

## **Why Christ Came, Part 2—Romans 15:8-13—1/13/2013**

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Keywords—Christ, joy, praise, hope, Lordship, unity, diversity, prayer

It's the second Sunday of a New Year and I pray you've begun your year with a renewed commitment to Bible reading and prayer.

I hope you have a plan for daily reading & private prayer.

As Jesus quoted in His response to temptation, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And as Jesus also said in Matthew 6, if we want God's openly gracious reward, we must seek Him alone in prayer.

You will not grow as a Christian if you do not give yourself to the spiritual disciplines that bring about growth.

But I know that can be hard some days—you may struggle to connect what you read in the Bible with daily life.

And I know that praying is work—it's a fight against laziness and our tendency to do visible tasks rather than talk to the invisible God.

So today I trust our passage in Romans will offer some help in these areas to strengthen and sustain you.

As we resume our study in Romans, we find themes that flow through all of Scripture that tie it together & set the parts in light of the whole.

Knowing how all Scripture fits together can be helpful in those sections where you wonder how it connects with today.

And today's text will also teach us how to pray as we'll see another of Paul's wish-prayers like we saw earlier in Romans 15.

If you struggle to connect what you know ABOUT God with how you speak TO God, our study today can certainly help.

And the striking thing we'll see is that the motivations for these basic disciplines also connect so clearly with what our world needs today.

In a culture of despair and loneliness and violence and sadness, we see again how to find hope and unity and peace and joy.

With all the failing, recycled methods being offered for fullness in life, we find again the one true, tested path to life now and forever.

That path leads us to Christ.

So Christ is again our focus as He was the Sunday before Christmas when we last studied in Romans together.

We pick up in Romans 15:8-13 where we were and continue on with reasons why Christ came.

We considered 2 reasons back in December and today we'll note 5 more reasons to refresh our hearts in why we exist, why we read our Bibles, why pray and why we do all that we do.

In Romans 15:8-13 today, we'll find 5 reasons Christ came that exalt Him as the center of why we are on earth, why we study the Bible and gather as a church and pray and much more.

We'll see some reasonable goals we're aiming for and how those answer the aches of our hearts and the ills of our day.

So turn with me to Romans 15 and let's recall where we are in our study by reading Romans 15:1-13. [READ]

Recall that Romans 14-15 are about love in relationships among Christians when we differ on non-essential issues.

When we come from different backgrounds or traditions, when we have different preferences or convictions, when we are different ages and stages of life and maturity, we need grace.

As verse 7 summarizes, we need to graciously accept one another as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.

For those trusting the biblical Gospel and desiring to follow Christ, we grow in Christlikeness to God's glory when we accept each other and seek to grow together.

God is shown as real when His people learn from our differences and grow in unity under Christ as our common Lord.

That means we patiently work with each other to help with issues and we humbly interact on the issues where we differ.

That kind of life together as Christians brings glory to our Christ.

We display Him as fulfilling what He promised.

And in the NT church at Rome and elsewhere, one difficult difference to overcome was the contentious divide between Jews and Gentiles.

Those two groups had ethnic, cultural, religious, and other lifestyle distinctions that separated them.

Yet in the coming of Jesus Christ to earth, those differences were no longer in force as the way God's people should be distinct.

And more importantly, Christ's coming recovered God's intention for Israel to be a channel to reach all nations.

God had told Israel at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:6 that they were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, meaning they were to be distinct as God's people in order to reach all peoples.

Israel was to point other nations to God, to be priests who intercede with God for others and speak from God to others.

They were to be His light to the nations.

Though they failed, we find the fulfillment of that goal in Christ's coming as the Savior of the world, the One sent to save people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation.

Since we're 2000 years removed from Christ's coming, it's easy to miss the powerful unity He brought, but He has the same goal today.

We may not label ourselves as Jew or Gentile, but we have other labels that get in the way of the label that matters most.

And that label that matters is Christian—whether we are in Christ, whether we have faith in Christ alone and are adopted into God's family by His grace alone so that we are brothers and sisters.

That brings us to our 1<sup>st</sup> point about Christ's coming this morning that sheds light on the overall story of the Bible and directs us in how we might pray in our times.

Here's something to recall that can open your eyes to what God has said in His Word and what He is doing and wants to do in our world.

Point #1—Christ came to bring transcendent unity.

To infuse all you do with eternal purpose, note 1<sup>st</sup> that Christ came to bring transcendent unity.

And kids, unity means oneness, being one in mind and heart with other people, like when you are on a team and your goal together as a team is to win the game.

You have unity around that shared desire for your team to do well.

All believers are on the same team & in the same family.

In the OT, God marked out His people Israel by special ways of eating and dressing and worshipping, now Christ's coming has brought unity that goes above and across differences from one group to another.

Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises to bring blessing to all the families of the earth through Abraham's descendant as God promised starting in Genesis 12:1-3.

Jesus Christ is the One Great Unifier of people—He brings unity.

And kids, when I say Christ came to bring transcendent unity, that word transcendent means this unity is far above the little differences we have with other people.

If others have different styles of music or clothing or schooling or hobbies, in Christ we share something in common far greater.

Being in Christ transcends or goes above most things we fuss over and gives us something and Someone more valuable to treasure together and agree upon as precious.

Since unity in Christ is above all else, it also reaches across so many of the things that can divide Christians like traditions or culture.

Of course, I'm not saying unity in Christ minimizes truth, because we only treasure Christ if we know truth about Him.

So biblical truth is essential to grasping who Jesus Christ is and why He came and what He says about following Him.

But in those essential truths, Christ brings people together and that was part of the purpose of His coming.

Read Romans 15:8-11 again to see that. [READ]

On the Sunday before Christmas, we noted from verses 8-9 that Christ came because God is (1) faithful and (2) merciful.

Verse 8 tells us that Christ came to earth as a servant of the circumcision, which means the Jews, for the truth of God and His promises made to and through the ancestors of the Jews.

Promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still yet unfulfilled and Jesus came to fulfill them.

Promises to Israel nationally and to King David personally and to their descendants were incomplete and Jesus came to complete them.

By doing so, Jesus proved that God is faithful to His Word.

Christ's coming confirmed God's trustworthiness to His promises made centuries and millennia before.

That was what verse 8 taught us.

Then Romans 15:9 extolled God's mercy as the reason Christ came for the Gentiles—that they would glorify God for His mercy.

So we said last time that Christ came because God is merciful.

Those two points—that Christ came because God is (1) faithful and (2) merciful—are review from verses 8-9.

They reveal Christ coming for both Jews and Gentiles so that both would trust His truth and both would receive His mercy.

Truth was not just for Jews and mercy was not just for Gentiles—Christ's coming accentuated each virtue in relation to each group.

God is faithful and you can and should trust Him.

And God is merciful and you can run to Him in Christ to find forgiveness and hope and help for now and forever.

When you do trust Christ, you also find transcendent unity with Christians from all walks of life and socioeconomic levels.

When we come to Christ, we gain a heart-connection by the Spirit to Christians from other countries and cultures and languages.

The OT quote in verse 9 here is from David's mouth in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 22:50 of him singing and spreading God's reputation and praise among diverse nations.

Then verse 10 quotes Deuteronomy 32:43, calling nations to join in rejoicing when God is faithful to His promises even of justice to Israel.

Then verse 11 quotes Psalm 117, which is a missionary call for all nations and peoples to praise the Lord.

The repeated point is that God had planned in the OT to graciously reach all nations to lead them to praise Him.

God had purposed to bring all peoples together in Christ and Paul quoted OT texts from the 3 portions of the OT to prove it.

He quoted from the Law, which was the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the Bible, and then from the prophets and then in the writings in the Psalms.

The Law, the Prophets and the Writings all promised that Gentiles and all nations would join in the praise of God.

So it should have been no surprise that Christ came to bring transcendent unity as we have phrased this 1<sup>st</sup> point.

Look for that theme when you read your Bible.

And pray that theme for God's people here and around the world—pray we will experience unity in our lives and labors together.

Unity is a theme the Lord Jesus highlighted in His own high priestly prayer for the church in John 17.

That should renew our commitment to relationships as Christians and refresh our appreciation for what we share in God's family.

That's point #1—Christ came to bring transcendent unity.

2<sup>nd</sup>, we also see in verses 9-11 that Christ came to bring joyful praise.

### Point #2—Christ came to bring joyful praise.

The quotes of verses 9-11 highlight praise, singing and rejoicing and then mention praise again and enjoying that praise all together.

So let's state the obvious—following Jesus Christ should not be dull, lifeless, discontent or thankless.

I'm sure we can all confess that we can be sinfully ungrateful and critical and complaining at times, but we have every reason not to be.

Christians of all people should be happy and thankful.

We should be excited to know the God of the universe & be amazed to receive His mercy and grateful to serve Him and enjoy His good ways.

Because God is faithful and merciful, we should respond by thanking Him and honoring Him with everything we are.

We were rebels against God, deserving to spend eternity in Hell, and in Christ God graces us with His secure, free, satisfying love and promises to work all things for our good.

Can you think of anything more glorious than that?

Our gathering together as Christians each week is our opportunity to fulfill verses 9-11 in singing and praising God in little ways that will only expand in far greater joy when reach heaven.

Sure we have problems and things break and health issues arise and struggles persist in this fallen world and it hurts, but Christ came to purchase us citizenship in His heavenly home forever!

So we gather to remember what matters most and rekindle our joy and thankfulness in receiving mercy from the Lord of history.

We are only here a little while, but we will be with Him forever and we'll inherit all He has earned for us if we trust Him.

And we'll sing and rejoice together with others who received mercy from all over the world all throughout time.

Then we'll feel not only the full significance of God saving us, but also the right significance of us praising Him.

Christ did not come to praise us or for us to seek praise for ourselves.

He came to open the way to the fulfilling purpose of living for and loving for HIS praise in all things.

That's a 2<sup>nd</sup> reason Christ came that should infuse your Bible study with a theme that jumps out on every page.

When Jesus said to lose your life in Him so that you will find real life, this is what He meant.

He meant living for HIS glory and HIS praise is true life at its best.

That's a foundational anchor to evaluate every prayer request and fuel linking our requests to how they can bring praise to God and joy to His people.

So let that deepen your study & strengthen your prayers this year.

Christ came to bring joyful praise—that's point #2.

Christ came to bring (1) transcendent unity and (2) joyful praise.

Then 3<sup>rd</sup>, note that Christ came to bring hope-filled submission.

Point #3—Christ came to bring hope-filled submission.

Read verse 12 to see that. [READ]

This quote is from Isaiah 11:10 in the context of promises for the Messiah's kingdom that has not yet fully come.

But Jesus the Messiah has come and is ruling in the hearts of His people now and this refers to that rule in Gentile hearts.

We know this is talking about the Messiah because the OT links the Messiah with David's line and David was the son of Jesse.

And when this refers to the root of Jesse, picture drought conditions in ancient Israel when visible vegetation died out.

Though the land looked barren, the roots of vines often survived and when rain came again, those roots would produce new shoots of life.

And those shoots or branches that came out of those roots are what is pictured here and translated as the root of Jesse.

The Messiah was the root of Jesse in the sense that He grew out of the root of Jesse's line.

As this term is better translated elsewhere, it's the shoot or branch of Jesse, the offshoot growing from the root of Jesse as the father of David to whom the kingdom promises were made.

So this mention of the root of Jesse means this was a descendant of Jesse and particularly a descendant of Jesse's son King David.

This Promised Messiah King from David would be a king not only for Jews, but He would rise up to rule the Gentiles also.

We know Jesus is that Messiah, that Christ and Anointed King who came from David's line and is the Savior of all who bow to His rule.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords whose kingdom spans the earth now spiritually and will one day be seen fully.

But the point of His rule is not merely cowering subjection.

Verse 12 says in Christ's rule the Gentiles find hope in Him.

Gentiles find sure, anchored, expectation for their good in Christ.

In Him, all diverse peoples from across the planet can find the sustaining focus to awaken eternal life and constantly renew us.

Biblical hope is the certain conviction that the best is yet to come, that God will fulfill all His promises for future blessing for His people.

Biblical hope is not longing for something that may happen that we want to happen.

Biblical hope is assurance that what God has promised will happen.

There is a heavenly city, a heavenly country, a final destination that is more than our minds can imagine.

In the midst of it is our God in Christ will dwell with us, radiating His compelling, glorious beauty to continually delight us.

When we come under the rule of that majestic Christ Jesus, then we join in that heavenly hope.

When we come to faith in Christ, we become part of what verse 12 points to when it says, "In Him the Gentiles will hope."

We embrace the hope-filled submission Christ came to bring.

So if you lack hope in life, look at what is ruling your heart.

Is Christ clearly directing and motivating and empowering you or is your heart ruled or clouded or distracted by other things.

Hope is not found in things here that we can touch and see.

Hope is found securely and surely in a Person that has come and died and rose again and ascended back to God the Father.

Hope is found in Christ alone and we cultivate and grow that hope by spending time with Him and strengthening our relationship with Him.

Hope is in the Living, Ruling Savior and Lord Jesus.

The more He rules our hearts, the deeper and sweeter our hope will be.

So submit to Him, seek His rule, and find lasting hope in Him.

Christ came to bring hope-filled submission.

With that kind of Savior and King who becomes our hope, it's no wonder that we should seek Him in prayer.

If this Christ is so good and has come to bring such attractive delights as transcendent unity, joyful praise, and hope-filled submission, then it's no wonder that He came to be sought in prayer.

So we find our next point to be that Christ came to bring promise-based prayer.

Point #4—Christ came to bring promise-based prayer.

Of course, I should be clear that OT saints prayed God's promises before Christ came like Daniel 9 so beautifully describes Daniel exemplifying.

But with all the fulfillment and assurance in Christ, now all the more should God's people seek Him in prayer based on His promises.

And I get that point from the transition here from OT quotes in verses 9-12 to the wish-prayer of verse 13.

As if to sum up and focus dependence on God to give what He's promised, Paul turns in verse 13 to call upon God.

Since all that Christ has done leads up to this response and secures the ability to pray, we can say Christ came for this.

We can say it as point #4—Christ came to bring promise-based prayer.

And I say this is promise-based prayer because prayer is a response of faith in who God says He is and what He promised.

But more specifically, verse 13 highlights promise-based prayer because the request is for spiritual fruit in believing.

Believing requires an object.

Belief or faith focuses on a person and what He has revealed.

So praying to God is responding to who His Word in faith.

With that in mind, read Romans 15:13. [READ]

This is in the same form we saw in verses 5-6, a wish expressed to people that calls upon God to do something.

Since it ultimately ends as an appeal for abounding hope, it starts with the affirming reference to God as the God of hope.

If you want hope, you'd better go to the right place to get it.

You won't find hope in a bottle—whether a bottle of alcohol or pills or other drugs, whether legal or illegal or prescribed or over the counter.

That's a bad source to look for hope because there are no sure promises to bank on.

You also won't find hope in what other people promise because we all fail—as dependable and wonderful as many of you are, you and I will fail others if they put their hope in us.

Our hopes will be dashed if we look to programs and politics or entertainment or escapes to renew and sustain us.

But we can go to God seeking hope because He is the God who is both the right source of hope and the right object of hope.

It's like I said last year about shopping for diapers at a sporting goods store—you won't find diapers at Dick's Sporting Goods.

So you need to know where to go to get what you are looking for and the place to go for hope is to the God of hope.

God is the right source for hope because He has planned the future and has revealed enough for us to long for the future.

And God is also the right object of hope because He will never fail, never forget, never change, and never grow old or less interesting.

What our addictive personalities really crave is someone or something that always gets better and never gets dull and we can only find that in the eternally endless glory of God.

That's why games and sports and arts and engineering and every pursuit have higher levels to pursue, higher achievements to reach.

We long for something more that will never grow old.

But only being transfixed on God will constantly sustain us with assured excitement for each new minute and that will be our wondrous occupation for eternity if we are in Christ.

Believing and hoping in that reality of God should do something to us, shouldn't it?

It should influence us inside and out, shouldn't it?

It should move us to seek God in prayer.

And it should move us to pray God's promises back to Him.

Then in believing those promises and responding to God, we should be filled with all joy and peace as verse 13 wishes for.

Paul prayed for the God of hope to fill his readers with all joy and peace in believing.

God operates through His truth as we hear and read and believe and receive and respond to His truth.

As we respond to truth with dependence on God to work—and that dependence is expressed in prayer—then we see God work.

Then we see God answer those promised-based prayers.

We see Him bring all joy welling up in our hearts with gratitude and praise of God and assurance of good in what He is doing with us.

And we see Him bring all peace resting our hearts in His love and wise purposes and extending that peace out in our relationships with other Christians even when we are different.

It is a marvelous thing to pray that we as Christians will be filled with joy and peace because we can be sure God wants to do that.

After all, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace, right?

So the way to get that fruit is by believing what God has said and responding to Him to ask for it in prayer.

Do you see how the Word and prayer work together?

God wants to give what He has promised and commanded in His Word and yet He alone is the One who can give them.

We can't create such eternal fruit like joy and peace on our own so we must seek God to bring them.

But God is so gracious that He wants to give it and He wants us to ask!

He brings joy & peace in answer to prayer AND He brings them in our believing, through our faith in what He has said.

It is this cycle of us responding to God and God graciously responding to us, of God revealing Himself to us in His Word to lead us to seek Him and then He blesses us as we seek Him.

We never want out of that upward spiral of God's work.

Though we all stumble, we want to be continuously plugged into the sustaining power of the Spirit using the Word to work in our hearts which then moves us to seek further power.

And Christ came so that His people might enjoy that upward spiral of grace and He sent His Spirit to accomplish it.

So we see in verse 13 that the Spirit is the power that brings answer to our prayers and feeds that upward spiral of God growing our hope to lead us to greater joy and peace and faith.

Read verse 13 again to see that. [READ]

The purpose of Paul's request is abounding hope so that hearts are ever expanding with assured hope in God's goodness.

And that hope only comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is a prayer of desperate dependence on God and no self-sufficiency or creative ability on Paul's part or in others.

But it is a prayer of faith in who God is & what He promised in Christ and therefore it is a prayer God loves to answer.

This is a prayer for truly biblical abundant life, which is what Christ came to bring as He said in John 10:10.



So we'll close by noting this as a 5<sup>th</sup> and final point today—Christ came to bring ever-abounding power in answer to prayer.

That's a little longer than the other points, but it's worth it.

#5—Christ came to bring ever-abounding power in answer to prayer.

Christ came to bring (1) transcendent unity, (2) joyful praise, (3) hope-filled submission, (4) promised-based power, and lastly (#5) ever-abounding power in answer to prayer.

I trust that helps you to be committed and refreshed in your prayer life as you begin this New Year.

And I pray those truths give you some themes to look for to keep you focused on what God is saying as you read through His Word day by day.

But it all starts with believing—with responding to the reality that God has come in Christ as the only perfect man to die as the only worthy substitute to pay for others' sins and risen again to prove His victory.

God says to turn from your sin and self-trust and bank on God being gracious because of who Jesus is and what He has done.

Jesus is Lord and God and He is the only Savior and Messiah.

Trust Him and seek Him continually to rule your life with ever-increasing hope and life-calming peace and motivating joy and Christ-centered unity all by the power of His Spirit.

And if we can help you trust Him for the first time or trust Him more, please come and let us talk and pray with you afterwards.

Now pray with me as we close.