permanent gracious arrangement. Several things we need to understand about this arrangement of grace as it applies to our obedience. First of all, it's an everlasting covenant. The word covenant means arrangement. We have a covenant arrangement that is everlasting. Look at Revelation 14:6 for your cross reference. That means this—the message doesn't change. The message of the Gospel of grace never changes because it's an eternal permanent covenant. Charles Spurgeon said this, "I will not commit treason against truth and change the content of Gospel." I will not commit treason against truth. The reason he said that is because the everlasting covenant, the message doesn't change. Our message is always going to be the same thing. It's about the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ and repentance and faith. That does not change because of the eternal, permanent covenant.

The second implication would be this. It's an everlasting covenant. Hebrews 13:20. The arrangement doesn't change. The arrangement that you and I have through the grace of God doesn't change. The message doesn't change and the arrangement doesn't change because it's based upon God's grace, not based upon you and me and our activities.

Thirdly, it's an everlasting salvation (Hebrews 5:9). In other words it depends upon him, not on you and me. We have an everlasting message, an everlasting arrangement and we have an everlasting salvation. You can't lose your salvation because you didn't earn it. It's something that God gave us in grace—gave us something that we didn't deserve.

Then lastly, it's an everlasting consolation (2 Thessalonians 2:16). We have an eternal comfort. Those are all implications of the difference between that which was temporary and external—the law—versus that which is internal and permanent, which is grace. They're both all of grace, but one fades and the other now is permanent.

He now gives us some great insights into a far more glorious arrangement known as the glorious arrangement of grace. I want you to see the four insights that he gives us in these particular verses. First of all, there's the glory of grace, then you see the hope of grace, we see the freedom of grace and we see the transformation by grace.

First of all, let's take a look at the hope of grace. You'll see that in verse 12. As a result of the permanence of grace, we have hope. It's because the new arrangement is permanent that you and I can have hope. Because it's an everlasting covenant, you and I can have hope because it doesn't change. It's not going to change. The foundation of our hope is the realization that Christ accomplished it and you and I didn't. He achieved the means of your relating to God and you and I didn't. He did that. That's the covenant arrangement. So therefore, you and I have hope because of that.

Look at Romans 5:1-2. I want you to see something about our hope. ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of

God.” (Romans 5:1-2) You see, we have hope because of the doctrines of grace. Paul is telling us this—that the great hope you have is because Christ accomplished your salvation, you and I did not, and therein lies our hope because he met all the demands of the original law and he fulfilled the law and you get credit for that. That’s what it means when you’re justified by faith.

Remember, justification is a statement that God makes about you when he gives you the sinless perfection and perfect obedience credit for what Christ accomplished, you get credit for that and God looks at you differently. That’s what Romans 5 is saying when it says, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Now as a result of that peace, notice in which you stand. You and I now stand in grace. You and I are not moving in and out of grace; you stand in grace. As Paul says, “through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace.” (Romans 5:2) You now understand that you’ve been introduced into grace by faith because you’ve been justified. Therein lies your hope. Our hopes lies in the fact that God has accomplished our salvation in this permanent arrangement known as grace.

Let me show you something that’s very interesting. I want you to see that not only is Christ involved in our salvation and in our hope, but also God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Turn with me to Romans 15:13. We need to understand, brothers, that you and I have what would I call a Trinitarian salvation. God the Father ordained it, God the Son accomplished it and God the Holy Spirit applied it to you. What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies. You and I have a Trinitarian salvation. When were you saved? When did you come to saving faith? When the Father ordained that before the foundation of the world. You were chosen before the foundation of the world. When was it accomplished? When Christ accomplished your salvation at the cross. He didn’t make it possible for you to believe; he accomplished it so that you would believe. What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies. That’s why we have the Gospel message and the doctrine of grace does not change. It’s an everlasting covenant. The message doesn’t change and we don’t commit treason against truth. It is the same message. It never changes because of this arrangement.

Notice Romans 15:13. I want you to see the involvement in our hope—that God the Father is involved in our hope, God the Holy Spirit is involved in our hope, and we saw in Romans 5:1 that Christ is involved in our hope. Take a look Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope,” there’s the Father, “fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Where is the source of our hope? It’s not in our circumstances. It’s not in our happenings. It’s in the fact that God the Father is the author of hope because of the doctrines of grace. God the Son is involved in your hope because he accomplished it for us. And now the Holy Spirit applies this hope.

The very first thing that Paul says, the difference between the old style of obedience, where you and I had to depend upon our own resources, now you have the hope because Christ has accomplished it, and you and I now have the hope of grace. You see, this new arrangement is one of hope. If you’re in Christ, guess what you are in. You are in what? You’re in hope. If you are in Christ, you are in hope. Your hope comes because you’re in Christ, not because of the things going on around the world.

Remember what you used to be? Look at Ephesians 2:12. The Scripture makes it very, very clear that non-believers have no hope because they are without God. Go to Ephesians 2:12. Here’s a description of what you were before you were in Christ, “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Now there is the best definition of a non-believer. They have no hope. Do you realize that? When you’re in Christ, you are in hope. When you are not in Christ, you are not in hope. You have no hope because you do not have God. They are without God and have no hope.

There's a consequence of not having a saving relationship to God through the person and work of Christ, and that is this—you have no hope. What Paul is telling us here, the marvelous thing about the glorious doctrines of grace is this. You are now standing in, you've been introduced to grace, and you're now standing in it and you don't move in and out of it. It's there because of the power of the Holy Spirit. The first insight he gives us is that this is a new arrangement, is one of absolute hope because you're in Christ.

“Where there is no hope,” as one Puritan says this, “where there is no hope, there is no faith, because the nature of hope is to expect what faith believes. Hope is never ill when faith is well.” Hope is never ill when faith is well. You see, if you are in Christ, you are now in hope. If you're not in Christ, you do not have any hope. That's the definition that Paul is teaching us. He teaches us that in Ephesians.

Those people who have no hope, I think all we can say is come to Christ. See Christ. Come to him. I would suggest the words of Peter—he says it better than I can—“Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” For somebody who does not hope, you can't change the situation. All you can do is introduce them to Christ. When Christ is revealed to them, should God be pleased to grant them saving faith, he introduces them to the doctrines of grace. One of the gracious things that he will introduce them to is the doctrine of hope because they'll be in Christ. Peter's words again, “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” You see, guys, hope is a person. Hope is a person. It's not events. It's not happenings. The first thing Paul says is when you contrast your own style of obedience, thinking that you have the resources to do it, realize this—you've been introduced to hope because you're in Christ, and now you have to realize that hope is really a person. So fix your eyes upon Christ.

When you and I are feeling hopeless, and we do that...there are times you get surrounded by the situations of life...Peter's answer is right, “Fix your hope on Christ.” The more you understand Christ, the more you're going to understand what it means to stay in hope. The first indication that Paul tells us is the glorious doctrine of glorious obedience in the new covenant is this—it is the glory of hope. You and I have hope because we're in Christ.

Then go to verse 17. There's the freedom of grace. We've seen the hope of grace. Let's take a look at the glory of grace, now let's take a look at the freedom of grace. We saw the glory of grace is that it is permanent, and it's internal as opposed to being external and temporary. That's the glory of grace. The hope of grace is that it's found in the person and work of Christ in which you are introduced. Now let's come down to verse 17 and look at the freedom of grace.

Notice the next feature of this new arrangement is a result of turning to Christ and having the veil removed from your eyes, the veil of blindness. That's removed from one's mind and heart. Notice verse 16, “but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” This is a reference to Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai when he wore the veil because he wanted to cover up the fact that glory was fading. Now see, the glory doesn't fade in the new arrangement because of the completed work of the person and work of Christ. That's when we discover the true liberty or the true freedom we have.

Remember when I told you a couple of weeks ago that I went to Israel and toured the Holy Land? On the Sabbath, I asked a gentleman to push a button on the elevator floor so I could go to the sixth floor of the hotel. He said, “I can't do that. Shabbat,” because he would violate the law. Another gentleman I asked if he would change a dollar bill for me so I could get my wife a Diet Coke, and he said, “Shabbat,” which meant I can't do that because it will violate the law.” You see, what Paul is saying is that fades away. Now Christ has completed all the obedience to the law and you and I get credit for his obedience when we fix our eyes upon Christ and we are now involved in the hope of grace. That doesn't mean it

gives us license to be sloppy. It now gives us a motivation to want to be obedient because of the accomplishments of Christ. That's what Paul is referring to here when he's saying that the freedom of grace comes when you fix your eyes on Christ, you're set free from all the law of having to keep it yourself. You now have the resources to do it in Christ.

The freedom of grace is that Christ has accomplished all the obedience the law requires. That's the freedom we have. It is now ours in him. When you and I are trusting him, we get credit for all of his obedience in keeping the law. In reality, the believer is the only free person. Do you realize that? A believer in Christ is the only real free person. Paul says it this way in Galatians 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery." In other words, don't get put back into measuring by externals, maintaining by rules, marked by spiritual death or motivated by guilt. Don't get back into that realm. You've been set free because of grace. You now are trusting the person and work of Christ who accomplished all the requirements of the law, and you get credit for that.

That doesn't give us license. It means it's a motivation that we want to please him. Obedience, for us, is really pleasing the Lord. That's why John 14:1 says, "If you love me, you'll obey my commandments." You see, obedience now in the realm of grace is internal. You have an internal desire to want to be obedient because you want to please the Lord because you understand what grace is. You realize that you get credit for all of his obedience, and what you want to do is you want to demonstrate that with an expression of gratitude, an attitude of gratitude, that says I want to please the Lord. And so you have a different motivation for obedience. It used to be external and fading; now it's internal and permanent.

You have this internal desire to want to please the Lord. It doesn't mean you're always going to do it. But we know that...we're not motivated by guilt. You can ask the Lord to forgive you and get off your butt and do it again. The real test of our maturity is not whether or not we fail, it's how quickly we get up when we do fail, because we are all going to fail. That's the doctrine of grace. That's the hope of grace. It's the glory of grace. It's also the freedom of grace.

We've been set free, not to please ourselves, but you've been set free now to please the Lord. Freedom is not the right to do as you please; freedom is the responsibility to do as you should. It's not the right to do as you please; it's the responsibility to do as you should.

Look at the word responsibility. It's made up of two words—response and ability. A person who's responsible is response-able. They're able to response. How is it that you and I are now able to respond? We are now able to respond because of grace. God gave us that which we don't deserve. You and I now...we become aggressive responders because we know what's required of us, we want to do what's required of us and you now have the resources known as grace to help you do that. A person who is responsible is response-able. It is knowing and doing what's expected of you.

Sig: Was Moses feeling...I'm not sure what the right word is...was Moses feeling guilty about the fading glory so he veiled his face so the people wouldn't think less of him or that something was wrong?

Well that's a possibility. I don't know, but I think that's certainly one of the possibilities, that he was trying to cover it up because he knew that it was fading, and he did not want them to know that the fading glory was going to dissipate. That's all by design, you see, because it was teaching us that the old covenant was fading and part of a new covenant that was going to be permanent. So there's a contrast here. We really don't know what Moses was feeling. All we know is he was covering up because he didn't want people to see the fading glory that he did have when he was in the presence of the Lord.

You and I now have a glory that doesn't fade because we're in the presence of the Lord all the time because God is what? Omnipresent. You see, that's why we really shouldn't say, "We now come into your presence," or "Take me into your presence." Where do you think you've been? {LAUGHTER} You see, God is omnipresent. You're always with him. We need to rejoice that we're always in the presence of God.

We've been set free to become responsible. You see, now we have the capability to be responsible, but that responsibility is defined basically as knowing and doing what's expected of me. I now have the desire to want to please the Lord. That becomes the focus of my obedience. It's not to achieve any merit. There's no merit in our obedience. You don't get credit for the merit, because, "Oh, he's a wonderful guy." What you're doing now is you're expressing your love for God because you have a different desire to want to be obedient to the law. The law is still in effect. It's been accomplished by the person and work of Christ who fulfilled the law. You get credit for his obedience, his sinless perfection and perfect obedience. That's justification. And now you have a different desire that's internal, that says I want to please the Lord and obey the law. Now it's a different motivation as opposed to being motivated by guilt. We've been set free to become responsible. Responsibility means the ability to respond. When situations occur in your life, you can trust the grace of God because you now have the ability to respond differently because of internal motivation.

That's why sometimes I get concerned, friends, about all the politicians who talk about our personal rights. I wish somebody would talk about our responsibilities. You see, the reason people's rights are violated is because people act irresponsibly. If we were to act responsibly, people's rights would not be violated. But all the time you hear about my rights this, my rights that, my rights this, my rights that. I wish some politician would say, "Let's not talk about rights anymore. Let's talk about your responsibilities to live a life." That's what Paul is teaching us. You now have the grace of God that frees you up to be responsible. Don't worry about your rights. You gave up all your rights when you trusted Christ anyway. All those rights now become responsibilities that are motivated internally by a desire to please God. "If you love me, you'll obey my commands."

Tom: *Overriding all of this is still the doctrine of grace. If we, in our humanness and sinfulness, fail to live up to expectations, we always have grace.*

That's what Romans 5 says. You've been introduced to grace, to be able to stand in it. Go back to Romans 5 and take a look at that. That's an important feature. You've been justified by faith. In other words, God declares you sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient. That's how God looks at you now. He looks at you radically different. You've been justified by faith. We have peace. The consequence of justification is peace. You now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The reason you have a peaceful relationship and have hope is because of the accomplishments of Christ. You've trusted Christ and God now declares you differently than you were before. He looks at you differently. That's justification. "Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace" (Romans 5:2b) How is you're introduced into grace. It's through the person and work of Christ. "In which we stand." (Romans 5:2c) Where is it you and I are standing? You and I are standing in grace. He doesn't say you're moving in and out of it. You're stuck in it. You're standing in it because you've been justified.

When you fail, you don't step outside of grace. No, you failed in grace. That's why John tells us, "If you confess your sins he is faithful and just to cleanse us of our sins and cleanse of us of all unrighteousness." We know how to handle our guilt. We just need to make sure we're not motivated by guilt. You see, that's what grace does. You're standing in grace. You don't move in and out of that. Remember John 10, "No one can snatch them out of my hand"? You see, you're in grace. You're standing in it. That's important to understand. You're surrounded by grace. You're standing in grace.

There's the glory of grace, there's the hope of grace and there's the freedom of grace. You're standing in it because of the grace of God.

Audience Member: *In verse 5 it says, "Hope does not put us to shame." I always wondered about that. What is that?*

In Romans 5?

Audience Member: *Right there. Yeah, in Romans 5:5, "and hope does not put us to shame because God loves us and has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."*

In other words, the shame comes when you and I feel a sense of guilt. That's when we feel ashamed. I blew it. Now, what he's saying is that the grace is there. It does not overcome the fact that we were disobedient. But it changes the understanding of it because you know that that sin has been paid for because of the love of God. So therefore, you do not have the guilt of that. You still have the hope of that because you know you're standing in grace. You've got to take verse 5 and look back to verse 1 because it's basically saying you're standing in grace. That's the critical thing, where you're standing in. That's why you have the hope does not give us despair. So yes, we might fail, but it does not lead us to despair because you're standing in grace. That's the marvelous thing about grace. Grace, grace of our loving Lord. It's so marvelous because it surrounds us and you're standing in it. That okay? Does that make sense?

Dick: *Bruce, so as we have moved from justification and we still are sinners, but we're standing in grace, so we don't work ourselves out of that sin, we accept the grace and we repent. God and his Spirit through us is placing on our heart a desire of repentance to love God more.*

Correct.

Dick: *So, most of us, even followers of Christ, even as we sin, we feel like we have fallen out of standing in grace and we're not.*

Correct.

Dick: *Once we are justified, we're always in grace.*

Correct.

Dick: *And we live that victorious life because of that.*

That's right. It doesn't mean that we live sinlessly perfect lives. 1 John tells us, "If you say you've not sinned you're a liar and there's no truth in you." We're not talking about sinless perfection. We're talking about the arena in which you and I now reside. We now are standing in grace. It's the grace of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Therein lies your resources. What Paul is saying is more glorious than the older arrangement, which was fading away. That was external and temporary; this is now internal and permanent. The grace has been written on your hearts. Ezekiel 36, "I will put my laws in their heart and cause them to be obedient." You see, that's what regeneration is. It takes the heart of stone, removes it, replaces with a heart of flesh, and he gives us a new desire in our life. That desire is called grace, because you're standing in it.

The important thing is to realize this. Romans 5:1 is critical. You've got realize what you're standing in. You're standing in grace. That's permanent. That's the contrast of the fading from Moses' face. The old

was fading. This one is permanent. It's internal and permanent versus external and temporary. That's the glory of grace. We stand in that. We just need to realize therein lies our hope. If you're in Christ, you are in? Grace. You're in grace. You're in hope. We are not hopeless.

That's why Peter's words are so critical, "Fix your eyes upon Christ." When you feel hopeless, what do you do? You don't try to change the situation, you fix your eyes upon Christ and understand again what does it mean that I'm standing in grace. You need to go back and look at WHJD, "What house Christ done?" He's accomplished that so that I'm standing in grace. That's why the maturity of the Christian faith is not if you succeed or fail. It's how quickly you get up when you do fail, because you know this. I'm standing in grace. The glory of grace, the hope of grace and the freedom of grace. You've been set free from trusting yourself anymore. You now have the responsibility just to trust Christ and his grace because that's what you're standing in. It's a marvelous concept to realize what we're standing in and that is that we're standing in grace.

Audience Member: *A contrast of that is, that might be helpful, too, is if you're not in grace, then you're standing in condemnation. It might be an evangelical tool to really witness to others, and too, just remind yourself over and over and over again there is no condemnation in Christ.*

That's a good point. Excellent. That's Romans 8:1, "No condemnation for those of us who" obey the law. No, for those of us who what?

Audience Member: *Are in Christ.*

Are in Christ. Christ obeyed the law. You're in Christ. Guess what? You obey the law. You're just now living that out in your life in our frailty. That means everything that I do is tainted because of my own sinfulness. It's tainted. But you get credit for it. That's the marvelous grace. You're either in grace or you're in condemnation. You're either in hope or you're lost. You see, there are only two kinds of people in the world—those who are with God and in hope and those who are without God and have no hope. Hope is found in a person, not in events or circumstances.

Sig: *You know, Bruce, these last few weeks, it seems like you've taken away all the obstacles or the excuses or the roadblocks. I think, when you said you're stuck in grace, a lot of times I feel stuck in a situation, in a job responsibility or with a person. But if I'm stuck in grace, how bad could that be?*

Let's use the word stand in grace as opposed to stuck. {LAUGHTER} Standing has a bit more of a clarity, biblical understanding than stuck. Sometimes stuck says I'm in here and can't get out of it. That's not the context.

Sig: *I don't want to get out of it!*

Then use the word stand.

Sig: *Okay.*

That's what I'm saying. Use the word...you're standing in grace, you're not stuck in grace. Stuck in grace has a negative connotation. Standing means it's a positive thing. Essentially what Paul is telling us is this. We've been set free because of grace. You've been set free to have the ability to respond differently because of grace. That's what it means to be responsible. You have the ability now to respond differently because of grace that you didn't beforehand. It doesn't mean you're going to know everything to do right now. That's why you trust Christ at the moment, because you know you're standing in grace and you're surrounded in that.

Paul is saying in contrast there is the glory of grace, there's the hope of grace and there's the freedom of grace. You've been set free now to have a different desire to please the Lord because you're standing in grace all the time.

There's one more we need to take a look at, and that would be in verse 18. That's the transformation by grace. The last feature of this more glorious arrangement is really a summary of the first three, which would be the glory of grace, that it's permanent and internal. Secondly the hope of grace because we are standing in hope. If you're in Christ, you're in hope. Thirdly, it's the freedom of grace. You've been set free to have a different response because of the grace you're standing in. And now the transformation of grace is a combination of all three of those.

The magnificence of this whole relationship of grace is we are being conformed to the image of Christ. All of this is really conforming us to the image of Christ. In other words, the longer we are in our relationship to Christ and fix our eyes upon Christ, the more we're going to look like him and be conformed into his image. That's the transformation of grace. Paul states it this way in 1 Corinthians 15:49, "And just as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall now also bear the image of the heavenly." You see, because you're standing in grace, do you know what's happening to you? You are beginning to be transformed to the image of Christ.

Audience Member: *I just wanted to ask about, just even with grace. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul had a thorn in the flesh and he said, "Lord, Lord, please take this away," and he said, "My grace is sufficient for you." You had mentioned negative connotation, and I just wanted to ask, the word "extra" that people put on the word "grace," like when you hear "extra grace," or "extra grace required," like when I hear that, like I had someone say, "I prayed for extra grace for you." Could you just share your thoughts on the extra grace?*

You can't add any extra to that which is already perfect. You can't add to it. It's just grace. It doesn't say you need extra grace. It says, "My grace is sufficient." Grace is God giving himself to you, so you can't add anything extra to that. It's like the same thing that people say, "I want God's perfect will." What does that imply?

Audience Member: *There's an imperfect will.*

There's a new one or you could get less than perfect. That's an offense to God because God is known as perfect. He only has one will. It's perfect. Or people say, "I want God's best for my life." I have a friend who's never been married. He's about 45 years old and every time I talk to him, "I'm waiting for God's best." Well, does that mean God could give you less than his best? "Well, I just want what is...I want God's best. I don't want any second rate." God doesn't do second rate best. He only has one best, and that's himself. So there's only one grace. There's not extra grace. Grace is complete because it's from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Let's take a look at this transformation by grace. We are being transformed to look like the image of Christ. We're being transformed to be conformed to his image. That's what you and I have to look forward to. As we go through the crucible of life, you realize because you're standing in grace, the formation of all of the intricacies of your life and the difficulties of your life are conforming you to look like Christ.

The Apostle John states it this way, "Behold, now we are children of God and has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when he appears, "Christ appears, "we shall be like him because we shall see him just as he is." Do you realize, friends, that your earthly relationship to Christ right now is a

foretaste of what it's going to be like when he returns? When you see him, you're going to see a reflection of yourself. Now I can't even understand that. When I look at myself and say, "How in the world is that possible?" That's only possible because of grace. It's only possible because of grace. All of life is conforming us to the image of Christ.

Let me just show you a contrast. John Calvin said this, "The design of the Gospel is that the image of God which has been defaced by sin may be repaired within us." That's transformation. When the Gospel of grace takes its place in our heart, you and I are being conformed, and what we're doing, the Gospel of grace is a demonstration of the transformation of a person's life. It really is the doctrine of grace, we are returning to the image of God that he made us to be.

Let me give you a contrast. Here's what the world's going to say. This is very interesting. Here's what the world says that you are. We just saw what both Paul and John said that you and I will be like—transformed to the image of Christ. We could spend a whole lot of time on that. What does that look like? What does that mean? It just means that you're taking on the character, the nature and the attributes of Christ himself. That's why it's so important you and I understand the 28 attributes of God. There are certain ones of those we can never take on, but there are others that we will be conformed to the image of Christ. You're beginning to look more Christ-like.

Here's what the world says about you. According to the Mayo Clinic, our present body equals 1,200 eggs, enough iron for two ten-penny nails, enough phosphorus for 400 matches, enough fat for 75 candles, enough fat and cholesterol for one cake of soap, enough hydrogen to fill one balloon. Our body contains 60 spoonful's of salt, one bowl of sugar, 6 gallons of water, enough lime to whitewash one chicken coop, enough potassium to explode one toy canon, and enough sulfur in your body to rid one dog of fleas. {LAUGHTER} That's what the world says that our body is.

Because of grace, you're being transformed to look like the image of Christ. Look at the contrast. That's what says our body is. Because you're standing in grace, something magnificent and supernatural is happening. You are actually being transformed to be conformed to look like the image of Christ. That doesn't mean that we're going to be perfectly Christ-like. It does mean this—you're taking on the circumstances or the attributes of the one your eyes are fixed upon because you're standing in grace. You see, that's transformation. That is a process that we go through in our life.

What Paul is saying here is it's really important for us to understand that obedience now has always been the requirement of the law, and always the requirement of the new covenant. Obedience is the requirement. The law is still active. The difference is by trying to obey the law in my efforts, which will fade, am I trying to keep the law in my own strength, which is external and temporary, but I'll do and I won't and I'll do it and I won't, I'll do it and I won't? Paul is saying there's a new arrangement. It's known as the arrangement of grace, a much more glorious obedience, because you have the glory of grace. It is now internal and it's permanent versus external and temporary. There's the hope of grace because when you're in Christ, you're in hope. There's the freedom of grace. You've been set free to be responsible, to respond differently because of grace, because you're standing in it. His grace is sufficient for all things. Lastly, you're being transformed by grace to take on the very image of the one who you love. Your body is not going to be a bowl of soap or 400 candles. When the Lord returns, you're going to be exactly looking just like him. You're going to see him as he is, and you're going to see yourself as a reflection of who he is. That's transformation by grace.

Audience Member: *Summarizing what you're saying, if you liken the hope of grace to a container of purple dye, we are whitewashed. Put yourself in that purple dye [UNCLEAR] have someone put you in—Jesus. Right? You are now in Christ and then that purple dye gets into that [UNCLEAR], and he cannot do it on its own, and it takes on the attributes of purple dye.*

Good. Good illustration. Do you understand the difference now between that which was external and temporary versus that which is internal and permanent? Do you understand the difference? Remember this. Obedience under the law is required. Obedience in grace is provided. There's your difference. Obedience under the law is required. Obedience in grace is given to you. It's provided. That's what grace does. Remember this, guys. You're standing in grace. You don't move in and out of it. The struggle for us is how do I live according to the doctrines of grace. That's why it's so important that we understand what Paul is teaching us. Let's pray.

Father, thank you that when you return, we will just not be a bar of soap, or we won't have enough potassium to rid one dog of fleas, but rather, we will be a reflection of you and all of your glory and all of your majesty. We thank you for the doctrines of grace. We thank you for the law. We thank you that the law required obedience. And we thank you that grace provides the obedience in the person and work of Christ. Grace, grace of our marvelous Lord. Father, just have our minds be focused upon Christ. Help us realize what it means to be standing in grace, and that we have all the resources that we need to please you. Just give us a heart to be response-able to be able to respond with a motivation to please you because of what you've done. Remind us, Father, of what Christ has done for us that we might be responsible agents and live according to his grace. For Jesus' sake, and all the Brave Men said...Amen!!