

# Do You Know the Gospel's Power?

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*Are You a Christian?*

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**Bible Verse:** Romans 7:4  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 9, 2024

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The series that we've been doing in the past few weeks titled "Are You a Christian," has really all been pointing toward this particular message. This isn't necessarily the last message in the series, but it is this message that we've been anticipating, at least that I've been anticipating, all this time. When you ask the question, are you a Christian, most people respond with a sense of what they do. "Yes, I'm a Christian, I go to church. I pray, I read my Bible, I do this or that." And we covered that in the first two messages, I'm not going to go into it any more than that, but beloved, the question, are you a Christian, is the complete reverse of that self-centered, self-righteous mindset, that self-reliant mindset and if I can put it in these terms that will be justified in the hour that follows, the question, are you a Christian, is asking, really, has something been done to you? It's not a question about what you have done, what you do for God, what you do to establish your righteousness, the question is, has something been done to you? Has something happened to you outside of yourself that has brought power to bear upon you in a way that is not within the capacity of human ability to achieve? That's the question. And I know that you're not used to hearing the question put that way and perhaps there are long-standing reasons for that; we need to completely reverse our expectations and our sense of principles that guide us when we answer that question.

So a couple of weeks ago we said that the question, are you a Christian, starts with, do you believe the gospel? The gospel is something that has been revealed and accomplished in history that is outside of you and is independent of you. Jesus Christ died for sinners. He was buried and he was raised on the third day and that death on the cross was the payment for sin, the act of reconciliation that God brought to men, not that men did for God and the question that we asked was, do you believe the gospel? Do you believe the holiness of God? Do you believe your own personal sinfulness? Have you repented and believed in Christ? That's where it starts. And last time when we talked about the gospel, we said that it's a question of power, that as you go through the New Testament and see how so many books from Paul and Peter when they, at the very start as they talk about the gospel, as they talk about being a Christian, there is this issue of power, a spiritual dynamic that is brought to bear upon souls through the message of the gospel as the Spirit of God does upon the human heart that which is beyond human ability to achieve. Do you believe the gospel and do you understand that the gospel is the power of God to

salvation? This is so clear and plain in the New Testament that it is remarkable that the church does not say more about it. It's about time that this was brought to bear.

The gospel is the power of God. It unleashes the unlimited ability of God to deliver men from sin and Satan. It changes men to the image of Christ. And I've got to tell you, one of the hardest things about being a preacher of the gospel is to preach these glories from heaven and to see, as I mentioned in my pastoral prayer, see how often it's met with the deadness of a countenance that obviously knows nothing about redemption, regeneration, the life of Christ in the soul. It doesn't hinder me from saying it, it just brings a sense of sobriety and a sense of urgency to the task. We have to know, beloved, when the Bible talks about the power of God in the gospel, we have to know how the power of God works in those that he has truly saved. We must know that. That is the essential question for all of us to address in our souls. If you know the power of God, what Scripture says about it, and if those principles of power are at work in you, then you can walk forth no matter what else is happening in life, no matter whatever discouragements, no matter whatever the struggles with temptation and sin may have accompanied you into the room today, if you understand the four things that we're going to look at here today, you can walk forth with confidence even if you are weak and struggling in your Christian life. If the things that we're about to look at are utterly foreign to you, well then, beloved, you're not a Christian, no matter how many times you come to church, no matter how many times you've read your Bible.

I was thinking earlier, it's a real joy to contemplate a message before you're about to preach it. We can just put it in this simple way. This is a tangent. The question is not whether you read the Bible, the question is whether the Bible has read you, whether Scripture has come with power upon you. And it doesn't matter, beloved, it just doesn't matter if you come to church and yet it's kind of against your will; you come because you have to because of the roof under which you live and somebody else kind of forces you to come and you shuffle in and all of that. We have to know how the power of God works within us and that's what we're going to see today. It's a great privilege for me to be able to lay these things out for the benefit of the body of Christ.

Turn in your Bibles, we're going to look at a single verse, and it's not a familiar verse. It will surprise you that we are going here, but turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 7, verse 4. Romans chapter 7, verse 4. Romans 7 is an enormously complex and difficult passage but here in verse 4, you get a summary of the essence of what God does and what God produces in those whom he truly saves. And one other thing, just by way of preface and introduction and a sense of anticipation, I am going to do my level-headed best to keep this plain and simple and obvious and lay forth the principles, not in great detail, but to show you where the different emphases of Scripture lie on what the effect, what the result of the power of God coming through the gospel on a human heart, what the effects of those are. These are not things that are unattainable. These are not things that are just set before you, something impossible for you to do. It's not in that realm. It's not in that realm at all and so let's read Romans chapter 7 verse 4 and see what the Lord has for us.

Before we do, just one little illustration that I want to make. The power of God produces life in the soul. The power of God produces life in the soul. We're going to see that and one of the things that we need to remember and one of the things that's really important for us to understand can be shown by way of a very simple human explanation. If you think of a strong adult man, maybe an athlete, maybe somebody that's a leader, and you see and you say there is life and there is power and there is strength in that adult man, he models the vitality of a full-fledged human life, okay? Understand something really important, you could have before you a newborn infant, wriggling but not able to do anything for himself, crying perhaps but not able to tend to his own needs, a little life that needs everything done for him on his or her behalf, understand that the strong, vigorous man is alive and can do a lot of things and has a lot of proof of his life around him, but understand that in that little tiny infant, the same principle of life is animating that child as well. You don't have to be a full-grown, fully developed man in order to be alive; you're alive even in the most basic sense as an infant. Scripture talks about how there are babes in Christ and you can be a babe, but be alive. And so these principles are not simply for the full-grown Christian, they're things that the youngest Christian can look at and identify, "I see those things at work in me," and have a full sense of confidence that he has been born again, even if there is a whole lifetime of growth ahead of him. This is crucial for you to understand. This is vital to understand.

And so let's look at Romans chapter 7, verse 4, where we read this, the Apostle Paul says,

4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Let's read that one more time because I imagine that very few of you have read that verse in any time recent and even fewer of you have really understood the implications of it. Romans chapter 7 verse 4, "Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God." I'm going to give you these four principles in the form of a question. Let the Spirit of God help you answer it rightly before God. So point number one here, before we get to that, I just want to say that in light of this verse, we see that there is an inward dynamic that is the unique mark of being a Christian. It is a multifaceted dynamic, but it is something that is inside that works in your life, in your affections, in your priorities that are manifested, and that is the unique mark of being a Christian. This is what the Holy Spirit works with power into the human heart. Scripture says that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ, to convict of sin, judgment, and righteousness, and so we look for those things that Scripture says the Holy Spirit does as his ministry, and we say, do I see the effects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in my heart, and we're using this text from Romans 7:4 to help us see it in a compact, concise way.

So let me ask you the first question: do you have spiritual life? Do you have spiritual life? The very first aspect of being a Christian is to have spiritual life. This is in perfect keeping with what the Lord Jesus said. He said you must be born again. You must be

born again to enter the kingdom of God. John 3. There must be a new birth that has taken place before any man can claim to be a Christian. You don't have to have a new birth to go to church. You don't have to have a new birth to read your Bible or to pray or any of those things to be religious; none of that requires a new birth. New life, spiritual life, that requires the new birth. That is distinct to Christianity. And so in verse 4, let's look at it. When we answer the question, ask the question, do you have spiritual life, look at what Paul says in verse 4. He says, "4 Likewise, my brothers, you have died to the law through the body of Christ." Christ is risen. Christ died, but he was raised from the dead. And so we have died to the law of God, and we are now joined to Christ, who, it says there later in the verse, he "has been raised from the dead." The question is, has there been a death in you that has joined you to Jesus Christ in a way that you share in his life? Because beloved, if you belong to Christ, understand that the nature of that is defined first of all by who Christ is and what's true of him. It doesn't start with what's true of you. And what's true of Christ is that he is alive. He is raised from the dead. He is exalted to the heavens, he is so alive, and the true Christian lives by faith in him so that we have set aside, we have been caused to die to that nature of trying to approach God through legal means, through works. The law tells us do this and live and none of us have done it and so none of us live according to the law. The law, people try to be justified by the law. They're under the condemnation of the law. But when a man is truly in Christ, he's dead to all of that. He's been made alive in Christ so that we are no longer trying to justify ourselves before God by what we do, we no longer fear the condemnation of the law because Christ has satisfied the law on our behalf and we approach God through him as our mediator, not in reliance on our own efforts.

The true Christian lives by faith in him. Look at Romans 8 chapter 11 and see this principle of life in the brief passages that we're going to look at. Again, I'm going to try to keep this really simple. Romans chapter 8 verse 11, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you," this is what's true of a Christian. The Holy Spirit indwells every true Christian and just as the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead out of the grave after his crucifixion, if the Spirit of God comes and he now dwells in you as a result of your conversion, then the Spirit that gave life to Jesus gives life to you. He gives life to you and that's what it says, "he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." God, for the true Christian, has imparted new life through the gospel, through the work of the Holy Spirit. He imparts new life to the one that he has saved. And so when I ask the question, do you know the gospel's power, the first question is, do you have spiritual life?

Look at this again in a different text in Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2, which, as you well know, Ephesians 2 speaks about those who are not Christians, speaks of our former life as Christians as one that was marked by being dead in trespasses and sin, walking according to the prince of the power of the air, being a child of wrath, like the rest of mankind. That's the natural state into which we are born. And beloved, let me, at the risk of repeating myself, not that I care about repeating myself here today, dead men, spiritually dead men, go to church every day. Dead men can read the Bible. Dead men can pray. But dead men aren't alive. That's the difference. And so we see in verse 4, as Paul writes to these Christians to help them understand what has been done to them, he

says in verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses," he did something and what did he do? What did he do by the power of God? He "made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ." There's new spiritual life in everyone that is a true Christian. In like manner, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17 says, "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17.

And so, my dear friends, whatever that life means, the question is, do you know something about a life that has been given to you that comports with the work of the Holy Spirit? Do you have spiritual life? Here are some simple things to ask yourself to help you answer this first question. As I said earlier, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ and to convict men of sin. Do you know something of the ministry of the Holy Spirit within your heart? And here, and again, we're putting this in terms that even the babe in Christ can affirm and recognize. We're not at all here today to talk about the level of your sanctification, how great your obedience is, how great your understanding of doctrine is. We're talking about something that's true of the one-day-old Christian who may not have an advanced understanding of doctrine, who still may have many issues of sin to be worked out in his life. We're talking about a principle of life. And so let me help you answer that question, either positively or negatively. All we're trying to do today is to help you understand whether you are a Christian. And so when I ask, do you have spiritual life, let me help you in this way. You may not understand it all, but something within you deeply draws you to the things for which the Spirit of God is known. And so I ask you, do you see something unique and separate about the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you see something, even if you don't fully understand the fact that he's God in human flesh, do you see something about Christ that sets him apart from everyone else and everything else in the universe? Do you see Christ as unique or do you simply see him as one teacher among many, as a good moral man, but there are other good moral men, there are other good teachers? Do you see something unique in Christ? The Holy Spirit is the author of the 66 books of the Bible. Do you see something unique about Scripture? Is there something that draws you to the word of God and says there is life in this book that I want to know and I want to have? Is there something in you that's drawn to Christ in the Bible at the moral level? The Spirit convicts of sin and sanctifies us. Are you aware of a desire to resist sin and to repent? Is there within you something that even if you're attracted to sin and still sometimes fall into it, there is simultaneously a resistance and a revulsion to it that is unlike what it used to be formerly in your life?

I'll give you a very simple illustration from my own life. I was like all young men before I was converted, you know, and a slave to various kinds of lusts and things of that nature. And I remember driving on the campus of Indiana University where I was attending school, and I was a new Christian and as is often the case on college campuses, I encountered as I was driving along a woman immodestly dressed, let's say. And there was an instant, "Oh, I need to see that," in perfect conformity with the man that I used to be. But unlike the man that I used to be, there was an immediate something in my soul said, "No, that is not who you are anymore." There was no great victory over sin in that

moment, but there was something new. There was life in me that was alien, that was foreign to the man that I used to be, suddenly resisting that which I used to gladly embrace and indulge. There was a new resistance to wicked things. Is there something in you, beloved, like that, even if you struggle with sin? Do you see something of a desire to resist it, something that says no where there used to be yes? Do you find a dissatisfaction with the world and with its lusts? Those are the simple things that can help you begin to answer the question do you have spiritual life? Are you alive to the Bible? Are you alive to Christ? Are you alive to holiness and increasingly wanting to separate yourself from the world?

Do you know anything about these kinds of things in your heart, in your inner man? That's the question. Do you know the gospel's power? Have you been brought from death to life, dead to the law, alive in Christ? That's the question. You see how that's so completely different from saying, "I go to church, I read my Bible." This goes to the very core of your very being. Secondly, do you have a spiritual relationship? Do you have a spiritual relationship with God? Go back to Romans chapter 7 verse 4 and we'll see it here. Romans chapter 7 verse 4 where we read, "Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ," here it is, "so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead." A true Christian belongs to someone new. We are no longer our own, we have been bought with a price. And Paul describes and says to these true Christians to whom he is writing, he says, something objective happened to you. You literally died to the law and now you were made alive to Christ. And there was a purpose to that and the purpose of that is expressed in that clause, so that, this happened so that you may belong to someone else. And he says, he makes clear who the "another" is, it's to him who's been raised from the dead. You've died so that you could belong to Christ.

Now, in the prior two verses, Paul had used an illustration of marriage and death to make his point and he's just making a point about how we die, we're released, and we're brought into a new relationship. So he says in verse 2, look at it there with me in verse 2. He says, "For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives." So he says, you've got a man and a woman, the woman is married to her husband, and the law requires her to be with him until they die, one of them dies. As long as her husband is alive, she's bound to her husband by the laws of marriage. Verse 2, "but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage." And so marriage is only until death do us part. It's not an eternal relationship in that sense. Verse 3, Paul says, "Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive." You can't do that. "But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress." A death takes place, and now a new relationship can be introduced. A death takes place so that a new relationship can be introduced. When the husband dies, the wife is free to marry another, the point being this, the old marriage relationship was severed by death, and now the woman is free to be remarried and to be joined to another man.

Now in the whole context of what Paul's saying throughout his argument in the book of Romans is this, formerly, beloved, in your unconverted state, whether you were really

conscious of this or not, you assumed that you could approach God on the basis of law, obedience to law, and your works. That's why people talk this way, "Of course I'm going to heaven, I've been a pretty good person. I'm not as bad as the next guy." Everything self-centered, everything rooted in supposed conformity to the principle of the law. But now, beloved, for the true Christian, a spiritual relationship of a different order, of a different kind has been introduced. Now – oh, this is so important, and so necessary for your complete attention – now you do not look to the law to justify you and make you right with God. Now you know, if you are a true Christian, you know that the law does not condemn you because what the law requires by way of punishment on evildoers has been satisfied for you in Christ so that there is a whole new spiritual relationship in place. You are not approaching God on a relationship premised on works, you are coming to God in Christ alone through a mediator, through one who represents you to God and who has brought God to you. We come to God in Christ alone by faith alone.

This spiritual relationship, stated differently, your position with God is secured not by your works, not by your obedience at all. That's humbling. Your position with God is secured by Christ. Let me show you this from a couple of other passages. Throughout these points I'm trying to point you to something briefly in Romans and then a cross-reference to another passage. Look at Romans chapter 8 verse 14. So there's this new spiritual relationship to which your heart testifies in agreement with the Holy Spirit that this is a reality about you. There's a power at work in you that has changed things. Romans 8 verse 14, "For all," actually start in verse 13, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." There is a new relationship there. Verse 15, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" It's a term of intimacy with which we address God. It's the sense of "dear Father," there's a reverential love that is in place. And so in verse 16, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Beloved, true Christians have received, have been given a new relationship with God. Stay with me right here, beloved. The fundamental disposition of a true Christian which grows over time is this, it is a disposition of trust in God, of confidence in him, of a family relationship with him that is rooted in reconciliation as opposed to one that fears him simply because he's going to judge you, or as is true of some of you sitting in this audience today, it just pains me no end to see it written on your faces of utter complete indifference to the things of which we're speaking. A true Christian has a sense of confidence, of love, of a desire for God that sees something in Christ of love and welcome and acceptance that he desires, rather than this alienation, indifference, coldness, hostility, whatever you want to use to describe it. Stated differently, beloved, a true Christian has intimacy and access to God that's not true of an unbeliever.

I haven't forgotten where I'm at. I know exactly where I'm going, just waiting for you to catch up with me in the discourse here. A true Christian has intimacy and access to God. 1 John 3:1 says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God." There is something in the heart of a true Christian that knows

that. Now listen and pay attention to me very closely here, beloved: that assurance may not always be very clear in your mind; it may be mixed with a lot of doubt and questions. Your love for God may falter at times but the question is, do you have a spiritual relationship with God? Is there something within you that is conscious of God as a Father who loves you, as God as a Father who has reached out to you in his Son, in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to make peace with you, peace that you could not make with God, but that God could make with you? Once again, we see the issue is, has something been done to you, not about what you have done? Has something been done to you that gives you a sense of new life, new reconciliation, new relationship, new relationship with God? If so, there will be a simultaneous aspect in your heart alongside this, like a bunch of grapes. You know, it's not just one grape, there's a lot of grapes around that cluster together and there are things that cluster together when we talk about these things. Clustered together with that awareness of a new relationship is an awareness that's shaped by gratitude and by a sense of earnestness.

We all know, probably if we were to weigh it out, there would probably be more on the side of the hypocrite than those that are truly earnest and genuinely saved, but in the true Christian, there's this sense of earnestness. "No, this matters to me. Though none may go with me, still I will follow. Though others may run in the realms of sin and I may have run in the realm of sin with them, I'm stepping out off of that track. I'm not running that race with those people anymore because I must follow Christ in this spiritual relationship that God has given to me. And I'm grateful". There's this new life in me that is so joyful, that is different, that is distinct, and as we sing in the hymn, "Heaven above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green, something lives in every hue that Christless eyes have never seen." There's this spiritual relationship through which you see the world in an entirely different light, through a biblical light. And so, beloved, I ask you, how do you relate to God? Do you know the gospel's power as expressed in a relationship, something like this, that was, "I'm dead to what I used to be. I'm alive to these new things in Christ."

Now that leads us to a natural third point. We've asked the question, do you have spiritual life? Do you have a spiritual relationship? How do you view God? And look, for some of you that are of tender spirit, and your heart is aflame with the things of God, these things should be bringing great joy to you just about now. Saying, "I see these things in me. I'm a real Christian. I truly belong to Christ. My sins are forgiven. I'm going to heaven when I die." And there's this bubbling fountain that just spews up like a geyser of joy in your soul. These are not things that at all discourage the true Christian at all. You know, sometimes messages about assurance and different things, they can weigh you down and say, "Man, I don't measure up to that." We're talking about what your nature is like. We're talking about what pulsates in your heart, what blood goes through the chambers of your heart as you live day by day. Is it a spiritual blood or is it a natural blood? Is it a works-based indifferent cold blood? Are you just a cold-blooded reptile on the face of the planet Earth as it pertains to God? Or is there a warmth pulsating through you, "The Creator of heaven and earth is also my heavenly Father, and I love him for it and I don't care who knows it." Those are the kinds of things we're talking about.



So, do you have spiritual life? Do you have a spiritual relationship with God? Thirdly, do you have a spiritual purpose to life? Do you have a spiritual purpose to life because what we're going to see, again from chapter 7 verse 4, is that true conversion transforms a man's life purpose and affections. True conversion transforms a man's life purpose and affections. Look at Romans 7:4 with me again, "Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ," you've got new life, "so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead," new relationship, now thirdly, look at this purpose clause here in verse 4, "in order that." In order that. These things have happened to you for a purpose, for a transcendent purpose. A lofty purpose accompanies this spiritual life and relationship and beloved, what's true of every true Christian that has ever walked on the face of the earth in any country, in any culture, with any language, what's true of every Christian is that God had a purpose for saving them and that purpose is that they would bear fruit for God. Look at it there in verse 4, "in order that we may bear fruit for God." There's a new purpose in life. God saves Christians so that they would bear fruit in their lives to his glory.

Beloved, it's an entirely new purpose that governs affections and priorities. Look at Romans chapter 12, verse 1. Romans chapter 12 verse 1. Paul says, Romans 12 verse 1, he says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." All to him I owe. If you have new life and a new relationship, then there is a corresponding awareness that comes that this life has been given to me that I might live to the glory of God. Whatever that means in the circumstances, relationships, occupation that the Lord has given you, you realize that it's given to you so that you would bear fruit to his glory in the life that he has given to you.

Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. 1 Corinthians chapter 6. These are the most lofty, noble, magnificent themes that could ever engage the human mind. Nothing exceeds what we're talking about today in glory and purpose and clarity and in their eternal significance. Nothing could be more searching to the depths and the very core center of who you are than what we're talking about right now. 1 Corinthians 6 verse 19, and notice how often in these Scriptures that I point you to the Spirit of God is right in the middle of it, in keeping with the whole way that we've approached this series. 1 Corinthians 6 verse 19, "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Glorify God in your body. That is your purpose in life now. Conversion produces in you a new purpose for life. Maybe you were going along and saying, I've got career aspirations that I'm going to meet, that I'm going to pursue. I want to, you know, and nothing wrong with what I'm about to say is a life desire, you know, but I want to be a mom, I want to be a wife and a mom. Good for you, those are good desires but they are not an end in themselves. It's not enough to live for being a mom and living for your kids, you know, parading your kids as proof of who you can be and what you are and how great you are through what your kids do, whether it's on an athletic field or, you know, in a song recital. No, beloved, no. No, the purpose that God gives to every true Christian is that they would bear fruit for him, for his glory. May they forget the channel seeing only him. Glorify God in your body and Paul goes back to that theme in chapter 10 verse 31 of

1 Corinthians when he says, "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

So beloved, I ask you, do you believe the gospel? Do you know the gospel's power? Is there at work within you something that makes you aware that you have new life, a new relationship with God? And the question is that's consequent to that right there in the verse that we're looking at, Romans 7 verse 4, is that these things are given to you so that you would bear fruit for God. My life belongs to him. My life purpose, even if it occurs in obscurity and anonymity, is to give glory to God. That's why I live. That's my passion. That's my desire. That's what the true Christian says. That's what true power from the gospel works in the human heart.

Is the glory of God the reason you exist? Do you know the power of the gospel? That's the question we're asking. Now look, the glory of God can be your purpose absolutely for the young mom, the wife, the single person. It's not about packing up and going on a mission trip. Very few people should give their lives to the pursuit of teaching the word of God, so don't misunderstand what I'm saying. The question is, what has the gospel produced in you, these desires that your life, whether obscure or widely known, would be something that reflects glory back to the one who saved you in gratitude for his life and his death on your behalf. You know, some of you, and I love you for this, some of you manifest that desire for the glory of God in the quiet simple way that you hold to the gospel in the face of opposition from your family or from your spouse. Some of you hold to it in the midst of a corrupt industry in which you work and there's a lot of vulgarity and carnality and ungodliness and yet however you might struggle with it, you're conscious, "I want to live for God here. I want to be faithful to God in the midst of this opposition." Some of you in the midst of isolation and discouragement and chronic illness clinging to the purpose to glorify God even when it seems like nothing's going forward to help you. That's what we're talking about.

The glory of God becomes an animating force, ultimately the animating force in the life of a true Christian. This is what Scripture says. This has happened to you so that you would bear fruit for God. Do you know something about that motivation in your life? If you don't, you're not a Christian, no matter how many times you read your Bible, no matter how many prayers you say. But if there's something that is in you that says, "Oh, if my life would just bring glory to Christ, my life would be a success no matter whatever else happens," beloved, that's the mark of a true Christian and that can be at life in the wriggling babe of Christ as much as it can in a valiant warrior like Tom Pennington, even stricken down. It can be a guy on the front lines, it can be a babe in the woods, animated by that same purpose that God produces in the life of everyone who's a true Christian. Do you know the gospel's power? Do you have a spiritual purpose to glorify God in your life?

Finally, point number four: do you have spiritual ability? Do you have spiritual ability? I'll illustrate this and we'll go through this pretty quickly, I think. The fourth aspect that we see from Romans chapter 7 verse 4 about the true Christian is that there is a spiritual ability that is given to them in conversion. Look at it there at the end of verse 4 again

with me, Romans chapter 7 verse 4, "in order that," there's the purpose, "in order that we may bear fruit for God." We may bear fruit for God. Think about what that's saying, beloved. God saves us in order that we may bear fruit for him. That means that he imparts to us an ability to do that. Power comes upon you from outside and you are given the ability, you are given grace to serve God in the body of Christ somehow, in some measure.

Look at Romans chapter 12 verses 6 through 8. Romans 12 verses 6 through 8. Paul says, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." Like eight or nine different aspects there, eight or nine different ways that people serve with different abilities within the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 7 says, "To each one," to each one, "is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

So beloved, when the Holy Spirit saves someone, he brings every Christian into the body of Christ, and he simultaneously imparts some kind of spiritual grace and ability to them that enables them to serve and contribute to the life of the body of Christ. Now, let me give you some questions to ask yourself to see if that spiritual ability is in you and it's not necessarily what you would think. Beloved, if you enjoy the fellowship of other Christians, that's the mark of new life, that's a spiritual trait, a characteristic that the Spirit gives to you. You find that you love these people. Despite their quirks and despite their difficulties, you find that you want to contribute somehow to their well-being. Even if it's just a simple word, a simple text, a simple gift, you want to contribute to them. That's a spiritual ability given from God to you to benefit the body of Christ with.

Let's consider it a different way. A true Christian, true Christian wants to identify with God's people. He wants to identify with them even in the face and especially in the face of opposition. Tell you a little personal story here; it's brief but it makes the point. Another thing in my early days as a Christian on the campus of Indiana University, there was an outdoor evangelist who was there week after week, year after year, and he was kind of fiery. He was very outspoken. He was pointing people to Christ and he was constantly the object of derision. And before I was converted, I would walk by and kind of share in that revulsion against him, even if I didn't publicly express it in any way. But after I was converted, there was a time where he was preaching and there was a pretty substantial group of dozens, if not scores, of people around him and they were mocking him. I remember one homosexual man went up and assaulted him in a graphic way to try to silence him. It was wretched to see that happen. I remember standing there as a new Christian and all of this opposition raining down upon this man and he courageously was speaking the truth to them in the best way he knew how. At one point he said, he was denouncing the sins of the world, and he said, "If you know God, if you know Christ, you don't need these other things." And there was mocking of him. And in that moment, the new life that was given to me, shown in the desire to identify with the people of God, came almost reflexively and involuntarily out of my mouth and I said, "Amen." And he said, "Who said that?" And, you know, the moment of identification had come for me. I

said, "I did." And, you know, then things went on, the crowd dispersed, whatever. My only point is, is that before I despised this man, now I wanted to identify with him and even more particularly, I wanted to identify with the message that he was preaching. There was an ability in me to do that that was not present and a desire to do that that was not present before. Beloved, is there something of a spiritual ability in you that wants the body of Christ, that wants to identify, that wants to support the body of Christ rather than living on the margins and seeing how little you can get by without?

So understand, beloved, as we talk about these things, new life, new relationship, new purpose, new ability, spiritual life, spiritual relationship, spiritual ability, understand this, and now I speak completely as a pastor to you to help you and to encourage you in every way that I possibly can. The evidence of these things may not be as clear in some people as they are in others. The sun sometimes shines through a lot of clouds that would otherwise obscure it. A baby is not as strong as an adult, but he does have life. The sun comes through even when it is being blocked by other things. And so beloved, are you a Christian? Do you believe the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you know something of the power of the gospel as we've seen it here today? If so, if you know something of these things, if so, rejoice and give thanks to God for your salvation because you are a real true Christian no matter how you may be faltering and failing along the way. Sometimes the best evidence of perseverance is shown by someone that continues on and gets up after many stumbles and is still walking before he stumbles again. This is not at all about perfection. This is about a principle of new life within you. If you're cold and indifferent to these things, I grieve over you. My heart just weeps inside me right now. For those that are like that, if beloved, if these things have stirred you, troubled you, say, "I think I need this but I don't know and I don't think I have that," don't lose heart. Let this be that which prompts you to go to Christ directly yourself. He's promised to receive everyone who comes to him. And ask that gracious, loving, sovereign Lord to lead you to the truth.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we've done our level-headed best in all of our weakness to preach your word in reliance on the Holy Spirit and, Father, many have listened in reliance on the Holy Spirit as well. We pray that as sovereign Lord over the gospel that you would accomplish your purposes and for those cold resistant hearts, Father, may you bring the warmth of the love of Christ to melt the ice in their hearts that they might turn freely and voluntarily to you. May you comfort and help the troubled seeker. May you give great grace of assurance to those who truly belong to you, all for the glory of God, all for the glory of Christ, all that we might bear fruit to the eternal praise of our holy God. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.*

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