

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

We > Me

PART

3

TITLE

Loving One Another

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:9-13



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If you have any Bible or a phone with a Bible, turn with me to Romans chapter 12. If you don't have one with you, we're going to have most of the various verses on the screen. But I want to encourage us as a Church Family not to become lazy. Have a Bible, read a Bible, see with your eyes. It's important for you to feel it and to have it and so this is simply a tool but let's be careful with the tool. We're in a series. We is greater than me and the idea here is that we were built for community. We're in need of people and every one of us, we know this is true. It's interesting how much change COVID has brought to us. Most of us, because there's been so many challenges and so many world events and crises that have happened, many of us have forgotten what our problems were before COVID.

We've forgotten that the vast majority of us, over 50% of us, if we happen to be a normal people group, which we are, dealt with and battled with significant recognizable loneliness and this is before months of social isolation and distance. It's really important for us to grasp very specifically what is loneliness and what is it not. You see, loneliness, we know for certain is not necessarily being alone, it's actually the feeling of being alone. It's that unnerving, deep distress that everyone else has someone that they can lean on or many people and yet I am exposed to my own gifts, my own abilities, my own strength.

Oftentimes, what it feels like is this, that everybody has somebody in their life and yet I am alone and yet ... Here's the reality, because it's so predominant in our life is that this mother of this child could actually be feeling the same kind of penetrating loneliness even though there's a family in her home and that's where some of us are at. We feel lonely. You may be sitting in a little pod right now with people, you may be at home and there may be people in your room with you and yet you can still feel like, "I just feel lonely for some reason." We know that loneliness, it has effect and it has significant damaging effect. Not only does it make us spiritually susceptible to temptation, but we're told also from social science as well as medical science, that loneliness can actually have deep effect not only to our physical health but also to our emotional health and psychological health.

It can affect each one of our lives. Which is why God, in his grace, in his mercy, records his first concern that he looks at, that he sees in the very first concern from God in the entire Bible is directed and aimed at loneliness. He looks at the man who's alone, who feels lonely and he says, "It is not good for the man to be alone." I want you to know, God looks at your life and he says, "It is not good for you to be alone. It is not good for you to be lonely." It's not what he has for us. You see, God designed life to be lived with people who encourage one another, who love one another and who believe that ultimately a life that is populated with the idea of we that it's greater and superior and richer than a life, this is dominated by me.

What we want to look at, as we started last week or actually two weeks ago is, we're in the 12th chapter of Romans, which gives us all kinds of instructions on how we can actually pursue relational living for the good of the community called The Local Church. To see your benefit is to my benefit. I recognize that right now, during COVID, it may be difficult for you to understand, "How do I practice and apply each of these principles to my own personal life?" But I want you to know there's a way with creativity and with his help.

Let me pray for us. Okay. Father in heaven, we look to you in faith, as we open your word now, we ask that you would speak through weakness, we ask that you would open up our eyes, help us to see wonderful things in your word but predominantly, would you help us to see that when we read this description of love and this amazing description of what life is like relational life, that what we're really looking at here is a mirror, a reflection of Jesus himself. A character of Christ, his relational abilities, how he treated people on ultimately he is now treating us. God in heaven, would you help us to grow in this area and I pray for those who feel dominated by this idea of loneliness, God, would you rescue them by helping them to pursue community living but also would you help the people who maybe near them, Father, to even pursue them and so we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

This chapter, it contains 36 imperatives that are all built on the back of one indicative. Well, I don't know what either one of those are. Let me tell you. Okay, if you were here last week you know ... I don't have any notes today or ropes but this is what indicative is, it indicates ... What God did, that we are to believe and then the imperatives are the things that God commands that we are to do. These two things, they work together. In fact, what you find is, it's like a coin. Like if I had a coin in my hand and I held it up, it has two sides and the fact is, if one side had no imprint on it, you would know that it was counterfeit and therefore it would lose its purchasing power and what we know from the Bible is this, every time you find imperative, something you and I are supposed to do, it was commanded by the Lord. It's actually funded, fueled, resourced by the indicative of what God has done, that he tells us to believe.

Perhaps, the most famous of his commands are called The 10 Commandments. Many of us, we could go ... You know what, this is at least what one of them is. Maybe some of you, you know all 10 of them. But do you know the verse that immediately precedes any of them? Let me read it to you as well as the first one. Exodus chapter 20, God says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." That is indicative. That's saying, "I'm the one who rescued from death, rescued from slavery, I'm the one who brought you to a good land. I am the cause behind your good."

Now, as a result of that, the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." Do you know why we should worship him alone? Because he's the only one that can pull people out of a pit. He's the only one who can rescue and he's the only one, providence, who has truly rescued us. You see, you find this pattern everywhere in scripture and this is why anytime you're reading the Bible and you find something that looks like something you're supposed to do, a command to humanity, a command to the church, a command to a Christian, you need to actually take the time to read before and after and find what God has done that you're supposed to believe that actually gives you the resource and energy and motivation to actually do what he's called us to do.

Well, Romans has two big parts. The first 11 chapters are just populated with indicatives. It's just, this is what God has done in our life in order to rescue us and then from chapter 12 to chapter 16, he's saying that this is what it looks like to live as a Christian in view of what he has done and this is why Paul, in chapter 12 verse

one, noticed what he says. “I appeal to you ... He says, “I’m about to give you 36 things you need to do that will impact your relationships and build community in your life, that will be erosive to your loneliness, it will eat away your loneliness and you won’t feel it as intensely.” I’m about to appeal to you but before I do, make sure of this, “That everything I’m appealing to is based on the mercies of God.” The mercies of God. We have to [inaudible 00:08:35]you did this last week.

I know I did it last week but here’s a deal, if we do not enjoy the reminders of his mercy, what you’ll find is this, is that you will have no staying power to pursue the community that God has for us. Romans 12 has actually broke it up in the three sections. How do you build community, you serve one another? How do you keep it, you love one another? What happens when we sin against one another, how do we endure as a community? He’s going to talk about how do you restore it and we’re looking at that next week. Each one of this is based on the assumption though, that the people who were pursuing and restoring and building his community are absolutely mesmerized by the mercy of God.

You see, Romans chapter eight verse one, tells us a lot about the mercy of God when he says that, “There is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.” Isn’t that good news? Some of you, you don’t feel like it’s good news, you just feel like it’s news and this is why, you see, it’s context that turns news into good news. That’s why the news of the cease fire, that the war is over, it lands differently and it’s felt differently if you happen to be a soldier on the battlefield or if you happen to be living out in the country and don’t know anyone in the world is fighting. When he says there’s now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ, he assumes that we’ve read the first seven chapters that actually say that we’ve sinned against God, he’s offended, we’re going to die for that sin and then we’re going to have to be held accountable to him and he is angry.

It’s context that turns news and makes it goodness. You see, Romans chapter one verse 18, you know what it says? It says that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, that’s where the story begins. I don’t like that story. That sounds so dark, it sounds so ominous, it is but if you do not understand that that’s actually where we’re at, you will not rejoice in mercy. Therefore, you will have no staying power to actually pursue the community that erodes your loneliness. They’re all connected together.

It begins with, there is wrath that is actually towards people who are sinners and then in Romans chapter three, he says it this way, he says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.” I recognize that I said this last week, I read it and I tried to explain a bit clearly, I didn’t do a good enough job because you didn’t seem to rejoice at the thought that there is now no condemnation over your head.

I don't know if you know this but apart from Jesus Christ, there's literally the wrath of God that is pointing at your direction and in eternity in the hell is awaiting you and me, all of us. That's the reality of sinning against the Holy God. He says, "We have all sinned and fallen short of his glory and so the wrath of God is directed to us." But what's amazing is the love of God is also directed to us and that's why it says that he, God, he actually put forward his son Christ Jesus as a propitiation. We don't use that word but the word ... It's the most stunning thing you find in the whole Bible and that is that God would actually put his son in our place and direct all of his wrath towards us. All of the insult that we have towards him and all of the stored up wrath, that he would direct it all entirely upon his son and he would die a death that would be in substitution of our own in order to redeem us, to pay our debt before him and deliver us from that spiritual prison.

Who gets to enjoy this? Those who receive him by faith. Who admit that they need a savior, who admit that they are a sinner, that they have a debt before God, that there's nothing that they can do, that they need the grace of God and Jesus is the only one who provides it and so they believed in Jesus Christ, confess him as Lord and do you know what happens to those who receive Christ by faith? They're justified, they're forgiven of all of their sin and given the righteousness of Christ and therefore there is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. Just think of the worst things that you've ever done in your life. No condemnation. None.

You see, this becomes really good, amazing, merciful news only if you believe Romans chapter one through seven as opposed to being so self-righteous that you simply assume in advance that you have a good standing before God. People who are self-righteous, who look in the mirror and said, "I think I got it all together." They don't sing at the thought that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and do you know what happens then to a self-righteous person? They make for a very bad family member. It's hard to have community with somebody who is self-righteous. You know why? Because all the principles that are given from God on how to enjoy community, there's an assumption of being overwhelmed at the mercy of God that there's now no condemnation on me.

Did you sing today at the thought that you have been forgiven, that he Loves you? What I want you to know is, if you didn't, you won't be able to do what I'm about to describe. Therefore, loneliness will be your lot in life. Mercy upon mercy. What we looked at last week was this idea that when we're mesmerized by this mercy, when we see it, we're overwhelmed by it. First thing it does is, it changes our priorities and wraps them around as well and then it changes our heart by developing humility within us and then it causes us to renew our appreciation for the fact that God's brought us into his family and then it leverages our gifts so that we serve one another and here's the deal, anytime you find within the scriptures, using our gifts to serve one another, surrounding that instruction is an explanation of love. The reason is because, it is very possible to serve for ulterior motives that can actually destroy community instead of build community and the condition is based on whether or not there's love, genuine biblical love.

Notice what he says after saying, “Look, if you have the gift of prophecy or service or teaching expectation, giving leading acts of mercy, verse nine, “Let your love be genuine. Abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer, contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” What we just read in those five verses, not only is ... There’s 13 imperatives of how we’re supposed to live our life that are all based upon an awareness of mercy. But what we actually just read was a reflection of the relational criteria and qualities of Christ.

Jesus loves us with sincerity. He abhors what’s evil, he holds fast to what is good. He’s not slothful, he’s fervent in spirit, he contributes to our needs. This is Jesus and this is all really important because it’s based on love. One day Jesus was asked the question, “Hey, what’s the greatest commandment?” And what did he say? “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, strength, everything that you are.” This is the first and greatest commandment and then what does he say? The second is, like it and that is, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” And the word, as, becomes really important because what he’s saying is this, is that, up until this time, the standard of how we should think about loving others is this, “Well, if that was you, how would you treat you?”

With the creativity and zeal that you have to feed your belly and give water to your soul and wear a coat when it’s warm, well, direct that same intentionality and creativity to love other people. Say, “Wow, that’s hard. Oh, no, it gets worse, it gets more difficult.” You know why? Because, the night before Jesus was killed on his cross, he gathered with his disciples and do you know what he said to him? He says, “A new commandment I give to you.” Maybe they all picked up, “Ooh, this is new, this is going to be fresh and exciting.” And then he says, “You love one another.”

I can see one of them going, “Oh, I’ve heard this before.” And then he says this, “Just as ... Not as you love yourself. The fact that I’m about to die and rise from the dead and then live in your heart is going to enable you to live and treat people in a way that was impossible before that. As I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” In other words, these are a description of Jesus and therefore these are his calling upon his followers. This is our mark of distinction. That’s when he says, “All men will know that you’re my disciples if you have love one another.” What does this love look like? What does mercy compel? First thing, God’s mercy compels us to love sincerely. By the way, if you’re just looking at your clock and you’re like, “That was a really long introduction, he’s probably not going to finish.” You’re probably right. Okay? I didn’t finish last hour either but it’s okay.

God’s mercy compels us to love sincerely. You and I can imagine all the different descriptions of love that he could have used in place of the word, authentic or sincere or genuine. Why that one? Why would he begin, “Let love be genuine.” You see, the word genuine, it literally means sincere or not hollow or hypocritical. I think the reason goes back to what we looked at last week, verse three, when he says that what mercy does is, it creates humility in our hearts so that we don’t think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

What is hypocrisy? It's the total absorption itself. Is living our entire life wondering what other people are going to think about me, leveraging everything so that you will think higher of me than really I am. That's what hypocrisy is.

Jesus, he gave us a few pictures of what hypocrisy is from some of the scriptures that he used. First of all, we learned that hypocrisy simply makes our showroom look better than our storeroom. They explain that. Every one of us has a showroom, is what people can see. If you've a restaurant, it's where people eat. But then there's the storeroom, that may be the kitchen and maybe where the food is stored. What he's saying is this, is the typically ... And this is a really gross. But if he have rats and roaches, it's best to not let people who were in the storeroom to see.

This is what he says, Jesus says, "Look, you hypocrites ... He's speaking and he says, "You hypocrites ... And then he tells why he says this, he goes, "This people honors me with their lips." What is that? That's the outer, that's what people can see, that's what people can hear. He goes, "But their heart, the storeroom, is far from me." You see, this is not love and yet this is actually what some of us did when we were singing this morning. We gave the impression that we really do have a love for God today and yet really our heart wasn't thinking about him at all and this is a really bad way to love people. This is community destroying, this is loneliness building kinds of activity. You understand? Because you have to hide and so you're always isolated.

It's always yourself because you can't let anybody in. Because if they did, they would actually see the true you. But Jesus goes on and he says there's another aspect of hypocrisy and it's this, is that it recognizes that we do have faults and sometimes there's a custom that actually gets up and it says, "I want to see the kitchen." And they walk in and all of a sudden, there's embarrassment and so what do we do then? Well, hypocrisy hides our flaws by highlighting the flaws of others. When you think this is a bad kitchen, come here, I'll show you a worst kitchen and that's what he says. He goes, "Look, how can you say, "Let me take out the speck that is in your eye when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite." This is not love either but why would we do this? Why do we do this? What could it be potentially cause us to be motivated to live this way and to treat people this way. The answer that Jesus gives is that we all love to be praised by people.

That's what Matthew chapter six says, he says, "When you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do ... And then he tells us why we do it, that they may be praised by others." What's interesting about hypocrisy is, it works. If you'd seek to create a front of house, that is clean and pristine and that picks on everybody else's house to make your house look all the better, you will get praise. The problem though is this, is that you will also be left very lonely because you were the only person who truly knows the condition of the house and not only that but you will also leave community very hungry because you will prove to be such a hollow meal.

If we live our life to say, “Think much of me so that you’ll praise me.” It’s actually an act of a lack of love towards you because I literally do not have what it takes to satisfy your soul. For better would be to be transparent about my weakness so that we can talk about Jesus and the mercy that he gives and now all of a sudden, we can actually praise somebody who instead of making us hungrier when we praise, he actually satisfies our heart and our soul. For love to be genuine, it must be beneficial to others and that’s why he adds two participles, the second and the third imperative. He says, “Abhor what is evil and hold fast to what is good.” This is how love is genuine. By abhorring things that are evil to people and holding fast to what it’s good for people, you see, to say that we love people and then not to abhor what destroys people is disingenuous.

To say that we love all peoples and then not find any issue within our heart to pray or to seek help when people are trafficked, when folks are mistreated because of the race, when babies are aborted, it is disingenuous. It’s not sincere love and to say that we love people and then not hold fast to what is infinitely good for them, good meaning morally good, what God says is morally good. Meaning that people need truth, they need justice, they need help, they need a meal, they need a coat, they need provision in their life to say, “I love you.” Then not to care about what is good for people, is also disingenuous because genuine love always benefits others and therefore always builds community.

You should ask yourself, if you’re feeling lonely, is my love for people hollow, hypocritical or is it genuine? Let me encourage this, on this point, let’s consider the mercies of Christ every morning. Consider the mercies of Christ every morning and this is why, friends, don’t you see them? That the command to actually love genuinely, actually begins then with a command to find our approval in Christ. Because, when you understand that you have been approved by Christ, then we do not need to extract, manipulate or deceive others to get it and as a result, we can serve them with our life. You don’t need peoples approval, you can serve people at their need.

The second thing we learned here is, the God’s mercy compels us to love as a family. You see, this in verse 10, every one of us, we come from a family and family tends to see the worst. True? Like your worst attitudes, your irritability, your worst decisions. Typically, it’s your family that gets the inside of you, of who we are. They get to be back in the kitchen where they see all the rats and all the roaches. They see it all but isn’t it also true there’s some staying power simply because it’s family? If other people treated you like your family treats you, you probably wouldn’t be friends with them. You probably wouldn’t want to spend any more time with them and yet there’s this staying power because it’s family.

Well, in verse 10, what he says is this, “Love one another with brotherly affection.” He uses two different Greek words for love. This is what he says. He says, “Phyllis store gay with Philadelphia.” Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. They may need to work on that but the city of brotherly love, Philadelphia. Many of us, we know that there’s different Greek words that all translate love, agape, unconditional, eros, erotic, romantic love. When you get to this word store gay, it’s family love. It’s love that’s based on you not selecting who you’re loving because someone else selected them for you and yet they’re staying in power because it’s family.

You see, if you happen to have a sibling that you really do love, you know that you're going to be there when they need you and yet you wouldn't probably choose them as your closest friend because they're so different from you if they weren't your brother or sister, then you know something about the word store gay. There's the devotion, which is why some of your translations actually says, "Be devoted to one another in love." It's like, "Man, it's my brother, my sister." It's like, "I have to endure." It's family. What we find within the scriptures is that, this bond of store gay is actually present also among Christians because we're in God's family.

I remember just a few years ago, I was overseas with Phil and a team here at Providence and we met a man, his name is Bozon, who we now as a Church Family support as one of our church planters. He's a remarkable man, mostly blind and the church planter and he was pastoring like 30 churches. It was amazing thing to see but the very first time that we met him, we sat down in his house and he began telling his story and he began talking about how the mercy of God had come to him and suddenly I, in my heart, I looked at him and I said, "I see." I could just tell that we are related to the same merciful father, we're family.

Still to this day, I think of him differently. I think of him as family that I don't think of people who may be like me in so many other ways but who don't know Christ? What is this love look like? What is this love one another look like? Well, he tells us what it looks like. With this part is to outdo one another in showing honor. We look at each other's needs, we look at each other's convictions, we look at each other's conscience. There's people who like to park close, we say, you know what, I'm going to let you park close. There's people who need service, I want to let you serve.

I had no idea how much I would spend time reading articles and responding to whether or not people should wear masks. They just never thought that would be a part of ever preaching through Romans. But this is the reality, there's some people who not only have a physical need to not wear one. Some people have just the burden in their own conscience and this is just a very difficult thing and what I would encourage us to simply think about is this, what a family does is, it sticks together by showing preference to one another. I was saying that your conviction in a certain areas, so long as it's not forbidden by scripture, I'm going to forbear with you, I'm going to forgive, I'm going to walk with you. We're going to love one another and the reason is because we're family.

You see, sometimes when we hear the word, brotherly love or brotherly affection, it sounds so sentimental though, doesn't it? Like biting down with no teeth. They just sound soft, brotherly affection. But those who saw it actually working in particular with the early Christians, they thought that it was something that was so radical. There was a philosopher, a non believer named Lucian in the second century, speaking of Christianity and complaining about them and this is what he said, he said, "Their founder, that's Jesus, persuades them to be like brothers and therefore they despise their own privacy and property." In other words, these people, they're not family and yet they think they're family. They treat each other like family so much so that they get in each others business and even share their stuff with each other. Crazy.

You see, in a family, there's a limit to privacy. I mean, there's some privacy. You go into the bathroom, lock the door. But that's about it. I mean, there's ... Family, you don't have as much privacy ... And the church is not a club, it's God's family. That's why if you're at a bird watchers club, you're like birds. You're like, I want to go see a Finch, okay. You go out and all of a sudden, you gather with your people out there and you and your little club and you're looking at, "Hey, look at that." Suddenly, you're there and let's just say, you're this person right here and all of a sudden, this guy, he kind of leans over and he goes, "Hey, how's your marriage?"

You've been sharing the gospel with anybody recently? You thinking about going on a mission trip anytime soon? What are you spending your money on? Why are you dating him? We'll be like, "Dude, birds, that's why we're here, birds? Stay in your lane. That's where we'd be and yet in a family, privacy is limited and this is a family. Members have claim on one another, sharing is needed, endurance is expected and loneliness is tackled together. Let's evaluate the devotion that we have to God's family.

Just ask yourself this question ... I know you're busy writing this down but ask yourself this question, if everybody at Providence was as devoted to the people of Providence as I am, could Providence be healthy? The third thing we find here is the God's mercy compels us to love enduringly. You see, if you take seriously what the Bible says about love, you're going to get weary and you're going to want to eventually disengage at least for a time and that's why he says to us these words in verse 11, "Do not be slothful in zeal." In other words, love does not permit apathy to rule in our hearts and then he tells us how not to allow slothfulness to take place in our zeal where he says, "Be fervent in spirit."

To take your spiritual capacity, your desire for worship, your desire to love one another and he says, "Be fervent." The word fervent means to strain and anytime I look at this verb in the Bible, I always think of an image and it's the image of a racehorse and full stride, just tearing it out, muscles bulging and it just running as fast and as hard as that horse possibly can. This is what he says, "The way that you tackle when you feel lonely, you feel disengaged, you feel like kind of a slothful in your spirit, the way to get out of it, is to be fervent in your spirit about something. It's to run hard and then just to direct that fervency in a direction ... That's where he goes next, he goes, "Serve the Lord."

It's not just, do anything you want fast, no, do the important things fast. Strain your spiritual gifts and muscles to connect and grow and serve and go, that people could be introduced to Christ. You see, well, what if I'm discouraged or afflicted at the time? Well, he tells us next, then, "You need to rejoice in hope and you need to be patient in tribulation or affliction and you need to be constant in prayer." In other words, keep your chin up in hope, keep your knees down in prayer as you wait for Christ to rescue you from affliction. Let me encourage you to cast off apathy and pursue Christ's mission. Every one of us, let's cast off that apathy in our heart. Some of you, maybe you're apathetic, you're feeling anxious, maybe there's a gut punch, maybe the church hurt you, you're just coming back and you're like, "Oh, I'm going to barely come back. That may encourage you to run so hard, she's so worth it.

The last thing is this, is the God's mercy compels us to love sacrificially. Christ demonstrated a principle in relationships that is ... Maybe the one to me, I just kind of remember it more than any other and it's this and nobody is ever blessed unless someone else sacrifices. If you've ever been blessed, is because somebody parted with time, energy or resource in order for you to be blessed, somebody had to give in order for you to receive. That's just how it is in the world, that's how it is in relationships and in community and so what does he say? He says, "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

Hospitality is what we show to visitors and strangers. It's friendliness to other people even people we don't know. Contribute to the needs of the saints and so this is what he has, he goes, "In relational to life, there's something for saints and strangers." You see, when times get tough as they are today, fear makes us really tight and that's when love takes over. Because, love seeks to provide what fear would protect. I have money, I can part with some of that money to help somebody else. I have a home, I can part with some of the privacy of that home in order to help somebody else and let me just say, in closing, that I want to commend you as a Church Family, your generosity as a church is not only encouraging to me, it's quite frankly stunning. It's so encouraging and without generosity, so many people have been blessed.

We acknowledge that God's grace is in your life and so we give praise. Let me close with this application, let's consider Christ's sacrifice to give us mercy. You see, when we consider what he did for us to give us mercy, that there's no condemnation in Christ, suddenly, what it does is, it frees us up to say, "I can sacrifice for you." And friends ... For those of you who don't know Christ, I want you to know that's exactly what he did.

Jesus Christ did come to this earth, he died after living without any sin, he died to pay the penalty for our sin, he was buried and he rose from the dead and when he rose from the dead, he says, "If you will believe in me and believe you need me, I will forgive you of your sin and I will give you my righteousness, I will justify you, there will be no condemnation over you from this time forevermore." If you're here and you're considering the claims of Christ and what it means to trust him, we commend you to him. This is what Jesus does for us. He loves us this way, he treats us this way, he is so worth following and so we call you to him now.

Let me pray. Father in heaven, we thank you that you love us, we thank you for your mercy, we thank you for your kindness, we thank you that you give to us this kind of love. We thank you that your love for us is genuine. You abhor what is evil, you hold fast to what is good for us. You love us as family members, you outdo us in showing honor. Every one of these we could go and we say, this is what we see in you and what we want to see in us. I ask God that you would forgive me first and you would forgive us as a people. For the ways that our life and relationships do not look like what we've read.

Would you help us to understand and help us to build our life upon you. We acknowledge that apart from Christ, we can do nothing and so we sing to you now about our desire to build our life upon you, recognizing that we need you. For those who are considering Christ, would you help them Lord to trust you now, help them to call upon you in faith and believe. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



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