

TRIUMPHANT LIVING

Taught by Tom Hansz

Session: April 26, 2013

Father, thank You so much for this day. Thank You for the indescribable gift of Jesus Christ that You sent Him to do Your will and, in turn, save us and bring us into Your family and make us brothers in Christ. Thank You so much. We thank You for the gift of Bruce and all the great teaching he has done for this effort and Your Holy Spirit guiding him that we might learn, and grow, and mature in Christ. So be with the doctors today, give them skill, and give Bruce complete remediation of the melanoma. Give Bruce grace and peace and Becky as well, and we pray that we will see Bruce return next week and we thank You for that. Thank You for this time together, and thank You for Don Maurer and all the blessings we have here as we come together in the name of Jesus to grow and be more like Him, and it is through Your Spirit that we do this. Amen.

Sometimes you cannot stop saying thank You.

Last week Bruce asked me if I would teach and I said sure I would be glad to; and I asked what do you want me to teach on. He said, teach on this. I go...oh, that should be easy. Whoa,...there is a lot here when you think of the transformation process in how we conduct our lives, and in what God is doing for us. We are going to look at Romans 12:2 and talk about it: Think, Act, Feel; or is it Feel, Act, Think? One of the people I shared this card with said, "Well you know Tom, everything starts with feel because no matter what you do, you have emotions. The idea is that you do not let that guide your actions, you do transformational thinking. You cannot ignore your feelings but you do not let them control you. You go back and base your actions on what you know, think on what God has taught you, think about what is in His Word and then base your actions upon knowledge, not on emotions. Emotions are not bad but, as Bruce always tells us, they are arbitrary. The idea is: what do we know, how do we base our actions on the thoughts that we have and not the emotions that we have? So let's go back and look at Romans 12:1 and 2.

"I appeal to you brothers by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, Holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." I think three words that pop out are, "do not be **conformed**;" "be **transformed**;" and "**test**." Those things we need to keep in mind.

I love the way J. B. Phillips translates this in his paraphrase...I like what he says because he says "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship to give Him your bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold you and re-mold your minds from within so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands, and moves towards the goal of maturity." That kind of brings it down on a level where I can understand it; you do at times feel as if the world really wants to make you conform, it is going to squeeze you to be one of them. We see that also in the Church. You look at the way the Church was say 50-60 years ago and the way the American church is today and there has been a big change. It's great to go to church so we are all the same. Do you see that? In your experience there is a desire that we all have this shared "brotherhood." Is it in real terms, spiritual terms, or worldly terms? Worldly terms are false terms.

Think about it, how does God re-mold us? He takes the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom provided by the Holy Spirit through His word and He transforms us to be like Christ. We are looking at...He is re-molding us in the way we conform, He's re-molding us in the way we transform, and He's re-molding us in the way we can test ourselves. I don't think many times we actually think about, yes I need to be testing and I need to see where I am along this route of sanctification. Am I going in His direction or am I staying in a direction that is very pleasing to me? If we are to conform, we are to be in line with God. We are being re-made in the image of His Son. It says in Romans 8:29: "For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the first born among many brethren." Bruce talked a little bit about that last week when he talked about election and predestination. But before we were born, before we were created, before the beginning of this world...God had us in mind. When we come here on earth and we grow up, He is then, through His Holy Spirit, changing us and conforming us to be like the image of His Son, to be a brother of His Son.

As Christ says in John 17, to be a co-heir with Him, to share; not just to go to heaven but to go to heaven on the terms of Christ. Think about that. That is mind-blowing. We don't deserve any of it. So often we think, "Oh I don't deserve to be saved." But what does salvation really mean; how far does it go? It's more than just being accepted by God; it's being brought into the family of God and given a position that is beyond our imagination, and to be used in ways that we cannot imagine, and to be used by Him especially with things such as spiritual gifts that we do not have, but that He gives to us and He builds us up for our use and His glory.

I love those terms that the Phillips translation says, "with eyes wide open look at the mercies of God. Don't let the world squeeze you but prove in practice...make your life a practice of going back and testing what I know, how I grow, what does His Word say? How much of His Word do I really know, and how much of the Word that I know do I live by?" That is what we're saying here. It's the knowledge that then directs you and the way you think according to God's terms, rather than to the way you feel.

Peter also says in 1st Peter 1:14, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." How often do Christians think of that, "I was really dumb, I was living in a world of ignorance..." It is usually, "Well before I say that I was out, now I'm saved and I'm in. And I can keep going on and doing what I'm doing." But where you were was so much untruth, so much falsity, so many things that were against God but you accept them because it was easy, because you were part of a system; and God is trying to take you out—and God will take you out and change you and bring you into His Kingdom and to be more like Christ.

God is taking us through this transformation process and this is what I think again...we need to get a good grasp on...it is not only transformation thinking but we need to change the way we think about all these things in life but He is changing us.

Yes, Don.

DON: *Yes. I can't help but think about...we think today...the way things are going in this country...the moral decline and everything...wow, it's really bad and it has never been this bad before...but in the days that Paul wrote Romans...it was probably worse. I mean, Christians were definitely in the minority and with all that was going on and all the immorality, the persecution, the Roman Empire, it was not an easy thing to be transformed and not to be conformed to the world. We see things today...the gay marriage thing...I can't believe people who supposedly know better who claim to be Christians but yet they are for gay marriage, or other things that...I forget the exact percentage, the polls that were taken and 52% of Christians believe in reincarnation or*

something like that. Really goofy stuff. It is not easy to be transformed just by the renewing of your mind unless the Holy Spirit is working in you [UNCLEAR].

Yes, good points. We tend to think that the world around us is acceptable. We're talking about spiritual things and who talks about spiritual things? Oprah. A very spiritual person, supposedly. But how much of what she talks about is based upon the Word of God? How much of what is brought out today that is acceptable among the general public, is acceptable to God? Very little, for Christians, as you mentioned Don...yes, it's good to have gay marriage—that is not based on God's Word—that is based upon the pressures of society to make everyone conform. We need to be very active and you would think that we have had it so easy in this country that if you look at this pastor that we hear about in the news now and from Iran who is in jail, he has endured beatings on a regular basis. The only thing he has done is preach the Word of God. He's a good man, but not according to them. So, he has a whole different life than we have and we have it so easy, in fact, it is too easy. Bruce was telling us a few weeks ago about that one missionary that says, "...what you need in America is more persecution." That's when the church can grow. We have just had a wonderful, easy time and we have allowed our church to dissolve to where the Episcopal Church in America is no longer a real church, it is a sect and it doesn't really preach the Word of God. It preaches the stuff that makes people feel good. That is again...back to this. It is not about feeling good, it is about acting on what you know, and based upon that you will feel good, but it doesn't start your motivation. You are motivated by what you know and what you know is in the Word of God.

The thing about transformation is, and I think this is interesting, it is only used three times in the New Testament—back in Matthew and Mark when we talk about the transfiguration of Christ. That word for "transfiguration" is the same word that Paul is using here, "...be transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is just not a change, but the apostles got to see Christ in His glory. They saw Him physically change and the presence of His Father came down. That same word is what Paul is using to say, "...have your mind changed." Be drastically changed. He also says that in 2nd Corinthians, "...and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit."

He's referring back to Moses—remember Moses went and saw God and the glory of God was so brilliant it made his face glow. As he came down, his face was glowing because he had been in the presence of the Lord; and you are seeing a reflection of God's glory. But as time went on that glory started to fade. So Moses puts his veil over him so that people do not see that it is going away; what he had is not staying there. He's kind of doing his human thing to protect his image; that is what Paul is referring to. With an unveiled face...so don't be like Moses take the veil off your face and allow God to work in you, transform you, and let people see Christ in you. As St. Augustine said, I like this verse, I quote it a lot, "Witness constantly, and when you must, use words." Let people see Christ in you, let people see Christ in the way you treat them, and in the actions you do, and the way you react to things. Then you don't have to buttonhole and say, "Are you saved, brother?" Let the glory of the Lord shine through because you are His ambassador. You are a living gospel, a letter written to others to see Christ.

So look at being conformed, not to this world, but let God conform you to the image of His Son. That's enough to make us humble as can be. And then transform us from what we were into what we will be, like Christ; and then look at the way we are used in this transformation. Because when we talk about going to church and I think Bruce referred to this last week...going to church for a "good worship experience." I'm sorry, but I looked through the Bible and I could not find anything on having a good worship experience. I thought about

the fact that I like to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit and I could not find that either. Nowhere does it talk about “feeling” the presence of the Holy Spirit. But there are so many people in church today and maybe sometimes we are kind of thinking that way too, that it is how we **feel** in church rather than **why** we go to church. Now, I don’t know where you are but for so many years I would go to church because I got something out of it. I’m like most people, I go to church and I want to hear a good sermon; that is one of the reasons why we came over here to this church. I like to go to church to sing praises to God, great music. I love to sing. Some people say, “I just go to church to feel good.” Nothing wrong with feeling good, but all those things do not count because God wants you to go to church for other people. I don’t hear that very often. I don’t hear “Go to church to be used” or “Go to church to serve.” Don’t go to church for you because it is not about you.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *Amen! {LAUGHTER}.*

Thank you. {LAUGHTER} God bless you. You are there because that is what the gifts are about. That is another thing that we just don’t use enough or learn enough, or concentrate enough on...what the Holy Spirit is doing for us in this transformation of things that we will do by Him but that we are really not trained to do. It is Him, not us. As Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 5, “For the love of Christ controls us; or it constrains us, because we have concluded this, that the One has died for all” (that’s Jesus) “therefore, all have died.” We are dead to our sins. “I die every day but this life I live, I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, and He died for all, that those who might no longer live for themselves, but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised.” So I’m living not for me, I’m living for Christ and His Church. Do we really get a sense of belonging when we go to church? Do we really get a sense of belonging when we go to church?

We always go to membership classes and say I’m a member of So-and-So Church, and you do look at membership, but how many membership applications are for the family you live with? You are belonging to a family, you are born into a family and, therefore, there are certain relationships that you have and certain values that you have that go beyond anything that can be written. You are now born into the family of God.

It is referred to in Genesis—the family of Abraham—that we are all in his family from a spiritual standpoint. Now it is not a matter of membership in the church but I belong to a group of people; and that is one thing I really praise God for the way I’ve seen things develop in this Friday morning group—there is a sense of real brotherhood here. A lot of times you meet people and as you talk to them or chat with them, you just feel good. It is not that you go there to feel good, but there is this good feeling that comes out of it. And that is the way it should be. It is just the opposite of the way people tend to think. So we have this belonging and this family that we are now in membership in a true sense.

Yes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I think it is so important to stress that feelings are a by-product of our actions [UNCLEAR] I have come across reformed, honest Christians who almost dismiss the by-product of feelings [UNCLEAR] as though the feelings themselves are evil or weakness [UNCLEAR], we ought to feel compassion, we ought to feel loved, but [UNCLEAR].*

Yes. I’ll say Amen to that. Because it is in its proper role. There are certain things that happen and the good feelings—there is nothing wrong with feeling good, but it is not the motivation. The motivation is God’s plan in your life, and we can only praise Him that He cares for each one of us to do that.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: [UNCLEAR]...describes it, “Not my will but Thy will...” But you are transformed, truly transformed when you [UNCLEAR], and it is your will to do the will that He has given us [UNCLEAR] comes forth because you know that you are pleasing the Father who loves you.. It doesn’t make sense, but that’s the way it works.

That is why we have been raised for a good portion of our life, some more than others, in the world that wants to squeeze us into their form. This is the way you do it, because the world is against God. The world has a ruler who is diametrically opposed to the will of God. So many times these subtle things come along and we are not even aware. Are we giving enough attention to the Word of God that we can see these things?

Yes, Don.

DON: Getting back to the whole role of emotions...I know the word is not in the Bible—“balance.” For example, you have in Ephesians [UNCLEAR]but you lost your first love. Then on the other side, you have [UNCLEAR] is warm and fuzzy but they tolerate Jezebel and they tolerate false teachers, and so there has to be a balance. [UNCLEAR]. So there you have it. Christ had emotions, He sweat drops of blood, He was in great, great, great distress. You don’t want that orthodox on the one hand but we don’t want, as you said, to be ruled by emotions either. There is a balance.

Yes. Balance is so critical.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: This is about transformation...I mean when you have a new believer and someone who is young in faith, they often are motivated by the feel, act, think. And that is what Paul said, “I plead with all men” and there is a place in the Church for that emotional appeal, realizing that people are in transformation during the process of becoming more think, act, feel and there is that place in the pulpit as well as to the music of the church to appeal to people who are that way and to help them move more towards being more guided by that reason than having that emotional outpouring.

Yes. So often in working with someone who says, “I just came to Christ,” and maybe it was just one-half hour ago—someone who just recently prayed to receive Christ at an outreach meeting or revival and then we sit down and talk to them and say, “What evidence do you have that you’re saved?” Most of them will say, “I just know, I didn’t hear any angels, I didn’t hear a choir, I didn’t see anything...I just know I’m saved.” That is how God imparts, He doesn’t give you an emotional experience necessarily as He brings you into salvation and gives you the knowledge that you are saved.

I remember this one fellow that had traveled a lot and he had gone to his hotel room and just was at the end of his ropes and started reading the Gideon Bible and at the end of the evening he said, “God I want you to take over my life.” He went for two years knowing that he was saved, knowing that he was close to God, but didn’t have anyone talk to him about it, didn’t mention it to anybody, it was just his personal relationship with God. But he knew that God was his guide now. Then, finally he was introduced to a church and began growing and meeting other people, and being in fellowship, and then being used in the church. And that is what it is for—that we have this belonging and we have a membership into a family. Now what do we do? If it is Christ’s body some of us are fingers, some of us are hands, some of us are thumbs or feet. Some of us are other parts. Christ is the Head, and that is not the administrative head. He is the Head of the body...we all have roles, we

all have parts or functions that we do in this transformation. The body cannot function without each of us during his part.

Yes, Tom.

TOM: *[UNCLEAR] basis for right thinking, I'm sure [UNCLEAR] is that you need to be well grounded and well [UNCLEAR] and so part of the issue in this day and age is to make sure that the person teaching you is an orthodox teacher and not one that is more liberal...in my opinion.*

Yes. Regardless of his certification or his credentials, we often need to be testing whether that person [UNCLEAR] because you know that you are in the Word and you come to get built up more. But there are certain truths in the Scripture that when you hear things that are against those truths need to be pointed out.

Another good example, in 1st Corinthians 14, that big section from verses 15-26, it is all about tongues. How do you properly use the gifts of the Spirit and speaking in tongues. Some people say yes, that is about the gifts of the Spirit, but if you go back and read it and you see how Paul concludes that section he says, "I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others..." So the real essence of that verse is using tongues to talk about your role in the church and your attitude. It is not about whether you speak in tongues or not, but it is about what is the purpose of it and it is for others. I would rather speak five words of my mind, I would rather speak and communicate so that others may learn than speak a thousand words in tongues and feel good.

TOM: *I think one of the reasons for the success of [UNCLEAR] is because you start with... "think about this" and go right through the Word [UNCLEAR] and the things that make you think, which leads to somebody acting on what you have taught them, and then comes the "wow" [UNCLEAR].*

But thank God that He has given us that ability to go to the transformation and think first. Act on what you know in the Word of God not on how you feel.

If you are going to church, then you are going to church for others, not for yourself. That's a big change. In Ephesians 4 Paul talks more about the gifts He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes, rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way unto Him who is the head into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Again, look at...we are in the church and He gives gifts to all of us for the building up of the body. I mentioned this to a pastor one time who is very well known and his church was for "the seekers" or people coming in. Well, OK, but I asked him, "Did you ever think that when we come to church it is for building up each other that we should be coming together to improve, not just to go out and bring in the unsaved?" He replied, "I never thought of it that way." And I thought, "How do you get a big church growing when you don't even have the basis of building up the body?"

We want to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, we want to attain unity of faith, and as I mentioned a few months ago—Psalm 86:11, “Unite my heart, O Lord...” Take **me** out of my heart, fill my heart with Christ that—“me”—what I want to do—is more attained to the world. I’m human and there is a lot of sin in this body and there is a lot of attractiveness that takes me away from Christ. “Take that out of me, Lord, and fill me more with Christ, unite my heart so that I’m not divided but am totally yours.” And that goes through a lifetime, it doesn’t happen overnight. It is steady, it’s fellowship, it is using the gifts that God provides for you, and we then grow to maturity in Christ and that is how we best work properly.

We are talking about avoid being conformed to the world and letting God transform us and watching Him transform you in your life, and then testing or proving what His will is for you. As Paul says in 1st Thessalonians 5:21, “But test everything, hold fast to what is good, discern what you hear and read.” You can hear and read a lot of stuff, but does it balance with this? This (the Bible) is it. This is why everybody in anti-Christian worlds wants to destroy this, or people ignore it. This is truth and this is our guide, this and the Holy Spirit is what helps us mature in Christ.

Also in 2nd Corinthians as Paul says, “The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom in Christ...” and we could talk about this for days...freedom in Christ...think about it...that in this transformation, you are also given freedom and you need to test that freedom by asking is it glorifying God? Is it being used to build up others? Freedom to be guided by God and not to attain with the patterns, the values, all the externals, and the superficiality of this world. And when you think about it, those terms...there is a lot out there and so much of it is displeasing.

Yes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I guess the concern that I have...I have several concerns going back to what God says about living in the world, and not so much for the group of men that are sitting in this room, but more so for the six-year old and the seven-year old...and the conflict that can occur in terms of what is happening to them in the public school or where ever they’re learning, so that the law is passed in Rhode Island two days ago for the gay marriage and in the State of Washington and so on, these are the laws of the land and is what is “right” and other things that are becoming “right.” They are learning and growing with this, so the challenge for parents to say to their children and teach the next generation—which is a challenge—is to say, “well, even though that is the law, it doesn’t make it right; because our standard is the Word of God and yet all these pressures or influences, whether they are pressures or not, but the influence is on them in educational systems and the peers and so on, because the government says it is right, so it must be right. To re-educate them that the government is not necessarily right and democracy is not necessarily right. God is not a democracy, but a monarchy, He rules, He is the King, He is the Lord, and He says this is what is right. So to re-educate or to create different thinking in young minds, is a pretty good challenge.*

It is a tremendous challenge because...let me say personally, I have three boys and all three boys came to know the Lord as little boys. And I thought, “This is great. Thank you God, You are blessing me.” Then they get to high school. {LAUGHTER} Why do they all smoke? We don’t and we never did. Why do they do this, why am I worried about things they are doing with girls? It is the world. Then they go to college and their thinking changes. It is amazing how it is almost indoctrination, even in the so-called Christian college, how things can take them away from the world.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *What Bob was talking about is a great point and the answers to a misguided government are [UNCLEAR]. An unrighteous government vs. a righteous government [UNCLEAR]. I happen to read the Proverbs every day according to the date [UNCLEAR] and it was either yesterday or the day before where it talks about unrighteousness being in the house of the king and his own unrighteousness...but when you put [UNCLEAR] but Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go...” (and I wrote in my Bible “God’s way”), “and when he grows old he will not depart.” He’ll wander, we know the prodigal son describes [UNCLEAR]. But Bob’s point is a great point because it is getting crazier in this world. But it is all in the Word of God...our answers...right here. It is not easy but it has answers.*

Tom.

TOM: *I think one of the answers that we all have if we have children who have now grown into adulthood [UNCLEAR, and I think one of the things [UNCLEAR] as John Guest used the phrase “keep on keeping on” so you keep doing what you’re doing as a Christian whether it is here, attending church, or being involved in a ministry—whatever you do, your kids will see that and I think the other thing that transforms your children is when they have their first child and all of a sudden, you know, [UNCLEAR]. {LAUGHTER}*

Yes, very good.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I would like to make a pitch for David Barton and the Wall Builders. Many of you here have seen him on TV. He has researched the archives, the pictures, and the chiseled in stone things in Washington, D.C. about what our founding fathers were trying to do. He preaches the Bible to them over and over again. (www.wallbuilders.org/)*

Yes, it is amazing how much is there. That’s wonderful. Thank you.

The other thing I think in terms of getting back to your point of children, is how you model yourself. Because when I look at the things that I learned from my dad—he didn’t sit down and teach me—I watched him. Once I came to know Christ, I looked and said, “That’s why my parents and grandparents did what they did.” It was their lifestyle, it is what they did; the modeling we don’t think about as much.

Again, get into the Word and know that this freedom that we have, in the Spirit of the Lord there is freedom; freedom to be transformed and undergo a metamorphosis and free to prove to yourself what His will is for you. Not what your will is in terms of a group of people but for you individually as you are a member of a church, a member of a fellowship and not just, in fact...but belonging and in relationship.

Any last questions?

Yes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: *I guess you can go back to whenever you started this and mentioned Oprah and you mentioned her spirituality and I just wanted to make it clear that with her New Age thinking and spirit that she’s talking about is [UNCLEAR] and the Spirit that dwells within me is a different Spirit. And so...the other thing I wanted to mention too [UNCLEAR] is that people know that we are Christians by what they see us doing but just thinking about even in John...and I know you didn’t say that because you did say that we are supposed to say something, but I wanted to say that just even with...in John 17 whenever Jesus was talking about future*

believers, "My prayers are not for them alone, I pray also for those who believe in me through their message." So we have that message and we have to tell them what the Word of God says. The other thing I was thinking was that the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us in all truth is going to be whether we are in a church that is being taught false teaching, the Holy Spirit is going to remove us from that and put us into an area where we are going to receive teaching that is true to the Word of God, because that happened to me.

Yes. Amen. Very good. Thank you.

Anything else?

Father, we just thank You for this time together, we thank You for the opportunity to learn. We thank You that Your Holy Spirit is transforming each one of us to be more like Your Son Jesus Christ that in Him, not only do we live, but we will live forever as co-heirs with Him. We ask you to be with our Brothers who are not here. Again, we ask that You be with Bruce this morning and give us all a blessed day that we might be used by You and come closer to that image that You have for us as in Christ. Thank You and in His name, we pray. Amen.