

Romans 12 & 13

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 22, 2018

All right, you can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans. And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're almost at the end of a series we started in February, called the Book of Romans in Three Months. Where we're looking at the book of Romans over a three-month or about a 13-week period of time. It's crazy to think we're almost done with this book, but time flies when you're having fun, amen? Awkward pause there, let the crickets chirp. But we actually went at this lightning pace, so you could understand the point of the book, so you could understand the main idea.

I don't think it's any secret a lot of people don't get the main idea of the Bible today. They struggle with the main point of it. I read some statistics lately from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, that surprised me a little bit. They said only 14% of Canadians, according to their research, read the Bible on a monthly basis. And only 18% believe it's the Word of God. They went on to say that 69% think it has contradictions in it, and 64% think it teaches the same thing as all the other religions in the world.

And I would say that's because they don't understand it, amen? I mean if they understood this book, they wouldn't have those ideas, right? I mean if they got the meaning of it, they would read it more than once a month. And I point that out to tell you, you can understand the Bible today. You can know what it says with confidence. It's the Word of God. It's entirely from His hands, it has no contradictions in it, and it is completely different from all the other religions in the world. It stands head and shoulders above that.

It's been said the greatest dust storm in American history will be when Americans take their Bibles off the shelves and dust them off. It would be the greatest dust storm in Canadian history too, amen? When Canadians take their Bibles off their shelves, they'll choke on the dust, but it will be a happy choking.

To contribute to the dust storm, we're looking at the book of Romans. We're looking at the main idea, or the big point of this book, which is found in the first chapter. If you want to look at this, Romans 1:16, which I've read to you before, gives us the main idea of the book of Romans in one quick sentence. Paul writes, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile."

Romans is about the gospel or the power of God for salvation. It's about the good news and its ability to change lives. The word "power" there (this is a review if you've been in the series with us) but the word "power" there is the Greek word *dunamis* from which we get the word "dynamite". The gospel is the dynamite of God. If you believe it, it will blow your life up in a good way. It will change everything for you. I've told you before, you can't throw dynamite in a room and expect nothing to change, and it's the same way with the gospel. You can't put the gospel in the room and expect everything to go on the same. The good news changes things.

A Barber once came to faith in Christ, and he was so passionate about his faith that he wanted to

tell the first person he saw. And so the next day a customer came in for a shave, and as he was sitting in the chair, getting a shave, the barber paused with the razor at his throat and he said, "Are you ready to meet God?" His timing was a little bit off. And then he realized what he did, and he said, "Look, I'm sorry, but my life has been changed by Jesus Christ. Can I tell you about Him?" What a great story, amen?

I mean what a great testimony. Jesus does that to people, He changes their lives. And I might add that He does this for everyone who believes. This is not exclusive for certain Christians. Everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved, and they will change.

I told you a little bit about my testimony last week. I really identify with the town of Chilliwack. I think Chilliwack has ... what are we? About 100,000? 80 to 100,000 people, 60 churches? Is that a safe guess? My hometown was 10,000 people and 40 churches. And so I really identify with growing up in a religious culture. But I was saved at a camp for Christian athletes, and afterwards I was completely changed. I didn't even know what happened to me because I thought I was a Christian for years and years and years before that. And I became so different that my friends freaked out about it. One of them told me I needed to calm down because I was embarrassing him, that's what he said.

He said, "I'm a Christian too," he said, "We're all Christians but you're taking this thing a little too far." I want to tell you something friends, when you're holding dynamite in your hands, you can't take it too far. When you're experiencing the power of God, you can't be too serious about that. Paul says that's what we have here, we have the dynamite of God.

I was thinking about this this week preparing for the sermon, and I came up with a list of all the different ways the gospel changes a man. And it's a simple list really. There's not much to it, but I just wrote out some ways the gospel makes a person different.

Here's what I came up with: It takes a drunk man and it makes him sober. It takes a drug addict and it makes him clean to the point he doesn't want to use drugs anymore, or he doesn't give into the temptation. He doesn't live for drugs, he lives for Christ now. It takes an adulterer, it makes him faithful. It takes a proud man and it humbles him, humbles him to the dust, humbles him to his knees. No one struts into the kingdom of heaven, we all get there on our knees. It takes a cruel man and it makes him kind. It takes a troubled man and it gives him peace. It takes a dishonest man and it makes him honest. It takes a jealous man, it makes him content. It takes a violent man, it makes him gentle.

The gospel does that. I knew a guy once in Georgia who was so violent before he became a Christian that he used to beat people up for fun. He would get drunk, go out and fight. He put a guy in the hospital. He was arrested several times for assault and battery. But when he got saved, everything changed, and he became one big gentle teddy bear. And he went back to the people that he had hurt and he made it right.

Let me tell you something, psychology can't do that. Worldly wisdom can't do that, drugs can't do that. That's the power of God, amen? I mean salvation (and we might add this), salvation changes a man and it keeps changing him. It keeps making him different, in a good way.

Salvation happens in a moment, but the change continues. Conversion happens in a moment but the difference lasts a lifetime.

By the time I knew that guy, he was getting more and more teddy bear-like as he went on. Big six-foot four guy, just one big teddy bear...he liked to play chess, that was really random. I never could figure how that big guy like to play chess.

Now D. L. Moody

says this. He says, "It's not necessary that we should be able to tell when you were converted, but it is important that we should be able to tell that you are converted." That's the idea here, because you keep changing, the change lasts.

Charles Spurgeon said, "Conversion is turning on to the right road but the next thing you do is walk on it." And you keep walking and you keep walking and you keep walking on the narrow road. That's how you tell someone's a Christian. They're still walking on that road.

And Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are a few who find it." And the word "narrow" there means "restricted, small and precise." It means you enter through this gate, you go down this road, and you keep going. You don't switch directions mid-stream. You don't stop when the times are hard, and that leads us to our passage for this morning.

In our passage for today, Paul talks about the progress you need to make in the Christian life. He talks about the change that needs to happen in you. And just to build up to this passage, let me walk you through the book of Romans up to this point. Like I just told you, Romans is about the gospel or the power of God. And to show you this power in chapters one through three, Paul says that "all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God but are justified freely by His grace." In other words, this is what the power of God does. Paul says, it justifies us by grace. It makes us right with God through a free gift. You don't earn it. You don't work for it, it is given as a free gift.

And in chapters four through five, Paul says this comes through faith. That's the next thing he says in the book. God saves us on the basis of faith. We believe in Christ, we put our hope in Him, and it makes us different.

Then in chapter six through eight, say that it gives us victory over sin. That's how you know a man is saved, he is getting victory over sin. Chapters nine through 11 ties this discussion into the people of Israel, and then in chapter 12, Paul starts off with this word. If you look in chapter 12:1, this is a key word when you're reading your Bible. If you ever see this, you want to perk up a little bit. It's the word, if you look, "therefore". That ties back into all Paul has said in the book of Romans.

God did all of this for you therefore, this is what you should do now. He saved you, He justified you. He gave you victory over sin. He did it by faith, you didn't earn it. Therefore, this is how you are to live now.

It's been said that sheep need to exercise, if they don't, they get bloated and sick. And Christians are the same way, we need to exercise what we have learned in this book. We need to put into practice, and this is how you do that in chapter 12. This is what this chapter is about. If you're wondering, "How can I tell if I'm a Christian, how can I tell if I'm walking with God." Well if you're taking notes, Paul gives you four characteristics of a changed life in Christ. That's our outline for this morning, simple outline.

In Romans 12 through 13, we're going to look at four characteristics of a changed life in Christ. What's the change look like? How can I tell if I'm walking down the narrow road? What's the progress look like? Does anybody here ever feel like you're not making enough progress in the Christian life, am I the only one? You know, you're driving to church thinking, "Man I sinned again, on my way to church, right?" Can't even get to church without sinning. Anybody else have little children, am I the only one? (Sometimes you guys look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about, you know exactly what I'm talking about). How can we tell that we're growing in the faith?

Here's four characteristics of that. The first one is this: a changed life has a sense of urgency. If you're saved, you will have a sense of urgency. You will live with a sense of earnestness. There's a certain earnestness that comes with being a Christian, there's a certain restlessness that we have as believers. On the one hand, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans five talks about that. But on the other hand, the Bible says that we're at war, right? We're engaged in a war. War with the flesh, war with the devil, war with spiritual forces. And wars are urgent things. You don't ever meet somebody in a battlefield who says, "I'm just hanging out, you know. Got his lawn chair propped up, you know bombs going. It doesn't happen.

The Bible also calls the Christian life a pilgrimage in a journey, which means you don't belong here. Have you ever felt like you look at the news, you look at the world around, you say, "What's going on? I don't belong ..." you don't belong. And so don't get too comfortable here, you need to be urgent, and that's what Paul says when he writes in chapter 12:1. He starts off and he says, "Therefore, I urge you brethren by the mercies of God."

I've already said a few words about the word "therefore" here. But it refers to everything we've looked at in the book of Romans. It sums up all Paul has said so far, and in light of all that, he says, "In light of your salvation and justification and your victory over sin therefore, I urge you." The word "urge" here is the Greek word *parakaleo*, which means "to come alongside or encourage someone". This is Paul encouraging the Roman Christians.

He actually pairs this off with the word "brethren," so that's another encouraging term. He says, "I encourage you as a brother, as a fellow family member in the body and the family of God, to be serious about your souls this morning." To be earnest about heaven, don't take it lightly, don't mess around with this. You don't see this in English so much, but in the Greek, the word "urge" is at the front of the sentence for emphasis. Which means this is all about urgency. Everything he says from this point forward is to encourage the Romans to get this.

The Greek language didn't have fonts in it, so you couldn't put something in bold or italics. But

to emphasize, to express that idea, they would put it at the front of the sentence and build everything around this word, and that's what Paul does here. He says this urgency is by the mercies of God. That's a reference to everything in Romans one through 11, that's all about mercy. But he says in light of that, you need to be urgent.

And I just want to stop right here and ask you the question, are you urgent about your souls this morning? Are you being serious about the things of God? I believe you are. I'm getting to know our congregation this last year or so, and I think we are very urgent. But let me just ask, does this stuff in Romans light a fire under you? Does it blow you up like dynamite? Or does it have no impact at all?

You know several years ago, I got to hear Wayne Mack speak at the ACBC Conference in Indianapolis (the Biblical Counseling Conference there). And he was talking about the time he walked by another counselor's office and he heard him saying, "Where's the blood? Show me the blood!" And he said, "Well that's kind of strange." You know, you don't hear that every day walking by another pastor's office. So, he went to the guy afterwards, to the counselor, and he said, "What was that all about?" And he said, "Well the guy wouldn't repent." He said, "The guy wouldn't take his sin seriously, so I pointed him to Hebrews 12:4, which says, 'You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood and you're striving against sin,' and I said, "Where is the blood? Show me the blood!"

Friends can you show me the blood this morning? Can you show me the earnestness with which you are fighting sin, enough to bleed, enough to die for this? You know Luke 13:24, Jesus says, "Strive to enter through the narrow door." And the word "strive" there is the word from which we get "agonize". He says, "agonize to get through the narrow door." If your eternal soul is based on getting through that door, He says, "Strain over it, sweat over it, and bleed over it if you have to. Break your back to get in."

Are you doing that this morning? Listen, it is all of faith, it is all of God, but you believe like your life depends on it. You know, for some of you who aren't saved this morning, that may not mean a lot to you, but let me ask you this, does your soul mean a lot to you today? I mean whatever you think about Jesus Christ and the Bible and those things, does your eternal soul mean something to you, is it a priority for you?

I just mentioned Charles Spurgeon a moment ago, but I want to bring him up again because on December 4th, 1864, Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled "Now". In the passage it says, "Now is 'The acceptable time'...now is 'the day of salvation.'" And he went on to say, he says, "My text doesn't say 'later,' my text says 'now.'" He says, "It doesn't say 'give me more time,' it says, 'do it now, trust in Christ now.'" He says, "Some of you will say, 'I need to go home and think about this first.'" He says, "That's not what it says. It says 'Now is 'the acceptable time'...now is 'the day of salvation.'""

Some of you will say, "I need to sit down and talk to my wife about it," no you don't. Some will say, "I need to pray about this, I need to do more research, I need to consider my options, I need to read some books" that's not what this text says. It says, "Now is 'the acceptable time'...now is 'the day of salvation'", because you may not have a later. For those of you who are not in Christ

this morning, you need to come to Christ now because tomorrow may be too late.

You know, I was actually talking to a doctor about this the other day, not a doctor in our congregation. Our congregation is full of South African doctors. I try to explain that to people in the States and they're like, "What are they doing in Canada?" I say, "Well, I guess they like the rain, I don't know." But this was a doctor outside of our church, and he was explaining to me how birth is just a miracle, right? I think a day-to-day life is a miracle, amen? And you never know how much time you have left.

It was said on his deathbed, that the famous atheist Voltaire said, "I would give half of all I have for another six months to live." He couldn't do it. It's been said that dead men don't carry watches. They don't need them. There's no sense of urgency on that side of the grave, but on this side, there is a great, great urgency. You need to run to Christ now. And for those of you who are in Christ, you need to be urgent about turning from sin and living for God.

In his resolution as Jonathan Edwards said, that he was "resolved to live with all my might while I do live." And he said he was "resolved never to do anything which he would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of his life." And that leads to another characteristic of the Christian life, of a changed life that we see in this passage.

We see a sense of urgency, we also see a sense of sacrifice. The Christian life, a changed life comes with a sense of sacrifice. And particularly in this passage, Paul talks about a sacrifice to God. If you love God, you give yourself to Him. He gave Himself to you, you give yourself back. That's what you're urgent to do, and Paul says in verse one, he says, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual sacrifice of worship."

Just a couple of things to point out here. Paul says to, "present your bodies." That's a reference to the Old Testament system, where the priest would take a lamb or a bull and present it to God. He wouldn't just kill it, he would actually symbolically lift it up to God before killing it and say, "Lord, this belongs to You." Paul says, you do that with your bodies. This is another way of saying, with your soul or all that is inside of you. The word "body" here is a reference to the entire man. You lift your entire man, entire person, up to God at the altar.

And he says, you do this as a living and holy sacrifice. That's an interesting phrase, because if you think about it, when a sacrifice is offered, it what? It dies, right? I mean a living sacrifice, it's kind of like a jumbo shrimp... doesn't make sense, really. It's a symbolic term. But the idea here is that this is to be an ongoing and holy; "holy" meaning you're fighting sin; ongoing sacrifice - you do this (you present yourself to God) over and over and over again. You lift yourself up to Him, over and over and over again.

We can say it this way, you don't crawl down off the altar when things get hot. You've got to stay up there. And when you start getting one foot that wants to come down because it's a little uncomfortable, you pull the foot back up, put it on the altar. You can't put the fire out and say, "That's enough, I don't like this anymore," you have to keep burning.

We could say it this way, if someone asks you what kind of sacrifice does God require? This is it, a never ending one, an ongoing one, right? If they say what kind of worship does the Lord want? This is it, one that burns continually. This is important to mention because I think a lot of Christians are missing this today. They're not giving a living sacrifice, they're giving a sacrifice a little over here and a little over there. Do you guys know I'm talking about? They sacrifice for a day or two, maybe a Sunday, maybe another day during the week, and that's it. You know, they read the Bible once a month, donate money to charity at Christmas time.

I don't want to be too controversial here, but we just had the season of Lent in many churches around the world, and I'm not being critical of that, other than just to say some people will give up coffee or chocolate during Lent, only to pick it back up when it's over. And there may be some value in that, but that's not what this text is talking about. This is not a seasonal kind of thing. I mean there's no seasons to a living sacrifice.

Paul also says, "This is your spiritual service of worship." That's another way of saying this occurs in the unseen places of your heart. You can't see it or touch it or feel it. You know, giving up chocolate and coffee, that's physical. That's not what this is referring to. The only person who can see this sacrifice is God. The only person who can truly appreciate it for what it is, is God. When the power of God changes you on the inside, that's where you sacrifice yourself on the inside. The dynamite explodes in here and this is where you lift yourself up in response. Which means, you can't brag about it on Facebook. You can't take pictures of this thing and talk about it on the Web.

I was controversial a moment ago, let me just keep going here. I remember when Facebook started, I remember when the Internet started. Do you guys remember that phone noise it used to make back then? I was a senior in high school, I remember that, when the Internet started. I remember thinking this thing is only going to have so much space in it and then it'll be over, and they'll sell it for millions of dollars - a website page. And it never ends, right? It keeps going. But one thing that struck me as odd when Facebook came out, and some of those types of things, is how many Christians would brag about their Christianity. Not necessarily the gospel, but just the good things they were doing on there. You guys know what I'm talking about?

Now again, there's a place for some of that. You want to tell people what the Lord is doing in your life, but they would talk about what money they gave to charity or going to an orphanage or giving up something for a holiday. And again, there's may be a place for that. But I think the whole Facebook world would change if people started saying, "Look at how I repented of my pride today." It's a totally different thing, right? Or, "Look at how I humbled myself in dust and ashes. Look at how I gave up my lust or my anger or my jealousy." My point is this, you can't take a picture of that. You can't show it on the internet. This is the kind of thing you do in secret. This is the kind of thing you do on the inside, it's entirely between you and God. That's true worship, right? True worship is entirely between you and the Lord. Paul says a changed life looks like true spiritual worship.

You know, a poor widow once donated her wedding ring to the church. And afterwards, the pastor gave it back to her. He said, "You can't do that, that's too much of a sacrifice." And she handed it back to him and she said, "It's not for you, it's for God." And she said, "There is no

sacrifice too great for Him.” Friends, we don't do this for people, we do this for God, and there is no sacrifice too great for Him, amen? But it doesn't mean other people can't see the effects of all of this, and that's what Paul goes on to say.

He's actually taken this issue of change and looking at it from several different angles. That leads to a third characteristic of a changed life, and that is a sense of nonconformity. I use that word because that's the word Paul uses here. But it leads to a sense of nonconformity. Our changed life doesn't look like the world around us. Our conversion doesn't look like them, lost people can't make this kind of sacrifice. They can do some of the physical stuff, but they can't offer a spiritual service of worship. They don't have the power, they don't have the dynamite. And therefore, believers, those who are truly saved, live with a sense of nonconformity to the world. The spiritual sacrifice does have physical effects.

And that's what Paul says, if you read on in verse one. He goes on and he says, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your body as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world.”

The word “conformed” there is where we get our English word “scheme”. “Don't be conformed to the world's schemes,” Paul says. Don't be conformed to the world's way of thinking. It doesn't mean you can't wear the world's clothes or appreciate the world's stuff, it just means you can't wear worldly clothes, you get the difference there? You can't appreciate worldly sinful stuff.

The devil is the prince of this world, so if something smells devilish, you stay away from it. It's what he's saying. You don't want to be influenced by that. I won't say too much about this, other than to point out, I just told you how many Canadians struggle with Bible reading. But that has actually bled over into a profound struggle with worldliness. I mean just like it is with any country in the world. You pick any country in the world, and you'll see the same trend as we have here. It's nothing unusual to Canada.

But I did look up some statistics on this. This is your statistics sermon I guess, I'm giving you a lot of statistics this morning, but I was interested in this idea of worldliness. You know, it said 40% of marriages in Canada end in divorce. Which is actually better than it is in the States. It's pretty sad, but, 40% end in divorce. And that's even more shocking when you consider that of those marriages, the majority of them only make it for about 14 years, and then they're done.

Other statistics say that there were 72,000 drunk driving incidents in the last year on record. They stopped putting them on record because I think it was kind of embarrassing, but 72,000. And in 2010 (this was the last year this was on record) there were 64,000 abortions. I'm guessing that number's probably gone up with the population increase. But my point is, we live in a worldly place, and if you lived in another country, that would be a worldly place. It's not a criticism, it's just a fact. We live in a world that is a place that's consumed with worldly schemes. Stuff is just flying at you continually, isn't it?

And I would guess that maybe some of us can't relate to those sins, they're not very churchy sins anyway. So, I looked up some churchy ones for you guys. (You can thank me after the sermon if

you want). I was thinking, “Boy, I need something more church-like.” So, here's some churchy sins. They actually started with the phrase “which one would bother you more?” So, let me ask you this, this questionnaire here. Which one would bother you more? A soul lost in hell or a scratch on your new car? It's kind of convicting, isn't it? Most of us don't like a scratch on our new car.

Here's another one, it says which one would bother you more? Missing the morning worship or missing a day of work? I like this one; which one would bother you more? A sermon that went ten minutes too long or a lunch date that started ten minutes too late? (See, now I'm starting to meddle in your lives a little bit here). Which one would bother you more? The millions who don't know Christ or the millions who don't cheer for your team in the playoffs? My point is just that we're worldly people, we struggle with this. We're far too caught up in the things of this life, and Paul says don't conform to that. Don't get caught up in that. Turn away from the things of this world.

That leads to the final characteristic of a changed life in Christ. As we've been going through this, you're probably wondering when we're going to get to the rest of chapters 12 and 13 so, we're only in verse two now. So, this sermon will probably end at about three o'clock. You guys are saying you're going to miss your lunch date, aren't you? This sermon's going ten minutes too long, far too worldly.

Now, this is my last point. We're actually going to tie it all together with this one. But a changed life is characterized by a sense of urgency, sacrifice, nonconformity; where we don't look like the world, we don't do what they do and act like the world. Here's a fourth and a final characteristic of a changed life: a sense of transformation. A Christian life leads to a transformation. That's what we've been talking about this morning, right? The gospel changes us, it makes us different.

D. L. Moody went on to say, he said, “The word of God was given not merely for our information but for our transformation.” You don't just need to hear the Word of God, you need to do what it says and change. And if you read all of these, this passage here, these verses, Paul says it this way, “Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Doing a lot of word studies this morning, but these words are so interesting that Paul uses the word “transformed” as the Greek *metamorphoō* from which we get “metamorphosis”. It's the word that we use for a butterfly coming out of the cocoon. Paul says when someone is saved, in their soul, they emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon. They become something completely different. You know, you go in like a dead man, you come out like a living man. You go in like a blind man, you come out with sight. You go in lost, you come out saved. You go in with one birth, you come out with two, you're born again.

And Paul says this happens by a renewal of the mind. That's how you're converted, that's how you're transformed. That's how you're born again by a renewing of the mind, a renewing of the way you think. The Christian life is by and large a thinking thing, it occurs in the mind. You

want to know how to fight sin? Improve your mind, simple. Which is why Bible reading is so important, because it impacts the way we think. I just told you that the gospel takes a drunkard and it makes him sober, that's because it changes his mind. It changes the way he thinks about alcohol. It takes a drug addict and it makes him clean because it changes his mind.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks within himself, so is he." That's the idea here. You know, the technology world actually has a phrase called "GIGO" that sums this. It means "garbage in, garbage out." You put garbage into something, you get garbage out of it. You put good things in, you get good things out. Your mind is the same way. You know, it's a convicting thought that when you get angry and go punch a wall, that anger has been stewing in you for some time, right? You didn't just all of a sudden just say, "I think I'm going to go punch that wall right there and see how it feels." You've been putting garbage into your mind, and now garbage is coming out of you and hitting the wall.

Which leads me to ask this (this is a good way to tie this passage together): what are you putting in your mind this morning? What are you thinking about constantly, continually, day in, day out? Are you putting garbage in there? Are you putting good things in there? Are you putting sin in there? Are you putting Scripture in there?

We could say it this way, what are you learning in the Bible right now? And I don't mean on Sunday mornings, when you come in here to church? There's value in that. It's a good thing to learn Scripture when you're here, but what are you learning when you're at home?

Robert Murray McShane said, "A man is what he is on his knees before God and nothing more." What are you like when you're on your knees before God? Are you ever on your knees before God?

I didn't mention this earlier, but all the words, all the verbs in this passage are in the present tense, which means they're all ongoing. The urgency and the sacrifice and the nonconformity, the transformation, they're all continuous. You do this at church, you do it at home, you do it when you're with us, you do it when you're by yourself.

And let me show you what it looks like, if you're wondering what the rest of these chapters have to do with this. Let me show you what it looks like when you renew your mind and fill it with Scripture. Paul says in chapter 12:3-8, that when you do this, you will exercise your spiritual gifts and serve the church. That's what he goes on to say. Verse seven says, "If your gift is in serving, serve. If your gift is in exhorting, exhort. Put your gifts to use."

He says in verses nine through 21, that you should do this with love and bless people with it. Verse 15 says, (and we prayed about this earlier), "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Chapter 13 gets even more explicit when it says, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities." And in verse eight of chapter 13, he says, "Owe nothing to anyone except love."

And then in verse 11 of chapter 13, he sums it up this way, and this goes back to the idea of urgency. If you look in chapter 13:11, Paul says,

11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lust.

That last phrase “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh” means that you should live your life as if there is no sinful flesh. You should live as if the sinful flesh is dead to you. It’s dead to God, you need to live like it’s dead to you. “Don’t feed the flesh anymore,” is another way of saying this. Starve it out, don’t provide for it.

But the point Paul is making here, is that a Christian is a changed man. All this stuff in chapters 12 through 13 looks different, the world can’t do this. I mean, this is one of the reasons the world laughs at Christians because it reads passages like this and it says, “Nobody can do this. Serving each other, blessing each other, subjecting ourselves, you can’t do this.” Well, you can’t do it unless you have the power of God.

Do you know the power of God today? Has it exploded in your life? If you understand Romans one through 11, Paul says you’re going to understand chapters 12 and 13. You’re going to be a different man and this is what it’s going to look like.

You know several years ago, a bronze cross was stolen from a cemetery in Arkansas. And it was 14-feet high and it was worth about \$10,000, but the thieves didn’t know that. So, to get it out of the cemetery, they tore it into pieces and sold the whole thing for \$500, because they underestimated the cross.

My friends don’t underestimate the Cross this morning. Don’t undervalue it. It can change your life today. If you hold onto it and put your faith in it, it can make you into a new man. Let’s pray and ask the Lord to do that for those who haven’t. And for those who have, they would be blessed by what Paul has written here.

Father, we thank you Lord for the Cross, and we do pray this morning that we would not undervalue what it is for us. It gives us life, it gives us eternal life, it changes us from the inside out, Father. And we want to take advantage of that this morning. We want to understand the true value. So, we pray for Your grace in that.

Lord, for those who read this passage and they see that their life has changed this way, I pray they would be encouraged to excel still more; that they would see all the wonders You’ve done in their life, all the miracle You’ve done by saving them, and You will continue to make them a new person in Christ.

And for those who are here this morning who have never understood salvation or never believed it, believed in the gospel, believed in Christ, Lord I pray you would really encourage them to take their souls seriously. That they would be urgent about eternal life, they would be urgent

about heaven and hell, and You would draw them to saving faith in Your Son.

Lord, may You be glorified as we go out and live this passage today. Like we just read about, we don't want to just do this here in this place. We want to take it to our homes, into our families, into our places of business. Lord, may You help us do that today. May we be Christians who honour You at home and everywhere we go. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen."