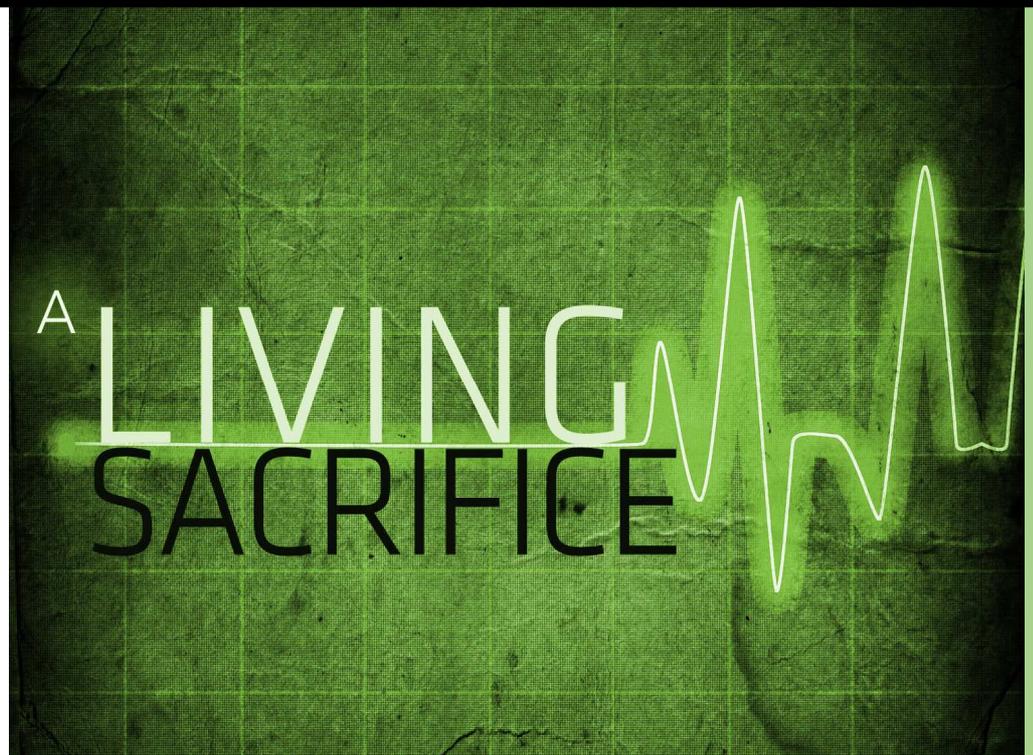


2016

Living Sacrifice Series



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www.bkchurch.org.au

Introduction

This booklet is a collection of sermons from Bruce Rock Church of Christ. They are the first sermons preached by Pastor Dave Quinn when he began his role as Interim Pastor in August 2016.

The theme of these sermons is Being a Living Sacrifice for God and focuses on Romans 12. The sermon titles include:

1. Five things to help us be a living sacrifice
2. Transformed or conformed
3. 10 things God says about you in the Bible
4. Born and equipped for a time such as this
5. A greater love
6. A greater perspective

The idea behind these messages is to encourage us to live our lives in God's service; to renew our minds to line our thinking up with Kingdom thinking; to understand who we are in Christ; to live our lives by loving others the way Jesus loved; and ensuring we are not overcome by the evil things that happen in the world around us.

We hope and pray these messages are a blessing and encouragement to you.

To find out more about our church or to contact us, you can visit our website here at www.bkchurch.org.au.

God's Richest Blessings.

Five things to help us be a living sacrifice

The title of my message today is “Five things to help us be a living sacrifice”. For my devotions this past week or so I have been working my way through Romans 12. As I did this Romans 12:1 has really stuck in my mind.

Romans 12:1 NLT says, “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him”.

In this verse Paul urges us as believers to follow Jesus example in being a sacrifice, but rather die for sin, we die to ourselves and offer ourselves to God. Paul encourages us to be living sacrifices. To give our lives for God’s service. He says that this is an acceptable sacrifice to God and the way we truly worship Him. It is a right response to the actions of a loving God.

But how do we go about being a living sacrifice? What are some of the things it entails? If we read through the rest of chapter Romans 12 Paul gives us a few clues. Today I just want to touch on some of the things that jumped out at me as I meditated on this chapter. In future messages I will dig a little deeper into the main points and give them a sermon of their own.

1. Renew our mind

Verse 2 says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Renewing your mind. This is a vital first step if we are wanting to live a life in God’s service and be a living sacrifice. We need to line our hearts and minds up with God’s thinking.

How do we do this? The primary way is by prayerfully reading, reflecting and meditating on the Bible. As we do this we allow God’s Spirit and God’s Word to enter our minds and sink deep into our hearts. The result of this if we do it diligently over a period of time, it changes our hearts to our minds forever. The result of this is “Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

I find that as the years go by and my mind is renewed more and more, the things of God become easier and more natural to do. It is easier to love others, it is easier to serve others and it is easier to live by Kingdom standards.

In many ways our minds are like the gearboxes of our lives. If our minds are renewed, it is easier to put them in D for drive and go forward in Christ and His will for our lives. If they are not renewed we might be in Park, Neutral or even Reverse. Those who drive an automatic will know that if you are in drive, you only have to take your foot off the brake and you start moving forward.

As I said I will unpack renewing our minds in a deeper way in a future sermon. But today I just want to make the first point that a key to being a living sacrifice is to renew our minds.

2. Use our gifts well

Verses 6-8 – “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Paul tells us to use whatever gift God has given us to the best of our abilities. If it is to prophesy, teach, serve, give, show kindness or encourage we should do the best job we can.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul also says, “4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

And in 1 Peter 4:10 Peter reminds us to, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Using our gifts well is a key part of being a living sacrifice for God. This is sometimes where the sacrifice part comes in. There is work in finding, recognising and developing your gifts. I may be an encourager but we have to work at it. My loner tendencies needed to be overcome so I could be where people were who needed encouragement. I was told I had a gift of teaching, but I had to work to develop my gift with diligent study. I also had to get over my paralysing fear of public speaking. It can be hard and a sacrifice, but there is no greater and more peaceful place to be than being right in the middle God's will using God's gifts for the good of others. I wouldn't be standing here today if I didn't work hard to develop my gifts.

3. Really love each other

Verses 9-10 – “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. ”.

Both the NIV and the NLT say this well, but I love the way the NLT puts it “Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them”. That is straight to the point!

I remember when our girls were young we put this verse on the fridge. We then had a list of ways we could show we really love someone. It said things like...

- Pray for them,
- Do nice things for them
- Share things with others

- Listen to them
- Speak nicely to them
- Give them a hug
- Give them a present
- One even said by giving them chocolate!

Kids have a way of putting things simply. I have never forgotten these things. They showed me that we love others in practical ways, by helping when they are in need. This is sometimes a sacrifice. But it is well worth it. Because it means we are living out this life that Jesus calls us to live and being a light unto the world around us.

There are a number of other places in the New Testament that talks about the importance of loving one another.

1 John 4:7 - Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11 - Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John 13:34-35 - "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

These verses remind us that we are commanded to love one another, that those who love are born of God, that since God loves us we should love one another and by our love for one another people we know we are Jesus' disciples. My heart is to be known as a disciple of Jesus, so I need to love others.

4. Live in harmony with each other

Verses 14-18 – “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

In the next section Paul urges us to live at peace with everyone. The NIV says to live at peace with everyone as much as it depends on you.

I remember years ago I worked with a lady who just didn't like me. No matter what I did or said she just would not warm up to me. She would even go out of her way to make sure I did not

receive favourable treatment at work. One day I read these verses and it reminded me that no matter how she treats me I had to live at peace with her. So I prayed and asked God to help me work with her and to ask if there was ways I could bless her. In time I emailed her and apologised if I had offended her without knowing. As a result, we were able to talk and the problem was sorted. We had a good working relationship and were able to talk and we did not have a barrier between us.

It really brought home to me that we should try to love and serve others even if they persecute us as Christians. God makes it very clear it is not our place to curse or take revenge. That is a big sacrifice at times and is contrary to a worldly way of thinking.

If you want to be a living sacrifice, you need to live at peace with everyone as much as it depends on you.

5. Conquer evil with good

Verse 21 – “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good”

Paul finally finishes this section with a plea to not let evil overcome us, but we need to press on and overcome evil with good deeds. I remember years ago I was heavily involved in community outreach with our church in Perth. We would go door to door giving away Jesus videos. We were on fire and we wanted to take on the world. Then along came September 11. It is when I let evil overcome me. I was horrified at the evil people could do to each other. It really knocked me and I found it hard to go out every Saturday. I knew there was evil in the world, but somehow it brought it home to me. It took me a few months to get back on track.

Verse 21 was one of the things that helped me get back on track. God commands us to conquer evil by doing good.

Edmund Burke once said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”. I think Princess Di used that in one of her famous speeches too.

It can be a sacrifice to have an overcoming attitude. But if we keep moving forward and serving God by serving others the Bible promises we will reap a harvest at the right time. It tells us this is Galatians 6:9.

Conclusion

As we can see from these things being a living sacrifice is about:

1. Renewing our minds to line up with Kingdom thinking
2. Using our gifts well
3. Living at peace with those around us.

4. Really loving and serving others.

5. Conquer the evil things that take place in this world by doing good.

And while we do these things we are to keep our hope, be patient when things are going wrong and keep praying faithfully.

Let's pray

Transformed or conformed

The title of my message today is Transformed or Conformed. It is a follow up message from last week where I did an overview of [Romans 12](#). In the message I brought out five main points. We need to renew our minds, use our gifts well, really love one another, live at peace with everyone and overcome evil with good.

In this message I want to focus on verses one and two and share four main ideas. I want to look at the two Greek words for transformed and conformed and one place where they are found in the Bible together. One is positive and the other is used in a negative way or as a warning.

I also want to look at what we are supposed to be transformed into, what helps us to transform and what should be our ultimate motivation for staying the course of transformation.

But first let us have a look at the text of [Romans 12:1-2](#).

Bible Reading – [Romans 12:1-2 NIV](#)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ([Romans 12:1-2 NIV](#))

There are two key words in this passage. Transformed and Conformed. Right now I want to have a look at the two Greek words used for them.

1. Definition of the Key Words for Transformed and Conformed

Transformed

The New Testament Greek word for transformed is metamorphoo. It means to change, transform or morph into something else. Meta means change, morph means transform into something else... and the oo just determines if it is a noun, verb or adjective.

The word metamorphoo is used twice in the New Testament. Once in [Matthew 17:1-2](#) when Jesus was Transfigured on the mountain. The other one is in [Romans 12:2](#) that we read just now. "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Metamorphoo is the word we get metamorphosis from which talks about the transformation from a caterpillar into a butterfly and the tadpole into a frog.

As you can see in the picture on the screen, the butterfly starts out as something very different. It looks different, it behaves differently, it eats different food. Then after the transformation it takes on a new way. Instead of crawling along the ground or branches, it flies from tree to tree or flower to flower. It is very much like this for us as Christians. We start off as one thing and then transform into something very different. Something very beautiful.

In Paul's letters, this word is used to describe an inward renewal of a Christian's mind where the mind and thinking is changed into the likeness of Christ and His Kingdom thinking. As we saw Paul told the Roman believers: "Do not be conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" ([Rom. 12:2](#)).

When our thinking is changed our perceptions change. We see things through the eyes of faith and through the lens of eternity. Transformation begins in the mind and continues in the mind. A transformed mind produces transformed behaviour.

Conformed

The Greek word for conform, *suschematizō* means "to take the form as another." It has the context of being moulded into another form.

As I said there is the positive context being slowly moulded into Christ in [Romans 8:29](#), but there is also the negative one when we are shaped into something else. It is very much like we do with kids when we play with play do. We roll it, squash it down, roll it some more and finally we force it into a mould and the lump is then changed into a giraffe, a chicken or a pig.

Both of these Greek words talk about being changed. One is slowly transformed over time, the other is about being moulded.

2. What is the goal of being transformed?

If the goal of the Christian is to be transformed into something else – what is the goal? There are two main things.

a. To become like Christ

The goal of this transformation is become like Christ – to become conformed to His likeness, to become like our Teacher and to reflect His glory in the world.

[Romans 8:29-30](#) tells us that "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified".

It is interesting to note that in [Romans 8:29-30](#) it uses a past tense. the words "predestined," "called," "justified," and especially "glorified" in [Romans 8:29](#) and [30](#) are in the past tense. The past tense is used because God, from His eternal perspective, has already seen this completed process.

[Luke 6:40](#) says "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher".

[2 Corinthians 3:18](#) “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”.

Our role as Christians to reflect His glory to the world around. Again, the goal of this transformation is become like Christ – to become conformed to His likeness, to become like our Teacher and to reflect His glory in the world.

b. To live like Christ

Christ lived a life of surrender and this should be our pattern too. In the last week of His life Jesus surrendered three times. Jesus surrendered His will in the Garden of Gethsemane, He surrenders His rights before Pilate at Gabatha, and He surrendered His life on the cross at Golgotha.

[John 6:38](#) tells us that Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me”.

Jesus also lived a life of servant-hood. He washed others feet. He modelled whoever wants to be the greatest must be a servant of all ([Mark 10:45](#)).

Jesus lived a life of compassion. He saw people were hungry and He fed them ([Mark 8:2](#)). He had compassion on the widow and raised her only son back to life ([Luke 7:13-15](#)). He became a compassionate Shepherd to the people in [Mark 6:34](#). In [Matthew 14:14](#) He felt sorry for them and healed all their sick.

As a result of all these things and Jesus’ compassion great crowds followed Him and many came to faith. He turned the world upside down and it continues to be changed today as a result of this one solitary life.

Our goal as Christians is to become like Christ and to live like Christ. This is the Transformation God wants for us.

3. What helps us to transform?

In my morning devotions a while back I was reflecting on the way that God changes our lives over time. Our old habits and attitudes slowly fall away and good deeds start to flow. As I was thinking about this I was thinking of two ways this process happens.

a. The Word of God

The Bible has a way of transforming our thinking. As [Hebrews 4:12](#) says “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”.

The Word of God cuts to the heart of things and shows us where we are wrong and when we are not living the way God wants. But it doesn’t leave us all condemned, it gives hope and

forgiveness and shows us the right way to think and live. Time spent reflectively in God's Word brings godly change.

We need to hear the Word of God because faith come by hearing the Word ([Romans 10:17](#)). We need to study it like the Bereans in [Acts 17:11](#). They studied it to see if what Paul said was true. We need to memorize it and keep it hidden in our hearts to keep our lives on track ([Psalm 119:9-11](#)). We need to meditate on it to be blessed and fruitful like trees planted by streams of living water ([Psalm 1:2-3](#)). We need to do what it says otherwise we are just deceiving ourselves ([James 1:22](#)). When we do these things our minds are renewed like Paul was calling for in [Romans 12:2](#). As we saw earlier transformation begins in the mind and continues in the mind. A transformed mind produces transformed behaviour. It changes us on the inside from worldly thinking to Christ centred Kingdom thinking.

b. The Spirit of God

God's Holy Spirit helps to transform us inwardly. When we come to Christ the Holy Spirit resides in us ([Romans 8:11](#)) and He helps us to change. The power that raised Christ from the dead lives inside us. Day by day this power transforms us inwardly ([2 Corinthians 4:16](#)) and we are changed into the likeness of Christ.

So the Word of God and the Spirit of God work hand in hand. As we spend time in God's Word, the Holy Spirit teaches, changes and strengthens us to become the people God intended us to be all along. Like the grub who builds a cocoon to change into the butterfly we need to build our cocoon of Bible reading and allow the Holy Spirit to speak and bring change.

But there needs to be a balance to it. As David Watson once said, "All Word and no Spirit, we dry up. All Spirit and no Word, we blow up. Both Word and Spirit, we grow up".

4. What should motivate us?

If the world and everything in it tries to draw us away from the God and this transformation process, and we know what we need to do, what should motivate us to stay on track.

a. The love of Christ

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again ([2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NIV](#)).

b. The mercy of the Father

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship ([Romans 12:1 NIV](#)). We have been forgiven and set free ([Romans 6:17-18](#)), we have eternal life ([Romans 6:23](#)), we have peace with God ([Romans 5:1](#)) and we are saved from His wrath ([Romans 5:9](#)).

c. God's promise to keep working on us

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus ([Philippians 1:6 NIV](#)).

d. Future giving account to God

So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad ([2 Corinthians 5:9-10 NIV](#)).

The love of Christ, the mercy of the Father, God's promise to keep working on us and that one day we will stand before God keeps us motivated to keep pressing on.

Closing

Today we have looked at [Romans 12:1-2](#). At the heart of these verses is the call to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. It tells us not to fall into line and be conformed to the pattern of this world.

We saw that this transformation takes place when we renew our minds. We become changed to become like Christ, so we can live like Christ. And even though the world and its pressures try to stall or even side track our transformation, we know that by renewing our minds in the Word of God and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us, this transformation can take place. Our motivation is the love of Christ, the mercy of the Father, God's promise to keep working on us and the knowledge that we will one day stand before Christ and give account of our lives.

Final Thought

Today I want to leave you with this thought...

We are all being transformed into something. What are you being transformed into? Is it Christ? Or is it conformed to the pattern of this world?

10 things God says about you in the Bible

The title of my message today is “10 things God says about you in the Bible”. I want to continue on in my series of messages from [Romans 12](#). Last week we looked at [Romans 12:1-2](#). This talked about being a living sacrifice and renewing our mind. We saw that we are being renewed in to the likeness of Christ, so we can live like Christ. We also saw that the Bible and the Holy Spirit help in this process. And that our motivations are the love of Christ, the mercy of the Father, God’s promise to keep working on us and the reminder that one day we will stand before Christ to give account. Today I want at the next verse – [Romans 12:3](#).

[Romans 12:3](#) says, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

This verse reminds of the important of having a right view of ourselves. It says we should think of our self with sober judgement. The Greek word used here for sober is so-fron-eh’-o. It means to think and be in your right mind or to think correctly about ourselves. Some people think too highly of themselves, while others have a too low opinion. The best way to think right about ourselves in by seeing who God says we are in the Bible.

As Christians I believe at times we need to be reminded of who God says we are. Sometimes we forget just how loved we are and just how important we are to God. Today I want to look at 10 Scriptures that changed and transformed my life. They helped me to see myself through God’s eyes and are helping me to fulfil the destiny God has before me.

The main focus is to let God’s Word speak to our hearts and minds. I will read each Scripture and make a very short comment.

1. You are created in God’s image

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ([Genesis 1:27](#))

We are made in God’s image. According to most theologians or Bible scholars, being made in God’s image has three aspects or three schools of thought...

- Structural – Structural in the way we are made. We think, can reason, make choices and love. We are logical cognitive beings. When we do these things we reflect God’s image.
- Vocational – God is vocational. He is creative in the way He works and created this world. When we create and work and use our gifts in the world around us we reflect God’s image.
- Relational – God is in the perfect loving triune relationship – the Trinity. Three persons, but one in love, purpose, mission, unity and relationship. When we love God and relate to each other in loving ways we reflect God outwards to the world around us.

While most theologians or Bible scholars fall into one of those camps, I believe that being made in the image of God is a combination of all three. When we make choices, when we work using God's gifts and when we related lovingly to each other, we reflect God's image.

As Christ followers we need to remember that God's DNA is stamped on us. Yes the fall of man skewed the image when God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden and sin entered the world, but it was restored in Christ's death and resurrection. We are able to reflect all God wants us to be.

2. You were chosen before the foundation of the world

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ([Ephesians 1:4-5](#))

God chose us before the creation of the world. What did He choose us for? To be holy and blameless in His sight. Why? Because that would give Him pleasure! It was His will and prior choice to have you in His Kingdom and adopted into His eternal family. There are no mistakes, regardless of what people tell us. You were chosen by God.

3. You were created for good works

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ([Ephesians 2:10](#))

The NLT says we are God's masterpiece, like Leonardo Da Vinci and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. We are created by God for good works that He planned for us before He made the world. You were on His mind and He had a job for you to do. Like Queen Esther was chosen for a time such as this, so are you. God made you perfectly to play your part. He used all the right ingredients when moulding you on His potter's wheel. You are gifted with everything you need to do all He needs you to do. Next week we will look into this in a deeper way when we look at using our gifts well.

4. You were adopted as children of God

Yet to all who received him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ([John 1:12](#))

We are God's children. Adopted into His eternal family because our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. We are co-heirs with Christ. We are all born into this world in to natural families. Some are good and some are not so good. But when we come to Christ we enter the eternal family of God. We here are brothers and sisters. Not just for this life, but for all eternity.

As I shared in my message a few weeks ago – we will spend way more time in eternity than we will on earth. When we have been there 10,000 years we have only just begun. Look around

and see your brothers and sisters in Christ. These relationships will last for eternity. We are brothers and sisters in Christ forever and ever and ever. We are adopted into Christ and God's eternal family.

5. You have the power of the resurrection inside you

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

([Romans 8:11](#))

Not only are we God's children and made in God's image, but we have part of God living inside us. We have resurrection power living in us. The Bible also tells us that we are a Temple of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit resides in you ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)). When we come together we have part of the Creator of the universe resides in us ([1 Corinthians 3:16](#)). We don't have to feel powerless because the same Spirit who hovered over the waters and the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is alive and active in you.

6. You are no longer condemned

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ([Romans 8:1](#))

Often we feel condemned and unworthy in the face of a Holy God. God tells us in the Bible there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. None at all. The Greek word used here for condemned is kat-ak'-ree-mah. It means an adverse sentence or judgement from a judge. When someone is condemned and ready to be sentenced to jail. But this verse says there is no condemnation. No sentence against us. Our judgement has been put aside.

As a result we can't let other people make us feel condemned, or the devil and we can't even condemn ourselves. We are free. Personally I was the worst offender at condemning myself. If I spoke to you the way I spoke to myself most of the time, then you would not want to be my friend and you would definitely want me as your Pastor! [Romans 8:33-34 NLT](#) told me that if God has said we are right with Him, who can condemn us. No-one! Not even ourselves! Now I am free to live in the love of Christ. Free from condemnation.

7. You are alive and seated with Christ

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ([Ephesians 2:4-7](#))

When Jesus returned to heaven He took up the highest place in the universe – seated at the right hand of the Father. These verses tell us that spiritually we are seated right there with Christ. You hold a special place in the heavenly realm. Learning this at Bible college changed my

whole perspective on life and how I see myself. I now see my standing as with Christ. I can hold my head up high.

8. God created you in your mother's womb

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ([Psalm 139:13](#)). [Jeremiah 1:5](#) – before I created you, I knew you.

This is David praying/talking to God. David realised the special role God played in creating him. He knit him together in his mother's womb. The potter moulded and shaped him into a future king. God also knit you together. Making you exactly how He wanted you to be. There are no mistakes. You are what He intended you to be. God said that same thing to Jeremiah. [Jeremiah 1:5](#) says, "before I created you, I knew you."

9. God loved you and sent His Son for you

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ([1 John 4:9-10](#))

God loved you so much that He couldn't bear for you to miss out on heaven and eternity with Him. He sent Jesus to die for you. Jesus gave His life for you. For God so loved you as it says in [John 3:16](#). It is the greatest sacrifice and the greatest demonstration of love of all time. He loved you first and planned always for you to be His treasured possession. You are God's treasured possession. Loved and treasured. God is besotted with you.

When God looks at you He looks at you with the pride and love of a parent holding their new born child, or like when you watch your children play, or like when you see your child ride their bike for the first time, or when you see your child grow up and marry. There is an immense love and pride in you. God loves you. He adores you. He is besotted with you.

10. You are free in Christ

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ([John 8:36](#))

If you are in Christ, you are free. Free of worry about salvation, free of worry about the future, free of the past, free of sin, free of guilt, free of condemnation, free of striving to be accepted, free of the need to know if God loves you or not. He loves you and accepts you. You are His. You are chosen. You are part of His eternal family. You are free of everything that would hold you back for being all God wants you to be.

Closing

Today we have looked at 10 passages that tell us who we are and what we have in Christ. And this is only just scratching the surface of the amount of passages in the Bible that tell us how important to and how loved we are by God.

When we fully believe these verses it changes our hearts and minds and it truly changes the way we live. We can stand taller and we can be confident in taking on the world knowing that God loves us, is with us and is on our side.

Summary

1. You are made in God's image
2. You were chosen before the world was made
3. You were created and equipped for good works
4. You are adopted into His family
5. You have the Holy Spirit living inside you
6. You are no longer condemned
7. You are seated with Christ
8. You were knit together in your mother's womb
9. You are truly loved by God
10. You are free in Christ. Free from everything that would hold you back.

It is my hope and prayer that you will take these Scriptures home with you and read them everyday this week. Let them sink deep into your heart and mind. Amen.

Born and equipped for a time such as this

The title of my message today is “Born and equipped for a time such as this”. I am continuing my series from [Romans 12](#). So far we have looked at verses 1-3 which talked about being a living sacrifice, renewing our minds and having a right view of ourselves. For those of you who are online I have put the text and audio of my last message “10 things God says about you in the Bible” on the website. For those who are not online I have printed a summary of the main points and verses here.

In today’s message I want to look at the idea of being made and equipped by God with all the gifts we need to do His work. I want to look at three things that will help us to be effective in using our gifts for God.

Bible Readings: [Romans 12:4-8](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-8](#).

1. We are born for a time such as this

In my last message several weeks ago we looked at a number of verses that talked about being chosen by God and God preparing works for us to do before the foundation of the earth.

We saw that [Ephesians 2:10](#) says, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

We are created by God for good works that He planned for us before He made the world. You were on His mind and He had a job for you to do. Like Queen Esther was chosen for a time such as this, so are you.

Before I came to Christ and before I started reading the Bible I thought I was born on the 29th of April 1967 by chance. I thought it was some random act of the universe – a cosmic chance. But I have learned that I was born at the exact moment in history because God wanted me born then. He had work for me to do that only I could do, because He uniquely shaped me for it.

If you think about it God is in a habit of raising people up at the right time. Noah when He needed an Ark, Moses when He need His people out of Egypt, Abraham when He needed a nation, Elijah when He need some false prophets defeated, Nehemiah when He needed the wall rebuilt, Ezra when He needed the people revived, David when He needed a King, Gideon when He needed an army lead, Esther when He need His nation saved, John the Baptist when He needed the Saviour announced, Jesus when He needed a Saviour, and Paul When He need the Gentiles to be reached with the Gospel. These are just to name a few.

You could have been born at any time in history, but God chose for you to be born now. You could have been born in 200BC, 57AD, 1232AD or even in 100 years from now. But you weren’t, you were born exactly when God wanted for His reasons and His purposes. When we realise this, it makes us want to find out why we were born at this time and what God has for us to do?

2. We are gifted for a time such as this

In the Bible it looks at the Gifts in four main places. This is [Romans 12:4-8](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-12](#), [1 Peter 4:9-11](#), and [Ephesians 4:11-12](#). The first three are about Spiritual Gifts for believers to help them do God's work and the last ones are the Ministries Gifts that help equip the church to help people use their gifts.

As we can see from the screen there are a number of gifts that are mentioned in several lists. This is probably because the Apostle Paul wrote Romans, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians and there is always a little bit of crossover in his writing.

Definitions

I am going to share some definitions of the various gifts mentioned in these passages. I want you to keep two things in mind. One is that I only have time to share a short definition of each. While some write books about them. The second is that I went to a Bible College that was non-denominational and had people from all types of churches – Brethren, Church of Christ, Baptist, Apostolic, Salvation Army, Lutheran, Four Square – so there was a wide variety of thoughts on the gifts. The Bible College took a middle of the road approach.

APOSTLE: [Eph. 4:11](#); [1 Cor. 12:28](#) – to be sent forth to new frontiers with the gospel, providing leadership over church bodies and maintaining authority over spiritual matters pertaining to the church (Greek Word: apostolos – 'apo'=from 'stello'=send; one sent forth)

DISCERNMENT: [1 Cor. 12:10](#) – to clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power

EVANGELISM: [Eph. 4:11](#) – to be a messenger of the good news of the Gospel. While we are all called to share our faith. People with the gift of evangelism are always thinking about bringing people to Christ.

EXHORTATION: [Rom. 12:8](#) – to come along side of someone with words of encouragement, comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be (Greek Word: paraklesis – calling to one's side)

FAITH: [1 Cor. 12:8-10](#) – to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.

GIVING: [Rom. 12:8](#) – to share what material resources you have generously and cheerfully without thought of return.

HEALINGS: [1 Cor. 12:9,28,30](#) – to be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually

HELPS: [1 Cor. 12:28](#) – to render support or assistance to others in the body so as to free them up for ministry or other things.

HOSPITALITY: [1 Pet. 4:9,10](#) – to warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one’s home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging (Greek Word: philoxenos – love of strangers; ‘philos’=love; ‘xenos’=stranger)

KNOWLEDGE: [1 Cor. 12:8](#) – A Word of knowledge is a revelation from God, concerning a difficulty or need, of facts not known naturally to those involved.

LEADERSHIP: [Rom. 12:8](#) – to provide direction of the local church with such care and diligence so as to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of these goals. My favourite description of Christian leadership is, “Christian leaders are people who are moved at God’s pace and in God’s time to God’s place. Christian Leadership is about taking a central role in taking people further into God’s plans and purposes and encouraging others into a deeper relationship and understanding of God.”

MERCY: [Rom. 12:8](#) – to be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion and caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress.

PASTOR: [Eph. 4:11](#) – to be responsible for spiritually caring for, protecting, guiding, and feeding a group of believers entrusted to one’s care. I rate 100% in surveys.

PROPHECY: [Rom. 12:6](#); [1 Cor. 12:10](#); [Eph. 4:11](#) – to speak forth the message of God to His people. This can be one on one or to a church group – sermon or words.

SERVICE: [Rom. 12:7](#) – to identify undone tasks in God’s work, however big or small, and use available resources to get the job done.

TEACHING: [Rom. 12:7](#); [1 Cor. 12:28](#); [Eph. 4:11](#) – to instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth. I usually rate 100% when I do gift surveys in this area.

TONGUES: [1 Cor. 12:10](#); [14:27-28](#) – to speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God’s message in their own language, or to the church body to be edified when shared publicly. There is also a private speaking in tongues for personal growth.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: [1 Cor. 12:10](#); [14:27](#), [28](#) – to translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues.

WISDOM: [1 Cor. 12:8](#) – to apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations.

We are given these gifts for the purpose of building the church up – growing us in our faith and growing the church in numbers. God wants us to grow in our faith and new people to come to faith that is why He has gifted us to partner in His work.

As followers of Christ it is important that we understand how God has made us and what gifts He has given. This allows us to be most effective for Jesus and His desire to see everyone saved ([2 Peter 3:9](#)).

There are also spiritual gift surveys we can do that ask questions and help us to narrow down a few areas. We have one on our website. If you type in www.bkchurch.org.au/gifts/ you will find one.

Once we work out how we are gifted it is important to develop them by using them, working alongside other who have those gifts and undertaking further studies if required. Years ago one of my Pastors said he thought I had a teaching gift. He gave me a chance to lead communion, then in time speak and the youth group and eventually he gave me the chance to preach my first sermon. This combined with 7 years of study helped me to develop this gift.

3. Time alone with God is the key to using our gifts well

We see in the Bible that Jesus often drew aside to a solitary place to spend time with His Father. In [Mark 1:35](#) we read that, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

On this occasion Jesus had spent the night before healing many people and preaching to great crowds, so He drew aside to spend time alone with His Father. He drew strength, for fellowship with His Father, and it seems direction because they went off to another place.

As I read about this and other passages when Jesus drew aside, I can’t help but think of the importance for us to have time alone with God too. If Jesus, as the Son of God, needed time in His Father’s presence, then so do we.

When I was at Bible College I read an article by Pastor and author Dr Gordon MacDonald about spending time alone with God. In the article he says, “the forming of the soul that it might be a dwelling place for God is the primary work of the Christian leader”. He went on to say that developing this intimate relationship with God through daily prayer, reflective Bible reading and time alone in God’s presence is vital if Christian leaders and Christians are going to be all they can be in God.

Understanding that Jesus drew aside for intimate time with His Father and that my primary responsibility as a Minister is to maintain and intimate relationship with God, have helped me to stay on fire for God. If I am to lead people into an intimate place with God, I need to be there myself. So when the world around me presses in and the circumstances of life try to force me away from God, I stop and focus my attention back on God and seek intimate times with Him.

When I am in tune with God, I see His bigger for the world and my part in it. I know that I am here for a reason, that I am gifted for God and I need to be about His work for me. Time alone with God – TAWG – is just so vital if we are going to all we can be for God and use our gifts well.

Summary

So in closing today I want to finish with a summary of today's message. You were born for a time such as this. You were no accident, not by chance, it was by God's prior choice.

You were also gifted for a time such as this. God has given you gifts to do the things that He planned for you in advance. Our role is to find these gifts, develop them and use them to build the church and bring people to Christ.

Lastly, time alone with God is the key to using our gifts well. Jesus, who was the Son of God, drew aside from the business of life to spend time alone with His Father. He drew strength, encouragement, and direction during these times of fellowship. If Jesus needed this, how much more do we.

Amen.

A greater love

The title of my message today is “A Greater Love”. It is inspired by two things – our readings from [Romans 12:9-20](#) & [Philippians 2:3-11](#) and reflections on the life of Christ.

In today’s readings we saw that it called us to a different way of living. It talked about things like really loving one another, hating what is evil, honouring others about ourselves, being devoted to one another, practicing hospitality, sharing with those who are in need, being faithful in prayer, having the attitude of Christ and not losing our spiritual fervour. It also touched on not practicing revenge and blessing those who are our enemies.

As I thought about these things it inspired me to be a better man. It inspired me to want to live at a higher level. A Kingdom level. As I reflected on this I realised that I needed to look afresh at the life of Christ. I needed to look at some of the things He did and how He interact with others. I needed to look afresh at the way Jesus loved others and the type of things He did.

So in this message I want to look at four things where Jesus showed “a greater love”. A love that is not the usual example of this world, but a love that stretches from eternity into our world and pierces the darkness and makes our lives so much better.

1. Jesus’ love met the people’s most pressing needs

On many occasions in the Bible we see that Jesus met people’s most basic pressing need when He interacted with them.

In [Luke 7:11-15](#) Jesus raised the widows only son. It says, “Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Jesus fed the crowds – In [Mark 8:2](#) Jesus said, “I feel sorry for these people. They have been with me for three days, and they don’t have anything to eat.” He then multiplied the fishes and the loaves and they all had their fill.

Jesus healed the leper in [Matthew 8:2-3](#). “A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.”

In all three of these occasions Jesus met the people where they were at and He met their most pressing need. The people needed food, the mother needed her son as she would have no-one to look after her being a widow or no way to make a living in that society, and the leper was

healed of his sickness that made him an outcast. Interestingly Jesus would have become ceremonially defiled touching a coffin and a leper, but He did it anyway.

For us as Christians we need to meet people's basic needs in order to enter their lives. That is why I am a part of the food outreach in Merredin and we are doing food parcels here. I have given away 15 food parcels this week (13 in Merredin and 2 here). It has allowed me to enter in people's lives, talk with them, pray for them, give them Bibles and tracts, and share the Gospel. It has opened doors to people who would not normally give me the time of day.

Like Jesus' example, we need to meet people's basic needs.

2. Jesus' love had compassion and He wanted to be their Shepherd

On many occasions in the Gospels we see that Jesus was moved with compassion. Jesus often saw the great crowds of people and He wanted to be their shepherd.

In [Matthew 9:35-36](#) we see that Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

In [Matthew 14:14](#) we read, "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick."

Also in [Mark 6:35](#) it says, "When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd that was like sheep without a shepherd. He felt sorry for the people and started teaching them many things".

There was something about a crowd that caused Jesus' compassion to rise up. He saw them as individual people who needed love, provision of food, comfort, encouragement, healing and teaching. He wanted to be their Shepherd.

In the Biblical context, shepherds had several different responsibilities to their sheep and ultimately, to the owner of the sheep. They kept a lookout for predators and protected the sheep from attackers. They cared for wounded and sick sheep, nursing them back to health. They rescued them if they became lost or trapped. They spent enormous amounts of time with them guiding them to the places of nourishment and rest. The result was a trust and relationship that kept the sheep following the shepherd. The sheep were attuned to the shepherd's voice to the point that even if they were temporarily mixed with another herd, at the call of the shepherd they would separate and follow him. This is like what Jesus does for us.

As the years go by our hearts should become more like Christ where His love and compassion flows through us. We too should want to care for others in the Jesus way. We might not all be called to shepherd a church, but I believe we are all called to look after those around us in a compassionate and shepherding type of way that Jesus did.

3. Jesus' love took Him out of His way for the one person

Jesus love meant that He would go on a long journey for the one person.

In [John 4:3-7](#) it talks about the woman at the well. Verse 3 starts with, "So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" The story goes on to say that Jesus told her everything she had ever done. The journey was about 110 kilometres or two and a half days on foot. It would be like walking to Merredin and back to reach one person!

Jesus also travelled a long way for the Demon possessed man in the cemetery. In [Mark 5:1-8](#) we also see, "They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" ⁸ For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" The story goes on to say that the demons came out and went into the pigs and the man was in his right mind again.

On both of these occasions Jesus travelled a long distance to reach one person. The Bible tells us that the woman at the well ran and told everyone about Jesus. Bible scholars tell us that she was the first evangelist for the region. On the other hand, we don't hear much more of the demon possessed man who was healed. The last we heard Jesus told him to go home to his family and tell of what the Lord had done.

As I read about Jesus example of going out of His way for people I can't help but ask, "Is there anyone in my life that Jesus needs me to go out of my way for?" How about you? Is there anyone in your life too? Like the lost coin and lost sheep in [Luke 15](#), they might need our help to be found.

4. Jesus' love was a servant hearted sacrificial love

In [Mark 10:35-45](#) we see what servant hearted sacrificial love looks like. "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with

the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

In [John 13](#) we see the type of servant attitude that Jesus wants for His followers. He stands during the middle of the Passover meal, takes of His outer robes, readies a basin of water and washes the disciple’s feet. Normally this would be the job of the host to designate a servant to do this, but as it was a private gathering, there was no host and no servant. Jesus took on this role as a voluntary humiliation to teach His disciples a lesson about servant hood. Jesus doesn’t want leaders and people who will lord it over people, He wants humble servants who will take on any role. In the Luke version of this story it followed the discussion on who would be the greatest and who would sit at Jesus’ right and left hand.

In [Philippians 2](#) the Apostle Paul reminds us of the attitude we should have. The attitude of Christ.

He says in [Philippians 2:3-11](#) “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. He left the glories of heaven to live amongst us. He came to show us the Father, to teach how to live and to die on the cross in our place. Jesus humbled Himself to die on a Roman cross to pay the price for our sin. The most humiliating way a person could die. In Jesus’ very own words, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” ([John 15:13](#)) Jesus’ love was truly servant hearted and sacrificial.

Closing

In closing today let us remember the type of love that Jesus showed when He lived amongst us.

1. Jesus’ love met people’s basic needs – He fed, healed, gave life.

2. Jesus' love showed compassion and the desire to shepherd the people
3. Jesus' love meant He went out of His way for one person
4. Jesus' love was sacrificial and servant hearted – He gave everything, even His life.

Let us be inspired by Jesus' life and the example He left us.

Amen

A greater perspective

The title of my message today is A Greater Perspective. Last week we looked at the idea of A Greater Love. We looked at Jesus' life and how He demonstrated a love that was from eternity and which pierced the darkness of this world. We looked at four ways where we could love others like Jesus. We looked at how Jesus met people's basic needs, how Jesus' love had compassion, how Jesus went out of His way for the one person and how His love was a sacrificial servant hearted love.

Today's message is the final message in my series from [Romans 12](#) which was focusing on being living sacrifices for God.

The last verse of [Romans 12](#) says "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (v21). I wanted to give this small verse its own message because as Christians it is easy to become overcome by evil at times. We are constantly bombarded by news of bad events that happen around us. We watch the news, we listen to the radio, we surf the net and we talk to people down the street and bad news is not far from us. It is unusual to go a day without hearing of something bad that has taken – an earthquake, a fire, an accident, a war, a home invasion, a terrorist attack or other things.

Today I want to look at five things that will help us not to be overcome by the evil in this world, and will help us to desire to do good, so we can individually make a difference to the world around us.

1. Meditate on the right things

For us as Christians it is vital that we focus our thoughts on right things.

[Philippians 4:8](#) says, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things".

[Philippians 4:8](#) is a key verse that helps us to meditate on right things. It tells us to focus on things that are true, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. In a world that focuses on things that do not need to be dwelt upon, it is vital we set our minds right or tune them in to the right things.

It is so easy to watch the news and be overcome. It is so easy to read all the negative things on Facebook people say and be overcome. It is easy to hear about sad things around us and be overcome. It would be easy to think that the world is going to hell in a hand basket as they say.

But I am here today to remind you there is so much good going on in the world. Just this week I was reminded about a number of amazing things going on around the world.

- Tony Rinauldo and his work with World Vision and restoring desert areas to produce crops within three years.

- Destiny Rescue – a small Australian organisation has saved well over 1000 children from slavery around the world since 1998.
- Compassion Child Sponsorship – over 6000 projects in 26 countries have helped over 1.6 million children.
- The growth of Christianity in China is exploding. 3 million Christians in 1980, 58 million in 2010, 67 million today and expected to be 250 to 300 million by 2025.
- Operation Christmas Child has delivered over 135 million shoe boxes to 150 countries since 1993. This year alone it will be 12 million.
- Leprosy Mission can cure most cases of leprosy with a combination of three drugs for about \$35 Australian. Now they work with helping cured people with retraining for work!
- Christ for all nations has had over 75 million decisions for Christ since 1974.

This is to name just a few things that Christian organisations are doing around the world. There is so much more. So many good things are happening and people like you and I are at the forefront.

We need to remember that we are on the winning team and God's plans will all come to pass. We have a great hope and we need to set our hearts and minds of things above if we are not going to be overcome by the evil things of the world.

2. Be around the right people

[Hebrews 10:23-25 NLT](#) – 23 Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise. 24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.

In this passage it encourages us by using the phrase “let us” three times. It encourages to hold firm to our faith, encourage each other on to love and good deeds and not give up meeting together.

When we are around the right people who are full of faith, loving, encouraging and supportive it rubs off on us. We are able to look above the troubles of the world and help each other to focus on right things.

I once heard a story of an elderly gentleman who had stopped going to church. He had been a regular attender for many years, but he just stopped going. One day the Pastor called over to visit him. The man invited him in and went back to sitting by the fire. The Pastor did not say anything, but just sat with him. After 30 minutes the Pastor stood and pulled a coal from the fire on to the edge of the hearth. It had been on fire and glowing, but in a few minutes it went

cold. Both men just stared at it. With that the elderly man stood and pushed the coal back into the fire and said, “Ok Pastor I get it, I will see you in church this Sunday”.

This story reminds us of the importance of not neglecting meeting together and being around the right people when we can. Like the coal in the fire, it is easier to burn and be on fire when we are together.

3. Meditate on Scripture

[Psalms 1:1-3](#) says, “Blessed is the man [or woman, child] who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”

[Joshua 1:6-9](#) says, “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Both of these passages talk about the importance on meditating on Scripture. [Psalm 1](#) tell us that if we delight in God’s law and meditate on it, we will be like trees planted by streams of water. We will bring fruit forth in the right season, we will not wither and we will prosper in all we do. These are a promise from God. When we are feeling weary from the world and the evil things it is important to meditate on God’s word and hold on to promises like this.

[Joshua 1](#) was at the time of Joshua’s call to take over from Moses. Verse 1 says Moses is dead, now get all the people ready to cross over into the promised land. I don’t know about you, but that seems a daunting task to me. It would be easy to be overcome by the evil things Joshua would see. That is why God told him three times in four verses to be strong and courageous. In one verse He says be strong and very courageous. In the midst of this God tells him to “not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful”. Joshua’s call to take the people into the promised land included a call to meditate on God’s Word and not let it depart from his mouth.

It is so vital to keep God’s Word in our hearts, in our minds and on our lips if we are to overcome the evil around us.

4. Continue in prayer

It has been said that the Bible is our food source as Christians. It has also been said that prayer is like the air we breathe.

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#) says, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”.

[1 Peter 5:7](#) – Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you

[Philippians 4:6-7](#) says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

These three passages remind us of the importance of being in continual prayer. God wants us to cast our cares upon Him in [1 Peter 5:7](#). When I read this verse I imagine casting out with a giant fishing rod. Casting a long way and allowing my cares to sink deep into the ocean of God. The last verse reminds us to not be anxious about anything but to take it to God in prayer. It promises that if we do, God WILL guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. A great promise.

Several weeks ago I touched on the following devotion plan I have been doing for years. As you can see on the screen it has five main areas. The prayer part is Praise, petition, intercession and Listen. Praise is the things I am thankful to God for on that day. Petition is the prayers for my family and I. Intercession is for the church members, community and things people have asked me to pray for. And listen is a time when I quietly sit with God and ask Him to speak.

There are three benefits of this idea. The first is that it keeps my prayers balanced between thankfulness, for our needs, for others needs and for God to speak. The second is because I write them down I can refer back to them as time goes on. And thirdly it keeps me accountable to make sure I am having time alone with God each day.

Having this balanced approach to prayer helps me not to be overcome by the world and all that happens in it.

5. Look outwards to serve

Once we have done the first four things we are in a good place to look outwards and serve God by serving others. There are so many verses in the Bible that encourage us to serve the Lord.

[1 Peter 4:10](#) – Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

[Colossians 3:23-24](#) – Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

[Matthew 5:16](#) – In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

[James 2:26](#) – As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without good deeds is dead.

[Matthew 28:18-20](#) – Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The Bible reminds us that we are to be about God’s work while there is still time. We need to use our gifts for the good of others, we need to work as though we are working for God and not man, we need to let our light shine so God gets the glory, and we need to be about making disciples. These things get me out of bed in the morning. These things keep me motivated and on fire for God. One day this body will be in the ground and I will not be able to serve God on this earth any more. I need to be about God’s work while I can. We all do.

Closing

Serving God from the foundation that is filled with the Bible, prayer, good people around you and we are meditating on things noble and pure is a lot easier and will help us not to be overcome by the evil in the world.

So today as we finish our service and go off to our church picnic let us remember these five points.

1. Meditate on the right things
2. Be around the right people
3. Meditate on Scripture
4. Continue in prayer
5. Look outwards to serve

A final word from Jesus...

[John 16:33](#) – “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Amen