

Inside Out  
a message based on  
Romans 11:33-12:3

Before we read the passage a word on the placing of it. The theme verse for the book of Romans is in chapter 1:16 where Paul writes that he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. What is the gospel? He spends a lot of time developing the idea that the gospel is found in the cross of Jesus Christ. What Jesus did on the cross is what counts; it's nothing we do; it's not what we bring; it's all Jesus!

In the chapter just before the one we're about to read, Paul has spent a lot of time outlining for the believer what God is up to change the world. So in chapter 9, verse 16 he writes, *It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.* This is an interpretation of something that God had spoken to Moses, quoted the verse before, where God declares that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. This is the centre of the gospel: God has had mercy on us! And so what is our response? Paul's response is worship. He can hardly contain himself, he is so excited, he is overwhelmed by what God has done to bring about change to the world. This is where we will start our reading this morning. Please stand at this time in honor of God's word as we read it.

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Followers of Jesus:

The theme for the All-North-American Youth Unlimited Convention 2009 was, "Living Inside Out." What does it mean to live inside out?

Many of us here have grown up going to church. We do the "church thing." We come to services on Sunday. We've gone to Sunday school, are now either attending or have attended Youth Discipleship classes, been involved in Total Impact. Some of us have even done what we call "profession of faith." Some more of us have gone to Christian school. We know the jargon called Christian. We know about Jesus, have heard about God, have an inkling about the Holy Spirit. We are good Christian kids who don't do much in the way of wrong-doing. We know the difference between right and wrong. The question is, are we really following **Jesus**? Do we really know Jesus by heart, and God the Father, do we know them by heart?

When I was a teenager one of the people who had a great impact on me was someone I did not ever meet. He was a singer/song-writer, a fantastic piano player who was, I think, a prophet in his time. He wrote a song called, "Asleep in the Light." Are we asleep in the light? He loved to talk about the church. One of the things I remember him saying on one of his albums (we didn't have cds back then) was something that really hit me. "Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes you a hamburger." Are we Christians who live from the inside out? Do we really follow Jesus, or do we just follow some rules? Can we say we really know God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, or do we should we really say, "Yeah, I've heard of him before, but I really don't know him"?

Jarrold Jones. Ever heard of him? Those who went to Convention heard him a lot! He tells the story of Mike the headless chicken. Read all about it at [miketheheadlesschicken.org](http://miketheheadlesschicken.org). It happened on September 10, 1945. Farmer Lloyd Olsen was asked by his wife Clara to go to the barn on a mission: chop the head off the rooster there so she could prepare for supper that night. Lloyd did the ugly deed sort of routinely. The chicken lived! It lived for 18 months following. It did everything chickens do: walk around, peck for food, preen his feathers. Lloyd, seeing that the chicken had such a strong will to live, fed him with a dropper, dropping water and grain down the chicken's throat.

How is that possible? A lot of people, though, are just like that chicken. We walk like a Christian, we talk like a Christian, we act like a Christian; but are we really living through the power of the risen Christ in us?

The passage before us tells us that our minds, what we put into our minds is important. If I were to ask you for your favorite movie quotes, would you be able to tell me? What about your favorite song you've put on your mp3 player? How much time have you spent this past week in the front of the computer screen on Facebook or emailing or surfing the net? How does that time allotment compare with the time you've spent reading a chapter or two in the Bible; praying to God (not just asking him for stuff, as though Jesus were your personal assistant)? Jarrod Jones asked us to imagine people coming to North American after it has been ruined and no one is living here anymore. Imagine them coming into your house that is not occupied. What would they find? They come into your living room a see all the furniture pointing in a certain direction. All the couches and chairs are directed at a box in the corner with a broken screen smashed in. Would they not conclude that that box – your tv – is your god whom you pay alot of attention to?

Remember the three questions that Jarrod Jones asked: "Are you living a lie?" "Are you wasting your life?" "Are you ignoring Jesus?" These are questions for all of us, are they not? What is our answer?

The mind. It's important what we put into it. What goes into our minds, works its way into our hearts and out into our every day lives.

**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom 12:2).**

**"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Rom 11:34).**

**But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16).**

**Finally, brothers, 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 (Php 4:8).**

Brian Doerksen and Craig Musseau have changed the words in that last verse. "Jesus you're true, Jesus you're right, Jesus you're pure, you are lovely." He is what we will think about! Do we think that Jesus is lovely, beautiful, thrilling, exciting?

William Law has written about the importance of intention. Intention has to do with our desires, what we want. He writes that if someone really wants "to please God in all the actions of his life" then he will stop swearing. It is because the intention is not there that we see men who swear and live in sensuality, "that you see [pastors] given to pride, covetousness, and worldly enjoyments. It is for lack of intention that you see women who profess devotion living in all the folly and vanity of dress and wasting their time in idleness and pleasures" (William Law, "The Importance of Intention"). People really don't want to.

So how do you know when you really are following Jesus? How do you know you've stopped acting, stopped pretending, stopped going through the motions of church, and are really serious about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit? You know, Jarrod Jones points out, when your desires start to change, when God begins to change you from the inside out.

**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** (Rom 12:1).

Always, every day, with every breath we take we need to keep in view, keep in front of our eyes the mercy of God as is found in Jesus Christ on the cross.

**You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly** (Rom 5:6).

Do we see what this is saying? It doesn't matter how religious we try to be. It doesn't make no difference that we go to church, or to Christian school, or Bible study if we have not looked at the cross of Jesus, his death there, and realize that God did it while we were still powerless, when we couldn't do a thing to save ourselves.

See, we are not talking about legalism here. Remember what legalism is? It's, "Do this, don't do that." We're talking about constantly taking out a view finder like you have on a camera, and that view finder always shows you Jesus on the cross. Do we see Jesus there? Is he clearly portrayed for us? Have we given God the end of the rope and asked him to pull us back up out of the pit?

One of the great differences between the faith of following Jesus and all other religions is that this faith puts a lot of importance not only on the mind, but on the body as well. What does the world say about our bodies? The world says, "My body is mine to do with as I please. As long as I don't harm anyone else, I can look at whatever I want, listen to whatever I want, say whatever I want." The gospel says, "This body of ours is no longer our own. This body now belongs to Jesus. My hands, they are his hands. They are holy hands, and they do holy things for God. My eyes are holy eyes, and I will only look at what gives God praise; otherwise I will turn my eyes away, or shut off the computer screen, or stop the movie. It means my mouth is holy, it belongs to Jesus, and I get to use it to build people up, not tear people down. It means there are certain things we will have to conclude, 'Jesus is better than that.' And it means that we get to do some very thrilling, exciting things that will truly please God."

Are we living from the inside out? It all begins by looking at Jesus on the cross. It progresses to asking God to change your desires, to change what we want. It moves forward to thinking about the most excellent things that God has for us, so they will move from our mind, into our hearts, and out into our lives.