

**TRIUMPHANT LIVING**  
**Taught by Bruce Bickel**  
***“An Evangelical Lifestyle”***  
**Session: September 27, 2013**

Father, we rejoice in Your presence. We stand in awe of Your magnificent glory. Thank You, Father, that You have designed a salvation plan that is designed for us to be the means by which Your glory is put on display. Father, we pray in the quietness of these moments that You would be pleased once again to open our eyes that we might behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Continuing our study on Triumphant Living in the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 we come now to Chapter 4, verses 1 to 6 and you have this on your handout for today. The last couple of weeks Ted and I have been teaching on the Glory of God and how it is to be perfected in man because we are to be the means by which He puts His life on display.

Essentially, as you have been learning the last few weeks in the scripture, the gospel is defined by Paul in these passages as the Glory of God in the Face of Christ. The Glory of God in the Face of Christ. That is what he refers to as the gospel. Now when you take that statement, the Glory of God in the Face of Christ, which is the theme of the gospel, you basically understand that the gospel is not about man but it is about God. It is not about man’s needs but it is about God’s glory. So the gospel as Paul defines it by definition is the Glory of God in the Face of Christ. So the only way you are going to see the gospel in the glory of God is to understand the personal work of Christ. That is why Paul says in other passages that he preaches Christ and Him crucified.

A pastor who takes the pulpit on the Lord’s Day to lead in worship should have no problem of what to say because the context is always the same thing—it’s about Christ and Him crucified. You just say that different ways. Good biblical preaching, as you have heard me say, is plagiarism. You just take a message that has already been given in the scripture and you just re-give it. That’s what good preaching is. Paul has defined for us the definition of the gospel.

Now, you take that definition, the Glory of God in the Face of Christ and you break that down and its contents would be this: the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and the work of Christ, and repentance and faith. That is how you would present the gospel: the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ (person means His sinless perfection and His work means His perfect obedience), the personal and work of Christ, and then repentance and faith. That is how one would present the gospel and that is based upon the definition that Paul gives us in these chapters about what is the gospel.

The last couple of weeks we studied what is the ultimate objective of our regeneration and our redemption. Remember, the word redemption means, rescued through the payment of a price. What is the ultimate objective of our salvation? Is it eternal life? No, that is an outcome; that is a consequence. The ultimate objective of the gospel of our salvation is, certainly to glorify God, but to restore the glory of man to reflect the glory of God. That is the ultimate objective of our salvation; it is to restore the glory of man to reflect the glory of God. That is what you begin to see all the way from Genesis through the Book of Revelation. The whole concept of our redemption is this: to restore the glory of man so that we are the representative to reflect the glory of God. That is what Paul’s teaching us about Triumphant Living.

I want to read for us today Chapter 4: 1-6. But I want to do it in the context of the previous verses because his references to the word “therefore,” in Chapter 4:1 refers us to a few verses previous. So let me pick up a couple. Let’s pick up verse 17 of Chapter 3 and we will read down to Chapter 4:1-6.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Now there you see the ultimate objective of our redemption (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:17-18). To restore the glory of man to reflect the glory of God.

Then we pick it up at Chapter 4:1-6. “Therefore,”....Now the word “therefore” reminds us to ask ourselves what is the “therefore” there for? The “therefore” is there for to remind us what I just read in verses 3:17 & 18 about the ultimate objective of our redemption, which is to restore the glory of man to reflect the glory of God. Now we understand what Paul is saying. “Therefore, since we have received this ministry as we have 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.” Now there he is talking about the definition of the gospel...the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Verse 5: “For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

There is the summary statement of the definition of the gospel. The glory of God in the face of Christ. Now, what Paul is defining for us here is, he is saying, “As a result of—and I just read from the New American Standard version—I think the NIV translates Chapter 4:1 as this: “Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry...” That is the way the NIV says it. Notice this: ministry is not the result of human achievement; it is the consequence of what? Divine mercy. Do you realize that? Ministry is the consequence of divine mercy, not the consequence of human experience or ability. It is not about man’s achievement but it is about God’s mercy. You have to understand what Paul is talking about in verses 17 and 18. He’s saying that you are being, through the plan of redemption and through the gospel of Christ, you are being repositioned to reflect the glory of God, therefore, you have this ministry. What is the ministry? It is the ministry of your reflecting the glory of God. That is what he is saying in verses 17 and 18.

In your outline today, I want us to see what Paul describes for us and what I’m calling “An Evangelical Lifestyle” based upon my understanding of what is happening to me in verses 17 and 18, and that is this: “that beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one stage of glory to the next.”

That is what is happening to you and me as a result of our redemption. That is what is going on inside of you and as a result of that you have a ministry. The ministry is a reflection of what is going on inside of you, which is the restoration of God’s glory. That is your ministry. That is not something that you decide to make happen; it is something that is going on. What Paul defines for us and describes for us is an Evangelical Lifestyle who

understands verses 17 and 18 and what is happening to me; therefore, my lifestyle is this: I have three characteristics for us:

In verse 1, it is a courageous life; in verse 2, it is a non-manipulative life; and thirdly, it is a life that appeals to conscience or what we would say would be, a truthful life. A courageous life, a non-manipulative life; and a truthful life.

Let's take a look at this passage. In Chapter 4: 1-6, Paul is describing the kind of life that is characteristic of life under the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace, we just saw, in verses 17 and 18 of Chapter 3: ...are being transformed into the glory of man to being restored the glory of God. That is the covenant of grace. God is restoring His glory in man to be the ones who will represent His glory to the world. Now Paul is describing for us the kind of life that manifests itself as a result of understanding the covenant of grace.

Paul has just been teaching us about being led forth in triumph as a result of the accomplishments of the personal work of Christ. Now the Jews of the day of Paul, and he was writing to the Church of Corinth, were looking and working for changes that would occur on the outside. They were looking for a change of the role of the Roman government, the Nation of Israel. They were looking for a political Messiah, not a spiritual Messiah. But what Jesus accomplished was change on the inside, not change on the outside.

So we studied that transformation the last couple of weeks in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Chapter 3:17-18. Notice this, because of this transformation (verses 17 and 18); God is making us look like Himself inwardly so we can live for Him outwardly. Do you understand that? God is changing us inwardly...that is verses 17 and 18 of the previous chapter...He is changing us inwardly so that we can live for Him outwardly. Often times we think about what should I be doing, rather than saying what should I be? It is really about being more than it is about doing. Ministry now belongs to whom? Everyone. If you are in Christ, you are involved in ministry because you are being changed on the inside so that you can live for Him on the outside. That is what Paul defines as ministry. It is giving away to somebody else what God has given you. You don't go looking for ministry, you are the ministry.

Now that says something that we need to understand. We often talk about I'm going to go into full-time ministry. Well where do you think you've been since you have been converted? Do you think that ministry is something that you just pull off the shelf and you wear a tee shirt that says, "I'm involved in full-time ministry?" Or, "I'm now being paid for it?" See, we have this mentality that, if you don't like your job you can always go into full-time ministry. {LAUGHTER} And you just go do that because God has called me to that because I don't like my boss; therefore, I'm going to go into full-time ministry. Well maybe you should have been in full-time ministry with a boss who is a twit, because the goal of your life is what? God is changing you on the inside to reflect His glory on the outside...and that is ministry. You were involved in professional full-time ministry once you are converted. We need to quit compartmentalizing this and saying, "oh, I need to go do ministry" and understand this: Paul is saying that you are the ministry because of what is happening on the inside of you.

The contrast is that the Jews were looking for changes on the outside, and Paul is saying the changes occur on the inside so that you can live outside for the glory of God. So the whole point of the first couple of verses is this: because of God restoring His glory in man to reflect His glory, He changes us on the inside so that we can live for Him on the outside.

There are several manifestations of that, there are several characteristics. The first one you will see in verse 1: it is a courageous life. The words “lose heart”...we do not lose heart; it literally means to give in to lose courage. Why is it that we can be courageous? The reason is that we do not give in and lose heart is because we understand the mercy of God. “Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry...” You see, the basis of your ministry is your recognition of the mercy of God. We need to understand mercy in the context of two other words. Justice, mercy, and grace.

Justice is getting what you deserve. The standard of the scripture of both the old and new testament is very simple: the soul that sins shall die...the old testament standard. The new testament is the wages of sin is death. Justice is getting what you deserve.

Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Do you realize that every body in this world who has ever been created has experienced God’s mercy, they just don’t know it? Because why didn’t they die with their first breath, which was an act of sin. That is because of the mercy of God. See, people have experienced God’s mercy...they just don’t know it. Because we don’t reflect it enough in our lifestyle to help them understand and ask us the question of why is it you are acting the way you are? Because God is changing me for His glory on the inside so that I can live for Him on the outside.

Grace is not giving what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve and grace is getting what you don’t deserve. God’s resources at Christ’s expense. The reason that you understand this: I am in full-time Christian ministry is because of my conversion and because of my regeneration, because of my redemption, because the ultimate glory of my ultimate objective of my salvation is: to reflect the glory of God. That means I am in ministry because of my style of life. That is why you don’t give up.

You don’t give up because you understand what? God has been merciful to you. He’s been merciful to me. That is what is Paul is teaching us. That is why we are courageous.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Bruce?*

Yes, please.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *[UNCLEAR]. Could you repeat that please?*

God is changing us on the inside so that we can live for Him on the outside. Ministry is not something you do; ministry is a style of life. It is who you are, where you are. That is why we have that on the back of the little card that Tom printed for us. Ministry is who you are, where you are. That means what? Wherever you are, you are involved in ministry. Now ministry is for God, not for people. You see you can be alone and can be ministering. How can you do that?

Just by praising God, by thanking Him, by being grateful, by reading the scripture, by singing hymns, or whatever you do. You see that is an act of worship because you are reflecting the fact that your life is motivated by one simple thing...God’s mercy. That’s why we have as our little **moniker** here in our Brave Men Group: M-8s, Mission Minded Members of a Movement Motivated by Mercy for Ministry in the Marketplace. Mission Minded Members of a Movement (the Kingdom of God) Motivated by Mercy for Ministry in the Marketplace. That means wherever you are, your marketplace is where? Wherever you are. Whether the golf course, K-Mart, it’s at PNC, it’s at Mellon, it’s at Pitt, it is a student in my high school, wherever you are...that is your

marketplace. And we are Mission Minded Members of a Movement, the glory of God, the Kingdom of God, Motivated by Mercy for Ministry in the Marketplace. God is changing us on the inside, Men, so that we can live for Him on the outside.

The first expression of that characteristic of an evangelical lifestyle is that you don't give up. You don't lose heart. You are not discouraged because you understand this: it is not the consequences of what you see going on, it is the realization of what is going on inside of me and that is this: I'm experiencing God's mercy. I'm a mercy-motivated member. So the first thing is we are courageous, we do not lose heart.

Paul's sense of the glory of his position arose out of his sense of the glory of gospel. What gives you the glory of your position as a believer? Is it because of your position in life? No, Paul says no, that is not the reason that I glory in my position. I glory in my position because I understand the glory of the gospel. The glory of the gospel is this: that God is reinstating His glory in man to reflect His own glory.

When he understands that, he says how can God do that other than to just be merciful to me? Let me describe how Paul describes His mercy. The ministry that Paul teaches us is not the result of human achievement; it is a consequence of divine mercy.

Turn in your Bibles to 1st Timothy 1:12-17 and notice the number of times that Paul uses the word "mercy." Now he is writing to one of his pastoral protégés, a young man that he is encouraging to be a pastor and he is reminding him of his position and understanding the position of the glory of the gospel because he understood God's mercy. Listen to the number of times he uses the word "mercy."

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was far more than abundant, with the faith and love, which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason, I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Paul is saying this: "I glory in my position because I understand the glory of the gospel." And that is this: I was shown mercy. What motivated Paul to be courageous, not to give up, not to give in, not to quit, it says recognition of the constant mercy of God and how God had redeemed him from his past life and positioned him in to being in a position of authority because of something as glorious as the gospel.

To whom does God show mercy? Well, He shows mercy to the condemned, the guilty, the hopeless—people just like you and me. That was before we were in Christ, but now that you are **in** Christ, you are no longer condemned, you are no longer guilty, you are no longer hopeless. So we can be courageous and not lose heart because we understand and have experienced God's mercy. That is why you don't give up; you just understand God's mercy in your life. A sinner understanding God's mercy, whatever the odds, just doesn't give up. That is a style of life, Men, that you and I live. We just don't give up. We don't lose heart. Do you know how Jesus defines giving up? How do you define giving up? Here is what Jesus says about giving up. Look at Luke 18:1:

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart...,” it is the same word...don’t give up...he defines giving up as not praying. Do you realize that? Jesus says, “when you stop praying, you are giving up.” This means that when we are most discouraged, we should be praying the most. Because when you are not praying and when you are discouraged, it is a sign of having lost your heart. It is a sign of giving up. It is a sign of being non-courageous. It is in those moments of our discouragement and disappointments that we need to be praying the most because it is a reminder of God’s mercy.

I find it very interesting that Jesus defines giving up as not praying.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *But, Bruce, I find that when I am most discouraged, I am most reluctant to pray.*

Absolutely, isn’t that true? Now why is that? Why is it that when we are most discouraged, most disappointed, we are reluctant to pray. Why is that?

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT:** *Our heart is hardened against God, in my moment of sin, the last thing I want is for God to save me out of it because I actually take pleasure in saving myself out of my ugly selfishness and rejection of grace.*

Thank you for your honesty, that’s well said. Do you realize, and I can only speak for myself, but when I choose to sin, do you know what that is saying, I love my sin more than I do Christ. That is what it is saying. When I choose to pursue that thought that is in my mind, out of the over-flow of the heart the mouth speaks. When I sin with my mouth, it is because I enjoy and love the sin more than I do the personal work of Christ.

What is the remedy? Remember, God’s mercy. It is prayer. But Ted is exactly right. All of us have...when you are discouraged and disappointed the last thing you want to do is pray. What I would suggest is and what Paul is suggesting is that you have to remember God’s mercy, because it is the understanding of God’s mercy that brings you back of not being discouraged.

**TOM:** *Don’t you think it is an incorrect idea that a lot of people think they have to ask God for mercy rather than thank Him for mercy?*

Amen! If you are **in** Christ, you have already experienced God’s mercy. Notice what Paul starts off with in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord.” The first thing to do is to start being thankful. One of the greatest deterrents for worry is worship. And how do you worship? You can start off by just being grateful, by being thankful. Thanking the Lord. Paul starts that session off about reminding himself of God’s mercy; he starts it off with an expression of gratitude by saying, “I thank the Lord Jesus who strengthens me.” Now how did He strengthen me? He strengthened me through mercy.

Yes, Don?

**DON:** *But what if you don’t feel thankful?*

Alright, good question. How do you guys handle that? I don’t feel thankful. So what do you do? Ted?

**TED:** *I encountered this the other day and what I did was I just started to remember all the things that God had done. I didn't feel thankful, I just started to remember them and number them and it changed. The feeling changed.*

Amen. There is a great theme that runs all the way through scripture and it is the theme of remembrance. Remember when the people crossed the Nation of Israel to Jordan? They said to build a rock tower there so that the next generation will come and say what does that mean, and it will remind them of the mercy of God to them as a Nation. That is this great principle. We need to remind ourselves of God's mercy. Just go back and count the blessings. The reason you and I can anticipate future blessings is because we have a litany of already having received past blessings. We need to go back and remember the past blessings because that will give us an indication of the future blessings that we will expect to come because of God's mercy.

So, Don's question is excellent...what do you do when you don't "feel" like being thankful? You just have to remember God's mercies. That is a matter of—here we go back to Romans 12:1: "Do not be conformed to the system of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Let me just show you something here. I think it is in Romans 8. Go to Romans 8 for a minute. I think it starts at verse 5. My point is this: I want you to see where the battleground is; the battleground is in your mind. Don has raised an excellent question and that is, what do I do when I don't feel like it? Let me just show you what Paul teaches us in Romans 8. To give you the context of Romans 8, we need to understand that in verse 1 we see that "there is no condemnation" for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. The chapter begins with: there is now "no condemnation" and it ends in verse 32 to 39 with "no separation." The reason is because of verse 34, there is Christ's "intercession." That is Romans 8: no condemnation, no separation, and the reason is because of Christ's intercession in verse 34. Now here is what Paul says between to fill in those pieces of that outline, beginning at verse 5.

"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." He is basically saying, there are two distinctions here, two mind-sets. One is the mind-set of the flesh...you pursue that; and one is the mindset of the Spirit. Now let's read on.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." Notice there are four times he uses the word "mind." What do you think he is trying to teach us. The battleground is where? In the mind. You've got to think right and one of the ways to help us think right is to remember; go back and remember the magnificent blessings God has given you. That is going to give you the hope of the blessings that you receive in the future because you have a litany, a history of blessings in the past.

Verses 7-8: "...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God," for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Think right, act right, feel right.

Verse 9: "However, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness." Now notice this: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you," What is the source of your power? It is resurrection in power... the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in you because the Holy Spirit is in you. See verse 11? "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead

will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” You have the ability because of God’s mercy, you have the ability because of God’s grace to say what? “No.” The greatest management technique that I can teach a manager is to learn to say, “No.”

The greatest leadership principle is “Follow me.” The greatest management principle is “No.” You have been equipped because of God’s mercy to have this battle of the minds. Satan is going to influence our mind to take us in this direction. That is when we have to say, “No.” You have the ability to say “NO” because the Spirit of Christ is **in** you. It is the same power that raised Him from the dead and it is the same power for you to be able to say, “No.” That is why you have heard me say over the years, “many times in my mind I have to say this: remove that thought from my mind because if you don’t do that and I pursue that, it is going to lead to disaster. What I’m saying is, “I don’t feel like it.” “I don’t want to do it.” “I need help.” “So Lord you are going to have to do something that I cannot do humanly, and that is to remove that thought from my mind; and unless you do that, it is a disaster. Because I understand that the battleground is in my mind; it is not in my feelings, it is what I am thinking.” So, I’m pleading for God’s help to help me remove that thought and replace it. So next thing I have to do is to replace that thought with something. So I go back and do what Ted suggested and just remind myself of the mercies of God. “Lord, thank you, for all those things.” Thanksgiving is one of the greatest deterrents for discouragement. Yes, Jay.

**JAY:** *I think, I just wanted to say that, thinking about training our minds, training ourselves in righteousness and, in that, in those moments of thinking when Jesus was tempted by Satan and He said “it is written” and just having the word of God in our mind, [UNCLEAR]but just finding that when Satan puts a thought that is not of the Lord in my mind and saying “No God, Your Word says this”...and knowing the Word and being able to defend those thoughts and temptations with God’s Word. The other thing I was thinking about is whenever you said about our will...God is sovereign but He gives us a choice, and throughout the Bible in that choice that He is giving us, we have something to do with it...so I’m just saying that our will, even though God’s sovereignty and our will...so we have a responsibility to study the Word, to know the Word and this is all supernatural by the power of the Holy Spirit...that’s all I wanted to say. {LAUGHTER}*

That was pretty good. Amen to that.

Now we have to be careful. Remember Romans 8 that says this, “If the Spirit of Christ is in you, you can’t do anything spiritually wrong because you cannot please God. Do you realize that? If the Spirit of Christ is not in you, you don’t have a choice. There is no choice involved in that. You don’t have a free will. Your will is conditioned by the condition of your nature. And that is this: You’re not **in** Christ, the only thing you can do is not please God. So the people who think, “I’ve got a free will,” you do not have a free will in the sense of choosing righteousness...you cannot. Scripture just told us you cannot please God if the Spirit of God is not **in** you. There is no free will there. Because you cannot do anything but chose what your nature is. And that is: “I cannot please God because I can’t even do it.” Do you see that in Romans 8? That is critical to understand.

Now, the freedom of the will comes in when you are redeemed; now you have the option because here is what Satan is going to do. Go to Revelation 12. See this, there is a great misnomer that people think I have free will in choosing God. If the Spirit of God is in you, you can’t choose Him at all because Romans just taught us that we cannot do that because their nature does not let them do that. They cannot do that, they are spiritually dead. That is what it means in Ephesians 2, you are dead in your trespasses and sins. You can’t choose anything spiritual because you are dead spiritually. Notice, here is where Satan is going to tempt us, those of us who are in Christ.

Revelation 12:10. “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who deceives them before our God day and night.”

Now there you are going to see Satan’s primary activity against us. His deception and accusation. Where does that occur? In the mind. People say, “Oh a tree fell on my car...did Satan do that?” I have no idea. I have no idea. Years ago I was pastoring a church in Kansas and there was this little boy who kept falling down the steps. He would break his leg one day and break his wrist the next day, get a black eye. His parents said he must be Satan possessed. I said, “No, his feet are just too big.” {LAUGHTER} “Take him to a podiatrist.” And the podiatrist said, “His feet are just too big for his body, we need to put him in some frames.” He gave him a special kind of shoes. We always have this tendency to think if something is going bad, Satan is behind it. I’ll tell you what Satan is behind—it is how you think. He is going to accuse you of your worth and say, “How can you be used by God because look at your past.” That is why Paul wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and said, “Look, I was a blasphemer, I was an accuser, I was an aggressive murderer of the people of the church, but yet I saw and experienced God’s mercy. I saw God’s mercy.

So the first thing that is going to happen is that he is going to accuse us of our worth, and secondly he is going to deceive you of your value—you have no value because you do not have the right position in life, you do not have the right possessions in life. You do not have the right things, you do not have the right education, you don’t have all of the things that the world says you must have. He is going to deceive us there. That’s where we have to fight it. That is where the battleground is, that is what Romans 8 is saying. You have got to fight it in your mind because the two directions: if you go in this direction, it is the mind of the flesh; but if you go in this direction, it is the mind of the Spirit. Certainly the way we do that is to keep the Word of God dwell in us richly. Let the Word of God dwell in us richly because that is what you have to do sometimes and come back and fall on the promises of God.

Now, what are the evidences of your salvation? Sometimes you just have to go back and say, “Lord: “Satan, get behind me because I know, Lord, that I am Yours and I am redeemed.” How do you know that? That is the doctrine of the assurance of salvation. There are three things that scripture says that are critical for a believer to understand his or her salvation and they are: first of all, the work of the Spirit in your Spirit and you will see that in Romans 8. The work of the Holy Spirit in your Spirit identifying so that you know because you know. Sometimes the only way that you can say “I know that I’m a Christian is...I just know that I am, I just know it.” That is the Holy Spirit that is **in** you identifying with His Spirit, which is in you, and He is saying, “I have confirmed that you are because you know that you are because I just confirmed it because I Am.” Sometimes you know because you know.

Secondly, the scripture promises. You know that you are reborn because the scripture says so. Repent and believe and you will be saved. Have you done that? You have to ask yourself the question, “Have I done that?” Have I done what the scripture says?” If you know that you have, then you have the assurance of that.

The third element is this: this is the one that is always left out. Increased righteousness. There has got to be proof in your style of life. Increased righteousness. That is why the Puritans in their evangelistic efforts back in the fifteen and sixteen hundreds, whenever they would go into a small village or town they would preach for several days...they would never say a revival occurred until they came back three to five years later. Then they would ask these questions: How many new church members do we have? Are there new churches being

formed? Is crime going down? Oh, we had a revival. You don't schedule a revival because you don't know what is going to happen. You don't schedule a revival on a Monday night through Friday night from 8:00 to 10:00. What if the Holy Spirit doesn't show up? What do you have? You have a nice program but you may not have a revival. It is a great way of raising money. We're going to have a revival, let's raise money. But you don't know if you had a revival until the results are there. That is why the Puritans are such great evangelists because they realize this: that the results of preaching are the consequences of divine mercy not human achievement. So they would ask the questions: Are there increased members of churches; are new churches being formed; and is there increased righteousness, which causes crime to go down? Now we'll know that we had a revival.

See, the real battleground for us, Brothers, is this and the reason that you and I do not lose heart and we are courageous: we understand, "I have experienced God's mercy in my salvation." Now I understand that the ultimate objective of my salvation is not my eternal life, that is a wonderful consequence, that is an outcome, but it is not the cause but it is a consequence. The ultimate objective is this that I am being transformed from one stage of glory to the next to reflect the glory of God. That is what happening inside of me so that I can live outside for His glory. That means this, Brothers: that when you understand that, your position has been elevated because you are now participating in the grand cause of the gospel of Christ. You do that by the way you live. May God give us the grace to understand how not to be discouraged, and when we are discouraged to remember the mercies of God. Let's pray.

Father, there is so much to learn in these passages and we thank You that You have given us clear thought about the ultimate objective of our salvation is the restoration of the glory of man to reflect the glory of God. May that be the thing that focuses upon my mind this day as I go and continue my ministry wherever you decide to take me. Remember Lord, that ministry is who we are, where we are. It is not something we pull off the shelf and can do. We are in Your full-time service because You chose us before the foundation of the world and we experienced Your mercy. May it be so, Father, that we will remember this: that we are Mission Minded Members of a Movement Motivated by Mercy for Ministry in the Marketplace. Help us, Lord, not to lose heart. For Jesus' sake and all the Brave Men said, Amen.