

Romans 15:8-13

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[0 : 00] I really appreciate the privilege of being able to talk about this wonderful topic today.! Why don't you turn with me to Romans chapter 15.! I'm going to be reading from verses 8-13.

Romans 15, 8-13. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.

As it is written, therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name. And again it is said, rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.

And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles. For the serious reader of the Bible, there should be no question that hope is a foundational part of the gospel message.

And as such, it's a foundational part of the Advent season. The genesis of hope is first observed in the Garden of Eden.

[1 : 25] There God promised our first parents that they could expect Him to remedy their fallen condition. Eve's seed would one day crush the serpent's head.

Later, as the Israelite nation and religion and culture developed, hope was reaffirmed and strengthened through the many prophetic oracles.

And that hope reached its peak in the period between the Testaments and was focused on the coming or Advent of the Messiah of Israel.

But the question for us this morning is not whether hope has a role in the Advent message, in the gospel.

The question for us this morning is, how much does hope affect our ongoing experience of the gospel?

[2 : 29] How much does Advent hope form our values? How much does it impact our daily decisions?

And how much does it shape our life and the life of the church? There appears in Scripture to be something about the experience of hope that God intended as a means to aid Christian growth and unity.

It was God who built hope into the Israelite faith. And it is God who continues to inspire hope in us now. During the Advent season, we remind ourselves about the coming of Christ.

It certainly is a time to reflect on the baby in the manger. But it's also a time to rekindle hope in His second Advent.

And it needs to be rekindled. In our advanced and comfortable and pleasure-filled world, it's easy to lose sight of our hope.

[4 : 01] So if our anticipation has waned, if our hope has dimmed, our growth and witness will be stunted.

But I don't believe God just wants us to regain a dimmed hope. I believe this morning He wants it to abound in us.

And that is the message of today's passage. Romans 15 is a chapter that gives a glimpse of God's intent for hope.

It shows us that God wants you and I to experience a life that abounds in hope. A life that abounds in Advent hope.

I think that's something quite different from the simple assumption that someday Jesus is coming back and heaven's going to be a great place.

[5 : 06] Instead, it is a vital, living, purifying, worship-inspiring hope that shapes all of our life while we eagerly anticipate and wait for Christ to return.

From verses 8 through 13, I'd like to point out three aspects that we can glean regarding Advent hope and what it means for our lives today.

First of all, Advent hope means that you can trust God to keep His promises. You can trust God to keep His promises.

Really, this is the basis, the foundation for everything else. Look at verse 8 again. 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.

So here we see one of the many reasons why Jesus came. It's highlighted here in this verse. His coming simply demonstrates God's truthfulness.

[6 : 30] God can be trusted in what He says. He spoke to the fathers of the Israelite nation promising them that He would bring salvation to the world through them.

The birth, the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus demonstrated, among many other things, demonstrated that God keeps His word.

God's promises can be trusted. Now, even though the word hope doesn't appear in this verse, it is the theme of the paragraph. And it's implied by the mention of the word promises.

hope is generally defined in the world as an expectation of something desired. And it's important to have those components, expectation and desire.

Because there is a difference. It's not just a desire, it's a desire that has an element of expectation to it. It's kind of interesting. Esther reminded me, she was my translator in Italy for three years as I was, would go to the markets or preach or whatever.

[7 : 51] She always happened to be with me. And she reminded me last night that this concept was real difficult because there isn't a distinction between wish and hope in Italian.

And it was difficult for people to understand that. But that's important here because it does have this sense of expectation with it.

Now, I understand that sometimes we use the word hope to express doubt. I hope so. You know, what are we saying? I don't know if that's going to happen.

No way. But that's not what it normally means. It does have a sense of expectation. Hope is a common and powerful theme in the modern world, even though it might not be the biblical definition. It's often used to emphasize the possibilities of human potential. I don't know how many movies you watch, but there's a scene in the theory of everything.

[9 : 02] You know, have you seen any of you familiar with that? The story of Stephen Hawking's life. And during a lecture in the movie, he began taking questions and a man rose and asked, knowing that Hawking didn't believe in God, did he have some kind of philosophy of life that helped him?

And after giving a short description of the apparent insignificance of human existence, he then said this, however bad life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at.

While there is life, there is hope. And at that point, the audience stood up and broke out in this amazing applause.

You know, wow, yes, that's so true. He was quoting Roman orator Marcus Cicero. And, you know, you could look at that and say, yeah, okay, there's, from whatever perspective you're looking at, there's truth to that, but that's not the biblical idea.

It is the hope of the world. It is the philosophy of the world which says there really is no meaning to the universe. But even though we're insignificant and even though we have real problems, we should hope for something.

[10 : 43] We should hope for something better and, as is the theme of many of modern science movies, together we can face any obstacle in hope of survival or for a better world.

And when you think about what they're really saying is that the hope we're supposed to have is just impossibility.

That something could be possible if we join together or if we work hard, if we do what good human beings have evolved to do.

The problem is there's no assurance at all. No assurance that the expectation is anything more than mere possibility. And because of that many philosophers today have argued that there really is no reasonable basis for hope.

And to live with hope is to live with an illusion. And yet people continue and will continue to hold on to this kind of hope.

[11 : 53] I think it's interesting what one self-proclaimed American agnostic one said, he said, I suppose it can be truthfully said that hope is the only universal liar who never loses his reputation for veracity.

Did you get that? I had to read it twice. I suppose it can be truthfully said that hope is the only universal liar who never loses his reputation for veracity.

At least he was being honest. And people will continue to hope this way because it's all they have. hope but it's quite different from the biblical portrayal of hope. And you can see a quote in your bulletin Daniel Caudry.

Now what is hope? But the expectation of those things which God has promised. And we find in the scripture that it defines hope in this way.

[13 : 14] Two parts. First an expectation of something desired which includes something promised and two a certain future reality.

A certain future reality. It's not just a possibility. It's something promised by a truthful God confirmed by the coming of Christ.

Advent hope assures us that God keeps his promises and you can trust him to keep all of them.

Now not only does Advent hope mean you can trust God to keep his promises but abundant Advent hope means you have inherited the same promises.

You have inherited the same promises. That's his point here in these verses.! God in order that so here's a second reason.

Why did he come? Why did he become a servant? He did so to have mercy on us.

[14 : 59] It was God's mercy that included you and me in the messianic hope. Paul says elsewhere in Ephesians that the Gentiles were once strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world.

Chapter 2 verse 12 But now they have been brought near by God's rich mercy chapter 2 verse 4 and through the blood of Christ 2 13 Now Paul could have just said Jesus came to save the world but I like the way he says it here he says it in a way that highlights our response we will glorify God for his mercy and then he quotes four Old Testament prophecies to demonstrate this in verse 9 we see that he indicates that something has changed in the world and God is now worshipped among all the nations and in verse 10 scripture calls on the nations to rejoice with the people of God the Jewish people and in verse 11 to worship the

Lord then in verse 12 we see the reason another quote from Isaiah and there we see that the messianic root of Jesse comes to establish his reign over all people and he himself becomes our hope I think it was always God's intent to include us it was always God's intent to include the nations in his plan even though for a time he isolated what looked like his affections on one particular people and gave them promises and worked with them and judged and had mercy on them and yet it was his promises to the patriarchs!

that included us to those of us who believe in Jesus we inherit the same promises and we see that in Ephesians 3 we are now joint heirs and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel verse 6 of chapter 3 so the triumph the promise of triumph the blessing of Abraham the messianic heritage!

the righteousness that we receive by faith the resurrection from the dead new glorified bodies and eternal life in the kingdom of God belong to you and me as well now what is this hope what what are we talking about when we we say we have hope we have hope in these promises and yet reading them it's perhaps difficult to understand exactly what is involved here and I think that's the point hope is a glimpse into the future a glimpse at what God has provided and yet God wants us to understand that glimpse and I believe that's what the apostle prays in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 18 when he says in his main amazing prayer in chapter 1 having the eyes of your heart enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you that's

[19 : 02] Paul's earnest and sincere prayer and I believe therefore God's desire for you this morning God wants your eyes to be opened God wants you to see more clearly than ever before your hope what it is he has planned what it is he has promised to you so that it might have an impact on you now understanding this requires enlightenment because we really can't comprehend it we have little to compare it to in this world but we do have the passages in scripture that give us a glimpse and there are four that are particularly linked to the word inheritance in Mark chapter 10 it's linked to the eternal kingdom of God in Hebrews chapter 1 it's linked to salvation in Luke chapter 10 it's linked to eternal life and 1

Peter 3 it's linked to the grace of life it's associated with Jesus return called the blessed hope in Titus chapter 2 we are told that we are heirs of God in Galatians 4 and fellow heirs with Christ in Romans chapter 8 whatever this hope is it's located in the new heavens and the new earth according to Isaiah 66 and 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 it's typified as a mansion in heaven in John 14 as a building not made with hands in 2 Corinthians 5 as an eternal city in Hebrews chapter 11 the quality of this inheritance is made clear to us in 1 Peter where he says that it is imperishable it's undefiled it's unfading and it's kept for you in heaven and

Paul I think exasperated with how to describe it in 2nd Corinthians 4 just says an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison how do you describe that I think it's difficult and we have to admit with Paul that even though we are told these things we really don't know what it will be like to live there to live in this kind of life one way to look at it is negatively there will be no impure thoughts or motives no fears or worries no loneliness no orphans no stillborn babies no maintenance no slums no need of police no prisons no planes no trains no cars no high tone sound of the sirens no bad news booze or bars if you're familiar with the

Isaacs no political parties no corrupt officials no misunderstandings no war no conflicts of any kind and as it says in revelation 21 no death no mourning no crying nor pain and suffering now that's enough to get me excited but think further about that what are the possibilities of living in a perfect world a perfect universe where everyone is righteous to be able to explore the wonders of God's creation without the limitations of the curse to enjoy the depths of God's goodness and power and apply his wisdom in our reign because that's what it says will be ours we will reign with

Christ or consider the possibilities of utilizing brand new bodies that are not just these old bodies restored to health but completely new bodies wonderfully designed for a grander and eternal life and you put your brain around that and try to imagine what it means that God himself God himself the sovereign all powerful good merciful gracious loving beautiful one is our inheritance!

[24 : 05] He is our inheritance! Well our understanding is certainly limited but we do know that it is way better than what we could ever have here we knew we do know that it belongs to us as well and we should and we should gratefully and eagerly anticipate it God wants you to know the value set your mind on eagerly anticipate what he has promised promised because he has promised it to you so Advent hope means one you can trust God to keep his promises two that you become an heir of the same amazing promises and finally Advent hope means you can live free from the attachments of this world while you eagerly wait for those promises to be fulfilled look at verse 13 the apostle concludes his thoughts by proclaiming a blessing on the church 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 Paul begins this verse this blessing by referring to the father in a unique way the God of hope that might be a little confusing to us what does that mean we can understand the God of love because he's full of love or or what other ones are there I'm ad living here I better not do that the God of hope what he appears to me to be saying is that God is the originator of hope not that he hopes necessarily I don't know I've never thought that through very well why would he but but but it does appear and the context seem to support that he's talking about

God as the originator the one who inspires hope in us in creating this world a world that would experience great suffering he mercifully allows us a glimpse of his ultimate plan to remedy the situation and that expectation helps carry us through doesn't it and it keeps us humble so that we can make or so that he can work in us and through us now the apostle invokes this God of hope to increase our own hope but instead of just saying may God give you greater hope he lets us see how God would do that it's a process it involves increased joy and peace connected to faith and that increase enables the

Holy Spirit to make hope abound in us so it's not just something I can say hey hope more and that happens God does a work in us hope really doesn't originate from us if your hope is has dimmed you won't be able on your own to restore it God needs to do that and there's a process that involves and it requires us to humble ourselves before him without a doubt though this is God's will for us he wants our faith to abound but what does that mean what is the difference between hoping and abounding in hope how do you measure that that difference I don't think he's saying the more hope the more you hope for the more you'll get I don't think that's what's implied here but

I believe it's a measure of hope that happens right now in this life it has to do with the degree of expectation that you have for what God has promised if hope is an expectation of what is sure to come then abounding hope is a greater and eager anticipation of it and that degree can be

measured in our attachment to what we have now Jesus describes something like this in terms of treasure in Matthew 6 he says for where your treasure is there your heart will also be and I think the more you're attached to this world and the things of this world the less will be your expectation of what is to come that's just natural your attachment is then is observed in what you value in your daily decision making and in your lifestyle typically when I teach on a passage I discuss the context of the passage early but you might notice I didn't here

[30 : 20] I waited till now because I believe it's significant to this last point in chapter 14 and the first part of 15 the apostle Paul is addressing a problem that was taking place in the church some people were despising others for their opinions about what they could or couldn't eat seems like a petty kind of thing but it was huge and disrupted the harmony and unity of the church and Paul cites the example of Jesus in 15 3 where he says Jesus did not please himself and he cited that to encourage stronger believers those he called strong believers to bear with the failings of the weak in order that we might live in harmony with one another verse 5 chapter 15 and glorify

God together with one voice in verse 6 so I am confident that Paul had unity in his mind also when he began talking about this hope and he appears to see hope as an important factor in how we live and relate to one another it has an effect on how you treat one another it's not just some wish for the future but it's it's a virtue that changes the way I live if I have it and if I have it in abundance then it will really change the way I live that makes sense when together we value the coming world more than this one we become free from trying to find our security and happiness here and are free to give and care for others we're free we're not attached our hands are free we can give because we have no loss when you compare what we have to what we will have we can give everything because we haven't lost anything if

God is our inheritance he'll take care of us here it is a bounding hope that inspires greater faith it is a bounding!

hope that vitalizes loving church community Colossians 1 3 through 5 it is abounding hope that frees disciples to lay aside personal dreams and worldly ambitions to live a life of sacrifice on the mission field and it is abounding hope that frees a person from self absorption it's no wonder that hope is a recognized remedy for all kinds of depression let me conclude by summarizing what we've seen these passages give us a glimpse of God's intent for advent hope God wants you to experience a life that abounds with it according to this passage it means you can trust God to keep his promises it means in Christ you have inherited all of his promises and it means that you can live a Christ glorifying others oriented life now while you eagerly wait for the fulfillment of those promises

I remember early on in my Christian life that hope was a very big and significant part of the Christians I came to be associated with during the Jesus movement in the California in the early 70s it had its kinks its quirks its weirdnesses I did a lot of my shopping at Maranatha Village if you needed tires you could go to Maranatha Tire there was even started a food company called Maranatha Foods and today you can go to Costco and get Maranatha almond butter but besides the quirks there was an anticipation there was continual discussion about

[35 : 41] Jesus' return and it bred a vibrancy and a desire to grow and a desire to live entirely for him and I think if there ever was a time for vibrant hope it is now most Christians will agree that hope is a virtue but few see really see the need to seek and possess an abounding hope and yet this is God's will for us this is what he wants and so I would simply say may this be your prayer as well during this Advent season and really for the rest of your life let's pray together again