

God of Hope

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[0 : 0 0] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. And we have praise the Lord, our mighty warrior, and he reigns over all the earth.

What a wonderful song. I believe that song is called Moses' Song. If you catch that, that would be a prayer that Moses would have. I'm thankful today that he's not only Lord over the Jew, but also the Gentile being in a room full of those people, those Gentile people, which is what we see here in Romans chapter number 15, that he came and he died for all men.

And because of that, we have hope. And because we have hope, there can be peace among us. So in Romans chapter number 15, we're getting towards the end. This section of Scripture is the last of the teaching verses.

Then we get to the benediction, but we're ending the book of Romans, then headed to Matthew. The pastor will take us there when he gets back. And then tonight we're in Genesis. Then Thursday night we'll do a summary of Genesis, and then pastor will lead us into the book of Exodus.

So we're ending these two books at the same time. First three chapters there in Romans taught us thoroughly about our sinfulness and need. And then for the next eight chapters, we saw the wonder of the cross and how great it was.

[1 : 1 3] And then for the last few chapters, it's been showing the relationship that we should have one another and to the government. Starting in chapter number 12, it said that we should deal one another with understanding.

And then at the end of the chapter, it said that we should help one another without giving offense. And then at the beginning of chapter 15, it says that we should work to seek each other's peace, letting Jesus be the model for the way that we'd serve each other.

And then now here in the middle section of Romans 15, it says that we should celebrate and rejoice in the hope that he has given us. And it's a wonderful thing to do this first Sunday, or this first day of the week on a Sunday as we celebrate our risen Savior.

And this is a great passage of Scripture. We get to look at the hope that we have. That he came and he died for two groups of people that were radically different, but he died for both of them.

And he died for every group inside of this church today. And it's something we should never get over. Ed read it to us a second, and we'll get into it here in a moment.

[2 : 1 5] But those of you that are veterans or currently enlisted, I'd personally like to just say thank you to you. And I know that a card does not do the honor that you deserve for being willing to stand and fight for our freedom.

I really liked the video when I came across it because getting to see some of our young people, as we see Edgar back there and Alex and others, getting them to see the starting of their military career really helps put faces to this.

And we have people of all ages serving in it. But let me tell you where I think the greatest honor came in today that we tried to show you is that upstairs in Sunday school, some teachers gave some cards out to some kids and said, let me explain why we will honor these men and ladies.

Let me explain why it is they did or they're doing what they do. So that's really the obligation our teachers have up there is not just to say fill these cards out and we'll make somebody feel good, but we explain why it is that they're doing that.

And it's in that way that we wanted to show honor to you today. Because that's an important question, isn't it? And Romans 15 answers that for us. Why is peace inside of the church and unity such a big deal?

[3 : 25] Is it just about us? Is it people-centric and the idea that it's a lot better to go to church where we're not fighting against each other? And I'd much rather raise my kids in a church where there's not a division.

And all those are wonderful things. Romans 15 takes it to the highest plane possible and says we do these things for the glory of God. And those of you in here, the redeemed of the Lord, those that are concerned about the glory of God and wanting to give Him the maximum glory with your lives, it means that this challenge and what we're told here in Romans 14-15 is not optional because it has everything to do with His glory.

He came here to show that God was true to the Jew. He came here to show mercy to the Gentile and to bring glory to our Father. It's a wonderful portion of Scripture, as all of them are.

Amen? They're all wonderful portions of Scripture, but we're going to look here together. Starting at verse number 4, let me read a little bit and comment before we jump into it today. For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

We said here that the Apostle Paul wasn't getting sidetracked into saying, while I'm teaching you guys about the weaker and the stronger brother, let me just encourage you to read your Bible, which is always a good second point in a three-point sermon, to say, yeah, we should really be studying our Bible, but he said that it's in the Scriptures that we find the hope and peace and the comfort and what unifies us together, and it's in nothing else, so go to the Scriptures.

[4 : 58] Weaker brothers, stronger brothers, go to the Scriptures, because it's there that we get the mind of Christ, and our hearts begin to beat together, and the following after our Savior. Now, the God of patience and consolation, in a moment we'll see him as the God of hope, but it says, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus.

Verse 6, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we read that aloud many times last week, that with one mind and one mouth, we would glorify our God.

Verse 7, wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to his glory, to the glory of God. So God accepted us with gladness, and now we should accept one another with gladness, and for what purpose?

The purpose is for the glory of God. Verse 8, and now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision. He was a servant unto the Jewish people to the circumcision for the truth of God, and to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

And then remember how I said in verse number 4, that we should remember scripture because it brings hope. The Apostle Paul puts his preaching into action five verses later, because verses 9 through 12 are quotations of the Old Testament.

[6 : 24] And listen to what he's saying, because this is speaking to a church, to a group of people that are radically different, to the Jew and Gentile which makes up the church. And as he's talking to them about this getting along and the stronger bearing the infirmities of the weaker, he then brings scripture into the conversation, and this is what he tells us, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written, for this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and saying unto thy name.

And again he said, Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people. And again, Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and laud him all you people. And again Isaiah said, There should be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, and him shall the Gentiles trust.

Four different verses, Moses, David, and Isaiah, talking about how the Jew and the Gentile, it was God's purpose in sending Jesus, that we would be brought together to worship his name.

Verse 13, which is what we should be looking and searching for today in this scripture, is now the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace and believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

He's now no longer speaking negatively, in that we should not do this, but positively in the fact that he's calling all of us to rejoice in what God has done, and making us one.

[7 : 50] And my sincere prayer for all of you today, is that the word of God will do in your heart what it's done in my heart, is that the God of hope, and that hope would abound, and we would see the wonderfulness of our cross, and what it has done in bringing us here together.

Heavenly Father, I pray that you will do the work in the hearts of your believers, that only you can do. I pray, Father, that you will let hope abound in our hearts.

A very specific, and the only type of true hope, Lord, this reality of the cross, and how because of it, there is no form of reconciliation that can't be made, but people can be brought to you, and because of that, they can be brought together.

Lord, I pray for my pastor today, Lord, as he gets rest, after preaching all day in Kenya, I thank you that he took your wonderful word there, and he preached it as well, and it allowed the hope to abound in the hearts of the people there.

I ask that you bring them back to us safely. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. So as we talk about hope, so verse number 13 tells us what the verses before are leading us to, and in Bible study, I'll tell you when I saw this, I kept looking, going down to verse 13, and saying that our hope should abound, and then I kept going back up to the scripture saying, I'm not exactly sure how this fits, and what it is that we are looking for.

[9 : 11] We see that there's something bigger in the church in unity, than just getting along for our own pleasure, but we see it's the glory of God. And what a wonderful passage for a sending church, because to be a healthy church, we have to be a church that understands why it is that we do what we do.

And why we do what we do must be at the heart of everything that we do. As we explained today about veterans to our children, we should also be able to explain to them on our back wall, why we have sent out families that we love very much.

So they not only grow up knowing what we do when it comes to missions, but they know why we do it. And we do it for the glory of God, and for the mercy of the nations. And that this is a real hope.

So Paul will pull out scripture for our hope, like he said in verse number four, and he does it. Let's talk about this word hope. It's a wonderful word. But oftentimes when we think about hope, we think of a passing feeling.

And that's how the word is mostly used today, is that I hope something will happen as it's kind of uncertain. Being veterans day, I was reminded of the story of the Stockdale paradox, and they are in Hilton, Hanoi.

[10 : 23] And in the book, Good to Great, it talks about how there's a group of soldiers, and the soldiers that often wouldn't make it were those that had a type of hope that was passing. Those that said, we will get out of here tomorrow, often didn't make it very long, because hope was such a, it was an emotion to them.

Well, then there's another group that was absolutely hopeless. They thought they would die in the camp there, and many of them did. But then there was a third option, which is available, which is where they face the brutal facts, but they still are comforted in believing that things will work out to good.

They retain the faith that the truth will prevail at the end, but at the same time they confront reality. And that's when hope is not a passing feeling, but it is a reality.

The hope that we have is a reality. It's not a passing feeling. It is something that is ever true. And it's a simple message, but it's a message that must be preached not only out there many times, but it often has to be preached in this church many times as well.

This passage should produce an overflowing of hope in our church, and that this hope is based on Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, and the ruler of nations. So verse number five and six there, it says we're united for his own glory.

[11 : 44] Paul makes us prayer, and also he gives us exhortation, that God is our source of hope and unity. 2 Corinthians 1.3 says, Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

So when you go searching through Scripture for what hope is talking about, it's the only type of hope that there is, and it is that hope that's found in God. But our unity here is founded not only on feeling, but on truth.

We saw last week in Ephesians 4, 4-6, there is one body and one spirit, even as you are called in the hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.

So Paul said, I don't expect that you'll be in a perfect agreement on every point, but he says that I would pray that each of you would have the Christ-like attitude and be studying the Scriptures there.

Because we said that the stronger brother looks upon the weaker brother, and we learned, no, they're not legalists because they're not adding to the gospel, and yes, their behavior is God-exalting because they do it unto God.

[12 : 53] But then also we look at the person there who is a stronger brother and say, why are you so concerned about this weaker brother? Why don't you leave him alone? But we know the stronger brother loves the gospel and does not want anybody to confuse the gospel and wants the weaker brother to know that this external behavior is not making you pleasing to God, but it was Jesus Christ on the cross.

And putting us together is a wonderful thing because we bring tension there to each other and we keep pointing each other back to the cross, which is what we need to be reminded of.

Because as I've been teaching my son, as he's been starting math, that things which agree on a third thing agree with each other. And people that agree with Jesus and agree with God's Word, we agree with each other on the things of life, of His Word and His truth.

So God's ultimate purpose is not just our unity, but it will be His glory. And we should fully welcome one another unto the glory of God. Wherefore receive you one another, it says in verse number 7.

And we saw the example here of how Jesus did more than just tolerate people that were different. He fully embraced them into His heart and into His life. He who was sinless accepted you and I when we were vile.

[14 : 13] The Pharisees said of Jesus, and they numbered among themselves, they said, this man receives sinners and eats with them. And every one of us benefit from that fact today, that Jesus received us as sinners.

You glorify God when you imitate this. He who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

So as we look at Jesus, and we see how He accepted people, as He didn't say, as we said that we are allowed to say, I don't agree with you in this point, but I accept you, and I love you.

As we had Sergi, and we had Bo carrying the chair dolly, which didn't have to be carried, but it could be carried. And as he was carrying it, Bo said, Sergi, I'm so glad you decided to pick this up and carry it with me.

And Sergi says, you know what? I don't think that I have to carry this, but I love you, and because of that, I'm willing to bear this infirmity with you. And that is Christ's likeness, and that accepting people that are different, and that are enemies, and that are different than you.

[15 : 23] In 1 Corinthians chapter number 10, the illustration was given. There's two brothers, the stronger and the weaker at a house, as the home of a pagan, an unbeliever. And meat was brought there, and the Christian had to make a decision.

Do I offend this other Christian, or do I offend my host? And many of us were in here shocked to find out that they decided that they could not offend his brother, and that they'd have to tell the host, if my brother does not feel that it's right for him to eat the meat, I will abstain as well, and I will bear that infirmity.

And you thought, you could overreact and say, well, so we're just pleased with one another, and forget about the world. Can I remind you in that story, these were two Christians, and the home of an unbeliever, for some purpose.

They went there, they sat down with the person, and they were having a conversation. So this is not to the exclusion of the world, but this is a decision in what's best for them. They're in their homes.

Those people were in their homes. And the word home, and meal, and hospitality, is something that is taught over and over again, in the New Testament. And when we look at it, if you don't understand that the word hospitality is work, then you have a very weak understanding of it, and that they were inviting people in, that were totally different than them.

[16 : 40] So we see here, it's for His glory. Then secondly, we hear in verses 7 through 12, that Jesus is a servant of the truth. Christ came to be a minister. He became to be a servant, to the Jew, and to the Gentile.

Mark 10, 45 says, even the Son of Man, came not to be ministered unto, but the minister, and to give his life, a ransom for many. As He's talking to the disciples there, and saying, you guys have to serve.

Stop fighting for honor and prestige. Go serve, for even the Son of Man, for even God, came to earth. And while He was here, He came to serve. He came down to earth for us, and He didn't wait for an invitation.

He didn't wait for a convenient season. He didn't just write about it. He didn't require us, to straighten up our act, before He came. But He came, and He was a minister, to all of us. And because of that, we have to remind one another, and we must teach our kids.

Yes, it's okay to grow up, and want to be a fireman like your dad, to grow up, and want to be a preacher like your grandpa, or grow up, and be a teacher like your aunt, or to go on, and do all these things. But most importantly of all, be a servant, like your God.

[17 : 47] Be a servant, like your Savior. Number one, in life, they are going to be servants, comma, and then they're going to find out, what else it is.

But they are going to serve, the God of heaven. And we see this example, He was a servant, to the truth. And Christ fulfills the promises, to the Jews.

As it says, that He came here, to show, that He was truth. Even the Father, there. And so, as we look, Jesus Christ was a minister, of the circumcision, for the Jew, for the truth of God, that confirmed the promises, made there.

All these promises, were made in the Old Testament. And Jesus arrives, on the scene, and He proved, that God keeps His word. He proved, that God was faithful, and He brings glory, to God.

And as He does that, coming for the Jewish people, He simultaneously, brings mercy to us, here, that are Gentiles. Verse 9, and the Gentiles, might glorify God, for His mercy, there.

[18 : 47] We find, in Ephesians 2, 11, that at the time, you were without Christ, being aliens, from the commonwealth, of Israel, and strangers, from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God, in the world.

But now, in Christ Jesus, He who sometimes, were far off, are now made nigh, by the blood, of Jesus. We were strangers, we were alien, we were not a people.

But Jesus came, and He showed mercy, and He brought us, closer, than He could ever imagine. In the garden, Satan thought, he had made a wonderful plan, where He would act, get us to act, like we were God.

And he thought, He would do something, that would separate us, and make us His servants, forever. But He did not know, that Jesus would come, as a servant, and in doing so, He would bring us together, in a way that was never, it was closer, than even unimaginable.

Would bring us, so close in the God, that we're now, hidden in Christ, who is in God. There is nothing, any closer. And what a wonderful thing, that God in His wisdom, took these evil devices, of Satan, and drew us, oh so close, and said, I'll take my people, back now.

[19 : 54] I'll take the Jews, and the Gentiles, and these are, my people. And because of this, we must be people, that will always point, to the cross. It says here, the root of Jesse, in the Romans chapter number one, it said of the seed of David, it calls that Jesus.

And often, in Matthew 22, they didn't understand it, when they said, He said, who am I? And they said, you are the seed of David. And he said, well explain, how I was around, before David, was around.

And it said, they had nothing, the same. But the God, that came for the Gentile, was this God, that was the root of Jesse, that had been prophesied, there. And we see here, a clear connection, between compassion, which is the desire, to show mercy, and missions.

Is it about, the glory of God? Is it about, mercy to the nations? And the answer is, yes. Our missionaries, that were sent out, around the world, back there, and you, as you went out, and as our team down, in Mapleton, go to start a church, is it about, the glory of God?

Most certainly, and always yes. Is it about, mercy upon people, that have never heard, the gospel? Most certainly, yes. Because our desire, to see him glorified, gives us a heart, to be the servants, that we're supposed to be, to see mercy, extended, the people, that are aliens, and strangers, who do not know, this message.

[21 : 14] Jesus looked out, and he was moved, with compassion, in Matthew chapter, number nine. So a servant spirit, and a heart of mercy, motivates a Christ, like missionary.

You know, we call our pastor, Mr. World Evangelism. He's got that label, for some time, because wherever he's at, and whatever he's talking to, he's going to quickly, bring the conversation, back to it, real fast.

Remember before, the church started, Jake Toby and I, who was in China, we were eating somewhere, together, and there was something, going on, some dispute, going on, and we had our opinions, as we always do, and we were going, on and on about it, and it was some small matter, and we were talking to him, and he wasn't paying attention, and we said, what do you think about it?

And he said, I don't. And he said, what do you think, that lady right there, our waitress, thinks about the gospel? He said, how many people, in Alpharetta, do you think, really know, about the gospel of Jesus?

How many people, around the world, will live and die, in these next ten years, as we see the church started, and nobody will take, the message, to him, to them. Because he was looking, way past these small disputes, that we wanted to make, and he was looking, at what really mattered, it was getting the cross, the people.

[22 : 30] It doesn't mean, that these smaller things, don't matter, but if these smaller things, if you do not have, the perspective of the cross, all these secondary issues, they become too big. Because all issues in life, are far secondary issues, to the cross.

But when you remove the cross, they all become real big, and they grow. Many of you in here, went to Christian colleges, or Christian universities, or, and even if you didn't, you might be familiar, with the term, dorm room theology.

See, what happens in your freshman year, is your vocabulary, grows really big, before your discernment, and other things. So you have a really big vocabulary, but you're not exactly, how to use it. So you sit in a room, and you throw big words, back at each other, and you talk about things, and you just, you live that life, for about a year.

I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the debate scene, I love talking about things, and I like the air conditioning room, where we talked about things. But there was a man, named Aaron Bashore, who there's a letter, on the back wall, and he wouldn't stand for it.

He was going to do something, for the ministry, missionary now in North Africa. And so I'd be in the living room, and he was my roommate, and he wouldn't ever have time for it. And I thought, Aaron, do you not think, these things are important, shouldn't we talk about them?

[23 : 38] But he was busy doing something. And I would go out with Aaron, and we would share the gospel with people, and he would talk about his plan, at the time, to reach Venezuela. I'd have a pizza box, with pizza in it, and it wouldn't be anything at all, for Aaron, just to grab my pizza box, and flip it upside down, and throw my pizza out of the box, and get a marker, and start drawing up his plans, for this country.

Craziest guy in the world, and perfect for North Africa. And as he was talking about it, I would get in the car with him, and we would do things, and my other friends, as they were talking in circles, see the problem with talking in circles, you don't ever go anywhere, you just stay in a circle.

But as my friend would talk about the cross, and as he would talk about missions, and as we would go out, and share the gospel, we talked about everything. We talked about all those other matters. But once it got in line, and we got to moving, then the other things began to make sense.

Because if there isn't a high view of the cross, then all the other things, don't fall into the rightful place. And I'm indebted to him for that. The fact that he said, I'm going to focus on what's most important, and seek first the kingdom of God.

And as he did that, we learned so many wonderful truths together. People that will point you to the cross. Paul points to the cross for hope. Paul is pointing to our source of hope, which is the cross here.

[24 : 57] Sergei and Anne, as our two brothers in the story here, you guys want to stand up? Sergei, you know I'm not going to go to service without using you to do something. You know it? All right, we got Sergei and Ed, and last week we had the stronger brother, and we have the weaker brother, and we found that the stronger brother knows that there's something this man needs to grow in, but he accepts him, and he loves him.

He doesn't criticize him, but he treats him as a brother, because he's not without faith, because he's a son of God. He's a fellow brother. So let me introduce to you another person in this story, which is the one I want to be, and I hope all of you will decide as well to be.

So there's these two brothers, and they're in a dispute, all right, be in a dispute, come on, like a boxing poster, all right, weighing in there, and they're in a dispute together, and you're talking, and they're talking, and then there's a third brother that comes in, and he reminds them of something else that is far more important, and he reminds them of the cross.

Say, guys, in this dispute that you're having with one another, and I'm sure that it's something worth spending time on, but maybe not during daylight hours, because right now, as the sun has come, and this time, let me remind you of the cross, and it takes so many issues, and it puts it where it belongs.

Be the person, thank you guys, be the person that will bring the cross into the story, and that brings the unity. And if you want to help keep unity in the church, step between two brothers, and point them to the cross.

[26 : 23] Tell the weak one that the cross is sufficient, that you don't have to do anything now to please God, you do it as an act of worship, but you're not earning your salvation, and to the stronger brother, would you remind them of how our Savior was when He bare, He took the cross, and He bore it, and how He came here and died.

And as you stronger brothers, you're strong for a purpose. Remember, if you have a truck, and you belong to a church, you have it for a purpose, alright? I need to borrow it. If you're a stronger brother, and if you know something, it's for a purpose, and it's to bear the infirmities of those that are weak.

And we find here that there's a division among those two people that is unlike anything we have today. You can look at early American history and the divisions that we had of races, it doesn't compare to that. You look all through history, and there's no two groups of people that had a greater hatred for each other, but things change.

There's no modern example. To the point that when Jesus is sitting by a person that's half Jewish, a Samaritan, it's odd that He would even help this lady get a drink of water there.

But something happened in history. Something happened between the Jew and the Gentile there. What happened in history that brought these two groups together? It was the cross. What happened in society?

[27 : 41] It was the cross. What happened in their hearts? It was the cross. The cross brought hope to the hopeless, and now everything is different. And why can we have a relationship as a church that is completely foreign to most places in the world?

It's because of the cross here. Why is there so much fighting in the world? Is a question that this Buddhist monk asked me in Var Narsim. He said, why are there fighting? Why is there wars?

And he says, I blame religion. I wasn't very quick on my toes, but if I had a chance to go back and answer him, I would tell him, without Christ, we cannot know who we are and why we exist.

Without Christ, we cannot receive forgiveness of sins. Without Christ, we can't enjoy a clear conscience. Without Christ, we cannot rest in the acceptance of God. Without Christ, we cannot be free from deception and bondage to fear and lies.

Without Christ, we can't have eternal life. But Christian missions and Christians bring Christ to all people and therefore it brings meaning and forgiveness and a clear conscience and acceptance with God and freedom and eternal life to all who believes.

[28 : 49] It brings hope to the hopeless. Where there is no hope, where there is no message of the cross, there is hopelessness. And where there is hopelessness, there is no peace and there will always be division there.

Probably wondering how long I was going to hold the cross. I was trying to set a personal record. All right? And so we have the cross and it brings there, it brings hope and where there is hope, there is peace.

Around the world, between Jew and Gentile and in this building between the stronger brother and the weaker brother, when we realize that Jesus died for both of us, it brings a hope and it brings a peace.

So what are some similar divisions that we have among us? Because the day our fight is not between the Jew and the Gentile, it is often between the weak and the stronger. James chapter number 2 verse 9 speaks about this.

It says, My brethren, have not faith of our Lord Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. Then it goes on to say, do you think of a man with goodly attire is of more use to God than a poor man?

[29 : 53] Are you able to judge the hearts of man? And it says, look at how God received us. Romans 5, 6 says, when we were weak, when we were ungodly, when we were sinners, when we were enemies of the cross, He received us with gladness.

So certainly Christians, we can receive one another with our differences of non-essential matters because Jesus Christ received us and He brought peace to us.

And then in these four verses here, the Apostle Paul shows them how it was always in the mind and heart of God to bring Jew and Gentile together and to worship Him.

God's name would be confessed among the Gentiles. And it's a quote there from Psalm. And David brought glory to God among Jews and Gentiles. You ever thought about when he kills the giant and he says he's going to do this for the glory of God?

He had two audiences that day. The children of Israel and he had the opposing group made up there. And when he killed the giant, two groups of people saw the power of God on that day.

[30 : 58] Let the Gentiles join believing Israel and joyfully honoring God. In verse number 10, rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And in verse number 11, it says we go on and do it by ourselves.

And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and all ye people. And again, Isaiah said, there shall be a root of Jesse and that He shall rise to reign over the Gentiles and Him shall the Gentiles trust.

And so we see it there. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We rejoice in the new heaven and the new earth in Romans chapter number 8. We rejoice in the hope that one day we will have a new body and there will be no pain and no death.

How many of you have experienced something this year where you hope and expect and look forward to that day where there's no more death and no more pain in our bodies. And we hope in things that have been provided for us by the cross.

You see, there's no other brand or type of hope in this world. All hope comes from the cross and it's more than enough. And so why does the Apostle Paul choose to talk about the cross in a conversation between the stronger and weaker brother?

[32 : 06] Because it's the only thing that brings true peace is bringing the hope that is brought there for us. There is a wonder creating truth that the Jew and the Gentiles, the stronger and the weaker brother are being reminded here.

Jesus came to die for both of us. He came for God's glory and to show mercy to us and he has not ran out of mercy to show and glory to those in this world.

So all of us in here today, can I tell you that if you're redeemed and born again, you got saved the exact same way that the person sitting beside you did. It's because of the cross of Jesus Christ.

And that's true of any opposing groups in all of the world that we are brought together because of the cross. And he came here to prove to the Jews that God was true and to bring glory to his Father.

And he also came to bring mercy to us Gentiles so that we could be part of him and have an everlasting eternity with him. And then verse number 13 says, Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and in peace believing.

[33 : 10] God is our source of joy and peace and hope. God gives us these blessings by means of faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. We have a sure hope of this glorious future and a joyful present.

There is no true peace or hope apart from God. And in this prayer, he prays that you will be completely satisfied as we look at the hope provided in the cross.

So as we close this teaching here between the stronger and the weaker brother and how we should relate to one another, we say that when we relate to one another, we should do so in rejoicing over the cross.

It ought to be what we talk about. It ought to be what we organize around. We should take our whole lives and wrap it around the fact that we're going to rejoice in the cross. What does that look like?

We sing songs about the cross and we give it our best? Yes. We preach about the cross? Yes. We see the cross when we study the scriptures? Yes. But we rejoice in the cross by taking it to the ends of the earth.

[34 : 13] And we rejoice in the cross by taking it to the end of the road. If you really want to know how excited you are about something, it is shown and how much you want to talk about it to other people who don't know about it.

And that's what we do together. As we bear the infirmities of one another, as we live together, as we rejoice together, we go do ministry together.

And that's why there's unity. And we go and we serve for God's glory. We go out here and we show His mercy down to people in Mableton and people in this area. And on December the 8th when we have people come in and December the 15th down there, we work together.

Because there's no unity if we're not working together. Because we're formed together for a purpose. We assemble together for His glory. And so my practical application last week and this week is a decision that can be made in your seat and here at the altar, but it has to be lived out throughout your week.

Find people in this church that you say are radically different than you, that you think are different than you. Get them in your home and serve them a meal. Go to their house and have a meal together and devise mischief for the cause of world evangelism.

[35 : 26] The evil man tosses and turns upon his bed thinking of evil things to do like your little sister if you have one. Always thinking of something to do to get into trouble and to make your life miserable.

But the children of God, we toss and turn at night thinking of ways to get the gospel because we are servants of truth. We go and take it to people and we should work together.

You know, there would be wonderful teams that would be established together inside of churches. There's people with strengths that would complement another strength if we would take down some of the walls of this person is not as cool as me, this person is not as whatever as me, this person is completely different.

If we took down all those man-made walls and we really worked as a team, we could take the gospel in places that is currently not being taken to. If you're in this room together, you have way more in common if you are in love Jesus than you have with any other group of people in this world who do not love Jesus.

I share the story often downtown Atlanta, like one in the morning and there was Edgar in the car, an eight-year-old kid, and somebody else. So we get pulled over by a police officer and we said, what would we do if we got pulled over by a police officer?

[36 : 43] Explain him, why is this motley crew together? Why is there a young man that has families from Mexico? Why is there this eight-year-old kid in the car? Why is there a truck filled with stuff being moved?

Why is this group together hanging out and being friends? And the answer is the gospel. Officer, I'd have to explain the reason that we seem very much different and that we're working on something that doesn't seem to make sense to you is that because of Jesus, we are now family.

And even though we look different to you, we're now family. And that is such a weak, weak illustration. But this world ought to look in here and say, you know, typically those two people wouldn't seem to be working together on something.

But there's some factor that I can understand that causes those people to work together in a wonderful way. And that wonderful factor is the cross. It's the cross of Jesus that brought hope, which means this is a place of peace, that we are now in the green zone and we're fighting to take over more territory for our Savior and our warrior as it was sung about.

So as I pray, our unity is so much more important than just peace in the church. We serve the God of hope and we have a mission to take the message to the world. Let us stay focused on the cross and not become contentious people.

[38 : 03] There's already a fight going on and we're already in it, so let's go to war together. Christ died for all of us and He died for all of them as well.

So find that brother that you would normally keep at an arm's length, stand shoulder to shoulder with Him and go be servants of truth for God's glory and for the sake of His mercy to those that have never heard.

Nothing like a good cause rallies people together to put aside things that don't matter and is there any group in the world that has a better cause than all the world than the glory of God and mercy to the nations.

Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your holy words here. I thank You to the reminder that was given to the church there to the Apostle Paul that is now given to this church as well.

Make us people that make much of the cross. Make us people that make much of Jesus and the hope that is found in You. People that keep the main thing the main thing and that we will serve together.

[39 : 05] An example, Father, of Your Son coming not when it's convenient or when the environments were good or not when He was invited but came and served us. I pray that we will follow in the same spirit of being a servant.

This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word.