



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 46

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----



GLORIFYING GOD TOGETHER

15:7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. 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. ^{NKJV} (Romans 15:7-13)

INTRODUCTION

While we are all individual believers, that is not all we are. We are part of an exceeding large number – the “*body of Christ*,” and are “*members in particular*” (1 Cor 12:27). This vast multitude is described as being “*out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*” (Rev 5:9). So far as territory is concerned, the larger part of this number are “*Gentiles*.” Although the covenantal workings of God were **not** directed to the Gentiles, or “*nations*,” yet they have become participants in His “*great salvation*.” The Gentiles were, in a very real sense, “*not a people*” (1 Pet 2:10).

This is a most marvelous consideration! The Spirit has affirmed that God’s earlier dealings were confined to the Jews, “*to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever*” (9:4-5). They are the “*good olive tree*” into which we Gentiles have been “*grafted*.” They are the “*natural branches*” who shall yet be grafted “*into their own olive tree*” (11:24). The Law, all of the prophets, and

all of the promises, were given to them. John the Baptist came from them, as well as our blessed Savior Himself. And yet, we Gentiles are now found in the Savior that came unto them (John 1:11). “*This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes*” (Psalm 118:23).

All of this is highly relevant to this section of Scripture. The issue of weak faith, the eating of meats, and the observance of days, was, among other things, a result of the mingling of Jew and Gentile in a common “*body*.” Different background! Different spiritual pedigree!

The marvelous accomplishments of redemption result in God receiving great glory from Jew and Gentile--by Given O. Blakely

OUTLINE

- < THIS IS WHAT WE ARE TO DO (15:7)
- < JESUS, A SERVANT TO THE CIRCUMCISION (15:8)
- < THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE GENTILES (15:9-12)
- < A FILLING ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD (15:13)

Differing perspectives.

The distinction between Jew and Gentile was the result of God's own working. From the natural point of view, it is the only external distinction among men that was originated and sanctioned by God Himself. Hence, if He has brought both of them together in Christ Jesus, there is no further basis for a distinction between them. In this section of Romans, humanly conceived distinctions erupt in one brother despising another. It also occurs when one brother judges another. In both instances, the action is forbidden by God. The very nature of our salvation also prohibits such attitudes.

In Christ, we have been brought together to serve and glorify God together. **Further, we will see that if that togetherness is interrupted by the carnality and capriciousness of men, no further purpose for salvation exists.** Division among God's people contradicts the prophecies of the prophets, the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, and the words of Jesus Himself. **If what we call "salvation" does not join us together, we lack evidence that we have even been saved at all.** There is simply too much revealed on this subject for it to be questioned.

THE PROPHETS

- ' *"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion."* (Isa 52:6)
- ' *"And I will give them **one heart**, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."* (Jer 32:39)

*"For then will I turn to the **people a pure language**, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him **with one consent**."* (Zech 52:6)

*"And I will give them **one heart**, and I will put **a new spirit** within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh."* (Ezek 11:19)

JESUS CHRIST

*"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one fold**, and **one shepherd**."* (John 10:16)

THE APOSTLES

*"For as we have many members in **one body**, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are **one body in Christ**, and every one members **one of another**."* (Rom 12:4)

*"For we being many **are one bread, and one body**: for we are all partakers of that one bread."* (1 Cor 10:17)

*"For as **the body is one**, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, **being many, are one body**: so also is Christ."* (1 Cor 12:12)

*"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also **ye are called in one body**; and be ye thankful."* (Col 3:15)

THE POINT

The point of all of this is that despising or judging our brethren can only occur when we forget we are "*one body*."

for them (Eph 5:29). He does not judge them because they lack understanding, but teaches them "*as the truth is in Jesus*" (Eph 4:20-21).

When, therefore, these attitudes are found among those professing His name, they reveal, to some measure, an absence of fellowship with Him. **Jesus does not fellowship with individuals in despising those who have believed on Him, regardless of the infancy of their faith. Nor, indeed, does He join with them in judging those for whom He intercedes, because they do not see things exactly as they do.**

It will do no good to attempt to justify despising or judging the people of God. There is no place for it. That is the purpose for this text. However, the Spirit will not simply forbid us to do these things. He will assist us to see why they are utterly unreasonable to faith. He will show us that the purpose of God, when understood, makes no allowance for such conduct. **He will seek to convince us that such an abundance has been revealed about Divine intent, that no question should exist on this matter.** That is something of what is involved in this marvelous text.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I have taken the time to say these things because of my own miserable background. Because of my own ignorance, and the flawed doctrine to which I was subjected, I did exactly what the Spirit here forbids: despising and judging those who have faith in Christ. I know something of the confusion that this

Even though I struggled to disqualify them from Divine acceptance, my own conscience shouted back to me, telling me they were not worthy of being excluded from Divine acceptance. Thus, I should receive them.

Jesus does not preside over multiple bodies, because He Himself is not "*divided*" (1 Cor 1:13). Jesus does not despise the members of His body, but rather nourishes and cares

attitude generates. Frequently, more than I dare to imagine, I confronted people whom my theological stance forced me judge or despise. Yet, many of these very

people possessed spiritual qualities I knew were superior to my own. Even though I struggled to disqualify them from Divine acceptance, my own conscience shouted back to me, telling me they were not worthy of being excluded from Divine acceptance. Thus, I should receive them.

I am exceeding grateful to God for being delivered from this wretched experience. It forced my mouth to speak contrary to my conscience. It even tended to make me more conscience of my own view than of the Word of the Living God.

The Kingdom of Christ and of God is so ordered as to make professing believers miserable and uncomfortable when they do not live

with a mind to please the Lord. Despising and judgmental people are neither pleasant nor peaceful. Their own view of things tends to make them harsh and abrasive. They are inclined to be rude and inconsiderate, to debate and be contentious. It is their religion that makes them this way. Yet, the Lord Jesus does not abandon such people. Rather, through the Spirit He strives with them to bring them into accord with Himself. He labors to assist them to see His people as He Himself sees them. They will never be the worse for accepting those whom He has accepted, and will always be the worse for despising, judging, or even rejecting them. **Such attitudes will not, and cannot, bring any true advantage to those possessing them. They are like an**

eroding leprosy to the soul, which rots both mind and heart. Praise God, there is deliverance from them in Jesus!

Therefore, it should not surprise us that the Spirit speaks to us so extensively about this subject. This is not a light matter. Nor, indeed, is it something optional, that can be ignored with impunity. Rather, this is something that deals with helping or hindering the progress of the people of God. It has to do with being a helper, or comforter, like the Spirit, or an adversary like the devil. We cannot be both, but can only be one. It confirms to our hearts that the people of God have sufficient disadvantages within and without to deal with. They need no further hindrance from us.

THIS IS WHAT WE ARE TO DO

^{15:7} **Therefore receive one** | merely meet the requirements of the

At once it becomes obvious that this is not a mere formality – like recognizing one another as belonging to the same local congregation or denomination. Formalities lacking heart or affection are out of place in the body of Christ.

another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” The exhortation that follows is the only acceptable response to what has been affirmed. (1 The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. (2 We should not seek to please ourselves. (3 We are to seek our neighbor’s edification. (4 Christ did not please Himself. (5 God will grant us to be like-minded toward one another. (6 The aim is to glorify God with one mind and one mouth (15:1-6).

It is imperative that we conduct our lives in harmony with the truth we have embraced. All too often, this requirement is either ignored altogether, or placed into the background of believer’s thinking. It is thought to be enough to

institution. Or, lower still, to live with a basic regard for satisfying self. But this is not acceptable. First, the truth is to be affirmed “*constantly*” (Tit 3:8), always placing it before the people of God for their consideration. Second, a hearty and consistent effort is to be expended in conforming our lives to that truth. Where either of these is missing, the people are living in transgression, and are outside of the circumference of God’s will.

This does not mean one lacking these things is instantly rejected by God. That should be evident by the word of exhortation that follows. **However, failing to do what is admonished does lead to eventual Divine rejection.** One cannot continue to live in contradiction of

the truth of God without paying the penalty. We must never forget that our Lord’s return will mean the condemnation of all who “*obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess 1:8). It is with this ultimate reality in mind that we are strongly urged to bring our lives into conformity with the Gospel.

THEREFORE RECEIVE ONE ANOTHER

“*Therefore receive one another . . .*” Other versions read, “*Wherefore, accept one another,*” ^{NASB} “*Welcome one another,*” ^{NRSV} and “*So then, take one another to your hearts.*” ^{BBE} At once it becomes obvious that this is not a mere formality – like recognizing one another as belonging to the same local congregation or denomination. **Formalities lacking heart or affection are out of place in the body of Christ.**

The word “*receive*” is a profound word with Kingdom depth. Etymologically, it comes from *προσλαμβάνεσθε*, which here means “to grant one access to one’s heart; to take into friendship and contact.” ^{THAYER} The Basic Bible English (BBE) version captures this sense of the word: “*So then, take one another to your hearts.*”

To “*receive one another*” in this

manner cannot not accomplished through law, or out of a sense of mere obligation. This is more than the intellect, or any other natural human faculty, can do. Yet, it is imperative that it be done. The answer, of course, is found in God granting us to be *“like-minded toward one another”* (verse 6). It is realized when *“grace and peace”* come to us *“from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (1:7).

All of the capacities to fulfill this word were granted when we were *“baptized into His (Christ’s) death”* (Rom 6:3). In that experience, we became *“dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (6:11). Furthermore, we are no longer *“under the Law, but under grace”* (6:14). We are not debtors to the flesh, or natural part of us, to follow its depraved prompting (8:12). If we sense any inadequacy in ourselves, God has given us His own Holy Spirit, who *“helpeth our infirmities”* (8:26-27). Jesus is also making intercession for us (8:34), powerfully communicating to us every resource that is required to please God in all of our manners.

What possible reason can be adduced for NOT receiving one another? There is nothing about salvation that inhibits the fulfillment of this word. Our reconciliation to God does not work against it. The fact that *“there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus”* (8:1) contributes to the fulfillment of this requirement. The fact that we were all *“digged”* from the same *“hole of the pit”* (Isa 51:1), forbids an uncomely view of one another.

“Receive one another!” Receive one another as *“members of one another”* (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25). Receive one another as belonging to Christ Himself – *“of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph 5:30). Receive one another as *“heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”* (Rom 8:17). Receive one another as having been delivered from the separating influences of flesh and blood! As a believer you are reminded, *“ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Pet 1:18-19).^{NKJV} There is no need to remain

shackled to lifeless traditions that were handed down to us!

CHRIST ALSO RECEIVED US

“ . . . just as Christ also received us . . . ” Other versions read, *“just as Christ also accepted us,”*^{NASB} *“just as Christ has welcomed you,”*^{NRSV} and *“as Christ took us.”*^{BBE} And how was it that Christ received us? What did He look for in us? What moved Him to receive us unto Himself. Did He not invite us to come to Him when we were *“weary and heavy laden.”* And did He not receive us when we consented to *“learn from”* Him (Matt 11:28–29)? Did He not promise, *“him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37)? He has extended Himself to make us welcome in His presence!

one another!

Let no believer demand more for fellowship with himself than God and Christ require for fellowship with Themselves.

It may appear quite unnecessary to say such a thing, but it is very needful. We have not been received by God because of the correctness of our theology, or the absence of all flaw.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

“ . . . to the glory of God.” Other versions read, *“in order to bring praise to God,”*^{NIV} *“for the glory of God,”*^{NRSV} *“unto the honor of God,”*^{DRA} and *“for the sake of God’s glory.”*^{NJB} How marvelous to consider the glory of God!

What does it mean for God to

Make no mistake about this, God Almighty is glorified by Christ’s reception of those who were “dead in trespasses and sins,” yet have come to Him for remission and acceptance! He is glorified because He Himself drew us to Christ

It was our faith that brought us to Christ! That is what moved Him to receive us! It was our faith that moved God to *“purify”* our hearts (Acts 15:9). We were sanctified, being made acceptable to God, by our faith (Acts 26:18). The very righteousness of God was given to us *“by faith”* (Rom 1:17; Phil 3:9). We were *“justified by faith”* (Rom 3:28; 5:1). We are categorically told we *“are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”* (Gal 3:26).

Initially, that faith was certainly not mature faith. It was hearty, and it was *“with the heart”* (Rom 10:10), but it was only the beginning. Much like the blind man from Bethsaida, we saw the truth of God like *“men as trees walking”* (Mk 8:24). We knew there was more than we saw, and so did the Lord. Yet, He *“received us”* – not upon the basis of the fulness of our faith, or the precision of its vision, but upon the basis of faith itself. That is precisely how we are to receive

receive glory from something? **It means that His power and Presence are seen in what has been accomplished. There is an obvious association of what is seen and done with the Living God. He is the explanation for what is accomplished!**

Make no mistake about this, God Almighty is glorified by Christ’s reception of those who were *“dead in trespasses and sins,”* yet have come to Him for remission and acceptance! He is glorified because He Himself drew us to Christ (John 6:44,65). He is honored because we are *“made accepted in the Beloved”* (Eph 1:6). What occurred when Jesus received us revealed what a marvelous work was accomplished by the Father. He put us into Christ, making Him to be our *“wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption”* (1 Cor 1:30). Heaven saw the working of God in our repentance, and rejoiced to the glory of the Father (Luke 15:7). When Jesus *“received us,”* it confirmed the immutability of God’s

promise, who at the threshold of human history declared the "Seed" of woman would bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). His promise of a New Covenant in which God would remember sins no more was corroborated (Heb 8:8-13).

Christ "received" us from God the Father. That is precisely why He frequently referred to those who had been

"given" to Him (John 6:39; 10:29; 17:9,11,24). In His last prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus referred to those who had been given to Him, and what the Father's will was concerning them. "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:1-2).

Christ received us without question. What possible reason can be presented for believers not receiving one another? It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to refuse to receive those whom Christ Himself has received. **Such conduct brings no glory to God, and no promise of eternal life is given to those who do not bring glory to God?**

JESUS, A SERVANT TO THE CIRCUMCISION

"^s 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 . . ." Although men often fail to place a high value upon the promises of God, they are always held in the highest regard in Scripture. It is through His promises that we become "*partakers of the Divine nature*" (2 Pet 1:4). Some have even concocted theologies that present God as having voided His promises. Such views particularly relate to Israel, to whom God is thought to no longer have any commitment. In dealing with chapters nine through eleven, I have already shown the utter folly of such views. Here again, however, the Spirit brings up God's commitment to Israel. It is as though He

become . . . " Another version reads, "*Christ hath been made.*" ^{ASV} This is something the death, resurrection, and enthronement of Jesus led to. It is an objective accomplished by His atonement. **It refers to the fulfillment of the prophecies given to Israel concerning a Messiah, or "Christ."** It represents a ministry for which His vicarious atonement qualified Him.

Throughout the Christian world, there are simplistic views of the statement, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*" (Heb 13:8). This statement deals with Christ's essential nature, not his ministry and activities. There was, for example, a time when He was "*in the form of God*" and

does not imply He always did that, is still doing it, or will always do it. There is no basis for such a supposition. It reflects a simplicity that is not honoring to Jesus Christ. There are certain consistencies taking place in "*the day of salvation.*" However, many of them will be abruptly terminated when Jesus returns in all of His glory to "*judge the world in righteousness*" (Acts 17:31). His patience with sinners will come to a grinding halt. The testing of the righteous will end.

Why Say All of This?

All of this may appear highly irrelevant to some, and even questionable. Our text, however, postulates Jesus **becoming** something. Just as surely as there was a beginning to His manhood, Jesus has present ministries that had a beginning. Before He became flesh and dwelt among us, He was not interceding for those coming to God through Him (Heb 7:25).

In particular, our text, like much of Apostolic doctrine, is declaring the activities of Christ Jesus following His enthronement "*on the right hand of the Majesty on high*" (Heb 1:3). There is a strange absence of this kind of preaching in our day. No person should imagine that godliness and strong hope can be promoted while men have a sparse knowledge of what Jesus is doing now – in "*the day of salvation.*" We will find this passage to be conducive to understanding, spiritual strength, and the culture of a living hope.

A SERVANT TO THE CIRCUMCISION

" . . . a servant to the circumcision

Although men often fail to place a high value upon the promises of God, they are always held in the highest regard in Scripture. It is through His promises that we become "*partakers of the Divine nature*"

insists that we consider them.

A theology that holds the Jews, or "*the circumcision,*" in disdain is a restrictive one. In this particular text, reasoning concerning the redemption that is in Christ Jesus involves Jesus being a "*servant to the circumcision.*" As we will see, this is a contemporary circumstance, and not a mere historical one.

JESUS CHRIST HAS BECOME

"Now I say that Jesus Christ has

"was God" (Phil 2:6; John 1:1). There was also a time when He "*became flesh,*" and "*humbled Himself and became obedient*" (John 1:14; Phil 2:8). There was a single period of time when He was "*tempted in all points like as we are*" (Heb 4:15), and even "*suffered being tempted*" (Heb 2:18). He also "*was made to become sin,*" and "*tasted death for every man*" (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:9). These are not matters that apply to "*yesterday, today, and forever.*"

The fact that Jesus did something,

... "Other versions read, "was a minister of the circumcision,"^{KJV} "hath been made a minister of the circumcision,"^{ASV} and "Christ's work was to serve the circumcised."^{NJB}

The argument being presented is that Christ has embraced both Jew and Gentile, and therefore we should embrace one another. This is not, then, a view of what Jesus did in the past, but what He is doing now. The Spirit is **not** saying that Jesus formerly ministered to the circumcision, but now, instead, is ministering to the Gentiles. Rather, He is saying that **our Lord is currently ministering to both. He begins, however, with the Jew.**

This is a proper beginning. The Gospel, after all, is God's power in order to salvation "to the Jew first" (1:16). The punishment of every soul that does evil is "to the Jew first" (2:9). The promise of "glory, honor, and peace" to those who do good, is also "to the Jew first" (2:10).

"The Circumcision"

The Jewish people, or "the children of Israel," are frequently called "the circumcision." They are never referred to in this manner in Moses and the Prophets, but quite often in the New Covenant writings.

The Former Use of the Word

In fact, the word "circumcision" occurs only one time from Genesis through Malachi, and then it was not a matter of teaching (Ex 4:26). The word "circumcise" is used six times. One was to Abraham (Gen 17:11), three had reference to the spiritual circumcision of the heart (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4), and two to Joshua's re-circumcision of the children of Israel (Josh 5:2,4).

"Circumcised" is used twenty four times in Moses and the Prophets. Eleven of them related to the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen 17:10,12,13,14,23,24, 25,26,27; 21:4). Four were in reference to the sons of Jacob dealing with the men who ravished their sister Dinah (Gen 34:15,17,22,24). Two related to the Passover Feast (Ex 12:44,48). One was a directive under the Law (Lev 12:3). Three were associated with Joshua's re-circumcision of Israel (Josh 5:3,5,7). One

related to God's punishment of both Jew and Gentile (Jer 9:25).

The word "circumcising" occurs one time in Joshua 5:8, and is connected with his re-circumcision of Israel.

I have given you thirty-two uses of the word "circumcision," and its derivatives. All of them pertained to Abraham and his descendants. A few of them were promises of an effective circumcision to come, but even those were promises to Israel, not the Gentiles. Because of this unique identity, those who

that "circumcision" refers to all who are in Christ Jesus. The word is used in that sense: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3). Believers are so identified because they "are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11). **However, that meaning must not be imposed upon our text, for the Spirit is showing us how Christ has received both Jews and Gentiles.** In

Jesus is a "Servant to" the Jews, not a servant of them! He does not come to serve their desires, but to serve to them the promises of God. He is the fulfillment of all that was promised them through Abraham and the Prophets.

were not Jews were called "uncircumcised," a term denoting Divine favor was not toward them (Judges 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam 14:6; 17:26,36; 31:4; 2 Sam 1:20; 1 Chron 10:4; Isa 52:1; Jer 9:26; Ezek 28:10; 31:18, etc).

Circumcision was Abraham's "token" of the covenant God made with Him - the covenant of which we have been made partakers in Christ Jesus (Gen 17:11). Stephen referred to it as "the covenant of circumcision" (Acts 7:8). Paul called it "the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith" that Abraham had before he was circumcised (Rom 4:11).

Because of these things, the fleshly descendants of Abraham are called "the circumcision" in the New Covenant writings. (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Rom 3:30; 4:9, 12; 15:8; Gal 2:7-9,12; Eph 2:11; Col 4:11; Tit 1:10). **This is how the word is used in our text: it is speaking of the Jews.** Jesus is declared to have become a minister to the Jews.

I say this because some might be tempted to spiritualize the text, saying

this text HE is emphasizing the two bodies of people that have been brought together, rather than the single body into which they have been merged. **These two bodies, Jew and Gentile, represent the only fleshly distinction God has made among peoples.**

"Servant to"

Jesus is a "Servant **to**" the Jews, not a servant **of** them! He does not come to serve their desires, but to serve to them the promises of God. He is the fulfillment of all that was promised them through Abraham and the Prophets. He comes to them from the Father, to fulfill His good pleasure toward them.

FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD

"... for the truth of God . . . " Other versions read, "on behalf of the truth of God."^{NASB,NIV} "to give effect to the undertakings given by God,"^{BBE} "to show God's truthfulness,"^{NAB} "to show that God is true,"^{NLT} and "fulfilling the truthfulness of God."^{NJB}

The phrase "the truth of God" refers to the truthfulness of God Himself. He is true to His word, and faithful to His

unchanging character. Here is a point that is of utmost importance to God: that men see **He is true to His word!** This is precisely why it is written, *“God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”* (Heb 6:17-18). Speaking as a man, there was no need for God to confirm His word with an oath, for God cannot lie. Oaths are ordinarily necessary because of the proneness of men to lie. But God cannot lie. He cannot misrepresent, exaggerate, or go back on

Thus, Jesus is represented as becoming a minister to the Jews in order to fulfill what God had promised them. **He did this so that God would be seen as true and faithful.** It is essential that we see this, for men too easily disassociate the fulfillment of God’s promises from themselves. Great bodies of theology have been developed by religious skeptics to account for why God did not do what He promised. For example, some teach the Lord has scrapped His plans for Israel, and has developed a new plan for the Gentiles. Others, sensing the absurdity of such a position, declare that God stopped the prophetic time clock to work for a while with the Gentiles. When this temporary work is completed, He will turn

Purpose In Ministry

One further thing can be seen in this affirmation – something that will assist believers in becoming spiritually stable, thereby bringing glory to God. If Jesus ministers in order to confirm that God is true, we do well to pledge ourselves to do the same. When things do not go our way, we ought not view the Father and the Son as though they had abandoned us. God did not send Jesus to solve all of our self-diagnosed problems, or fulfill all of our self-conceived plans. The Lord Jesus is serving God, not men. **At no point is He depicted as serving the personal interests of individuals whether they be Jew or Gentile.** Those, therefore, who come in the name of the Lord to solve the problems of men, have thereby betrayed they are not from God.

Speaking as a man, there was no need for God to confirm His word with an oath, for God cannot lie. Oaths are ordinarily necessary because of the proneness of men to lie. But God cannot lie. He cannot misrepresent, exaggerate, or go back on His word or His oath

If this seems heartless, we must remember that Jesus Himself has been anointed to *“bind up the broken hearted”* (Isa 61:1). He is the one who gives “rest” to those who are *“weary and heavy laden”* (Matt 11:28-29). While the redeemed play a measurable role in this noble work, their primary involvement is getting the people to Jesus Himself. Salvation joins the individual to Jesus, making *him “one spirit”* with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17).

His word or His oath (example, *“as I live,”* Rom 14:11). The particular oath to which the Hebrews text refers is recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, following Abraham’s intention to sacrifice Isaac as he was commanded. *“By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee . . .”* (Gen 22:16-17). It was imperative that Abraham, as well as we, be assured of the integrity of God’s word. **Although He Himself has no need to swear in such a manner, men are so accustomed to disappointment and frustration that the Lord graciously condescends to our frailty by extending Himself to make us confident.** This is why unbelief is such a despicable sin. When God has gone to such great lengths to assure us He had told us the truth, He will not excuse those miserable sinners who refuse to believe Him.

again, they say, to the Jews. Such evil men can easily explain why they conceive of God as having no present dealings with the Jews. But when they have finished with their babblings, our text declares that Jesus **has become** a minister to them, to show the truthfulness of God, not to unveil a Divine change of plans.

This Is Pertinent to Our Text

These things are highly pertinent to our text. We have, after all, been grafted into the Jewish olive tree, and have thus become partakers of the promises that were given to them.

Additionally, Jesus is presently ministering to believers among the Jews without regard to their various levels of understanding. He has *“received”* them because they have received Him! That ought to be enough to constrain us to receive one another without imposing any additional requirements.

CONFIRMING THE PROMISES

“ . . . to confirm the promises made to the fathers.” Jesus is now (has become a minister) fulfilling to the Jews the promises that were made to *“the fathers,”* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In particular, these are the Messianic promises of *“the Seed”* through whom the world would be blessed (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). In general, they are the promises of moral and spiritual change that would be wrought in them. How blessed it is to consider some of them.

- ‘ *“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live”* (Deut 30:6).
- ‘ *“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh”* (Ezek 11:19).
- ‘ *“And I will bring the blind by a way*

that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them” (Isa 42:16).

“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Heb 31:34).

Much is made of this by Christ’s ambassadors. *“Of this man’s seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). “And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again” (Acts 13:32-33).*

On the day of Pentecost, Peter’s entire message proclaimed the fulfillment of promises made to Israel (Acts 2:16-21,25-28,34-35). Later, after healing an impotent man, Peter declared that in Jesus, God had fulfilled what He had shown through the mouth of the prophets (Acts 3:18). Peter told Cornelius that all the Prophets had given witness to Jesus (Acts 10:43). James saw the ministry of Jesus as fulfilling the words of the Prophets (Acts 15:15). Paul affirmed the ONLY things he declared are those which Moses and the Prophets *“did say should come” (Acts 26:22).*

The Importance of this View

The fact that Jesus is presently ministering what God has promised, or confirming the promises He has given, is a vital aspect of the Gospel. Most people are not only unaware of this, but have little knowledge of the promises of God themselves. They are largely ignorant of the fact that God DID make remarkable commitments concerning the thorough resolution of the dilemma caused by sin. These promises are appropriately called *“exceeding great and precious promises,”* by which we are brought to participate in the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

A New Kind of Preaching

With the current emphasis upon

psychological approaches to human difficulties, a new kind of preaching has evolved. It is a “God-will solve-all-of-your-problems” kind of preaching. In it, human difficulties, on a personal level, are accented, often blown completely out of proportion. The minister or church who meets these humanly defined “needs” is thought to be the most successful and relevant. **Life is thus viewed through the philosophical filter of human experience rather than Divine assessment.** Therefore words like “sin,” “transgression,” and “iniquity,” have

viewed as fallen (Rom 3:23), disobedient and deceived (Tit 3:3), dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-2), and vassals of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). By nature their hearts are hard (Rom 2:5), their minds blinded (2 Cor 4:4), and their ears dull and uncircumcised (Matt 13:15; Jer 6:10). They are *“servants of sin” (Rom 6:17,20), “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18), and “without God and without hope in the world” (Eph 2:12).*

As important as personal circumstances may appear to be, they are

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been replaced by “disease,” “substance abuse,” “child abuse,” “spousal abuse,” “mistakes,” “emotional stress,” and other similar terms. All of this, of course, is the jargon of the world, and represents its feeble attempt to identify the problems of mankind.

Within such a context, the promises of God have absolutely no relevance, unless they can be construed to bear directly upon what men conceive to be their problem. **To put it in other words, if God is not interested in men’s problems, what He says must seen as relatively unimportant.** All of this may appear quite innocent. Actually, however, it represents a major intrusion of the devil and his hosts of darkness. Whatever pushes the promises of God into the background cannot be good. Something that represents the ministry of Jesus as focusing upon personal and temporal needs cannot be from God.

The heavenly manner of preaching is to provide the Divine assessment of the situation. This is done from a heavenly point of view, and is universal in its scope. Further, it is a view that has been revealed. Thus humanity is

not the primary circumstances, and neither Christ nor the Gospel **focuses** upon them. It is only when these are addressed that the more obvious matters can be satisfactorily dealt with. All of this may appear cold and heartless to those stuck in the mire of the flesh. But for those who walk with God, they know this is the appointed way of deliverance, victory, and fulness of joy.

Jesus is then presented as God’s appointed resolution to these conditions. The promises of God are proclaimed as having to do with these things from the very beginning. Thus, what God said He would do is seen as having to do with our real condition. **For this very reason, the conforming of men and women into the likeness of God’s Son (Rom 8:29), or the Holy Spirit changing them from glory unto glory (2 Cor 3:18), is directly related to the promises of God.** Thus, it is written, *“ . . . glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:3-4).*

Jesus has entered into the ministry of fulfilling the promises of God, which

are the appointed means through which we are changed into Christ's image. **This being so, how can any progress toward the Divine likeness be accomplished where the promises are not held before the people of God?** It is no marvel that the modern

church is filled with all manner of problems, both moral and spiritual. It is also no wonder that so little of Jesus is seen in the religious masses. If the promises of God are withheld from them, they are, by that very circumstance,

confined to an unalterable state, for change comes through these exceeding great and precious promises. That is precisely why so much of contemporary preaching is nothing more than a miserable band-aid for the souls of men.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE GENTILES

"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;

attended by a certain sense of marvel and wonder. It is consistently seen as a great depiction of the mercy of our God. Once again, it is not common for such wonder to be experienced in the modern church. In fact, there are even doctrines being perpetrated that cause men to be arrogant about the Gentiles acceptance. They are moved to boast themselves "against the [Jewish] branches" (Rom 11:18). Such

wert grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree" (Rom 11:17). "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph 3:6). "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph 2:13-14). "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph 2:15).

Considerable space is now given to the matter of the Gentiles' acceptance. This not because they are more significant than the Jews, but because their acceptance is more remarkable. From a human point of view, there is less reason to expect Gentiles to be received by Christ than for Him to receive the Jews.

And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.'

The Spirit now begins to reason with us about the remarkable acceptance of the Gentiles. Christ has also received them through their faith. **Even though they, as a whole, did not have previous exposure to God's promises, yet He is fulfilling the same to them also.** Thus, no believing Jew should recoil at the idea of receiving a Gentile brother or sister in Christ. Nor, indeed, should they seek to impose upon them rules that were peculiar to the Lord's dealings with the children of Israel.

THE MARVEL OF GENTILE ACCEPTANCE

Wherever the Holy Spirit deals with the acceptance of the Gentiles, it is always

things ought not to be!

The Gentiles are never represented as taking the place of Israel! If men imagine that such representations are in God's Word, let them produce them. Let them show us where God ever said He would transfer all of the promises of His goodness away from the Jews and to the Gentiles. Where is it ever said that their tree would be plucked up by the roots, and another planted in its place?

The Gentiles are never said to be received INSTEAD of, or in the place of, the Jews. Rather, they are received WITH them. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom 1:16). *"Thou, being a wild olive tree,*

Jews and Gentiles were joined together in the guilt of sin (Rom 3:9), and in Christ they are joined together in redemption and justification. Those who are "called" come from "both Jews and Greeks" (1 Cor 1:24), and, by virtue of that common call, constitute one body.

Acceptance Not Taken for Granted

Still, such acceptance is not to be taken for granted. Considerable space is now given to the matter of the Gentiles' acceptance. **This not because they are more significant than the Jews, but because their acceptance is more remarkable.** From a human point of view, there is less reason to expect Gentiles to be received by Christ than for Him to receive the Jews. After all, the promises were all given to the Jews (Rom 9:4), and Jesus Himself came to them (Matt 15:24; John 1:11). Peter declared that Jesus was sent "first" to the Jews (Acts 3:25-26). When Jewish flesh looks at this, it tends to become arrogant. When Gentile flesh beholds it, it tends to

despair. Neither reaction is proper. The Jews must consider that they heard the Gospel first for the fathers' sake, and because of the promises that were directed to them. The Gentiles must consider that the Jews heard the Gospel first in order that the Lord might remain righteous in accepting both Jew and Gentile in the Beloved.

The Impact of this Realization

Much of the arrogance and pride of the modern church would be quickly removed under the impact of this realization! In a manner that challenges our hearts and minds, the Spirit will show us that **Gentiles owe their salvation to the unprecedented mercy of God.** They have been permitted to join with the natural branches, not replace them. The Gospel has not been preached to them because they are better than the Jews.

You can only imagine the great joy that must have come to early Gentiles who tasted of the bread that was placed exclusively upon the Jewish table. Who can forget the Gentile centurion who pled for Jesus to come and heal his servant. He knew Jesus was a Jewish Messiah, but sensed there was mercy for him also. He exhibited such faith that Jesus "marveled," declaring to them who followed Him, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt 8:10). That centurion received his request!

And what of the Grecian woman, "a Syrophenician by nation," who besought the Savior to cast the demon out of her daughter? Jesus told her He was "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and that it "is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs" (Mk 7:26; Matt 15:24). Yet, she continued to plead with Him, saying the dogs could eat the crumbs that fell from the Jewish table. Taking note of her faith, Jesus said to her, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter" (Mk 7:29).

Do you imagine that the Centurion and the Grecian woman were haughty in their view of the Jews? Do you not see that both of them realized they had become partakes of a benefit that

belonged to others? Both of them would no doubt highly value the mercy of the Lord. **You would hear neither of them speaking of their worthiness, or boasting of how Jesus preferred them to the Jews.** After all, the One who blessed them was not walking in their cities, nor was He being followed by hosts of Gentiles. It was not their prophets who had spoken of this Man, nor did they have special Scriptures that spoke of Him. They certainly did not boast themselves "against the branches."

Proper Views and Good Attitudes

A proper view of the acceptance of the Gentiles will promote a similar attitude among us. That is why this perspective must be declared and perceived. **A glad day has indeed come**

given to the Gentiles. **All of them were given by Jewish prophets to the Jewish people.** It is as though God could not hide His gracious intention to bless the Gentiles, even though they knew nothing of that purpose.

GENTILES GLORIFYING GOD FOR HIS MERCY

"... and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy . . ." Most versions read exactly the same. One version reads, "and He came so the Gentiles might **also** give glory to God for His mercies to them."^{NLT}

A two-fold reason is declared as being fulfilled by Jesus' present ministry.

To be a minister to the Jews, for the

In a manner that challenges our hearts and minds, the Spirit will show us that Gentiles owe their salvation to the unprecedented mercy of God. They have been permitted to join with the natural branches, not replace them. The Gospel has not been preached to them because they are better than the Jews.

when you can see the marvelous display of God's mercy and kindness in receiving the Gentiles! It will promote a proper regard for your Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ. It will also prompt fervent prayers for the veil to be lifted from the eyes of those who do not yet believe. Those who see this truth do not find it hard to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psa 122:6). They can join with Paul in saying, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom 10:3).

With great care, we will be told our Savior did not spring from a Gentile nation, or a Gentile person. How, then, dare any Gentile believer judge their Jewish brethren.

The following passage will cite several prophetic references to the Gentiles. They are all magnificent, bringing great refreshment to the soul. None of the references, however, were

fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers.

In order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His great mercy.

The latter purpose will now be developed in a most glorious manner. The Lord will confirm to us that all of this is by Divine intent – a purpose which was established before the foundation of the world. The acceptance of the Gentiles is not a consequence of the rejection of the Jews, for Jesus is presently fulfilling to them the promises made to the Fathers.

Glorify God for His Mercy

The "mercy" of God speaks of His kindness and good will toward those who do not deserve it. It is coupled with God's desire to help, lift, and save, so that He is seen to have kindness and good will because He wants to have it. His mercy is not heartless pity, but the evidence of His great heart and desire to bless. His mercy includes the offering of clemency, whereby

sins can be remitted and renewal experienced. The mercy of God causes His compassion to rise at the pitiful sight of sinners. God is intent upon showing mercy, and when His will so dictates, there is nothing that can prohibit the triumph of that mercy. Thus it is written, *“I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy”* (Ex 33:19; Rom 9:15).

While, in Christ, the Jews are particularly beholding the truthfulness and faithfulness of God, **the Gentiles are especially beholding His mercy.** This does not mean the Jews do not behold His mercy, or that the Gentiles do not perceive His faithfulness. The Spirit is here speaking of a dominant perception.

His person, highlighting something that was not clearly seen before.

In our text, the Gentiles are said to glorify God for His mercy – insightfully pointing out that Divine quality. They are not exclusive in this ministry, but join with believing Jews in magnifying this Divine trait. The notes of glory from them, however, will rise to a crescendo at the sound of *“MERCY.”* That is the only way they can account for their salvation – Divine mercy! They cannot boast of having a Law, a Divine service, the Prophets, or the promises. If ever there was a trophy of Divine mercy, the Gentiles are it. That is the point of this word.

When Abraham’s servant had found

prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Rom 9:23-24). In the illuminating and cleansing impact of His glory, unspeakable change and growth take place. That is involved in the meaning of the expression *“the riches of His glory.”* Those very riches are revealed to be the resource from which the Holy Spirit strengthens us with might in the inner man (Eph 3:16).

Mercy is a prominent aspect of God’s Person. To put it another way, **those who glorify God for His mercy have seen Him in a fuller and more effective way.** It is essential to behold God as the Creator of all things. It is even more essential to see Him as *“The God of my mercy”* (Psa 59:10). The Gentiles have *“obtained mercy”* through the unbelief of the Jews (Rom 11:30). Further, through the mercy extended to the Gentiles, the Jews *“also may obtain mercy”* (Rom 11:31). Is it not fitting, therefore, that the Gentiles *“glorify God for His mercy?”*

As Gentiles who were without hope, our salvation is accounted for in these words: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)”* (Eph 2:4-5). Again, it is written, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”* (Tit 3:5). And again, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Pet 1:3).

As for us Gentiles, it is written, *“Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (1 Pet 2:10). God has determined that this aspect of His Person – His mercy – will be made known from the Gentiles. His great salvation is calculated to do precisely that. The Gospel of Christ, which is His *“power unto salvation,”* magnifies His mercy, declaring both its value and effectiveness.

Look for the Evidence

Where people do not speak often,

Mercy is a prominent aspect of God’s Person. To put it another way, those who glorify God for His mercy have seen Him in a fuller and more effective way. It is essential to behold God as the Creator of all things. It is even more essential to see Him as “The God of my mercy”

When the Gospel is declared to the Gentiles, and they believe it, the mercy of God will shine forth like a day star. It will be seen to be most prominent.

Glorifying God

To *“glorify God”* means to make Him known, to enhance His reputation, and to magnify Him. Although He is present throughout His creation, *“who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Eph 4:6), yet He remains obscure to the eyes of men. When He is glorified, that obscurity is removed, and men are enabled to see more of Him. It is something like what occurred when Jesus strode along the banks of the river Jordan. To the multitudes, He was *“the Carpenter”* (Mk 6:3). They were totally unaware of His real person. However, when John the Baptist saw Him, he glorified Him saying, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). He drew attention to

the appointed wife for Isaac, he confessed that God had not left Abraham destitute of *“His mercy”* (Gen 24:27). **He was glorifying God for His mercy.** When the ark of the covenant was brought back to the city of David, he first delivered a song of thanksgiving into the hands of Asaph the musician. In it He said, *“O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever”* (1 Chron 16:34). **He was glorifying God for His mercy.** The 136th Psalm contains the words *“for His mercy endureth for ever”* in every one of its thirty-six verses. **The Psalm is glorifying God for His mercy.**

Vessels of Mercy

Those who enjoy the salvation of God are appropriately called *“vessels of mercy.”* The Gentiles have graciously been included in this category. It was God’s intention all along *“that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore*

and with insight, about the mercy of the Lord, there is a but a small vision of God – if, indeed, there is any at all. Throughout my life, I have seen that **those with a propensity to Law, patterns, and procedures, speak very little about the mercy of God.** They are more apt to attempt to glorify God for a pattern than for His rich mercy. All such failures to glorify God for His mercy are a gigantic contradiction of Divine purpose. **If Jesus is presently ministering in order that the Gentiles may “glorify God for His mercy,” then where that is not occurring Jesus is not ministering.** That is a rather elementary observation, but it is far reaching in its implications.

See the Text Correctly

It is essential that we perceive this text correctly. This is not a declaration of the law of the Kingdom. It is not the announcement of an edict that is to be carried out by men, like the decrees of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (Dan 3:28-29; 6:25-27). Rather, this is the announcement of Divine intent or purpose. This is a declaration of what Jesus is presently doing among the Gentiles. The text is not seeking to impose the glorification of God for His mercy upon the people. **Rather, it aids us in recognizing where the Lord Jesus is at work.** Our response should be to judge ourselves and our surroundings by this criterion. When we find men glorifying God for His mercy, it will gender confidence and thanksgiving in our hearts and mouths. Where such evidence is not found, men should engage in a fervent quest for such glorification to occur. **You may rest assured that where this is not found, Divine recognition and blessing will not be realized.**

I WILL CONFESS YOU AMONG THE GENTILES

“ . . . as it is written: *For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name . . .* ” Here is the first pillar of support for the declaration made: *“that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.”* Here is how that intention is being fulfilled. This is how Jesus is presently ministering among the believing Gentiles.

This is a reference to Psalm 18:9. *“Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Thy name.”* This particular Psalm is also recorded in Second Samuel 22:49. It is an unusually long Psalm, and was written by David upon the occasion of his deliverance *“out of the hand of Saul”* (2 Sam 22:1; Psa 18:1). In it, David is not speaking of his own intentions, but **God is speaking through David of His own immutable purpose in Christ Jesus.**

A Similar Expression

A similar expression is found in the twenty-second Psalm, although the giving of thanks is there said to be among David’s brethren. *“I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee”* (Psa 22:22). The relevance of this text is that it is quoted in the second chapter of Hebrews, which is also an exposition of Christ’s present ministry. *“For both He that sanctifieth [Jesus] and they who are*

We are speaking of the ministry into which Jesus has come as a result of His vicarious death and triumphant exaltation. This is a preeminent ministry, not a secondary one. It blends most precisely with God’s own *“eternal purpose”* (Eph 3:11). This does not negate or diminish other aspects of His present reign. It does, however, give effectiveness and meaning to such things as guiding, feeding, and sustaining the saints. **It is within the framework of this primary ministry that all other blessings occur.**

The Focus of Jesus’ Present Ministry

While yet among us, our Savior declared this fundamental work. His death, resurrection, and enthronement, were in order to make this ministry effective. Furthermore, salvation cannot be initiated or maintained without it.

Matthew 11:27-30

“All things have been delivered to

Jesus is not merely reciting some interesting or novel facts. The Father delivered all things into the hands of the Son in order that He might make the Father known. The necessity of this revelation is seen in that fact that no one knows either the Son or the Father.

sanctified are all of One [the Father]: for which cause He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare Thy [the Father] name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee [the Father]” (Heb 2:11-12). Thus, Jesus is seen as presently ministering among His people, the church. He is extolling and revealing the Father as He dwells among them.

The Point of the Text

The point of both Psalmic texts is the same: Jesus is ministering among His people. **The particular focus of our text (Rom 15:9) is that He is doing so among the Gentiles in order that they may glorify God for His mercy.**

Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt 11:27-30).

Jesus is not merely reciting some interesting or novel facts. The Father delivered all things into the hands of the Son in order that He might make the Father known. The necessity of this revelation is seen in that fact that no one knows either the Son or the Father. Nature is not able to produce

such knowledge. Of himself, man has no capabilities in this area, for both the Father and the Son are beyond the perimeter of natural capacities.

Thus Jesus comes to “*reveal*” the Father, in order that men may properly respond to His word of grace. What is more, Jesus is kindly disposed to do this, for He invites all who are burdened under the yoke of sin and death to come to Him. He will teach them of the Father, for He wants to do so. If His greatness and glory tend to cause us to fear, we must remember He is, in this ministry, “*meek and lowly*.” He will effectively teach us, and we will be the better and the happier for it. The ministry of Jesus, when it is received, yields nothing but goodness. We are always the better for learning from Him “*the truth as it is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20-21).

First John 5:20
“And we know that the Son of God

He will effectively teach us, and we will be the better and the happier for it. The ministry of Jesus, when it is received, yields nothing but goodness. We are always the better for learning from Him “the truth as it is in Jesus”

is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). The words “is come” parallel the words of our text, “*Christ has become a servant*”^{NKJV} (15:8), and “*I will confess to thee among the Gentiles*” (15:9). In other words, this is what Jesus is doing now, during “*the day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:1-2).

The understanding that Jesus is ministering (“*has given us an understanding*”) pertains to God Himself. Through His teaching, He is showing the Father to us, unveiling both His purpose and His intentions to our hearts. For some, it is necessary to say that this is not

a substitute for the Word of God. Rather, it is the key to understanding the Bible.

As we should expect, knowing God is not an academic matter, like knowing **about** God, or having an intellectual grasp of what He has said. The God taught by Jesus *is “the true God,”* and knowing Him “*is eternal life.*” That is the meaning of this verse, and it is confirmed by Christ’s own words in John 17:2. “*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*”

The focus of Jesus’ present ministry is the exposition of God.

Said another way, it is to acquaint us with God in order that we might fellowship with both the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). This is what Jesus is declaring among the Gentiles. It is the theme of His song. He does not come to teach us of political, social, or domestic affairs, but to “*show us the Father.*” The reason for this

should be very apparent. God’s gift is “*eternal life*” (Rom 6:23), and political, social, and domestic issues are all temporal. Consequently, they can only be properly addressed within the framework of “*eternal life,*” which is knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

The Role of the Knowledge of God

The unlearned will suppose that the knowledge of God is too weighty for the novice, and is applicable only to the spiritually mature. But this is not at all the case. The knowledge of God is actually the common denominator among the people of God: “*they shall ALL know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them*” (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11).

Ponder what is said of this

marvelous knowledge.

- ‘ God prefers it to sacrifices and burnt offerings (Hos 6:6).
- ‘ It is a shame not to possess it (1 Cor 15:34).
- ‘ Wayward and competitive thoughts are against it (2 Cor 10:5).
- ‘ The knowledge of God is the area in which we are to increase (Col 1:10).
- ‘ Grace and peace are multiplied to us within the context of “*the knowledge of God*” (2 Pet 1:2).
- ‘ We escape the pollution of the world through this knowledge (2 Pet 2:20).
- ‘ Jesus justifies men “*by His knowledge*” (Isa 53:11).
- ‘ Wisdom and revelation are experienced “*in the knowledge of Him*” (Eph 1:17).
- ‘ Although God has given us “*all things that pertain unto life and godliness,*” they are obtained “*through the knowledge of Him*” (2 Pet 1:3).

When our text says of Jesus, “*I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name,*” it is speaking of the teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus. He is giving them an understanding of God, which is precisely why they glorify Him for His mercy. Now, under the indispensable ministry of the Son of God, those who “*knew not God*” (Gal 4:8) have come into a saving acquaintance with Him. It is no marvel that such people “*glorify Him*” for His mercy!

Vast bodies of people who are called *Christians* have rarely heard or considered these things. Yet, they are associated with Divine acceptance, the ministry of Jesus, and Christ receiving us to the glory of God. I cannot conceive of anything being more basic and more needful. It is of great concern to me that it is common for church leaders to totally ignore these things. Such a condition reveals an alienation from the life of God that, if not corrected, will lead to eventual destruction. God will not honor a religious system that makes no room for the ministry of His exalted Son. It is on the part of wisdom, for us to react to these lifeless systems in the same manner.

GENTILES REJOICING WITH HIS PEOPLE

“*... And again He says: ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!’ ...*” Again,

the Spirit is showing us that the Gentiles have joined with those of Israel who have believed. The church is the particular focus here, for the Spirit is teaching us concerning accepting one another. He does this by first showing Christ has received us both. Then He confirms that Jesus teaches us both. Now He reminds us that God has exhorted us both to “Rejoice” for His great salvation and abundant mercy.

Before Moses died and was buried by God Himself (Deut 34:6), God moved Moses to speak to the people about His vengeance against all who stood against Him. He would vindicate His name in such a manner as to provoke praise in all who discerned it. The verse we are presently considering is found couched in that very speech. **“Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people: for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people”** (Deut 32:43).

Nestled in Moses’ words God delivered a prophesy concerning the unified rejoicing of the Gentiles with “His people,” the Jews. Harmonious rejoicing would come from those who had been separated from one another by a “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14) erected by God Himself. That “partition” was the covenant of the Law, which served to formally distinguish the Jews from the Gentiles. However, because Christ is “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom 10:4), Jew and Gentile can rejoice together in Christ Jesus.

In order to check the rise of pride in the Gentiles, they are said to rejoice “with His people,” the children of Israel. It is understood that God will recognize such rejoicing. How, then, could men stoop to not receive one another?

In this passage, we see there are only two categories of people: the “Gentiles” and “His people.” This is the only fleshly distinction God recognized, and it is utterly destroyed in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). What will be the Divine reaction to those who honor such spurious distinctions as that of race or religious sects and denominations? The people of God must be able to adapt this text to the

condition of the contemporary Christian community.

PRAISE THE LORD AND LAUD HIM

“... And again: *‘Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples ...’*” First, we were told that, according to Divine intent, Jesus declares God’s name among the Gentiles. *“For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.”* Then we were reminded that the Gentiles would rejoice with God’s people. *“Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people.”* Now the Spirit tells the Gentiles to praise and laud the Lord as one great body: *“all you peoples.”*

Other versions read, *“Praise the Lord ALL you Gentiles, and let ALL the peoples praise Him,”* ^{NASB} *“Praise the*

Christ Jesus, it was not at all apparent to those before the exaltation of Jesus. Even the early church struggled with the acceptance of the Gentiles. Through a special vision and extended revelation, God made the acceptance of the Gentiles known to Peter some ten years after Pentecost (Acts 10:9-48). The Apostles and elders of the early church even came together to consider whether the Gentiles had, in fact, been received by God without due recognition of circumcision Acts 15:2-19).

The 117th Psalm is understood to be a celebration of the deliverance of Israel from the Babylonian captivity. It was a call for the nations to behold in Israel the working of the Lord, and to join in His praise. Now the Spirit shows us that the Lord intended a much loftier revelation.

This is reference to Psalm 117:1. “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!” ^{NKJV} This particular Psalm is the shortest chapter in the entire Bible, consisting of only two verses. It is also the middle chapter of the Bible.

Lord, ALL you Gentiles, and sing praises to Him, ALL you peoples, ^{NIV} *“Praise the Lord, ALL ye Gentiles: and magnify Him, ALL ye people,”* ^{DRB} and *“Praise the Lord, ALL nations, extol Him, ALL peoples.”* ^{NJB}

This is reference to Psalm 117:1. **“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”** ^{NKJV} **This particular Psalm is the shortest chapter in the entire Bible, consisting of only two verses. It is also the middle chapter of the Bible.** How fitting, therefore, that it speaks of praising God and loudly extolling, or lauding, Him. It also reveals God’s merciful kindness, its greatness, and the enduring nature of His truth: *“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples”* (Verse 2).

The clear implication of the 117th Psalm is that God’s salvation was to extend throughout the entire world. While that may seem very apparent to those in

In His mercy and lovingkindness, He would gather the nations together with His people in one grand chorus of praise.

The Prophets frequently allude to the turning of the Lord’s attention to the Gentiles. The Messiah would *“bring forth judgment to the Gentiles”* (Isa 42:1), and be *“a light of the Gentiles”* (Isa 42: 6). God declared, *“I will lift up Mine hand to the Gentiles”* (Isa 49:22), and *“they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles”* (Isa 66:19). Jeremiah must have startled his peers when He prophesied, *“the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit”* (Jer 16:19). Before the pen of Prophets was sheathed for over four hundred years, Malachi wrote, *“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles”* (Mal 1:11).

Now, our text declares these prophecies have come to pass. Men are no longer to conduct themselves as they did prior to Christ. There is no longer a race of men, descended from Adam, who have exclusive rights to praise the Lord. God has assembled a great congregation consisting of "all peoples," and calls upon them to praise and laud Him in fulfillment of His word through the holy Prophets.

Because men can only praise God if they know Him, this text confirms the effectiveness of the ministry of Jesus. It is His tutelage that leads them to praise the Lord with "His people." These references are not intended to be used as the hammer of Law, but to announce that Jesus is doing precisely what God said He would. The Spirit is calling upon the saints to fall into line with the Lord Jesus, and join together in praising and extolling the mercy of God. The extolling of God for His mercy

This text refers to Isaiah 11:10. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people." Jesse is the father of king David (1 Sam 16:18-19). The prophecy of Isaiah was given during very grievous times. The meaning is that Jesse's root appeared dry and shriveled – unable to produce any more branches or shoots. But the root would show its liveliness by producing its premier Branch, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is, in a sense, the "Root" itself, for without Him, there would have been no purpose for Jesse's root at all.

For this reason, Revelation 5:5 and 22:16 refer to "the Root of David" and "the Root and offspring of David." That is, David sprang from Christ, who created all things. Christ Jesus, so far as His earthly lineage was concerned, sprang forth from Jesse in general, and David in particular. When He was born, the "Root" appeared. Sixth months after Elizabeth conceived

seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell [Hades, not the lake of fire], neither His flesh did see corruption . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:29-31,36).

The Lord Jesus, therefore, is the ultimate offspring of both Jesse and David. He is also the reason for them both.

REIGNING OVER THE GENTILES

" . . . And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles. . . " The marvel of Isaiah's prophecy is not merely that Jesus would spring forth "as a Root out of dry of dry ground" (Isa 53:2), but that He would "reign over the Gentiles." Isaiah's prophecy reads, "to it [the Root] shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious" (11:10b). The NIV clarifies this word for us. "In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His place of rest will be glorious."

A "banner" is a standard, or ensign, around which men gather. In Israel, every tribe had a banner, or flag. Each tribe pitched their tents around this standard. As it is written, "And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts" (Num 1:52). Isaiah pictured the Messiah as a standard, ensign, or flag. "He shall stand as an Ensign for the people." Of Him Isaiah also said, "And He shall set up an ensign for the nations" (Isa 11:12).

But our text declares Jesus will "reign over the Gentiles." How does that agree with Isaiah's word of God raising up a Person unto whom the Gentiles will gather? The answer is glorious! **Christ's reign is evidenced in the gathering of the Gentiles to Himself.** While yet among us, Jesus alluded to this ministry. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men unto Me**" (John 12:32). And again, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also **I must bring**, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

The Spirit is calling upon the saints to fall into line with the Lord Jesus, and join together in praising and extolling the mercy of God. The extolling of God for His mercy is of greater importance than our private views of one another.

is of greater importance than our private views of one another. God had to remove what we were in order to bring us together. It is only by clinging to the flesh that believers can despise or judge one another. It should not be necessary to comment on the reprehensible nature of such activities. Earlier in this book the Spirit said, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (8:8). That certainly applies to any who refuse to join in the vast chorus of praise with the redeemed.

A ROOT OF JESSE

" . . . And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a Root of Jesse. . . " Other versions read, "The Root of Jesse will spring up," NIV "The Root of Jesse shall come," NRSV and "The root of Jesse will appear." NJB

John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. He told her she was going to bear the holy child Jesus. He would be "called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk 1:32-33). On the day of Pentecost, Peter confirmed the reign to have taken place commensurate with Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, **He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne**; he

The coming of the Gentiles to Jesus was evidence of His reign. It was He who *“opened the door of faith”* to them (Acts 14:27). If Jesus was not the King, sitting upon the throne of David, the Gentiles would never have come to Him! Their desire to come to Him, together with their faith, confirms Jesus is enthroned.

Reigning over the Gentiles does not speak of subduing enemies, but of providing for friends. It is not the language of casting down, but of lifting up. This is precisely the kind of reign proclaimed by the Gospel. *“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 5:31). **The reign over the Gentiles, therefore, affirms that they too will be given repentance and forgiveness of sins.** Therefore, who is the person who will dare to judge or despise those to whom the Lord of glory has given repentance and forgiveness of sins? That is the point of this passage!

HOPE FOR THE GENTILES

“ . . . In Him the Gentiles shall hope.” The KJV reads, *“trust”* instead of *“hope.”* There is no conflict in the readings, for hope is an aspect of trust, and those who trust are, indeed, *“saved by hope.”* You cannot trust in the Son of God without having hope, and you cannot hope without trusting in Him. Hope and trust are two sides of the same coin. Trust relies completely upon the Lord, and hope expects good things to come from it.

Isaiah wrote, *“to It shall the Gentiles seek,”* or *“rally.”* That is, the Gentiles will see the utter futility of everyone else, and will flee to the Savior for refuge, to lay hold of the hope that has

all Gentiles, and were evidence of the power of heaven working among men. Our text has affirmed that Jesus has been raised up as the Divine rallying point for all peoples.

The church is not the rallying point. A theological position is not the point of gathering. Not even a worthy cause is to be set forth as the point of union. Jesus Christ, and Him alone, is the One into whom things are being gathered. Those who are gathered to Him are to receive one another.

been set before them in the Gospel. As already stated, Jeremiah gives a most vivid depiction of this gathering of the Gentiles to Jesus. *“ . . . the Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit”* (Jer 16:19). Who is it that can make such a marvelous thing as this come to pass. Let the motivational expert step forward and see if he can lead the whole city of Nineveh to repent (Jonah 3:5-10; Matt 12:41)! Let the trained leaders of the day see if they can persuade the entire city of Samaria to believe (Acts 8:5-6). Let those schooled in oratory and skills of persuasion see if they can compel a city of cultic devotees to come together and burn all of their books of curious arts (Acts 19:19). These were

The church is not the rallying point. A theological position is not the point of gathering. Not even a worthy cause is to be set forth as the point of union. Jesus Christ, and Him alone, is the One into whom things are being gathered. Those who are gathered to Him are to receive one another. They are to blend their hearts and voices in praise to God for His abundant mercy. No person who has been drawn to Christ is to sit in judgment upon another who has been drawn to Him. No individual who has fled for refuge to the Son of God is to despise another who has also fled to Him. If Christ has received us, we are to receive one another! These things are quite plain to faith.

A FILLING ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD

“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.” In order for effective unity to be experienced among God’s people, a filling is required. If the tendency to judge another man’s servant lingers among us, a filling is needed. If there are those who dare to despise one of the brothers or sisters of Jesus, it is necessary that they be filled. This filling cannot be accomplished by an institution. It does not happen automatically. The Kingdom of

God is characterized by life, not automation.

By saying *“Now,”* the Spirit is showing us we can participate in the blessings of the Lord. This prayer has to do with assisting us in receiving one another as Christ received us to the glory of God. This is one of the great texts of Scripture, confirming the marvelous effectiveness of Christ’s atoning death.

THE GOD OF HOPE

“Now may the God of hope . . . ”

Here is a strong Apostolic desire. It is driven by a profound fellowship with both the Father and the Son. It fueled by faith and buttressed by hope. **It is the expectation that God Himself will do something for His people.** The focus of this prayer is the promise, *“In Him shall the Gentiles trust,”* or *“hope”*^{NKJV} (verse 12). In voicing this petition Paul is saying, *“May the very God upon whom the Gentiles have come to hope produce the things for which I pray.”* **He prays because all of his admonitions are powerless if God does not come to**

the aid of the people.

“The God of hope” is the God who gives hope, and the One in whom hope resides. It is He, and He alone, who has “given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thess 2:16). When David found himself relying implicitly upon the word of God, he confessed to Him, “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which **Thou hast caused me to hope**” (Psa 119:49). Other versions read,

do for His people? What would be effective in causing brethren to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God? What precious gift would remove from them the tendency to judge or despise one another?

Filling is an aspect of spiritual life that is most precious. We can be filled with “knowledge” (Rom 15:4), “comfort” (2 Cor 7:4), and “with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:19). We can be filled with

God is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17). Now he prays that joy will pervade every aspect of our persons – that the cheerfulness of faith will dominate us.

Joy is of such remarkable power that it is said of the churches in Macedonia, “that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality” (2 Cor 8:2). Although themselves suffering and afflicted, their joy moved them to give beyond their means to the needy brethren. They were “filled with all joy.”

Being filled with joy is the result of perceiving that He who is in us is greater than He that is in the world (1 John 4:4). Joy comes when we consider what we have been delivered from, and what we have been promised. It erupts when we recall what we were, and what we have become in Christ Jesus. Pondering the threats of wicked men will not bring joy, but considering the goodness of the Lord will.

Put this to the test, and see if it does not prove to be true. When you are filled with joy, you are least apt to judge your brethren. When joy floods your heart, you will not despise your weaker brethren. Rejoicing in the Lord makes you more kind, more forbearing, and more considerate. It is no wonder the Apostle prays that the God of hope would fill us with “all joy.”

FILLING WITH PEACE

“... fill you with all... Peace...”
“Joy and peace” blend well together. When peace does not rule our hearts (Col 3:15), joy cannot fill us. An unsettled person is not a rejoicing person, and a sad soul tends to be agitated within. Peace is something Jesus gives us (John 14:27), but it takes a further blessing for us to be filled with it.

Because God fills us with this peace, it is called “the peace of God which passes understanding.” The truth of this is confirmed in the keeping power of this peace. As it is written, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). Because it comes from God, this peace can enter a heart

Here is what we need, and here is what we can have. Filled with all joy! That is like a double superlative: “filled” and “all.” The God of hope can so fill us with joy that it will erupt in a prison, at the hearing of God’s Word, or in the contemplation of our hope.

“made me hope,” ^{NASB} and “given me hope.” ^{NIV} **When it comes to hope, God is at the helm.** The ability to hope, which is an aspect of faith, comes from Him. Also, hope is fixed in Him: i.e., we are relying upon Him fulfilling His promises and guiding us with His eye (Psa 32:8).

“Hope” is a fundamental consideration for those who are in Christ Jesus. We rejoice in hope (Rom 5:2), are “saved by hope” (Rom 8:4), and are called “in one hope of our calling” (Eph 4:4). Our helmet of protection upon our minds is “the hope of salvation” (1 Thess 5:8), and it is an anchor for the soul, both steadfast and sure (Heb 6:19). Hope speaks of confidence, assurance, and expectation. It motivates us to purify ourselves, “even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). It is a “better hope” (Heb 7:19) a “living hope” (1 Pet 1:3), and joins together with our faith “in God” (1 Pet 1:21).

The “God of hope” is the One related to all of those essentials. He is the Source from which they come, and the Object toward which they are directed.

FILLING WITH JOY

“... fill you with all joy...” What would you pray for the “God of hope” to

“the Spirit” (Eph 5:19), the “fruits of righteousness” (Phil 1:11), and “the knowledge of His will” (Col 1:9). We may also be personally “filled with joy” (2 Tim 1:4) – our text says “all joy.”

Many of God’s children attempt to live on meager spiritual supplies. Their cup does not overflow (Psa 23:5), and they appear to have too much of the world in themselves. The very fact that a prayer like this is in the Scriptures indicates the unacceptableness of attempting to live without the fulness that is found in Christ Jesus. If holy men prayed that we might be filled, you may conclude that we need to be filled. Spiritual life is designed to be lived while in possession of the rich supplies of grace. **Many of the difficulties believers encounter is owing to their attempt to live at a comfortable distance from God. Such efforts are totally futile.**

Here is what we need, and here is what we can have. **Filled with all joy!** That is like a double superlative: “filled” and “all.” The God of hope can so fill us with joy that it will erupt in a prison, at the hearing of God’s Word, or in the contemplation of our hope. Previously, Paul reminded us that the Kingdom of

that is unwillingly disquieted, and call an end to inner turmoil. We are commissioned to allow this peace that comes from God to do its work within us. *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts”* (Col 3:15).

You cannot conjure peace up in your heart. Nor, indeed, are there experts in peace who can pour it into your heart and mind. This is a peace with which only the living God can fill you. However, He is surely disposed to do this. That is why Paul prays that He will.

IN BELIEVING

“ . . . fill you with all joy and peace in believing . . . ” Other versions read, *“fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,”*^{NIV} and *“make you full of joy and peace through faith.”*^{BBE} Here is how it works. As you work on believing, God supplies your need. Joy and peace do not stand on their own. They flourish where faith exists, but wither and die where it is lacking. **It is not possible to be filled with joy and peace while being ruled by unbelief.**

The association of believing with rejoicing is confirmed in First Peter. *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, **yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls**”* (1 Pet 1:8-9). Faith is the channel through which these blessed gifts are realized: *“fill you with all joy and peace **IN believing.**”*

If, therefore, you can believe, all will be well. You must understand that this has to do with the Gospel, and the blessed Savior it proclaims. It will do no good to believe God can do this or that for you, if you do not believe *“the record that God gave of His Son”* (1 John 5:10). But if you do believe that record, your faith becomes the appointed means through which God can *“fill you with all joy and peace.”* This is a marvelous arrangement.

ABOUNDING IN HOPE

“ . . . that you may abound in hope . . . ” Other versions read, *“that you may overflow with hope,”*^{NIV} *“so that all hope may be yours,”*^{BBE} and *“you may be rich in hope.”*^{NJB} In many believers, hope is

like a person in the throes of death. It seems to be gasping for breath, as the individual is beaten down by the circumstances of life. You can scarcely find a person who exudes great confidence and a joyful expectation of the coming of the Lord. The absence of these qualities reveals a lack of hope.

It is affirmed that *“we are saved by hope”* (Rom 8:24). But hope that hobbles along on frail legs cannot sustain the soul, much less provoke the zealous cleansing of the defilements of *“flesh and spirit”* (2 Cor 7:1). Nevertheless, these are things that need to be done. Believers are solemnly exhorted, *“Save yourselves from*

expended with any degree of consistency. If some effort is put forth, it will be short lived, at the very best.

It is general knowledge that an enormous percentage of those who profess faith in Christ fall away. Here is the reason why they do. They are not abounding in hope. Candidly, they are not convinced that what God has promised belongs to them. It is to be acknowledged that no believer is exempt from such tendencies. That is exactly why Paul prayed this prayer. He knew we needed an abounding hope, and that salvation was designed to produce it.

As you work on believing, God supplies your need. Joy and peace do not stand on their own. They flourish where faith exists, but wither and die where it is lacking. It is not possible to be filled with joy and peace while being ruled by unbelief.

this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). Again we are admonished, *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Phil 2:12). What of the challenging word, *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim 6:12). Or, *“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”* (James 4:8).

Settle it in your heart, these are not optional matters. Imaginations are to be cast down, and wayward thoughts taken captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5-6). Most believers know this – at least theoretically. But, how are these things to be accomplished? If God requires them of us, we dare not view them as things that cannot be accomplished.

The answer is found in hope – *“abounding in hope.”* The person who is persuaded God is able to keep what they have committed to Him, will set about to eliminate uncomely things from their lives. They will press toward the mark, with the confident expectation of obtaining the prize. However, where hope is lacking, such efforts will not be

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“ . . . by the power of the Holy Spirit.” The joy we need comes from the Lord -- He fills us with it. The peace we need also comes down from above – the Lord fills us with it. Both joy and peace are made effective and dominant through our faith, and the grace of God brings that to us (1 Tim 1:14). But even that is not enough for us to abound in hope. In order for spiritual virtues to flourish, they must be enhanced by the Holy Spirit. At no point does the Lord leave us to ourselves, our intellect, our will, or our strength.

In this regard, hope does not make us ashamed, *“because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”* (Rom 5:5). The *“power of the Holy Spirit”* is not experienced through natural senses. It is transcendent to flesh, which cannot be trusted in the first place. How could God *“condemn sin in the flesh”* of His holy Son (Rom 8:3), then confirm the power of the Holy Spirit by means of our *“sinful flesh?”* What form of reasoning would support the supposition that the God who demanded

that we crucify the flesh (Gal 5:24), would confirm the presence and ministry of His Holy Spirit through the fleshly senses?

I am aware that many teach the

words. The necessary prelude to this mighty working is also stated, so that there can be no question on this subject. First the God of hope – not the God of feeling – fills us with all joy and peace,

Where believing, joy, peace, and hope are weak, the power of the Holy Spirit is not being displayed, regardless of the experiences men claim to have. On the other hand, where men are strong in faith, giving glory to God, and where joy and peace are joined together with an abounding hope, the power of the Spirit is being experienced.

Holy Spirit registers confirming feelings upon the carnal senses. They imagine that He is felt by the part of us God condemns – the part that must be changed before we can dwell forever in the courts of the Lord! The very thing, therefore, that contributed to our alienation from God, is now perceived as the means through which the Holy Spirit confirms His presence with us and power in us.

Proper Views Are Encouraged

While I do not make a test of fellowship over this matter, I am compelled to remind you of the text before us. It speaks of *“the power of the Holy Spirit.”* It reveals something this power accomplishes, declaring it in no uncertain

both of which are rational in nature. Neither joy nor peace are mere feelings of exhilaration. They both have an impact upon our hearts and minds. Nowhere does it say they effect our bodies. Our bodies are to be brought unto subjection by us.

What is more, God fills us with joy and peace *“in believing.”* This involves our persuasion that God is, and that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). It is related to believing the record He has given of His Son -- the Gospel of Christ. It includes the embrace of His promises, and the acceptance of His commandments. Believing is done with the heart, and it purifies the heart from corrupting influences (Acts 15:9).

Working within the framework of those realities the *“power of the Holy Spirit”* causes us to abound in hope. Hope is not a mindless emotion. It is not something that is conjured up in dreams, or in a state of unconsciousness. Hope is of such a character that one can give a *“reason”* for possessing it to those who ask about it (1 Pet 3:15).

For the most part, the Christian world is divided into two warring factions concerning the Holy Spirit. One sees His power as overt, for they know little about living by faith. The other treats the Holy Spirit as a theological relic, consigned to the past, when really big things were done. That side also knows little about living by faith.

Our text has associated the Holy Spirit of God with believing, joy, peace, and abounding hope. **No one should imagine that any of these things will flourish where flawed views of the Spirit Himself are entertained.** Make no mistake about this. Where believing, joy, peace, and hope are weak, the power of the Holy Spirit is not being displayed, regardless of the experiences men claim to have. On the other hand, where men are strong in faith, giving glory to God, and where joy and peace are joined together with an abounding hope, the power of the Spirit is being experienced. That is a condition that calls for thanksgiving, particularly among we Gentiles.

CONCLUSION

It may appear that Paul has taken a great detour in his exhortation to receive one another, as Christ has received us to the glory of God. However, this is not the case at all. Through the Spirit, he is showing us what produces the unity that he urges. Jesus has received us to the glory of God, but there were many accompaniments that were required before that reception could be realized. Sin had to be put away by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26). The devil who deceived the whole had to be destroyed (Heb 2:14). Principalities and power that

held humanity in bondage had to be “spoiled” (Col 2:15). The gigantic debt that had been created by our infractions of God’s holy law had to be blotted out (Col 2:14). Because we were enemies, we had to be reconciled to God (Rom 5:10). Because we were vassals of the evil one, we had to be sanctified (Heb 10:14). Because we were altogether unrighteous, we had to be made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:21). We had to be raised from death in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-3), and made alive unto God (Rom 6:11). The *“middle wall of partition”*

that stood between Jew and Gentile – a wall imposed by God Himself – had to be taken down (Eph 2:14). *The “new and living way”* into God’s presence to be opened (Heb 10:20), and a highway raised up in the desert (Isa 35:8). The wells of salvation had to be opened (Isa 12:3), and the veil covering the most holy place ripped in two (Matt 27:51). A way had to be made for God to be *“just”* in the justification of sinners (Rom 3:26).

Do not imagine for a single moment that Jesus could have *“received us”*

independently of these accomplishments. He has all power in heaven and earth, but He could not “receive us” until these issues were settled. God Almighty reigns in heaven, and is *the “Governor among the nations,”* but He could not be righteous and just in giving us His righteousness while our debt remained.

The good news is that all of these things have been accomplished by Christ Jesus. He can now receive us without compromising His own nature. God can justify us, and be just and righteous in

doing so. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus is forward to receive us. He is not looking for flaws, but for faith. He knows a man can be imperfect, and still have faith. He will receive people because they believe, and are willing to turn from idols to serve the living God, and wait for Him to return from heaven.

I suppose these things are obvious to all – and yet, there is a sense in which they may remain obscure. Wherever a weaker brother stands in judgment of a stronger one, or wherever a stronger one

looks with despite upon a weaker one, a serious condition exists. Such people are demanding more from their brethren than the Lord Jesus demands, and require more than the God of heaven requires.

There is no need to attempt to justify such actions. They cannot be justified. If Jesus has received us, then we are obliged to receive one another. If God is glorified by Jesus receiving us, He is also glorified when we reflect His mind by receiving one another. These are things to ponder, embrace, and fulfill!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/2/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 14-21 of the fifteenth chapter. The theme will be, **“FROM JERUSALEM TO ILLYRICUM.”** The effective spread of the Gospel at the hands of a meager few, when coupled with the power of God, brought unparalleled blessing to the world. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>**