

Romans 7 & 8

by J.I. Packer

The sermon explores the Puritan style of preaching and its emphasis on expository, doctrinal, contemporary, and applicatory preaching, as well as the importance of reacting to God's truth and living in response to the gospel.

Duration: 51:10

Topics: "Christian Living", "Gods Strength"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on four key truths that every believer should react to. The first truth is that if these things are true, no opposition can triumph over us. The speaker encourages the audience to not be afraid and to trust in God's strength. The second truth is that God will freely give us all things, both abundant blessings in this life and fellowship with Him as our final goal. The third truth is that no accusation can succeed against us if the facts of Romans 8 are true. The speaker emphasizes the importance of reacting and responding to these truths, stating that living Christianity cannot exist without doctrine. The sermon concludes by highlighting the need for these truths to be explained in order to fully understand and live out the Christian faith.

Transcript

Congratulations, the eighth chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and the first words of verse 31. What shall we then say to these things? This has been announced as a sermon in the Puritan style. I just wonder what you're expecting.

Are you expecting me to go on, I wonder, for two hours? We may say straight away that the Puritans sometimes did preach too long. John Howe, one of the very greatest of them, once on a fast day, preached for three hours solid. And a lady in the congregation was asked afterwards how she liked it.

Well, the first hour and a half had been taken up in putting the text in its context. And her comment was that he spent so long laying the table that I quite lost my appetite for the meal. There was also recorded of another Puritan that on occasion, as a guest preacher at a special service, he preached for two hours.

Then he had the grace to stop and apologize for going on so long. And say, well, he said, well really I must stop now. And the congregation, we are told, cried out, for God's sake, sir, go on, go on.

And Thomas Fuller, recording that, commented, wonder not if hungry people crave more meat. The principle is that you don't give more than people can take. But it's good to be ready to give as much as

people can take.

There's two sides to this. Again, I wonder if you're expecting me to give you a whole multitude of points. Richard Baxter once got the 64th place.

But don't worry, I shan't get within sight of that target. We may frankly admit that Puritan sermons were often too complex, suffered from too many subdivisions, and sometimes obscured their own argument thereby. We don't want to imitate them in that.

What does it mean then to preach in the Puritan style? I'll tell you what I take it to mean. It means to preach in a way that's expository. The Puritans thought to be expositors first and last, opening texts.

That was their phrase for it. Bringing out the treasures hidden in the various texts of the Word of God. Preaching in the Puritan style is preaching that's doctrinal.

The Puritans believed that texts teach truths, and that the preacher's business is to find those truths and display them so that people may learn them. And again, preaching in the Puritan style is preaching that's contemporary. There never were preachers more directly contemporary than the Puritans.

One of them said this, It's a cheap zeal that declaimeth against the errors of yesterday. And it would be a cheap zeal on my part, wouldn't it, if I simply ate the Puritan preacher when God has set me to preach the Word to you in 1967. Then again, preaching in the Puritan style is preaching that's applicatory.

The Puritans thought to get inside their hearers. They thought to use the Word of God in order to search their hearts. They believed that one reason why God had given us His truth was so that we might know ourselves as we are in His presence, as He knows us.

And they thought to apply the Word in such a way that their congregations would know themselves. And also in such a way that their congregations would feel the healing power of truth of those particular places of need and trouble, the sore places, the bruised places, in their own consciousness and their own hearts. Applicatory preaching, we need it today.

This is one of the things that the Puritans can teach us. And finally I'd say this, that preaching in the Puritan style is preaching that, if I might try to reclaim an abused phrase, preaching that is honest to God. Much preaching today, I believe, is not honest to God.

It's not honest to God in its nature. It doesn't declare God's whole counsel. It fast peddles God's holiness and God's severity.

That's abusing the Word of God. Much preaching today, I believe, is equally failing to be honest to God in its manner. It's sentimental and cheapening holy things.

Or it's brilliant and thereby calling attention to the preacher rather than to the Lord. The Puritans lead us out of these paths into honest preaching. The preaching of those who have sought to hear the Word of God and now stand before congregations to declare what they've heard.

Richard Baxter had a phrase for it. I want to be, he said, a plain and pressing downright preacher. I believe we need such preachers today.

This, to be sure, is what I mean by preaching in the Puritan style. You can see that it's only by the grace of God that anyone ever succeeds in preaching in the Puritan style. And if a man ever does, he ought to be very thankful.

May God enable me to preach in the Puritan style tonight. Look at this text. What shall we then say to these things? Says the Apostle.

He's asking a question. He's asking for a reaction. We're used to this, of course.

This is an age in which people are very interested in their fellow men's reactions. And whole radio and television programs are built up simply out of interviews in which people are quizzed about their reactions to this and that. But Paul is not asking for reactions to events of the day, a politician's speech, the passing of a law, a particular cultural trend or an issue about which people are talking.

Paul's not thinking of anything like that. What he's asking for a reaction to is his doctrine, his theology. Oh, there are many people today who shake their heads when they're asked to react to Paul's theology.

They say, Paul, let's face it. He's a very difficult and a very dull writer. And we take leave to doubt whether when you've understood him you've really got to the heart of Christianity.

Or they say the heart of Christianity is in the Gospels rather than the epistles. We can afford to give Paul a miss. That's what they say.

Can we? I judge that reaction to be simply disastrous. What shall we then say to these things, says the Apostle? He's inviting us to react to the things that he's been telling us, the specific things that he's been telling us in this 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Why did he write that chapter? He wrote it because he'd just written the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

And in that 7th chapter, in the second half of the chapter particularly, he'd explained at length what it is that the law of God, the holy law of God tells the Christian about himself. What it told Paul about himself. That he's still a sinner.

That he's still got an awful long way to go. That still despite his desire to be perfect, he's a thousand miles off perfection. It tells him he remains a miserable sinner.

He aspires to please the Lord who has redeemed him and saved him. Sometimes he thinks he's getting on well. But then comes the law and the law talks to him about himself and shows him all his failures, all his shortcomings, how very, very far short he falls.

And it's depressing knowledge. As Paul wrote it down in the second half of that 7th chapter, it depressed him to write it. You remember how at the end of the chapter he cried out, O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Well he had an answer to that question.

He had a hope of deliverance. But the very fact that he was prompted to write the question into the letter shows how strongly, how acutely, how distressingly it made him feel just to put it down. What the Lord told Paul about himself and he knew that if his readers were spiritual Christians what he had written would have a depressing effect upon them too.

So he follows the 7th chapter of Romans by the 8th chapter. And the logic connecting the two chapters is pastoral logic. When a preacher of the gospel has told people, Christian people, things calculated to

depress them then the next thing for him to do is to remind them of the things that the gospel tells them about themselves in order to restore the balance.

And that is what Paul is doing in the 8th chapter of the letter. He has told them what the law has to tell them about themselves now this is what the gospel tells them about themselves as he recaps the whole exposition of divine grace that he has been following through from chapter 3 through chapter 6 he tells them this for their comfort for their encouragement to restore the equilibrium to set them on an even keel again. For you see the Christian isn't simply addressed by the law of God now nor even primarily addressed by the law of God fundamental to his living are the things which the gospel tells them about himself the good news of the mercies of God.

Let's be clear on it. The Christian lives both in Romans 7 and in Romans 8 he doesn't escape out of the one into the other he lives in both together and you are not indeed in Romans 8 not truly unless you are conscious of being in Romans 7 because Romans 8 is the answer to the questions that Romans 7 raises. The Puritans were clear on this it would help some of us if we were clear on it too.

I don't like the word Calvinist Calvin wouldn't have liked it either he would have said you've no business to be following me follow him but sometimes I'm accused of being a Calvinist and as men use the word I can't deny it so all that I want to say about myself is what Calvin wanted to say about himself namely that I seek to follow where the Lord Jesus and his apostles would lead me but if this kind of question is put to me I answer it like this I say well you use the word I don't know what you mean by it but may I tell you what I mean by a Calvinist and if I'm allowed to do that I say what I mean by a Calvinist is this a man who lives in the 8th chapter of the Romans man whose home is there you could define a Puritan the same way too other Christians wander around from place to place

the Puritans lived in the truths of Romans 8 what are the things that Paul has been saying in this chapter that he's summoning us to react to he's been speaking of the four gifts of God through the gospel first the gift of righteousness you remember how the chapter opens there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus for God has bestowed on us the gift of righteousness now we are right with him now we are accepted with him because Jesus Christ has died for us and our sins are put away there is no condemnation no fear therefore nothing to be alarmed at the gift of righteousness the gift of a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ and then he went on secondly to speak of the gift of the spirit the spirit who dwelleth in us as he said in the ninth verse of

the chapter the spirit who shall quicken our mortal bodies as he said in the eleventh verse the spirit who helpeth our infirmities teaching us to pray as he said in the twenty sixth verse the gift of the spirit the earnest of our inheritance the first installment a foretaste of glory the great enabler given to us by God to indwell us and be with us and uphold us through this world to our heavenly home and then he went on thirdly to speak of the gift of sonship the gift of adoption once you were without God, without Christ, without hope says Paul but now you've received the spirit of adoption because you've received the status and the privilege of adoption the spirit's given you to confirm it and to testify to it in your heart the spirit dares witness with our spirit that we are the

children of God he said in the sixteenth verse you're adopted into God's family you're made God's heir what a wonderful thing that the holy God of heaven is now your father and despite all your sin he smiles on you as his child the gift of sonship a wonderful thing and then he spoke of the gift of security he spoke in verse twenty eight of the purpose of God according to which men are being called and in verses twenty

nine to thirty he described what their purpose is whom God did foreknow from eternity he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son that he, the Lord Jesus might be the firstborn among many brethren and whom he did predestinate then he also called and whom he called then he also justified and whom he justified then he also glorified the gift of security

whom he justified then he also glorified the tense seemed wrong why you say here is Paul using the past tense when our glorification is yet future but the answer to that is that you haven't grasped Paul's point Paul deliberately uses the past tense in order to make the point that in the plan and purpose of God the thing is as good as done settled established whom he justified then he also glorified it's certain it's fixed it's definite it's promised that's the gift of security these are the things that Paul has been talking about what tremendous blessings they are righteousness the spirit adoption safety and now Paul summons us to react to these things and from this fact from I mean the fact that he does summon us to react to them we learn two things first we learn the nature of

Christianity what is Christianity it isn't simply a matter of seeking to imitate the Lord Jesus it isn't simply a matter of seeking to live out the sermon on the mount it certainly isn't a matter of vague spiritual quiet feeling it's a matter of reacting to God's text it's a matter of reacting to gospel truth it's a matter of knowing about these things and reacting and responding to these things this is why we say that you cannot have living Christianity without doctrine these four truths, these four doctrines are the essential truths to which Paul summons us to react being a Christian is a matter of reacting to the good news of these things the Puritans knew it that's why they were so strong in teaching doctrine gospel doctrine their concern was to teach truth and make truth known that

men might savingly respond to it and react to it in a way that would bring them eternal life that's the very nature of Christianity and an undogmatic preaching of a Jesus who's never explained will not issue in a very high quality of Christianity these truths are needed to explain him Christianity is response to the gospel according to Paul and the second truth we learn as Paul summons us to react to these things is the secret of Christian living again, this is something that the Puritans knew call it the Puritan secret if you like men without Christ take their tone the whole temper of their life and their conduct from circumstances around them Christians don't that's the secret of Christian living this is the essential difference between the Christian and all other men we know how men

out of Christ are they're restless they're dissatisfied they're depressed just underneath all that restless activity they're depressed aren't they? why? because deep down at the heart of them they've got a sense of impotence they can't handle themselves very often they certainly can't handle life around them they feel they're in the grip of forces that are too strong for them they become faithless just can't cope as we say in England I don't know if you say it here life too much for them they've got no hope what can they look forward to? getting old losing their power going into what we call declining years yes I know we cover it up with nice names like senior citizens and so forth but as a man searches his heart and looks on to the days when he'll be old if he's just a worldling and has

got nothing to live for save the pleasures of every day it's a depressing prospect no wonder then that he feels well while things are good I'll take as much as I can he feels guilt men in our day have thought that they could get rid of the reality the sense of guilt by denying God and men have denied God and they'll tell you they're atheists but they still have to queue up at the psychiatrist's consulting rooms because they've got a nagging unfocused sense of guilt guilt that they can't get rid of and the psychiatrists by their own confession and they write this down in their books non-christian psychiatrists men with no christian axe to

grind record this when they meet with this general unfocused sense of guilt setting all the colour out of life bringing gloom, bringing depression

there's not much that they can do about it this is part of the tragedy of modern men you know if only he were humble enough to admit that his sense of guilt was a token that he'd sinned against God and if he would humble himself before the God against whom he'd sinned then he could get rid of his sense of guilt he could have his sin forgiven but if he won't acknowledge God he can never get rid of that knowledge of guilt at all neither in this world nor in the world to come and there's modern men and he's isolated and he's lonely and he feels unloved and he's craving for affection and he's unstable and he's miserable this is why men drink this is why they get surly and snap your head off when you talk to them this is why they chase after money and possessions and a big bank balance and

pleasure and so forth this is why they crack up well, this is not of course new truth to you nor is it new truth to the world this essentially is a situation that hasn't changed since St.

Paul's day and, now this I want to underline these are pressures which are and always have been just the same for the Christian as for the man without Christ here was Paul and he was getting old and he was living a life of outward insecurity and when he thought back to things like the execution of Stephen and the days when he persecuted the church he felt guilt and the Puritans too had to face some of these pressures they were isolated men, they were ridiculed men they were often imprisoned for their faith and the hardships that some of them had to endure when they came across the Atlantic and colonized New England are nobody's business and yet Paul and those Puritans of old didn't react to these crushing pressures of circumstances in the way that the worldling does and the tone and the

temper of their life didn't come from these pressures and they weren't depressed what was the tone, the temper, the mood of their life why it was a mood of joy humble joy fallen joy but yet real joy why was that you say why simply because they had faced these things the things which Paul sets forth in Romans 8 and day by day they were reacting to these things and these things were setting the whole tone of their lives often feelings were against them what did they do they set themselves to argue themselves out of these feelings of depression and gloom by fixing their mind on these things the wellspring of joy and so they lived a life which the apostle describes in an amazing phrase in the 37th verse of this chapter he says in all these things all these outward pressures and hardships and

difficulties in all these things we are not simply conquerors but more than conquerors through him that loved us this is what happens when people begin to react in a positive way to these things of which Paul has been speaking in the 8th chapter of the Romans note that Paul says what shall we then say to these things that we is inclusive it's Paul and all true Christians all true believers with Paul he is speaking as representative of all the saints does that include us who are the we for whom Paul is speaking we can answer that question very simply the we of this verse is the people, the company of those who have followed Paul through the reality that he has been explaining and displaying in his arguments in the epistle to the Romans up to this point those who followed Paul through the

recognition of God's anger against their sins those who have acknowledged God's grace in the cross of Christ those who have repented those who have turned from sin those who have trusted those who have cast all their hopes on the Saviour those who thereby have entered into peace and who, being justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and those who, as it says in the 6th chapter of the epistle have become, and consciously become servants of righteousness and whose one business in

life now is to please their Lord and be holy all along the line servants of righteousness and those therefore who are seeking to do what Paul summoned his readers to do earlier in this 8th chapter to mortify sin to set themselves to fight sin that sin that dwells in them and so far as

they can to kill it to put it to death and have to put it to death and drain the life out of it by the power of the Spirit of God penitent believers servants of righteousness fighting sin each day of their lives that's the we for whom Paul is speaking those who with Paul have been willing to go into hard places for the Lord Jesus that's the we for whom he is speaking are you among that we? the Puritans knew that this kind of question could never be asked too often the Puritans knew something of the self-deception of the human heart how easy it is to suppose that you're in that is that you're in the kingdom and in Christ just because you're in the fellowship of earnest Christian people a lively church you like singing the hymns you come to the services you join in the prayers you must be

in you feel and there's the deceitfulness of the human heart taking over it doesn't follow at all that you're in just because you belong to an evangelical Christian church and go through the motions and sing the hymns and all the rest of it you're only in if you've repented and believed you're only in or at least you're only entitled to believe that you're in if you're consciously living as a servant of righteousness and setting yourself against sin in every form in which it presents itself every temptation that comes every seduction that the devil brings to you every evil thought that rises up within you and would lead you astray from the way of the Lord before we go any further let's search our own hearts I say again are you among the we for whom Paul's speaking here for he's going to

show us what is the Christian man's reaction to these things and if you're not a Christian man you can't follow him any further so may the Lord search our hearts and make us real with him but what's the reaction which Paul himself expresses and the reaction which Paul expresses not simply on behalf of himself but on behalf of all those who are truly in Christ real believers well we haven't time to say very much about it we could only just glance through the passage and give the headings really but I want us just to glance through it and see how Paul argues the thing through to the end of the chapter he says four things four things which express his reaction and every true believer's reaction to what should we say to these things what follows from them what's the inference what's the

consequence well first this if these things are true no opposition can triumph over us Paul's ministering to the man who's tempted to be afraid the man who finds that his Christian service is leading him into ways that are so discouraging and so depressing and pressures which are so great and so seemingly intolerable that he's beginning to panic Christian though he is no no no says Paul look at the facts of the gospel and realize what follows these things are true and therefore no opposition can triumph over us what shall we then say to these things if God be for us who is against us now I'm following the revised version and all the modern translations when I render the last words that way not who can be against us as the King James puts it but who is against us it's the better

translation and it gets us nearer the heart of Paul's thought you see he's not saying that if God is for us there can't be any opposition that would be stupid that would be false he's going to contradict it in a very few verses time there's a great deal of opposition if you become a Christian you walk into a war men are against you sin is against you the devil is against you and you have to face perplexities and an intensity of opposition that you never knew in any situation whatever before you became a Christian but says Paul God is for us in the light of that he says I invite you to do a calculation God is for us now consider who is against us now ask yourself which is the stronger side do you remember the time when Elisha's servant

got into a panic it's recorded for us in the 6th

chapter of 2nd Kings he woke up one morning and the city was surrounded with the armies of the Syrians and they were after Elijah and Elisha's servant was absolutely not absolutely at his wit's end didn't know where to turn alas my master he said how shall we do Elisha wasn't in a panic Elisha answered him we are told as the 2nd Kings 6.16 fear not he said for they that be with us are more than they that be with them and Elisha prayed and said O Lord I pray thee open his eyes that he may see and the Lord opened the young man's eyes and he saw on the hill the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha if only we could wake up to God's facts then we shouldn't be frightened of the opposition anymore angelic hosts come to protect the Lord's servant that's what

Elisha's servant that's what Elisha's servant saw when his eyes were opened and the almighty God for us in all his might and his majesty that's what the apostle sees here and he says and if God is for us well who is against us do you suppose that there's any doubt as to which is the victory side all individual battles may be lost temporarily for the moment but there's no doubt as to who will triumph in the end Satan will fight and fight hard but there's no doubt whatever who is the conqueror in battle with Satan God is for us therefore no opposition can triumph over us one with God is a majority that's what Paul's saying here's a word for men who as so many of the Puritans were are seeking to foretell a ministry in churches where the gospel is not known nor loved but rather rejected and

where men resent the preaching of Christ here's a word for the lonely layman seeking to bear a faithful witness for Christ in a church that doesn't care for the gospel and where it's never preached no opposition can triumph over us you feel the opposition my friend yes I know you do and often it's very depressing and discouraging indeed remember that the Lord's on your side remember to react constantly daily to the great facts of Romans 8 Paul goes on the second thing he says is this no blessing he says can be withheld from us that too follows from the fact that these things are as they are that's verse 32 he that spared not his own sons this pull but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things man was made to want the best nothing to be ashamed of

in that that's just to be that's just what it means to be human if you don't want the best you're something less than human but the question which the Bible teaches us to ask is what is the real best Paul is speaking in this verse the people who still are tempted to discouragement tempted to alarm they fear that the opposition and the pressure of the opposition and the fight in which they find themselves engaged as Christians will somehow mean that they lose life's best it will be a hard road and what will there be at the end of it well Paul is here answering that doubt for himself and for all those in whose name he speaks he answers it by asking a question what can stop God what can stop God giving us every good thing that he has to give that's Paul's question look he says our God has

already given for us the greatest thing that he had to give Jesus his own son dying on a cross for our sin he spared not his own son but delivered him up to Calvary for us could there be any gift more costly to the father than that could there be any gift more precious either to him or to us than that well if God has already given us the greatest gift how can we doubt that he'll go on to give us all the rest he'll give us all things not necessarily all the things that in our folly we want but all the things that he knows is to be for our good and our good means that purpose that he has for us that good purpose for which all things work together for good and that means ultimately that God will bring us to himself and bring us into fellowship with himself in a way with which no bliss that

we know on this earth can compare you remember how it's put at the end of the 73rd psalm thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory whom have I in heaven but thee and there's none upon earth that I desire beside thee my flesh and my heart faileth but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever how shall he not with him also freely give us all things abundant blessings in this life and himself in all his fullness as our final goal man was made to enjoy God forever says the shorter catechism and so you shall says the apostle he that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all will with him also freely give us all things all blessings leading to himself and his own fellowship his own smile, his own joy at the end of the road and the third

thing Paul says is this if the Romans eight facts are true then no accusation can succeed against us that's verse 33 who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect it's God that justifies who is he that condemneth it's Christ who died yea who's risen again who's even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us no accusation can succeed against us if he stands there in the Father's presence guaranteeing our eternal welcome guaranteeing our eternal peace by his blood, by his intercession you see there are two kinds of consciences there's the conscience that is not conscious of sin when it should be and I think too many of us frankly have consciences of that sort but there's also the type of conscience that the apostle Paul had quite certainly the conscience that is not

doesn't always find it easy to be as conscious of pardon as it should be and which has to argue itself back into assurance when the sense of guilt comes when Satan begins to stand up in the conscience of the accuser of one and to bring one's sins to one's remembrance and to remind one what a rotter one has been Paul is here arguing out of that state of mind back into the assurance of pardon who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect it can't be done says the apostle this is part of the glory of the message it can't be done top lady rock of ages top lady once put this into verse in what seems to me to be a wonderful hymn the soul arguing with itself over this very issue listen from whence this fear and unbelief hath not the father put to grief his spotless son for me and will the

righteous judge of men condemn me for that load of sin which Lord was charged on thee if thou my pardon hath secured and freely in my room endured the whole of wrath divine payment God will not twice demand first from my bleeding short his hand and then again from mine return my soul unto thy rest the sorrows of thy great high priest have bought thy liberty trust in his efficacious blood nor fear thy banishment from God for Jesus died for thee no accusation can succeed against those for whom Jesus died and finally Paul says this nothing can separate us from Christ's love that's the thought of verses 35 through 39 who shall separate us from the love of Christ I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor anything in God's whole creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord oh says someone times are so trying and I make such a mess of the situation when I'm tested and I'm such a poor disciple may not the Lord lose patience with me may I not by my stumbling and my fumbling kill his love for me no says the apostle you can't Christ's love for you was freely given and Christ's love freely continues and he'll keep you and nothing can separate you from his love nothing can pluck you out of his hands let top lady put it for us again the work that his mercy began the arm of his strength will complete his promises yea and amen and never was forfeited yet and I to the end shall endure as sure as the earnest is given more happy but not more secure the glorified spirits in heaven yes one day I shall be happier than I am now but I shall

never be safer than I am now for with Christ holding me in the bonds of his covenant love I am as safe as ever I can be what shall we say to these things that no opposition can triumph over us that no blessing can

be withheld from us that no accusation can succeed against us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ the Puritans called this consolation strong consolation isn't it just strong consolation for the hard pressed saints of God and you know this is what Puritanism was all about seeking to build a church and a community made up of individuals who lived in Romans 8 and who knew these things in their own hearts and were living lives of triumph and holiness because they knew these things in their own hearts that's Puritanism that's the real thing don't be misled by the

caricatures that was the heartbeat of it that's what this next three days of conference is all about too and this let me say to you brethren of mine in the ministry is what our ministry is all about this is the ultimate objective of our preaching of the gospel and our pastoral care are we clear on it have we got it in view all the time to lead men and women out of darkness into the light of Romans 8 assurance Romans 8 triumph Romans 8 holiness for this ultimately is what the Bible is all about God has given us this book this book of promises this book of grace precisely to lead us into this experience is that what he's using it to do in your life in my life isn't this something from which many of us have slipped isn't it something from which many of us have drifted yes I know we are doing

many things right things for our Lord but are we homing on Romans 8 are we homing on this strong consolation and this radiant holiness based on reaction daily reaction to the great facts of covenant mercy and divine salvation I think that some of us are falling short of it that's why I think that this Puritan conference of ours is needed and under God may do some of us a great deal of good a tract published in 1646 entitled The Character of an Old English Puritan contained finally this description of him he was a man who stood four square unshakable unmovable so that they who in the midst of many opinions have lost the view of true religion may return to him and there find it I believe that to be a true testimony and my prayer for our conference in these next three days is that under God

the Puritans may help us to find our way into these realities so that our Christian lives may be deep and strong and radiant and pure and we may grow up from our pygmy state into the measure of a full grown man the stature of the fullness of Christ may this be our portion God grant it so Amen

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