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Romans

...and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name. Romans 15:9

In the previous verse, Paul showed that "Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." But now, he will demonstrate that even the Old Testament, which was predominantly directed to "the circumcision," also showed that Christ would come to be glorified among the Gentiles as well. He begins by quoting a portion of David's writings. The quote is actually found in both 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49. Paul amends it for the purpose of explaining the gospel. The original is recorded as -

"Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name."

Romans 15:8 & 9 are actually one unified thought which have been divided into two verses. By linking them together as he did, Paul is showing that Jesus is God's truthful fulfillment of the Old Testament to the circumcision as well as the merciful embracer of the gentiles apart from the law in the New Testament. In this then, praises should flow to God through Christ from the Jew for His fulfillment of their law and praises should likewise flow from the Gentiles for His grace upon them apart from the law. There should be a harmonious chord of rejoicing that both Jew and Gentile are saved by the work of Christ and freed from

the constraints of the law. Both can now participate in the covenant community by faith in His work alone without reverting to that which He has fulfilled.

It is evident that what God did in Christ completed two different actions - one towards Jew and one towards Gentile, but it doesn't result in doing two different things. Rather, it results in one gospel. This is why Paul said in Romans 10:12, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him."

The intent of God's work in Christ was not a resulting Jewish community of believers who would continue to failingly adhere to the Law of Moses and a separate Gentile community who would be granted heaven's access completely apart from the law. Rather, the work of God in Christ is the fulfillment of the law for both Jew and Gentile. And so the Jew is told to not remain under the burden of the law, but to rest in the work of Christ alone. In Hebrews 13:12, 13 the Jew is thus instructed -

"Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

There can be no "one foot in the law and one foot in Christ." It is all Christ or it is no Christ, for Jew and for Gentile. As obvious as Paul's writings are, many fail to see and receive the pure gospel which is the work of Christ on behalf of all. The re-imposition of the law on Jew, or the imposition of the law upon Gentile, can only lead to condemnation. There is no longer a sacrifice from the law which is acceptable because Christ is the end of the law for all who believe.

Life application: It has become popular in many circles today to place the stress back on the law as a necessary part of one's Christian walk. This is particularly so in many Messianic communities. But this is not the truth of God in Christ. Christ is our rest and in Him alone can we rest. Do not be led astray by those whose terminology twists the purity of the gospel of Christ.

And again he says:

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" Romans 15:10

This is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 32:43 which comes from the Song of Moses. This is the last verse of the Song of Moses which is a poetic snapshot of the coming history of the nation of Israel. In particular, this song is actually a scathing indictment on the apostasy Moses foresaw would come upon them. It speaks of their rebellion, turning away from the Lord, and His resulting judgment. And after all of the strong words of condemnation and doom, the song ends with restoration -

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people;

For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And render vengeance to His adversaries;
He will provide atonement for His land and His people.”

What is clear is that God is faithful and covenant keeping, even when His people turn away from Him. He will never reject them or utterly destroy them, thus violating His promises to them. This glorious God who is truthful to His covenant people Israel (verse 15:8) is also merciful to the Gentiles (verse 15:9). And so together, Jew and Gentile are asked to "receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God (verse 15:7). The idea is that truly, in Christ, there is no favoritism. He is the Lord of Jew and Gentile and therefore we are to receive each other just as Christ has received us.

It is important to not separate what Paul is trying to tell us from the overall context of what he has been giving instruction on. Throughout chapter 14 and the opening of chapter 15, he has been educating the church on "doubtful matters." These come about based on who we are as individuals coming into the body of Christ. Jews may find some things difficult; gentiles other things. We are to accept one another's shortcomings just as Christ has accepted us. If He has received

someone, then how can we reject them? And so Jew should not look down on Gentile nor should Gentile look down on Jew over doubtful matters. Instead, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people." Together, we can all give glory to God for His truth and mercy.

Life application: Instead of tearing others within the body down over "doubtful matters," let us glorify God who has called us, despite our failings, into the body of Christ. Let us glorify God for His bestowal of favor upon His people.

And again:

**"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles!
Laud Him, all you peoples!" Romans 15:11**

In the previous verse, Paul used the Torah (the Law) to demonstrate that God's attention was directed toward the salvation of the Gentiles as well as the Jewish people. Today he will cite another section of the Jewish Scriptures, the Ketuvim (the writings) to witness to the same fact. As a major portion of the writings are to be found in the psalms, he chooses a verse from there. But more than just an arbitrary psalm, he goes to the 117th Psalm. This is a psalm which is notable for several reasons.

- 1) The 117th Psalm is the shortest chapter in the Bible. It is simple and direct in its purpose and intent.
- 2) The 117th Psalm is a part of the "Hallel." This includes Psalms 113-118 and is the portion of the psalms which are openly recited at the time of the Passover. In the New Testament, we read this about the night of the crucifixion -

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' And

when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." Matthew 26:27-30

This "hymn" would have been a portion of the Hallel; the psalms which they would have completed during the Passover meal.

- 3) After completion of the New Testament, the 117th Psalm is the very center of the Bible. It is as if it is an axis upon which Scripture pivots.

In using the 117th Psalm, and this particular verse from it, we are shown that God's heart is as equally directed to the salvation of the Gentiles as toward the Jews. This is even more clearly understood when considering that Jesus' singing of this hymn occurred before His crucifixion. It was as if He were trying to wake the world up to the fact that the cross was intended for all people.

The Israelites were selected for a mission and were set apart for a purpose, but they are not the end of God's redemptive plan, they are the means in which He would bring it about for all people. In setting Israel apart, God used them to usher in the Messiah, thus bringing Himself glory from both Jew and Gentile.

And so, because of God's great work in Christ, all people can recite the Hallel, knowing that they were included in Jesus' thoughts as He went to pray at Gethsemane and then was nailed to that tree. Let the world sing of God's great act - "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"

Surely the LORD (Jehovah) has done great things for His people in the Person and work of Jesus.

Life application: God has done the work, but it is incumbent on each person to accept that work. Call on Jesus, be reconciled to God, and Praise the Lord for His mighty deeds.