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Romans Road to Recovery / Romans 15:7–13

Christ's dual ministry to Israel and the Gentiles serves as the ultimate display of God's eternal plan.

Notes

8/30/2026 — Romans 15:7-13

Title: "The Global Scope of God's Glory"

Subtitle: The Fulfillment of Prophetic Hope in the Unity of God's People

Main Idea: Christ's dual ministry—confirming the literal patriarchal promises to the circumcision and extending mercy to the Gentiles—serves as the ultimate display of God's eternal plan.

Companion Scripture: Psalm 18:46-50

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INTRODUCTION We love to build walls. It is the default setting of the human heart. We group up by politics, by tax brackets, by the way we dress, and even by our theological preferences. In the first-century Roman church, those walls were threatening to tear the congregation apart.

When I say they were building walls, I mean that literally. If you went to the Temple in Jerusalem in the first century, there was an actual, physical wall separating the Jewish courts from the Gentile courts. Archaeologists have found the warning signs posted on that wall. The inscription carried a deadly warning: "*No foreigner may enter within the balustrade around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.*"

This is the centuries-old hatred these believers carried into the Roman house churches. Years earlier, the Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. When those Jewish believers were finally allowed to return, they came back to a church that had become thoroughly Gentile. Suddenly, there was a massive cultural collision. Jewish culture historically viewed Gentiles as morally abhorrent and unclean; Roman culture viewed Jews as bizarre and anti-social. You had the "weak"—Jewish believers clinging to ancient laws—and the "strong"—Gentile believers flaunting their new freedoms. They were fracturing the fellowship.

But in Romans 15, the Apostle Paul refuses to give them a lesson in mere tolerance.

Instead, he points them to the ancient blueprints of the universe. He shows them that the local, petty friction in their church pews was blinding them to the massive, global, unstoppable glory of what God was actually doing in redemptive history. God's plan was never **just** to save you; it was to shatter your tribalism and tune your voice to a global chorus led by Christ Himself.

I. EMBRACE OTHERS BECAUSE CHRIST EMBRACED YOU (v. 7)

Look right at verse 7. Paul drops the hammer on the entire dispute:

Romans 15:7 *"7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."*

In modern English, "welcome" sounds painfully polite. It sounds like giving a visitor a warm smile in the lobby and then immediately moving on to sit with the people you actually want to talk to. But Paul isn't asking for polite tolerance. He uses the Greek word *proslambanō*. It means to aggressively draw someone in. It means to take someone to yourself, to pull them into your home and your deep, personal fellowship.

To understand how socially radical this was, we have to look at another word Paul uses later in his ministry. When he writes to Timothy and Titus, he says a pastor must be "hospitable" (*philoxenos*). Today, we confuse hospitality with *entertaining* our closest friends. But *philoxenos* literally translates to "a lover of strangers." In the first century, the *xenos* was the alien, the person who lived entirely outside your social tribe.

Proslambanō ("Welcome" in v. 7) is the physical action of being a lover of strangers. It means looking at the person in your church who feels completely foreign to you—who votes differently, or worships with a different cultural vocabulary—and refusing to keep them at arm's length. You pull the stranger into your circle.

Why must we do this? Look at the standard and the goal in the text: **"...just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."**

As theologian John Stott points out, this verse is the ultimate theological sandwich.

Christ's welcome is our standard, but God's glory is our supreme goal.

Never forget that before grace intervened, you were the *xenos*.

We were all strangers and aliens to the promises of God. Yet Christ didn't just tolerate us from a distance. He executed the ultimate act of *proslambanō*—He shed His blood to pull spiritual foreigners into the inner circle of God's family.

Ephesians 2:19–22 “19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

When a room full of people who naturally belong together get along, nobody is impressed.

But when people, who have no earthly business loving each other, aggressively embrace one another, the world has to look up and say, “There seems to be something real about what they believe.”

“Unity isn't about your comfort; it is about making God look glorious.” — John Stott

You might be thinking, “Pastor, pulling people into my inner circle who are fundamentally different from me sounds impossible.”

But listen to the WWII German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”

Paul is not asking you to manufacture a fragile unity out of your own politeness.

Paul is asking you to participate in the unbreakable reality Christ has already bought with His blood.

So, how then do we participate in Christ’s unbreakable reality?

In order to do that, we need to...

II. ANCHOR OUR FAITH IN THE PROMISE-KEEPER AND MERCY-GIVER (vv. 8–9a)

Romans 15:8–9 “8 **For** I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, 9 and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy...”

The grammatical hinge of this entire passage is the little word “For” at the beginning of verse 8.

Christ’s ministry was a dual-threat against human pride. First,

Paul preaches to the "strong" Gentile believers. He says, *Christ became a servant to the Jewish people to prove God's truthfulness.*

The Gentiles in Rome were getting arrogant, thinking they were the new center of the spiritual universe. Paul reminds them: God's redemptive plan started millennia ago with Abraham. Church in Rome, if God breaks His ancient covenant to the patriarchs, your faith is built on sand. The only reason you can trust God with your future is because He kept His word to Israel in the past.

Second, Paul pivots to the "weak" Jewish believers. He says, *Christ also came so that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.*

The Jewish believers assumed they had a monopoly on God's grace. But Paul shows them that the inclusion of the outsider wasn't a glitch in God's system; it was the ultimate goal.

The Greek grammar here is stunning. When Paul says Christ "became a servant," he uses a perfect tense verb. It describes a past action with continuing, present results. Paul means Christ became a servant and **remains one forever**.

If the King of the Universe permanently took the posture of a servant to welcome you, how can you refuse to serve the person across the aisle?

Paul is leveling the playing field. He strips the Gentiles of their arrogance by anchoring them to Jewish history, and He strips the Jews of their exclusivity by pointing them to God's global mercy.

We stand completely level at the foot of the cross.

As Dr. Timothy Keller famously put it: *"We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."*

When you realize that you were flawed enough to **require** the King of the Universe to become a servant, but loved enough that He actually did it, you lose the ability to look down on anyone else.

When that kind of grace levels a room, a profound shift happens. You stop viewing the people across the aisle as an interruption to your preferences, and you start realizing that they are the fulfillment of a prophecy.

This united, multi-ethnic church wasn't some new social experiment Paul dreamed up just to keep the peace in Rome. It was the ancient, prophetic heartbeat of the Old Testament.

Paul is calling them out of their petty squabbles and inviting them to take their place in a millennia-old symphony; to...

III. JOIN THE GLOBAL CHORUS LED BY THE KING (vv. 9b–12)

Just in case anyone in Rome thought Paul was inventing a new theology on the fly, he takes them to the ancient scrolls.

In verses 9 through 12, Paul fires off four quotes from all three sections of the Hebrew Bible: **The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings**. He is proving that a multi-ethnic, united church was the unified testimony of Scripture all along.

Notice the beautiful, expanding progression:

- **Verse 9** (quoting from the Writings Psalm 18): "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."
 - Originally, David sang this. But Paul applies it to Christ. Jesus is the "I" in this verse.
 - Psalm 18 was originally David's victory song over his enemies. Christ's resurrection victory over death is exactly what enables Him to stand as the lead singer among the Gentiles.
 - Christ isn't just saving the nations; He is standing in the middle of them as the lead singer of a diverse, global choir.
- **Verse 10** (quoting from the Law Deuteronomy 32): "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."
 - The outsiders are invited into partnership, singing side-by-side with historic Israel, rather than stand outside a wall of division.
- **Verse 11** (quoting from the Writings Psalm 117): "Praise the Lord, **all** you Gentiles..."
 - The invitation becomes a universal command.
- **Verse 12** (quoting from the Prophets Isaiah 11): "The root of Jesse will come... in him will the Gentiles hope."
 - The progression is complete. The Gentile nations are placing their eternal hope in a Jewish Messiah.
 - Notice Isaiah says the root of Jesse, not David. Jesse was David's father. A stump is what is left when a royal tree is chopped completely down and everything looks dead.

- Paul is telling them: God brought the Savior of the world out of a dead stump.
- If God can bring global salvation out of a dead, hopeless stump,

God can bring beautiful unity out of a fractured, messy church.

Why does this matter for us on a Sunday morning?

John Calvin observed about this exact text:

"God has so bound us together... that we shall never truly praise Him until our voices blend together in one harmonious song."

Did you catch that?

Unison is when everyone sounds exactly the same. Harmony requires different voices, different tones, and different backgrounds singing the exact same chord.

God doesn't want unison; He wants harmony.

This is a stark contrast to the fractured Roman house churches. However, isn't this the plan, isn't this the eschatological reality of Revelation 7:9?—a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne. It proves that the "harmony" Calvin speaks of is the guaranteed, eternal destiny of the church.

The person sitting across the aisle from you, who annoys you with their different preferences, is your assigned duet partner in a global choir spanning thousands of years.

You cannot harbor bitterness when you realize Jesus Christ is standing in the center of the room, leading both of you in worship.

That is a breathtaking theological picture. But let's be honest: while the vision of a global choir is inspiring on a Sunday morning, the daily reality of loving people who frustrate you is hard work.

It is emotionally exhausting.

How do we keep singing together when the differences feel too heavy?

Where do we get the energy, the fuel from to actually live this out without burning out?

Paul gives us the answer in verse 13 when he tells us that the fuel for harmony within His church is unshakeable hope, so...

IV. FUEL DAILY UNITY WITH UNSHAKEABLE

HOPE (v. 13)

Bridging cultural divides is exhausting.

Paul catches that word "hope" from Isaiah in verse 12, and immediately turns it into a magnificent benediction in verse 13:

Romans 15:13 *"13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

In English, "hope" sounds like wishful thinking. It sounds like optimism.

But as theologian J.I. Packer notes:

"Optimism is a psychological attitude that hopes for the best without any guarantee of its arriving... Christian hope is a theological certainty, a faith looking ahead to the fulfillment of the promises of God."

Secular optimism crosses its fingers and hopes the church doesn't split.

Biblical hope (*elpis*) looks at the empty tomb, looks at the promises made to Abraham, and says,

"My God finishes what He starts."

When you grasp that theological certainty, look at what God does next.

Paul prays that the God of hope will **fill** you with **all** joy and peace.

Notice the absolute nature of that promise. God doesn't just want to give you a tiny drop of tolerance to help you survive a tense church meeting. He wants to *fill* you.

God wants to fill you with Joy and Peace

Notice how Paul says this. In the Greek, 'fill' isn't a command. Paul isn't pointing his finger at you saying, 'Fill yourselves with joy and peace! Figure it out!'

It is a prayer.

It is a plea to heaven.

Paul knows that bridging a centuries-old ethnic divide, or even just forgiving the person who offended you in the pew, is totally impossible in your own strength.

We cannot white-knuckle our way into this kind of peace. It must be handed down by the God of hope. And Paul doesn't pray for a slow drip of tolerance; he prays for a total, complete filling.

When a vessel is filled to the brim, there is no empty space left and it is a fact that a

vessel cannot fill itself; it must be held under a rushing source.

When the Holy Spirit fills you with *all* joy—a deep delight in what God is doing—and *all* peace—the total cessation of hostilities with the person across the aisle—there is simply no room left in your heart for cultural anxiety. There is no corner left for tribalism or bitterness.

And what happens when a vessel is filled to the brim? It spills over.

Paul prays that you may abound in hope.

That word means to overflow the banks like a flooded river. Your hope isn't supposed to just keep you personally afloat; it is meant to spill over and wash over the "weak" and the "strong," the Jew and the Gentile, the insider and the stranger.

This is not something to manufacture on our own. Bridging a centuries-old ethnic divide, or even just forgiving the person who offended you in a church pew, requires more than human willpower.

That is why Paul anchors this entirely in the **power** of the Holy Spirit.

Both come from the Holy Spirit.

The exact same divine energy that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the energy required to make two radically different people love one another in the local church.

You cannot do it, but the Spirit can.

Why is Paul pressing so hard for this? Because...

This unity is the grand finale of redemptive history.

It brings us back to the core truth of this entire text:

Christ's dual ministry to Israel and the Gentiles serves as the ultimate display of God's eternal plan.

God didn't just plan to save isolated individuals.

God planned to put His glory on display by creating a beautifully diverse, unified family.

When your future is completely secure, you don't need to fight for supremacy in the present.

Future certainty heals present fractures.

- It frees you to look at the people around you not as threats to your preferences, but as monuments to God's grace.

Why do churches fight?

We fight because we are anxious.

We think if we don't protect our cultural preferences, we might lose our place.

In contrast, Paul says we serve the *God of hope*.

When you actively believe that God has kept His promises to Israel, and that God has extended His mercy to you, the Holy Spirit supernaturally fills your present moment with joy and peace.

When your future is completely secure, you don't need to fight for supremacy in the present.

Future certainty heals present fractures.

CONCLUSION

We need to look around us. The people near us are not there by accident.

Romans 15:7 "7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

When Paul shifted this letter from deep theology to everyday life back in Romans 12, he begged us to present our bodies as a *sacrifice of living*, calling it our true *spiritual worship*. He told us, '*Do not be conformed to this world.*'

Make no mistake: the default pattern of this world is tribalism. The pattern of the world is building walls, demanding our preferences, and retreating to the safety of people who look and sound just like us.

But when you lay down your cultural comfort, when you sacrifice your pride to fiercely welcome the stranger—the *xenos*—into your fellowship, you are living out Romans 12. That cross-cultural, costly unity *is* your living sacrifice. That *is* your spiritual worship.

That worship was never meant to stay trapped inside the four walls of a church building.

Once this diverse choir is united in harmony, the song has to go on the road.

God hasn't just called us to sing to one another; He has commanded us to take the song to the unreached.

Next Sunday, we are going to dive into Romans 15, verses 14 through 21, in a message titled, **"Pioneering the Gospel of Grace."**

We are going to watch Paul pivot from a peacemaker to a pioneer.

We will examine his unique, priestly role as the apostle to the Gentiles, and we'll see his relentless ambition to take the gospel to places where the name of Christ had not yet

been heard.

More importantly, we are going to see how Paul's frontier mission must become our mandate today—how we must mobilize our people and our resources to the unreached as our supreme act of worship.

For today:

The dividing walls of hostility have been torn down by the blood of the cross.

Don't settle for polite Christianity.

Don't just smile at the stranger, the person who doesn't look or think exactly like you, and then retreat to the safety of a comfortable tribe.

Do the hard, the glorious work of *proslambanō* ("accept").

Draw others in, especially those who might be alien to you.

Remember, we do not unite so we can be comfortable; we unite so God can be glorified.

Christ crossed the cosmos to welcome you when you were an outsider, an alien, and He did it for the glory of God.

Let us abound in hope.

Let us join the global choir.

Let us actively embrace one another—just as Christ embraced us.