

**TRIUMPHANT LIVING**  
**Taught by Bruce Bickel**  
*“Focusing on God’s Power”*  
**November 15, 2013**

Good morning, Men. Good to be with all of you, thank you for showing up today. Since we do not have any music this morning, let’s just quietly go before the Lord and in our own personal way ask Him to keep our mind upon Christ and as Mark prayed, that the Lord would be pleased to be our teacher. Let’s quietly go before Him.

Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, we are absolutely dependent upon Your grace for us to learn anything about Your majesty, Your glory, or Your character. Father, would Your Holy Spirit Who is among us and leading us, open our eyes that we might behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. And all the Brave Men said, Amen.

Let’s turn in your Bibles please to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4, looking at Paul’s exposition on triumphant living, how one lives in the grace of God, through the covenant of Christ. Triumphant Living has been our primary Scripture and is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:14, “But thanks be to God, who always, always, always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” That is our hallmark verse.

We come to a passage today in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:13-15. and I’ll be reading again from the New American Standard. People ask me why I use that version and I always say it is because it has the largest print.

{LAUGHTER}

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:13-15. “But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke,” we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”

In the previous verses 7 through 12, we have this treasure in earthen vessels to show the all-surpassing power comes from God. Paul has been describing what life is like in the new arrangement through the gospel of Christ. He is basically describing His life to the people of Corinth and he gives for us in describing his own lifestyle, as we saw in verses 7 through 12, a typical life of a Christian in this world system.

It is very likely that because we live in a hostile environment, which Paul describes for us...let me read those verses again, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:7-12 so that you will understand the context of the verses I just read, 13-15. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves...” Then he goes on to describe his own style of life and gives for us a picture of life as it is in a hostile environment. “...we are afflicted in every way, **but** not crushed; perplexed, **but** not despairing; persecuted, **but** not forsaken; struck down, **but** not destroyed, always carrying about in the body of the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” Now that is a key phrase...so that the life of Jesus may be demonstrated or manifested, or made obvious in our body.

You and I are going to go through the same hassles and the same difficulties that everybody else does in life except for one issue. You and I are never the victim of circumstances, we are just the vessel in the circumstance. God is putting His life on display by the way that you and I manage the normal hassles of life

living in a hostile environment. That is the first time that he gives us the reason for our living in a hostile environment to put God's power on display.

In verse 11: "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake..." In other words, he is saying that in a hostile environment in which you and I live today in our culture, we always die a little bit because the world just suppresses us and harasses us. There is a little bit of dying in that, but what happens as a result of our dying is, in verse 11: "...so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." That is the second time he said the same thing.

The idea of these verses is that God permits us to be in a hostile environment to go through the same things that everybody else goes through in order that the life of Christ may be manifested or put on display by the way in which you and I manage these hassles of life. Verse 12: "So death works in us, but life in you." In other words, you and I are giving life to people by the way that they see how we handle the normal situations of life—what I'm calling a hostile environment.

Then he comes to verse 13: "But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak..." Now it is very likely that you and I could get easily discouraged by living in this hostile environment. The real issue is not so much are you discouraged, but what is it you're thinking about when you realize that you are discouraged. Remember this, we are not what we think we are but what we think, we are. We are not what we think we are, but what we think, we are. That is what Paul is teaching us here in verses 13-15. He's saying it is very likely that you could be discouraged by the hassles you go through by living in a hostile environment; and you may not understand all the reasons behind these hassles that are sovereignly permitted by God and sovereignly ordained.

The issue is not so much do I understand what I'm going through, but the real issue Paul now says in verses 13-15 says, how are you thinking about what you are going through? Where is the focus of your thoughts? In other words if you do not think right you are not going to act right and if you don't act right you are not going to feel right. So Paul's emphasis here is this: yes, you may be discouraged by living in this hostile environment even though you do understand that you are not a victim, you are a vessel, you may not understand the hassles you are going through and you know the big picture is this: God is putting His life on display, that is how God gives His life away and much like a lookout on a ship at sea, He'll take his binoculars and He'll adjust them so that He can see the long horizon. You have to make some adjustment. What Paul is saying is, even though you are discouraged the real issue is not do I understand why I'm discouraged, but what am I thinking about when I am discouraged? That is when you have to be as the seaman on the ship who is a lifeguard or who is a lookout...he adjusts his binoculars to see long-range. What Paul tells us in verse 13 is, you need to think long-range.

You need to focus on God's power. So in the midst of our discouragement, what is Paul saying? He says you have to think correctly and what he wants you to think about is focus on the power of God. He gives us three illustrations in verses 13-15. There are three things that will keep us on focus when we think correctly and when we make the adjustments to look long-range.

First of all is faith. Faith will keep us from fainting and that is verse 13. The resurrection of Christ will keep us from sinking and that is verse 14. And the power of gratitude will keep us from complaining and that is verse 15.

So he says, even though you are discouraged the real issue is not so much, am I discouraged but what is it you are thinking about when you realize you are discouraged? His answer is, think on the power of God in three areas of your life: in your faith, the resurrection of Christ, and gratitude. That is what we want to look at today.

To help us understand God's adequacy, Paul has already told us that God alone is adequate. We saw that in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:4. God alone is adequate. Let me give you a great example of why God alone is adequate to live the Christian life. That is what Paul is saying, so we need to have a little bit of historical background to understand why we can trust the power of God. The power of God is in three areas: Paul says in your faith, in the power of the resurrection, and the power of gratitude. But why is it that God alone is adequate? Turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis 15: 8-21.

Genesis 15: 8-21. It is when God establishes the covenant with Abram. Now the principles that you are reading there as you scan those verses are the basic elements of a covenant agreement between man and man from the basis of what God has done with Abram. In other words, we see an illustration of what God did with Abram... He takes an illustration from their relation between people and the Chaldeans culture, He uses that as an object lesson to teach Abram something very significant, and that is this, that God alone is adequate.

There are several ingredients that are important for a covenant relationship. First of all, there is a statement of terms as agreed upon between the two parties. You can read about it in Genesis 26:29 and Genesis 31:50-52.

Secondly, an oath was made by each party to observe those terms. They both made an oath and you can read about that in Genesis 26:31 and Genesis 31:48-53.

Thirdly, each party evoked upon himself a curse to prevent disregard of the agreement. In other words, they both agree not only upon the terms but what happens if you break those terms...f you broke it, what happens. You'll see that in Deuteronomy 27:15-26.

Lastly, there was a formal ratification of the covenant agreement and it was demonstrated by some solemn act so that they both would remember it, such as what was common in the early tradition at that time was drinking each other's blood. In other words, that was the thing that gave them the symbolism of "we will not break this" and that was the solemn act that will ratify the fact that we made this agreement between us." When you go back to Genesis 15:7 we see the statement of the terms that will be done. In Chapter 15:8, Abram asked—not out of doubt so much—but he does it with the purpose of saying, "Could I be sovereignly established in my faith to understand your ability to fulfill what you said you would do?" He is not asking in vs. 8 so much out of doubt as he is saying, "How is it that you can assure me, give me a solid anticipation that you will fulfill what you said you would do?" Of course, what he was talking about was that he had no heir in vs. 2 of Chapter 15 when God said you have no heir in your lineage and he had none. So Abram was asking, "What is it that is going to give me the assurance that you are the one who alone is adequate?" So what God does wisely is, He takes this covenant agreement and demonstrates it to Abram.

God's word is so pure that it does not need to have any special guaranty to confirm it, but in order to make Abram sure that God alone is adequate to fulfill what He said He would do and give him all the support that his faith needs during his time of trials...God employs this covenant process to make Abram certain. That is why He does it...to ensure that Abram's faith system, so that when he goes through troubles, he is going to rely back upon this example that God gave him of the covenant agreement.

So in vs. 9, the covenant is established and God condescends to let it be done in the way of tradition of the ancient Chaldeans. In other words, He took something that was very much from Abram's life and said, "Look, I'm going to give you an example from your own life...an example of how I am going to be the one alone who is adequate." When you read on in that, where the two covenant parties would pass through the halves of the beasts, implying that a similar lot would befall their own livestock if one violated the covenant.

As you read 15 you will notice that they cut the animals in half and in the tradition of the Chaldeans both parties would walk through that, holding hands and walking on either side of the two animals and it was a symbolism that said, "If I violate this agreement, then you have the right to do this to my livestock." Then the other guy would say, "If I go through this and I violate it, you have a right to do this to my livestock." That was the picture. That is what God was implying, demonstrating and illustrating to Abram. But notice that God modifies it a bit. Neither do both parties—God and Abram—walk through the halves, and is that threat implied.

Notice verses 12-16. God affirms the agreement between them, then in verses 17-18 of Genesis 15, God solidified the covenant made with Abram by using a flaming pot. Now that was a two foot inverted bowl with fire coming out of the top. Notice who passes through the two halves? God alone does. What is that saying? God is saying that He is holding Himself accountable to whom? To Himself. He is holding Himself accountable to Himself to make sure this agreement is in vogue and it is never violated. That is the difference. So he is using an illustration from the Chaldeans' life that Abram would understand of the natural human agreement system known as a covenant, but God modifies it by saying, "I'm not going to hold **you** accountable to the covenant, I am going to hold **who** accountable to it? Himself. That is why Paul says that God alone is adequate. Because God alone is adequate to fulfill what He said He would do. That is the unique thing of this covenant agreement between God and Abram in Genesis 15.

God uses a flaming pot to demonstrate that He alone was the One who walks through the two halves of the animals. Notice that God alone passes through this, the two halves, and by doing so God binds Himself to the fulfillment of certain obligations that He made to Abram. God holds Himself accountable to whom? To Himself. Now that is the critical point when you understand what Paul is teaching us in this new covenant of understanding 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, that God alone is adequate. God alone is the one who holds Himself accountable to what He said He would do in the arrangement. So when He has a covenant with us, who holds Himself accountable? Not to us. He holds Himself accountable to Himself.

God teaches Abram about the new covenant in vs. 6 and that is the principle of justification by faith alone. We are at a great advantage in our day and age. Do you understand what I just said about who holds Himself accountable? I want you to understand that is the critical point...when we see that God alone is adequate. Why is it that God alone is adequate? Because He is holding Himself accountable to what He said He would do. That is the basis of our faith. The basis of our faith is not how deeply we believe, it is in the object of our belief. Do I really believe that He alone is adequate? Yes is the answer because of our regeneration God give us a fledgling faith that we believe God in His nature and because He holds Himself accountable. So what Abram and others saw as a mere shadow, we see in the fulfillment of Christ. God alone fulfills His covenant through Christ.

Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 13. This is all by way of introduction, Brothers, to help us understand the significance of what we are going to talk about when we say that we believe and then we speak. Because the thing that kept Paul from being discouraged in living in a hostile environment was this: it was his understanding

of faith that kept him from sinking, it kept him from fainting. And that was because he understood this: that God alone is adequate.

Hebrews 13:20-21 and we find this wonderful passage. “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant,…” Now there is a covenant that God made with His son—who does God hold accountable for the accomplishments of the personal work of Christ? He holds Himself accountable to that through the blood of the eternal covenant. “...even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.”

Now notice a couple of things. Who does the equipping? You and I do not do the equipping for our salvation. We do not do the equipping for our sanctification. Who does that? Christ does that because of the eternal covenant He made with His Son and that is because God alone is adequate to accomplish two things: your sanctification and your salvation. God alone is adequate to do that. No one else can do that. Now notice this, “Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd...” That is Christ of the sheep. “...through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will...” How are you going to do His will? God alone is adequate to help you do that. You cannot equip yourself to do that. God alone is adequate to do that. “...working in us...” Who is working in us? Christ is working in us because of that eternal covenant. “...which is pleasing in his sight...” He does the things that are pleasing in His sight. “...through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever.”

Now notice, talking about the eternal covenant, that Christ was the One passing between the two halves of sin and death. You and I did not pass through that. Christ alone passed through the two halves of sin and death in a covenant relationship with us. Who holds Himself accountable for your salvation? Christ does. That is why you have heard me say for eighteen years that He accomplished your salvation, he did not make it possible. He is holding Himself accountable for your salvation.

Who holds himself accountable for your sanctification? Sanctification is not something that you do, it is something that Christ has done **in** you and **for** you because He holds Himself accountable for your sanctification. Do you understand that. He is the One Who went through the two halves of sin and death and He holds Him accountable for two things: your salvation and your sanctification. He holds Himself accountable and what you and I do is we believe that. We trust that. Faith is forsaking all, I trust Him.

The reason I’m going through all this, guys, is to help you understand the significance of Christ holding Himself accountable for those two things in your life. That means, practically speaking, you are saved not because of your commitment to Christ but because of Christ’s commitment to you. Do you understand that. That is why you are here today. It is not because of something you did **for** Him, but it is something **He did for you** because He holds Himself accountable to the covenant relationship of passing through sin and death. The reason you are set apart for unique services for the Kingdom of God for His glory is because Christ accomplished your sanctification. He accomplished that. Now you can do good things.

Go back to Hebrews. Notice, “...even Jesus our Lord, equipping you in every good thing...” That is your sanctification. Who does the equipping? Christ does that. The real issue, guys, for us to understand what Paul is saying is the reason...yes, you may be discouraged living in a hostile environment of life but the thing that is going to keep you from fainting is your understanding of faith. What do I believe in? Do I believe in the fact that God holds Himself accountable? And Christ holds Himself accountable for my salvation and for my

sanctification...that is what I believe and that is what is going to keep me from fainting. I may not know or understand all the things I'm going through but I do know this: I can trust Christ because He accomplished that for me. God alone is adequate.

So you and I are saved not because of our commitment to Christ; it is not something that we chose to do, it is something that He accomplished so that we would choose to do it. See the difference? There is a tremendous difference. One of the real problems that I have in our modern evangelistic preaching is that we have relegated salvation to something that I choose to do; and we have lost sight of the Biblical understanding of regeneration. Regeneration is being "born again." If you are truly dead in your trespasses and sin you do not need faith, you need life.

What is regeneration? Very quickly, regeneration is a direct and an immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of a person. It is a direct and an immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of a person. That is something that God does because He alone is adequate to accomplish it. A direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of a person.

Go with me to 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:1. I've given you this illustration before but I want to emphasize it again because I think in much of our evangelical preaching we have simplified salvation to be something that man chooses to do because he has an option to do it. Realistically speaking, you and I are absolutely passive in the ministry of regeneration. We are passive because regeneration is an immediate and direct work of the Holy Spirit upon that person and at that point you and I are passive. Something happens to us and then we become active the moment we start believing, but the reason you believe is because of the supernatural work of regeneration.

We talk about belief all the time and, yes, belief is the consequence, it is not the cause. The cause of our belief is regeneration. The cause of your believing here today is the fact of a direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul sometime in your history. The result of that the first expression of that magnificent work called regeneration of being born again is that you believe. Belief is the evidence. Belief never saves anybody. Belief is the evidence that you have been regenerated.

Go to 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:1. Are you tracking with me, guys? "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." As I explained to you this, in the original text, it would be translated this way, "Having been born of God, one believes." Because it is basically saying this, we lose a lot in the English translation. There is a **past** event in your life called regeneration and that is a direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul in your life...past tense. There is an event that **occurred** in your life that has a present-day consequence of belief. The present day consequence of belief. Belief is the consequence of your regeneration in which you were passive. That is the work of the Holy Spirit immediate and direct upon your own soul. Do you follow that? The belief is the result of your regeneration, it is not the cause of it. In much of our evangelistic preaching we relegate salvation to an option that I have to choose from many things I could do.

Regeneration, we need to talk about regeneration and teach that from the pulpit because that is the difference between my having a choice and God doing something because God alone is adequate. He is the one who take responsibility **for** your salvation and **for** your sanctification because He holds Himself accountable to Himself. He doesn't hold Himself accountable to you and me. He's accountable to Himself.

Just let me show you another illustration. Go back to Ezekiel 36. Basically I do not teach anything new every week, I just reiterate what I've said that past 17 years. {LAUGHTER} You've noticed that, Ted? Well, repetition is a great way of teaching, I just excel in it. {LAUGHTER}

Go to Ezekiel 36.24. Here you see a picture of a direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of a person. "For **I** will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land." Who is this about? Who is the subject matter? "**I**." Notice how many times you see the word "**I**." It is not about you, it is not about me. This is what God says what "**I'm**" going to do. He does this because He alone is adequate. He is the only one who can do it. "For **I** will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land, then **I** will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean; **I** will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols. Moreover, **I** will give you a new heart..." That is regeneration, that is a direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul, at which time you were passive. Something happened to you that God chose to do for His glory and your benefit. "**I** will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and **I** will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **I** will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Who takes responsibility for your obedience and sanctification? God does. He does that through regeneration, through direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul.

Notice, just in summary here is what we see in vs. 24-27. **God** calls us to Himself. **He** cleanses us from ourselves. **He** creates a new life within us. **He** completes us with the Holy Spirit. **He** causes us to be obedient. See how that progression works? Let me give it to you again: vs. 24. He calls us to Himself. You didn't find God, God found who? You. Because **He called you to Himself**. God alone is adequate to do that. He called you to Himself. If His intent is to demonstrate the fact that He is holy, He is going to have to clean us up. The second thing he does after calling you into a saving relationship through regeneration, He cleanses you from all your idols. He cleans you up a little bit. Then He creates a new life within you and takes that heart of stone and gives you a heart of flesh. Now you are sensitive to spiritual things and now for the first time you can believe. Now for the first time you can believe. It might be a fledgling belief but you can start believing because God has done an immediate and direct work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul, and the end result of that is that you can believe.

So God calls us to Himself, He cleanses us from ourselves, He creates a new life within us, and now He completes us with a new source of power and that is who? The Holy Spirit. He gives us the Holy Spirit. It is a paraclete...the One who comes along beside you and who is your counselor through the rest of your life, to guide you to be obedient in your sanctification. That is the equipping that He does. God takes responsibility for your sanctification by giving you a new source of power. That is what Paul is teaching us in our verses. He says when you get discouraged, don't be worried that you are discouraged; the real issue is what am I thinking about when I am discouraged? The answer is this: think on the power of God. The power of faith, the power of the resurrection, and the power of gratitude.

Lastly, He calls us to Himself, cleanses us from ourselves, and creates a new life within us, completes us with the Holy Spirit and, lastly the consequence is this: He causes you to be obedient. Brothers, do you understand this? Who takes responsibility for your obedience? God does. Now that does not mean you sit back and let go and let God. I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying there is tremendous responsibility in our obedience. But who equips you to have that desire to be obedient? God does. We saw that in Hebrews 13. God alone is adequate to do two things in your life: save you and sanctify you. He alone can do that. What you and I do is

we put that sanctification life on display through the normal hassles of life while living in a hostile environment. That is what we saw in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:7-15. And Paul now tells us this...go back to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians....

Yes, Tom.

**TOM:** *I think it's interesting how the Lord underlines all that He just said and we have gone through in verse 32 of Ezekiel 36. "It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God. Let that be known to you."*

That is excellent. In other words...read that again...Ezekiel 36:32. "It is not for your sake that I will act declares the Lord God. Let that be known to you."

In other words, catch this: You and I are never the reason that God does anything. Who is the reason that God does something? God is. God is the reason He does something. Tom, that is great. Thank you. Good summary of that. He does that for His own glory because He alone is adequate.

What Paul now tells us is this...go back to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:13-15. When you are discouraged because of the normal hassles of life, Paul says that is going to be natural because you are living in a hostile environment. He experienced that but he now begins to teach the Corinthians this: when you have those moments of discouragement, you may not know why you are discouraged, but the real issue is what am I thinking about when I am discouraged? He says you need to think about the power of God. That is why I went through this ½ hour of introduction into this verse. It is to help you understand the power of God that is available to you and me in the moments of our discouragement. The first one is the thing that keeps us from fainting and that is faith.

Let's take a look at what he is teaching us in verse 13. The first thing that keeps us from sinking in the discouragements of life and the pressures of the hassles of a hostile environment is the spirit of faith. That means that we approach every situation with a certain disposition, a certain way of thinking. We approach it through the eyes of faith. I may not understand what is going on but I'm going to look at this from the big picture like you look out of adjusted binoculars on a ship at sea and I'm going to see the big picture and I'm going to approach this situation that I do not understand by the Power of God because the one of the things that is going to keep me from sinking is the power of faith. I have been given that through regeneration. What I just went through. You now believe and that is your great power that you have...the power of belief.

Notice the order in verse 13. Paul says, "I believed, therefore I spoke..." Which comes first? Belief comes before you speak. We often get turned around and we try to speak confidently when we really do not believe something. It's like we try to talk ourselves into believing God will act. People pick that up. We come across it as being somewhat diluted and deceived because our conduct does not reflect our words. People pick that up. Paul teaches us that we are to act out what we think. Paul is quoting from Psalm 116 when he makes that statement...where David uttered these same words when he was in great danger from which there was no possibility of rescue except by the power of God and that is Paul's point. During these hassles of our life and discouragement as we focus on God's power by faith, we believe what God is doing in verses 7 through 12 in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, putting His life on display.

You may not understand it but the one thing you can hang your hat on that keeps you from fainting is this: God is sovereignly using me as a vessel to put His life on display. That is what keeps you from sinking, that is what keeps you from fainting because the big picture...many times we get lost in the forest because we are looking



for the trees. We get lost in it because we are looking for the immediate result. Why me? Paul is saying don't worry about why you...just understand that there is something going on that you may not understand but believe it. God is putting His life on display. Twice in verses 7 through 12 He says, "So that the life of God may be manifested in your flesh." Now I don't know why I go through the hassles that I do. You don't understand why you go through the hassles but I do believe this that somehow in God's sovereign majesty because He alone is adequate, He is putting His life on display and I need to act like it. If you do not think like that, men, you are not going to act like that. If you begin to say, "Wow is me," you are not going to think about that at all. You are not going to focus on God's power, but you will focus on yourself and say, "How come it is happening to me?" **Paul is saying don't do that but focus on the power of your faith because you know He has already taught us that God alone is adequate.**

We are reminded of the great power of God when we believe in our faith and that He is in control. There are many applications of this, let me give you a couple before we close.

First of all, faith is the constraining principle in our speech. The heart and tongue should always go together. The tongue should always be the revealer of the heart and the heart should always be the suggestor to the tongue for Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:34 "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." Brothers, if you want to understand and take a look at your maturity in Christ, listen to your language. What do you talk about? You see, that is a reflection of how you think. Thoughts become our words, words become our actions, actions become our habits, habits become our character, and character becomes our destiny. It all starts with how you think.

Believing is an act of the heart. What is first spoken with the tongue should first be stamped upon your heart. What is first spoken with the tongue should be first stamped upon your heart. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. That's why the sequence here is: "I believed, then I spoke. I believed, then I spoke Paul says.

Romans 10:10. "For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. Whatever comes out of the mouth should be stamped on the heart.

Everywhere in the Scripture you will see that faith and speech are always united. One Puritan says it this way, "The man who speaks what he does not believe is a hypocrite. The man who believes and does not speak what he believes is a coward." That is rather heavy-duty isn't it? The man who speaks what he does not believe is a hypocrite. The man who believes and does not speak what he believes is a coward.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *What Scripture is that Bruce?*

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *That is a Bickelism. {LAUGHTER}*

That is from a Puritan...J. G. Rodgers.

Number 2. The second thing about faith. We must have faith before we can believe successfully. Believing deeply must come before speaking heartedly or else we will get discouraged in our failures and proud of our successes. What Paul is saying is that when you focus on the power of faith it is going to prevent you from getting discouraged but also prevent you from being proud because you know God alone is the source. God alone is adequate.

Number 3. Our faith will be the energy behind our speech. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones says this: "Faith is the refusal to panic." Why is it that you don't panic? Because you know the power of God. God alone is adequate.

Martin Luther said, “The property of faith is not to be proud of what the eyes see but to rely upon what the Word reveals.” It is what you believe that determines your behavior. It must never be what you want to achieve to determine your behavior, **it is what you believe that determines your behavior and not what you want to achieve.**

Fourthly, what we believe we are bound to speak as God leads us. What I’m teaching you today, I believe this with all my heart; that is why I’m teaching it. I believe it. People may not understand it, they may not agree with me but that is irrelevant. The issue is this is what the Scripture teaches, this is what I believe, and therefore, I am bound to teach it regardless of the response of the audience.

Let me give you some quotes. Matthew 10:19. “But when they deliver you up do not be anxious about how or what you will speak for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak.” Why is that? Because of the power of faith. Faith and the fact that God alone is adequate.

Number 5. Our faith gives us the assurance of our success. We believe that there are other forces which we do not see which are mightier than all the forces which are lined up against us. A good illustration there would be 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 6:15-17. Take a look at it. It is an illustration of this principle. There are forces outside of us, lined up against us, but the forces against them are greater than the forces against us.

Listen to some of the men of my Puritan friends describing faith. From Richard Baxter, “A believer sees invisible things.” Thomas Brooks says this, “Faith makes invisible things visible; absent things present, and things that are very far off nearer to the soul.” Augustine says, “Faith is to believe what we do not see and reward of this faith is to see what we believe.” Lastly, King David from Psalm 20:7: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of our Lord God.” It is faith that gives us the assurance of our successes, not our circumstances.

When you are discouraged in the midst of the hassles living in a hostile environment, Paul says to do this, “Don’t try to figure out why you are discouraged. What are you thinking about when you are discouraged? And that is to think on the power of God because it is the power of faith that God alone is adequate to accomplish the things...the big picture that God is giving His life away to the hassles of life. That thought determines how you respond.

And may it be so for God’s glory. Let’s pray.

Father thank You that You not only teach us principles but you teach us application. I thank You for Paul’s logic; he not only gives us the reason for the hassles of life but he also teaches us how to manage those hassles of life when we are discouraged and that it is the power of faith that keeps us from fainting, the power of the resurrection that keeps us from sinking and the power of gratitude that keeps us from complaining. May it be so for Jesus’ sake and all the Brave Men said, Amen.