

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Rejoicing with One Another in the Plan of God

Scripture: Romans 15:8-13

Code: 45-113

Let's open our Bibles tonight and look together to the fifteenth chapter of Romans, Romans chapter 15. And I want us to look at verses 7 through 13 which really are the closing of the main argument of this epistle. From chapter 15 verse 14 to the end of chapter 16 is like a postscript. Some additional things are added. The major argument really comes to its climax here in the passage before us.

Now let me just review briefly since we are going to come to some kind of a conclusion tonight, that you'll remember in chapter 1 of Romans, beginning at verse 1 and running through verse 17, Paul broke upon chapter 1 by giving a preview of what he was going to talk about. He introduces it, in fact, in verse 1 when he refers to the gospel of God...the gospel which was promised, the gospel which was concerning His Son Jesus Christ, the gospel, verse 5, which he had received; the gospel to which you were called, verse 6 and 7, that gospel; the gospel he says that he is debtor, verse 14, to preach; that he is ready, verse 15, to preach; the gospel of which he is not ashamed, verse 16, and the gospel in summary, verse 17, which is the just shall live by faith. So, in the opening 17 verses of chapter 1, he introduces his theme which is the gospel, the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

The unfolding of that gospel then begins in chapter 1 verse 18 and the first section, 1:18 to 3:20, discusses sin. The first word of the gospel is the bad news that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Then in chapter 3 verse 21 clear to the end of chapter 11, chapter 11 verse 36, all of that is about salvation from sin in all of its richness and all of its implications. Then beginning in chapter 12 verse 1 and running to chapter 15 verse 13, the practical out-working of that inward salvation. And we're in the section now then on practical Christian living in response to the saving work of Christ.

Now in this section on practical Christian living, we have talked about the Christian's focus on the Lord, chapter 12 verses 1 and 2, our relation to the Lord as Christians; chapter 12 verses 3 to 8, our relation to other believers in terms of using our spiritual gifts; chapter 12 verse 9 to 21, our relation to everybody and he sums up all kinds of relationships there; chapter 13 verses 1 through 7, our relation to the government; chapter 13:8 to 10, the primacy of love; and then chapter 13:11 to 14, the importance of time...the importance of time. He says the night is far spent, the day is at hand. So, we're to have then a cultivated proper relationship to God, to other believers, to everybody, to the government. It is to be permeated with love and it is to be done immediately because the time is far spent.

Then in chapter 14 we saw, beginning at verse 1 and running all the way to verse 13 of chapter 15, he discusses the relationship of strong and weak Christians. And with that he sums up his discussion of salvation and its implications.

Now in this lengthy section to which we look again, chapter 14:1 to 15:13, he gives four principles to govern the relationships between strong and weak Christians. Number one is to receive one another with understanding, chapter 14 verses 1 to 12, to receive one another with understanding. Number two, build up one another without offending, build up one another without offending, chapter 14 verse 13 through 23. Then the third principle for relations between strong and weak is to please one another with Christ as our example, that in chapter 15:1 through 7. And then overlapping verse 7, the final section, rejoice with one another in the plan of God, verses 7 through 13. Now that gives you just a brief overview of the book.

We come then to the final section of the final issue before a postscript closes off this great epistle. And in finally discussing the relation of strong and weak believers, he says we ought to rejoice with one another in the plan of God. In other words, it ought to be the concern of all believers not to struggle with each other, not to have division, not to have chaos, not to have hassles with each other, but to accept each other, to embrace each other because this is the plan of God.

And we should rejoice that it includes all of us. And again, this final section--verses 7 to 13--emphasizes the intended character of the church, that it is all of us being one in Jesus Christ, whether we're weak or strong, whether we're Jew or Gentile, we are all to be loved and accepted and embraced as one in Christ.

Let me read you verses 7 to 13 so you'll have it in your mind, then we'll look at it. "Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the nations and sing unto Thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice ye nations with His people, and again, Praise the Lord all ye nations and laud Him all ye peoples. And again Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse and he that shall rise to reign over the nations in Him shall the nations trust. Now the God of hope fill you will all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Now this final call for unity among weak and strong, this call for rejoicing together, you'll notice that emphasis here, verse 10 rejoice, verse 11 praise the Lord, this emphasis on praise and rejoicing because of the blending together of Jew and Gentile sums up Paul's argument regarding the weak and the strong. In order for us to look at it with understanding, I want us to see three features: the basic instruction, the biblical illustrations and what I'll call for the sake of alliteration, the benedictory

intercession.

Now before we look at them in specifics, just a general perspective. The call of this passage is a call for rejoicing that God in His saving plan has brought all of us together, Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, and made us one body in Christ.

Paul is no longer exhorting here in a negative way as he had earlier in this portion when he was calling us not to offend, or not cause some...someone to grieve, or not cause someone to stumble. He's no longer speaking of negatives but positively calling for us to rejoice in what God has done in making us one.

Now this is the positive aspect of unity. To have unity in the church we have to avoid certain things, make sure we don't cause someone to stumble or be grieved, or to be led into sin, or to be caused to be discouraged or distressed or to go against their conscience and therefore feel guilt and so forth and so on. But apart from just avoiding the negative, we are called to a positive attitude of rejoicing. And that's such an essential thing. Sometimes when there's conflict in the church, when there's argument and when there's bitterness between people, the key to overcoming that is not to not have that attitude, but to cultivate an attitude of joy, rejoicing and praise.

Now remember, the strong in view here, the strong are those who have the faith. Now I want you to listen to this cause it's the key to the whole passage. The strong are those who have the faith to accept their freedom from the Old Testament ceremonial law and ritual. The strong believers are those who have no concern about sabbath days, about feasts and festivals, and new moons and dietary laws, and all the external trappings of the old ceremony. They are free from that. They realize it, they believe it so they don't worry about it. They're not hung up on old religious taboos and institutions of a prior economy.

Now frankly, for the most part, you must understand this, these would be Gentiles. Did you get that? For the most part, these would be the pagans who never did have any orientation to the Old Testament law. It would be very easy for them not to have that problem. They were never subscribed in their own minds to the Old Testament ritual and law and ceremony and practice.

So for them that really was no problem at all. And so, when the text identifies the strong, it has primarily, though not exclusively, because there could be a strong Jew who got to the place where he understood his liberation, but primarily it has to do with the Gentile believers.

On the other hand, the weak are those who do not feel in their own minds the freedom from Old Testament ceremony. They're still observing the sabbath, they're still trying to keep the external laws and rituals. They're still concerned about dietary practices and new moons and feast days and all of that, and they do not believe they are free to ignore those things. So they are weak in the sense that

they are weak in faith to accept their freedom. The Scripture reveals that freedom. The Apostles have articulated that freedom. But they can't quite come to believing that. And they would be generally identified with the Jews, though there might also be some Gentiles who were still holding on to some things that bound their conscience from their former pagan religion.

But for the most part, and you see this in this passage, it is a Gentile equals strong issue, and a Jew equals weak issue in the church in Rome. And the conflict came because the liberated Gentiles were wanting to exercise all of their freedoms and the Jews were wanting to confine everybody to Old Testament ceremony.

Now the strong were right, they did have those freedoms. The weak were wrong but Paul calls for loving understanding until the weak can be brought to the place where they have the faith to believe they're free as the others do. No conflict should exist between the two, but rather Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, as I said, mostly identifying the Jew and Gentile conflict were to be mutually rejoicing over each other and patiently, lovingly bringing each other along in unity.

Now let's look at the basic instruction, first of all, the basic instruction. It's a very simple passage. I know when I read it, a few of you had blank looks on your face because it doesn't seem to go anywhere in particular, but you'll see. The basic instruction is in verse 7, "Wherefore, receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Now that's the basic instruction. Wherefore, or therefore, takes us from verse 6. Since God's desire is that one with one mind and one mouth we should glorify God, wherefore we have to receive one another. Since God wants us to be one, since that's the eternal design of the church, in order for us to be one mind, that's internally, one mouth, that's externally, united...we have to receive one another. Now that doesn't mean receiving people into church membership by writing their name on a list, that means receiving them into affection, receiving them into fellowship.

It's the same verb used in chapter 14 verse 1 where almost the same point is made, "Him that is weak in faith, receive...receive." Open your arms, embrace, it's calling to communion, to mutual love. The strong receive the weak, the weak receive the strong, the Jew receives the Gentile, the Gentile receives the Jew. And as we shall see, verse 7 is vital because Jesus is the example of what it means to receive. And we'll see that in a moment.

But first, let's note that the word "to receive" is an intense word. It is not just the simple word "to receive," but it is the word "to receive" with a strong preposition added to it which intensifies the word. It is a word which means to receive by pulling something very close to yourself. Let me illustrate it to you. Get your Bible now handy, and let's look at Mark for a moment, chapter 8 verse 32, I want to show you several Scriptures very fast. And in verse 32 of Mark 8, it says, "And He spoke that saying openly," that is the Lord Jesus Christ spoke the saying about being rejected and killed and after three days rising from the dead, noted in verse 31, Jesus spoke that, "And Peter--and

here comes the word--and Peter received,"

or literally here, "took Him and began to rebuke Him." Now this is classic Peter who pulls Jesus aside and starts to rebuke Him.

But the point you want to note is that the use of the word, and this is far and away its primary use, in fact, in a sense its exclusive use, the only other three other times, and I'll show you, it is used of eating. And I think maybe I'll take the moment I need to show you that. But its primary use and almost exclusive use is of pulling someone in intimately. In this case, it's Peter getting Jesus away from everybody else and pulling Him up to himself and then with unbelievable gall, rebuking Him. But the point is it's to pull Him aside.

In Acts 17 I want you to see the term again, because again this will enrich your understanding of it. In Acts 17 the Jews who did not believe, of course Paul is preaching in Thessalonica here, and the Jews who did not believe, moved with envy, and here comes the word again, took to themselves certain vile fellows of the worst kind. And what they did was get them to start a riot.

And again the idea is that they pulled them apart from the crowd, pulled them to themselves in intimacy and said to them the things they wanted to say. It's pulling someone very close for some kind of private conversation.

Chapter 18 of the book of Acts, again we see the same word, verse 26. And he began, this is Apollos, a great preacher of the Old Testament, eloquent in the Scriptures, mighty in the Scriptures it says in verse 24. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, did Apollos, whom when Aquila and Priscilla heard, they took him unto them. And here's the same kind of an idea with this word again. They pulled Apollos away from the crowd, away from the synagogue, away from the ministry into private counsel and explained to him the way of God more perfectly. And again I want you to note that this word means to pull someone very close for some very private counsel.

Then, as I mentioned earlier, in the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts, and you don't need to turn to that, three times it is used of taking food in. Again, a very intimate kind of receiving. The term used for literally taking in food. Then in chapter 28 of Acts and verse 2, you have another use of the word, and Paul has escaped from the shipwreck and they've landed on Malta, it's called Melita, the island of Malta. They land on this island and the barbarous people, pagan people showed us no little kindness for they kindled a fire and received us, everyone because of the present rain and because of the cold.

In other words, they took them in with hospitality, brought them into a place of warmth and there was a fire prepared for them and so forth. And so it is a receiving of some intimacy.

In the little letter, the beautiful little letter that we come to know as Philemon, I want you to notice the word is used twice.

In verse 12, receive him. Paul calls to Philemon and says receive Onesimus the servant when he comes back. And then again in verse 17, if you count me as a partner, receive him as myself.

Now those are the uses of this wonderful word. It is a rich and wonderful term that means to take to your heart, to give access to you in a very personal way. And that is precisely what Romans 15 intends to say. Back to verse 7, "Wherefore, take intimately to yourself one another, take intimately to yourself one another." That's a wonderful, wonderful command. The implications of it are especially wonderful if you understand this particular text. Let me read it to you and see if it doesn't grip your heart. Matthew 10:40, "He that receives you...what's the rest of it?...receives Me. And he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me." Isn't that wonderful? When you receive another believer, you receive Christ. And in receiving Christ, you receive the one who sent Christ, even God the Father.

So, receiving your brother in Christ, though he differs from you in life style, though he may not have the same liberty that you enjoy, though he may differ in some of the things he believes, and this is not an issue of doctrine, this is in spite of what they might believe, receive them intimately in love.

This was not easy in the Roman assembly. It wasn't easy for the Gentiles who were liberated, who didn't have any of the hold over from the Old Testament law, it wasn't easy for them to accept a Gentile...or rather a Jew. It wasn't easy for a Gentile who had no taboos held over from the old covenant to just open his arms for this legalistic duty-bound Jew who was still hung up on all kinds of old traditions that he tended to look down on him and say, "Why can't you accept your freedom? And why can't you grow up?"

On the other hand, the weak Jew who was bound by the law had a very difficult time, the ceremonial law, had a very difficult time accepting a liberated Gentile. He had enough trouble accepting a Gentile period. It was a very difficult thing for him to conceive of God allowing a new inclusive brotherhood of Gentiles on equal terms with Christ with Jews, very difficult.

Particularly when these Gentiles had no regard for Old Testament ceremony, no regard for the sabbath, no regard for the dietary laws, no regard for any of those traditions. They appeared to be guilty of abusive license. To the Gentiles, the Jews appeared to be guilty of a lack of trust and a lack of faith, and so the potential for conflict was very great. But they both needed to understand the principle of verse 7, and that is to take into personal intimacy each other, accepting them the way they are.

You see, what we've been saying all along is one of the most devastating things that happens in the church is when people set up criteria by which they will receive each other. And if you don't meet that criteria, you're shut out. That's devastating in the church. We need to see what the meaning of this whole passage is and receive each other.

Now let's talk a little more about that as we look at the next part of verse 7. "Receive one another as Christ also received us." Now that's our pattern. You want to know what it means to receive one another? Here we're going to find out. He is our pattern. When He said in Matthew 11, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me," He was telling us that we ought to not only learn of His gospel, but learn of His character and learn of His approach to things. He is our model. In Ephesians 5 it gets very specific, actually at the end of chapter 4. It says, verse 32, "Be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you, be ye therefore followers of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ also loved us and has given Himself for us and offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor."

Be tender hearted, be kind, be forgiving, be loving, be sacrificial to each other, just like Christ has been to us. He received you, didn't He? Were you worthy of it? Did He receive you because you were so wonderful? Did He look all around the world and say, "John MacArthur, you're irresistible? I just want to take you in because you're so attractive." Not at all. He received us. Luke 15:2 says, "He was condemned as one who receives sinners." I love that. They said He receiveth sinners.

Now if Christ has received us unlovely, sinful when we hated Him, when we hated God, when we were deep in our sin, if He did not refuse to love us, if He did not refuse to embrace us, if He did not refuse to forgive us, to call us His friends, to call us His children, to call us His brothers, to enter into an eternal fellowship with us, to live within us, to empower us, to call us to assist Him in the development of His Kingdom, if He did not refuse to do that, but rather received us, shall we not receive each other?

Now listen carefully. When a Christian refuses to receive into his heart another Christian, he is saying--in effect--I know Christ receives the worst of sinners, but I require more, I have a higher standard. Are you more holy than He is? Can He be friends with people not worthy of your friendship? Can He receive people that are just not good enough for you and me?

Blasphemous thought, is it not? So, put it in perspective, folks. For those in the body of Christ to refuse to open their hearts in love to each other is to say I know that Christ does that, but He doesn't understand my standards. Blasphemous thought, blasphemous thought. He's our pattern.

Now he's not telling us, Paul is not telling us that there is some real equality in the qualitative essence of these two compared things, that is us and Christ, for no human sacrifice to receive another person can even come close to the sacrifice of Christ who received sinners. But the illustration still stands.

As He received those who were unworthy, so we must receive each other. He receives us, we receive others. Put it in perspective. Your failure to open your heart to some other believer because you resent something about them is an affront to the Christ who received you. And if we place restraints on our love to each other, we are violating the principle taught in the passage and we are violating the example of redemptive action in the person of Christ Himself.

Furthermore, the reason is given is why He did it. Verse 7, He received us...for what reason?...what's the reason?...to the glory of God...to the glory of God. And that's the same reason for which we are to receive each other. We do it because God is glorified when we do it, because it reflects the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, because it is His expressed will, it brings Him praise. My prayer for the church is that we might know this kind of attitude. I hear all the time, and so do you, all kinds of little squabbles among Christians. People set off against other people, people condemning other people, not only within a local church but among churches and among those who name the name of Christ who want to fight and pick and poke at each other and grieve and wound each other, rather than with open arms to receive each other, understanding that there will be differences in our understanding of Christian freedom, but that is not a cause for division.

I am reminded of Matthew 10:24 when I think about the fact that Christ set the example. Do you remember what it said? The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. You remember that? The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord, Matthew 10:24. And if Christ received sinners, then we ought to receive each other.

Now specifically, let's ask a question: how did Christ receive sinners? Or better, how does He? Let me give you four answers to that. First of all, and you might want to jot these down, I think you'll find them helpful. First of all, Christ receives men gladly. That's basic. He receives men gladly. It is not with reluctance, but gladly.

Look for a moment at Luke chapter 15, and let's just see a brief illustration of this in Luke 15. I mentioned verse 2, but let's flow on beyond that a bit. "Then drew near unto Him all the tax collectors and sinners to hear Him." Wonderful congregation to preach to, any preachers dream. "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured and said, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." What a commendation, huh? They thought it was a condemnation, but it was a commendation. "And He spoke this parable unto them saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep if he lose one of them doesn't leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." And you can underline that word "rejoicing", "And when he cometh home he called together his friends and neighbors saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents more than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance," self righteous people.

No, the point is, when a sinner comes and the Savior receives a sinner, he is received gladly...gladly. Not reluctantly. We're not storming the gates of heaven pleading to be received. We're not begging God to receive us. He does it eagerly. He cries out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto you, how oft I would have gathered...gathered you as a hen gathereth her brood, but you would not." How many times I wanted to take you and receive you but you refused. And we hear Him say, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And He cries out for those who will come. He says, "If any man thirst, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And He says, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." He cries out, "You will not come to Me that you might have life." And even on the cross He says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." No, Jesus receives people gladly. He receives the sinner gladly. It isn't with reluctance, it isn't condescension, it is that for which He came and with outstretched arms He embraces the sinner who comes to Him. He says in John 6, "Him that cometh unto Me I will under no circumstances cast out."

So, our fellowship should be the same. When we receive one another it should be with gladness, not with condescension, not with reluctance. I remember when I was in the south in Mendenhall, Mississippi, a pastor of a church there, white fellow, opened his heart to teach the Bible to a black man. And I remember driving by the church and seeing the sign, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," this was the sign in front of the church. A black man came who was heavy laden and who was laboring and who needed help. And this pastor began to disciple this black man and the church told him to stop because he was creating a racial problem.

And the pastor continued to do it and so he couldn't buy gas at the gas station, groceries in the grocery store, cancelled his insurance policy, they harassed his children. This is at the church that says, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And finally he had a total nervous breakdown, they put him in a hospital in Jackson, Mississippi. And the second day he dove out of the third floor and killed himself. I was...extreme trauma, I don't know all of the dynamics that made him take his life, I can't know what built up all of that and I do not commend what he did, obviously, it's a tragedy of tragedies, but it's illustrative of the fact that we can have a theology and can even hold it out as if it's the identifying mark of our fellowship, and in our hearts be living something in the exact opposite realm. We are to receive one another, not reluctantly, not condescendingly, but with gladness, with gladness.

Secondly, Christ not only receives sinners with gladness but he receives sinners in spite of their sin. He receives them in spite of their sin. They don't have to clean up their act first. God doesn't say, "Look, if you can get your life cleaned up I'll take you." No, that's heresy. Not for a minute do we believe that there are some pre-salvation works which man can do for himself to make him receptive....uh, receivable, if you will, to make him acceptable to Christ. He receives sinners in spite

of their sin. That's the beauty of grace, that's the wonder of Christ's attitude. Go back to Matthew and back to the house, many tax collectors, many sinners sitting down and Jesus is there. The Pharisees say, "Why is your master eating with tax collectors and sinners? And Jesus says, The ones that are well don't need a physician, but they that are sick--that's sarcasm-- these men know they're sick, go and learn what that means, I'll have mercy and not sacrifice, I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." He came for those who were sinners.

He receives them in spite of their sin, not because they clean their act up.

In Mark 2 we find Him again in the parallel passage with the same thing, it's repeated there. We find the same kind of thing in Luke 5; Luke 6, Luke 7, Luke 18, as the publican and the sinner, the publican and the Pharisee are in the temple praying and the Pharisee thinks everything is right and he says, "I thank God that I'm not as other man...I fast and I tithe and I do everything I'm supposed to do. The sinner's pounding on his breast, won't even look up to God, and he says, God, be merciful to me a sinner." Now who has God received in Luke 18? Does He receive the Pharisee who thought his life was right, who prayed all the time and fasted all the time and gave his tithe all the time, or does He receive the sinner pounding on his breast?

Well, Jesus said the sinner went home justified rather than the other. He receives sinners in spite of their sin, though they're sin-stained and depraved and despairing of righteousness and helpless and ignorant and guilty and vile, when they come they are received. And that's what Paul said in Romans 5:8, that while we were yet sinners, God commended His love toward us.

That's what Paul meant in his own testimony, 1 Timothy 1, when he said Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost. So He drew Himself to sinners to change their sins, to change their imperfections, to make them--that is to make us-- like Him. So, Christ receives sinners in spite of their sin and He receives them gladly.

May I add another sort of side point? Thirdly, He receives sinners impartially. He receives sinners impartially.

The Bible tells us in Acts 10:35, in Romans 2:11 that God is no respecter of...what?...of persons. It does not matter to God whether you're Jew, Gentile, male, female, bond or free, doesn't matter to God what your background is, doesn't matter to God anything, He receives people impartially. And He calls for that same thing in James chapter 2 verse 1, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." Don't let your Christianity have respect of persons. "If there comes a man into your assembly with a gold ring and fine apparel and a man comes in in a filthy garment, a poor man, and you have respect to the one that wears the fine clothing and say, Sit here in a good place. And say to the poor, Out of the way, fellow, get under the footstool, are you not then partial in yourselves and are become judges with evil thoughts?"

Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? But you have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats, do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which you are called? If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, you do well. But if you have respect of persons, you commit sin and are convicted of the sin...convicted of the law as transgressors."

It is a serious transgression to have respect of persons.

No place for that in the church. Christ sets the example in John 6:37, again, "Him that comes unto Me, I will not cast out." So, He receives sinners gladly, He receives them in spite of their sin, He receives them impartially, and finally, and now we come to our text again, finally, He receives them for the highest reason. And that reason is the glory of God. That's the reason He receives sinners, so that it will be to the glory of God. You see, God is glorified when a sinner is saved, is that right? Of course it is. God is glorified when a sinner is saved.

Ephesians 1:4, "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will-- listen to this--to the praise of the glory of His grace." The reason He saved you was for His own glory, that He might demonstrate His own glory, that He might manifest His own glory, that He might show the principalities and powers, that He might show the angelic host, that He might demonstrate to all beings created His glory. In Ephesians 3:10, His intent is to show the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God, and He does that by showing the salvation of the church.

So, everything that is done, doesn't it?, ultimately resolves itself in God's glory. His sovereign electing grace, His predestination, His will, His grace, His shed blood, His saving work is all for His glory. So, Christ received sinners gladly in spite of their sin, in spite of their imperfections.

He receives them impartially and receives them for the highest reason. Now that's our model. Our model then for receiving one another is to do it gladly, is to do it in spite of their imperfections, is to do it without impartiality and to do it so that God can be glorified in the unity of His church. Now you understand verse 7, the basic instruction.

Let's look at the biblical illustrations. And these just briefly. He illustrates this point of Jew and Gentile being one in Christ by choosing four Old Testament prophecies that verify Gentile salvation. Did you get that? Four Old Testament prophecies that verify Gentile salvation. They show that the coming Messiah would receive the nations of the world into salvation as partakers of the covenant of

grace. And these verses should soften Jewish prejudice in the church at Rome and anywhere else, they should call the Jews to rejoice over Gentile salvation as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy rather than allow Gentile salvation to create division and dissension.

Now I can't really get into this passage without first saying that this is primarily a theme throughout the whole Roman epistle. The whole Roman epistle is somewhat preoccupied with the Jew and the Gentile issue. Let's run through it fast. Go back to chapter 1, let me just show this to you in about one minute. Romans chapter 1, we notice that the gospel comes in Romans chapter 1, verse 5, for obedience to the faith among all nations. So Paul lets us know in the very beginning where this gospel is going to go, it's going to go to all nations. Verse 14, "I am debtor both to the Gentiles and to the barbarians, to the wise and the unwise," and back in verse 13 he wants to have some fruit among other Gentiles. Verse 16, "It is the power of God, the gospel is, unto salvation to everyone that believes, the Jew first, but also to the Gentile." So, the whole epistle is really filled, fraught with this theme of Gentile conversion.

In chapter 2 he talks about in verse 14 the Gentiles who have not the written law, but by nature do the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves and they show the work of the law written in their hearts. So God has even given the Gentiles the law in the heart. God through Paul condemns the Jews in verse 24 because their conduct caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles whom God sought the Jews to evangelize, instead of reaching the Gentiles with the truth, they were reaching the Gentiles with a blasphemous counterfeit of the truth and God was dishonored.

Chapter 3, we also find in verse 19 that every mouth in the world is stopped and all the whole world is guilty before God, both Jew and Gentile. Then when you move ahead a little bit in chapter 3 to verse 29, we find He's the God of the Jews, He's the God of the Gentiles also. So all are sinners but all have the same God to whom they can turn for salvation. You find that when you get to chapter 5 verse 12, death passed on all men, Jew and Gentile, all have sinned, in verse 12. Verse 15, again, so as the offense, that is that all have sinned, so is the free gift. By the offense many are dead, but the grace of God, by Jesus Christ many can receive the gospel. It abounds unto many.

Verse 17, by one man's offense death reigned, and then again righteousness reigns for the many who believe.

And he follows that same thinking through the end of the chapter. And again, bringing Jew and Gentile together in a gospel intended for the whole world. Chapter 9, of course, is the same thing exactly, verse 24, "Even us whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." And then he goes on to talk about that in verse 25, "I will call them My people who were not My people, and her beloved who was not beloved," again a reference to Gentiles who enter into the saving covenant. Verse 30, the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness have attained to

righteousness. So, Gentile conversion is a major theme all through this. You find it in verse 12 of chapter 10, there's no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call on Him, whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

You find it in chapter 11 and verse 11 again through their fall, the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles. You find it even down in verse 25, the fullness of the Gentiles is coming as well as the salvation of Israel. Now that's just a quick run to let you know that this is not something new.

Romans began with the whole world in sin. It ends with the whole world in terms of the saved world, Jew and Gentile brought together in unity in Christ. We see both Jew and Gentile in sin then we see both Jew and Gentile in Christ. And that's the flow of this glorious epistle.

So, Romans then is a declaration of the sovereign act of God to save both Jew and Gentile. The Jew is a transgressor of written law. The Gentile is a transgressor of the law in his heart conscience. And so, in verses 8 to 12, follow...we're going to look at it just briefly because it's just a series of Old Testament quotes...we find here the proof of Gentile equality in salvation. Verse 8, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises of God made unto the fathers and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." Do you see it?

Jesus was a servant of the circumcision, that is He came as a Jew, a servant sent to the Jews could be its meaning, or a servant circumcised himself, for He was circumcised as a child and identified in a true way with the sign of the covenant which was physical circumcision. He comes as a Jew, circumcised as a Jew, He comes to Jews, He even said "I am come--initially--to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He came then as a servant of the circumcision. I prefer to translate that a servant sent to the Jews. But it's obvious He was a Jew so He is a circumcised Jew sent to the Jews for the purpose of the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers. Do you see that? He came then to fulfill prophecy, that's what it's saying. If Jesus hadn't come to fulfill the promises made to the fathers, then God would not be true, God would be a liar.

Who were the fathers? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God in giving the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham in reiterating it to Isaac, reiterating it to Jacob, you can follow it starting in Genesis 12 all the way on through the life of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God reiterates the covenant of salvation, the covenant of salvation, the covenant of salvation. He promises there will come a great deliverer, there will come one who will enact that covenant. And Christ came as the perfect minister of the Jews to fulfill those promises made to the fathers, made by God. So the truth of God is at stake. The truth of God is at stake. He came then, now note it, for the truth of God. Why did He come to the Jews? To verify God's Word. Now keep that in mind, that's an emphasis you want to maintain. He came to verify God's Word to them. And when Jesus came in Matthew chapter 5, He said He came to fulfill the law, didn't He? He came to fulfill the law. "I have not come," Matthew 5:17, "to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill the law. And not one jot or tittle will be removed till it's all fulfilled."

He fulfilled the law by coming as the law said, to save. He fulfilled the law by upholding its sacredness and reestablishing its truth. He came and fulfilled the law by keeping it perfectly. He fulfilled the law every way possible but what Paul is saying here is when He came He verified the promise of God thus He came for the sake of the truth of God. He came to verify that God speaks the truth. What a wonderful reason to come. Now that's to the glory of God, see. That's to the glory of God.

You say, "I thought He came just to save me." No, He came to prove God true...to prove God true, to confirm the covenant, to ratify the covenant that God had originally given which He ratified with His own blood. When...when Mary knew about the child, she cries out in her Magnificat in Luke 1 and says this, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and then she ends this by saying, "As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." In other words, God is doing what He told Abraham He would do. That's a glorious thing...glorious thing.

Zechariah filled with the Holy Spirit, hearing of the birth of His own child, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, He has raised up a horn of salvation for us and the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets." You see, Christ comes for the sake of the truth of God so that God cannot be thought a liar. So when Israel praises God, they praise God because Christ came and verified His truth.

But look at the Gentiles in verse 9. "And the Gentiles, they might glorify God not for His truth but for His...what?...His mercy." Certainly the Jews are thankful for mercy and certainly the Gentiles are thankful for truth. But the emphasis here is that Christ came to show to the Jews the truth of God and He came to show to the Gentiles the mercy of God.

That was the emphasis. He was a minister of the circumcision to show them the truth of God and to show the Gentiles the mercy of God. And so, a saved Jew will primarily praise God for His truth, He made a promise and He kept it. And the saved Gentile primarily praises God for His mercy, for He gives mercy to a non-deserving, a no-people, a people outside the covenant, outside the promise, outside the fathers, outside the line of Messiah.

And so, you take the saved Jew praising God for His truth, the saved Gentile praising God for His mercy and you blend them together with one mind and one voice and they both glorify God.

The emphasis may differ. Covenant promise is important to Israel. Mercy to a non-covenant people is important to the Gentiles. But both glorify God, both rejoice that they are included in the plan of God. Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto me all the ends of the earth." Isaiah 52:10, "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

And so, both rejoice. And to show the promise of Gentile salvation and further encourage to accept the Gentile, Paul gives these four Old Testament quotes. And I'm just going to give them to you. Verse 10...I'm sorry, verse 9, "As it is written," and here he quotes Psalm 18:49, it's also quoted--by the way--in 2 Samuel 22:50, the same verse, here's Psalm 18:49, or 2 Samuel 22:50, "For this cause I will confess to Thee among the nations and sing unto Thy name." The Psalmist says, I will declare God's name among the nations. The word "confess" means to acknowledge God. He says in the middle of the nations, I will acknowledge God, I will sing unto Thy name. So, David--who is in view here, the Psalmist--is singing the praise of God among the nations, an allusion to Gentile salvation.

Then in verse 10 he quotes Deuteronomy 32:43. And again he saith, and by the way, "He saith" is a wonderful reference to God and even though it's a quote from the writing of Moses, God said it and this is another one of those subtle indications or not so subtle indications of inspiration, divine inspiration. And again the Lord, or God says, "Rejoice ye nations...watch this...with His people." So all the way back in the writing of Moses, isn't that wonderful?, Deuteronomy 32, the last part of Moses' writing, the first set of books in the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, the Gentiles rejoice along with the Jews. They join in offering praise. The first Scripture, the Psalmist in the midst of the Gentiles offering praise, now the Gentiles join the Jews in offering praise. The third Scripture, verse 11, and again praise the Lord all ye nations and laud Him all ye peoples, and here the nations are doing it alone. First the Psalmist did it, then the nations did it with the Jews and now they're seen doing it alone.

That's quoted out of Psalm 1:17 verse 1...Psalm 1:17 verse 1.

Praise the Lord all ye nations and laud Him all ye peoples.

Then in verse 12, the final Scripture, and again Isaiah said, "There shall be a root of Jesse," that is something that comes out of the stock of Jesse, out of the Davidic line, "and he that shall rise to reign over the nations, in Him shall the nations trust." That is taken right out of Isaiah 11 verses 1 and 10. He quotes Isaiah the prophet who said there would be a root of Jesse, that is the Davidic line, Jesse being the father of David, the son of Obed, the father of David the king from whose loins, of course, came the Messiah. So there would come a root of Jesse, the Davidic line, and one would rise, that is rise out of humiliation, rise to reign over the nations. Messiah will rule the world. He'll reign over the nations. But not just over the nations with a rod of iron, "For in Him shall the nations hope," ..is the proper text. They'll hope in Him. Again, a promise of Gentile salvation. Salvation is hope. Salvation is hope. This is a saving hope so the nations will hope in the Messiah.

You see the plan of God? The Jews rejoicing over God, keeping truth in Christ. The Gentiles rejoice over God showing mercy in Christ. The Old Testament all along said that the Gentiles would be saved, that the Gentiles would praise and rejoice with God's people Israel, that the Gentiles would

hope in the Messiah to come. And we ought to embrace them and each the other. All are loved by God. The Gentiles, you see, can have no grudge against the Jews because through the Jews the salvation came to them. The Jews can have no grudge against the Gentiles because their very purpose for existence was to reach the Gentiles. So Jew and Gentile are consummately blended together.

And Paul closes with a benedictory intercession. And I always feel like I'm treading on sacred ground when I try to explain a benediction. All you need to do is read it. "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 Spirit."

That really is the summation of the whole epistle. It's a benediction to wrap up everything. And it's a prayer, the God of hope, the God who is the source of eternal hope, the source of eternal life, the source of eternal salvation, fill you up leaving nothing out. Literally overflow you with joy and peace that comes in believing that you may super abound in hope through the agency of the power of the Spirit of God. In other words, that's another way of saying may you get all there is to get and may you know all the joy and all the peace and all the hope that can possible be given to you through believing in Christ by the power of the Spirit of God.

You know what that's calling for? You know what his benediction really is? May you be totally spiritually satisfied.

May you be totally spiritually satisfied, filled with joy and filled with peace and filled with hope to overflowing. That's what salvation was intended to bring. It's a prayer for a satisfied soul which is to sweep back through the whole epistle, may you know forgiveness, may you know peace, may you know hope, may you know love, may you know victory over sin, may you know the power of the Spirit of God, may you know the obedience of a spiritual life, may you know the use of your spiritual gift, may you know a right relationship to people, a right relationship to government, may you know the love, may you know the sense of urgency, may you know how to care for each other as weak and strong, may you know all that God could possibly overflow to you in the power of the Spirit and thus be a fully satisfied believer. His prayer, his benediction is that we might be fully satisfied in Christ.

Father, that's our prayer, that we might be satisfied, that we might have nothing lacking who need to have nothing lacking in Jesus Christ. We pray in His blessed name. Amen.

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