

Rom 15 8-13b NKJV 8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises [made] to the fathers, 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for [His] mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." 10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" 11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" 12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope." 13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

OK. I hope you were all encouraged by the fact brought out last week that God confirms his promises with proof, with action.

So verse 8 focuses on the Jews. Christ was first a servant to the Jews, God's chosen people. Christ **was promised** and Christ **was delivered** as promised. The focus of world history up to the point of Christ had been primarily about the circumcision, about the Jewish people.

Notice too that the saved Jewish person is likely to praise Christ for **His Truth**. Christ was the **true fulfillment** of scriptures. He was clearly the **true answer** to the promises of God.

But Paul doesn't leave it at that. Notice that "and" at the beginning of verse 9. Paul is pointing out that Christ did not just come for **one** group of people. Christ came for **two** groups of people. And this is not a last minute decision. It is not a reaction to a failure to reach Israel. It is not plan B. It is plan A **part 1** and **part 2**. This would probably have been a surprise to most of the Jews. They thought they were the **only ones** God cared about. They thought they were the **only ones** that would be receiving God's redemptive attention. Everyone outside their group was inferior. They were abandoned by God. They were second class. They were unclean. They were castaways.

But here Paul, with one word, shows that the common Jewish view is very wrong. He said Christ's second purpose was that **the Gentiles might glorify God for [His] mercy**

Glorify God. Does that sound familiar? Another way of saying this is that Christ was sent so that the Gentiles might render or esteem God glorious. We see it again. The salvation of humans is primarily about the glory of God. Christ came **to declare God glorious** in the Gentile world.

Now look what comes next. What character trait of God's will be emphasized by the Gentiles? Mercy.

Here the focus is on God's mercy. Why? Well, what had the gentiles been promised by God? Very little. They did not have any covenants made by God with them. They had no reason to expect that God's judgment would not be carried out upon them with great force. But that is not what Christ came for. Notice that while the saved Jewish person praised Christ for **His truth**, the saved Gentile praises Him for **His mercy**.

The Gentiles weren't expecting a Messiah. Many probably knew little about Jewish history. The Gentiles were just living out their existence on planet earth. They weren't, en masse, pounding on the Jewish door asking how they, too, can be right with God. And then the gospel message reached them. And most of the time it isn't even by their choice. Most people don't go looking for the truth of Christ. Most times it intrudes into a person's life.

Think about your own life. Were you on a vigilant search for God's truth? I know I wasn't. The truth is, I couldn't get away from God's truth, even if I tried.

So our blessings, as Gentiles, primarily came through God sending his promised redeemer to the covenant people. We got the blessing through God's work to the Jews.

Now Paul goes on to back his statement about the Gentile inclusion.

He quotes passages from three sections of the Old Testament- the law, the prophets, and the Psalms. And Paul quotes them from three OT heroes. From Moses, David and Isaiah. If you were trying to make a point to Jewish people, it would be hard to imagine using more authoritative sources. Paul knows he will accomplish much in a short period of time with these quotes.

There is also a progression of thought here.

First David praised God among the Gentiles.

Second Moses exhorted the Gentiles to rejoice with His people

Third, David commands the Gentiles to praise the Lord.

And Fourth, Isaiah predicts that the Gentiles will live under the Messiah's rule and will hope in Him.

Back to our text:

as it is written:

When someone speaks pretending to have authority about any topic, the best first question is, WHO SAYS? **Who is it** that is speaking so authoritatively? What are they claiming is the source of their authority? The best start to an authoritative discourse is to begin by quoting scripture. You cannot appeal to a more authoritative source. "As it is written" is the same thing as saying, here is what God, the creator of the universe has to say on this topic.

"For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name."

This first quote is from II Samuel 22:50. David is praising God for giving him victory over his enemies. David recognizes God's provision in all this. He knows that **it is God** who has done it. In NKJV it says that I will give thanks **to You** among the Gentiles. David is saying to His God that it does not matter who a human is. David is going to praise God for what God has done in his life in front of that person.

This is off topic, but it is really a good example for us to follow. A large part of sharing our light is genuinely giving credit to God for those things He has done in our lives. If something happens that you are thankful for when you are surrounded by unbelievers, be genuine. If in your heart you are thanking God for it, say it. If you are one who sings songs while you work, sing songs of praise when you feel inclined to do so. I think that is essentially what David is doing here. These gentiles may have respected David or they may have hated him. It didn't matter. David was going to be genuine.

Paul uses this quote to show that **David** saw that the Gentiles were **part of God's plan** and he would **declare good news to them**.

Next we find this quote.

10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"

This quote is from Duet 32:43. Here is the rest of the quote.

Deuteronomy 32:39-43 (NKJV)

39 'Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.

40 For I raise My hand to heaven, And say, "As I live forever,

41 If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me.

42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword shall devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the heads of the leaders of the enemy." '

43 "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people."

This appears to be a call to the Gentiles to join the Israelites in order to gain in their blessings and to avoid the punishment of God's enemies. There is a comfort offered to the Gentiles. They can be treated as part of the Lord's fold. They can live in God's kingdom in such a way that their enemies will be God's enemies. It is very clear that the intent of this scripture is to include the Gentiles in the redeemed people of God. It was given looking forward to the church of Christ.

11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"

This is from

Psalm 117:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!

2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

We see it again. Here is inclusion for the gentiles. They are encouraged to Praise God, to join in with all of God's people in the praise of God.

And look at the reasoning. David got what the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day completely missed. God's merciful kindness extends farther than the Jewish boundaries. His mercy extends far.

Notice here that we see God's mercy and truth combined together, just like earlier in our text. Christ's truth was important to the Jews and his mercy was important to the gentiles.

You know, it is very easy to become like the Jews of that day. All we need to do is to become self focused and forget how we came to Christ. We can easily develop a mentality to the big bad world that they deserve what they get and we are God's chosen people. We can start thinking that all God cares about is us. But it is even a greater mistake **for us** than it was for our **Jewish forefathers** in the faith. We are gentiles, for goodness sake. We were **grafted** in. We didn't belong, but we were **made to belong**. We should have a desire to bring in everyone we possibly can into this fellowship. It isn't like God is in short supply of mercy. It isn't as if when we bring one more person into the kingdom we will **use up** God's supply. David understood this. So he felt free to call out to the Gentiles to join this fellowship of faith. And ultimately, it results in more people praising the Lord. Remember that this church at Ferndale is not primarily about our comfort. It isn't about our good time. It is ultimately about the glory of God. Would we not bring God even greater glory if we included more people to give God praise?

12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."

This is a quote from Isaiah 11:10

10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

It would be impossible for anyone to read this and refute the point that Paul is making. God **always intended** to include the Gentiles in His kingdom. That is

essentially what we are told here. We are told that there will be an offspring of David that would rise and upon His rise the Gentiles will seek Him. The gentiles will follow after Him.

Here we are given even greater specifics for **when and how** the Gentiles will be included en mass. They will follow after Christ. They will hope in Christ. They will join the many generations of Jewish people who looked forward to their Messiah. They will praise Christ. They will receive Him as King.

Remember that Paul is appealing for unity- first to those in weak and strong convictional opinions and then secondly, as Jew and Gentile. He has made his point that scripture foretells the Gentile's inclusion and it is clearly God's will. And he says that the Gentiles will place their hope in Christ. Now Paul moves to verse 13 and closes this passage.

He says

Romans 15:13 (NKJV)

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul began addressing personal application of the Gospel back in chapter 12. Since that time he has been telling these believers in the city of Rome how to live. We have just come off a chapter and a half addressing differences of opinion and conviction. Then Paul applied the principle of unity to Jews and Gentiles in the church. In verse 13 he is closing this section of his letter. From this point on he is going to get personal, telling more about how he sees the church and greeting the individuals in the church.

So verse 13 is a pivotal verse. It is like a preacher when he says, "in conclusion". That is how this would have been received.

Now let's look at how he starts.

Now may the God of hope- Paul is essentially praying this request for these people. It is what John MacArthur calls "a benediction of intercession for all the people of God."

And he is addressing God for all the believers. He does not single out any group. He is talking about what they all have in common. If his letter does not bring them together in the end, there isn't much hope for them.

Then he appeals to God to fill all believers **with all joy and peace in believing**. Why would he focus on those things? Because those are attributes of the kingdom of God.

Romans 14:16-17 (NKJV)

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The Christian life isn't a code or a key, it isn't a checklist. It isn't a creed. It isn't being able to recite the same things. In fact it isn't even based on believing identically at all points. What it is really about is a new creation. It is about people living in physical bodies being born again spiritually. It is an amazing thing. It is not something a survey can determine. It is not some demographic that can be defined and described. It is a bunch of people who have one thing in common. Once they were lost but now they are found. They are miracles. And as a result of that miracle they experience peace and joy, to varying degrees, in the Holy Spirit. But it cannot be denied that these things are present.

Do you know that you are at peace with God? Do you know if you were to die today that God would receive you into His presence? You can know that. You can rest in confidence and hope. First you must recognize that you are a sinner. You must understand and see how you are in a bad state spiritually, condemned by your own sin, with no recourse available to you. You cannot do enough good to undo the bad you have done. You cannot turn over a new leaf to get rid of your sinful history. You need to be rescued, pure and simple.

Then you must understand that Christ took upon himself the wrath of God that was directed at you. The reason He died to was to pay the sin penalty for every person who would ever come to Him. He died in your place, completely paying the penalty for your sin. Now He compels you to come to Him, receiving what He did for you by faith, and surrendering your will to His, trusting in Him to save you. That is what a Christian is. And you can be one this morning. Come to Christ.

Now back to our text. And how did those peace and joy get into our lives? **may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing**

How does God fill us with joy and peace? By believing. He tells us lots of things. We hear it or read it. And we decide at some point that we will believe it. And I don't mean a surface belief. I mean a belief that goes to the core of who we are. It changes us. We quit trusting how we feel and how we perceive things. We quit allowing our feelings to have any authority over us. We submit to what God says and we trust that He is correct about life. As we do that we experience more joy and peace.

Are peace and joy in low supply in your life? You can track that problem down to a source. What are you feeding your mind? Are you feeding it the truth of what God says? Are you trusting what God says? Or are you believing everything **but** God? Doubt will never provide you with joy and peace. Only belief will do that. And the only thing worth believing is what God says is true.

Here is a very good prayer that we can pray for each other. May the God of hope **fill all the believers at this church with all joy and peace in believing.** What do you think would happen as God began doing this work? I think we would be amazed at what God will do in the people who are empowered by Him with joy and peace. I think we would do well to pray this prayer for each other and trust God to do what we are asking. This is another “in Jesus name” prayer.

And look at what the result of this action of God would be.

that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The God of hope wants us to abound in hope. Do you see just how very important **hope** is. Peace and joy aren't even the **end product** hoped for. They are a **means** to having **hope**. Maybe it is because as we have true peace and joy in our lives, we know that we are living a miracle. We know that God is at work in our lives. We experience the result. And as we experience this result here and now, we gain confidence that what God has in store for us **is real**. It is **for us**. We know it is for us because we have peace and joy. We know that didn't get in us by itself. We know that God did it.

So having that peace and joy just increases our **looking forward** to what God has in store for us. We become more and more sure that **it is real** and **it is intended for us**. To abound means to be over and above a certain number or measure.

Carla and I have been using a sweetener called Stevia. Now no one told us what happens when soda water hits stevia. The stevia foams up the whole glass in just a few seconds. Since I am a slow learner I have spilled that stuff a lot of times. It abounded over the top of my cup.

Well that is what the Holy Spirit will do to us when we are filled with Joy and Peace by believing God instead of any other source. We will foam up with joy and go over the top of our spiritual cup.

Hope is really central to a faithful life. We are all smart people. None of us do anything for **no reason**. **We have a reason**, no matter how illusive it may be. God knows that no one will live a faithful life **just because**. We need fuel. We need incentive. We need that thing that makes living a faithful life smart. We need something that will make it **worth the cost**, worth the trouble. **That thing is hope.**

I want to close, this morning with a picture of what hope looks like. How it empowers the Christian life. And how it transforms death from something horrible to something sweet.

When Charles Simeon, the influential vicar of Trinity Church in Cambridge, was dying, someone bathed his eyes and asked if he was relieved. Opening them and looking up to heaven, he said, “Soon they will behold all the glorified saints and

angels around the throne of my God and Saviour, who has loved me unto death, and given Himself for me; then I shall see Him whom, having not seen, I love; in whom, though now I see Him not, yet believing I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" [1 Peter 1:8]. Then turning his eyes towards his friend, he added, "Of the reality of this I am as sure as if I were there this moment."

Sometime later, though suffering much, he said, "My principles were not founded on fancies or enthusiasm; there is a reality in them, and I find them sufficient to support me in death." [24]

The last words of Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, were, "Oh, wifie, I have had such a blessed time with my Lord."

When D. L. Moody, the American evangelist, was dying, his son was at his bedside and heard him say in slow and measured words, "Earth recedes: heaven opens before me." His son's impulse was to arouse him from what he thought was a dream. "No, this is no dream, Will," he said. "It is beautiful!...If this is death, it is sweet!...God is calling me and I must go."

Later he exclaimed, "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years." Then his face lit up, and he said joyfully, "Dwight! Irene! I see the children's faces!" referring to his two grandchildren, whom God had taken home within the past year. Again he said later, "This is my coronation day! It's glorious!" [25]

Frances Havergal, the well-known blind hymn-writer, died on 3 June, 1879. When her family could see the end was near, her sister Ellen recited Jesus I will Trust Thee, and Frances "clearly but faintly sang the whole verse, to her own tune Hermas. Then she was desperately sick again, and lay back murmuring, "There now it is all over! Blessed rest!"

"And now," wrote Maria, "she looked up steadfastly as if she saw the Lord...for ten minutes we watched that almost visible meeting with her King, and her countenance was so glad, as if she were already talking to him. Then she tried to sing, but after one sweet high note, 'He...' her voice failed, and she passed away. Our precious sister was gone—satisfied, glorified—within the palace of her King!"

George Mueller, the orphanage builder and philanthropist, told of a Boston merchant, Mr Cobb, who declared on his deathbed:

It is a glorious thing to die. I have been active and busy in the world. I have enjoyed as much as anyone. God has prospered me. I have property enough, but how small and mean does this world appear on a sick-bed! Nothing can equal my enjoyment in the near view of heaven. My hope in Christ is worth infinitely more than all other things. The blood of Christ—the blood of Christ—none but Christ! Oh, how thankful I feel that God has provided a way that I, sinful as I am, may look forward with joy to another world, through his dear Son.

The converted slave trader, John Newton, who became a beloved minister of the gospel and encouraged Wilberforce in his fight against the slave trade, whispered as he lay dying, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour.”

That irrepressible Cornish Christian, Billy Bray, came downstairs for the last time on Friday, 22 May 1868. To one of his old friends, who asked a few hours before his death if he had any fear of death, or of being lost, he said, “What! Me fear death! Me lost! Why, my Saviour conquered death. If I were to go down to hell, I would shout ‘Glory, glory to my blessed Jesus’ until I made the bottomless pit ring again, and the miserable old Satan would say, ‘Billy, Billy, this is no place for you: get you back.’ Then up to heaven I should go, shouting ‘Glory! Glory! Praise the Lord!’

A little later he said “Glory!” which was his last word. [26]

A Greek named Aristides, in AD 125 wrote to a friend about the new religion called Christianity: “If any righteous man from among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort his body with songs and thanksgivings as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.

Those at the bedside of the influential New England preacher Jonathan Edwards, thought he had passed from the realms of consciousness. They began to lament the sad loss to the church, only to be stopped by a memorable final sentence: “Trust in God and you need not fear.”

On the morning of his execution, James Guthrie, asked how he was, replied, "Very well. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Before the scaffold Guthrie, who had been offered a bishopric and refused it, declared to the great crowd:

I take God to record upon my soul, I would not exchange this scaffold with the palace and mitre of the greatest prelate in Britain. Blessed be God who has shown mercy to me such a wretch, and has revealed His Son in me, and made me a minister of the everlasting Gospel...Jesus Christ is my Life and my Light, my Righteousness, my strength, and my Salvation and all my desire! O Him, I do with all the strength of my soul commend to you. Bless Him, O my soul, from henceforth even forever. Lord, now let your servant depart in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation.

Do you see how important hope is? Do you see what it does to a person who has it? Hope transforms all of our living. It gives us a different perspective, a different motivation, and a different enthusiasm, knowing that we are prepared to live, because we are prepared to die. And that, in the end, every price we ever paid will be worth it.