

**TRIUMPHANT LIVING**  
*“Heavenly Confidence” – Part 2*  
Taught by Dr. Bruce Bickel  
**January 31, 2014**

Good morning, men!

**Audience Members:** Good morning!

It's good to be with you. Let's ask Don to set the tone for us. Let's just quietly go before the Lord and know that he is God.

*[MUSIC]*

Gracious Heavenly Father, it's with a sense of awe that we collectively sit at your feet this day. Father, we just pray that you would have mercy upon us the sinner. Cleanse us of all unrighteousness name make us worthy vessels to set at your feet, that you'd be pleased to have your Holy Spirit fulfill his job description and guide us into all truth, with the idea that we would understand the person and work of Christ more clearly, see you more diligently and love you more fervently. May it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen!

Let's turn in your Bibles please to 2 Corinthians 5, continuing our examination of Paul's letter to the church at Corinth entitled Triumphant Living. That comes from our passage, "But thanks be to God who always, always, always leads us in triumphal procession and spreads everywhere the aroma of the knowledge of Him." We're talking about triumphant living.

Paul is really describing his own life. He's describing what it is to be a follower of Christ in his culture, and in doing so, he sets a picture for us of what it's like to be a follower of Christ in our culture. One of the things we need to understand about Paul is he makes it very clear, as I tried to introduce last week... let me read several of our verses in 2 Corinthians 5...because we come to a very important portion of Scripture dealing at the end of Paul's life and how he views his impending death. A great encouragement for us as we understand why Paul is writing this particular passage under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Again, I'll be reading from the New American Standard version from 2 Corinthians 5:1-8.

<sup>1</sup>For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, <sup>3</sup>inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. <sup>6</sup>Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—<sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight—<sup>8</sup>we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:1-8) May God be pleased to open our eyes that we might behold him more clearly.

Last week, as I introduced this passage, we talked about the word "know." Paul says, "For we know." That's a verb of assertion. In other words, Paul is stating a fact here. He's not stating his opinion. He's not stating his preference. He's not stating an observation. Something happened in his life that

transformed him to such a degree that he came with great assertion saying, “There was an event in my life that radically changed the way that I think about everything.” Of course, you can see that in the next verses down in the passage. He talks about when anybody becomes a Christian they become a brand new person. He’s not talking about taking your old life and remaking it. He’s talking about a new life in which you start all over. It’s what we would call a transformation.

Paul is saying there’s something that transformed my life. That is what we would call regeneration. That is a direct and immediate act of the Holy Spirit upon your soul. It doesn’t mean that all the fruits of regeneration are evident every day. That’s what we would call sanctification. Paul is saying something dramatically happened in my life that changes that way that I view everything.

In this passage, as we work our way through this, we’re going to see that his view of three things changed. First of all, he says, “My view of Christ changed. I used to view him from a worldly point of view, but I don’t do that anymore. I see him in his reality. I see who he really is. My view of God has changed. My view of the person and work has changed because of this act of regeneration of being born again.” He also says, “My view of myself has changed. I see myself radically different than I used to.” Thirdly he says, “I don’t see anybody else from a worldly point of view anymore.”

When a person is reborn, one of the first things that happens is it changes your view of everything. First of all, it changes your view of how you see God. We don’t see God as the great Steeler in the sky anymore. We see him as the sovereign Lord of the universe sitting on the throne of God at his right hand. You see, our view of Christ changes.

If you want to be popular as a preacher, all you have to do is not talk about the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Talk about social media, talk about poor, talk about the needy, talk about all of the things of this world, talk about abortion. Talk about all the other things. Talk about adultery. Talk about those things. But don’t mention the person and work of Christ. The moment you start talking about the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not be popular. If you want your picture on the cover of some magazine, don’t mention Christ.

What Paul does is he mentions Christ. He’s saying when you understand what it means to be truly converted, when this event occurs in your life, the first thing that’s going to happen is you’re going to change your view of who God is. It’s going to change your view of who you see yourself as, and thirdly how you view other people. He doesn’t view them from a worldly point of view anymore, as we’ll see in our passage next week.

What Paul is telling us is this—that Christianity is an assertion. It’s a fact. It is not based upon opinions. It’s not based upon people’s ideas. It’s not a philosophy. It’s not a system. It’s based upon the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment you remove Christ from your message, you no longer have a Christian message. You’ve got a nice American socialized version of it, but you don’t have the message of Christ. When you remove Christ from the message, Paul tells us, you no longer have Christianity. Christ is what defines Christianity. You and I don’t. You can remove Mohammed, you can remove Confucius out of their movements, and you have nothing. You remove Christ, you have a nice message, but you don’t have anything being Christianity.

**Audience Member:** *Just want to ask a question on that. You’re saying Christianity is a fact. You know how people always say, “Well, that’s your interpretation.” It’s so obvious, it’s right there in the Bible. I mean, how do they...they use that as a default to kind of side step.*

That's a smoke screen.

**Audience Member:** *How do you address that?*

That's a smoke screen. All I say is let's talk about the person and work of Christ. Spurgeon says this (remember, I quote I him a lot), "You don't take people to the university of predestination and election until they've graduated from the college of repentance and faith." That means you go back to the very basic thing. What do you say about the person and work of Christ? I would take somebody like that and say, "Let's study the book of John." The book of John will tell you that Christ is God.

That's something that you can't convince anybody of. That's what Paul is telling us when he says, "For we know that this tent that I live in is dissolved. I have home that is made by God in the heavens." You see, he's stating a fact. This is not some philosophy he's talking about.

When you look at the gospels, the book of Matthew teaches that Christ is King. The book of Mark teaches that he's a servant. The book of Luke teaches that he's man. The book of John teaches that he's God. You see, when somebody says, "Well that's just your opinion," all you can realize is you're never going to convince them of anything. All you can do is take them to the Scripture. The Holy Spirit's job is to guide them into all truth. He's the only one who can do that. That's what Paul is saying when he uses that word "know." He's saying there's an event in my life that was so radical that changed that way that I think about everything. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. That's regeneration. That's being born again.

Let's go to 2 Corinthians 5: 14-21, "<sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ controls us." Right there is a summary statement of this whole chapter. The love of Christ controls us. "<sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died." He begins to talk now about three things that are the centrality of the Christian faith, and that is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Christ. Notice what he says, "<sup>15</sup>and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." He's talk about the person and work of Christ in that summary statement. Notice what he says next, "<sup>16</sup>Therefore," in other words, based upon the incarnation, the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, "<sup>16</sup>Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh." His view of people changes as a result of regeneration, being born again. God changed his heart. He sees radically different. That's the transformation that he talks about. "<sup>16</sup>...even though we have known Christ according to the flesh." In other words, I had a view of Christ that was very fleshly, very worldly. But it's not that way anymore because something happened to me. Something happened to me where God changed my view of everything. That's regeneration. "Yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer."

Then he goes on to a summary statement, "<sup>17</sup>Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." You see, he's summarizing this and saying, "You know, I used to be known as the one who was the persecutor of the church, and now I'm the primary preacher for the church." And people were saying, "How is that possible? What transformation occurred in Paul's life that was so dramatic that he went from being a persecutor to a preacher? We can't believe that, so we don't think he should be classified as an apostle." Paul is defending his apostleship by saying, "Let me tell you what happened in my life." He's describing for us in chapters 2, 3 4, 5 and 6 of 2 Corinthians triumphant living, "This is what happened to me. One of the first evidences of my true conversion is this—I don't view God the same way I used to. I don't view people the same way I used to. And I don't view myself the same way I used to because something radically changed. I became a brand new person."

When we're dealing with someone who says, "Well that's just your opinion," you can't argue that. There's no argument when opinions are concerned. You're not going to convince them of anything. All you can do is take them to the Scripture, allow the Holy Spirit to do his job. If God has sovereignly ordained before the foundation of the world that they would come to saving faith, that will happen. But that's not anything that I can do. I cannot make that happen.

A lot of times people say, especially when I'm at Christian conventions or pastoral conferences, "Tell me Bruce, how many people have you lead to Christ." My answer is, "None that I know of." "Oh really? Are you out of fellowship? What's wrong?" I've been the OB/GYN who's presided at their new birth, but I've never been the one who caused the new birth. You see, somebody planted the seed, somebody watered the seed; I just happened to be there to be the OB/GYN who presided at the new birth, but I wasn't the cause of it. That's what the Scripture does. That's what the Holy Spirit does. That's what will be telling us here. He makes an assertion. He is saying that Christianity is not a philosophy. It's an assertion of facts based upon three things—the incarnation of Christ, the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. Remove that from your message and you no longer have a Christian message.

***Don:** The thing that's frustrating to me is that that kind of attitude about, "Well, that's your interpretation." I'll just give a way-out example. A christian, for example, who would say, "Well, I believe in reincarnation." "Well that's diametrically opposed to, well, what about Hebrews 9:27 that says [UNCLEAR]?" "Well, that's your interpretation." These are people who supposedly go to church who profess to name the Name of Christ. That's what's particularly frustrating to me. Or any number of doctrines.*

Absolutely right. The biggest conflict we have is really inside the church, not outside the church. Outside the church could give a rip about us. It's those inside the church who are preaching a false gospel that we need to be concerned about. It's a Gospel that has removed the person and work of Christ.

If you want to be popular as a preacher, say anything that's nice, because people will want to hear about peace. They want to hear about feeding the poor. Which, rightly, we should do that. Now I'm not saying we shouldn't. Understand what I'm not saying. I'm saying that's a result of your conversion, not the cause of it. It's a result of it that we have. We look at people differently, Paul says, therefore I need to look at the poor differently. I need to be involved in their lives and helping them. But that's a result of my conversion, not a result of my social media or my social gospel. If you want to be popular, just talk about anything, but don't talk about the atoning work of the person and work of Christ. The moment you do that, "Well, that's your opinion."

Paul is making an assertion when he says this, "For we know." Paul is saying for we know. He summarized that by saying, "Something happened in my life that was so dramatic that I now make this assertion, that I know that when I die, when my earthly tent dissolves, I have a heavenly home made by God in the heavens."

We want to examine that, and so what Paul teaches us...there are a couple of applications I think we need to make about this. Paul is talking about his impending death. Something you and I will have to deal with. I would say this—if you and I don't know the answer to the last question, there's no hope for understanding the previous questions. If you don't know the answer to this question of 2 Corinthians 5:1-3, if you don't know the answer to that, you will have no understanding of the previous questions that you're asking, and that is the question, "What happens to me when my earthly tent is destroyed?"

If you don't know the answer to that, guys, you're going to have a whole bunch of questions you'll never get answered. That's the first question you've got to deal with, Paul tells us. At the end point of his life he's saying, "I have an assertion. I know this, because something happened in my life."

I would say ask all of us today, do you know the answer to that question as it pertains to you, personally? When your earthly tent dissolves, do you know with an assertion that there is an event in your life that occurred with such dramatic transformation that you can say, assertively, I know; regardless of what happens, I know. You see, that's what Paul is telling us. Brothers, until you answer that question yourself, you have no hope of answering all the other questions you're pondering, until that one is answered. The last question that must be answered first before you answer the first questions.

Secondly this—if you only derive comfort from this understanding of the Scripture, compassion and mercy of God, when you're in church, then you'd have to ask yourself, you may not be a Christian. Because you see, there's more to the assertion that Paul is saying, is that you take that with you in the troubles of life. He talked about the hassles of his life. Go back to chapter 4, "You have the treasure in the earthen vessel." He talked about the struggles he went through. Paul found compassion, peace and mercy in the midst of all of those struggles of life. That's where he got his encouragement.

You'll notice the number of times he uses the word "encouragement" in chapter 5. He's basically saying, "I'm encouraged in the midst of my impending death." He feels good about that because he has the assertion of knowing he's answered the last question, because of his regeneration.

All I'm saying is this, guys. If you only get comfort when you're in a worship service and you hear the right music or hear the right message, what about the times when you're alone, by yourself, struggling with the activities of life, all the hassles that you go through. You see, Paul is saying, "It's in the midst of all of those hassles that I now can make the assertion that when that happens to me, I know that I'll have a heavenly home when my earthly tent is dissolved."

All I'm saying is this. You've got to find some comfort in your aloneness, in the Scripture, in what God says. That's the transformation power for the Holy Spirit. It's in your life when you're by yourself and you're not encouraged by anybody else, what do you think about when you have nothing else to think about. Where does your mind go? Does it complain? Does it gripe? Does it moan? Does it blame? Or do you find comfort in the realization that I know, I know. That even in the midst of the troubles I'm going through, I know this; that when my earthly tent is dissolved, I know, make an assertion, that I have a heavenly home that awaits me. That's what Paul is telling us. Great comfort for us as we get older in life.

A couple of us were talking about the pains that we have as we get older. My pains are all weather related. They have nothing to do with my age. I'm not getting old. It's just all weather-related. Right.

My point is this, brothers. Take comfort in these verses. As you go through your age, getting older, you can make the assertion I know because something happened in my life years ago that transforms the way that I look at my death.

*Ian: You sort of make it sound as though it's black or white.*

Thank you. You're right. Thank you.

**Ian:** *Okay. For me, I don't know, for me, there's a little bit of gray. First there's the black and white, and that is are you saved, therefore is there any hope of taking comfort. But the next part of it for me is not just are you walking with the Lord, but how closely? And that's the gray part. If I'm walking closely with the Lord, I tend to take much more comfort in the troubled times, but if I'm walking further from the Lord, it doesn't mean I've lost my salvation; it just means my relationship with him isn't what it should be, and therefore, I tend not to take the comfort that I ought to. Is that fair to say?*

That's correct. If you're saying that's the gray area, I would agree. That's correct.

**Ian:** *That's the only gray area.*

Okay. That's what I meant. But if you're saying is this a black and white issue, the answer to that is absolutely yes. That's what Paul is saying. This is a black and white issue.

**Ian:** *Because I have lots of troubled times, but it doesn't mean to me that I need to doubt my salvation.*

That's correct.

**Ian:** *It's about the integrity of my walk with Jesus.*

Paul is going to teach us...look at your outline. He's going to teach us in these verses a couple of things. First of all, he's going to teach us about our heavenly dwelling. That's 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. Then he's going to talk about our heavenly walk, how we walk, how our citizenship is in heaven, but yet we walk on this earth. How do we live that way? That's what you're talking about, Ian. And then thirdly, what's our earthly motivation? You'll see that in verses 15-16.

So absolutely. My point is exactly what Ian is suggesting. The closer you and I walk with the Lord, the more we're going to have comfort in troubled times. When you don't have that, it doesn't mean you've lost your salvation; it just means you've lost the compassion, the joy of that relationship. It's important that we study the Scripture and be together because that's where Paul says, "I'm encouraged in the midst of all of this."

Let's take a look at our first point, which would be verse 1, our heavenly dwelling. Notice the contrast that Paul writes in verse 1 between our earthly tent and an eternal building. The contrast suggests several different things. It suggests the fleeting nature of life versus the permanent character of our future dwelling. It's a contrast between the fleeting nature of our life and our permanent dwelling in heaven.

An earthly tent is temporary. It's moveable. It's fragile. It's has bending poles. It has thin canvas and no foundation. He's describing our life. Our life is like a tent dweller, Paul tells us. The Old Testament picture is quite clear of this concept, and used quite frequently, especially in the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths recording in Numbers 9:15-23. You can read about that. Paul is playing off that imagery. The Tabernacle was transient, for wherever the cloud went, which was God's presence, the tent went. As God moved, the tent moved. When God changed directions, the tent moved.

In Leviticus 23:33-43, the Feast was to remind the descendants of Israel that they lived in tents and to remind them of their wilderness experience. There was a reminder of the fact that they were living in temporary tents. The temporary nature of life is described by this word in the Scripture—destroyed or

dissolved or removed. The NASB describes it as, “if our earthly tent is torn down, dissolved, destroyed.” It means to demolish, it means to dissolve.

Paul is saying that even if you live in an earthly tent dwelling, your body, today, dismantled by death, you have a permanent home made by God. That’s what he’s saying. He contrasts the permanency of your home with God versus the transition of our life here, which is very, very transient, described by a tent.

The term “eternal house” is a reference to our resurrection body mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15. There are a lot of unknown facts about our resurrected body, and we’re not going to get into that today. Paul is saying this—because of what happened to him previously in his life...there was an event that occurred in his life, which we’re calling regeneration (2 Corinthians 5:18), when a person becomes a Christian and becomes a brand new person, that’s regeneration. He’s saying, “When that occurred in my life, I began to view myself as a tent dweller, realizing that with an assertion and a fact, I know this, that I do have a heavenly home.” He is talking about his transition from one life to the next.

We leave this tent, which is temporary, and enter a house which is permanent, Paul says. A reference to our resurrected body. What he’s saying is this—that while he knows that death awaits him, he has this great confidence that the body that awaits him is superior to the present one, just as the difference between a tent and a permanent home. That’s the contrast. This eternal shelter is described by Jesus in John 14, “Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many dwellings. If it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you.” You see, God is the architect of this permanent home, therefore there will be no maintenance problems because the foundation is in Christ.

Here’s an example from the life of Abraham. Go to Hebrews 11:8-10. It gives us an illustration of Abraham’s understanding of this. “<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; <sup>10</sup>for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” In other words, Abraham understood this; that he’s a tent dweller right now, but he was looking forward to a permanence. This what Paul is saying.

As you and I look at our impending death, we look at it as the difference between the tent versus eternal home, and the contrast is so significant because one has no foundation, the other one has the foundation in God. He says that with a great assertion, “For we know...” I would say this, brothers, until you can really answer that question yourself, the last question, you won’t have any hope of answering the previous questions.

One of the great events that I had years ago...I had the privilege of baptizing a quadriplegic. As the elders and I were immersing him in the water in the pool, just before we did that, he gave one of the most powerful testimonies of what he was looking for in his resurrected body. He talked about the accident that paralyzed him. He lost all of his facilities, movement. But he gave such a wonderful testimony of the hope that he had because he knew this—that right now this is my earthly tent, which doesn’t function. Just before we baptized him, he just gave us such a wonderful, powerful testimony of realizing this—that one of these days I’m going to have a resurrected body, a tent that is made by God that’s going to have no debilitation in my movement.

We don't know a whole a lot about the resurrected body that we're going to have, the glorified body. But we do know this is-there's going to be some continuity to it. In other words, we have a human construction. Our resurrected body is going to have some human construction to it. We're going to have capabilities. You notice that in the person and work of Christ in his resurrected body. He came back in his physical status. He ate. He drank. People could touch him. He walked through walls.

We don't know a whole lot about all of that other than just some of the examples we have. But we do know this; that there's going to be some continuity in our physical stature that we have now that will be with us in our resurrected body when the Lord returns in all of his glory. That's what my friend, the quadriplegic, was expressing. He was saying, "I'm going to have this body that I have right now is going to be so far superior to the body that I have right now that the contrast is extreme as a tent versus an eternal home, and I can't wait for the day that I get my resurrected body because my functions will work again and I will no debilitation anymore."

**Audience Member:** *Reverend Ted Wood had a study many years ago...where is Ted.*

He's behind you.

**Ted:** *I deny it. {LAUGHTER}*

**Audience Member:** *This study was...Ted, do you recall the study on the resurrected body? [UNCLEAR] paraphrase [UNCLEAR] it's from a loving place...in order to love we have to touch.*

Correct.

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR]*

**Ted:** *Yes, absolutely.*

That's correct. There's going to be some...when I use the word continuity, it's what Ted was saying, it's continuity. From what I understand of the Scripture, we have a physical body now, we're going to have a physical body then. What it's going to look like? We don't know that yet. It's all under the power of God. It'll be an environment of love, concern. You'll recognize your friends. You'll recognize your loved ones. There will be touch. There will be feeling. But it'll all be pure. For the first time in our life, you see, my touch and feelings won't be tainted. Right now, everything I do is tainted. The very best that I do is tainted. In my glorified body, that will not be the case. Ted, do you want to add some more to that, please?

**Ted:** *No. I mean, bodies are very critical in our faith. Physicality is very important. The only way I can tell you I love you or communicate that to you is you say it, you're hearing it physically, or to hug you, you feel it. I can't telepathically tell you I love you.*

That's correct.

**Ted:** *So, I mean, [UNCLEAR] Christian different than the Eastern religions, [UNCLEAR] because of reincarnation, the bodies are irrelevant.*

Right.



**Ted:** *You die, you come back in another body, another one, another one. It really doesn't make any difference. The body [UNCLEAR]...then we actually have Christians who talk like that at funerals, "Well, you know, the body really doesn't make any difference." Well, it does.*

Absolutely it does. That was the point my quadriplegic friend was saying, "I can't wait until I get that body." We don't know a lot about it other than the fact that there's continuity in the physical body we have now will be the same continuity we will have with the resurrected body in heaven.

**Dale:** *We'll also have a new name.*

Well, everything is going to be new. Correct. What are they going to call you? {LAUGHTER}

**Dale:** *I don't know.*

**Audience Member3:** *[UNCLEAR] great favor this morning. First of all, the shame of the Gospel, the embarrassment of the Gospel. It's despised and rejected by millions. However, the exciting thing that you brought to me this morning, which you've done me a great favor, is the fact that somebody can get started right now. They don't have to come to [UNCLEAR] one of these Bible studies to be introduced to Jesus Christ. They can be transformed like Paul was in a moment.*

Amen. That's the direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul. That doesn't mean you're going to have all the fruits of that regeneration. That comes over time. That's sanctification, where the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, works in us. That happens over time. But there is that immediate change. When that happens, you think differently. That's radical. That's transformational. That thought process begins to transform everything you do. That's what Paul is telling us.

One of the great things we need to understand in what Paul is telling us is look forward to your resurrected body. That's something that we can look forward to. There's going to be continuity there. There will be relationships. There's going to be love. There's going to be feeling. There's going to be no sadness. There's going to be no pain. That was the point my quadriplegic friend was saying before we baptized him, "I'm really looking forward to that." That was his great encouragement.

He hung in there for several years after that and then the Lord was pleased to take him home about five years later because of the disease that permeated his body. When we did his funeral, you know, it's like when you go to...remember when they buried John the Baptist? Go to Mark 6:9. When they buried John the Baptist, we're told that the disciples came and took his body, and after the beheading of John the Baptist, the friends came for him and the Scripture says, "They buried it." They didn't bury John. They buried it. What was the "it" they buried? The body. John's soul had already departed and gone to be with the Lord. You see, that's what Paul is saying. They just buried "it." They didn't bury John.

You see, what Paul is saying is this—death, for the Christian, is a change of location. It's one life, but two locations. I have a location now in my earthly tent, and I'll have eternal life in my earthly home made by God. It's one life, but two locations. Death for the believer is a change of location. When they bury me, they'll bury it, but they won't bury me. Because I know this—that God has prepared a home for me in heaven that is made by him and not by man. We can assert that because of our regeneration.

Remember the little hymn? "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through. My treasures are laid somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore." There's a degree where you and I have our citizenship in heaven, but our

life is here on earth. We realize that death for the believer is just a change of location. One life, but two locations.

Now the question is this—which life do you have? Do you realize that everybody has eternal life? Everybody has an eternal life. The question is which one do you have? Is my eternal life in my heavenly home or is my eternal life in hell under the wrath of God. Everybody has an eternal life. The issue is this—do I know the answer to the final question of the destiny of my eternal life? When they buried John, they buried it; they didn't bury John. Death for the believer is a change of residence. One life with two locations.

Not only is death like going from a tent to a house, Paul also describes it in terms of our clothing of our spiritual resurrected body, what we will wear. He now begins to describe our heavenly clothing. Look at verses 2-4. Paul recognized the limitations of his own body. It was really a very fragile clay pot or a jar of clay, an earthen vessel. We read about that in chapter 2 Corinthians 4:7. Now he says that under the pressures of this hostile environment, which we read about in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, he says that he groans. Not only does he say that he groans under the pressures of life, but he also states that he longs to be clothed with our eternal dwelling. He longs to be clothed.

By saying this, he doesn't mean that he despises his present life. He's not saying he wants to hurry this up. He's not saying that. He's just recognizing that he's a citizen of two worlds. His body is on earth, but his heart is in heaven. He pictures our destiny in the form of clothing here in these verses. Being clothed versus being naked is a picture of our spiritual life.

There are several ways to interpret this. Here's one of the applications. In Genesis 3, before sin entered the world through our first parents, Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. They were naked and not ashamed. After they sinned, they clothed themselves to cover up their inadequacies to living as God commanded. Nakedness could be a description of our inadequacies. They were naked and not ashamed.

The moment that they sinned, five things entered the world, which we are now constrained by—guilt, fear, shame, blame and death. Prior to that, Adam and Eve did not know that. When sin entered the world, through original sin, now you and I live a life of guilt, we live a life of fear, of shame, blame and death. That all came as a result of sin. Those things all speak of our inadequacies. Paul is saying, "I would rather not have my own inadequacies, I want to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ."

The very first sacrifice in history is when God made skins from animals to clothe Adam and Eve. Who made them adequate? God did. They didn't make themselves adequate. Does that sound familiar? We saw that in chapter 4:3. We see God sacrificing something in order to make them righteous. In Isaiah 61:10, we're told that we are wrapped in the robes of righteousness. That's our clothing. The righteousness of Christ will be our clothing. The righteousness of Christ refers to our clothing, and the nakedness refers to our inadequacies. Paul is saying, "I would rather not be inadequate anymore. I want to be clothed in my heavenly dwelling, which is the righteousness of Christ."

Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." You see, that is our future clothing. It's going to be the righteousness of Christ. What Paul is saying is this, "I'm at home, I'm away from Christ because I desire not to live in my inadequacies anymore; I just want to be wrapped in the robes of righteousness, to receive my heavenly clothing, which is the righteousness of Christ." That's why the Scripture says, John

says that when you see Christ, you'll see him just as he is and you'll be just like him. That's because you'll be clothed in his righteousness.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:21, "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." That's our heavenly clothing. What that's going to be? We have no idea, other than we know this—that our clothing is going to be the righteousness of Christ. That's our clothing. Those who are in Christ have Christ as their righteousness, whereas those who are not in Christ, only have their own inadequate righteousness.

Is there reason for us who are in Christ to be encouraged and confident after death? Absolutely. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:6-7, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—<sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight." One of the reasons that you and I walk by faith is because we understand the destiny we have of our righteous clothing. We know this, that I have eternal life. One life, but two locations. When I die to go with the Lord, it's just a translation from this earth to my heavenly home. I know this—at that moment, I will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ, because he who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

If you ask me the most important word in the New Testament, I mean, I could not argue with you if you said it was grace. I could not argue with you if you said it was love. I couldn't argue with that. But I think one of the most important words that we don't understand is this little word "hupere" in the Greek in 2 Corinthians 5:21. It's the word "on behalf of." Notice, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." I think that is one of the most important words that we can understand in the Scripture. It's because of what he did for me that I have his righteousness. On behalf of—hupere—in place of. In other words, he died in place of me so that I could have his righteousness. That's what the word hupere means—in place of. In place of my death, he died. The result of that is that we have the clothing of righteousness in our eternal home. Paul is saying, "Look, yes I know I'm in this life, but I would rather be clothed in righteousness than continue to be clothed in my own inadequacies. Therefore as I look at my impending death, I can be encouraged, and that's why I live by faith and not by sight, because I have the truth of the assertion of I know that when I die I'm going to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ."

He speaks of two things, first of all—our heavenly dwelling and our heavenly clothing. There are a lot of unknown things we don't know about all of that. Paul is saying, "We know, and I know, factually, that that's going to happen because of transferred in my life.

**Ted:** *You used hupere, a preposition. Another preposition we talked about in the past is [UNCLEAR]. All of this is possible...everything we talk about is possible because we're in Christ.*

Amen to that.

**Ted:** *If we're in Christ, then where he is there we are also.*

Amen. The beauty of that is this—that when you see Christ, you're going to see him as he is, and you will look just like him. What that means is we don't know, but in other words, you're going to see the righteousness of Christ. Guess what you're going to see in yourself? You're going to see the righteousness of Christ as your own clothing.

**Audience Member:** *And guess what God is going to see. He's going to see his son...*

He's going to see his son.

**Audience Member:** ...when he looks at us.

He'll look at us...we'll be just like his son. Amen. Good point. Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" 127 times in the New Testament to describe a person who has a saving relationship to Christ. In other words, you are in him. We spent some time talking about that. Notice this in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf (in place of me), so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (in Christ)." It's all because you're Christ. You're either in Christ or you're not.

**Jay:** You used eternal life, you used "know," and there's a Scripture, and I was just thinking about this last week, but just even the Scripture in 1 John, that this is the testimony of God, and in 1 John 5:11-14, "<sup>11</sup>And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup>He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.<sup>13</sup>These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life," and the words after that, "<sup>14</sup>This is the confidence which we have before Him," but just that "know," that's beautiful.

You can only know that if there's been an event in your life in your past that brings you to the point of actively knowing that. And that act is regeneration. It's act of God taking a heart of stone, replacing it with a heart of flesh, removing your heart of insensitivity to spiritual things and now causing you to have a heart that follows the spiritual things and you begin to walk by faith. You see, we're talking about the supernatural nature of conversion. We should never remove the fact that conversion is supernatural. It's not a matter of your will or my will. It's a matter of what God has willed to do in you. It's something that he does for us.

It's critical that we understand that. You can't have that knowing, Jay, that you referred to, unless something has happened in your heart where God gives you the change of mind, which is called regeneration. We don't talk enough about the impact of regeneration. We talk about, "Would you like to have eternal life?" That's a consequence; that's not the cause of salvation. Salvation is so that you will be reconciled to God. That's the purpose of salvation.

In that reconciliation, one of the consequences is you go from an earthly tent to a heavenly home. You go from being inadequate to being righteous. Those are consequences of being reconciled to God. The Gospel reconciled sinful man to God. That's the purpose of the Gospel. It's not the offer of eternal life. Eternal life is something you know that you have because of that fact you've been reconciled. That's what regeneration does.

**Audience Member:** One thing that keeps popping out here, especially [UNCLEAR] we have our tent, ours, our possession, versus what is given us from God. Look at Genesis 3 [UNCLEAR] we fell. [UNCLEAR] man went out and sewed fig leaves. But God gave us after that fleshly clothes. I mean, he had to clothe us. Over and over and over again, from what Jay said and what Ted said is [UNCLEAR] it's no longer our tent, the stuff that we do, our victories that we're doing and our [UNCLEAR] the fact that [UNCLEAR] and there's such freedom in that, that we can go and serve with gratitude and have that joy that talks about even in the trials. It is so freeing, there's so much freedom and grace, how could you not want to [UNCLEAR] with that mindset.

You see, with what you just said is that summary verse where Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight. What you just described, dear brother, is a great illustration of that. As a result of everything you've just said, you live your life by faith, not by sight. You don't look at the temporal things to assure you of that, you have this assertion. That's the critical nature of that word "know." Paul says, "For we know..." You cannot make that assertion unless there's been an event in your life that caused you to change the way that you think, and that event is when you were reconciled to God through the mercy of God in the person and work of Christ. You remove that from the Gospel message, you'll be very, very popular, but you won't change a soul at all.

**Audience Member:** *Bruce, a practical way for us to do that for our families is to take our families camping.*

Excellent.

**Audience Member:** *Think about that. Take our families camping. We live...isn't that true that we live in this life as if it's forever.*

Yes.

**Audience Member:** *On behalf of camping, that gives us a good illustration...*

It does. Excellent idea.

**Audience Member:** *...[UNCLEAR] earthly, temporary [UNCLEAR].*

That's an excellent idea. Take your family camping and help them understand the difference between a tent and an earthly home. Great application of that.

**Ted:** *I think it's important to distinguish from saying "knowing" and of "head." Having a "knowing" event is not the same thing as a "knowing" experience. My wife, before we met, went to a church that had altar calls, and she kept going forward to be born again, and she kept going forward again and again because she didn't have an emotional experience. We're not talking about an emotional experience, although emotion may come [UNCLEAR]. You're talking about a fact of what God does and not what you are experiencing. It's kind of like C. S. Lewis in his motorcycle ride [UNCLEAR]. He came at the end of that ride and...before he got on the motorcycle, he was not a Christian, and afterward, he knew he was because God had done a work, but it wasn't an emotional experience, although it may be.*

It may be. You may not have angels bouncing off the walls. I remember once I had, at the Fellowship of Christian Athletes conference we were talking about regeneration. I said, "What's your definition of regeneration?" One young coach said, "It's when you see angels bouncing off the walls." {LAUGHTER} That's not what we're saying.

**Audience Member:** *Bruce, I know we're at the end of the time, but the word that sticks out to me in this passage that we haven't dealt much with is the word "groan." [UNCLEAR] is groaning over the weight of what is occurring and the balance between being put under the groaning weight of the world and recognizing who we are in Christ. We can know that individually, but the passion and compassion that we have for the people in Syria and the people in the Philippines and the people spread around this world that don't know from day to day whether in the morning they're alive and whether they will not be alive at the end of the day because of a lack of resources they have and the droughts. All of those*

*things are happening. The earth is groaning and we could daily be groaning individually because of the circumstances of the world and trying to get a balance between our personal knowledge of where we're going to end up and living in this life. There's just a lot of groaning that's going on [UNCLEAR].*

Absolutely. All of creation groans. All of creation groans along...not only us, but all of creation, waiting for the redemption of God's own children through the reconciliation of Christ. Excellent point. Paul is saying, "My life is like groaning. But in the midst of all that groaning, I have this assurance—I know, in the midst of that."

**Bishop Rodgers:** *I was just thinking I live in a retirement community. All of us are groaning as we get older {LAUGHTER}; however, for some of us, it's a preparation looking forward.*

Absolutely.

**Bishop Rodgers:** *For others, it's a desperate attempt to deny it.*

Amen. Well said. Closing point, brothers, would be this. Until you can answer the last question, you don't have any hope of answering the previous questions. You've got to ask yourself, "Do I know?" Do I know?

Let's pray. Father, we've just touched on the glorious aspects of our glorified, resurrected body. There's much that we don't know, so we have to walk by faith and not by sight. Father, we thank you that you became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of Christ in Him for your glory. And may it be so, Father, that you would draw us closer to yourself that we will actually live a life of faith and not by sight, be transformed not by conforming to this world, but by the renewing of our mind. Change our minds, Lord, that we will think correctly so that we will act correctly, and may it be done for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!