

TRIUMPHANT LIVING
“A NEW CREATION” PART 5
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For you visitors, we have a lot of fun, but we're also very serious, and we trust the Lord to be our teacher. So would you go before Him in His grace, just in a moment of silence, and be still, and know that He is God. (Music.)

Father, we are reminded once again, as we come into this season of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the wonderful, marvelous love of the Lord Jesus. Father, we pray that You would free us of all of our frustrations, our consternation, and all the things that hinder us from living a life that would be pleasing to You. May You be pleased to have Your Holy Spirit be among us this day in a special dose of grace, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. And all the brave men said, "Amen!"

Turn in your Bibles, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter five. We've spent the last four weeks on one particular verse, verse 17. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." I want us to read that in it's context, so we understand the ministry of reconciliation that God has given us through His grace.

Now certainly, as we see the Easter season upon us, with the resurrection on the Lord's Day, this Sunday, I want you to take special notice of the realization in the reconciliation that occurred when He reconciled you to Himself, through the cross. Remember this: when He was on the cross, you were on His mind.

So let's begin at verse 11 of 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and we'll finish up with verse 17. "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. And what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance, and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right minds, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this, that One has died for all, therefore all have died. And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but live for Him, who for their sakes died, and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sakes, He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God

Bruce: Amen, amen! We've been studying 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17, for about four weeks now. Just in summary, if you recall, by condition we are in Christ, by character we are new creatures, and today we're going to finish up the changes that have been made. By condition, we are in Christ, our character is a new creation, and the changes are, the old has gone, and the new has come.

We live in a very uniform society, and dress according to our role in life. You can tell a lot about a person by the kind of clothes he or she wears on a daily basis. Take the soldier, the bus driver, the baseball player, the policeman, and others. Their vocations are recognized by what they wear and how they are dressed. They wear a certain kind of uniform; they wear a certain kind of attire, and because of that attire, you can recognize them. They are detectable because of their outward garments. The mailman is distinguished from the policeman. The policeman is distinguished from the physician, because of what each one of them wears

Now what we wear is important to what we are, and Paul understood this concept very clearly by the number of times he talks about "putting on" in the Scripture. Now what Paul is basically saying is this: a new man should have new attire. Remember the statement of Charles Spurgeon years ago in London, when he was preaching in the park in London. After he finished, a man raised his hands, and said, "Communism will put a new suit on that man." And Spurgeon's response was, "Christianity will put a new man in that suit." You see, there's a difference. Now what Paul is talking about is that he understood this in a spiritual sense. Paul is teaching us this, that a new man must wear new clothes. Now I'm not talking about wearing a tee shirt that says, "Jesus saves," or "Jesus loves you." I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a spiritual sense.

Let's go to Colossians, chapter three. What Paul is talking about is the style of life that accommodates our identity, making us detectable disciples. So go to Colossians chapter three, and we'll see this concept of putting on, beginning at chapter 3, verse 1. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden in Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in your members: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them, But now you must put the mall away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, after the image of its Creator. Here there is not Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. As the Lord has forgiven you, so also must you forgive." Paul is talking about the garb that we wear spiritually.

Now notice: I read the first portion of Colossians 1 because it says you've got to put your mind in the right place. When you woke up this morning, and decided to put your clothes on, what was the very first thing you had to do to put on your clothes?

Participant: Get them.

Bruce: You had to go get them. You had to have the right mindset that says, "I'm going to wear this today; I'm not going to wear that." You had to have your mind thinking about the fact that I'm going to choose to wear brown slacks and a brown shirt and a green coat. My mind was thinking, this is how I have to think. Paul is saying, Look! You're a new creature in Christ. You've got a new character. By condition, you're in Christ, by character you're a new creation. Now you need to think correctly so that you will put on the right clothes that will make you identifiable as a follower of Christ. Just like the policeman wears his garb, and the baseball player wears his uniform, you and I have uniforms that we wear. They're spiritual uniforms, and it's in our conduct. You have to decide, and have your mind right to say, I'm going to dress like this today. I'm going to put off this old stuff, and I'm going to put on this new stuff, because that is the change that has occurred to me, because by condition I'm in Christ, and by character I am a new creature. Now I need to dress like that! I need to be recognizable. That's how you and I become what I would call a detectable disciple. I'm not talking about wearing tee shirts and belt buckles and baseball caps that say, "Jesus loves you." I'm talking about the condition of the life that you live and the choices you make. It all starts with how you think. You see, Paul wrote in Colossians that you've got to put your mind right. You've got to think right before you dress right. And when you dress right, your conduct is the way in which you dress.

So Paul is very, very strong in this idea of putting off the old stuff, and putting on the new. And that's exactly what he wrote to us in 2 Corinthians 5:17. "The old is gone; the new has come." You see, there is a definite change that has come about because of our condition of being in Christ, and the character, a new creature. But when you and I revert back to our old style of living, (he referred to that), put off that old stuff! You don't live like that anymore! Can you imagine a beggar being given a new suit, and then walking outside the shop and taking it off, and putting his old dirty clothes back on? That's essentially what we do when we revert back to our old style of life. Paul says, Don't do that! Put off that stuff! Put on the new stuff!

Last time we were together, we talked about the old things that were put away. Today, I want you to see the new things that we're about. The old is gone; the new has come. So open up your Bibles to 2 Corinthians. Here are some of the features that are recognizable because of the garb that we wear, because of the quality of life we live, because we are new creatures. Remember, we are new creatures because of a divine work, a royal work, which is so radical that the only description we can use is a new creature.

So I want us to review the things that God has taught us in our study of the New Covenant, beginning in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, all the way to chapter 5. Now here is a list of the new things, the new style of life that Paul has taught us over the past two years, as we've looked at this passage of 2 Corinthians 2, 3, 4 and 5. Here are some of the

recognizable features of a new creature. In other words, because we got rid of what was old, we now put on what is new. And our new style of life clothing should identify us as new creatures.

Look at chapter 2, verse 14. We have a triumphant life. “Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession.” The first thing that went away was the old style of being a defeated life. We now have a triumphant life. 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14. But in chapter 2, verses 15 and 16, we live consequential lives. It’s not only a triumphant life, but it’s a consequential life. There are consequences to our lives. Do you realize that following Christ has life and death consequences? To one person, you are the smell of death, to the other person, you are the smell of life. That’s the consequence of being a new creature in Christ. You have a consequence in your life, because people are exposed to you, because you’re a representative of the Person and work of Christ.

So we have a triumphant life. We have a consequential life. In chapter 2, verse 17 of 2 Corinthians, we have a sincere life. We don’t manipulate anymore. We’re very sincere. That has changed. You used to be selfish; now you’re sincere.

Chapter 3, verse 4. We have a confident life. We live a confident life. Our confidence is in Christ. Your adequacy comes from Him, not from yourselves. You realize this: that I can’t make a difference. The only One who makes a difference is the Person and work of Christ. So I’m confident, not in myself, but in His grace and His mercy, and the fact that He will do what He is pleased to do. So a triumphant life, a consequential life, a sincere life, and a confident life.

Chapter 3, verse 5. It’s a competent life. We are competent. Yes, please, Jay?

Participant: With your statement, “I can’t make a difference,”—

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: Would you please expound on that, just with I can’t make a difference. Is it just giving it all to God?

Bruce: Go to 2 Corinthians chapter three, please. It’s a way of thinking, Jay. You see, when we think correctly, we’re going to act correctly. And I realize that whatever God is pleased to do, it’s a function of Him and not of me. I have to start with that mindset, that I can’t change anybody’s life. And so we come to 2 Corinthians chapter three. Paul writes in verse 4, “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.” That’s what it means. It means our sufficiency to change somebody’s life comes from Him and not from us. It’s not based on my ability to be an eloquent speaker, or teacher, or anything else, or my knowledge theologically. It’s all what God does, because He is the sufficient One who will make the change. You’ve got to start thinking of it that way. If you don’t think that way, you’re going to become a manipulator, because what you’re going to do is you’re going to want to get somebody’s response, and you’ll do whatever is necessary to get the response that you think they should have, and therefore you become a manipulator, rather than proclaiming truth and letting the Holy Spirit do His work. There is a degree of saying the sufficiency of everything I do comes from Him, and not from me. It’s a way of getting away from our pride.

It's the same idea as I've told you many times. People have asked me, "How many people have you led to Christ?" My answer is, "None that I know of." But I've been there, and been the OBGYN who has presided at their new birth. But I didn't lead them to Christ. I just presided at their new birth, and had the joy of being the one who could be the physician of their spiritual lives in helping them come to Christ. But I didn't lead them to Christ, because He'd already done that by planting the seed and watering the soil. I just happened to be the OBGYN.

So what I'm talking about here, as we talk about a confident life, is that our sufficiency comes from Him. You see, whenever you begin to think that you make a difference, you become a manipulator. But when you realize that it's all dependent upon Christ, that doesn't mean you sit back and do nothing. It just means that you recognize that the sufficiency of what you're ready to do comes from Him and not from yourself. Is that helpful? Yes, Don?

Participant: Yes. I heard a pastor a couple weeks ago say it. I like the phrase he used. He referred to it as holy schizophrenia. Paul says, "I did more than all the other apostles,"— (I'm just paraphrasing) —

Bruce: Sure.

Participant: But then he says, "Yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me."

Bruce: Amen. Holy schizophrenia?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: It's a good thought. Jay, is that helpful? (Laughter.) Yes, Thomas?

Participant: I think the other thing, too, is that you can't go halfway in doing this, because, as you read in Colossians three, Paul says set your mind on things above. In the very sentence before that, he says, Set your heart on things above. It's your heart and mind. It's a total thing.

Bruce: We need to understand the verse I read (3:4) in it's right context. Let me take you back to 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14. Here is the right context of having a competent life. "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere." Now that's who we are in Christ. You, in Christ, are spreading the fragrance of the Person and work of Christ by your very participation in whatever event that is in your life. In other words it's this: ministry is who you are, where you are. Where you are, ministry is going to occur, because you give off the fragrance of Christ. "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved, and to those who are perishing." That means that not everybody is going to have a real positive response to you. But you can't control that! It's not up to you. You see, it's a consequence of who you are in Christ by condition, and who you are in character as a new creature. Some people are going to be drawn to you, and some people are going to be turned off. You don't control that; that is a consequence of your being in Christ. It's not something you make happen, it's not something you want to happen; it's a consequence of who you are, where you are. And you read next. "to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life."

Now here is the most important question in Paul's whole second epistle to the Corinthians. He asks this question. "Who is sufficient for such a thing?" Now what is he referring to? He's saying, Who is sufficient to realize that your life is going to expose death to some people, and life to others? In other words, your life has life and death consequences. Who is sufficient for that? Are you able to live with that, realizing that my life is going to cause death to some people eternally, and that my life may cause life to some people eternally? Who can live with that dichotomy? His answer is: Go down to chapter 3, verse 4. "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves, to claim anything as coming from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from Christ." The answer to his question, who can live like that?, is chapter 3, verse 4. It's the sufficiency of Christ. That's what I mean, Jay, when I say that I can't change anything. It's not up to me, because I realize that I'm living with life and death consequences, because I'm a new creature in Christ by identity. Things have changed, and to some people you are going to be the aroma of death, and to some people the aroma of life.

Do you understand the historical context of that, if you recall that from months ago? Paul is describing the triumph of procession here of a military parade. There was a victorious general. There were troops, because of the consequences of his victory. There were about five thousand enemy troops, and in front of him were his own soldiers. At the end of that parade, the consequences of that parade were life and death—life to his own troops, who became the Praetorian guard and became Caesar's personal guards. That was life for them. But to the five thousand enemy soldiers, they were sold into slavery or killed. And as they were going through this parade, people would throw flowers in the parade, and people would step on them, and an aroma went off.

Now the real issue here, you see, is what side of the parade you're on. If you're on this (the victorious side) of the parade, you're going to share in the triumph. But if you're on this side of the parade (the losing side), you reveal the triumph.

Participant: Bruce, please, just for the sake of the transcript, when you say this side and that side, what do you mean?

Bruce: Okay. I wasn't going to go into that detail. This commanding general would ride in a gold-laden chariot driven by white horses. In front of him would be his troops in battle dress, in front of the general. After him would be the captive enemy soldiers in their fetters and their chains, marching behind him. So that's your parade. Historically, what is going on is that people would throw incense and flowers in front of these thousands of marching feet. When you step on flowers, what happens? You crush them, and an aroma is given off. That's the aroma that Paul is alluding to. He's saying that you, who are going through the parade of life, are an aroma. Now there is one aroma, but two consequences. If you're on this side of the parade, meaning in front of the chariot on the general's side, you're part of the victorious general's army. You are going to share in his triumph, because your next military assignment will be the part of the Praetorian guard. You're sharing in that victory. That's this side of the parade. Now if you're behind the chariot and the general, you're part of the enemy captive soldiers. You're in fetters and chains. At the end of that parade, that same aroma is the smell of death for

you, because you're either going to be killed, or you're going to be sold into slavery. For them, that same aroma was death. But if you are on this side of the parade, meaning in front, with the general's army, you're going to have the aroma of life.

So Paul is saying, that's what it's like to be a Christian. You are dealing with life and death consequences. And who is able to live a life like that? He's saying only God can do that. So that's what I mean when I say that it doesn't depend upon us. The real issue is, for us, either way it's a triumph. That's why he said, in verse 14, "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession." You see, it's a triumph either way. But the issue is, if I'm on this side of the parade, meaning in front of the general, and I'm with his army, it's going to be a share in his victory. If I'm on this side of the parade, and I'm one of his enemies, I'm going to reveal his victory, but either way it is a victory. That's your life. Some people are going to be turned off by you, some people are going to be turned on by you. The thing we need to make sure of is that we don't do something stupid and idiotic to turn them off. We just let the natural grace of God do that for us. And who is sufficient for that? Only God can do that. Yes, Mike?

Participant: Just down a little bit farther, in chapter 4, verse 7, "For we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that this all-surpassing power is from God, and not from us."

Bruce: Amen. We have to think correctly before we act correctly.

So we have a triumphant life, a consequential life, a sincere life, a confident life, a competent life, and then, in chapter 3, verse 6, a serving life. That's new for us. We're no longer selfish; we're now serving.

Chapter 3, verses 7-11. We see the description of our new life in Christ as a glorious life. Chapter 3, verse 12 is described as a bold life. This is a new life we're putting on. It's a bold life. Chapter 3, verse 16. It's an enlightened life. Chapter 3, verse 17. It's a liberated life. We've been set free; a liberated life.

Chapter 3, verse 18. A transforming life. Then we come to chapter 4, verse 1. It's a courageous life. You see, Paul is describing in this whole section of 2 Corinthians 2, 3, 4 and 5 the new life we have in Christ. He's describing it in terms of our spiritual clothing, in which he is using the terminology of a lifestyle. In other words, the style of life that you and I live is the spiritual clothing that we wear that makes us detectable disciples. So chapter 4, verse 1. A courageous life.

Then we come to chapter 4, verse 2. It's a truthful life. We live a truthful life, no longer deceiving people. That's a change, a radical change, because you're in Christ by condition, by character you are a new creature, and the change is that you went from having a selfish, untruthful life to a truthful life.

Chapter 4, verse 5. A submissive life. Remember Jesus' words in the gospel. "If you want to come after Me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me." That's the definition of a disciple. The definition of a disciple has three character qualities—self denial, self sacrifice, and self submission. That's the definition of a disciple from the mouth of the Lord Himself. If you want to come after Me, then you must deny yourself (self-denial), take up your cross (self sacrifice), and follow Me (self submission.) You can't be submissive to Christ unless there has been such a radical

change by a royal work of God called regeneration, in which your life changes, and you put off the old self and put on the new, and you now become submissive. He's saying that's one of the changes that goes through our lives that is so radical that you can only describe it as being a new creature. Old creatures don't want to be submissive. New creatures are submissive because of the grace of God.

Then in chapter 4, verses 7-12, it's a revealing life. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God." People see the power in your life, that it comes from Him and not from you. The all-surpassing power does not come from us, but from Him.

Then chapter 4, verses 13-15. It's an encouraging life. We encourage one another. Chapter 4, verses 16-18. An enduring life. Chapter 5, verse 4. A forward looking life. Chapter 5, verse 7. A faith guided life. Our lives are guided by faith.

Chapter 5, verses 8-11. A godly, motivated life. In chapter 5, verse 14, a Christ-controlled life. Brothers, those are the changes that occurred in your lives when God was pleased to take your heart of stone, replace it with a heart of flesh, regenerate you, and you came to repentance and saving faith through the Person and work of Christ. By condition, you are in Christ. By character, it is such a radical change by a royal work. The only way you can describe it is that you are a new creature. You're a brand new creature. And that radical work manifests itself in these changes. The old stuff and style of your life is gone, and the old style of life has been replaced with these: triumphant, consequential, sincere, confident, competent, serving, glorious, bold, enlightened, liberated, transforming, courageous, truthful, submissive, revealing, encouraging, enduring, forward looking, faith guided, godly motivated, Christ-controlled living. That's an entirely new creature. Those are the changes that we went through.

Now contrast that with what we discussed last week. Here is what we gave up. Now just listen to the contrast. We gave up: profiteering, performance, insensitivity, self-dependency, legalism, self-deception, wearing masks, manipulation, man-centered preaching, enslavement, insignificance, fear, temporal values, and insecurity.

The artist Rodin was asked years ago how he could make a horse out of a piece of marble. His answer was this: You just chip away what doesn't look like a horse. If anything doesn't look like a horse, you just get rid of it. What I've described is normal Christian living, not something reserved for the spiritual elite. For a person who is in Christ by condition, God just chips away all that doesn't look like Himself, in order to reveal a brand new creature. By condition, you're in Christ, by character, you're a brand new creature, and by changes the old stuff of the way you lived has been replaced with a new style of life.

Now we've spent several weeks on that. It's so important that we understand the reality of that, because we now go to the next verses and we see the result of that. So go to chapter five of 2 Corinthians. Right after verse 17, we see this wonderful summary statement. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God." What is all of this from God? Your regeneration, your conversion, your sanctification, your future glorification, your whole spiritual life. All this is from God. It's a wonderful summary statement. Then

notice this. “who through Christ reconciled us to Himself, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” What is it that Christ did for you? He reconciled you and me to Himself, and what does He do for us? He gives us the ministry of doing that to other people. In other words, there is your definition of ministry. You’re giving away to somebody else what Christ gave you. What did He give you? Reconciliation. What do we give? Reconciliation. Why can you do that? Because it’s all from God.

Now notice how he describes this. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us.” Why is that? It’s because He gave you a new heart. He reconciled you to Himself, through His death on the cross. Now you and I give that away. That’s the message we communicate. We’re ambassadors for that message. What does an ambassador do? He represents some other authority. You’re no longer representing the authority of your own life; you’re representing the authority of Christ.

“We implore you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” And then here is this wonderful statement that I’m going to be preaching on tonight at my church. “For our sake, He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” Amen to that; we might become the righteousness of God. Yes, Bob?

Participant: I just wanted to mention that something struck me. You have always said that one of the most important things in the Bible is the very first one, “In the beginning, God.” Now it strikes me that this particular sentence we just passed, “all this is from God,” that ties this together. That’s second in importance.

Bruce: There you go. Excellent! That’s his summary statement, guys. He’s talking about this wonderful description of your regeneration. Remember that regeneration is a specific and divine work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul. It’s a one-time event in your life. All of that is from God.

Now let me review for us the causes of our condition of being in Christ. We’ve talked about this before, but it’s important that we understand the causes of all this. If this is all from God, what are the causes? First of all, I described for you previously four causes in your salvation. The first one is the origination cause. Where did your salvation originate? It originated in the eternal purpose and decrees of God, through His electing grace. It starts right there. Next, you have the meritorious cause. That is the mediation of Christ meeting the demands of the law. The demands of God’s law were met because of the meritorious work of Christ. Thirdly, you have the effectual cause, the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit works in us what Christ purchased for us. You see, the Holy Spirit is working at that. What is the role of the Holy Spirit, according to John 13? To call attention to Christ, to lead us into all truth. That’s what He does. That’s the effectual cause. There is an effect. When you hear the gospel of Christ, the Holy Spirit applies that to you. He is applying to you, through the act of regeneration, what Christ purchased for you on the cross. That’s the effectual cause. Something happened supernaturally when the Holy Spirit penetrated the depths of your heart, and He applied to you what Christ purchased for you by meeting the demands of the law, because of God’s electing grace. It’s applied to you. And then, lastly, the instrumental cause, which means we have a responsibility. We are the instruments

through which this all occurs, and that would be through our repentance, faith, obedience and perseverance. Yes, Jay?

Participant: And whenever we have repentance and faith, so God regenerates us, and you had said that regeneration and conversion are different, which they are. So in that conversion we turn, and we repent, and we're carrying that weight of sin. As we turn to Jesus and trust in Him, we actually let go of that weight of that sin that we've been carrying around. And whenever we're regenerated and born again, that chipping away of the sin, I wanted to say that it hurts so bad, and being thankful that the sin, when we do sin, being thankful that it hurts, because even now, today, it hurts. But we're also asking the Lord to help us not to continue to sin, that being the sanctification process.

Bruce: This is what Paul says in Romans 7. You've got to understand that if you're not struggling with Romans 7, you may not be in Christ at all. If you're not struggling with "why do I do that?" You see, you wouldn't even be asking that question if you weren't regenerated. If you're not asking that question, you've got to take seriously your own faith. Do I have saving faith, or a spurious faith? So we need to be very, very understanding. Yes, Bill?

Participant: Doesn't that tie to what we talked about a couple weeks ago, about the mystery of faith? I mean, we see in today's discussion that it's all God. It is He who is sufficient, and we are sufficient through Him in us. Our sanctification and the whole process of reconciliation is God, and yet at the same time, Romans 7 points back to those other Pauline discussions that we have to, as you said this morning, purposely decide, when we get up in the morning, to put on that righteousness.

Bruce: Yes, that's the battle that we're involved in. And the reason you have that battle is because of your regeneration. If you didn't have the regeneration, you wouldn't even be involved in the battle. That's what Paul is saying. "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession."

The Scripture talks a lot about mortifying our sin. We need to grieve over our sin. One of the greatest things that can happen to you is to have your sin exposed, because you know this: Jesus came to do what? Make you happy. (Laughter.) He came to what? Take away your sin. You see, when you recognize as a regenerate, reborn person, when you sin, you have this. I've got Somebody who can deal with that. I just need to give it to Him, and let Him take it away from me, because I can't deal with it anymore. I give it to Him. Yes, Thomas?

Participant: Going back to your analogy of clothing, as Christ changes us and reconciles us to Himself, He gives us a new suit. So here we are in a nice Brooks Brothers suit, and yet our adversary comes along and says, "Wouldn't you like to be back in your old outfit, where it was more familiar, more comfortable?" You know, we always get this tug, at times, to go back and do what we used to do.

Bruce: That's exactly right. You see, that's why I say that the instrumental cause is our faith, our obedience and our perseverance. That's our responsibility. Now it also means this. That's our responsibility, but it's because of God's sovereignty that we have that responsibility. You can't be saved by your faith, your obedience or your perseverance, but you can't be saved without them. They're not going to save you, but

you can't be saved without them. The evidence of your salvation is your faith! It is your desire to be obedient! And it is your perseverance. One of the great doctrines of the Scripture is the perseverance of the saints. God preserves His own. They persevere because God preserves them. Yes, Dale?

Participant: There's a short poem that summarizes a lot of this.

Two spirits dwell within my breast.

One is foul; the other is blest.

One I love, the other I hate.

The one I feed will dominate.

Bruce: Our resident poet! (Laughter.) Very good. Thank you, Dale, who is our resident poet. Wonderful!

Well, guys, this has just been a summary. Look at it this way. It's really quite simple, but it's so powerful. Do not ever overestimate the supernaturalness of your salvation. It's all from God. There is a cause behind it. There is a meritorious cause, there is an effectual cause, and the instrumental cause is that you and I begin to apply what the Holy Spirit effectually causes in us to change our hearts. That's our responsibility. Remember this: the Scripture talks about three things for the church, a remnant—it's not everybody,—persecution—the church will be persecuted,—and spiritual warfare. Those are the three things that we are all involved in. The question is, am I part of the remnant? Am I a new creature in Christ? What gives evidence of my salvation? Paul is saying this. You wake up every day, and you purpose to have your mind set, and you want to put on your spiritual clothing, because the old stuff is gone. The new stuff has come. When we live a life by the decisions that we make, we reveal the fact that we are followers of Christ, that we are learning what it means to have self-denial, what it means to self sacrifice, and what it means to be self submissive, so that people will recognize that we are disciples of Christ.

Years ago, one of my foundation clients came to me, and I was introduced to her, and she was a hippie from the '60s. The first thing she said to me was, "I know about you, and I hate religion." And I said, "Well, so do I." And she said, "But aren't you a minister?" I said, "I'm a follower of Christ." She said, "What the f--- does that mean?" And all I said was, "Stick around me for the next five years, and I'll show you."

Now, I could give you a whole litany of how the Lord was pleased to (incomplete thought.) I never said a word. All I did was live in front of her a new life that gave her evidence of the fact that I was regenerate. She passed away, and I did her funeral, because she said, "I don't know anybody I'd rather have do my funeral than you, because I just wish I had lived my life like you did." I can give you a whole story about that. But you see, you don't have to say so much. Paul is just saying, Wake up every day. Put on your new life. The old stuff is gone. You're a new creature in Christ. By condition, you are in Christ. By character, you are a new creature. And by changes, the old stuff is gone, and the new has come. Let's just live like that, brothers, so that we will have the all-sufficiency of Christ. Know this, that He alone does all the stuff for His glory. It doesn't depend upon us. We just depend upon Him. And may it be so for Jesus' sake.

Let us pray. Father, we've kind of rambled all over the place today, but we just trust that You'd be pleased to take the truth that has been communicated, and remove the things that aren't consistent with Your nature, Your glory or Your attributes. May we only be reflective, and reminded of those things that are consistent with Your revealed Word. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!"