

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Orange – Sermon Notes

Life on the Altar

- In July of 1848 a man named Phineas Gage was hired to work on the Hudson River Railroad.
 - This railroad would connect New York City to an existing railway system.
- Phineas Gage was described as an excellent worker with a strong work ethic and a sharp mind.
- In fact he was so well thought of that just two months after being hired he was promoted to foreman.
 - He was assigned to a specialized division that worked with explosives.
 - Their work was to blast away large amounts of rock to prepare the way for construction crews to follow.
 - Their blasting technique was to place gunpowder into a narrow hole and then tamp sand or clay on top of the gunpowder to help contain the explosive force.
- While Phineas was packing down the sand, the tamping rod he was using struck a rock in the hole, causing a spark which then ignited the gunpowder.
 - His tamping rod rocketed from the hole and up towards his face.
 - The rod entered Phineas's head under his left cheek and exited the top of his skull.
 - The rod landed 80 feet away.
- Miraculously Phineas survived without even losing consciousness during the ordeal.
 - He had no memory loss, and aside from losing sight in one eye, he sustained no loss of physical abilities.
 - But he was different.
- People who knew him saw changes in his personality.
 - These changes in his personality caused Phineas Gage's friends to remark that he was "no longer Gage".¹
- Something happened to Phineas Gage.
 - Something that changed him
 - He was never the same.
- A similar change takes place in those who give their lives to following Jesus Christ.
 - Their behavior is different.
 - They think differently.
 - And just like Gage's friends, Scripture describes Christians as new people after they're saved.
 - They're no longer themselves.
 - We'll see what those new behaviors are in our text today.
 - But before we get there we first we need to know what happened to them.
 - Something happened that changed these people.
 - Just like Phineas - something happened to all Christians.

¹ <https://PMC.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1114479/>

- We're going to see what that is.
- If you haven't opened your Bibles already, please open up to Romans 12.
- Let's read verses 1 and 2

Romans 12:1–2 (ESV)

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- These two verses are the result of 11 chapters of tamping done by Paul
 - He has just laid out an extensive and glorious theological treatise which ended with verse 36 in chapter 11.
 - A doxological spark ignites the doctrinal gunpowder and in verses 1 and 2 we see the inciting incident for the change.
- Paul is calling his readers to live in a way that is consistent with their salvation.
 - He's telling them to view their lives as a sacrifice.
 - Every day, laying down what their old self would have preferred and taking up the new life that God has given them.
 - Paul is calling believers to put themselves back on the altar.
- And this process is helped along by the renewing of your mind that he describes in verse 2.
 - This renewal is only possible by refusing to be conformed to this world.
 - He's saying "Stop feeding on what the world has to offer!"
 - Stop fitting yourself into the mold of our culture.
 - Be transformed.
 - Stop floating along on the current of the world.
 - Rather test your decisions and circumstances against God's will.
- Verses 1 and 2 are especially helpful to reflect on right now given that we're at the beginning of a new year.
 - We're only 4 days into this new year.
 - Now is a great time to course-correct.
 - If Jesus Christ is your Lord and you haven't been putting yourself on the altar this year - start now!
 - We're 4 days in and if your outward behavior hasn't been consistent with the radical inward change that's taken place - turn the ship around.
 - If you are saved, you know Jesus Christ as your savior - you need to ask yourself "Was my behavior in 2025 consistent with my salvation?"
 - If not - don't lose this opportunity to be exhorted by scripture to start living out your salvation.
- And just to be clear - your actions, your thoughts, your words - they flow from your salvation.

- Paul spent 11 chapters talking about salvation and now he's saying "in light of that salvation, live different."
- I don't want anyone to think that their actions play a role in their salvation, it's actually the opposite.
 - Your outward actions testify to an inward reality.
- If you're here and you don't know Christ, you don't know where you'll be after you die, today is an opportunity to change that.
 - Today is an opportunity to trust in Jesus for salvation.
- So just like the iron rod flying through Phineas Gage's head was the cause of the change in his life, the salvation of your soul is the inciting incident for change in your life.
- So what is that change?
 - Drop your eyes down to verse 9 and we'll dig in.

Romans 12:9–10 (ESV)

⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

- The first thing Paul is concerned about is our love.
 - Paul says, in light of your salvation make yourself a living sacrifice.
- What does that look like?
 - Love genuinely.
 - Don't fake it.
 - Really actually love.
 - Feel it!
- This goes against the old saying that "Love is a verb".
 - Have you ever heard that before?
 - I wonder if you've ever told yourself that before.
 - Maybe you've muttered that to yourself as you've resentfully cleaned up a mess left behind by a coworker.
 - Or when you're doing laundry and you're turning socks right side out even though you've told your kids a thousand times to do that before they go in the hamper.
 - There's a kernel of truth in the idea that love is a verb.
 - Love is often expressed in verbs.
 - We hug people that we love.
 - We attend to the physical needs of our children or our aging parents because we love them.
 - But Paul isn't satisfied with actions.
 - He's going deeper.
 - He wants our love to be *genuine*.
 - Paul wants us to **lose the lip service**.
 - As people who have been changed by the gospel, **we must lose the lip service**.

- He wants you to feel love.
 - Not just conceptually understand love.
 - Not just say that you love others.
 - But truly actually love them.
- He then starts describing what genuine love looks like.
 - Abhorring evil, clinging to what is good.
- Moving into verse 10 he says
 - Loving one another with brotherly affection.
 - Again you cannot get around the fact that this involves your feelings.
- If you think you're not in control of your emotions, Paul disagrees with you.
 - I'm not saying it's easy, or that it's instant.
 - But remember what Paul says in verses 1 and 2, we are called to sacrifice our whole selves, including our emotions, daily.
 - I'm also *not saying* that you disengage from serving others until you feel love for them.
 - Loving actions may come before loving feelings.
 - Loving feelings may come before loving actions.
 - But we can never be satisfied until we have both.²
 - One way that we love is by honoring one another.
- We're to outdo one another in showing honor.
 - Not seeking to be honored, but rather finding ways to honor others.
- This is going to require lots of self control and effort.
- Paul acknowledges this in verse 11

Romans 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

- This is another aspect of being a living sacrifice.
 - You've got to put effort in.
 - And Paul even cares about *how you do it*.
 - Be fervent!
 - There's a famous biography written by Elizabeth Elliot about a missionary named Amy Carmichael.
 - In it she tells this story of Amy Carmichael conversing with another missionary who is cautioning her against accepting the discomforts of missionary life.
 - He was telling her to temper her zeal in favor of longevity.

² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Second Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 795. : “Genuine” Christian love, Paul is suggesting, is not a directionless emotion or something that can be only felt and not expressed.”

- She tells him “I would rather burn out than rust out.”³
- Amy Carmichael understood what it means to be fervent in spirit.
 - She understood how to avoid slothfulness in her service to the Lord.
 - She didn’t wait around for someone to coax her into serving the Lord.
- She pushed back against passivity.
- We need to do the same.
- As people who have been changed by the gospel we need to **push back against passivity.**
 - Our flesh will always pull us towards passivity.
 - Nobody is going to make you serve the Lord.⁴
 - Nobody is going to make you be self-sacrificial.
 - In fact, there will be forces attempting to prevent you from living sacrificially.
 - Your flesh, the world, and the devil would really prefer for you to take things easy.
- Hoisting your rebellious heart back onto the altar is hard work.
 - It takes intentional, focused effort to serve the Lord.
 - We cannot let our hearts drift.⁵
 - Even when things are hard.
 - Look at how Paul encourages us through both highs and lows
 - In verse 12 he says

Romans 12:12 (ESV)

¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

- Now there’s three parts to what he’s saying here.
 - I think this verse could be its own sermon, but we’re going to just note the three parts and move on.
- Look at the first part here - rejoice!
 - What are we rejoicing in?
 - Hope.
 - This isn’t an abstract conceptual hope that things are good or will be good.
 - Paul is talking about our eternal hope here.
 - Our eternal salvation that was purchased by Christ on the cross.
 - The gospel isn’t something we mentally ascend to and then shrug off.
 - It should be an explosive force of joy in our lives.
 - Just radiating out from us.
 - The joy of a believer says “I’m gonna die one day and then I’m gonna see my savior face to face.”

³ Elliot, Elisabeth. *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2021. 122.

⁴ <https://jacobrcrouch.wordpress.com/2025/12/26/no-one-is-going-to-make-you/>

⁵ MacArthur, John F., Jr. *Romans*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991. 190. : “For weeds to prosper, the gardener need only leave the garden alone.”

- And because of that none of this pain that I feel matters.
- That's the next thing
 - Be patient in tribulation.
 - This word, tribulation, can mean affliction or distress or anguish or suffering.
 - We can be patient in the midst of that hardship.
 - Why?
 - Because of the hope that we have in eternity.
 - It can't touch you!
 - What joy that brings.
 - And through it all we pray.
 - Constant in prayer.
 - Not only when times are good.
 - Not only when times are bad.
 - At all times.
- Now Paul starts weaving in more practical concerns.
- Look at verse 13 with me

Romans 12:13 (ESV)

¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

- This could be translated as “share in the needs of the holy ones”.
 - There’s a sense here not of just sterile contribution but of shared need.
- The need of your brother becomes your own need.
 - Let me give you an example of what this is *NOT*.
 - I remember when I was in high school there was this unwritten rule around the sharing of chewing gum.
 - If someone asked you for a piece of gum, and you had one piece left you could look them dead in the face and say “ooh sorry it’s the last piece.”
 - And everyone understood that the last piece should be reserved for the holder of the pack of gum.
 - It’s too sacred to be shared.
 - It doesn’t matter if that person’s breath could peel paint off a wall, if it was your last piece you were under no obligation to share with them.
 - This is not that!
- Paul is telling us that not only should we care about the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we should share in their need.
 - We should be identifying so closely with our brothers and sisters that we feel their need as if it was our own.
- Part of how we can meet needs will sometimes be by opening our homes, showing hospitality, and by giving of our own resources.
- As people who have been changed by the gospel, we must **contribute cheerfully**.
- Giving someone a meal, a place to stay, a car to borrow.

- And pay attention to how Paul says this -
- He says “seek to show hospitality”.
 - Not “be hospitable when people ask”.
- Look for ways to be hospitable.
 - You’re on the hunt for opportunities to show hospitality.
 - Hospitality can be expressed in a lot of different ways.
- You know how Pastor Tony tells everyone at the beginning of his sermon to find someone you didn’t come to church with and introduce yourself?
 - I see some of you run across the sanctuary to find someone you don’t know.
 - I love that!
 - That’s seeking to show hospitality.
 - It’s hospitable to introduce yourself to someone at church that you don’t know.
 - If you don’t have the cardio conditioning for running from one side of the sanctuary and back in the time allotted for greeting, maybe try sitting in a different spot on Sunday so you can be around some people that you haven’t met before.
- So far Paul has been giving us some homework that might push us out of our comfort zone.
- But what he says next pushes us to actually fight our flesh.
 - Look at verse 14 with me

Romans 12:14 (ESV)

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

- Paul wants us to bless our enemies.
 - What does this mean?
 - Well blessing is something that God does.⁶
 - The book of James tells us that he is the giver of every good gift.
- And we often pray that God would bless us, other people, organizations.
 - But it doesn’t feel natural for us to pray for people that wrong us.
- Our flesh looks for payback when we’ve been wronged.
 - Now we can probably think about large-scale enemies.
 - Maybe a terrorist group like ISIS or Boko Haram.
 - But we all need to realize that in the context of this verse sometimes people those people who hurt us will be in our church.
 - And we need to pray for their blessing too.
 - Even if we’re not calling down curses on an enemy we might say something like

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Second Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 798: “In the Scriptures, “blessing” is typically associated with God; he “possesses and dispenses all blessings.”

- “You’ll get yours.” Or “I hope he gets what’s coming to him.”
- But in verse 14 Paul is commanding us to do the opposite.
- Bless the ones who hurt you.
- And he actually sounds a lot like Jesus here.
- Jesus says in Luke 6:28

Luke 6:28 (ESV)

²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

- When our old nature says, “Curse them”; God says, “Ask me to bless them.”⁷
- This will require us to practice some self control.
- It’ll require us to **exercise our emotions**.
- That’s our fourth point today.
- As people who have been changed by the gospel, we must exercise our emotions.
- You might have to exercise love towards someone you don’t like.
- You might have to exercise compassion towards one suffering.
- You might have to exercise you might even have to exercise joy if you’re a naturally melancholic person.
- Whatever your natural predisposition is, following these commands will require you to do some heart work.
- You need to be holding the reigns of your heart.
 - Controlling your emotions.
- Verse 15 gives other scenarios where we might need to exercise our emotions.
- Let’s read it

Romans 12:15 (ESV)

¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

- Just like everything that has preceded this verse, obeying this command will require prioritizing others above ourselves.
- Here are a couple examples of what I mean.
 - Let’s say at work you and your friend are up for the same promotion, your friend gets the promotion and you don’t.
 - Are you able to rejoice with them?
 - A young couple has been trying to conceive for over a year.
 - They’re starting to get nervous about their chances of having kids.
 - Another couple in their small group announces that they’re expecting.
 - How hard will it be for them to rejoice?

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, Romans, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 239.

- Say you have a wayward child.
- Despite your years of faithful prayer, their hearts remain hard to the gospel.
 - Can you rejoice with someone else who is seeing their own son or daughter come to saving faith?
- Let's look at the opposite scenario.
 - We just came off the holidays, when everyone wants to feel cheery and joyful.
 - But a friend from church is experiencing profound loneliness.
 - Are you going to view them as a kill joy?
 - Or will you lay aside yourself and weep with them?
- Or how about someone grieving the loss of a loved one?
 - Do you grieve with them for a day?
 - Are you patient with them when they're still struggling a year later?
 - Will you be secretly frustrated that they haven't moved on? Or will you sit with them, bear their pain, and weep alongside them?
- There will come a time when your emotional condition will make it hard for you to share in the joy or the sorrow of others.
 - But even though it's hard - we are not excused from loving others by sharing in their joy or pain.
 - And if you are chronically unable to show compassion for those who are hurting or to rejoice with those who are rejoicing, you won't be able to love genuinely.
 - You may need to get down on your knees and ask Jesus to forgive you for having a hard heart, and ask him to change you.
 - Ask him to warm your heart to those inside and outside church.
 - Remember God has commanded us to have genuine love.⁸
 - Not lip service.
- This genuine love will help us to live in harmony with each other.
- That's what Paul is after in verse 16.
 - He says

Romans 12:16 (ESV)

¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

- Harmony among the body of Christ is so important.
- In fact - Jesus prays for our unity in John 17.
 - Take a look at John 17:21.
- Jesus prays

John 17:21 (ESV)

⁸ Moo, *Romans*, NICNT, 800. : “[...] love that is genuine will bring us to identify so intimately with our brothers and sisters in Christ that their sorrows will become ours.”

²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

- There's a couple things that I want to highlight here.
- First, the level of harmony that he desires for us is displayed in his union with the Father.
- He's praying that just as he shares an essence with his father, we would all be of one essence.
- He's praying that just as there is no conflict among the Godhead, there would be no conflict among us.
- He's asking that the love we have for one another would be like the mutual unhindered love between God the Father and God the Son.
- Why is he praying that?
- Look at the end of verse 21
- "So that the world may believe that you have sent me."
- Jesus is praying to the Father asking that the church would have unity so that the unbelieving world would believe that Christ was sent from God.
- Our unity as the church reveals the gospel to the watching world.
 - When the love that the church has within itself transcends natural affinity, the world takes notice.
 - Unbelievers are forced to ask the question "Why are they such good friends? They have nothing in common!"
- Author Jamie Dunlop answers that question in this way:
 - "Our new society of the church is not a mutual admiration society, but a shared admiration society. Our affection for each other is derivative. It derives from our worship of God—a God who saved us from a million different "communities" of this world to become his family. Our identity no longer stems from our families of origin, our professions, or our interests and ambitions, but the fact that we are in Christ."
- The harmony that Paul is talking about in verse 16 causes our invisible shared bond in Christ to become visible.
 - We cannot put unity in the backseat.
 - To do so would be to sacrifice our gospel witness.
 - There are matters that qualify for amiable separation, but Paul is referring to social class, maturity, age, ethnicity.
 - Unity in those things reveal the gospel.
- But our corporate unity requires individual humility.
- As people who have been changed by the gospel, we have to **observe ourselves objectively.**
 - This means seeing ourselves as sinners who have been saved by grace.
 - No better than the person on our left, no worse than the person on our right.
 - As we often say here - the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

- Just like in our church, the church in Rome had a wide spectrum of spiritual maturity, background, income, and interests.
- And Paul is instructing us, thousands of years later, in the same way that he's instructing the church in Rome.
 - Don't consider yourself better than your brother.
 - It's through humility and genuine love that the church will display the unity that reveals the gospel.
- And then Paul addresses how we're to treat those outside the church.
- Take a look at verses 17-19

Romans 12:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.
¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

- While all of these instructions apply to those inside the church.
 - The word "all" that we see here is a clue that Paul has broadened his focus.
- He's now instructing people *who have* been changed by the gospel on how to treat those *who have not* been changed by the gospel - or at least not yet.
- It's no surprise that it's pretty consistent with what he said earlier.
 - Just like we should seek honor to one another inside the church, Paul is commanding us here to consider how to honor those outside the church.
- We're to be thoughtful in how we treat *all* people, not just those whom we know and love.
 - Verse 18 charges us to do everything we can to have peace with all.
- I wonder if there's anyone you're not at peace with right now.
 - Is there anything you can do to make peace?
 - Anything at all?
 - After hearing this will you go and make peace?
 - Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."⁹
 - James 3:18 says "a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."
 - Proverbs 12:20 says "those who plan peace have joy."
- It can be very uncomfortable to pursue peace.
 - You make yourself vulnerable when you offer an olive branch.
 - What if the other party seizes the opportunity to take advantage of you again?
 - If that happens, we can trust that God will set all things right.

⁹ Matthew 5:9. See also: Ps 34:14, 1 Peter 3:11, Romans 14:19, Heb 12:14, James 3:18, 2 Cor 13:11

- Friends, as people who have been changed by the gospel, we must **entrust justice to God.**
- Verse 19 tells us that our God will repay.
 - If you're worried about being mistreated as you attempt to live peaceably, remember the words of 1 Peter 2:19-23

1 Peter 2:19–23 (ESV)

¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

- We can trust our sovereign God to watch over us.
 - And if he chooses that we should suffer while trying to make peace, know that you are following behind Christ as he suffered.
 - This is an encouraging truth.
 - Our job is not to repay, not to avenge.
 - Vengeance belongs to our God, amen?
- So what are we to do if someone wrongs us?
 - If we're not supposed to avenge ourselves, do we just lay down?
 - Do we just passively accept the suffering?
 - Well like we saw earlier, people who have been changed by the gospel are not passive.
 - So what do we do when we're wronged?
- Back in Romans chapter 12, let's take a look at verse 20 for our answer.

Romans 12:20 (ESV)

²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

- If you were here when Pastor Tony went through Proverbs this verse might sound familiar.
 - Paul is quoting Proverbs 25:21.
 - It's almost the exact same wording.
- Back when he was preaching through Proverbs, Pastor Tony said this is **countercultural.**¹⁰

¹⁰ <https://www.messiahbible.org/proverbs-25-1-28-self-control-as-a-way-of-life>

- And he's right!
- It's counter human-nature!
 - This desire for payback is deep inside us.
 - We want to be the judge, jury, and executioner.
 - You see it in movies, books, plays, even made up games that we played as kids.
- But when you're changed by the gospel - you submit to the authority of the great judge.
- And instead of plotting your enemy's downfall, you show him kindness.
- Instead of spending time formulating the perfect comeback for your next interaction, you spend time thinking about how you can help them.
 - You spend time praying for them.
- Solomon and Paul both tell us that this is a better tactic!
- Think about it - if someone wrongs you and you lash out in return, where does that leave you?
 - Are you at peace?
 - Do you feel ready to move on from the conflict?
 - Has your enemy experienced the love of Christ?
- No - you can't answer yes to any of those.
 - And what's more the injustice of the initial offense fades away, because your aggression has taken center stage.
- On the other hand if you chose not to retaliate but to offer kindness, where does that leave you?
 - Your enemy is left holding their own aggression.
 - They're probably stunned into silence at the treatment they're receiving.
 - They're second guessing their choices.
 - And they're wondering why you didn't respond in kind.
 - The reason why you didn't respond in kind is this:
- People who have been changed by the gospel **kill evil with kindness**.
 - That's our last point this morning.
- That's Paul's message in verse 21.
 - He says

Romans 12:21 (ESV)

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- Paul is linking this idea of being overcome by evil back to verse 19–20
 - His thinking goes like this.
 - If you retaliate with evil when you are sinned against, you have been overcome by evil.
 - Evil has won because rather than doing good you're doing evil!
 - So how do we keep ourselves from being overcome by evil?
 - We do good.

- Not because we're "good people".
 - Not because it's the nice thing to do.
- Don't lose the thread throughout this whole section of scripture.
 - This section is describing the behavior of people who have been changed by the gospel.
 - We overcome evil with good because of the riches that we now possess in our salvation through Christ.
 - Christ our savior, laid down his life for us, sacrificing himself to save us.
 - And now we who have been changed by the gospel are compelled to follow in his example of overcoming evil with good.
- I want to tell you a story about overcoming evil with good.
 - In 1857 a man named George Gordon landed in Dillon's Bay on the island of Erromanga.
 - He was a missionary from Canada and brought with him his wife, Ellen.
 - George Gordon was trained in medicine and was considered to be a brilliant man.
 - He threw himself into translating the Bible into the native Erromangan.
 - At that time he also built a home for himself, a schoolhouse which he taught at, and other buildings.¹¹
 - He was extraordinarily productive.
 - One day a trading vessel landed on the island and brought disease that killed many Erromangans.
 - They believed that it was his presence that brought this evil upon him.
 - On May 20th of 1861 he was murdered by a group of Erromangans.
 - Just a few minutes later after opening the door of their house to investigate the screams, Gordon's wife was also murdered.
 - The sad news of George's death reached Canada and his brother James immediately applied to the mission board to take his place on Erromanga.
 - George's mother wept for her martyred son, but sent another son to take his place.¹²
 - He was accepted by the board and in 1864 he began his work on Erromanga.
 - God blessed his effort and allowed him to continue the translation work left by his brother.
 - He made significant progress.
 - But on March 7th, 1872 as James Gordon was translating the book of Acts into Erromangan he too was martyred.¹³
 - News of James' death reached Canada some time later.
 - James and George's mother was blind and frail.

¹¹ https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gordon_george_nicol_9E.html

¹² A. K. Langridge, *Won by Blood: The Story of Erromanga, the Martyr Isle* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1922), 86.

¹³ H. A. Robertson, *Erromanga, the Martyr Isle*, ed. John Fraser (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1902), 152.

- There was concern that the news may be too much for the 81 year old woman.
- When she heard the news, she again wept for her son.
 - She said “I wish that I had another boy to send, that they might receive salvation.”¹⁴
- Mrs. Gordon was changed by the gospel.
- She was not overcome by evil.
 - But she overcame evil with good.
- The verses that we have been looking at today are not a list of checkboxes that you need to accomplish in order to be changed by the gospel.
- Remember Phineas Gage?
 - He was changed because of a violent, gruesome event.
 - Something happened to him that left him permanently different.
- If you follow Christ, you too have been changed by a violent, gruesome event.
 - Jesus Christ died a criminal’s death despite being a completely innocent man.
 - He took on our guilt.
 - He accepted our punishment.
 - And he gave us his righteousness.
 - Jesus overcame evil with good.
 - He overcame evil through his self-sacrificial death.
 - Scripture tells us that he defeated death.
 - And that same victory is available to all of us.
 - All that’s required is that we trust in his death to pay for our sins.
 - Trust in Jesus Christ and be saved.
- Please pray with me.

¹⁴ <https://www.missionary.com/articles/six-counsels-for-a-sending-church>