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**Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith**  
**Message: A Look Back – A Look Forward**

**Transcribed Message**  
**September 25, 2022**  
**Romans 12-16**

I thought it would be good if we started off this morning with two questions. One of the questions is kind of looking back and one of the questions is kind of looking forward. Let's start off with the question that looks back and I ask you this. What happened on March 1 of 2020? What happened on March 1, 2020? Was it clean-up day for Australia? Was it 71<sup>st</sup> day of winter? Remember winter? Was it the first case of Covid in New York? Was it the first study from the book of Romans? Was it any of those things? Or was it all of the above? What say you? it's all of the above. It really was our first study in Romans back on March 1, 2020.

The second question looks forward. We are likely to finish our study in Romans by before March 1 of 2023, March 1 of 2024, March 1 of 2025, or literally no one knows nor can they know. That is not nice. We have guests here this morning. We must be nice. Well, here would be my answer. March 1, 2023 is a little too soon. That's not that far off because we take all of December off for other things in celebration. March 1, 2025 just seems a little too out there. Literally no one knows – that answer seems a little too cynical I just have to say. Let's settle for March 1, 2024 and trust that God will help us to finish up somewhere before that even happens.

But lest you grow weary, you need to know that Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones spent 12 years with his church going through Romans. 12 years. Then of course there was the reformed pastor that the Babylon Bee wrote about and he preached through Romans for 47 years. 47 years. The series started during the Vietnam War. The last message was a short breezy one-hour exposition of Romans 16:27d on the word “amen”. The pastor's sermon series had many highlights. Several elderly church members recalled being particularly fond of the three years he spent on Romans 3 during the Reagan administration. Others cited his decade-long exposition of Romans 9 in the 1990s as their favorite part of the broad overview of Paul's epistle. Then he said, “There's a lot to

unpack in Romans, but you can't take too long or you start to lose people's interest. Most churchgoers can only hang in there for four or five decades before they start to check out." He further stated that he considered condensing the series even further to an even 30 years but then he decided against it when he realized he'd have to cut out his brief five-year historical background section to the book. "30-year long sermon series", he said, "are for Arminian churches." That that's not nice either. At publishing time, the reverend had kicked off a filler sermon series on the book of Ephesians expected to last over a decade. So there's much to be thankful for here at Covenant Community.

Here's what we're going to do. We have taken a break from Romans since the summer and went into our summer series and we're coming back now. What I'd like to do this morning though because there's quite a few of you that that haven't been part of our Romans study, so I'd like to do is just take a quick look back at Romans 1 through 11 and then take a quick look forward at chapters 12 through 16. Kind of a review and an overview to get us caught up and get us looking at what's ahead. All of it with this in mind – that the way we live our lives is in response to God's amazing grace. We've just sung about it. Obedience is our thank you to God every day.

Let's begin with a look back at chapters 1 through 11. These chapters are all about the gospel being given. The gospel is given. Just a word before jumping to the outline because the first 16 verses of Romans 1 are the greeting and the introduction. When Paul starts off in verse 1, I just find it so encouraging that he begins and says Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus. I mean here's the greatest apostle, the greatest missionary. He has given us arguably the greatest expression of theology and doctrine that we have in the New Testament Scriptures. He starts off by reminding the people at Rome that he's a servant of Jesus Christ. It just reminds me that the greatest need in the church today is that we would have servant leaders, like we just heard. Servant elders. We need a whole lot less of celebrity pastors and celebrity leaders and we need a lot more who come as servants. We need them not just in the church. We need them in the home. We need them in our marriages. We need them in our schools. We need them in our places of work. What would happen if every one of us took on the heart of

Paul and we really thought in terms of the places that God has us that we want to be known as one who is a servant.

So here's Paul. What is it that is on his heart? we look again at that first verse and really all of these opening verses. What's on his heart is the gospel. That takes us to the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> verse for I'm not ashamed of the gospel, Paul would say in 1 Corinthians. But here he says to us I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it (that is in the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The just shall live by faith. That's the theme of this book. Those are the verses that we've committed to memory because they remind us of what is so central and important and what's on the heart of Paul is the gospel.

Notice in that 5<sup>th</sup> verse he wants to take this gospel to the nations. He wants to take the gospel to the nations. Isn't this cool? I mean we're taking the gospel to the nations. Yes, we are, in terms of missionaries that we support here in the states and all around the world. But you know what is really cool in this season? God's bringing us the nations right here on to our campus in our building. Caitlin said this last Monday night in ELL we've got like 12 to 13 different nations represented among the students that are learning English and taking citizen classes. How awesome is that? The nations literally are coming. We're going and they're coming as well. That and along with our Afghan families, the ones that we're helping and supporting and ministering to. It's just an expression of what Paul is talking about here.

The most important thing that you and I will ever know is the gospel. The most important thing you and I will ever share is the gospel. The most important thing you and I will ever live out is the gospel. That's the heart of Paul here. That's the heartbeat of Paul. It needs to be ours too.

I've got to say that the greatest joy that I have as a pastor in this setting and in any other setting that God gives me opportunity is to share the gospel. That is the greatest joy of my life is to share the gospel, because it's the most important thing that I know. It is the most important thing I can share. It's the most important thing I can live. It needs to be that way for all of us. We need to have that same sense of joy that Paul has. But you know what? At the same time, it's also my greatest burden. It is my

greatest burden because I realize that in a group this size on any given Sunday week after week there are people who sit here and maybe they have sat here for months or even years and they haven't fully yet understood and grasped the gospel. So it's my greatest joy. It is my greatest burden – that you would know without hesitation the answer to the question if you were to die tonight do you know for absolute certainty that you would go to heaven, and that you can state succinctly, clearly, simply why that is so and it wouldn't have anything to do with what you've done. You wouldn't even bring up anything that you've done. You would zone in and zero in immediately on Jesus and what He has done on the cross. That would be an understanding of the gospel that we want to know and live and share.

Now the reason that is so important is the first of the five words on your outline. The very first word is the word condemnation and it's the need of the gospel. That's why we need the gospel. In 1:18 all the way to chapter 3 verse 20, Paul tells us everything that we need to know about why it is that we need the gospel. He wastes no time. Look at verse 18 after he does his introduction. Verse 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." So much for political correctness, right? So much for not offending anybody. So much for Paul being a preacher who simply wants everybody to go home feeling good. He jumps right into the great need of the gospel and he says as plainly as he can that everybody everywhere in the world has been given some revelation of the light of God. Everybody everywhere in the world has received some revelation about the knowledge of God. And what have they done with it? Paul says they've suppressed it. They've rejected it. They've turned away from it.

We have this great need of the gospel. It is the cry of the hour as he begins and we've already seen. He says in verse 10 there is none righteous, no, not one. If you're here this morning and you might be thinking, I'm not that bad. I think I can get to heaven. Paul has already said no, you can't. There's not anybody that is good enough. There is not anybody in their own righteousness. He argues in this opening section that the religious person isn't good enough, the moralist isn't good enough, the pagan surely is not going to make it. All have a need for the gospel. So that's the bad news. The bad news is condemnation.

But the second great word we're introduced to in Romans is the good news. And the good news is all about justification. Justification. The heart of the gospel from 3:21 all the way to 5:21. Justification means to be declared righteous. It's a declaration that God makes over us to be declared righteous. When you look at chapter 3 and how Paul begins this section at verse 21, he begins it with the adversative but now the righteousness of God. It's going from condemnation to now the good news. Bad news is followed by the good news. And the good news is justification. Dr. Barnhouse used to say that this section Romans 3:21 to 26 is not only the heart of the gospel, is not only the heart of the book of Romans, is not only the heart of the New Testament, it's the heart of all of Scripture. This is the heartbeat of God. He through Christ His Son has made a way back.

Our culture, our world, people often express the troubling question how in the world could a loving God send anybody to hell. That's a hard question, but Paul's not grappling with that question. Do you know the question Paul's grappling with? Paul's grappling with the question how in the world can a holy righteous God of justice ever forgive a guilty sinner. That's what he's dealing with in this section. Not how could God send somebody to an eternal separation, who has rejected him by the way, but how could God forgive someone who has sinned against Him?

There is a song that I think is 20 years old now that speaks of the answer to that question. The answer to that question of course is only through Christ. It is only through the death of Christ. It is only by our being justified. That's why Paul says in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter verse 1: "Therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That song says this. Four simple sentences. "Holy God in love became. Perfect man to bear my blame. On the cross he took my sin. By his death I live again." My friends, that is justification. That's 3:21 to 5:21.

The third word is the great word sanctification. The word sanctification. Now this is the power of the gospel. This is the power of the gospel. From 6:1 all the way to 8:13, we looked at sanctification. The Emancipation Proclamation from sin is what this is. In chapter 6, Paul says what should we do? Should we keep on sinning so that grace may in fact abound? And God's people said? *Me genoita!* We aren't speaking in tongues here. That's the Greek word for "may it never be". Chapter 7, Paul said the things I want

to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do. In chapter 8, he steps into this glorious truth of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, who by His power enables us to overcome temptation and sin. It's all about sanctification, so he can say in chapter 8 and verse 1 there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Not even a little bit.

The fourth word is the future aspect. It's all about our glorification. Our glorification. From chapter 8:14 all the way to the end of that glorious 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, Paul's talking about the weight of sin has been born by all of creation. All of creation groans under the weight of sin waiting for that great and glorious day that's coming. We know this because he ends that a chapter with that wonderful promise of our future glorification.

Then we came to that fifth section all about Israel and all about the promise of the gospel. The promise of the gospel. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 focused on the promise of the gospel to God's chosen people Israel. This was probably by far, we would all say, the most challenging section that we took on in Romans. It made our head hurt almost every Sunday and we pushed through that to see the mystery of a sovereign God doing a work of calling and choosing a people for Himself, which led then finally to that great and glorious declaration of praise at the end of that 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. Nothing like it in all of Scripture. O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable all His ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever, amen. Chapters 1 through 11. The gospel is given.

Now the gospel is given for a very specific purpose. It is given so that the gospel will be lived. That's now chapters 12 through 16. A look forward. This is what's coming. It is really the application of the gospel to our life. When we get into Romans 12 through 16, it's going to seem at times like we're doing a topical study every Sunday because what Paul does in these last chapters is he applies the gospel to all of these different life situations. I wrote them all down and then I decided not to include them. I should have probably just put it on the screen. There's about 35 different topics that Paul takes on. A lot of them have to do with relationships. But here in this last section is how does the

gospel look in my life individually, but even perhaps more importantly what does it look like in our life collectively as the people of God, as the church of Covenant, as the church of Jesus Christ.

Before we look at these individual sections, I want to say something about the structure of these last five chapters. The structure of the final chapters. Paul begins as you know so well the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter with an appeal. It's an appeal he's going to make again in chapter 15 and verse 30, and again in chapter 16 and verse 17. It is those familiar words: I appeal to you therefore. I urge you. I beg you. This is Paul constrained by words that call out to us to do the right thing, to live out this gospel. We don't receive the gospel to not live it out. We receive the gospel to live the gospel. That's the whole point of these closing chapters. Paul is saying do this. Live it out every day.

Do you know what we are to live out? It is very simple. We're to live out Jesus's ethic. That's what we're going to live out. We get into these last chapters and it's just the life of Christ being lived out. That's what is – the life of Christ. There are many direct and indirect references to the very teachings of Jesus in these last chapters. Look at chapter 12 and verse 14 as an example. He says: "Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them." That sounds a lot like something Jesus said, doesn't it? There is going to be a lot of those as we go through this. So I look at this and I simply say here's Christian living in light of the gospel. This is the life of Christ being lived out.

The content. Strap it on. Here we go. We have 10 sections and we've got about eight minutes so that's about ... that's fast. Concluding words are the way Paul finally ends, but there are 10 sections here that I want to just touch on. The first one is when we're living out the gospel, and that's what we want to be about. We want to think individually. We want to think corporately. When we are living out the gospel, Paul says we are people who worship. That is the first couple of verses. Now don't be discouraged, but those first two verses are so critical that we're going to take our time on those first two verses. We're not going to do one word a Sunday, but we're going to go slower. What he says here begins with that famous therefore. I urge you, I appeal to you therefore. In other words, it is going to all be based on what he just said. The gospel has been given. Verse one. Therefore.

It's not a worship that is a Sunday morning experience alone. We don't want to come to these verses and think of 9:30 on Sunday morning. I would say to you if you're not worshipping in the way you live out your life, in the way you live out the gospel, if you're not worshipping on Monday through Saturday, I don't really know that there's a lot to hope for when we gather on Sunday. When we gather on Sunday and we worship and we give our heart to God and to each other, it seems to me we're being equipped then to step in to Monday through Saturday and to worship in the way that reflects the gospel being lived out. But if we're not doing it Monday to Saturday, it's going to be tough just to get there in 75 minutes and think this is what Paul was saying. This is what we're supposed to do. It's not quite that limited. We want to be worshipers 24/7.

Now notice secondly. When we're living out the gospel, we serve. That's chapter 12 verses 3 through 8. It's going to be in this brief section that Paul talks about spiritual gifts. He's going to step into a brief description of some different gifts. Every gift of the Spirit is sovereignly given. That's what he said in 1 Corinthians 12. You and I need to know what our spiritual gift or gifts are. Probably most of us have more than one gift. We all have at least one, but I think most of us have multiple gifts. When someone says to you what do you think your spiritual gifts are? You should be able to say, this is what I think they are. Then it's not enough just to know what they are. We're to be using them, aren't we? We know and we use our gifts to build up the body of Christ, to advance the gospel. That is the heart of Paul.

The third thing when we're living out the gospel, we're characterized by grace. We're characterized by grace. Verses 9 to 21 of the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter. The overriding principles that we're going to see in this section have to do with loving one another. There's lots of one another statements. In fact, earlier in the spring when I was thinking about what to do in the summer, I almost decided that I would do a series of the one another's in Scripture, in the New Testament. There's like 35 depending on who counts and how many they count. There's 30 to 35 statements in the New Testament about how we treat one another and how we deal with each other. Then I thought that won't work because when we get into chapter 12 of Romans, there's all kinds of one anothers. It would be like we did a one another series and then we do another one



another series. There is going to be a lot of one another's in here and it's really all about how it is that we relate to each other.

Number four. When we're living out the gospel, we submit to God-ordained authority. That is chapter 13 verses 1 through 7. Paul will teach that government is ordained of God. The government that exists is ordained of God. Verse 2. He says: "to resist government is to resist God." He even tells us to pay our taxes and to love the IRS. I just threw that last one in. He didn't say that, but he tells us to pay our taxes. I'm expecting that when we get to chapter 13 there's going to be some interesting community group discussion times.

Number five. When we're living out the gospel, we love our neighbor. When we're living out the gospel, we love our neighbor. Verses 8 through 10. Loving one's neighbor is just a fundamental ethic of Scripture. It was true for the Old Testament ethic. It's true for the New Testament ethic as well. A gospel centered church loves its community. We do that in a whole variety of ways. We do it through benevolence, at times helping people who are in need. We do it through our community partners. We have different partners that are in sometimes underserved communities – Arise Ministry to single moms, Youth and Family Services right here in Canadian County, helping with those folks at St. Paul's Community School serving underserved children in south Oklahoma City, Shiloh Camp, Crossroads Clinic which is our pregnancy center, Hope Is Alive. Then of course within even our own ministry of going to Charlemagne Apartments or ELL. All kinds of ways that we're seeking to love our neighbor. Southwest Covenant School does that every year. They do a massive love your neighbor campaign, which is really what it is when they do Patriot Project. They go into the community and they are just loving their neighbors. A church that is living out the gospel has a heart for and a love for its community. That's where you and I should be as well in terms of not only here but with regard to our church.

Number six. When we're living out the gospel, we're looking for the Lord's return. Verses 11 through 14. The Lord's return is closer today than it's ever been because it's just one day closer every day. That's what Peter says in 2 Peter 3. That truth is to impact our lives. We'll see what that looks like.

Number seven. When we're living out the gospel, there's unity and diversity. There's unity and diversity. All of chapter 14 and a big chunk of chapter 15 is going to fall within this category. All of these different ways that there's diversity within the body of Christ. The differences that we have in terms of our backgrounds, our upbringing, socioeconomics, and ethnicity. All of those things bring together a group of people who otherwise might not be connected because their backgrounds, their differences are what they are. But there's also in this section the matter of Christian liberty and doing things that as a believer we have the liberty to do or not be doing them because we love our neighbor. Paul is going to say don't judge each other. Don't treat each other harshly. You need to recognize and preserve the unity and the harmony that we have because of Christ.

Number eight. When we're living out the gospel, we're spreading the gospel. Verses 14 to 33. Those who have received the gospel – we have an obligation to share it. We want to share it with everybody that God brings into our life. We've got 32 people on our missionary list that we support all through the United States and around the world. I was so encouraged when I looked at financing of last year and saw that our church gave almost \$450,000 to missions last year. That is what you guys did. You gave almost \$450,000 to missions. Now that is one piece, but it also needs to be who are we praying for. Who's the person or persons that we're praying for that God will allow us to share the gospel with.

Number nine. When we're living out the gospel, there's love and there's hospitality. This 16<sup>th</sup> chapter I don't know exactly what we'll do with it, but there's like 40 names in this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter where Paul just goes through and he's thanking people. He is talking about their partnership and I almost wonder if a part of what he's doing is that he's trying to help these people see their connection with each other, that they are part of a bigger picture, ministering together for the gospel and the full expression of the body of Christ.

Number 10. When we're living out the gospel, we're on guard against false teaching. That's the closing chapter 16 verses 17 to 20. We're to love each other. We're to be gracious to our enemies. But you know what Paul says? You better be on alert for false teaching. There's a place for intolerance and that intolerance is towards those who

would teach that which is contrary to Scripture. Paul put it as plainly as you could in Galatians when he basically said don't mess with the gospel. Don't mess with the gospel. That's the final warning that he gives in Romans as well. He thanks a few more people, he closes with a doxology, and all of this to remind us that how we live our lives every day is in response to what God has done for us in the gospel.

What do we take away? The impact and intent. The impact and intent of the gospel is to transform every area of our life. We don't have a segregated life in which we have areas that Christ isn't exercising His lordship over. All of life is sacred. All of life is set apart to God. That is God's call on our lives. That's the call of Christ's lordship over our life.

It all begins with the gospel. It all begins with the gospel. The gospel begins with bad news. The bad news says I've sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The bad news says there's nothing I can do to earn God's merit in favor of myself. But the good news comes and it says but Jesus has died on the cross for my sins, and if I will believe and trust that what He did was enough, God will give me the gift of eternal life. That's the gospel. That's the transforming message that we need to believe and receive and then begin to live out for the glory of God.

Let's pray. Father God, we are so grateful to step back into this amazing letter that You allowed the apostle Paul by Your Spirit to write to us, even today here at Covenant Community Church. I pray, Father, that we will step into these truths with joy and delight and eagerness of heart. Father, that this gospel will grip our hearts with such passion that we cannot help but live it out every day as our expression of thanks to You. I pray right now, Father, if there's anybody here that does not know the truth of this gospel that your Holy Spirit will give them understanding that anything that they're doing, as good as it might be, is never enough to earn eternal life because that is given as a gift by Your grace through faith in what Jesus has done. We thank You for that. In Christ's name, amen.