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Pondering Christ in Romans

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Well, hello, and welcome to Ponder by NorthernLife. We're having a conversation about the Word of the Lord as it was preached to us on Sundays and as we encounter it in our everyday lives. My name is Jack, I'm very glad to be back with you.

I'm joined by Ben and Jono. Now, Tristan's away today, but we are joined by the one and only Virginia.

Welcome.

Morning.

Great to have her on the pod again. And today, we're talking about Christ in Romans, which was Jono's sermon on Sunday. Jono, I get the feeling this was a bit of a labour of love for you.

I wonder what your reflections were, first of all, just coming back to Romans and re-engaging with that. Any insights?

As I said in the message, it was a genuine sense of excitement because we're looking at Christ in each book. And I made the comment like, where is Christ not in Romans?

So it's sort of nice after looking at Obadiah last week, which is less so Christ in every verse, really. But yeah, just loved getting back into Romans. It's such a dense book.

It was hard to pick where to spend our time. But I think Chapter 12, which is what I picked, was a good place. It's a mixture of theology and practice.

And I said to you yesterday, Romans Chapter 12 is special to me because it was the verse we had, me and Steph had at our wedding.

So that was nice to revisit that. Did you want to just recap on what the actual content of the sermon was for us?

Yeah, sure. I just broke it up into eight points and worked through the text, which was basically starting off with, in view of God's mercy, everything is different.

And that was sort of the foundation of the whole sermon, this incredible change that has happened in the fulfillment of God's plan, which is what we've been looking at in all of our teaching.

Christ in Scripture was really pointing to the unveiling of Chapter 1 Romans, the righteousness of God revealed. And that's this incredible unveiling that Paul does in giving the detail behind it all.

And so we just looked at a bunch of different points. Because everything's different, Paul says, we are all in. We offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

Renewing your mind, so we looked at thinking new, humbling ourselves, stepping up into ministry. Live love, he talks in a wonderful way about what love would look like in the church. I talked about catalyzed community.

We talked about what a spirit-filled person could do to community as a catalytic force.

And then it finishes up with really what points us to carrying our cross, which is what Christianity is all about, really following Jesus, to a place of humility and self-sacrifice to honor Him, and allow that to be used by God for mission.

So, that was sort of the essence of it, and then that led us to communion.

And I love that. There's so much coming from, in view of all that God does, there's so much that flows out into every aspect of Christian life.

Gin, Ben, I wonder if you guys had any reflections?

Well, as the lay person here, I just appreciate, I think, that I think John has said before, the logical response to everything, to what Jesus has done.

But just those steps, I find it just so helpful to, almost every week, it's like, here's, remember, this is what life looks like. And it's easy to get caught up with, oh, I've got to read the Bible. I've got to have my quiet time.

But it's just such a great reminder of the breadth of how this changes my life. I found that so helpful.

Yeah, similar to what you said before, Jack, I think the first word of chapter 12 carries so much weight, therefore.

You know, you made the point that Romans is Paul's greatest letter, and he has spent 11 chapters articulating the gospel, the righteousness of God revealed. And then with one word, he pivots to say, therefore.

And then Romans 12 is just such a good chapter because it's the implications and applications for what the gospel should mean for us. And so practical and helpful, I think.

Yeah, 100%.

So for our first question, I want to talk about this idea of all in, and had this idea of a sporting team that you're not half out. We give our whole lives to God.

You talked about, sort of, was it like giving the car to someone without the keys or something like that? That basically we offer our bodies to God to take control. And sort of this idea of all of our lives being given to God.

And I had this idea as I was thinking about this about slippage.

I don't know if other people have felt this, but where I want to give every aspect of my life to God, but I find just over time certain areas of my life, maybe it's Merck, maybe it's something else, through distractions, they just kind of, God sort

of leaves that picture. And I'm focusing on God in other areas of my life. And when I'm coming to pray, I'm not praying about my work area, or my friend group, or my marriage, or something like that.

I just wondered how we can respond to that sort of slippage, where things kind of fall outside of that all in category.

I think apart from what we always talk about, some level of spiritual disciplines, habits that are helpful, habits that remind us about what life is about.

Apart from that, I think doing, organizing more mountaintop experiences is a helpful thing, like going on a mission trip overseas, or stepping up into something that is hard, like the preaching farm, doing that. You know what I mean?

Like just doing something that is intentionally a challenge that focuses you can be helpful, I think.

Yeah, it's a very challenging question. I like what Paul says in verse one of chapter 12, therefore, in view of God's mercy, I did a youth talk on Romans 12 once, and had the image of keeping the cross in view.

And if I stand behind a wall, you can't see the cross anymore. So we have to orient our lives such that we keep the cross before us, keep the mercy of God before us.

When you consider what Jesus did for us in giving everything, His whole life, how could we not be motivated and compelled to give more of ourselves? And so probably asking that question regularly is helpful.

What parts of my life am I holding back from the altar of giving it as a living sacrifice to God with the view that, in view of God's mercy, we offer all of ourselves to Him?

I think that came up last week in the ground of our hearts that we can keep. Like, what's… do we need to…

is it fallow, you said?

Fallow ground.

Yeah, the fallow ground, what's unplowed. I think sometimes for me, I think I've got to do… there's a whole lot of practical things I have to do, and it's easy to think the spiritual stuff is in God's realm.

I've got all these other practical things I have to look after, but it's easy to get caught up in that. And I find… I just woke this morning, and just that idea, His mercy is anew every day.

The focus is on Him. The other stuff happens. It doesn't have to be the central bit.

And it's easy to do that, I think, in our lives, to think about challenges that we have, that perhaps are more practical, less seemingly spiritual, but they can take our attention, and then they take our hearts, I think.

All in, I think, is quite contextual for the early church, when you read about it in Acts. It's like Jesus is coming back pretty soon. They're giving away money, and like it's just simplicity, and just all in.

I think that changes. It changes if you're in a war zone. Just things change.

I think it's, when I was very young as an adult, and we were in community, chasing hard after God, doing long fasts, and going on mission trips, a street evangelizing, all sorts of things, praying every night, we talked about reckless abandon.

That was just a line that we had. And we would read people in history who tended to die young. They would die of some disease they got from praying in the snow.

And it was like, yes, yes. That just change a bit when you get married, and you have kids, and you take on responsibility. So I sort of wonder how all-in changes in the seasons of your life.

And it can be a really good thing for people of a similar season to get together and say, what does all-in look like for us? Because it is different to reckless abandon. Probably being reckless as a parent isn't always so great.

You know, interested to see what you guys think about it.

That just brings to mind you guys all being in the boys' house. You know, there was a time where you were all living together, or a number of you living together, and I think now you've all dispersed, haven't you? And it's a different season of life.

I think that would have looked quite different back then.

Yeah, for context, for those who might not know, myself, Ben, and a couple of other young adults, we all had a share house for a couple of years, and that was a really fruitful time for us in being in a similar stage, to be able to connect and be

discipled by one another.

I mean, it's fascinating that it would seem like Jesus called a bunch of relatively younger men.

Have I got that right? I don't think we're told, oh, someone was 50, and Jesus enjoyed their wisdom that they brought along. It's a young crew that leave everything.

I want to shift now to this idea of transformation.

And Jonah, you brought up this word, menomorfoho, which Ben's preached on as well. And there's all sorts of fun grammatical stuff going on there with the imperative and second person and sort of language nerdy stuff.

But the idea is this idea of be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Obviously, I think we would say the transformation is not supposed to stop at your mind.

But I think sometimes in the church and in Christian circles, we can get a little bit too focused on the mind sometimes, especially, you know, we've got these, we do sermons, we do studies. A lot of it can be very head based.

How can we ensure that the transformation is flowing out from the head and not just being satisfied with a head transformation?

Well, I think the most obvious place that comes out is in relationships. So if relationships are not looking healthy, then the learning is staying in the head and not coming into the heart, and probably the body as well.

I mean, our bodies react with what's sitting in them, I suppose. So it is challenging, I think, to do that.

But I think reflection is a good tool to think, is this integrated in my whole life or have I got little pockets of places where I'm better or doing better than in other places. Yeah.

The points of the sermon take you through quite a helpful response to that. You know, what does it mean to be all in and then think new, to have your mind renewed?

The next things that Paul talks about is humble yourself, step up into serving and doing ministry by the power of the Spirit, live love, be a catalyst in community, carry across. So, I think Paul makes it very clear.

This is not meant to stay in a transformed mind, but affect your whole body as you follow Jesus. I think that's a simple, sort of beautiful idea. Jesus wants to live his life through me today.

And so after my mind is again renewed in view of God's mercy, what's Jesus up to today? What good works has he prepared in advance for me to do? It's going to involve humility and stepping up with courage.

It's going to involve loving people.

Let me just jump on two of those outworkings that I had a thought about.

So you talked obviously about humbling ourselves, and also this idea of being a catalyzing community, that in community, we should be people who inspire others and bless others, and are a catalyst for the kingdom amongst the community as a whole.

And I feel personally, sometimes I feel a tension between humility and becoming catalyzing of community, because with catalyzing community, you're kind of making yourself visible in a certain way, and you're kind of...

It can very easily become a prideful thing, I feel like. If I'm up the front worshipping or preaching or encouraging people, as opposed to sort of the humility sometimes Jesus calls us to, to do good deeds in secret. I guess, like, what's the...

How do we balance the tension there between those two, and sort of humbly catalyze our community?

I don't see the tension so much, myself, when I think about community, and I think about a kingdom catalyst. That catalytic power that we're talking about of a person behaving Christ, in a Christlike way.

I tend to think of people who are doing it behind the scenes.

Right.

I do. I don't think of that being, oh, the inspiring, charismatic leader up the front. I think, no, I'm observing this person who, others are getting gnarly and angry about something.

They want to curse, and this person is just blessing. And they're responding in the way Jesus would respond. As Ben said last night, sometimes we do stand up for the truth, and we do have a hard line, for sure.

But, you know what I mean when I say that? The rest of you people? It's often done in the humble way, and yet you see the power of the action and the attitude.

It reminds me of when Jesus talks about yeast.

He often uses that image that a little yeast leavens the whole batch. Kind of this, the little catalyst, the humble person, the one member in the congregation works there. Well, God works his power through that catalyst into the whole community.

So rather than it being the big, dramatic, upfront catalyst, it's the little things. That's the way of the kingdom, the seed that grows into the biggest tree, the yeast that leavens the whole dough.

And so that, it's like a, it's a very humble thing to catalyze community, to play your small part within the broader body.

I think too, we hear examples of that from people who are, sometimes it's serving in something in particular, or you ask about if they know about somebody, and it's this whole sort of web of people doing things that we just don't know about.

And it's, I think that's so encouraging, that people are just loving other people without having to say it, or be part of something in particular. They're just doing it.

It was so nice to have four people get up and sing harmony.

And that was to illustrate the point, that one person singing is nice, but you bring in another few people, and they're not actually singing, if you listen to the line they sang in harmony, it's nothing special.

It's like the line that Ben Carlile in the group was doing. We've seen this low, deep baseline, not moving much, but it gave so much to the performance.

And I asked them to do that, because I think it's just a great example of step up, play your role, and know that you, led by the Spirit, have a role to catalyze this amazing thing we have called community, church.

Finally, I wanted to ask you about the point you said, which was live love.

And we had a little bit of discussion before we started about the wording of that, because I think of that, and it seems quite simple. Why would you say live love?

It sounds a little bit like that phrase, live, laugh, love, or all those phrases that go around. Do you want to explain a little bit why you chose those words?

I just, as I was reflecting on it in my preparation, I thought it's about as simple a way as you can describe what we're called to do with our lives, live, because life comes through Christ, and we're meant to pursue love.

And so, live love is a very pure, simple way to describe life in Christ. But I also think it's actually describing God. It's describing the Trinity.

God is love, and they live love eternally. And that's just a wonderful good news story that the ultimate goal is to be, to just live in love.

Loved by the Father first, and then soaking that up, and then being a conduit of that love to reflect out to the world.

And through the Gospel, through Christ, I'm acceptable, so I can come, even though I'm sinful, into a full comprehension and understanding and shed abroad in my heart love of God, so that I could love others. And that's it. Live love.

I thought it was quite helpful. It's probably goes through under the radar, but it's worth just pondering it a bit.

I suppose that's kind of ties back to the living sacrifice question at the start, that part of what it means to be all in is to allow or receive the love of God in all of your being and all of your life we love because He first loved us.

And then because He loves me from the top to the bottom to the depths of my heart, I'm called to love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and my neighbor is myself.

So it's the two movements of breathing in the love of God and then breathing it out for other people. And when you do that, as you become a Christian for longer, you become more mature.

Hopefully, by God's grace, you're opening more of yourself up to receive the love of God and therefore to pass on the love of God to others as well, to live love.

Yeah, that's cool. I think too you spoke about hate what is evil and cling to what is good. I just think that image of clinging to what is good is very powerful.

Rejecting evil but clinging like there's a desperation in that, isn't there, to reject the darkness and turn our faces towards what is good, what love is, and we, like it changes us on, in an on-going sense, I think.

Yeah.

It becomes an easier decision to make each time when you experience that.

Well, on that note, we might move towards the end.

The palate cleanser questions are back, because Patrick Ross has sent me an entire list of them. So I just need to pick from his list. So today, I'm going for, okay, this one.

What kind of fruit would the person on your right be and why?

What kind of fruit?

What kind of fruit? The person on your right. I think Ben would be a banana because he's tall and skinny.

Deep.

Jack, I think you're a kiwi fruit.

A kiwi fruit.

Yeah. Lots of layers, lots of interest in that. I think you can open it up and it's quite complex.

And I think that's you in a wonderful way.

Oh, that's very nice.

I think Genevieve has a blackberry. I used to climb a tree around our house and eat blackberries, and think. And I can imagine you doing it too, being in a tree, eating blackberries, mulberry tree, and thinking about life.

Oh, that's funny.

I am a closet tree climber.

Oh. Yeah.

We had a big maple in the front growing up, and I could not speak to my father when it was chopped down.

Do you still make a habit of that?

No, but my son inherited it. And maybe one of his. He's not doing that anymore.

So whatever fruit you find in the tree.

Yeah.

Okay.

I don't know.

Is it a strawberry? The little black dots on the outside, are they seeds?

I think so.

Let's call them seeds. Let's say that the things on the outside of a strawberry are seeds. I think dad is a strawberry.

He's constantly planting seeds of growth. Every place that he goes, he helps people grow.

Thank you.

I feel bad now that mine was so simple.

Because you're a simple guy.

I am a simple guy.

Well, apparently not according to Jin.

Simply complex.

Elegantly complex. Elegantly simple.

All right.

We better end now. Thank you all for listening. Thank you guys for coming on the pod today and we will catch you on the next one.

Bye bye.