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Romans

And again, Isaiah says:

**"There shall be a root of Jesse;
And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles,
In Him the Gentiles shall hope." Romans 15:12**

So far in just two quotes, Paul has demonstrated from the Torah (the Law) and from the Ketuvim (the writings) that God has always had an intent and purpose for the Gentile peoples as well as the people of Israel. Today, Paul cites Isaiah, a prophet, to make the same point. The prophets form the third section of the Old Testament known as the Nevi'im. In essence, what Paul has done is to demonstrate God's purposes for the Gentile people from every section of the Old Testament. Collectively, they are called the Tanakh, an acronym comprised of the first letter of each of these subdivisions - Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim; TaNaKh.

This may seem trivial or without purpose, but it is not. He has woven together these quotes to show that the concept is sure, founded in the whole body of Scripture, and thus a principle tenet of God's redemptive plans.

- 1) He selected a quote from Deuteronomy; written by Moses, the great Lawgiver, and in the book which provides practical living and instruction for the Israelites who are about to enter the land of Canaan.
- 2) He selected a quote from Psalm 117, part of the Hallel, which is sang every year during the Passover by all faithful Jewish families.

- 3) He selected a quote from Isaiah, "the prince of the prophets," whose chapters and words form a "mini-bible" of 66 chapters, often showing interesting parallels to the 66 books of the Christian Canon.

Whether Paul intentionally selected these quotes of his own will, or whether he did so without thinking of the greater pattern he was forming, the quotes are a perfect demonstration of God's plans and intents for the Gentile church. And so, quoting Isaiah, he says that "There shall be a root of Jesse..." Jesse was the father of King David. David was told that his throne would be eternal. Scripture notes that the Messiah would come from the house of David, thus being the fulfillment of the promise that he was given.

But this verse from Isaiah shows something different. It shows that "there shall be a root of Jesse." Paul has already shown that the root supports the tree and the branches, not the other way around (Romans 11:18). Therefore, the "root of Jesse" isn't speaking of someone after Jesse, but before. It is an indication of the eternity of Christ. This is similar to the words of Micah -

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting." Micah 5:2

It is this "root of Jesse" who "shall rise to reign over the Gentiles." The prophesied Messiah would not just be the Messiah of the Jews, but of all people. This is actually prefigured in the book of Genesis in types and pictures such as the life of Jacob and the life of Joseph. What God is doing in human history through Christ has effect for all people.

These, and many other quotes from the Old Testament, were missed by the Jewish people though. Instead of realizing that God was using them to bring

salvation to all people, they couldn't see beyond their own national identity. Paul is reminding them, and us, that Jesus is the hope of all nations. And so he finishes his quoting of Isaiah with, "In Him the Gentiles shall hope."

"Hope" doesn't even hint at harsh rule. Instead it is a term of eager anticipation and even longing. The Jewish people expected the Messiah to come forth, rescue them, and rule over the world from Jerusalem for their sake and for their exaltation. Rather, Paul shows that His coming wasn't one of harsh rule over a disobedient people, but one of joy at the reign they would be under.

It is true that after the church age, Christ will physically return to earth and rule from Jerusalem and amidst His people Israel, but that is another dispensation which will come after the church age. During this time, Christ is our ruler and in Him many Gentiles have placed their confidence, their trust, and their hope.

Life application: The whole body of Old Testament Scripture - the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets, testify to the work of God in Christ for both Jew and Gentile. Christ Jesus is the hope of all people. Make every effort to pass on the good news to those around you today.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

As Paul does at times during his writings, at the end of a formal exposition on a particular matter, he ends with a benediction before moving on. This treatise, which really began at Romans 14:1 is no different. He has gone through several over-arching issues with one ultimate goal.

He addressed the difference between the weaker and the stronger of the faith. After this, he instructed one to not show contempt for the other. He followed directly with the matter of not judging one another over "disputable matters." He also went on to implore one to not cause another to sin over such things.

Following that, he showed the need to make allowances for one another in a Christian manner, focusing on the spirit and bond of love. The example for this was next identified - the Person and work of Christ who willingly bore reproach. And finally, he demonstrated that all, both Jew and Gentile, should glorify God together.

Considering the length of his epistles, Paul has put an immense amount of time and consideration into this issue. It is one then which should be considered as the highest importance in maintaining fellowship between believers. In hopes that his instruction will take root and be effective, he now makes his short invocation for divine blessing, guidance, and help.

"Now may the God of hope" is noted by scholars as having two applications. The first is that He is the God who provides hope; the second is that He is the God in whom we hope.

- 1) The God of hope doesn't just provide hope at certain points during our walk, but He provides a continuous stream of it for those who keep their thoughts and minds on Him. There is never a moment that the hope He provides is either lacking or insufficient to calm His child in the storm.
- 2) The God of hope is the eternal God. He isn't just our hope the day we call on Him for salvation and forgiveness, but He is the same God who arranged the universe at the beginning and the One who will be there for His people for all the ages to come. No matter what our station at any given moment; no matter what trial we face; no matter what loss we have encountered - He is the true Source of our hope. Nothing in creation can separate us from Him and therefore our hope is grounded in what is eternal.

It is to this beautiful Creator that Paul makes his petition for us. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." May you be filled with the continuous knowledge that your faith is grounded in that which doesn't perish and may that thought bring you constant and complete joy. It is from this wondrous state "that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The God of hope, who provides hope and who is our hope, is petitioned to bring us to a hope which abounds. And this is, in fact, possible. Because he has sealed those who believe with the Holy Spirit. The key to unleashing this joy and peace then isn't external but internal.

We are granted access to it upon belief. The Spirit from that moment resides in all His fullness in the believer. However, the Spirit can get more of the one who believes. This is the state that Paul is praying for. He has given the instruction on how to achieve this. Now, by applying what he has taught, the Holy Spirit can accomplish this condition in the obedient soul. By expecting an external demonstration of the Spirit to come upon the believer, the joy is far too often missed. Only by reading, understanding, and applying Scripture in a right manner will the Spirit effectively accomplish His work in us.

Life application: Paul's benediction is directed to those who already have believed and been sealed with the Holy Spirit. They have full access to the power of the Spirit already. The way to receive the joy and peace is to apply the instructions of the Bible as given. This is how the Spirit works in us; filling us as we yield to Him. Be sure to read, understand, and apply the words of the apostle and you too will be filled with all joy and peace in believing. In this state, you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Romans 15:14

For the most part, Paul has given the bulk of his epistle of doctrine and he has given his words of instruction. His benediction of verse 13 has been uttered and now he begins a lengthy closing statement. However, it is not without further instruction or doctrine. It is mingled, among other things, with special reflections, personal requests, and words of encouragement and greeting to individuals.

Having spent so much time on the issue of "disputable matters" and the necessity to develop and maintain harmony within the church concerning those things, he tactfully provides today's verse. "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren..." He has heard of the church, he has given them instruction, and now he is encouraging them by acknowledging that they are capable to handle all the points of doctrine they have received as well as being able to handle the "disputable matters" which exist.

To these "brethren" and in full confidence of this, he tells them that you are -

- 1) "Full of goodness." They will be willing to properly and tactfully respond to the weaknesses of others without judgment in matters which are not of doctrinal weight and importance. Instead, their goodness will shine forth and make adjustments in these issues.
- 2) "Filled with all knowledge." They were already established in Christ (Romans 1:8) and now Paul has instructed them in the issues necessary to elevate them to right knowledge in the areas they may have been lacking. As an apostle (Romans 1:1) he has carefully submitted a thoughtful and majestic epistle of instruction on how to handle matters of both doctrinal weight and importance and those of lesser weight which are disputable in nature. This knowledge is sufficient to the task of building them into an effective and mature body of believers.
- 3) "Able also to admonish one another." Through their knowledge, and with the assistance of a written epistle which they can hold on to and refer to for instruction, they are now able to correct one another in doctrinal deficiencies and also to decide what matters are doubtful. Knowledge in those matters which are weighty in nature will keep the congregation on sound footing and away from heresy, licentiousness, and apostasy. Those matters which are of less moment can be addressed from a loving standpoint where the weaker will grow to a state of strength and the stronger will be kept from haughtiness or arrogance when dealing with the weaker in the body.

In essence, the "goodness" in them will keep from damaging the faith of the weaker as well as inciting egotism in the stronger. At the same time, the "knowledge" is their source of correct instruction for the weaker in the faith. The "admonishment" is the effective means of instruction in a way which should avoid the pitfalls he has so carefully and exactly warned against.

The example of Christ is to be remembered in it all and that example, as he summed up just before his benediction, is one which is equally bearing on Jew and Gentile. With God, there is no favoritism and only through acceptance of the state of one another, and a loving display of that acceptance, will the congregation truly reflect His example.

Life application: Doctrine matters in tenets of weight; acceptance of differences matters in disputable issues; goodness is a bridge to effectively use knowledge; and admonishment should come with that attitude of goodness. In all of this, remembering the example of Christ is paramount.

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, Romans 15:15

Paul had just said this to the Romans in the previous verse -

"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

Having said this, he now states, "nevertheless." He will make a firm addition to the kind words which he just spoke in the thought he is about to impart. In essence, "Despite my confidence in you and your abilities, I have to say the following...."

"I have written more boldly to you on some points..." He acknowledges that despite their knowledge and ability to discern what is correct and to pass it on to others, he has engaged in some very strong and weighty issues in a way which was quite forthright and which could possibly even be considered overbearing to the recipients. And he did this "on some points." The term used here is *apo meros* and is actually debated as to what he is referring to. Two options are considered -

- 1) Some of the points noted in his epistles were direct and forthright, or
- 2) He was direct and forthright to a portion of the letter's recipients (i.e. Jew or Gentile, or possibly the "weaker in the faith" and the "stronger brethren.")

Either way, Paul's words were not intended as a bold rebuke, but rather as bold instruction. Were they a rebuke, he certainly wouldn't have been as generous in his wording of the previous verse. Though bold, he desires it to be known that his words were simply a way of reminding the Roman church "because of the grace given to" him by God.

He had stated his apostleship, defended his calling, and noted that as the appointed "apostle to the Gentiles" he was serving in a priestly role to them. He was providing the instruction of God to the people of God, including clarification of spiritual matters. This was the role of the priestly class in the Old Testament and he had been called to this role in the New.

It should be noted that in times past he could not have been given these duties because he was of the tribe of Benjamin and priestly duties were once given only to the tribe of Levi. But in Christ, who descended in his human genealogy from Judah, a new order of priesthood had come about. As John states to the believers in Revelation 1:5,6, without distinction of tribe or nationality, "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

Paul certainly then filled this priestly role within the confines of the New Covenant and he did so by "the grace of God given to" him. In this position of grace, and in fulfillment of his priestly duties, he imparted his knowledge boldly in an effort to keep the body of believers on the right track concerning their doctrine and practice.

Life application: Paul is the New Testament's appointed "apostle to the Gentiles." It is his instruction to which the church is to adhere to during this dispensation. All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for our instruction and edification, but Paul's writings are the authoritative standard for church-age doctrine and practice. We dismiss his words at the expense of a properly operating and effective body of believers.

...that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:16

Paul provides an enormous amount of detail in this verse. He just stated that he has been bold in some points as a reminder to the Romans and then he said this was due to "the grace given to me by God." He now explains that grace; it's substance and how it is worked out. He shares that this included that he "might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles."

The word he uses for "minister" isn't the normal one that we might think of, diakonos. Rather, the word is leitourgon. It is a word used only five times in the New Testament. One example is Romans 13:6 which is speaking of the "governing authorities" in the civilian world. Another example though is found in Hebrews 8:2. In this instance, it is referring to Jesus, the High Priest and "a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man."

Paul is showing that his apostleship is a ministry of such weight for the gentiles. He is a superintending governor in doctrinal matters and his ministry is executed

in the form of a priest on behalf of the gentiles. This is evident from the context which he will continue to reveal.

In his priestly role, his work is for the purpose of "ministering the gospel of God." Again, a word is introduced which provides the context. "ministering" here is the word *hierourgounta*. This is its only use in the New Testament and refers to doing temple work or performing sacred rites. These are duties only a priest of the Old Testament would accomplish, and yet he - from the tribe of Benjamin, has been granted this rite. This demonstrates the certainty that the previous covenant is set aside in Christ and a new order of priests and priestly duties has been initiated.

Paul's ministry then is the "gospel of God." The work of God in Christ is the very thing which makes the Gentiles acceptable to God. They are justified and sanctified, not through temple sacrifices and offerings, but through the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary's cross. It is through His work and the ministering of Paul that the "offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable."

Here again is another word demonstrating the greatness of what has occurred. The word "offering" is *prosphora* - an offering to God. This would be comparable to a sacrifice or offering made in the temple during the law. In Hebrews 10:8, this same word is used in a manner referring to those Old Testament offerings in which the Lord "did not desire, nor had pleasure in them." And then in Hebrews 10:10 it says that believers "have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." In this verse, the word *prosphora* is used referring to the body of Christ.

As can be seen, the Gentiles have now actually become an offering to God because of the work of Christ, sanctified through what He has accomplished. It is through this great work that the Holy Spirit is available to do exactly that, the part of sanctification. Although it would appear to the Jews coming out of the Old Covenant that this would be impossible, it is the very heart of the work of Christ. That together, Jew and Gentile, are found acceptable through Him.

As an object lesson in this, the book of Acts notes the conversion of Cornelius and his household. When the Holy Spirit came down on them, it seemed incredible to the Jews, but in the end, it notes, "...they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'" Acts 11:18

Life application: Through the work of Christ, Gentiles are now an acceptable offering to God. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is evidence of this. The Spirit is given upon belief and without any other thing being necessary. If God has justified the sinner and sanctified him by the Holy Spirit, then how can we argue against what God has done?