

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Session 12,

Romans 11:33-12:13

6-min. Video Overview

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Welcome to the Explainer. Today, we're diving deep into the ancient book of Romans to pull out this really powerful idea about, well, completely transforming the way we think. We're going to explore a concept that starts with this sense of cosmic awe and ends with real, practical, everyday actions.

So, let's get right into it. So, we start right where the author, Paul, does. And it's not with a rule or a command, but with this.

This profound, almost poetic explosion of awe at just how grand God's plan is. It's the kind of thing that just stops you in your tracks. Now, this feeling, this worshipful awe, it isn't just a nice little sentiment to kick things off.

It's actually the why behind the whole radical shift in thinking that Paul is about to introduce. This really sets the stage for everything that's coming next. Yeah, it's so important to get this.

This isn't just filler or some fancy language. As Dr. Craig Keener points out, this little burst of praise is the necessary foundation. Before Paul tells us what to do, he makes sure we first have this massive, God-centered perspective.

It's the starting point for a whole new way of seeing the world. Okay. So, grounded in that incredible sense of awe, Paul makes a pivot.

He shifts gears from pure worship to a central command about how we're actually meant to live our lives. And here, Paul uses this incredibly powerful, kind of jarring phrase: a living sacrifice. I mean, think about it.

In the ancient world, sacrifices were all about death, but Paul just completely flips that idea on its head. So, this totally reframes what sacrifice is. It's not a one-time event that happens on an altar somewhere.

Nope. It's a continuous day-to-day lifestyle. The way you use your body, your time, your energy, that becomes the real act of worship.

And this is where it gets really interesting, because this illustrates the next link Paul is making. The original Greek word he uses here is *logikos*. It's where we get our word logic.

It means this sacrifice is a rational, reasoned, thought-out act. It's not some mindless ritual. It's a thoughtful, intentional offering.

And that concept of reason, well, that leads us directly to the mind. And this brings us right to the heart of the matter, the core conflict of the whole passage. It's this conscious choice

that every single one of us has to make between two competing patterns that are basically battling for control of our minds.

You've got to notice the powerful contrast here. Conforming, that's passive. It's just letting the culture around you squeeze you into its mold without even thinking about it.

But being transformed, well, that's an active process. It requires a fundamental, deep-down renewal of your mind. Dr. Keener really helps clarify this.

He says Paul is setting up a clash of worldviews. This age refers to the current, temporary, often broken way the world operates. So the call is to stop thinking according to that system and instead adopt the perspective of the world to come, to start living today in light of eternity.

And this table, which is based on Dr. Keener's analysis, just lays out the stakes perfectly, doesn't it? On one side, you've got the corrupted mind that we saw earlier in Romans. It worships the wrong things, conforms to the age, and it leads to all these selfish habits. The renewed mind is a total 180.

It worships God, offers the body in service, and produces acts of love. It's like a complete system upgrade for your thinking. Okay, so we've established why we need this transformation.

But what does this renewed mind actually do? How does it work? Let's explore its practical function. Its number one job is discernment. This renewed mind isn't just for thinking abstract theological thoughts.

It's a practical tool for navigating the real world. It helps you evaluate choices and situations, allowing you to figure out what is truly good and pleasing and perfect in God's eyes. And it kind of operates on two levels at the same time.

On one hand, it helps you understand yourself, your unique purpose, your specific gifts. But, and this is so crucial, it never just leaves you there focused on yourself. It always places your individual life within the bigger context of your community, always asking, okay, how do my gifts serve the whole group? From this, Dr. Keener shows how Paul lays out a really simple practical framework.

Step one, have a sober, realistic view of yourself. Not too high, not too low. Step two, figure out what your unique gifts are.

And step three, put those gifts into action for the good of other people. It's a really clear path from self-awareness right into service. So where is this all going? Well, this internal transformation of the mind isn't supposed to stay locked up inside.

It naturally and inevitably produces external, tangible actions that people can actually see. And this is where the rubber meets the road. You can see the evidence in how we act.

A renewed mind doesn't just change what you think; it fundamentally changes how you treat people. It leads to sincere love, genuinely honoring others, radical empathy, and a

revolutionary way of dealing with conflict and even your enemies. And it all builds to this, one of the most powerful commands in the entire book.

This isn't just a passive defense against negativity; it is a proactive offensive strategy. Don't just resist evil, actively go out and overcome it by replacing it with good. So the ultimate takeaway from this ancient text is really a challenge to live with a brand new perspective, an eternal one.

And that brings us to a final, provocative question for you to really think about. If you truly adopted this renewed mindset, if you started viewing today through the lens of eternity, what single thing in your life would change?