

Romans 15:8-9

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[0 : 0 0] And we're going to read from Romans chapter 15 from verse 8. Well, let's read from verse 7. The NIV starts from there.

We'll read from verse 7 of chapter 15 down to the end of the chapter. And then we're going to look at a bit of chapter 16 later tonight.

So we're going to look at the first section of that bit in chapter 15 this morning. And then a second section of 15 into 16 tonight. And looking at this wonderful theme of grace to the world.

So let's read and hear from God's word. Accept one another then just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God.

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth. To confirm the promises made to the patriarchs. So that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.

[0 : 5 8] As it is written, therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles. I will sing hymns to your name. Again it says, rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.

And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles. And sing praises to him, all you peoples. And again Isaiah says, The root of Jesse will spring up.

One who will arise to rule over the nations. The Gentiles will hope in him. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.

So that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness.

Complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written to you quite boldly on some points. As if to remind you of them again. Because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.

[1 : 5 6] With the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God. So that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me. In leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done. By the power of signs and miracles.

Through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum. I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.

So that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather as it is written. Those who were not told about him will see. And those who have not heard will understand.

This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions. And since I have been longing for many years to see you. I plan to do so when I go to Spain.

[3 : 04] I hope to visit you while passing through. And to have you assist me on my journey there. After I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now however. I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.

For Macedonia and Achaia. Were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it. And indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews spiritual blessing.

They owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task. And have made sure that they have received this fruit. I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.

I know that when I come to you. I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. I urge you brothers by our Lord Jesus Christ. And by the love of the spirit. To join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea. And that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there. So that by God's will I may come to you with joy. And together with you be refreshed.

[4 : 11] The God of peace be with you all. Amen. As letters go it would be fair to say that this one is quite important.

Isn't it? In the history of the world this letter is one of the most read that has ever existed. And although it's a wonderful letter. And we've probably heard many many sermons.

Talks. Read books about this letter. Sometimes we can overlook the reason that this book was written. Sometimes we can overlook the reason that Paul writes to the church in Rome.

Yes he's absolutely wanting to get across to them. What is the gospel of grace? What is it for us to be in a right relationship with God through Christ? But the big drive underneath all of this is for Paul to be saying.

And this gospel cannot be contained to the small places that we've already been before. This gospel is grace for the world. And this gospel must go to the ends of the earth.

[5 : 16] And I'm going to Spain. And you're going to send me. And that's effectively what he says at the end of this section. So I should just sit down now and we should all go home. Yeah? That's what he's trying to help people to understand in the church in Rome.

He's wanting them to get a grasp of the gospel of grace. But he's saying this gospel of grace is good news for the whole world. And it needs to go out. His desire is to see the believers in this church in Rome captivated by God's glory in Christ.

And he wants them to be participants in this mission of God. He says that he wants them to be fully active in taking this gospel into every aspect of their lives in that city.

And to see that gospel of grace flow out from them. So that there would be many more people who would come to know and understand Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And what he's saying in this section, this first bit that we're going to look at from verse 8 to the middle of verse 9 this morning, is that the reason we can have great confidence in doing this is because God is fulfilling his promises.

[6 : 28] God has fulfilled his promises in Christ. And God is fulfilling his promises through his people to the world. So as we spend some time together today and come to receive the bread and wine, let's spend some time considering the grace of God for the world.

And also rejoice in the reality that the promises of God have been fulfilled in Christ. And are in many ways still being fulfilled through his people taking that gospel to the ends of the earth.

Two things I want to gather our thoughts under. First one is that there is the hope for all people, verses 8 through 13. And then there is the part one of the ministry of God's people.

I deliberately did that so that you would get excited and come back later on tonight, didn't I? Not that that's the motivator, but verses 8 through 13, the hope for all people.

Now it's not a new thing for Paul to have dealt with cross-cultural tension. Cross-cultural tension in the church had existed for decades, and it was very normal for Paul to experience this.

[7 : 35] Years, decades of ministry had taught him that old habits die hard. That's what he had learned from a long time in ministry.

Reconciling centuries of segregation and separation was not easy. And it came to the forefront of Paul's ministry among the Gentiles so frequently.

Effectively, that's what we see being worked out from chapter 14. Through to chapter 15. Don't think of yourself as more important than others. You are God's people and you are to be united around about this gospel.

There are people who will find things more difficult. And therefore, as someone who is a believer, don't make them stumble. It's not something which has disappeared.

Squabbling due to our ethnic or cultural preferences may not seem prevalent or important. But it really is. Because it tells us a lot about how we understand the gospel.

[8 : 36] Tells us a lot about how we understand God's grace. Where we elevate what we think should happen. Because this is what we have experienced. About people receiving the gospel and the grace of God.

Something's just not quite right there. When this becomes the dominant theme of a local church or churches in a nation. It highlights that the big picture of God fulfilling his promises.

Of sending Christ. So that the whole world would come under his lordship. And experience his grace and mercy. It kind of shows that that big picture of what God is doing.

Has maybe just got a little bit distorted. Or potentially has been lost. Do you remember Dr. McCoy from Star Trek? It's life, Jim. But not as we know it.

This was the people of God. But not as they knew it. They didn't quite know what was happening. There had been people coming from different backgrounds. Different social strata. Coming together.

[9 : 38] And it was strange. It was different. It got difficult. And as was the same then. We are all broken people. We are falling short of the glory of God.

And what happens as a result of that. Is that we can begin to canonize our culture. We can begin to canonize our heritage. And we become unaware of our own cultural blind spots.

So that the way we have understood how to express faith. Becomes the way it must happen. Pause for a moment.

What are the things that you and I have become blind to? We all have it. We all do it. Just not aware of it. That's why it's a blind spot.

Things that we hold so dearly. But aren't actually keys to understanding the orthodoxy of the gospel. You see living in secular Scotland provides us with great opportunities to announce the gospel of hope for all people.

[10 : 46] We don't throw out orthodoxy. We don't throw out what is true about the gospel. Gospel truths can never be conceded. We need to state that so clearly right at the very beginning.

But we do need to come in humility to learn from God's word. That what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ in our secular age in Scotland today.

Means that we need to be sensitive to the leading of God by a spirit. Into what is this going to look like? Do you know one of the greatest challenges is that none of us have got a clue what we're doing. Actually.

We've never faced this before. A post-Christian age. It's something that we actually don't know what to do. And that can cause us to be very scared and fearful.

And when we become scared and fearful. We grab on to what we know. Yet that means because of the secular age. There are great opportunities.

[11 : 43] Which exist. For us to share something about this amazing person called Jesus. That people may never have heard about before. Who have never encountered the real and risen Christ.

Yeah they may have encountered religion. They may have encountered a church before. But they've never met with the risen Jesus. God is opening up opportunities for all people in this city.

He is opening up opportunities throughout the nations. To hear this message of Jesus Christ. One of the questions we need to think about as we read this. Is how are we being sensitive to God's leading by his spirit.

So that we are part of those who are seeing those opportunities created. And also proactive participants with God. In being involved in those opportunities that he is opening and presenting for us. As God's people.

That's why Paul helps the believers in Rome to remember. That across their cultural barriers. They have one example. It is the Lord Jesus. There is one person who they follow.

[12 : 43] There is one example that we should chase after. And it is not what we have known from our past. It is pressing on with Jesus Christ. Accept one another. Verse 7.

Then just as Christ accepted you. In order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant. Christ has become a servant. And in this way he fulfills the glorious hope of what we read right at the very beginning of our time of worship.

The servant who has been despised and rejected. The one whose body has been pierced for the transgression of his people. His wounds are the only wounds in the whole of the entirety of the universe.

Which can bring healing and wholeness to sinners. No matter where they are from. Where they have been. What has been happening to them. What they have done. He alone. This servant is the only one who brings that hope.

That healing. That restoration. At cost to himself. I don't know all of you here. You may not know or trust Jesus yet. But please hear from him.

[13 : 46] The servant of all. He cares for you. He knows what has happened in your life. He knows what you have done. He knows what has been done to you.

And he says that does not put me off. Because I come to you to bring grace and mercy and healing and peace with God. Now we as God's people are not the servant of the Lord.

We are. You know. Jesus is the servant of the Lord. But we are the Lord's servants. And this means that our lives should be colored with the beauty of Christ's likeness.

And Paul exemplifies this. Paul exemplifies this. Showing what it means to speak truth. And yet not endorse cultural, ethnic or racial superiority.

He comes to them and says our example is Jesus. That's what I'm going to take you back to. I'm not going to take you back to the things that I could call upon as things which would give me importance. I'm going to call you back to Jesus.

[14 : 44] Because he is the person that we are following. What unites people who have been born again through Christ is greater than what divides them. And I'm very specific in saying that.

I'm not just saying people who own the name of Christian are all the same. People who are born again. People who know the grace of God at work in their lives. People who have received the gift of the Spirit.

Regenerating them and making them new people. What unites us is greater than that which divides us. And that's what he moves on to explain next in that section, isn't it?

He transcends the false divisions which more often than not we as fallen people begin to establish in our minds and our habits and our patterns and our hearts. He says, guys, this is not our thing.

He's far more eloquent than that. But he says, this is not our thing. The gospel, the salvation, the church, the grace of God, this is not our thing.

[15 : 46] These are all God's things. It is him who owns these things. It is him that these things are for. I don't own it. We are but recipients of unmerited favor through grace and providence given out by the hand of God.

Jesus had come as a Jewish man, is what Paul says. Christ came as a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth to confirm the promises to the patriarchs. He says he came as a Jewish man to serve the Jewish people because they are his people.

Because in God's purposes of salvation, this was the means for salvation to be worked out in time and space. For salvation to be worked out in history. But it was always the intention of the God of hope to invite the whole world to worship him through Jesus Christ.

Because he was not only the servant of the Jewish people, but he was the servant of the Lord. The servant of all of the people who would come to praise and to hope in him.

We are united because we need the same Lord. It is not Jew or Gentile. It is not Scott or English. It is not the UK or the American.

[16 : 57] It is not any of those things. It is the people of God being united around the one Savior. The one Christ. The global glorification of God in unity as the people of God is not a new thing that Paul is introducing.

That's what he cracks on to, isn't it? He says, if you don't believe me, I'm just going to quote quite a few places in the Old Testament. So as that, you know, you don't really have any option or wiggle room to get out of this. This has always been God's plan.

This has always been God's purposes. That the world would come to know him. That the world would be under the lordship of the risen Christ. It was the heartbeat of the faith of God's people all along.

Because it was the heart of God from the beginning. Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles. I will sing hymns to your name. Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles. And sing praises to him, all you peoples. The root of Jesse will spring up. One who will arise to rule over the nations. The Gentiles will hope in him.

[18 : 06] Now let's pause. Stick up for a bit of breath of fresh air. In what ways are you and I living as believers to display our unity in Christ with believers from different backgrounds?

And remember what I mean by believer. I mean someone who has been born again by the spirit of God. I'm not simply saying someone who takes Christian on the census sheet in Scotland. I mean someone who has been born again by the spirit of God.

What ways are we seeking to live and display unity with Christians, people who believe in Christ, born again people from different backgrounds? Man, it is not easy.

It is hard. It can be really difficult to reconcile some of these things. But this is where the most difficult thing is. It's the gospel. The gospel is that we live in unity with others who have also been born again.

Yes, in our local church community context, but also further afield. That's what you see further on in this letter. Dr. Harvey Kouiani was speaking at a conference in Glasgow last week.

[19 : 18] He's involved in teaching at Liverpool University. He's a professor of African Christianity and looking into the diaspora African mission movement. And he said this really challenging, difficult thing for us to hear.

It's very moving. He said British Christians prayed for revival. When it came, they did not recognize it because it was black. Now, zoom out from that in our own local setting within the UK, within Scotland.

Zoom out. Does it disturb us that there are people who live on God's earth who do not know that Jesus Christ even existed at all? They just don't know who he is and therefore they cannot glorify God in Christ.

I think sometimes in the Western world, we forget there are people who do not know that Jesus ever existed. The hope for all people flows out from the God of hope.

The God who Paul asks will fill his church in Rome with joy and peace as they push forward in seeing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural barriers broken down. They push on for these things because the desire is that the glory of God would be seen and that the salvation of many peoples would happen.

[20 : 43] Now, let's land Paul's prayer that last little bit in verse 13 into our everyday. What are we hoping in? He talks about this God of hope, the one that we are to place our hope into.

But what are we actually placing our hope into? God has fulfilled his promise in sending this person, the Messiah. He is also fulfilling his promises through his people.

But what is it that we are putting our hope into in our everyday? Perhaps it's our careers. Maybe it's our educational achievements, our academic ability. Possibly it's a perfect looking family.

But as I'm starting to find out very quickly, that just doesn't happen. Because they just don't do what you ask them to. As good as these things can be, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the word of God in power communicate to us an even greater story that all of us, as the people of God, are a part of.

They communicate an even greater story. And through the work of the Spirit in us, we too share in the privilege of carrying, displaying, and announcing this hope for all people.

[21 : 52] That is why you exist on the earth. That's why you have breath. To declare the praises of the one who has set you free. In every aspect and dimension there is your everyday existence.

That is why I exist. Does it mean I'm perfect? Does it mean I do it all the time? Does it mean I do it right? No, it doesn't. But that is what we are here to do. Can I suggest to you that one of the greatest reasons for the discontent and disconnect in the church in the Western world today is because of our misplaced hopes.

We would rather, or we would often rather spend more or give more in terms of our money, our attention, our abilities, everything, in every way, to see our thirst for entertainment quenched.

To see our hunger for security or belonging in a world which is chaotic, satiated. We would rather invest everything in those things. We would also rather that our physical needs in either food, sex, or exercise were gratified in more extreme, inventive, or elaborate ways.

And yes, I am speaking about the church here. I'm not just speaking about the world around about us. I mean the people of God. We place our hopes in these things. When actually really our joy is being robbed because we are misplacing our hope.

[23 : 15] Our joy and our peace is found in proactively participating in seeing the church of Christ being established throughout the world.

Because this is the hope which does not fail. Why are you discontent? Why do you feel disconnected in church?

Why does it not kind of maybe make sense? Why do you feel disconnected in church?

Lord, before God jobbar with you. Why do you feel connected in your need? That the God's glory would be improved. And the people, young, old, would be saved and come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

As you come to this table this morning. You come declaring afresh that there is one Lord. There is one Savior. There is one hope for all people throughout the world. No matter where they are from.

[24 : 32] And no matter what they have done. And no matter what has been done to them. Let that thrill your soul this morning. let that be something which kindles in you a fire that's maybe gone out. Let it be something that encourages you to head into your meetings tomorrow and work, to do the housework that you just can't be bothered doing, or to just get up to face whatever tomorrow brings.

Because Christ is building his church, and he is inviting all of us to take part in that building project for his glory. The ministry of God's people then, the second thing that we're going to draw our thoughts under, verses 14 through 19.

What does it look like being involved in this building project? You'll be glad to know this second section is shorter than the first one. That's why it's split in two. What does it look like to be involved in the building project that is Christ involved in forming his church throughout the world and across cultures?

Grace for the world comes through the worship and witness of the people of God. We are like signposts in an airport. You know, you get off the airport and you're like, I have no idea how to speak the language here. It's one of the most difficult things when we go over to East Asia, especially if you go somewhere where English is not a common language.

I just look and I go, I don't know where I'm going. And equally, people get off the plane in Edinburgh and go, I have no idea how to speak English. We, as the people of God, are like signposts pointing people to the end of the journey.

[25 : 57] There is life on God's earth. And Paul's great desire is that all of God's people would be united in Christ, reaching out to the world. He looks through, there's three Ps.

We're going to cover two of them this morning. He talks about a priestly ministry that God has given, verses 16 and 17 of chapter 15, a priestly ministry that God has given to him.

And this priestly ministry revolves around our worship. This isn't simply about music. We probably all know that. It's not simply about how we sing. That's sometimes how the contemporary English language would define it.

But this is about whole life worship. Worship. Paul is offering over these Gentiles. He is offering them over to God in an act of worship.

These people that God has brought to know him, Paul is offering them back to God. Because as they respond to the beautiful truth of the gospel in Christ, he can do nothing else but say, this was not my work, this was yours.

[27 : 02] So receive them back because I have not done any of this. The Gentiles are not Paul's. They are the Lord's. Every aspect of our life is an avenue of worship.

Perhaps one of the reasons that many churches in the Western world become detached to wider global needs is down to misunderstanding who it is that we are worshiping. As Paul travels around that huge part of the known world, seeing people come to know Christ, he does not claim them for himself.

He offers them back as an offering saying, these are your people, not mine. Because he understands who it is that he is worshiping. He understands who it is that he is following.

And sometimes in the Western world, we can downplay the size, scope, magnitude, and majesty of God. And we forget that he is not a local tame deity.

The earth is the Lord's and everything that is in it. How do you worship God with all that you have and all that you are and all that you will be?

[28 : 11] How do you view God? It's probably a more pertinent question. How do you view God? Paul says the priestly ministry that I have been given, yes, he's an apostle, but there are things which apply to us as well.

That life of worship offering over everything. How do you respond? How do you view God? Do you not just love that Paul speaks so boldly about the power of gospel ministry?

He moves on talking about the priestly aspect to going down to verse 19. And he says, it comes by power, the power of signs and miracles through the power of the spirit. See that verse is 18 through the beginning of verse 19.

Sometimes we can read this and people get very excited. It's about healing miracles. It's about things happening. We see stuff taking place. And we're not here to debate that this morning.

What we are here to announce with Paul is that gospel ministry, the proclamation of God in his grace and his mercy, that is powerful stuff.

[29 : 24] What it is that we are involved in week by week, moment by moment in our lives and proclaiming Christ is powerful. Witness to Christ in the power of the spirit, which brings dead people to life through announcing God's word is powerful.

It can be in a pulpit. It can be in a train station. It can be at the toddler group when you can't even hear over the racket and the noise that's taking place around about you. It can be at a family gathering where there is tension between different members.

Wherever that word of the gospel goes forward, that is powerful ministry. Because it is not us who has the power. For it is God by the power of his spirit, which takes his word, which is true to people's hearts and to their lives.

If we are failing to recognize the God who deserves worship from all that he has made, then we will inevitably shrink back from allowing God to use our lives to display his power as we are transformed.

Our worship, what we worship, how we understand the one who we are worshiping is inevitably going to impact our witness, how we communicate, what we share, whether we should share or not.

[30 : 42] Have you forgotten just how powerful the gospel is? Do you know why I ask that question? Because Martin forgets how powerful the gospel is. Because Martin sometimes makes God a tame little deity that he's got to know, forgetting that the earth is the Lord's and everything that is in it.

The gospel was powerful enough to save Martin, to transform him from someone who was dead to someone who is alive. Yours, like mine's, your conversion is a power encounter with God.

Do not forget that. He has changed you. He has changed me. And that is a powerful display to an onlooking world of the God who is powerful to save.

Friends, we know these things and Paul says that to the church in Rome. That's what he says in verses 14 through 15. He says, I'm convinced that you understand these things, that you can teach each other, but I'm writing these things to remind you of them.

We always need reminded of these things so that we keep living out the life of faith, so that we keep living out the ministry of the gospel as God's people.

[31 : 58] It needs to be at the forefront of our minds. That's what we need to be reminded of all of the time. Because spiritual amnesia can very easily lead to spiritual apathy.

And from there, the core of what it means to believe this message of hope, that God has sent his one and only son as savior and Lord, that he is fulfilling his promises, these things can very quickly disappear off like a mist.

We forget the point. When we forget the point, we don't understand our purpose. Perhaps one of the reasons why our witness in the church in Scotland locally and globally is more often than not anemic comes as a result of our bent towards spiritual amnesia.

We just forget consistently throughout God's word there is this call to remember what he has done. So we take the lead from Paul in this whole section.

Indeed, throughout the whole letter, he has been going back to time after time after time. Remember what God has done. Remember what God has said. The Gentiles are to come to faith.

[33 : 05] The Gentiles were always part of the plan. This is no new thing. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. And I have been privileged to be set apart by God for that ministry of proclaiming his name to the ends of the earth.

And friends, in some very amazing ways, so have we been included in that mission of God. To see the Gentiles, which we are part of, come to know the glory of God in Christ.

And I pray that that is something that will encourage you in the everyday realities of your life. And I pray that it is something which will penetrate down all of the layers of your life.

As we come to receive the bread and the wine, we remember that it is by his body and his blood that this relationship of grace and this ministry of grace and hope, this ministry of worship and witness is what we have been given by God, by his grace.

We are worshiping witnesses with each other and also to an onlooking world. Let that go through all of the layers of your life. Let it filter down through each one of them and grow to respond to the Lord's leading in your serving him throughout the worship of your life and throughout the witness of your life.

[34 : 24] Whatever it is that he places you in the world, everyone has taught see to see each other's leading-show to see and if in the audience and as live-stadt that we are watching you live in the work of the work of the past, even in the walk of the laughter beginning second half of the day and how the truth is trying to correct things other things.

What I do here for is