

Hope Will Change You!
Romans 15:9-12

Paul has been admonishing us in this section to welcome all in the context of the church of Jesus Christ. It is easy, like the Corinthians to get into little cliques in the church of Christ and into little divisions. I am of Paul or Apollos or even of Christ as if Christ is divided or one option among many. So Paul commands us to welcome one another in verse 7. And meaning here is of a joyous family and warm-hearted greeting. It is to do whatever we can do to make one another sense that they do belong and that we are thankful that we are here, and seek to be a blessing. And we realize that driving motivation in all of this is the glory of God.

And look at how Paul explains and seeks to motivate obedience on this command in verses 8-9, **“For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles get glorify God for his mercy.”** God sent Jesus as a servant to the Jews in order to fulfill the promises of God to send a saviour that would not only be for Jews but also for Gentiles. And the dual motivation here is to follow the example of Christ and also realize that our acceptance and our welcoming is based on the mercy of God found in the substitutionary death of Christ. He came to serve. The people who were not his people will glorify Him because of his mercy. An incredible truth!

Now we realize that the glory of God is the reason for everything. We realize all of creation praises the glory of who God is and sings his fame, strength, and wisdom. We also realize our salvation sings of his glory, and the glory of our witness of Christ is that we do that together. But the glory of God is seen and felt in our lives because our salvation creates hope in our lives. It creates a certainty about what God is doing and where all of this that we experience in the here and now is ultimately leading us. That is why the Scriptures are given us. They are given us that we hope in a way of looking at life that is so different from those around us. Look back at Romans 15:4, **“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”** The scriptures are written to give us an indestructible hope. Look at the last line of the last quotation in this section in verse 10, **“in Him will the Gentiles hope.”** Look at verse 11, **“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.”**

Here is the amazing thing about Christianity - it is always forward looking. It looks back at the cross of Jesus and his glorious victory through resurrection, and it realizes that our hope is secured now and into the future. And that hope changes us. It causes us to reach out and get out of our comfort zone. It causes us to minister to people we would never minister to. Our hope changes us. But may I say that if you hope in something else that hope will change you also. As I was preparing this sermon, there were blockades and demonstrations throughout our country. And many Christians joined the angry and frustrated demonstrations or supported them in some way. Other Christians actually used that time to go to the demonstrators and hand out tracts and witness to them about their greatest need. They didn't yell at the police and

they didn't get angry but went in love. Why the difference in response among those claiming to be believers? The difference is where our hope truly is. We get so off track or lose where our true hope is and how glorious and grand that hope in Jesus Christ is. Hope in Christ will change you. It will cause you to be the most compassionate, forgiving and accepting person. The question is not: are you hoping? We all hope. But where is your hope? Who and what are you hoping in? Paul grounds our ability to welcome the strong and weak, Jews and Gentiles, bond or free in the church in the closest of relations because of the peace and hope that we have in Christ. And I want to instill something of that glorious hope in you this morning. I want this hope to change you and keep changing you. So I want to walk through these quotations and then make some observations at the end.

1. We need to understand these scriptures. Vv. 9b-12.

Paul says that all Scripture is given to us that it might cause us to endure and might encourage us so that it ultimately produces hope. And one of the ways it does is through the prophetic passages of Scripture. As we see prophecy come to pass, what God has spoken will come to pass, and we realize the reason why is because God did not just foretell but he fore-planned. Scripture is full of verses of not only prophecy but also verses that speak of God's power and ultimate control of all things that come to pass. Israel is told to stand firm against her enemies and trust in the Lord during the days of Isaiah. And the reason why they can have encouragement is because God is in control of everything. He was faithful to all of his promises in the past and he will in the present and future. He says in Isaiah 46:9-11, **“remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.”**

What does prophecy teach us? God is in control. All of his promises will come to pass. They encourage our hearts. If all I knew was what was going on my heart would despair. But God has given me his Word. There is a plan that is being enacted right now that is leading to my final destination, and his plans and ways are far superior than any of mine. I can trust in him. His plan and promises are being enacted 24/7.

So look at the first quote here taken from Psalm 18:49, **“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name.”** Let me read the last two verses of that Psalm, **“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.”** In this Psalm of David, David's enemies are encamped around him during the rebellion led by David's rebellious son Absalom. And David praises God for his great deliverance that will come. And he ends the Psalm saying that he will not only stand but praise God and sing to God - “among the nations.” The meaning here is surprising because it is not over the nations as a conquered foe but among has the meaning of with. “Great salvation he brings to his king.” It looks forward to the coming Davidic kingdom in which Jesus Christ will reign.

Again, here is the promise - people who are not your people and have no hope will be your people and have hope and will praise You.

Look at the next quote, **“And again it is said, ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.’”** It is fascinating how these quotations are scattered throughout the Old Testament that announce the hope for the nations of the world. This one is taken from Deuteronomy 32:43, and this is the song of Moses just before his death and the people of Israel cross over into the promised land. And it is an amazing quote because you would think that the song of Moses would look just at the immediate future and the need of the nation to trust in Christ in order to subdue the land. And the quotation is taken from the Septuagint reading. In our version it has **“Rejoice with him, O heavens,”** and it is a call for all of creation to join with the Jews in praising God for his goodness. And it is not only an invitation but also a recognition that others outside of Israel will praise him.

And look at the next quote because I think there is a real neat transition here, **“And again, ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.’”** This is taken from Psalm 117:1. And let me read the whole Psalm, **“Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!”** All two verses; it is the shortest Psalm in the Psalter. And the uniqueness about this quote over the other two is that it does not mention the Gentiles as coming alongside the Jews to worship God, but there is one people of God here. God’s steadfast and covenant love is to all who have trusted Christ. And all the distinctions that man makes in separating the people of God are done away with. They are gathered before him, and all are given the promise that nothing will separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. He sent Abraham’s seed to save the people of the world, and they are united under the banner of Jesus Christ.

And Paul’s argument comes to a crescendo with his final quote here, **“And again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.’”** This is such a great passage of Scripture taken from Isaiah 11:10 and if you feel that your hope is depleting, go home after service, find a quiet place if possible, and read and meditate upon this passage of Scripture. Notice there is a root of Jesse. Jesse is David’s father, and here he is talking about a descendant of David. It is talking about him ruling all nations and all peoples. In fact, let me read the opening four verses of that chapter, **“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth, and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”** Our hope is not in our current government. In fact, our hope is not in a democracy, but it is the coming monarchy. He will rule with utter righteousness and care for his people. There has never been a government like this. All human

governments create a yearning for something different. For us, it creates a yearning for the coming monarchy of the King of kings.

And then after that he describes a wondrous change that will come on creation. Just listen to the change that will come and realize if you are a believer, you will not only one day be under that righteous rule of Christ but you will experience this in Isaiah 11:6-9, **“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”** All that we know in this fallen and broken world will be changed. It will be altered, even the relationships in the animal world. Imagine, we live in a world where we are such a small minority who hope in Christ but that coming day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God. Everything will speak of the glory of God and the magnificence of the ruling King Jesus.

And right after all those verses we have this quote. Listen to how it is stated in Isaiah 11:10, **“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”** Here is the hope for the hopeless. Here is where it is found. Here is where Scripture takes your eyes off the here and now and puts them on the hope that gives us rest and life. Christ has come and because of that we have real and substantial hope. Let me ask you if this is what gets you up in the morning? Is this what motivates you to come out on Sunday morning to be with God’s people and sing and celebrate our God who has given us hope? Is this what causes you to truly welcome others because God has welcomed me into this hope that will soon be a reality?

2. Observation about hope.

Let me give three observation about hope and how it changes us as believers. And this certainly is not an exhaustive list. First of all, Biblical hope always reorients my heart to what is truly important. I believe about ninety percent of the things that we worry about, and cause anger and frustration in this life are truly not that big of a deal. They consume our time and energy. When you take the thousand year rule it brings into focus what is important and what is not important. A thousand years from now will the I be happy with the attitudes and actions and words and posts that I put out this week? Did they really mean anything for eternity? You see looking at everything through the lens of eternity and our biblical hope brings everything into focus of what is important and what is not. Obeying God when I do not understand why things are happening, and living in light of the gospel is. And let’s me ask you: what are you frustrated with? What are you hoping for? Where does your mind go and what is it occupied with most of all - change in the here and now or the glorious change that will come?

Someone has observed that one of the knocks on Christianity is that Christians are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. They need to get their heads out of the clouds and see what is going on around us. But I think those who are the most heavenly minded are the most earthly good, because they point away from temporal

change and temporal hope to the only hope that can give us peace and joy regardless of what is going on around us. And when we give that hope, here is the paradox, it does bring change. It changes others so that they glorify God through this great hope in Christ. It changes us and it changes others. Listen to how it is worded in 1 John 3:2-3, **“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”** How do I know that I am living in light of my hope? Because it purifies every aspect of my life, the way I talk, live and even my relationships. I am just so overwhelmed with what Christ has for me.

But another way that our biblical hope changes us is that it causes us to love God more and grow in recognizing who he is. Isn’t true? God has some fantastic promises that happen to be in His word, promises that if we did not read them in Scripture, in other words, from God himself, they would be just too glorious and grand to believe. Let me give you just one in 1 Corinthians 15:50-53, **“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”** Now think of it: there is going to be a whole generation of believers that will not taste death. And their bodies will change from corruptible and mortal bodies to incorruptible and immortal bodies, and that is all done in a twinkling of an eye. Now how could that ever be done? Well, it even gets better. Those who are dead in Christ will be resurrected and given the same kind of glorified human existence. Well, here comes the nay sayers - how can Paul who has been dead two thousand years and his dust as been scattered to the four corners of the earth ever be resurrected?

And I am going to tell you and not tell you. Here is my first answer to the nay sayer. I don’t know. Here is my second answer: God. I don’t think we slow down enough to read what Scripture actually teaches or we have been around it so long that it no longer impacts us. God is a God of all power, inexhaustible and nothing is too difficult for him. Think of it: if I gave you a bunch of dirt what could you make with it? God takes dirt, forms and fashions it, and breaths into its nostrils and it becomes a physical and spiritual being. With a heart pounding, brain waves, able to see and communicate, with muscles and animation, and gives it a spirit that exists forever. How great is the power of God? And here is my whole point: the more we take in the hope we have in Christ, the more you will grow in your knowledge and love and confidence in God.

And lastly, our hope also causes us to treat one another differently. Our great hope is unmerited and undeserved, and if God has loved me so, ought we not to love one another? Ought we not to welcome one another? Our hope should affect how we walk into church every Sunday morning or any other time. God has given us this hope for our endurance and encouragement. And it will come to pass. You want to be earthly good? Hope in God. It will change your life.