

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
A More Glorious Obedience – Part 2
Taught by Bruce Bickel
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Gracious Lord, we ponder the magnificence of the cross, as we come into this season, as we remember your sacrifice and what has Jesus done. May our minds be reflected upon the value, the significance and the importance of the cross in our lives. Apart from that father, we would be lost, we would be damned to eternity, and Father, we would be strictly relying upon our own resources. But because of the wonders of the cross, you have redeemed us, you have saved us and brought us into a saving relationship with you through your Son. To that end, Father, we pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Turn in your Bibles please to 2 Corinthians. We are looking at chapter 3. The last couple of weeks, we have been discussing obedience. Now as we've been looking at both the old covenant and the new covenant, the covenant of grace, which has two expressions to it—and older and a new, but all of it is of grace—we've seen two kinds of obedience. There is the obedience that is referred to as the old covenant obedience, where basically you depended upon your own resources. "If you obey, I will be your God," which meant that when you didn't obey, he wasn't your God. The whole emphasis of obedience in the old covenant was dependent upon your own resources. You had to have your own resources and you had to achieve that.

We've been talking recently about new covenant obedience, which is more glorious. The contrasts are the old covenant obedience, where I'm depending upon myself and my own resources. We have the tendency to measure by externals, and then we maintain by rules and we are marked by spiritual death and we're motivated by guilt. That's when we try to be obedient upon our own strength, thinking that I can make the difference. So we have those indicators or barometers of our not trusting the Lord and his grace.

Last week we looked at a more gracious style of obedience, and that is trusting the completed work of the person and work of Christ, who accomplished all the law. The law is still in effect. We are now trusting the one who kept the law, the primary law keeper, who is Christ himself. As we walk by faith, we get credit for his obedience to the law and we are justified by faith when we are given credit for his sinless perfection and perfect obedience.

Last week we saw the glory of grace, we saw the hope of grace, we saw the freedom of grace and we saw the transformation of grace. That would be 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. The contrast was there's a more glorious kind of obedience. That is the obedience that we find in the doctrines of grace, where we see that God gives us what we don't deserve. Now we get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience, that Christ kept the law, we get credit for that. That's a far more glorious arrangement than it is trying to do it in our own self.

One of the things that we have as a result of that is hope. Go to 2 Corinthians 3:12-17, "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," there is freedom.

Now there's your contrast. One is the ministry that is far more glorious is the ministry of grace. I want you to notice the word hope. Essentially, we can see here, the word therefore is referring back to what we talked about last week, and that would be the glory of grace, the hope of grace, the freedom of grace and the transformation by grace. He says, "Therefore you have hope." The reason you and I have hope is because of the grace of God. We don't have hope because of the circumstances changing around us; we have hope because we understand this glorious, more glorious arrangement of obedience is one of all grace that God gives us. As we trust the person and work of Christ, we have hope.

The word hope does not mean wishful thinking. It means confident expectation that it will occur. It's a confident expectation. That's far different than just thinking, "I wish I could," or "I hope I can." There's a deep-rooted sense of confidence, a deep sense of confident expectation that what I'm hoping in is going to come to fruition and into reality. I want you to notice where our hope lies. One of the first evidences of our understanding a glorious new covenant obedience is the way that we talk about it. Notice, "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."

One of the ways you could look at that is we have ministry without masks. You see, we have a ministry without masks, and that's manifested by the way that we talk about our saving faith. We have a great sense of hope, great expectation, that what we talk about will come to fruition, so we can have a sense of boldness.

The word boldness is an interesting word. We have boldness in our speech. The word boldness literally means absence of fear in speaking. Absence of fear in speaking. Let's be honest, when you have an opportunity to share your faith either publicly or privately or just one-on-one, what goes through your mind? Do we have this sense of boldness in our speech that there's the absence of fear in our speech. Or do all sorts of things go through your mind and saying, "Well I better do it right. What if don't use the right verse? Somebody else could do this better than I could. How come I'm in this situation? I really don't feel confidence. I don't know what to say. I don't feel confident being up in front of somebody publicly." There are all sorts of things that go through out mind.

Notice what Paul is saying. Because of our understanding of the more glorious understanding of a gracious obedience, you and I can have boldness in our speech because we have hope. We have a confident expectation that what I'm going to say is going to bring glory to God, build the kingdom and therefore, I can use boldness of speech.

Boldness of speech does not mean that you beat somebody over the head with your Bible. I'm not talking about that. Boldness means the absence of fear. When you're talking and sharing your faith, you can actually have an absence of fear as you're sharing your faith, however that may be. That's what Paul is talking about when he says, "Therefore." It's our understanding of a far more gracious style of obedience, that obedience that depends upon ourselves, where we measure by externals, we're maintained by rules, we're marked by spiritual death and we're motivated by guilt.

You see, Paul is saying you don't need to be motivated by guilt anymore, because it really doesn't depend upon you. You see, the results are not dependent upon you. The results are depending upon the grace of God so that you have the freedom in Christ to speak boldly without fear. It doesn't mean that you've [UNCLEAR] somebody, you beat him over the head. It means that when you are speaking, you can do it with a great sense of sensitivity, calmness and confidence because you have hope in the person and work of Christ. You see, our hope is in a person. That means the results are really something that God does through us. We are just the means or the vessel by which we are speaking the truth.

Paul is saying, "You're not like Moses." You see, Moses, when he came down off of Mt. Sinai, because he'd been in the presence of the Lord, his face shined because he had been in God's presence. He put this veil on his face because the farther he went away, the longer he was away, it began to fade. He didn't want the nation of Israel to see that it was fading. There's a fading glory. Now there's a picture there of our attempting to be obedient in our own strength is a fading glory. You and I can have a ministry without masks. You don't need to put something over your face and wear a mask.

How often times do we wear masks? Be honest. We want people to perceive us a certain way, so we put up this mask and we hide all those things and our vulnerability and our insecurities because we think that our vulnerability and our insecurities are going to hinder our ministry so we wear a mask. Somebody says, "How are you?" "Oh, I'm doing great. God is good, isn't he?" That might be your response, but inside you're just dying. There's something deep inside of you that's just eating you alive, and yet, we wear the mask and say, "Oh, I'm fine."

All I'm saying is that you have hope. You and I can have a hope and a boldness of our speech that we can talk about our faith life and do that with a great sense of confident expectation that God will receive the glory because it's all up to him. You and I are just the means by which you're giving away what somebody else has given you. That's been our definition of ministry for 17 years. It's just giving away to someone else what God has given you.

Paul is saying this; you have a hope. You have a hope because you understand a more gracious obedience because of the accomplishments of Christ. That's why our little wristband says this, "What has Jesus done?" You see, that's what we need to be reminding ourselves of. What is it that Christ has done?

Let me take you to, I think it's 1 John 1:5, just to play off this, to show us a means of having confidence. The Apostle John is writing this wonderful little letter, and in verse 5 he says, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." Do you know the implications of that? It means this—God cannot forgive sin. God cannot forgive sin. He can't do that. It would be a contradiction of his nature, of his purity, of his holiness, of his glory and his righteousness. You see, because, John says this, "God is light." That means God is absolutely pure. God is absolutely holy. God is absolutely righteous. There's no darkness in him, which means sin cannot be in his presence. God in his nature, cannot forgive sin. It would be a violation of his contradiction of his own assets, his own nature, his own glory. He can't do that because he's all purity, he's all righteous, he's all holy. God cannot forgive sin. But God provided a way in which sin is forgiven. That's the cross.

He, understanding that he can violate his own purity, his own righteousness, his own nature, sent his son to die on the cross so that there would be propitiation made. You see, when you take a look at the cross, you've got to understand that is God's way of not violating himself with making forgiveness possible, and that's in the sacrifice of the person and work of Christ. Do you see that? We need to understand that God never violates himself. But what he did is he sent himself in the form of his own son, who would go to the cross, pay for our sin, so that now we can be reconciled back to God. In God's own nature, he can't forgive sin, apart from the cross. Apart from the cross.

That's why the cross is enough, brothers. You've got to understand the significance of the cross. It's enough. You and I don't need to add to that. That's what we call legalism. Legalism is adding to what the cross accomplished, because we don't think the cross accomplished enough, therefore we think that what I do is going to add onto it so that God will forgive me. You see, God has already forgiven us because of the work of Christ at the cross.

A couple of weeks ago, I mentioned a new work that was just published by Northampton Press called *Law and Liberty*. It has to do with legalism. Legalism is basically saying, from my perspective, the cross isn't enough. I've got to add something to it. You see, Paul is saying that's exactly wrong, because you've got hope. Hope in a more glorious obedience that Christ accomplished, and you're trusting his obedience. You're trusting the one obedience keeper, the one law keeper. You're trusting the person and work of Christ. You don't need to add onto that. You just need to abide in it and rest in it, because therein lies your hope.

There are several good articles on here. Some of the authors of this are John MacArthur, Steve Lawson, Joel Beeke, and others. I'm one of the others. {LAUGHTER} Somebody said to me the other day, "How come your name isn't listed?" I said, "Do you think somebody's going to buy a book if my name's listed? This is pure marketing. John MacArthur—they'll buy the book because of MacArthur." There are several of us who have written chapters on this. It's the same group of guys who wrote the book on prayer. This has to do with legalism. It has to do with our understanding of obedience.

MacArthur has a wonderful section in his chapter on obedience is a love response. You see, it's not legalism; it's love. Why are you and I obedient? Why do we have a desire to be obedient? It's because we understand the cross. We understand this—that God cannot forgive apart from the cross. The cross is the means by which God can forgive and never violate himself. In him is light and there's no darkness. You can order this through NorthamptonPress.org. It's called *Law and Liberty*. I'll try to get us some copies. I think it might be helpful because it ties in very much to our whole understanding of obedience.

I want to take you to John 15. I want to help us understand something about a more glorious obedience through grace, and how it puts us in a position of having a love response. You see, obedience is a love response. In John 14, Jesus says, "If you love me you will obey." So what is our motivation? It's not legalism, it's love. It's the desire to express my love for the Father because I know he's provided me a means by which I can be forgiven, I can have reconciliation, and I'm justified by faith alone.

How is it that you and I begin to live in that? In John 15—it might be a very familiar passage to many of you—I'm reading from the New American Standard. John 15 1-5, "¹I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in Me," remain in Me, "and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

Whenever you look at a parable, you have to realize it is teaching one central truth. The central truth of this particular parable is this—the degree to which you and I will bear fruit will be the degree to which we are abiding in Christ. In other words, if I'm not bearing fruit, that's a barometric indication that I'm really not abiding.

The word abide is the Greek word "mano." It literally means, after many, many different expressions, a good summary of it is "pitching your tent and feeling at home with Christ." You feel at home with Christ. You and I come to a point of understanding God's grace. The phrase that we use to describe the nomadic herdsmen of biblical times who would take their flocks and they would look for a place and they would come to a stream or an oasis. They would find the location. They would pitch their tent and they would feel at home and they would stay there a while. That's where we get the English word "remain." You remain in Christ. Abide in Christ. You pitch your tent and you feel at home with him.

Now notice, he says, "When you abide in Me," you pitch your tent and feel at home with me, the consequence will be you will be a fruit bearer. Notice, our command is not to bear fruit. Our command is to what? Abide. You see, who bears the fruit? The vine does. You and I do not bear the fruit. The vine, the life of the vine, comes through us who are abiding, and the result of that is fruit. The most natural thing for you and me to be doing is bearing fruit. But you are not the cause of the fruit bearing. Our role is not to go bear fruit. Often times, we think, "I've got to go do something for the kingdom so that I am bearing fruit. I want the fruit of my ministry." Folks, you and I are not the ones who produce the fruit. It is the vine who produces that.

When you and I are grafted into it, we pitch our tent and feel at home in the vine, the true vine, the person and work of Christ, his life begins to flow through us, through the Holy Spirit. And notice, who else is abiding? He said, "If you abide in Me," and notice what? "And I abide in you." Do you realize that? That Christ is abiding in you? He has pitched his tent and he feels at home with you. Do you understand that? That's what it means to be in Christ. You're no longer in Adam. You're in Christ. Christ has really taken his life and he feels at home by pitching his tent and feeling at home with you. He's abiding in you. When you and I abide in him, we remain there. We draw the life source of his own life, and what happens is, the result is fruit. You and I are not to go out and initiate fruit. Fruit is the natural consequence of our abiding, and his abiding in us. It's a consequence.

Often times, we say, "I need to go do something to be fruitful. I'm not being used." Well I would suggest this. Let's go back and concentrate on what your responsibility is. And that is it to what? Abide. You see, the natural consequence of our abiding will be fruit. But we have a tendency to think, "The cross isn't enough. I'd better go do something." I'm not saying you sit back on your haunches and do nothing. I'm not saying that. You know me well enough to know that that would not be my perspective. I'm talking about being an aggressive responder to what you see the Lord doing in your life and in people around you.

That's why when I go through the Fort Pitt tunnel every day on the way to work, my constant prayer just as soon as I come out of the south end of the tunnel is this, "Lord, give me the wisdom to see what you're doing around me so I can respond. That's all I want to do today. I have no plans on what my day is going to be. I know what I have to do. I want to fulfill what I've been given to do. But if you're going to do something around me, would you give me the wisdom, the discernment, just to see what you're doing so I can become an aggressive responder." You see, that's what it means to abide. You just pitch your tent and feel at home with Christ.

But the other thing is this. Notice that he has pitched his tent and feels at home with you. Notice how John says it in John 15:4, "Abide in Me and I in you." Dearly beloved, do you understand, guys, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a result of the cross has pitched his tent with you, and he's abiding in you? He's abiding in you. He feels comfortable abiding in you. Our responsibility is not to make fruit happen. Our responsibility is to abide.

Now, how do you do that? How do we abide in Christ? What do you do...the word "abide" literally means "to have a continual, perpetual communion with and relationship for." In other words, you have a constant communion with the Lord Jesus Christ because you're abiding in him. It's a relationship that you're working on, that you're developing all the time. You're in constant perpetual communication and communion. It has the idea of pitching your tent and having communion in the relationship of permanence. That's our responsibility. Our responsibility is not to go create new things for the kingdom. Our responsibility is to understand the hope that we have in the person and work of Christ because of the cross. That's the means by which we are forgiven. The means by which we've been redeemed. The means by which we have reconciled to the Father. It's all through the cross. The cross is

enough. Legalism comes along and says, “You know, I’ve got to do one more thing. I’ve got to add onto it because it really wasn’t enough.”

We need to understand how to abide. Let’s talk this. Very practical. Remember one of the things we always talk about as we leave on Friday is not what does it mean to me, but what am I going to do about what I just learned. Let’s talk about that. Practically speaking, the Scripture has told us this—that our responsibility...the word “responsibility” means this—to know and do what’s expected of you. That’s what responsibility means—to know and do what’s expected of you.

The word responsibility is made up of two words—response and ability. A person who is responsible is response able. They’re able to respond. That’s what I’m saying is our responsibility. We are to be response able people because of our abiding in Christ. As we see the Lord working in us, we begin to be an aggressive responder and we do and know what’s expected of us and we do that, and as to remain and develop this communion with the Lord himself in a perpetual, eternal relationship, with communion and intimacy. Because we know this—he’s abiding in me. I mean, that just blew me out of the water recently. I always knew what it meant for me to abide in him. All of a sudden, I began to realize he’s abiding in me.

The reason there’s fruit is why? Because he’s abiding in me. It’s not because I do something so well. It’s the consequence of the natural life flow of your spiritual life coming through the Holy Spirit as God works in you because you’re part of the vine. You see, that’s why he says those branches that aren’t bearing fruit are cut off. When you look at the big picture of this parable, there are those who heard the Word of God and accepted it. And there are those who heard the Word of God and rejected it. There are the two branches. This is also a microcosm of the relationship that Jesus had with his disciples. There were some who heard it and accepted it. And there was one who heard it and rejected it—Judas.

What the parable of this is...when you hear his Word and you reject it, that’s an indication that you never accepted it in the first place and you’re not even in Christ and you’re cut off because it will interfere with the other fruit that’s being born by the other branches who accepted it. You see, the real issue is this. The people who bear fruit are the believers. The ones who are not bearing fruit never had saving faith in the first place, because there was never the abiding mutuality of me in you and you in me. They’re cut off because...they’re cut off because it interferes with the life flow of the other branches.

So how do you abide? It means to pitch your tent and feel at home with. It means to develop a communication and a communion relationship, a perpetuity and eternal. It means that I’m developing a relationship of deep sense of intimacy and communion with the Father. How do you do that? What do you do to abide?

Audience Member: Read Scripture.

Alright, read Scripture. If you want to get to know the Lord, then we need to keep our nose in the Book, don’t we? What does that mean in your life? Let’s just don’t give a nice little answer of, “Just read the Scripture.” What does that mean practically speaking to you? What are you going to do about that?

Audience Member: Pray!

Well let’s talk about Scripture first. We’ll come back to pray second.

Audience Member: Daily reading, meditation.

Alright, there's got to be some form of meditation in your life. Now what that looks like is up to you. Some people call that a quiet time. Some people call that a devotional time. Whatever you do. But there's got to be some sense...you see, our responsibility, brothers is this—is to abide. That means I don't worry about the fruit. The fruit's going to be the result of my communion with Christ, who's abiding in me.

One of the things I'm going to do, which is my responsibility, is to have some sort of communion with the Lord every day. However you do that is up to you. There's no one prescription for it. There's got to be some sense that I'm really wanting to abide and get to know him more deeply. That means you've got to be somehow involved in the Scripture in some sort of meditation, however you do that. What else are you going to do?

Audience Member: *Pray.*

Pray? What does prayer do?

Audience Member: *Deepens your relationship with Christ.*

It deepens your relationship with Christ. Remember we talked about prayer is preparation to make the next decision. Remember in John 18, the night that Jesus was betrayed and he was taken captive. He says to James, Peter and John, "Come with me and I'm going to be in the garden." He prayed and they wanted to sleep. Then the next events occurred. You see, two people responding, Peter responding to the same situation that Jesus responded to, but in different aspects.

Peter, when the authorities came to arrest Christ, Peter drew his sword and cut the ear off of the high priest's slave. You see, he responded out of trepidation, which is fear. Peter responded by basically saying, "I've got to defend God. They might take him. My responsibility is to defend him. I'd better go do this. I'd better do something in my own strength." So he draws his sword out and does a deed of cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave.

Jesus says, "Put your sword away. You who live by the sword are going to die by the sword." You see, Jesus responded to the same situation differently. Prayer is preparation. Jesus was praying that, "I will have the right response when the next event occurs." That's what prayer does. Prayer prepares you and I to have the right response, to be an aggressive responder, because at that moment, I'm abiding in Christ through my prayer relationship. I am now being prepared so when the next event occurs in my life I have the right response to be an aggressive responder.

Jesus responded out of preparation, which is prayer. Peter responded out of trepidation, which is fear. You see, prayer is not a means of just getting an answer. It's something much bigger than that. Prayer is preparing you so that you can become an aggressive responder to the next event in your life that you're confronted with, whatever that may be, because you're abiding in Christ. And you know what happens? The spiritual life of the person and work of Christ by the ministry of the Holy Spirit is flowing you through you, one of his branches. The end result of that is you're going to be an aggressive responder at that next event and it's going to be what? Fruit. That's how you bear fruit. You're an aggressive responder as you draw your life from Christ. So prayer is certainly critical.

We've got some devotional life. We've got some meditation life, a quiet time, whatever you want to call it. Also prayer. What else might be a means by which you and I can be responsible?

Audience Member: *You've got to apply it.*

Certainly, we've got to apply it.

Audience Member: *Thought life.*

Thought life? There you go. What do you do with your thought life? How about our verbs? Our words? Out of the overflow of the mouth, the heart speaks. You see, part of my abiding is guarding how I talk. It's a reflection of the depth of the life of Christ flowing through me because he's abiding in me and I'm abiding in him. So certainly, our thought life, certainly our word...

Don: *What about what we're doing here now?*

Absolutely.

Don: *Or on Sunday mornings or whenever?*

Absolutely. Corporate worship. Do not forsake the assembling of the saints. You see, the Scripture says get together with other believers. Get together with other branches who are abiding, and stimulate yourself to good works. You see, one of the reasons that it's so important for us to be together on Fridays is so that when we leave, we now have the fruit of our being grafted into the vine, and the fruit of that is the good works that we do. So absolutely, the fellowship that we have. It stimulates us. There's great stimulation when we are together here as brothers who are seeking the Lord's counsel and developing our abiding relationship with him. It's very important that we be in fellowship with one another, the body of Christ. We were never designed to live our life alone. Never designed to live it alone. We're designed to live it with each other.

Audience Member: *One of the other things, Bruce, I thought, was possibly witness?*

Absolutely. Giving away to somebody else what God has given you. Now let's go back to our verse. Therefore we have hope and boldness of speech. Do you see, it may be because of your abiding in Christ, all the things we've been talking about—your quiet time, your meditation, your prayer, the way you're guarding your thought life, the way you're managing your tongue, all those things, the fellowship you have, the corporate worship experience on the Lord's day, communion, the ways by which we see and remember God's grace, remembering the cross. All those things go into play. Now you have an opportunity to speak about your faith. Paul says you can do it with boldness, because you have hope. Hope in what? Hope in the fact that you're abiding in Christ and Christ is abiding in you. You don't have to wear a mask like Moses and say, "Oh everything is just fine." You might have to say to somebody, "You know, I'm really in a hugely difficult situation." You can be honest and be bold. You can share your faith without fear, Paul says. That's what he means when he says, "Therefore we have hope and use boldness of speech," not obliterating people with theology and beating them over the head with a Bible. You can do it without wearing a mask. You can be vulnerable. Sometimes, brothers, you and I can just be vulnerable. That may be one of the greatest testimonies you have because you're real to somebody.

Bill: *This Scripture not only has this positive instruction with regard to abiding and being in the process of spiritual fruit, but it has also an admonition in it. The vine there was the symbol of Israel referring back to Psalm 80 and other areas. I think he's counseling that you can't rely on your proximity or your association or anything other than that abiding. I think that we in America many times feel that since we're either Americans or we have [UNCLEAR] of being Christians, it's sufficient. He's attacking that right there [UNCLEAR] at all. It's the abiding. [UNCLEAR] people around us who rest in that because they're*

whatever in their life because of family relationships or whatever, he's attacking that as not being [UNCLEAR]...

That's right. Good insight. That's exactly right. The point of this is...my whole point is this. You don't need to feel squeamish when you have an opportunity to share your faith. You can do it with boldness. The reason you can do it with boldness is because you understand a more glorious obedience arrangement that we just described. The hope of grace, the glory of grace, the freedom of grace, the transformation by grace, as opposed to maintaining by rules, measured externally, marks of spiritual or motivated by guilt. You see, you're no longer motivated by guilt because you're not worried about how am I going to do. You see, that's the point of John 15. It's not about how I'm going to do this. It's a realization I'm an aggressive responder because I'm being response able in my abiding in Christ. The fruit will come out because who's fruit is it? It's Christ's fruit, not yours. You see that? It's not your fruit.

I've given you this stupid example before, so bear with me. Have you ever seen an apple tree grunt? {LAUGHTER} I mean, an apple tree doesn't do this...grunt, grunt, grunt, I want to bear fruit, grunt. All of a sudden, fruit appears. What's the most natural thing for an apple tree to do? Sit there and abide. Be in the root. Be grafted into the root, the life source. What happens as a result of being grafted into that life source called the roots or the vine of the apple tree? Here's what happens...pop, pop, pop...fruit appears. You see, that's what Paul is saying.

Therefore, we have boldness in speech and we're not like Moses. We don't have to cover up that which is fading. What we have now is not fading because it's a more glorious obedience. Grace does not fade. Grace does not fade. You can have hope, brothers. You're going to hope in the person and work of Christ who is the life source because you are working at your perpetual relationship and communion with him because you've pitched your tent there and feel at home. But the other thing is this. You've got to realize that Christ has pitched his tent with you, because of the cross. That's why we need to understand that the cross is enough. The cross is enough for us to have that reconciled relationship and we have peace with God. You see, there's no peace of God until you have peace with God. It is the cross that has given us the peace with God so that we can have, as Philippians 4:7 says, the peace of God that passes all understanding. You only get the peace of God after you have peace with God.

Sig: *So abiding in Christ in terms of talking to other people or sharing our faith as Jack was saying, we can really rest in that not be as aggressive, but listen and ask good questions and let them...I find a lot of times when I talk to people about faith, their arguments don't hold up because they don't think as... some people do, but a lot of people don't think as intensely about their position as we do. We study it, we read it, and we can calmly ask questions and know that it's not just going to be a one-time visit within a few minutes and if I don't get the word out before we get off the elevator, I'm never going to see this person again. Just relax.*

There's great freedom. You see, the freedom of grace. We talked about that last week. There's great freedom. When you look to Christ, the veil is removed away. When that veil is removed away, what do you have? There's liberty. There's freedom. That means you and I don't have to worry and be consumed by, and fearful of what I'm going to say may or may not get results, because you're trusting the providence of God. As Bishop Rogers told me the other week when we were chatting, he said, "We all end up at right place for all the wrong reasons." {LAUGHTER} That's true. We end up at the right place for all the wrong reasons. That's God's providence. You see, there's our hope. Our confidence is in the providence of God.

I'm at the right place, but I look back on my life and I've sure done some dumb things. But I'm still here. You see, that's God's providence. That's the result of a body. That's the fruit that he produces within us. You and I can have wonderful calmness when you're sharing your faith. Don't worry about am I saying

the right thing. That doesn't mean you can be sloppy and say the wrong thing. I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is where is your confidence? Is it his fruit that's going to be born or is it my efforts that's going to bring about fruit? You see, he is the fruit bearer. You and I are just the...we're just the means by which that fruit that Christ produces in us because of abiding. It occurs. It's the most natural thing in the world, brothers, for you and me to be fruit bearers for the kingdom. All I'm saying is saying is just let it happen.

Bishop Rogers: *I was just thinking of that whole area that we didn't mention. I'm chuckling, wondering why I didn't think of it earlier, and as that one of the ways we abide is how we handle our money.*

Absolutely.

Bishop Rogers: *If you really are relying on the Lord, then you're a cheerful giver.*

Absolutely. One of the ways in which we abide is realizing that you're a steward, not an owner. Now money doesn't kill. Ownership does. We think it's mine. Little kid says, "You can't have that toy. It's mine." Where do they learn that? Well, they learned it from me, because I said that and he heard me. You see, it's ownership that kills. We've been set free to be stewards.

Part of our abiding is how do I manage the resources that somebody else has entrusted to me to be the steward of? That includes our finances. It includes the quality of our life and everything else. One of the ways in which we can abide also is just how we are the stewards of the things that God has given us to do.

Ted: *I wonder if this whole area would be worth unpacking further, this whole idea of what it actually means to abide. I think it's such a critical teaching.*

It is. That's why I just wanted to touch on it today because it really struck to me that the freedom we have is because of our abiding. We can talk about this more if you want to do that.

Ted: *In terms of how it actually works itself out.*

Sure.

Ted: *Because I think we all understand Christ died for my sins, therefore, the blood covers me, that qualifies me to be with the Lord. But how does that actually work itself out in everyday life? That's the thing I wrestle with.*

Yeah, that's what I was trying to help us understand. What are some of the things that we can fulfill our responsibilities? Our responsibility is not to bear fruit. Our responsibility is to what?

Audience Members: *Abide.*

Abide. Now the question is this. What am I going to do about what I just learned as my responsibility? Let's talk about that next week. Give it some thought. Pray about it. Let's come back next week and let's unpack this a little bit. What are some of the practical things that you're going to do between now and next Friday about abiding based upon what we've heard so far? Remember this—Christ is abiding in you, brothers. You're no longer in Adam. You're in Christ. You're in Christ. Let's just be response able. Let's just abide and watch the fruit appear.

Sig: *And we are meeting next Friday.*

We will meet next Friday—Good Friday. That will be a good Friday.

Audience Member: Amen!

Let's pray. Father, the power of your Word is just so profound in dealing with our unclarity of thought. Transform the way that we think. Teach us to think right so that we will act right so that we will feel right. Father, we thank you for the fact that the cross is enough, and that what you accomplished on the cross has set us free from legalism, from adding onto it. May we just develop a saving relationship with you that manifests itself in a constant every day expression of abiding. Give us insights on how we do that, Father, for your glory. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!