

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
“A NEW CREATION” - PART 4
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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: Well, Don, do you want to set the tone for us? Let's go into the Presence, and know that He is God. (music)

Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, have mercy upon me, the sinner, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We're continuing our examination of the passage, 2 Corinthians 5:17. When a person becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new creature. The old is gone; the new has come. We've been examining that for several weeks. We've seen what it means to be in Christ by condition, the new creature by character, and now we want to look at the changes that occur; the old is gone, the new has come.

Our culture is preoccupied with what I would call new frontiers, or new discoveries. Any time a new discovery comes along, it develops and demands mass media attention. I remember several years ago, when Coke introduced a new Coke flavor. Ted Koppel spent a whole hour on Nightline talking about the new flavor of Coke, because it was something that was brand new. Now can you imagine what would happen if biologists said there was a new creature roving the world? What would the media attention be? I think it would be much more than a diet cherry flavored vanilla Dr. Pepper that we now have on our stands. You see, we're just enamored by something that is brand new

So what's the preoccupation with new creatures, or new discoveries, or new frontiers? I think it's because life is basically boring. (Laughter.) We're always looking for something that is new. But take a look at it. The flowers that are blooming now are like the ones that bloomed 5,000 years ago. They're not new flowers. Do you realize that no new animal has been discovered the last 6,000 years? And so what would happen, if the word got around, that roaming this world there were new creatures? What do you think the world would say? A media blitz would occur if new creatures could be found. But that's exactly what Paul is teaching in this passage, that there are new creatures that have been created. They're new creatures. These are people who are the freshness of the old flowers and the new flowers, and they have the fruits of a new life. And these, the new creatures, are men and women, boys and girls, who are in Christ by condition, new creatures by character, who have undergone a definite change because of a divine work. The old is gone; the new has come.

Now brothers, that's you. If you're in Christ today by condition, that's who you are. You are a new creature. You are what the world is waiting to see, what the world is clamoring to see, what the world is looking for, because of our whole preoccupation with new discoveries and new frontiers.

Now the question is this. Are you recognizable as a new creature? Are you detectable? Do people recognize that there is something radically different in you

because of a royal work, known as the wonderful work of regeneration that has its impact upon the quality and decisions of your life, so that people will say, “There is a new creature,” far more important than the new diet Coke flavor that’s on our stands now

The new creatures that Paul is talking about are definitely recognizable. They’re detectable, because they are creatures who have been remade by the grace of God, because they are creatures who have wept over their sin, because they are new creatures who confess their iniquities, because they are creatures who have cried out, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner,” because they are creatures who rest in the shed blood of Christ, because they are creatures who live for His glory, because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the reason they are recognizable is because they have gone through a magnificent, royal, radical change, and the only way you can describe a person like that who is now in Christ by condition and character is that he is a brand new creature. And that means this: that the old is gone, and the new has come.

What does that look like? When we flippantly say, “The old is gone; the new has come,” what does that look like? Well, there are many ways to describe what has gone away. Now the verb tense in that particular passage suggests this: that there is a past act in your life, a moment in time when things began to radically change because of a royal work, and that royal work is known as regeneration. Regeneration is a specific, immediate, powerful work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of a person that changes their thinking patterns. There was a specific time, Paul tells us, when a person, through the royal work of God, known as regeneration, changed the way that they began to think, and the new things came, and the old went away. This new person has new views, he has new motives, he has new objects, new plans for his life. He has new purposes, and lives for the new end, for the glory of God. There is a change so deep, so clear, so entire and so permanent that the only way you can describe it is, the old is gone! It is so radical that all you can say when you see that person is that he or she isn’t like he or she used to be.

Let me remind you of how that happens, this royal work, this radical change known as regeneration. Remember the four stages, the four causes of our salvation. First of all, there is the original cause, the eternal purpose and decrees of God in His electing grace. That’s where it started. Then we saw the meritorious cause, the mediation of Christ meeting the demands of the law. Then we saw the third cause, the effectual cause, the regeneration and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in us what Christ purchased for us. And then lastly there is the instrumental cause, which means we are the instruments that receive the original cause, the meritorious cause and the effectual cause. You and I are those instruments, and that is where we apply faith, repentance, obedience and perseverance. Now we’re not saved by those, but you can’t be saved without them.

So that’s the origin of our regeneration. It makes us such radical descriptions of new creatures that the only way you can describe a person who has been regenerated is that he is a new creature! That’s the only way you can describe him, because it’s such a radical work, and the changes are so radical, because of the royal work of regeneration, that the only description you can say is they are new creatures.

Now let me turn you to Ephesians chapter 4 for a moment.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: Of those four causes,--

Bruce: Yes, sir.

Participant: Would it be true to say that the instrumental cause is the only cause we experience existentially, as we're going along in life, or is it the effectual? I'm just trying to see which one we actually experience.

Bruce: In the first three, we are passive, and in the last one, we are active. There is a difference, as we talked about last week, between regeneration and conversion. In regeneration we are passive. That is something that God chooses to do because of His divine providence, His sovereign grace. We are passive in regeneration, but we're active in conversion. And that is where we apply what happened when God removed the heart of stone and gave us a heart of flesh. We now have a desire for spiritual things. We now begin to be the instruments in which that is applied. We now become active in the illustration of our repentance, our faith, our obedience and our perseverance. We can't be saved by those things; you're not saved by them, but you can't be saved without them, because those are evidences of the instrument that is applying the original cause, the meritorious cause, and the effectual cause. Those three are passive. We are active in the instrumental, and we apply what the grace of the Holy Spirit applied in our lives, through regeneration.

Go to Ephesians chapter 4. This may help us understand this radical change brought about by a royal work known as regeneration. Now the context of this particular passage, chapter 4 of the book of Ephesians, is Paul's description of how children live as children of light. Notice verses 22-24. "Put off the old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desire, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away all falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." Now for the old problem, the old way of life, the old habits and the old lifestyle, Paul has three verbs there in those verses—put off, put on, and put away. That's his admonition. Put off the old stuff. Put on the new stuff, and put away the old habits. Now if you want some instruction about being the instrumental cause of salvation, that's where you and I become really very, very aggressive responders to what the grace of God has done in our hearts through regeneration. We've become very, very active now in our conversion, in the fact that we've put away the old stuff, we've put on the new stuff, and we've put away the old habits. That's what Paul is teaching us there

He's basically saying that having new attitudes of the mind produces new conduct. In other words, it's what we've been saying for months in our little card. You've got to think right before you act right. If you don't think right, you're not going to act right. And what causes us to think right? Regeneration. That's what causes us to begin to think differently than we did before. We now become very active in putting off those old thought patterns. We put on new thought patterns, and we put away the old habits. It's really quite simple. That's where you and I are the instruments of our salvation. We

become active in the participation of that. Put off, put on, and put away. It results in such a radical change, because they've been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness

Look at verse 24 of Ephesians 4. "And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness." That's what you put on, because that's how you've been re-created. You are a new creature, created to be after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness. That's what you put on.

Now let me give you an example of something I read several years ago about the critical nature of thinking correctly. What Paul is saying is that you put off your old thought patterns. He's talking about "Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." It starts with how you think. If you don't think right, you're not going to act right. If you don't act right, you're not going to feel right. The world is going to say, "Feel, act, think." The Scripture says, "Think, act, feel." The whole issue of being regenerated and being converted is that it starts with the way that you think. Your desires change through regeneration, and all of a sudden you and I now have the responsibility to do three things. Put off the old thought patterns. Put on new ones, and put away the old habits.

For years, criminal behavior was believed to result from environmental factors, such as where a person lived, his economic status, and how he was treated by his parents. Now for years, that was the theory that said this is why criminal minds act the way they do. It's because somebody else's environmental problems have now become theirs. And what has crept into psychology and psychiatry today, and unfortunately into the church, is what we would call victimization therapy. I am not responsible for my conduct because I'm the victim of my environment. My dad tied his shoes wrong when he was 12, therefore it's his fault that I'm messed up today. Yes, Don?

Participant: What have you been hearing on the news all week? The boy that perpetrated the stabbings the other day—well, he was bullied. Now, I'm not saying bullying is right. Bullying is terrible. But, all of a sudden, sin doesn't even enter the picture anymore; it's victimization.

Bruce: Victimization is crept into the counseling of the church, unfortunately, because we basically say that it's not your responsibility, it's not your fault, because it's the environment that caused you to be who you are.

Now, I read a book a couple years ago by two criminal psychologists. They conducted a 15-year study on the criminal mind. The two authors are Samuel Yukinson and Stanton Samonelle, two criminal psychologists, and the book is called *The Criminal Mind*. And after 15 years of study on the criminal mind, here is their thesis. The thesis of the book is that criminal behavior is a result of warped thinking processes, of faulty thinking. That's simply the whole book. The function of a criminal mind is the product of a warped thinking process.

What does Paul say? Put off the old thought patterns! Put on the new ones; you're a new creature! Put away the old habits! Where does it start? It starts in your mind! If you don't think right, you don't act right. If you don't act right, you're not going to feel right

The criminal minds, they said, and here is their summary statement, and I quote, “The point is this, that a person becomes what they are by a series of choices. Choices become habits, habits become personality, personality becomes character, and character determines your destiny.” Remember we talked about that? Thoughts become your words. Words become your actions. Actions become your habits. Habits become your character. Character becomes your destiny. And where does it start? It starts with how you think. And as a new creature, Paul says, “Put off the old habits.” Don’t think like that anymore. Change the way that you think. Put on new thought patterns. Now you have the ability to do that through your repentance, through your faith, through your obedience and through your perseverance. That is your instrumental cause, and you are to participate actively and do that, and you are to do three things, Paul says—put off, put on, and put away.

Now notice the context of that. Go back to Ephesians 4, verse 17. “Now this I say, and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.” Now what does the word Gentile mean there? It has two meanings. Historically, it meant Non-Jew. Historically, it meant somebody who was not of the Jewish culture. They were Gentiles; they were outside of the covenant people of Israel. They were Non-Jews. But it also has a theological understanding. Paul describes it thusly in the book of 1 Thessalonians, when he says this. “Gentiles live as if they do not know God.” A Gentile is one who does not know God. So what is he saying? Let’s go back and plug that in. Now this is what I say, and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as if you don’t know God. And how are you going to do that? By how you think! You’ve got to think right! You put off the old habits. You put on new thinking patterns, and you put away the old habits. Put off, put on, and put away.

Now when the Spirit of God acts upon the human spirit, it affects the realms of our thought. In other words, the old way of thinking is radically changed because of a new desire. Now let’s reverse that situation, what used to be. One’s destiny is altered, because the character has changed, which modifies the personality, which alters the habits, which produces new choices based upon new thinking. Thoughts become your words. What do you talk about? It’s the things that you’re thinking about. Remember several months ago I asked you the question. Where does your mind go when you have nothing to think about? Where does it go? Paul says you’ve got to fight that. That’s why you’ve heard me say just in my personal life that there are times when I have to say this: Lord, if you don’t remove that thought from my mind, it’s going to be a disaster, because I might pursue that. If I go down that road of thinking that way, it will be a disaster. Lord, I’m depending upon You and your grace to remove those thoughts from my mind, because I have the responsibility as a new creature to put off those old thoughts. But Lord, I need Your grace to do that, because I don’t want to do it. Yes, Dale?

Participant: I’d like to insert into that also the fact Satan is a force to be afraid of. So I have consciously and loudly said, Get thee behind me, Satan!

Bruce: Amen! That’s a great battle cry, get behind me, Satan! Unfortunately, Satan has a lot of WMDs, weapons of mass deception. Do you know where they are? They’re in the church. There is a lot of deception in the church, because we hear a man-centered

gospel, as opposed to a God-centered gospel. When was the last time you heard anybody preach about regeneration? We talk about inviting Christ into your life. Do we talk about the cause of that person deciding to invite Christ into his life? We don't talk about that, because we make it all human oriented. You see, there are a lot of weapons of mass deception in the church, in a lot of its preaching.

So we've got to be careful of that. You've got to put off the old thoughts. Put on the new ones. And put away the bad habits. Don't act, Paul says, as if you don't know God. Now how are you going to do that? You're going to demonstrate that by the series of choices of how you make your decisions. It all starts with thinking. Yes, Don?

Participant: Not only do we have the devil to contend with, but we have the world and the flesh, too.

Bruce: Absolutely. Or we have the church to contend with, because of weapons of mass deception. There's a lot of deception going on. We've got to go back to our biblical roots. That's why we're spending so much time on one verse, to help us understand the whole concept of regeneration, and the causes of our salvation, so that we become the effectual instruments of applying our repentance, our faith, our obedience and our perseverance, because of the cause of Christ, and what He has done for us.

Now what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is that when a person is in Christ, he undergoes such a radical change that his old way of thinking has been discarded, and he is recognizable now because of his new way of thinking. And that thinking changes his decisions and his lifestyle.

So what is it that Paul is saying is gone? Now, this is not a complete list, but let's just go back. We've been studying 2 Corinthians 2, 3, 4 and 5, and we're coming to the end of it. Let me give you just a synopsis of some of the things that Paul says are gone. Open your Bibles and follow along. These are things that Paul has already taught us. It's a summary of all the old stuff that is gone. So let's review what Paul has taught us about life that is in Christ by condition, and a new creature by character. And here are some of the changes. Just follow along.

In chapter 2, verse 17, he says this: "We no longer peddle the word of God for profit." We stop that! It's not a money making issue! It's a proclamation issue for the glory of God. In chapter 3, verse 1, he says that we no longer need to perform for the praise of the world. We gave that up. Put it away! Don't think like that. You don't do activities for the praise of the world.

Chapter 3, verse 3. We are no longer insensitive to others. You see, your mind has changed; you look at people differently. Look at 5:16. The verse right before that says that your view of God changes, and you don't look at people the same way anymore. So we are no longer insensitive to people. You gave that up, because you're a new creature.

Chapter 3, verse 5. We no longer depend upon ourselves. You gave up self-dependency. You gave up thinking this: I can make a difference! You gave that up, because you know that you can't make a difference in anybody's life. But you can be the means by which they will understand where the truth is resident, because they see it in the new creature. So you gave up depending upon yourself.

Chapter 3, verse 6 of 2 Corinthians. We are no longer involved in legalism. You gave up legalism. Chapter 3, verses 10 and 11. We no longer live by deceiving ourselves. You quit deceiving yourself by thinking that you're so spiritual, that you can walk on water. You realize this: Have mercy on me, the sinner. It's the most powerful prayer I think a person can pray. Say every day, just have mercy on me, the sinner.

Chapter 3, verse 13. We no longer wear masks. Bruce, how are you feeling? Oh, I'm just wonderful; it's the greatest day of my life! And down deep inside I'm dying of something because of some pain. You see, you don't wear masks anymore; you don't need to do that, because you're not out to perform and to impress people about how spiritual you are. You don't wear masks; you gave it up. You put it off, because why? In Christ, you're a new creature. Those are the old habits. You don't think that way anymore; you gave it up.

Participant: Except on Sunday mornings. Then we put the masks on when we go to church. (Laughter.)

Bruce: Yes, that's right; that's true. When do most family arguments happen? Saturday night or Sunday morning on the way to church. Isn't that right?

How about chapter 4, verse 2? We no longer manipulate. You gave it up. You're not a manipulator. You're a servant. What is servant leadership? It is the quiet quest for anonymity. That's servant leadership. It's the quiet quest for anonymity. It's not about you. It's about who or what you represent. Yes, Dale?

Participant: One of the most popular common phrases is "hope and pray." I'd like to try to reverse that in my thinking, always to "pray and hope." If we don't pray, there's no hope.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: Ted Wood has added that you've got to have the Word in front of that, too. And I agree.

Participant: That's what we know.

Bruce: That's the Word. We pray the Word, and then we have hope. That's the best thing you can pray. Pray the Scripture. Just pray it back, and that's where your hope will be generated. So we no longer manipulate—chapter 4, verse 2.

How about chapter 4, verse 5? We no longer preach a man-centered gospel. You gave that up. Why did you do that? Because you're a new creature! You're in Christ; you think differently about the gospel! You think differently about preaching. You think differently about the Scripture. You think differently about the Word, and its inerrant possibilities about changing people's lives. That's what Paul said. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe." What's our greatest weapon? It is a Biblical message. It's not our methodologies, it's our message. We have become methodology people, as opposed to message driven people. It's our message that is the power. So we give up a man-centered gospel just to get the response that we want. Why is it that we water down the gospel? It's because I want you to respond a certain way, and I evaluate myself. When I don't get the right response, then I'm going to change it, because I want to get the right response, because I feel better

when things happen the way that I want. Put off that way of thinking. So we no longer preach a man-centered gospel

Chapter 4, verse 11. We are no longer slaves to circumstances. You're not a victim! You're a what? A vessel! You're never the victim of circumstances, you're just a vessel in them. And why is that? Because, by condition you're in Christ, and by character you're a new creature. You're no longer a victim! You're no longer a slave to circumstances. Remember, happiness is based upon happenings. Blessedness, as Jesus teaches us in the Beatitudes, is being happy in spite of circumstances. You see, blessedness is happiness in spite of the circumstances. Happiness is the result of happenings that you like. We're blessed. So we're no longer slaves to circumstances.

How about 4:17? We no longer seek our significance in circumstances. Where is your significance? It's in the person and work of Christ, because, by condition, you're in Christ. In character, you're a new creature. Where is your significance? "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God and not from ourselves." God shares His life with you, gentlemen; what more do you want? To be significant? To have a sense of security? What more do you want? Do you want some circumstance to validate that? My goodness, the God of the universe has entered you through the magnificent grace of regeneration, and you have the audacity to say that I don't feel good about myself? What more do you want? God is sharing His life with you! That's the Christian experience. You are, by condition, in Christ

How about chapter 5, verse 1? You no longer fear death. Put it away! You no longer fear death. You know this, that it's one life, but two locations. I'm in an earthly tent and an eternal home. Death for the believer is just a translation to a new location, but it's the same life. You don't fear death anymore.

Chapter 5, verse 7. You no longer live by sight, you live by faith. The greatest evidence of faith is when there is no evidence to believe, and you still believe. Oftentimes, we teach people to offer God a fleece. God, if You do this, then I'll believe that. Now there is faith in that, but it's weak faith. The highest level of faith is this: There is no reason to believe; there is no evidence, and yet I choose to believe. That's the level of faith. That's the book of Hebrews. Faith is the things that are hoped for, when there is no evidence. That's faith. So we no longer live by sight

And then 5:16. We no longer see people from a worldly point of view. Now Paul just went through a litany of all the things that he has taught us in the previous year about things that we gave up when we became in Christ by condition, and our character because of our new creation. Those are the things that have passed away. Now there are other things that will pass away that the Scripture will teach us. But I'm just reviewing what Paul has already taught us over the past year in our verse by verse study. You see, the old stuff is gone

Now let me just categorize those, and summarize them just by giving you one-word descriptions. Here are the old things that are no more. Profiteering. Performance. Insensitivity. Self-dependency. Legalism. Self-deception. Masks. Manipulation. Man-centered preaching. Enslavement. Insignificance. Fear. Temporal values, and insecurity. You're a new creature! What would the world say if they recognized that in

you and me? Do you think Ted Koppel would have an hour-long sensational TV show about that? (Laughter.) You see, if we acted out who we are, we could really change the world. But are we recognizable as new creatures, or do we just want to fit in and be like the world? You see, it is not our job to bring God down to our human level. It's our job to take people up to His divine level

Participants: Amen!

So we do not become like the world; we are new creatures. So, if you are in Christ today, brothers, you've been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son that He loves. You're a new creature. Your old way of thinking is gone. Your former prejudices, your former opinions, your former habits, your former attachments, have all passed away. Your supreme love of yourself has passed away. Your love of sin has passed away. Your love of the system of this world passes away. And your supreme attachment to earthly friends, rather than to the glory of God, passes away. Your love of sin, sensuality, pride, vanity, levity, and ambition all passes away. There is a deep, radical change that occurs in your life, and it can only be described in one term: you are a new creature—in Christ by condition, and in character you're a new creature. And the reason for the changes is that the old has gone away. If you're in Christ by condition, you're a new creature by character. Just go out and live like that. Be recognizable. Yes, Brian?

Participant: Oftentimes, we think this should be easy. If I'm a new creature, if I'm a new creation, this should be easy. But my understanding, especially with what Paul says about buffeting our body and perseverance, is that we should fight and really work at this, and it's not going to be easy. If Jesus was sweating blood in the garden, then a lot of this is going to be challenging, and we're going to have to fight the good fight, and we're just not yet there. Have we really fought to the point of death? Obviously, not.

Bruce: Well, you're absolutely right. Remember the instrumental cause? It is my repentance, my obedience, my faith, and my perseverance. One of the great doctrines of the Scriptures is the perseverance of the saints. You'll recognize them because they persevere. That means it's going to be a battle. Remember the three words that historically have always described the church, the body of Christ? Three words—remnant, (not everybody), persecution, (if you desire to live in Christ Jesus you will be persecuted), and spiritual warfare. Those are the three things that we're involved in. Remnant, persecution, and warfare. That is not easy. Everything I have described, brothers, is what? What I've just described is not natural; it's supernatural! Never eliminate the supernatural of the conversion of a person through the marvelous, radical work of regeneration. That is something that radically happens in your life that changes the way you begin to think, and you and I then have the responsibility to change the way we think by putting off the old thoughts, putting on the new ones, and putting away the old habits. That's a fight, brothers. And we need each other to do that. That's why we've been coming together for 17 years. We can't do this by ourselves. You're not an island in yourself; you're not the captain of your own soul. That's the deception of this world. You need each other. You need the brother sitting right beside you to help you when you have that struggle. You say, "I'm struggling with this. Will you help me? Will

you pray for me? Will you walk through this difficulty with me?” That’s the body of Christ. We were never designed to live the Christian life alone. You gave that up. You gave up thinking that you can do it. You realize that you are absolutely dependent upon other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

That’s why, if you want to hook yourself to something that is never going to end, there are two things that will never end. Those are the word of God, and the church.

Men: Amen!

Bruce: If you want something to hook your wagon to that is permanent, hook yourself to the Scripture and the church. Those are the two things that will last forever. It’s not going to be your vocation, your performance, your position, or the corporation which you serve. They will all go. But the two things that won’t go are the Word, and the church. Give yourself to those two things, and you’re hooked for eternity. Yes

Participant: Hey, Bruce, as I’ve been contemplating this teaching of a new creature in Christ, the question that I ask, (and I’d like to hear what you think), God chose to make us new, so we have a new spirit

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: Why didn’t He give us a new body? Why do we have to battle with this body

Bruce: I ask Him that every day, as I look at the scars on my body. (Laughter.) Remember the 28 orthopedic surgeries I’ve had. You’ll get a new body. It’s called a resurrected body. That’s so we don’t live by sight; we live by faith. I’m looking forward to my resurrected body.

One of the great experiences I had years ago was baptizing a quadriplegic. It took myself and three other elders to put him into the water and pull him out, because he was in the wheel chair, totally quadriplegic. But, you know, his testimony before he was baptized was this: “I just can’t wait to have my resurrected body, because my body will function the way it was designed to function, not a result of the accident I had, which God has used to develop my faith in Christ, and bring me to saving faith. I’m looking forward to my resurrected body. One of these days, it’s going to be over!” That was such a powerful testimony!

So, we do have a resurrected body, and that’s something we’re looking forward to. And the reason, I would say, (I don’t have God’s mind on this), but I would say that the reason He doesn’t give us a new body right away is so that we live by faith and not by sight, so we’re always looking forward to that. One of the great things I learned about the Puritans is they had such a great desire for heaven. Now that doesn’t mean that they were trying to anticipate or make it happen. But they understood this, that the glory of my life is yet to come. I have such a great desire for heaven, because that’s when I’m going to have my resurrected body, and be free from the presence of sin. Remember, justification is freedom from the penalty of sin, sanctification is freedom from the power of sin, and glorification is freedom from the presence of sin. No longer are you going to be in the presence of sin. We walk by faith, anticipating that. That’s why we do not fear death. Death for the believer is a glorification. Yes, Ted?

Participant: When you teach in this manner, it is very powerful. (We're waiting for the but.) We teach in this manner. I wonder if a lot of the brothers sitting here are not wondering, "Gee whiz, that's great—put off, put on, and put away. But, you know, that's just not my experience." And, I'm thinking, as you're teaching about Romans the seventh chapter, which is very sobering, because he talks there, and you just think about the negatives and pull those out. "I don't do what I want to do, but the very thing I hate, .." So how do you reckon Romans 7 with a new creation? How can you be a new creation and still have Romans7?

Bruce: Romans 8.

Participant: That's cute. (Laughter.) But that doesn't solve the reality of the guys sitting here—

Bruce: Okay.

Participant: They're saying, "I don't feel it. I still fear death. I still feel defeated."

Bruce: I understand. You're right.

Participant: Thank you.

Bruce: Go ahead, Bishop.

Participant: It seems to me in (chapter) 6, Paul says to reckon yourself—

Bruce: Think correctly.

Participant: Understand yourself to be dead unto sin, and alive in Jesus Christ.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: That's how we are to see our identity. In 7, he says, Ah, but in the midst of this identity, these dark things keep passing in my heart and soul on some level, and in a way, (chapter) 8 says that the Holy Spirit starts to help you in this struggle. But, it's interesting that what we have to say is, the dark stuff that continues in me has no right to be there. What has the right to be there is the good stuff.

Bruce: Amen!

Participant: So I say, "You don't belong here. You're here, and the Spirit is going to help me, but you have no right to be here." I have no right to think of or do that stuff.

Bruce: Amen, amen, amen! And here's another way of looking at it. If you don't have the struggle of Romans 7, you may not be in Christ by condition.

Participant: Good point.

Bruce: Do you understand that?

Participant: Say that again.

Bruce: If you don't have the struggle of Romans 7, it means you may not be in Christ by condition, because you wouldn't even be thinking about it. If you're not in Christ, you're not going to worry about Romans 7, or why I give a rip about this. But the fact that you are struggling with it is an indication of what? That something has changed in your life.

Men: Amen!

Bruce: So Romans 7 is sort of a backhanded compliment, an affirmation of the fact that you are in Christ, because, if you didn't have that struggle, you wouldn't be worrying about it. That's why I say, "Lord, if You don't remove that thought from my mind, it will be a disaster," because I know this, that I have the desire not to have the thought there,

but it's there, and I need to trust the Holy Spirit to help me do that. That's Romans 8. So look at it this way. If you're not struggling with Romans 7, you may not be in Christ by condition in the first place. Only you can answer that question. I can't. Carl?

Participant: And Bruce, we have to recognize that nobody gets a clear button when you come to Christ. (Laughter.)

Bruce: That's right.

Participant: We have to understand that this is a work that we're doing.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: And, as we continue to work in that, and let Him live in us, we start to do away with those things, but that struggle pushes us and pulls us to Christ.

Bruce: Amen. Yes, Brian?

Participant: That's one of the reasons Ted thought what I did. Hey, I came to Christ; I'm this new creation, this new creature. I shouldn't have any more struggles. (Laughter.) (Unclear.)

Bruce: Absolutely!

Participant: That's when the struggles start.

Participant: And we fight it from gratitude, not from legalism or guilt, but gratitude for what Christ has done in me. With that kind of motivation going for us, we fight the good fight.

Bruce: Hey, I never had the problems of Romans 7 till I became (a new creature) in Christ.

Men: Amen!

Bruce: I had no idea what they were like. I didn't give a rip about them. That wasn't my thought pattern at all. Yes, Bishop?

Participant: The very things that I now renounce are the things I thought were right on.

Bruce: Absolutely! I used to say that this is what it's about. Some of the stuff I used to say, even when I was converted—When I was with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. (Laughter.) I just went back to Kansas City, and preached at a men's conference there, and had a reunion with some of the staff who reported to me 29 years ago at FCA in Kansas City. We sat around, and do you know what we talked about? The dumb things that we said 29 years ago. (Laughter.) We didn't talk about "Oh, the Lord's using us." I said, "I can't believe, at that conference in Estes Park, Colorado, I actually said that." I thought I was so cool! (Laughter.) We just sat around and laughed at all the dumb things that we said 29 years ago that were just because of our immaturity in faith, because we were so man-centered! Here is one of the things I said. I just can't believe it! (Laughter.) "The Christian life is like a bowl of cherries, and somebody else has the pits." (Laughter.) Isn't that profound? That's really going to change somebody's life. (Laughter.) Yes, please?

Participant: Since last week, when I mentioned how this Bible study has benefited me so much, I've started to write down many words. And the ten most frequently occurring words that I've found are these: I'm sorry, forgive me! This is really popular with you guys. Thank you! Now the last three were sort of rare. At least, maybe you

haven't said it to me. I love you! I wrote this the other day. To me, these are the ten most powerful words in the English language, or the four most important sentences. I've been writing many things over here when I come, and these are particularly occurring words. I'm sorry, forgive me, thank you, I love you. It's amazing, I thought.

Bruce: It's amazing what that would do, if we thought that way. Amen to that. Yes, please?

Participant: As I've been wrestling through this, the Lord directed me to Judges chapters 1 and 2, so I'd encourage you guys to read that. You know, when Israel had conquered the Promised Land, He said to drive out the enemy. He also said, "You know what? I give you a new spirit. You need to claim the land that I have given you. You have responsibilities in your land." And to me, it motivates me to express my love for the Lord not out of duty, but out of love.

Bruce: You see, Bishop Rogers really expressed that so clearly, when he said that those old habits don't have a right to be there anymore. They're gone! What does the word "gone" mean? It means this. There is only one Person in the resurrection business. That is not us. Don't resurrect your old habits. You're a new creature. Just act like that.

Now next week, we'll talk about the new things that have come. We have talked about the old stuff that's gone, and this is not a complete list. All I did was give you the things that Paul has taught us in the past year about the old things that have changed as a result of our becoming in Christ by condition. Next week, we'll look at the new things that have come, and we'll do the same thing. We'll go back and review everything we've looked at so far. He gives us a list of the new things that are there, and we'll just contrast the two next week.

Let us pray. Yes, Bishop, please, go ahead.

Participant: I was wondering, when we meet next week, if you could address how we actually apply this. How do you change your thought patterns. (Unclear.)

Bruce: We'll give that some thought. Also, let me ask you to do this. Remember, the hallmark of any Bible study is what question? What am I going to do about what I've just learned? Don't ask yourself "what does it mean to me?" because it doesn't make any difference, what it means to you or anybody else. The only One to whom it makes any difference is the Author Himself. So the better question is this. What am I going to do about what I have just learned? Now Bishop Rogers has just given us a great challenge. I want you to think between now and next week, and we'll start off next week with this. How do you apply what we've just learned, that the old is gone, the new has come? Pray about that, come back, and let's teach each other how we're going to do that together. And I'll give you some insights on this also.

Let us pray. Gracious and merciful Father, we thank you for the miracle and the supernatural activity of your redeeming grace, that You did something we could not do ourselves, and that was change the way that we think, because of a radical work, because of a royal work that is so descriptive it can only be described by saying that we are new creatures. Father, may we understand the significance of that, and may we apply this truth to our lives, for the glory of Jesus. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!"