

True To His Word

Romans 15:8-13

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This article is based upon a verbatim transcript of a recent sermon from Drew Taylor.
It has been edited with AI, along with editing by staff members at
Third Millennium Ministries.*

If you have your Bible or electronic device, go ahead and turn to Romans chapter 15. We are continuing our sermon series in the book of Romans, and this morning I'll be preaching from Romans 15, verses 8–13.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." And again it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Amen. This is God's Word.

If you haven't already turned there, I want to encourage you to open your Bible or device to Romans 15:8–13. We'll be returning to this passage several times this morning. And if you don't have a physical Bible, our church just ordered more—we would love to give you one. We want you to read God's Word, know God's Word, and love God's Word.

The Bible is described as God's inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word. Inspired means we believe Scripture comes from God himself—through the power of the Holy Spirit working through human authors. Infallible means it does not change; the words written thousands of years ago are just as true and just as good today as they were for the original audience. And inerrant means it is without error—nothing slipped through the cracks. All of Scripture is for our good.

Would you pray with me as we dig into Romans 15?

Jesus, thank you for the truth, the joy, and the freedom found in your Word. Your Word reveals that we are great sinners in need of a great Savior—and thankfully, you are that Savior. You have poured out great mercy so that we might be made right with you through believing in your work on our behalf. Lord, I pray that the words written long ago by the apostle Paul would enlighten our minds and hearts. Encourage us, challenge and convict us, and ultimately transform us by the good news of your Word and the good news of what Jesus has done, so that we might live for your glory all our days. In Jesus' name, amen.

Throughout history, there have been many examples of unique or unlikely friendships—people you wouldn't expect to spend time together who nevertheless became close. For example, I learned this week that the inventor Thomas Edison was befriended by Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company. The two of them spent a great deal of time together. Or consider Amelia Earhart, the famous pilot, who intentionally sought out a friendship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. They maintained that friendship for years.

Scripture also highlights unexpected friendships. Think of David. As a young man serving under King Saul, David was befriended by Saul's son Jonathan. If you know the story, you know David would eventually become the next king of God's people—meaning Jonathan, the current king's son, should have been his rival. And yet these two became genuine friends.

Real friendship, however it begins, is often marked by a shared purpose—a unified goal. And one of the best modern examples of this, in my opinion, is found in the movie *Toy Story*. Woody and Buzz Lightyear begin as rivals, but ultimately they share a purpose: bringing joy to their owner, the young boy Andy.

This morning, our text in Romans 15 shows Paul addressing another unlikely pairing: Jewish Christians and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians. The passage hints at ongoing friction between these two groups. But Paul calls them—and us—to see three things:

1. These two groups share a common promise from God.
2. They share a joint purpose of glorifying God together.
3. They share a living hope and the same Holy Spirit.

So I have three points this morning. The first is this: God is committed to the truth of His Word.

Look with me at verse 8, and the beginning of verse 9:

“For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”

“The circumcised” refers to those who were ethnically Jewish. “The patriarchs” refers to the original recipients of God’s promises—Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac’s son Jacob. Paul reaches all the way back to Genesis to remind his readers of these foundational promises.

In the first-century church in Rome, Jewish believers—those physically descended from Abraham—were worshiping alongside Gentile believers from Rome, Greece, and throughout the expanding empire. The tension was real. Gentile Christians might have been tempted to say, “Jesus has come—so let’s forget anything distinctively Jewish. Those traditions are obsolete now.”

But Paul pushes back. In verse 8 he reminds them that their Savior entered the world as a servant to the Jews. Jesus took on flesh as a Jew. He fulfilled the Jewish law. He came as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises and expectations.

A couple of chapters earlier, in Romans 9, Paul puts it this way:

“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

Out of the Jewish people came Jesus—God in the flesh—who entered humanity to bring salvation. He is the fulfillment of the promises made long ago to the patriarchs.

And so, the temptation for the Jewish believers would have been to carry themselves with a kind of spiritual arrogance: Those Old Testament promises were made for us. We descended from Abraham. We are, by blood, connected to Jesus, our King and Lord. As a result, non-Jews—Gentiles—could easily have been viewed as second-rate or second-class Christians.

But in the midst of this friction, Paul points out in verse 9 that God has always promised, and always intended, to include the Gentiles as part of His people—His Church—His one people. We’ll look at the biblical examples Paul uses in just a moment, but hear me: this is really important.

When Paul addresses how Jesus fulfilled God’s saving promises to the Jews—promises referenced throughout the Old Testament—and how Jesus is also God’s plan to provide salvation for the Gentiles—also referenced throughout the Old Testament—he is making a clear point in Romans 15. God is absolutely

committed and passionate to reveal and prove that He is faithful, and that His Word is the source of truth. When God promises something, when God declares something, it will come to pass. It will be accomplished.

Christians—both Jewish and Gentile—throughout history, but especially in first-century Rome, desperately needed clarity that Jesus is the truth, the fulfillment of God's promises made in the Old Testament, both for themselves and for the other group.

And today, for you and for me, Jesus and the words of Scripture are to be the primary source of truth on which we build our lives, our families, this church, the Church. Even our communities must be solidly built upon the Word of God because God Himself is clearly committed to truth. Therefore, the Bible serves as the primary lens through which we are called to view the world.

Why does this matter?

Because we live in the 21st-century American church, where we are regularly encouraged—or at least tempted—to drift slightly away from the words of Scripture, away from the true and sufficient good news of the Bible, and to root ourselves in something other than the Word.

Let me give you an example.

You've likely heard the phrase, "Love is love." It's a common phrase today, attached to various cultural, social, and moral conversations. But when we use the word love, we must remember that 1 John 4:8 tells us that God Himself is love. If God is love, then God alone defines love.

So when we hear "love is love," but that statement is used to affirm something that contradicts the truth of God's Word—such as affirming a same-sex marriage relationship that goes outside the design God clearly communicates for marriage between one woman and one man—we have to ask: What do we mean by love? How does God define love?

Thankfully, Scripture gives us the answer. In 1 Corinthians 13:4–6, love is defined this way:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

God is committed to the truth of His Word, and the Bible is true because He alone is the source of truth. We say the Bible is infallible—it does not change. It is good and true for us today just as it was when it was written, because the Author of Scripture is Himself good and true.

Even when it's difficult for our fallible, changeable hearts and minds to take in everything Scripture teaches, we know God's Word is true and His promises are kept. In fact, He has committed His very self—Jesus, love personified—to ensure that His promises are fulfilled.

This leads to a much shorter second point, but one that connects beautifully: God is zealous for His glory.

Look again at verse 9. Building on God's commitment to truth and His confirmation of Old Testament promises, Paul writes, "in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." Then he begins quoting several Old Testament passages to show that God has always promised one people—including the Gentiles.

In verse 9, he references 2 Samuel 22.

In verse 10, he quotes Deuteronomy 32: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."

In verse 11, he cites Psalm 117: "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol Him."

And in verse 12, he quotes Isaiah 11: "The root of Jesse will come... in Him will the Gentiles hope."

Paul is building a case from every major section of the Old Testament:

—from the historical books (2 Samuel),

—from the Law (Deuteronomy),

—from the poets (Psalm 117),

—from the prophets (Isaiah).

All of Scripture reveals one overarching truth: there is one people of God who will glorify Him forever.

To glorify God means to praise Him, worship Him, and make much of Him. And as we've talked about unlikely friendships, God has provided salvation for both Jew and Gentile—not only to save them, but to give them one unified purpose for all eternity: to glorify God.

Willow Creek, what is the beginning of our mission statement as a church?

We exist—to glorify God. I love how our Scripture text aligns with our mission today.

May we not only say it, but recognize God's zeal—His commitment—to see the nations glorify Him. His passion for people to know Him, glorify Him, and, as verse 9 ends, experience His mercy.

We want to see the nation sing. We want to see the peoples who are moving into Florida praise God—know Him, discover Him, and grow deeper in their walk with Jesus. Would you partner with us in giving and in prayer, so that we, as Willow Creek Church, might zealously desire—like God Himself—to see His glory go out from here and for people to experience His mercy?

How is God merciful? As verse nine states, He is merciful in keeping His promises. God promised to send a Savior who would gather to Himself a people who are broken, sinful, and needy—and He fulfilled that promise through the person and work of Jesus.

That beautiful little baby, Avery—her baptism is a sign of God's mercy and promise. She was born into a home of two sinners, Josh and Haley, who themselves have received God's mercy. And so the call for Josh and Haley, with Avery and their son Jack, is first and foremost to point their children to the promises fulfilled in Jesus—His life, death, and resurrection—and to the mercy they themselves have received.

Church, if you want to know practically what it looks like to have a heart that is zealous for God's glory, start with your own children and grandchildren. Those of you serving—or preparing to serve—in the nursery, children's ministry, or student ministry of Willow Creek Church, start by making much of Jesus there, so that the next generation would see and know that He is true, faithful, and worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. Amen.

Our third and final point from the text is that God provides us with a living hope to live out. That leads us to verse 13: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Paul is wrapping up this section by looking back at the truthfulness of God's Word and His faithfulness in keeping His promises, and now he brings us forward—into the present and future hope of every believer in Jesus.

When we say the word hope, we often think of a desired outcome for a future event. For example, one of my all-time favorite movies is *The Shawshank Redemption*. The whole story centers on a man falsely accused of murder who spends years in prison, hoping to escape and live free. His friend, played by Morgan Freeman, famously says, "Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane." (I thought about trying the Morgan Freeman voice, but that would have failed miserably.)

But in Romans 15, hope is not something uncertain or fragile. Hope is not “maybe it will happen, maybe it won’t.” God Himself is the Truth-Establisher. He is the Promise-Keeper. He is the Hope-Provider—the One worthy of all glory. He alone is the source of eternal hope, eternal life, and salvation. Guaranteed hope comes from God alone. Nothing and no one else can offer the hope God provides. Everything else will disappoint you eventually.

And here’s what’s beautiful: not only is God the source of eternal hope, He is also the object of our hope. One biblical commentary puts it this way regarding the phrase “the God of hope” in Romans 15:13: it means the God who inspires hope, the God who is the object of our hope, and the God who imparts hope to His people.

And that hope—which comes from God and is focused on God—fills us, as verse 13 continues, “with all joy and peace in believing.”

So how do we maintain or obtain hope in the midst of a challenging life? All of us face—or will face—difficult trials, circumstances, hardships, and questions about what is true and right. How do we obtain hope, joy, and peace? God’s Word says: through belief in Jesus. Belief is simply resting in the assurance that Jesus has overcome our greatest enemies—sin and death—so that we might live confidently, holding fast to the hope He provides.

A helpful analogy is Paul’s own: running a race. I’m not a big runner, but my wife is. In fact, I’ll brag on her for a moment—yesterday in Oviedo she ran a 10K and won as the fastest woman in her age bracket. When she runs a race, she knows there is a finish line ahead. You don’t run aimlessly; you run with purpose, with expectation, with your eyes looking forward.

We can run the race of life with that same confidence, because God—the God of hope—not only assures us of the finish line, but He Himself, in Jesus, has already run the race and won.

Verse 13 ends by highlighting the great Helper God provides to His people—Jew and Gentile alike. Those who believe in Jesus are given the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:5 says, “For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.” The Holy Spirit resides in you, and the hope we have is fanned into flame by Him. It is a living hope, as the Spirit grows in us the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, and self-control.

So today, church—this week—as you read and hopefully reread Romans 15:8–13, you can go to our website under “Watch” and find the sermon guide to help shape your thoughts and discussion. Would you live out God’s truth found in His Word? Would you live for His glory? And would your life reflect that you and

I, because of Jesus, have a living hope and the Holy Spirit dwelling within us? And may we do that—as Buzz Lightyear says—“to infinity and beyond.”

Let’s pray.

Jesus, thank You for the hope we have in You—the security, confidence, and assurance we possess as believers because of what You accomplished in Your life, in Your death on the cross, and in Your resurrection and victory over sin and death. For those here today who do not know You, who do not yet experience that hope, or who may be blinded to the truth of Your Word, I pray that You would work in their hearts. Draw them to ask questions and seek to know Your Word.

Lord, thank You for being the Promise-Keeper. Thank You for giving us a shared, unified purpose: to bring You glory all the days of our lives. I pray that we would do exactly that—that we would glorify You and enjoy You more and more. Thank You. It’s in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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