

For the Glory of God

Romans 15:7-13

Did you know that God is glorious and that as believers we were saved in order to glorify God? Listen to just a few verses from the Bible that emphasize our glorifying God:

Psalms 22:23 - You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Psalms 50:15 - Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

Psalms 86:9 - All nations whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name.

Psalms 86:12 - I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

Psalms 96:7-8 - Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory [due] His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts.

Isaiah 24:15 - Therefore glorify the LORD in the dawning light, The name of the LORD God of Israel in the coastlands of the sea.

Isaiah 25:3 - Therefore the strong people will glorify You; The city of the terrible nations will fear You.

Matthew 5:16 - "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

John 12:28 - "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."

1 Corinthians 6:20 - For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2 Corinthians 9:13 - while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal sharing with them and all *men*,

1 Peter 2:12 - having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 4:16 - Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Revelation 15:4 – "Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You alone are holy*. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

Revelation 19:7 - "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Listen, we were created and saved to glorify God, to give Him glory, to show how glorious He is. We are redeemed to be for the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:12, 14).

So let me ask you: What is the most important way we can glorify God? Is it by building grandiose cathedrals to His name? Is it by raising our hands in worship? Is it by singing exuberantly to Him? Is it by putting bumper stickers on our cars? Or by wearing a cross or a T-shirt with a Christian message? Is it by living holy lives full of good works? Is it by enduring the suffering of this world for the sake of Christ? Is it by leaving all the comforts of home to go to a remote mission field to proclaim the gospel?

All of those things may be ways to give God glory. But here in Romans 15 Paul points out that God is especially glorified in His church when we accept one another as Christ has accepted us.

Listen for that instruction to accept one another in verse 7 and listen for how and why do this in verses 8-13 as I read from Romans 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.

These verses in Romans 15 are really Paul's concluding argument to this whole letter to the Romans. The last chapter and a half (Romans 15:14 – 16:27) are kind of a postscript where Paul tells about his plans and gives some personal greetings and benedictions. So today's text is like the last chapter of a mystery, for they tell us where Paul has been heading since his first introductory words in chapter 1.

His topic in this whole letter to the Romans has been the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:16-17 Paul wrote, **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."**

And remember that Paul went on to show in chapters 1-3 why everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike, need the gospel of Christ. We need the gospel because, as sinners, we do not glorify God. Romans 1:21 said about the Gentiles, **"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were**

darkened.” And in Romans 3:23 he concludes this about all people, Jew and Gentile alike, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** We need salvation because we do not glorify God, we fall short of His glory.

Then in chapters 4-5 Paul showed that it is by faith in Jesus Christ that we can be saved, declared righteous and so by faith we glorify God. In Romans 4:20 Paul gave the example of Abraham saying, **“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.”** And in Romans 5:2 Paul says that having been justified by grace through faith we **“rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

In chapters 6-8 we saw that through union with Christ in His death and glorious resurrection (Romans 6:4) and through the indwelling Holy Spirit we are being sanctified so that God’s **“glory ... shall be revealed in us,”** (Romans 8:18).

In chapters 9-11 Paul told us about how God chose those who would believe from both Jews and Gentiles, **“... that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”** Concluding in Romans 11:36, **“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”**

Now in this final section of Romans starting in chapter 12 Paul has shown us how we are to live out the gospel of Christ for the glory of God. All of our relationships are to be a reflection of these great truths of this gospel of grace for the glory of God.

So Paul is concluding here in chapter 15 saying, in Romans 15:6-7, **“that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”**

The aim for every believer in Christ and for every local church is one thing, to glorify God. We do that especially in two ways: 1) with one mind united in Christ toward the essential truths of the faith; and 2) with one mouth united in glorifying worship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (15:5-6).

The goal of salvation is one thing, to **“glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** And as verse 7 shows, one of the greatest ways that we glorify God in His church is to **“receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”**

So in verse 7 we have:

1. The Command: Receive one another (Rom. 15:7)

“Receive one another,” calls for a willing, open attitude and action toward others in the body of Christ. It means to accept and welcome other believers into your life and into our fellowship. You include them. You count them in. You treat them with kindness, show them forgiveness, consider them as brothers and sisters in Christ, treat them with family love, and seek after their good and their encouragement.

It’s really amazing what is found in those three words! Can you imagine the scene in the church at Rome? Here were Jewish believers who had been

brought up to honor the Lord God by obeying all the Old Testament laws and ceremonies. They gathered regularly with other Jews to hear the rabbinic teaching. They made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the holy days where they offered sacrifices to the Lord according to the Law. They refused to eat what the Law banned. They refused work on the Sabbath. They had nothing to do with idols or pagan rituals or images or the immorality that often served the worship of false gods in the Roman Empire. And they certainly had nothing to do with Gentiles!

Then they came to faith in Christ. But what would they do about these Gentiles who also were converted and called themselves 'brothers and sisters in Christ?' **"Receive one another,"** Paul told them. Welcome the Gentiles into your lives! Welcome them as family, treat them with kindness, love them as your very family. Do you realize how shocking this was to Jewish sensibilities? Frankly, it was not too easy for Gentiles either. Many of them looked down on the Jews. The Jewish people had been the brunt of their jokes and the object of their prejudice because of their peculiar habits and diet and customs. But now, as Christians, they are told to accept these Jewish believers as family, as brothers and sisters to whom they pledged their love and lives.

Do you see how stunning this command seemed to both those believers? The same stunning command comes to the church today. **"Receive one another"** means that we cross every racial, cultural, gender, economic, language, tribal, and national boundary to welcome fellow believers as brothers and sisters.

Maybe you have trouble accepting other believers because of their personality or some issue where your feelings have been hurt. Listen, Paul does not give us any leeway to wiggle out of accepting one another. Just get over the barriers that you've erected between another brother and sister and accept them.

But what does acceptance look like?

2. The Example: Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:7-9)

Paul takes us back to the gospel that he has proclaimed throughout the book of Romans. **"Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."**

This verse not only tells us the reason why we should accept one another, namely, because Christ accepted us. But it also tells us how we are to accept one another. **"just as Christ also received us."** How was that? He died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8) while we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). We were not seeking after Him (Rom. 3:11). He came looking for us in our lost, helpless condition (Luke 15:4). He didn't require that we clean up our lives or make vows to change or do anything to deserve His love. Like the father of the prodigal son, Jesus ran to us, embraced us, and welcomed us into His family, in spite of our smell and dirty rags! He promises (John 6:37b), **"... the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."** That's how we are to accept one another.

Then in verses 8 and 9 Paul reminds us of how God accepted both Jews and Gentiles for His glory. **"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.” Notice the language: Christ as a servant to the Jews, but the nature of the service is qualified. He’s not a servant to accommodate their wishes. He’s a servant with regard to the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—**“the fathers.”** Paul is declaring Jesus to be the promised Messiah whom God promised to the patriarchs in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the seed of the woman who will crush Satan’s head (Gen. 3:15). He’s the seed of Abraham through whom all the peoples of the world would be blessed (Gen 12, 15). He fulfills every promise of scriptures as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20, **“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”** God fulfilled every promise made to the Jews in Christ for His glory.

But he does not stop with the Jews. Notice how verses 8 and 9 are tied together: **“and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.”** Jews do not have an edge on the Gentiles. The God who promised to save Jews also purposed to show mercy to Gentiles.

Although Jesus was a Jew and the first Christians were all Jews, God never intended for Christianity to be limited to the Jewish people. God gave promises to Abraham and Isaac that specifically included all the nations of the earth.

To prove that point Paul quotes four Old Testament texts in verses 9-12. The first quotation (from 2 Samuel 22:50) says that Christ will be praised among the Gentiles. The second (from Deuteronomy 32:43) says that the Gentiles and Jews will praise God together. The third quotation (from Psalm 117:1) calls on all the Gentiles to praise the Lord. The fourth quotation (from Isaiah 11:10) looks forward to the day when Christ will return and reign over the nations of the earth.

Don’t miss the key point. God always planned to include the Gentiles in His kingdom. He wanted His family to include many different kinds of people from many different backgrounds.

And since He accepted Jews and Gentiles, welcoming our corporate worship and praise, we must accept one another.

3. The Purpose: the Glory of God (Rom. 15:7-12)

These verses are filled with worship. They call us to praise. God’s purpose in accepting us in Christ and of our accepting one another is for His glory.

Listen, it is not our personal convictions which should consume us. Nor should it be the differences we have with our fellow-believers. It is God who should consume us. May we be caught up—lost in Him—in His glory, honor, wisdom, and power. Let us not leave this text without joining Paul and all of the saints of all the ages, in praising God. To God be the glory, great things He hath done!

I’m greatly challenged by what John Piper has said about the goal of missions in his book Let the Nations be Glad: “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate.” To say it another way, the goal of our witnessing is so that there will be more worshippers because praise is the universal language of the Christian church. God’s promises should cause us to praise Him.

4. The Result: an Abundance of Hope (Rom. 15:13)

Finally the practical result of this in our lives today is that we will have hope. It is fitting that this whole argument regarding the way we treat one another and accept one another in the body (Rom 14:1-15:13) ends with a prayer focusing on our common hope in Christ, **“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.”**

“Hope” bridges two worlds or two realities. It is the realization of the ‘not yet’ in the ‘now.’ It is the confident expectation that all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are ‘Yes’ and ‘Amen.’ Hope gives us confidence to live as Christians in an unchristian world. Hope radiates—it shows up in our countenance, motives, and relationships. People without hope in Christ can easily sink under the weight of this world. But for Christians, hope lifts us, not by focusing on wishful thinking or the power of positive thinking, but focusing on the provisions of Christ through the gospel. It is above all a gospel hope.

Our God is characterized by hope. So, how do we anchor our lives in hope? It is “in believing.” Believing what? That’s better put, believing who! It is our faith in Christ Jesus, living in the good news of what He has done and promised us. Hope grows as we constantly go back to the gospel and live in its promises.

The church is to be a place of hope and we are to be a people of hope. We ought to be the happiest, most positive, most optimistic, most encouraged, most forward-looking, most creative, most dynamic, most hope-filled people on the face of the earth. Maybe we should put a sign out front, “If you’re looking for hope, we’ve got plenty to spare!”

When people come to Jesus Christ, they find one thing they can’t get anywhere else—hope. Our calling is to be a people of hope because God’s heart is big and includes all the people of the world. In Jesus Christ there is hope! Let’s take that message with us and share it wherever we go this week. Amen.