

Romans (15:8-12)

One True God

Part 88 - November 19, 2006

PAUL'S MAGNUM OPUS

Remember the olive tree analogy in chapter eleven? The roots were the Old Testament Jewish patriarchs. The broken branches were the Jews who reject Jesus. And the grafted branches were Gentiles who receive Him. Paul is determined to convince the church in Rome that they must overlook their deeply entrenched prejudices, because they have been grafted together through Christ.

And now, everything (from Romans 14 to where we are) has been about accepting fellow followers of Christ who don't believe or behave exactly as ourselves on the *disputable* matters.

Do you know *why* Paul is so fervent, and so passionate about uniting the Jews and Gentiles in that church in Rome? It's so much more than just wanting everyone to get along. Paul knew that uniting the Jews and the Gentiles - through the work of the Messiah, was nothing short of the fulfillment of O.T. prophecies, and promises to the patriarchs. And he knew it could happen in *his* day ... in *his* church!

And today is Paul's "magnum opus" on the subject. He's gonna "pull out the stops", and "drive this baby home"!

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." - *Romans 15:8-12 NIV*

The first thing Paul does is remind them that Jesus became a Jewish man to serve the Jewish people.

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth (15:8a)

This doesn't mean that Jesus *didn't* serve the non-Jews. It's just that He had to: "confirm the promises made to the patriarchs"

I don't know who my forefathers were (back in the forests of Germany or wherever), but I *do* know that God didn't make a covenant with 'em; He made it with to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Q: And so, exactly how did Christ serve?

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. - *Mark 10:45 NIV*

A: In other words: His *service* was His sacrifice for our sin.

There're so many things to notice here!

1. Jesus' ministry to the Jews was: "On behalf of God's truth"
2. His ministry to the Gentiles was on behalf of: "His mercy"

You see, even though it's the same act, on the same cross, because my "grandpa" didn't make the covenant with God that Abraham did, it was *mercy* to the Gentiles, and *faithfulness* to the Jews.

And look how strange this seems:

- A. Jesus serves: "On behalf of God's truth" (i.e. faithfulness)
- B. Jesus serves: "To confirm the promises"

Q: How are those two things different?

A: God is *true* before He makes any *promises*. God is the definition of truth. And He is the measure of truth.



In construction, you "true" something up by leveling it or squaring it. And when something is "out of true" it means that it's out of alignment or adjustment. There is simply no standard outside of God. He is the One True God. He is the measure of all things.

All things are true to the degree they align to Him. This is why we must daily adjust our thoughts, words, and deeds to the truth of God, as found in His Word.

And when I fall, and when I fail, I don't have to fret about God getting mad and backing out on His promises, because He is first and foremost true to Himself!

If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. - *2 Timothy 2:12-13 NIV*

And so, the faithfulness of Christ confirmed God's faithfulness first, and God's promises second. This is why we close our prayers "in Jesus' name". It is by His

authority and worthiness (not my own) that I have any claim to the pardon and promises of God. It's like saying, "Stop in the name of the law!"
And notice it says that: "Christ has become a servant"



This is written in "perfect tense"; meaning that His service hasn't ended. This is what Jesus now *is*. Christ continues to serve! He doesn't serve in *spite* of being God; He serves *because* He is God. This is what perfect truth, and undefiled love does.

Serving *is* the evidence of love. So, as a follower of Jesus, I have to ask myself an important question: Who am I serving?

- If we aren't serving, we aren't evidence (of God's love)

Right now we have, Operation Christmas Child, and Lend-a-Hand, and cookies to the imprisoned; ministry leaders, missions workers, Children's Church teachers and helpers, Arktoberfest volunteers, etc. But it can't just be serving for the sake of serving.

Q: What is Jesus' ultimate reason for serving? What was the *reason* He brought the truth about God? What was the *reason* He confirmed the promises of God? What was the *reason* He included all of the Gentiles?

A: So that: "God would be glorified for His mercy"

The ultimate goal was God being glorified. Service that fails to glorify God is superficial; it treats the symptom without touching the problem. The glory of God's mercy must be our motivation

Without God's mercy, as confirmed through Christ: Those we serve can't know why they exist; or receive forgiveness of sin; or enjoy a clean conscience; or rest in God's acceptance; or serve can't be free from deception; or have eternal life.

Q: Do you know what it means to: "glorify God for His mercy"?

A: To "glorify" is to "worship" ... but it is more than that.



Did you notice the brighter screen? Thanks to a generous donation, we were able to purchase a brand new, state-of-the-art projector: the Sanyo PLC-XF46! We don't even have to dim the lights anymore!

The old one projected: 2,500 lumens; the new one projects: 12,000 lumens! That's a lot more lumens! We've "magnified" and "glorified" the reflection of the projection by 480 percent! We glorify God when we receive and reflect His mercy.

Q: So, how many "lumens" of mercy do you reflect?

My goal is to progressively upgrade the lumens of mercy that I reflect, in the way that I think, speak, act, and serve. I want to be a sanctified PLC-XF46 ... *maybe* even a 47!
Sidebar: That image of the projector looks black, doesn't it? It's not. It can't be, because the screen is white. If we shut off the projection, you can see how light the screen really is. And since it's impossible to project darkness onto the screen, the image can't be *darker* than the screen.

So, why does the image of the projector look so black? Because of the contrast of the light that surrounds it. It's just the spot that's not reflecting any light. The more of God's glory we receive and reflect, the more obvious the darkness of our sin becomes.

That's why the world (those who don't know the glory of God's mercy through Christ) can look at their sin and say, "It's not so dark." Without God's glory for contrast, everything looks grey.

AS IT IS WRITTEN

Okay, back to Paul's opus.

Paul finishes by quoting from the three *Jewish* divisions of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms; and from three great *Jewish* heroes: Moses, David, and Isaiah.

(Psalm 18:49) The Messiah praises God in the *midst* of Gentiles:

As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." *(15:9b)*

(Deuteronomy 32:43) The Gentiles are invited to rejoice with Jews:

Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." *(15:10)*

(Psalm 117:1) All of the Gentiles are called to praise the Messiah:

And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." *(15:11)*

(Isaiah 11:1,10) It is prophesied that the Gentiles will place their hope in a very Jewish Messiah:

And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." *(15:12)*

And with that, Paul leaves no doubt that God's *goal* was always to become the *Jewish* Messiah. And His *purpose* was always to bring truth, mercy, hope, and salvation to the entire world.