

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
Taught by Bruce Bickel
“An Evangelical Lifestyle” Part 2
October 11, 2013

Let's have a moment of quiet and go before the Lord and know that He is God, and then I'll just close us in prayer.

Father sometimes we just need to be quiet and just listen as Your Spirit would minister and identify with our Spirit that we might be more consistent in who we are in Your grace. Father, we pray now that You would remove all the frustrations of this week, all the anxieties that we have as we come to sit at Your feet. We have a great anticipation with a sense of awe and respect and dignity for how Your Holy Spirit will be our Teacher this day. Father, once again would You be kind enough to open our eyes that we might behold You for Your glory, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We're studying a passage in 2nd Corinthians 4:1-6 under the theme of Triumphant Living but thanks be to God Who always, always, always leads us in triumphal procession and spreads the aroma of our knowledge of Christ. Playing off the theme of Triumphant Living, we come to a passage where Paul describes what I'm calling an Evangelical Lifestyle. Evangelism is not an activity that we schedule per se, although we do part of that...that is part of our programmatic activity of the Church...evangelism is really a style of life. It is a way that you and I live as men who have been called by God's grace to a saving relationship through God the Father, through God the Son, and to God the Holy Spirit. We have a different style of life and that is a triumphant life because God always leads in triumphal procession. We have to have spiritual eyes to see this triumph; it is not something that you just look at through human eyes. You have to have the eyes of the Spirit to see that all of life is a triumph.

Paul goes into some great definition now in Chapter 4, verses 1-6, which I would like to read and I'll be reading from the New American Standard version. You have your outline and we will walk through this. We began last week talking about the characteristics of an evangelical lifestyle. Here is what the apostle Paul writes to us.

2nd Corinthians 4:1-6. “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

If you take a look at your outline, we are looking at two major themes in this passage. First of all, the characteristics of an evangelical lifestyle and then the confidences, or why do we have such confidences to be able to live that kind of a life? Last week we looked at the first characteristic of an evangelical lifestyle and that is it is a courageous lifestyle. You'll see that in verse 1. “...since we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.” In other words, the reason that you and I are courageous...the word courageous there does not mean bold, it does not mean loud, it does not mean boisterous, it does not mean offensive; what it means is, without fear. You

and I live a lifestyle that is without fear. We do not fear the things of this world because we have experienced God's mercy.

As we saw a few weeks ago, ministry is a consequence of divine mercy, not human achievement. The NIV translates it: "Therefore, since we have this ministry, through God's mercy," or "...since through God's mercy we have this ministry..." We have to realize that the quality of life we're talking about is a ministry; the ministry you have is the style of your life...it is who you are, where you are. That means that the first characteristic Paul teaches us in this passage is because you understand God's mercy and your salvation and redemption, you now have a courageous life and you are not fearful of what the world is going to say because you have experienced God's mercy, which has changed your life. The very first characteristic we see is a courageous life.

Then we come down to the second one and that is a non-manipulative life. Notice verse 2, non-manipulative. Because of mercy, which results in our courage, you and I can be the source of a person of integrity in three specific areas. Notice verse 2. The three specific areas in which you and I can be people of integrity: (1) We renounce secret and shameful ways and that would be purity of motive. Our motives change. There is a purity of motive because we have renounced secret and shameful ways. (2) We do not use deception, that would be purity of conduct. (3) Nor do we distort the Word of God, purity of doctrine.

As a result of understanding God's mercy, you and I live a fearless life. In other words, we are not consumed by fear because we understand God's mercy has changed our life. It changes us in three specific areas. In our motives, in our conduct, and in our doctrine. Therefore, we have purity of motive, purity of conduct, and purity of doctrine. Let's take a look at this.

Paul is teaching us that ministry is not some manipulation; it is not something that you and I battle somebody's will or somebody's mind and win the task of fighting it together. We do not need to cause things to happen, God is the one who will cause things to happen. We just need to be faithful. If you recall 2nd Corinthians 2:14, our theme verse is "But thanks be to God, Who always leads in triumphal procession, and spreads through us everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of knowing Him." What he is saying is this: ministry is who you are, where you are and you do not need to be a manipulator because you have purity of motive, you have purity of conduct, and you have purity of doctrine.

Ministry is God's triumph. It is something that God does. Whatever it is, it is not manipulation whenever you and I want it to be. There is a big difference. You and I might want something to occur and that may not happen, and what does occur is what God wants to occur because ministry is His consequence and His activity, not ours. We just need to make sure that we have the purity of motive and we have the purity of conduct, and we have the purity of doctrine.

Paul's reference here to these false teachers who used craftiness to promote their own causes, these Jewish teachers who promote their own causes. They were known as "Judizers" and they followed him into the various cities of Asia Minor where he preached and their methods exposed them as false because of their schemes, and they were exposed because of their activity. Take a look at somebody's activity and see if they have purity of motive, do they have purity of conduct, and do they have purity of doctrine.

Let me give you a real example. About 25 years ago, a friend of mine was on the staff of HCJB, a radio station down in South America. I think at that time it was the largest Christian radio station in South America, in the

southern hemisphere. He was on the staff there, he came back on furlough, and I was visiting with him in Chicago. He said, "One of the things we've had to do in recent years is eliminate the radio broadcast from churches from the United States. We don't have them any more. We've had to eliminate them because they portray God as a beggar asking for money rather than a God who is a giver of grace. We have eliminated all the ministries coming out of North America that evolve in the churches because they picture God as a beggar who wants their money as opposed to a God who is giving grace and mercy. So we don't use United States church ministries any more, and we have had to find other places."

Now that is tragic. See, that exposes them right there about their purity of motive, their purity of conduct, and their purity of their doctrine. Notice what Paul says in verse 2, "We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness of adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Let's take a look at these three things. He is basically saying if you understand God's mercy, you then have a ministry because of God's mercy. Ministry is who you are, where you are. You recognize that ministry is something that God produces in and through you. It is not something that you manipulate to happen. So that means if we are just faithful God always leads in triumph. You and I might not see it as a triumph but God does because as you notice in our confidences: God is sovereign, Christ is Lord, and God is adequate. We will see that in the next lesson when we study this.

First of all, let's just examine this: the purity of motive, purity of conduct, and purity of doctrine. Let's take a look at these. How about your motive? Go to Matthew 6:4. This is where we need to examine ourselves, Brothers, this is not to pin the donkey on somebody else's rear-end but it is to pin it on our own. Now examine yourself when we look at this.

Matthew 6:4, it talks about the purity of motive. The motive of your giving, do you give to control or to give to meet needs? See, if you are giving to control something so that you can control the situation, that is exposing a false motive because scripture says in Matthew 6:4 that we are to give according to meeting the needs not for us to control things.

How about your prayer life? Matthew 6:6. When you pray publicly do you do it to impress other people, or do you pray as your listening to God? What is your motive behind your prayer life?

How about fasting? Matthew 6:18. Do you do that to be spiritual and to be seen as more spiritual as somebody else, or do you fast to get to know God more quietly?

I don't have answers for you, but I'm just trying to throw some things out to examine yourself. Examine yourself. Why do you give, what is your motive for giving? What is your motive for praying? Is it to get something from God or is it to worship Him and adore Him and to recognize His glory? What are your motives behind those things? That is what Paul is saying. He's saying, to live an evangelical lifestyle you have to take a look at your motives. You are not a manipulator and you are not schemer...you just check your own motives in those areas. These are areas you can check yourself just as I need to do that.

How about in our conduct? Purity of motive and now purity of conduct. He says, we watch the purity of our conduct. Now the word "deception" here means crafty, it means cunning, it means gimmickry, it literally means to catch with a bait, to lure, it is appearing as one thing but not really being that. The internal reality of your

motives is revealed in the external expression of your conduct. The internal reality of your motive is revealed in the external expression of your conduct. That is why you see purity of conduct is following purity of motive. If you don't have the right motive, you are not going to have the right conduct. That is how it follows sequentially.

Look at 2nd John, verse 4. A couple of verses that will help us understand about conduct. John writes, "I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father." In other words, he saw their conduct was an expression of the purity of their motives.

How about 3 John, verse 3. "For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth." You see, is His word His word, or is His word something else? Is His word, His word, or is His word something else? Your purity of conduct will be a reflection of the purity of your motive. That is why Paul says in ministry you do not need to be a manipulator, you do not need to make things happen, just check your motive, check your conduct.

And the last thing is, you check your doctrine. How about doctrine? Doctrine means standard. Notice what he says, we don't need to dilute the severity of scripture in order to make people feel good. That does not mean that you are a bible basher, that is not what I'm saying. Remember this, that every time you see the word "truth" in scripture it is associated with the word "grace." It is grace and truth. You and I do not need to water things down just to get people's response to be what we want it to be. There is no Good News until you understand the bad news. We do not talk about the bad news enough sometimes.

Last week, Bishop Rodgers took you through a session on the sentimentality of God's love. God's love is a difficult thing to understand, it is very difficult. Sometimes we have a tendency in our culture to sentimentalize it—to make it mushy and ooie-gooie when you have to understand the consequences of God's love and the motive behind it. We need to understand that purity of motive leads to purity of conduct and the bridge between your motive and your conduct is purity of doctrine.

How about Matthew 22:29. "But Jesus answered and said to them, You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God." You see, messing with the doctrine, messing with truth, brings about destruction and error.

2nd Peter 3:16 is another illustration of this. "...as also in all of his letters speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, and they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." In other words, he is saying, some people are not going to understand the truth of the gospel.

Paul defines for us what the gospel is in verse 6. It is the glory of God in the face of Christ. That is the gospel. It is the glory of God in the face of Christ. You and I do not need to water that down just to get a response. The tendency is, and it is very human nature, you would like to be well received, well thought of, and have people appreciate what you do. Sometimes that is just not going to happen. The reason we can do that with grace and truth and proper motive and proper conduct is because we understand God's mercy. You understand verse 1 that says ministry is not the result of human achievement, it is a consequence of divine mercy. It all goes back to our understanding of verse 1.

The reason you and I can be fearless in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ in all of its truth and all of its severity, and all of its magnificence and all of its glory is because you understand God's mercy. The ministry, whatever happens as a result of your proclaiming the gospel of Christ is not the consequence of your human achievement, it is the consequence of divine mercy. Because ministry is what God does. So we can be courage, we can be non-manipulative. Messing with the truth is going to lead to destruction, it is going to lead to error, and we do not need to add human philosophies to make people feel good. We just proclaim it for what it is. It is the truth of God. That is what the word "doctrine" means.

Several years ago I was invited by a large city to be the speaker at their prayer breakfast, and they said we normally have two thousand to three thousand people attend, and we have the mayor and the senator and all the bigwigs come. And we have heard about you, and when you were here in the city years ago and we would like to have you come back. Would you speak at our prayer breakfast? I said I would be very honored that you would even consider me. Thank you because I am not that well known in that city any more, but thank you for the thought. He said, by the way, the only requirement we have is that you cannot mention the word "Jesus." {LAUGHTER} But we have a wonderful prayer breakfast but you cannot mention "Jesus Christ." You can talk about God, you can talk about the man upstairs, or however you want to phrase it but you have to be very, very sensitive because we are going to have people who really are just coming...it is really about just making us feel good to get together as a city. And I said, well I appreciate your honesty and that is very, very helpful. I'm sorry But I'm not the person to come and do that. I just cannot do that. He asked, what do you mean? This is a great event for **you**. I said no, this is not a great event for me. I would be compromising my convictions and I cannot do that. He said, really? We thought you were a decent guy. {LAUGHTER} That was his response. We thought you were a decent guy and really could fit in well with what we want to accomplish. I said, well I'm glad you think I'm decent, I trust that I am, but I am also one of convictions and thank you for understanding. Thanks, but no thanks, I'm not the one to do that. I can recommend many people who can. He said, that's OK, we have a list.

But you see, ego would say, "What a great thing for me to go do." People could also say this, "But you could have gone and done it anyway and mentioned Jesus Christ." That would be manipulation and dishonoring their authority. We are people under authority. Ministry is what God does. I don't know what He is going to do with that, but you and I have to check the purity of our motives, the purity of our conduct, and the purity of our doctrine. If there comes a time when you have to say, "Thanks, but no thanks; I just can't do that because I would compromise my own convictions and I'm not willing to do that just for the sake of a program." See how that works?

The only reason you can do that and walk away from something like that is if you understand verse 1. "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry." Do you realize that ministry is a function of mercy? It is not a function of our human achievement. That is the whole basis of what Paul is saying. The beginning of our living an evangelical lifestyle, a courageous lifestyle, a non-manipulative lifestyle is our understanding God's mercy.

There is a third characteristic we want to take a look at. In verse 1 we saw it was a courageous lifestyle; in verse 2, we saw it was a non-manipulative lifestyle. Do you understand what I mean when I say "non-manipulative?" You don't need to make things happen. In other words there is great freedom in just being able to speak the truth, and so the last characteristic in these first two or three verses is that it is a lifestyle that appeals to the conscience because it is an authentic life...it is a life of truth. While salesmanship and gimmickry may appeal to one's intellect, those of us who understand God's mercy can appeal to people's conscience. Truth appeals to conscience. Salesmanship appeals to emotions. What are we trying to do? Are we trying to appeal to somebody's emotional response, or are we trying to appeal to their conscience? You see, truth alone is what appeals to a conscience.

Philosophies and sneaky gimmicks may attract the intellect of men, but it is really the plain and unadulterated Word of God, the gospel of grace revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that strikes it home to the conscience. Freidrich Krummacher, a theologian, writes this: "An evil conscience is like a raging sea, which can only be calmed by the sign of the cross of Christ. It is a gnawing worm into the bones, the removal of which nothing less is required than the blood of the Son of God."

A pastor friend of mine years ago was relieved of his pastorate because when the board of the church called him in and said, “We love you as a person, we just think you and your wife have a wonderful family, you are a great model of the Christian faith; but we are just tired of being convicted, and we need to find somebody who is going to come and make people feel better.” So he was removed from his pastorate and he called me about that. He was really down trodden. I told him he ought to just praise the Lord, you have been rescued. You have been rescued from a situation where you would be totally frustrated. And so the Lord has him in a different position, but that was the role of the church. “We’re tired of being convicted.”

I had that happen to me when I was the interim at Memorial Park several years ago. A guy called me and said, “How long are you going to be here?” {LAUGHTER} I said, “Well, I’ll be here another six weeks.” He said, “Oh, good my wife will come back then. She’s just tired of being convicted. We want to go some place where we can feel good.” I said, “Well, I would hope that you feel good when you hear the truth. I would hope that would make you feel good when you hear the truth.” He said, “We’re just tired of being convicted. We just want to feel good when we go to church. That’s why you go to church isn’t it, to feel good?” That is the mentality of what we have. So we need to be people of truth, people of pure conscience, pure motive, pure conduct, pure doctrine; we are courageous in our lifestyle, we are non-manipulative in our lifestyle, and we are truthful in our lifestyle. People may disagree with what we preach and disagree with what we teach, but they should not be able to accuse us of being something other than what we are. That is what Paul is saying. They should not be able to accuse you of being something other than what you are.

I want to give you something here that I came across recently about the impacts of manipulative ministry. This has to do with young people in America and what teenage Christians are saying about themselves. Just listen to some of these facts. About one-third of American teenagers claim to be born again believers...one-third. Yet slightly more than half of the U. S. teens also believe Jesus committed sins when He was on the earth. About 60% agree that even good works will earn them a place in heaven. About two-thirds say that Satan is just a symbol of evil, not really a living being. Only 6% of all teens believe that there are moral absolutes. Now catch this: one-third say that they are born again, 6% of those one-third say that there are such things as moral absolutes. Friends there is a great disconnect there somewhere. Only 6% of all teens believe that there are moral absolutes and most troubling to evangelical leadership, only 9% of self-described born again teens believe that moral truth is absolute. They do not believe the scripture. “I’m born again and I have a saving relationship.” Why is that? Because somebody said you did. Has God really produced that in your heart? I don’t know that.

When you ask Christian kids, “How can you say (a) is true as well as (b) which is the antitheses of (a)?” The typical response is, “I’m not sure but it works for me.” Ninety-one percent of all born again teenagers surveyed a few years ago also proclaimed that there is no such thing as absolute truth; 91% of professing born again teenagers says there is no such thing as absolute truth. What are we teaching them? What are we teaching them in our churches and our programs? Are we teaching them just to feel good about themselves, are we teaching self-esteem? Or are we teaching God-esteem? This is serious stuff because there are people out there who have been diluted and who have been deceived because of manipulation; because of gimmickry. Just 52% of committed Christian kids in 1992 who denied the existence of absolute truth has now gone up to 72% in 2010. Since 1992 to 2010 it has gone from 52% to 68% that do not believe in absolute truth. So basically they are saying they deny the scripture. There is a great disconnect more than ever in the history of the Church in America between a Christian young person saying that what they are and what they actually believe.

Paul is saying that when you understand an evangelical lifestyle, you make sure that who you are is what you believe, and what you believe determines who you are. The majority of teenagers today in America are saying there is no such thing as absolute truth. Now all I’m pointing out, Brothers, is this: what are we saying to our teenagers? What are we saying in our churches about doctrine, about truth? Remember, Paul is saying, an evangelical lifestyle is a courageous lifestyle. It is a lifestyle free of fear of the response of the world based upon what you are communicating about your relationship to the saving work of God’s grace through the personal work of Christ. You have this fearlessness; it does not mean that you are not wise, I’m not saying that. I’m not saying you are a bible-basher; all I’m saying is that when you communicate the truth of God you realize that if ministry is going to occur it is going to be something that God does, not what you and I do. Do you understand that?

Yes, Ted?

TED: *Why do you think there is this disconnect? I mean we have youth programs, we have youth rallies, we have events [UNCLEAR] Pennsylvania that draws thousands of kids...that is a serious demographic, it is huge.*

That is what concerns me about the next generation. Ted's question is why is there such a disconnect? Yes, please?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I'll wager that it is when we separate the children from the parents in the church. Whenever we [UNCLEAR] by the worship on Sundays, on the Lord's day, when we worship as a family, we have our children with us, and I have my two year old on my lap sometimes we walk back and forth to make sure he doesn't interrupt others...but when we separate the children from the parents and give them an opportunity to go to youth ministry, often times that youth ministry, the youth pastors are in a position to water down the preaching rather than instruct the whole family.*

That's a good observation. I think in my opinion, we are sometimes more interested in entertaining children in the church rather than teaching them about the church. Bishop Rodgers?

BISHOP RODGERS: *I understand that our culture [UNCLEAR]make a distinction culturally between scientific fact and opinion which covers everything else. That is to say,[UNCLEAR] each **relativism** by the general attitude of our culture in every area except science. [UNCLEAR]*

I had at the Naval Academy this past week one of my classmates...Bishop Rodgers, the book that we sent, your "Thirty-nine Articles"...I sent it to my friend. I met him and he said he was beginning to read it, and he said he had a lot of questions. I said, "Well, go ahead, we've got ten minutes." Here was his first question, "What happened before the big bang theory?" {LAUGHTER} That was his first question. I said, "Well, before I answer that, why don't we deal with this question? What have you done with the personal work of Jesus Christ? Let's talk about that?" He said he had all kinds of questions and I said I was sure he did, but none of them will be answered until you resolve this question. "What have I done with the personal work of Christ?" He said, "Well, I need to think about that." I said, "I hope you will and we will continue talking, send me an e-mail." But that was his first question. That is the relativism that we have in our culture and our teenagers are just being inundated with that relativism; it is whatever you think is workable.

Yes, Tom?

TOM: *Also, to answer your question, I think that some churches have strayed from the doctrine, this Bible, and what is sin...the definition of what is sin. And so, even though they are gathering kids and teaching kids, they are teaching incorrect doctrine [UNCLEAR] definition of a sinful act.*

Yes, please, you work with youth so help us out.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *[UNCLEAR] put it all on the church. A wise old man [UNCLEAR] said, "Life is a relationship [UNCLEAR] so it starts at the home [UNCLEAR] building a relationship with children and [UNCLEAR] and if we don't have that relationship then they are going to look outwardly to get it from their peers so we have to keep [UNCLEAR]."*

That is a great insight. If you would ask me, a generalization...and there again it is tough to deal with generalizations...I would say that one of the causes of the dynamics that I just read and the data I just exposed you to, was the breakdown of the family. It really starts there, doesn't it? The breakdown of the family? Because where is the responsibility to really teach the children about the grace of God; it is in the family, not the church. The role of the church is not to be the teacher of your teenagers, it is the role of the family to be the teacher of the teenagers.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *Isn't it typically the man's responsibility?*

Yes, yes. When you have the breakdown of the family, you have the breakdown of that leadership. That is a generalization and there are a lot of things that we can fill in; but I think your point is well taken. My summation would be, one of the real causes is the breakdown of the family.

Yes, Patrick?

PATRICK: *Another factor was the separation of church and state with the Supreme Court related [UNCLEAR] in taking out the bible reading and prayer in 1961 and 1963. So it is not just this generation of kids, it's their parents, that dovetails with other [UNCLEAR] kicked out Christianity and replaced it with relativism so not only these kids were lost but their parents really started to have different views of truth and less biblical-based and less Christian-based. When those parents have...not all of our Christian kids go to public school or Christian schools but go to private schools...but a lot of their peers go to public schools, but it still has a heavy influence [UNCLEAR]...relativism and then we start to hold truth less tightly. And those are some big factors.*

Let's listen to the words of Jesus. You are all saying the right things, those are all...the real question for us is, "Whom am I going to become?" We need to take this down to ourselves...we have to check our own purity of motive, our own purity of conduct, and our own of purity of doctrine rather than pointing the finger at somebody else. We have to take a look at ourselves and say, "What does this mean to me and what am I going to do about what I'm learning? How am I going to apply this in my own life? I'm all for us understanding the bigger picture, but we have to get down to the bottom line. Paul is teaching us how to live an individual style of life. He is saying this is how an evangelical lives. Your courageous, you are non-manipulative, and you proclaim truth. Now those are the three basic things of an evangelical lifestyle.

Evangelism is not some program that you schedule, it is a way of life. Evangelism is something that we are, not something that we do. That is what Paul is teaching us. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:29.

"But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures or the power of God." Notice why He said you are mistaken... "not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God." That is rather a profound statement when He says, "you are wrong because you don't understand the Scriptures, because in the Scriptures you see the power of God." Notice Paul's definition of the gospel in 2nd Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the Knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

What is the gospel about? The gospel is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. That is what it is about, it is not just about eternal life and salvation. That is all consequences of it, but the real issue of the gospel is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. Now is that how we proclaim the gospel? Or do we teach it as, here is something that you would like to receive, rather than who is it the God that gives? What is the content of the gospel?

I think what I'll do next week is in my doctoral dissertation of the "Puritan View of the Pulpit and the Focus of the Gospel and Puritan Preaching"...I did a summary statement...Sig, the one you just sent me. Next week we're going to do a contrast on that to show you modern evangelism vs. what I'm calling biblical evangelism. There is a big difference. One is very, very man-centered, and one is very God-centered. So, Sig, could you

send that out and post it? We'll send it out for your review and do it in comparison just to understand; because Jesus' statement is really powerful there. "You don't understand the scripture or the power of God." The power of God is really found in the scripture.

Yes, please?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *Yes, Bruce, [UNCLEAR] you used the word "authentic" life [UNCLEAR]. I think what our kids see lots of times in our [UNCLEAR]...one thing on Sunday as something else. When mom and dad are not perfect [UNCLEAR] and kids see that.....[UNCLEAR].*

Yes, there is an authenticity and that is what Paul is teaching us about in these verses. There is an authenticity behind our being fearless, courageous, about our not being non-manipulative...we are not gimmick- oriented... and we can proclaim truth and in that we are basically saying, "This is who I am and the reality of who I am is what I'm doing." The purity of your motive, the purity of your conduct and the purity of your doctrine. That is the thing that makes sure there is no duplicity in kids seeing that in our lives. It starts at home.

Yes, please?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *In the 1970's our principal [UNCLEAR] to make sure the child is [UNCLEAR]and that has been progressing to where you cannot even say "no" to a baby of one year old. [UNCLEAR]...*

Yes, that's true and it is an immense problem, but the real solution starts with us. We have to go back to ourselves. Who am I? Let's don't point the finger at other people and hide behind it, you have to ask, "Whom and I and what are my motives, what is my conduct, what is my doctrine? You have to deal with that yourself because we as a group of men have a great deal of power, but it starts with us. That is what Paul is saying. What about your life? Not about someone else's life but your life.

Yes, please?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I think it also goes back to what Bishop Rodgers was saying last week, we have the[UNCLEAR] of God, even in the churches where Jesus is my buddy who gives me what I want and we feel good rather than the holiness and righteousness [UNCLEAR].*

Notice the definition of the gospel there in 2nd Corinthians 4:6: "...the glory of God in the face of Christ." You cannot get away from that; that is the content of the gospel. It is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. In other words, the way that people are going to see the glory of God is seen in the personal work of Christ. That is why Paul says, "I don't preach myself, I preach Christ and Him crucified." Paul said, "because when I preach Christ and Him crucified, I'm going to reveal the glory of God." You see that in the face of Christ. We need to understand what is the gospel about? It is not about us. The gospel is not about man, for man, from God; it is about God, from God, for God. It is not about us, it is about Him. It is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. You have to be courageous in this world to be able to preach that. You have to be non-manipulative in this world because the world is not going to respond to it. You have to be non-manipulative and you have to be truthful. You have to go back to the basic things that Paul is saying: check your motives, check your conduct, check your doctrine and the bridge between your motive and your conduct is your doctrine. That is the bridge between your motive and your conduct...it is your doctrine.

That is why Bishop Rodgers' book "The Thirty-nine Articles" is such a powerful tool. It is something that we ought to be reading because it helps us to bridge our motive in life and our conduct in life would be the doctrine that we have, and the doctrine means standard. It is a huge issue and I just bring it out for your attention, but the emphasis has to be "What about me?" You have to take it back to yourself. Don't walk out of here saying, "It is their fault." You have to walk out of here saying, "Lord, what am I going to do about what I just learned?" He is saying that the characteristics of an evangelical lifestyle are being courageous, non-manipulative, and truth.

Now, why do we have such confidence that we can live a life like that? Let's take a look at the next verses, beginning at 2nd Corinthians 4:3, 4, 5, and 6. The first reason for our confidence is that God is sovereign, notice verses 3 and 4.

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." So our first reason for having the confidence for living a courageous, non-manipulative, and truthful life is that we understand that God is sovereign, but thanks be to God who always leads in triumphal procession in Christ.

Notice verse 15 of 2nd Corinthians 2: "For we are a fragrance to God among those who are being saved, and among those who are perishing." Do you realize that Paul says, "And who is adequate for such things?" Do you realize that living an evangelical lifestyle has life and death consequences? That is what he is saying. Your life is going to be a turn-on to some people and a turn-off to others, and you don't control that. Now that does not mean that we have the freedom to be stupid and to be twits. I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is that when you live a courageous, non-manipulative and truthful life some people are going to be turned off and you don't control that. Some people are going to be turned on and you don't control that either. That is the sovereignty of God and that is why you don't be a manipulator, you don't need to use gimmickry because you know this: when I proclaim truth, it is truth that is going to set people free, not my personality. Not my style, not my programmatic activity.

I told you several years ago about my football reunion twenty years ago and I had a teammate come up to me and he basically said, "I never liked you." And we went through that. He was rather inebriated at the time so I give him so license, but at this meeting we had this 50th year anniversary...so it tells you how old I am...do you realize that 50 years ago I was playing college football? {LAUGHTER} Wow, this is the honor of the team that played for the national championship that played Texas in the Cotton Ball. Texas won the game but this was honoring the team that played in the national championship game and they had a 50th anniversary. It was a wonderful time and I had the privilege of leading a memorial service for our team of our deceased classmates and families.

After the service the same guy who 20 years ago had come up and said, "I never felt comfortable with you." It wasn't an accusation, he just said, "There is something about you that I didn't like." Now, what he was saying was, when I told him I was a pastor, you see it was that...to him I was the smell of death. To other people you will be the smell of life. Well, I saw him walking up to me after the memorial service, and this time he came up and he embraced me with tears in his eyes and he said, "You know that I am the most irreligious person here on the team, but that is the best stuff I ever heard." And he just walked away. Now, I don't know what the Lord is going to do with that. But something has happened over 20 years, same situation, I don't know what the Lord is

going to do. When he was walking away, I just said “Thank you, that means a lot to me.” He just walked away and I said, “Lord, just use that as a seed.” Now I have no idea what is going to happen, but you don’t need to be a manipulator. You can just the Lord work because you know that God is sovereign and it is because of His sovereignty that you and I can have the courage to be courageous, non-manipulative, and truthful.

So our first reason for being confident is we realize that God is sovereign. Notice that we are the same but there are two different consequences to your life. One lifestyle but two consequences: life and death. Some people are going to be turned on and some people turned off. You don’t control that and neither do I. It doesn’t give you license now...understand what I’m not saying. It doesn’t give you license to be sloppy. It gives you the freedom to be consistent. It is in the consistency that God will be sovereign. Now why is it? As Paul says, “The gospel is veiled to those who are perishing.” Why is that? It is because as Paul says, “Satan has blinded them.” Why is that? “Because of their unbelief.” Who are the perishing? “Those who reject the gospel of Christ who are blinded by the god of this age, blinded because of their unbelief.”

You’ll notice in Acts 2:14-36 in Peter’s sermon, he begins reminding the men of Israel that they are the people responsible who rejected and killed Jesus Christ, the blackest sin of all. Now notice he did not start with their felt needs, he started with this is your sin. Now I’m not saying that you and I go and point out people’s sin; that is not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is that you understand that God is sovereign and when the opportunity comes you can speak the truth in love and do it with grace. As so what we can do is that we can be very, very confident that God is sovereign because it does not depend upon us. He begins by exposing their sins so that they might be convicted in their conscience, that is what truth does.

Now, as we talked about the role of the Holy Spirit, the role of the Holy Spirit is several-fold. First of all, it convicts us of our sin, convince us of our sin, convert us from our sin, comfort us in our new way of life, and then be our paraclete, the one who controls our decision-making for the rest of our life. These are the five things the Holy Spirit does and it starts first of all with convicting us of our sin. Then convincing us of our sin. Then converting us from our sin. Then comforting us in our new way of life. Then controlling our actions as a child of God. It is exactly what we saw in the previous verses where Paul says he appeals to one’s conscience and how do you appeal to people’s conscience? By speaking the truth.

Here is a statement of one of my Puritan friends. “To be saved is not just to see the beauty of Jesus or the glory of God, to be saved one must see the heinousness of their sin.” Now that does not mean that we start telling people they’re sinful, I’m not saying that. But it is this: when you preach the gospel of Christ, which is the glory of God in the face of Christ, their sin will be exposed. You don’t have to expose it for them. That will happen when you proclaim the truth. “One must have their life shattered by the terror and horror of their own sin before a Holy God.”

Notice in John 16:7-9: Jesus tells His disciples and us: “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.”

A person is not a sinner because they lie, cheat, and steal; they lie, cheat, and steal because they are a sinner. That is an evangelical lifestyle can do. As the opportunity comes, you can be fearless, you can be courageous, you can be non-manipulative, and you can speak the truth and know that God is sovereign; you can be the most gracious person in the world in how you can proclaim the gospel of Christ. You can do that we great

tenderness, compassion and mercy because you know that it is not based upon your skill-set to communicate it; it is based upon the truth that you say.

Just make sure that we are giving a biblical gospel and not an American version of a cultural gospel. We need to be very, very careful of that. We don't squeeze people into the Kingdom. God does that himself. Thomas Brooks, a Puritan, said, "The sovereignty of God is that golden scepter in His hand with which He will make all men bow, either by His Word or by His works, by His mercies, or by His judgments." Either way, God will do that. The great confidence that you and I can have, Brothers, in living an evangelical lifestyle is the fact that we know God is sovereign. He is the one Who will produce the results; therefore, you and I can be courageous, non-manipulative and we can be truthful trusting a sovereign God to produce what He desires for His glory. Remember, the gospel is about the glory of God in the face of Christ.

We'll pick this up and bring your notes again for next week, and we will continue looking at the other confidences: Christ is Lord...that is another reason you don't have to be very confident; and the third is that God alone is adequate. Our great confidences are these, three-fold: God is sovereign, Christ is Lord, and God alone is adequate. That is what gives us confidence to live an evangelical lifestyle for the glory of God.

Let's pray.

Father, this is really about You and not about us. We pray, Lord, that You would open our eyes that we might behold You more clearly. Father, if we have said anything that is inconsistent with Your glory, with Your magnitude, with Your character and Your attributes, we pray that You would remove those thoughts from our mind and only those things that are consistent with the scripture revelation of Who You are will be that which we remember. And may it be so for Jesus' sake and all the Brave Men said, "Amen."