



The Hope of the World

Romans 15:8-13

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Now this morning I would like to draw your attention to the book of Romans, specifically in the fifteenth chapter. We're going to be looking this morning at Romans 15:8-13, and there is some sense in which this is the ending of Paul's letter to the Romans. Now don't get worried yet. We're not completely done with Romans, but after this passage, Paul deals with things that are more personal, the nature of his ministry and of others who are ministering alongside him.

So this section, this passage, is really a good summation of Paul's argument about the gospel of grace throughout this letter. So, as we look at verses 8-13, I would ask that you would give attention to the reading of God's Holy Word. For the Word of the Lord is completely inerrant, the Word of the Lord is completely sufficient, and the Word of the Lord is completely authoritative. Romans 15, beginning at verse 8:

“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 is said, '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.”

Thus far the reading of God's Holy Word. Let's pray for his blessing upon it. Heavenly Father, we ask that you would open up your Word to us, that as we hear your Word we would understand it by the power of your Holy Spirit, but even more than that, Lord, we would not only understand but we would also have it take deep root in our hearts, that we would be changed by it, that we would be more and more like Jesus because we are under your Word. This we ask in Christ's precious name, amen.

What is hope? For some people, it is a wish. They hope things will turn out okay. They hope for a change in their circumstances. For others, it's a feeling against the reality of circumstances, circumstances as would appear to be difficult, or trials, and we just hope they will go away. This might be described by some people as a *step in the dark*. "I don't know how this is going to turn out, but I hope it comes out for the best. I'm just going to take a step in the dark and hope for the best." The Bible doesn't talk about hope that way. In the Bible, hope is the assurance of God's promises. It is what the believer waits for, to receive from the hand of God. So hope is personified in Jesus Christ. Jesus who is called *our hope* and the *hope of glory*. In Jesus we have a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul. Jesus is a reminder of and the greatest expression of God's redeeming love. So in that, Jesus is the hope of the world.

This morning, I would like us to see two things Paul wants us to hear about hope. First, Paul presents us with the *Christ of hope*; that is, the Messiah of hope, the Lord Jesus Christ who is hope. Then secondly, he presents us with the *God of hope*, that God is a God of hope, that he is the source of our hope and the power of our hope. The Christ of hope and the God of hope.

The Christ of Hope

Let's begin by looking at Jesus Christ who is the Christ of hope, because Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of God. Now let's remember the context of our passage, how we get to this place. Paul has been reminding us that the church is one body, it is one people. That's true even though the church is made up of people with different backgrounds, with different levels of maturity, with different views on practical matters. This is what Paul has been telling us throughout chapter 14 and the beginning of chapter 15.

He tells us that even though the church is different, it is united in Jesus, so Paul tells us not to pass judgment on one another. He tells us not to cause each other to stumble. He tells us not to focus on comparing ourselves to others, but instead, we are to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus did not live to please himself but, rather, he lived to put others first. So the sum of all of this, Paul wraps up... In chapter 15, verse 7, he says, "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Now Paul is continuing that thought about how Jesus welcomes us as believers, how he welcomes us to his church. Despite our sin, despite our background, despite our immaturity, Jesus welcomes us. Paul continues this thought in the beginning of verse 8, and we're reminded once again that what Paul is writing here in the letter to the Romans is not a series of disconnected aphorisms or pieces of wisdom.

Often, if we study the Bible by simply turning from page to page, trying to find a verse that speaks to us at the moment, we forget that there is a cohesion. There is a unity to the Bible and the way it's written. What Paul is telling us here is to encourage you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ, Paul is reminding you of the love of Christ for *you*.

In verse 8, we see once again that little word Paul uses over and over again: *for*. It reminds us that he's connecting what he has now with what has gone before. He's continuing a logical argument. He's showing how Jesus has practically welcomed you, what it means to be welcomed by Christ. That's what he's going to tell us, and he's going to tell us how Jesus' welcome is the design of God himself, God who has gathered to himself a people.

As we mentioned earlier, in many ways, this passage is the conclusion of Paul's letter. It sums up his thought in very condensed form. After spending much of this letter telling you about your great need in your sin and about God's provision for your need in Jesus Christ and about the salvation that has been applied to the believer by the Holy Spirit, he now gives a simple summary.

We might put it *this way*: *Jesus Christ is your hope*. He is *our* hope. He is the hope of the whole world. That's what Paul has been telling us now this year and a half we've been in the book of Romans, that our only hope, the only hope for *anyone*, is Jesus. He now gives us an example of why Jesus is our hope. He picks this up in verse 8. He

says, "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness..." Jesus is our hope because he testifies to God's truth.

Now, what does Paul mean by this? How does Jesus show God's truthfulness? What did Jesus prove from God? How did Jesus prove what God said is true? As a matter of fact, what *was* it that God has said that Jesus proves is true? We can go all the way back to the garden of Eden. God told Adam that if he ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he would surely die. He told Adam that as a result of rebellion and sin, what would come upon him would be death, separation from God.

So Jesus becoming a servant shows that what God said was true. God says that sin is a big deal, that its consequences are great, that sin is a problem that cannot be easily solved, so the only way God can be just and true and the Savior of sinners is through Jesus. There is no other way. If there *were*, God would have used it. This is very important in our day, because in our day, people insist that God's way is not the only way. They say all the time that sin is not really that big of a deal.

When was the last time you saw someone who's a public figure acknowledge his own sin? We don't see that at all anymore. No one acknowledges sin. No one even acknowledges fault. We have this wonderfully amorphous, vague phrase that is used now in our public way, which is "Mistakes were made." Can you imagine that?

Could you imagine if you went and looked at your bank account ledger and you saw you were short \$10,000, and then you saw that someone who had access to your account had \$10,000 more in *their* account, and you said, "What's going on here?" and they said, "Oh, mistakes were made. I don't know how exactly it ended up from your account into my account, but I'm sure I'm not to blame. Mistakes were made. It's not that big of a deal. Don't make such a fuss over this. Let's just let bygones be bygones."

We see it all the time in our society, the way we are lackadaisical about life. We treat life so lightly. We cast our very young, children in the womb, and now, more and more, our *old* off into the dust bin. We say life isn't that important. But God says sin is very important, and he says life is very important, and he says the only way you resolve the problem of sin is through the work of Jesus Christ.

The servanthood of Jesus Christ tells us that God did not spare his only Son because there was no other way to resolve the problem of sin. It was only through the work of Jesus that we can be reconciled to God. This is what Paul has been saying throughout this letter, that everything God says is true and we can know this because of Jesus. Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Jesus is also the one who confirms God's promises. Paul says, "...in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs..." That's one of the reasons Jesus became a servant. Let's think about this. Let's walk our way backward in time. What are the promises of God? Well, first, there's the promise God gave to David in 2 Samuel 7. You may remember the story.

David looks out and sees that God dwells in the tabernacle. The temple has not been built yet, and David is cut to the quick. He says, "I live here in this palace, and God is in tents," and he says, "God, I'm going to build you a

house." God says to David, "You're not going to build me a house. I'm going to build *you* a house, and the house I build you will be an eternal house, and the throne I establish for you will be an eternal throne." He says, "Your throne shall be established forever."

What does God mean by that? He certainly doesn't mean David will live forever. David died. He doesn't even mean David's son Solomon will live forever, because Solomon, the wisest of men who ever lived, committed idolatry and sinned and fell short of the glory of God. What does God mean here? He means that David's greater Son, the one who would come from David, the Lord Jesus Christ, would establish and sit on the throne, and that would be established forever.

Jesus fulfills that promise. No one else could fulfill that promise...not Solomon, not all of the other kings, not judges, not priests. No one but Jesus. What about the promise God made to Moses in Deuteronomy 18? God says to Moses, "I will raise up a prophet like unto you, and the people shall listen to him." There's a sense in which that is partially fulfilled, because there are a whole series of prophets God raises up...Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. We could go through the whole list.

But there's a problem. The people of God did not listen to the prophets. The prophets came and proclaimed, and Israel still went off into captivity, Judah still went off into captivity, and when they came back, they still rejected the prophets. It became a byword that they murdered the prophets. So what does God mean here by *this* promise? What God means is that Jesus is *the* Prophet. He is the one who fulfills this promise to Moses. God brings *the* Prophet who the people will listen to in the person of Jesus Christ.

Then there's the promise God makes to Jacob. You may remember in Genesis, chapter 49, Jacob says, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah," and by the *scepter* Jacob is referring to the kingship. So who is the King who will last forever? Who is the great King, like the great Prophet, but our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who comes from Judah, the one who holds the scepter of authority and will never relinquish it? You see, we do not need to be concerned about someone taking over for Jesus.

It is commonplace during election season, no matter which party you support or who your candidate is, for you to be pretty nervous during the election season. We're nervous about who will win. Will our party be replaced by the other party? Will our man be replaced by the other man, and what will happen when that occurs? Will everything be turned upside down? Will my life be changed forever? What will happen to our laws and our society? There is an agony, an anxiousness, all across the entirety of the American electorate.

What you have to understand is the Christian should never have an ounce of that insecurity with King Jesus. As the famous preacher once said, you can't impeach him and he ain't going to resign. Jesus is the King forever. He fulfills that promise to Jacob. Let's keep going back farther. What about the promise God made to Abraham, that in Abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed? How does *that* happen? How does Abraham become a blessing to all of the families of the earth? Well, Abraham becomes a blessing through Jesus Christ.

Abraham is the father of all of the faithful, all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Paul told us in Romans, chapter 4. It is the relationship we have with Jesus Christ that brings us in relationship to Abraham. It's

not that we are related to Jesus through Abraham, but rather we are related to Abraham through Jesus. By believing on Jesus Christ we are blessed.

Let's go back still farther. Let's go back all the way to the garden of Eden. In the midst of the blackest day in history, when sin came into the world, when death was about to embark upon all of humanity, God gives a promise to our first father and mother, Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3:15, after Satan has tempted Adam and Eve, after in his wickedness he has brought sin upon mankind...

Even though Satan will mock God, even though Satan will bring more and more sin into humanity, even though he will lead the rebellion against God, God declares that he will be defeated. He says the seed of the woman will crush the head of the Serpent. That is a promise that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus fulfills the promise of God to Adam, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to David. Jesus is the "yea" and "amen" to all of God's promises.

Now, when we look at Jesus fulfilling God's promises, our focus is typically upon the Jews, because those promises are found in the Old Testament and they are given to the Israelites. Much of what we just looked at were promises to the Jews. As a matter of fact, in Romans 9:4, you may recall that Paul says one of the great benefits and blessings for the Jews was to *them* were the promises. *For* them were the promises of God.

We also saw, as we went back farther and farther in time on the promises of God, that they were not limited to the Jews. Those promises were for the whole world. Abraham was to be a blessing to *all* of the nations, and, of course, Adam is the first father of *all* mankind, so those promises are not limited to the Jews. Paul picks up this argument, as he often does here in Romans, by stating it and then proving it from Scripture.

He gives four separate quotations from the Scriptures in support of his argument, but first, his argument that he states is that Jesus became a servant and finished his work, his work of living a perfect life and dying a death upon the cross and rising again to be the only Savior of the world. His work *did* fulfill the promises to the Jews. We saw those promises, the promises to the patriarchs, and they were fulfilled by Jesus coming as a Jew, as a servant of the circumcised, Paul says.

Then in verse 9, he adds another component. "...and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." You see, it's not enough that Jesus be the Savior of the Jews. It's not enough that God's salvation be seen in one part of the world. No. Jesus is the Savior of the Gentiles. He lived and died and rose again so that the Gentiles, all of the nations of the earth, would glorify God for his mercy.

How marvelous is that? Can you think about that now? The very fact that you are here today and hear about the grace of God in Christ is a testimony to that truth. You are here thousands of years later and thousands of miles away from where Paul wrote this letter, yet you are hearing about the mercy of God right now. What could be more unlikely? Your ancestors and mine worshiped trees and animals and the sun and the moon, and they had no hope at all in the world. That's what Paul tells us in Ephesians 2.

Now you have hope. You have *every* hope. You have hope because of Jesus, because God is redeeming Gentiles for the glory of his mercy. How Paul emphasizes this is masterful. He shows so that no one will be mistaken about this

but that Jesus is the hope of the whole world. You see, some might be tempted to say because Jesus is a Jew and the promises were to the Jews that the Gentiles are not a part of God's people, that there are other ways to God besides Jesus. "Jesus is just one avenue. I could take the avenue of Buddha or of Gandhi or of Allah and Muhammad."

But Paul proves from the Scriptures that Jesus is the hope of the Gentiles. He begins, first, in verse 9, by citing the Psalms. He cites Psalm 18:49. "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." Then again, in verse 11, he quotes Psalm 117:1. "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." Then in verse 10, he quotes Deuteronomy 32:43. "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." Then finally, in verse 12, he quotes Isaiah 11:10.

Now what do we know about these various passages? It's very interesting that the Psalms are called a part of the *Writings* in the Old Testament. One division of the Old Testament are the Writings, and that's the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes. It is a segment of the Old Testament. Then Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Old Testament, and it is a part of what is called the *Law*. The first five books are the Law, and of course, Isaiah is a prophet.

So what we have here is Paul quoting from the Law and the Prophets and the Writings. Why is he doing this? He wants us to see that the Gentiles' hope is at the core of the Old Testament. It's not something mentioned in passing. No one can accuse Paul of cherry-picking verses. He is saying that *all* of the Scriptures speak to Jesus being the only hope of the whole world, including the Gentiles.

I want you to also notice the progression Paul gives in the way he uses these quotations. He wants us to see how far God has taken this mercy to the whole world. First, in verse 9, we see David praising God among the Gentiles. David is doing more than praising God *to* the Gentiles, but he is in the midst of the Gentiles praising God.

Then, in verse 10, the Gentiles are called to join in this praise. "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." So now they're not just observing what's going on. They're not just *witnessing* the praise of God; they are *participating* in the praise of God. Then, in verse 11, we see that the Gentiles are then called to take the lead in this praise. "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles..." They are to initiate this praise. They are to be the source of this praise.

Then, finally, in verse 12, Paul ties the Jewishness of Jesus to the Gentiles. He says the root of Jesse (Jesus, the descendent of David) is the hope of the Gentiles. There's no one else they can hope in but Jesus. Where is *your* hope? Do you hope the stock market will continue to climb or that your education will give you a secure job and a life or that your wise decision-making will bring you the security you long for?

None of these things can be your hope. Your only hope in life and death is Jesus. Your only hope is that you belong to Jesus, that he has paid for your sins because you have faith in him and you trust him to save you. There is no other hope. Jesus is the hope of all of the nations. That's what the word *Gentiles* means: the nations. Jesus is the hope of all of the nations. He is the only Savior of the world.

The God of Hope

Paul then concludes this section in verse 13, and he concludes, in a way, the argument of his entire letter with a benediction. "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." Now, you know what a benediction is. Right? A benediction is when the pastor gives the blessing at the end of the worship service. The term *benediction* means a good word or to speak a blessing.

A benediction is different from an *ascription*. We'll get a little bit technical for a moment. Some young pastors at the end of a service will ask people to rise for the blessing and raise their hands, and they'll give an ascription. The best example of an ascription is Jude, verse 24. "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority."

What do you notice about that ascription? Who is the object of that phrase? It's God. It's giving glory to God. That's why an ascription is not a benediction. A *benediction* is a blessing for God's people. An *ascription* is a description or attributing glory to God. Now why is this so important? It's important because a benediction is a blessing *for* God's people, and that's what Paul brings to us.

He's not just describing how great God is, although he *is* in the sense that the great God is the one who gives the blessing, but he reminds you and me that this blessing is for *us*. We're not just standing and observing. We are receiving the blessing of God. That's what Paul is doing here in verse 13. He has told us who Jesus is. He has done that from chapter 1 on.

He specifically told us in this passage why Jesus became a servant, why he took on humanity, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross. Jesus did this, Paul says, to bring us hope. Remember that hope is not a vague wish that things will turn out okay. It is a certain hope that you can rely on. Jesus is the hope of the world, and that means you can trust him today with your very soul.

God sent Jesus so you would have hope, hope you can hold on to. He is the God of hope. He wants you to receive this hope, and the only way you receive it is through Jesus. That hope is real. It is not a wish, and that means that hope brings blessings to you. God's blessings to you are a sign of the reality of your hope in Jesus.

Have you ever wondered why God gives blessings to people? I know there are some so-called preachers who say that God *has* to, that if you name it and claim it, God is obligated to give you a blessing. There are others who say God's people *deserve* blessings, that God owes it to them because of their obedience, but the Bible doesn't say that.

The Bible says God blesses his people so they would know the sureness of his love in Jesus. You're told here that God, the God of hope, blesses you immensely. Look at the verb Paul uses. "May the God of hope *fill* you..." God is not just going to give you a *taste* of a blessing. He's not just going to give you a *chance* at a blessing. He is going to fill you up with his blessings.

Now what *are* these blessings? First, we see that it is *joy*. This is something we need, if we're honest with ourselves, because life is hard. Circumstances are difficult. Illness comes our way. Pain is in our way. Relationships are hard.

Financial times are difficult. People don't act the way we expect them to act. We fall short. Life is hard. So what we need is joy, because we get dragged down by our own sin. We get dragged down by *others'* sin.

So God, in order to keep our eyes on the hope he has given to us, gives us joy...*all* joy, Paul says, the joy that can only come from knowing Jesus. Paul understood this. You remember the story in the book of Acts where Paul is in Philippi and he's in jail. He's not just in jail; he has been beaten first, and *now* he's in jail. He's a prisoner. And what does Paul do? He starts singing hymns. That's crazy, isn't it? Not if you know the joy that comes from knowing your hope is secure in Jesus. Then, whatever life throws at you, you know it cannot take your hope away. You are safe in Jesus. Paul wants you to know that kind of joy.

A second thing Paul says God blesses his children with is *peace*. Now, I don't think Paul means here the peace he has talked about earlier in the book...a reconciliation between God and man, a cessation of enmity, an end to the conflict between God and man over sin. I think what he means is the result *of* that reconciliation, that subjective sense of peace that comes over us that we experience because of the hope we have in Christ. That is the peace which passes all understanding. It's this kind of peace which only comes from Jesus.

Then thirdly, Paul says God blesses us with *faith*, that is, *believing*, he puts it. Paul reminds us that the link to joy and peace is faith. It comes through believing. It is as you believe the promises of God that Jesus is your only hope that you experience joy and peace. Don't look anywhere else. Only look to Jesus.

The final thing Paul points us to is how God empowers us in our hope. He empowers the believer. Now, he has told us that Jesus is the one who proves God is true and that each and every person can look to Jesus for hope and salvation. He has told us that God blesses us so we can be sure of this hope, and now he tells us the reason he wants you to know all of this. We see it in the phrase Paul uses in verse 13: *so that*. There is a purpose to Paul's exposition here. It is so we would know the power of the Holy Spirit in our hope.

Do you see how gracious and good God is? It might have been enough for God to tell us about our hope, just simply to tell us about Jesus, or it could have been enough for him to stop at blessing us in Jesus, because he is the God of hope. He's making that hope real. But no, God goes even further than that. He wants you to *abound* in hope. He wants you to have it in abundance. He wants you to know the power of hope that comes from the Spirit.

The image here is of Jesus feeding the 4,000 in the Gospels. After everyone was fed, everyone was satisfied, do you remember what they did? They gathered up all of the pieces, and Matthew tells us quite simply there were seven baskets leftover. The word Matthew uses for *leftover* is *abound*. There was such an abundance of food that after everyone had all they could possibly need or want, there was still some leftover.

Stop and think about that in the context of hope. What Paul is saying to you is that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has given you so much hope that after you have all you need (no more than that), after you have all you could possibly want... Picture in your minds being so stuffed after a gigantic meal you don't even want to *look* at food, yet there's still a whole feast leftover. That's how much hope God gives to us through the Spirit.

God is the God of hope because he generates hope in us. He provides the object of our hope, Jesus Christ, and he empowers us to hope *on* Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. So I don't want you at all ever to doubt what God can do. It's interesting that Paul talks about the power of the Holy Spirit. There are two words in the Bible that are used for the English word *power*.

The first Greek word means authority, and you could see how that comes to mean power. You have the authority to do something. You have the power to do it. That is certainly true of God. But there is a second word that is used for *power*, and what it means is might or strength. That's what Paul uses here. He wants you to understand that not only does God have the *authority* to do this; he has the *power* and the *might* to do it. He will never be defeated. He will never be gainsaid. He will never be stopped...*ever*. Your hope can never go away, because God will never be defeated, and he is the source of your hope.

Do you wonder if you could experience the life-transforming power of the gospel? Would you like to experience unity in the church and the fellowship that comes from that unity? Can you have the hope that is so secure even in the midst of the storms of life around you? Well, God's Word tells you that you *can* because of the work of God in you. It is *his* power that makes the difference. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and abound in the hope he gives.