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Sermon Notes

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From Church Relations through Missions to Eternal Worship

Romans 15:7-13

Revelation 5:6-9 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

John Piper: *Let the Nations Be Glad*

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal in missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The Lord reigns; let the earth *rejoice*; let the many coastlands *be glad!*" (Psalm 97:1). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations *be glad and sing for joy!*"

(Psalm 67:3-4).

But worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can't commend what you don't cherish. Missionaries will never call out, "Let the nations *be glad!*", who cannot say from the heart, "*I rejoice* in the Lord. . . . *I will be glad and exult in thee, I will sing praise to thy name, O Most High*" (Psalm 104:34; 9:2). Missions begins and ends in worship.

Christ came and died to make the nations glad. Not glad just for this afternoon, because they have had a good lunch. Not glad just for the next six months, because they have had a good harvest. Not glad for just the next few years, because they have had their first child born healthy. Not glad for just the next few decades, because they have married the girl of their dreams.

No... Christ came, suffered, died, and rose again on the third day to make the nations ETERNALLY glad

Glad forever and ever and ever!

Now, that's a powerful amount of gladness!!!

What could possibly keep us glad for an infinite amount of time? Only and infinite source of happiness, and the only infinite source of happiness is HIMSELF

"The Lord reigns... let the nations be glad, let distant shores rejoice."

Christ came to make the nations glad in HIM... in His reign, in His sovereign supremacy, and in His delightful personality... forever and ever

This was His expressed and stated plan from before the foundation of the world

BUT the nations, at present, are NOT glad that Christ reigns

They are NOT glad in God's eternal power and divine nature

They are NOT glad in God's immutable throne

What is the solution to that problem? It is missions, and nothing less than missions

As Paul has already stated:

***Romans 10:13-15 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴
How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"***

So what's the problem?

Well, in God's infinite wisdom, the preachers must be sent! The sending ones are the church

The church must be healthy and united in order to send its preachers to the distant shores

So, Paul is writing to the Roman church about UNITY

In Romans 15:7-13, we move from local church unity, to worldwide missions, to eternally united worship

Review:

I. Review: From Church Relations to Worldwide Worship

- A. Modern Chapters of an Ancient Struggle
- B. Jew-Gentile Conflict a Subset of Human Conflict
- C. The Church at Rome: Seeds of Its Destruction Already Planted
- D. Unity of the Church Essential to Its Mission

John 17:23 "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

E. Summary of Flow of Thought

- All things are done to glorify God... that is the center of everything
- The salvation plan was worked out before the foundation of the world
- It included BOTH Jews AND Gentiles from the very beginning
- Christ is the Pattern for Jew-Gentile Unity: He accepted sinners like us, we should accept each other
- Jew-Gentile unity in worshiping God was prophesied to the patriarchs and the prophets
- The ultimate end: Elect representatives from every nation will be perfectly united in worshiping God forever
- So we should accept one another deeply, gladly now, as Christ has accepted us

F. Six Remedies to Jew-Gentile Division Listed

- Understand God's Ultimate Purpose: His Own Glory
- Understand God's Second Purpose: Our Delight in His Glory
- Obey God's Command: Accept Each Other
- Follow Christ's Pattern of Acceptance

- Understand Christ's Servanthood to the Jews
- Understand Christ's Commitment to God's Truth

G. Four Remedies to Jew-Gentile Division Remaining: Each with the Goal of Gentile Worship

- Believe God's Promises to the Patriarchs
- Glorify God for His Mercy to Both Jews and Gentiles
- Understand the Prophecies of Jew-Gentile Unity
- Hope in Our Glorious Future Together

II. Review: Remedies to Church Division Seen Last Week

A. Understand God's Ultimate Purpose: His Own Glory

1. Man-centered thinking is the root of all human division
2. Basically: Human strife and conflict will cease forever in heaven where God's glory takes its rightful place as the center of our existence

B. Understand God's Second Purpose: Our Eternal, United Delight in His Glory

1. God's ULTIMATE purposes were God-centered
2. God's SECONDARY purposes were human-centered... He LOVES us
3. The greatest measure of love is what it will sacrifice, what it will GIVE to the one it loves
4. God's gifts are lavish
 - a. The greatest gift God could give us is HIMSELF... that we might be overwhelmed eternally by His very presence
 - b. The second greatest gift God could give us is EACH OTHER... especially once we have been perfected, cleansed of all sin, radiant in Christ's righteousness, shining in Christ's glory
 - c. Therefore God is working out a beautiful salvation plan in which racists and bigots and self-worshippers will be saved from their racism and bigotry and self-worship to adore and glorify God

- d. AND as they do, they find delight in each other as a secondary blessing: people from every tribe and language and people and nation falling on their faces together... perfectly united in one thought: THE GLORY OF GOD

C. Obey God's Command: Accept Each Other Wholeheartedly

1. Bookend commands:

Romans 14:1 [Welcome] him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

^{ESV} Romans 15:7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

2. Simply put: God commands us to accept one another, to welcome one another

D. Follow Christ's Pattern of Acceptance

1. Paul answers two questions about Jewish and Gentile Christians acceptance of one another: "AS CHRIST HAS WELCOMED YOU": WHY? And HOW?
2. Why should we accept one another? Christ is the motive for our acceptance of one another

How can we refuse to accept someone else if Christ has not refused to accept us?

3. How should we accept one another? In the pattern of Christ! AS warmly and lovingly as Christ forgave and cleansed and loved and welcomed you!
4. Christ answers WHY and HOW!

E. Understand Christ's Servanthood "to the Jews First"

1. Christ's great love to the Jews should remove any Gentile tendency to look down on their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ; it should cause us to revere the Jewish roots of our own faith
2. It also gives us the pattern of how we treat each other: as servants not as Kings

F. Understand Christ's Commitment to God's Truth

Vs. 8 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

1. Christ's coming was to display the truthfulness of God, specifically in keeping his promises to the Patriarchs and His prophecies through the Prophets

2. Vindication of the name of God, of the glory of God as a truth-telling God is uppermost in Christ's list of motives
3. Christ's powerful display of the truthfulness of God is a sure and certain foundation for Jew-Gentile unity in the church

III. God's Purposes for the Jews and Gentiles: Eternally United Worship

A. Believe God's Promises to the Patriarchs

Romans 15:8-9 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 ⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy

1. Paul mentions the Promises made to the Patriarchs

Genesis 15:3-6 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

The idea: a child of promise (Isaac) was a pattern of Christ who would come

AND also a multitude of descendants as numerous as the stars

Genesis 22:17-18 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

2. Once again roots the ministry of Christ in the Old Testament promises; but notice the promise:

through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed

3. The central promise for Jew-Gentile unity came in the original call of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees

Genesis 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The Jews tended to forget that "all peoples on earth" would be blessed through Abraham

The true fulfillment of the Promise to Abraham was Christ... God promised to bless Abraham himself directly... and so he did, not just in life but in eternity

And God also blessed the Jews as well, by causing them to multiply and to inherit the Promised Land

But the ultimate fulfillment of the promises to Abraham is in Christ, the Savior of the world

Through Him and Him alone did Abraham bless all peoples on earth

This is a solid basis for Jew-Gentile unity

Genesis 17:4-6 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

Paul sees Jew-Gentile unity in the fulfillment of this promise:

Romans 4:16-17 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Both Jews and Gentiles can call Abraham their father by faith in Christ

4. These promises made the Abraham pointed to Jew-Gentile unity in Christ

Galatians 3:8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."

B. Glorify God for His Mercy to BOTH Jew and Gentile

Vs. 9 so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy

1. Thus Paul refers to the PURPOSE of God in making these promises to the Patriarchs
 - a. God's desire has always been WORLDWIDE but still self-focused
 - b. God wants to give people from every nation on earth the gift of Himself, that we may GLORY in Him
 - c. Since all of us are sinners, that will only happen if He shows us extreme mercy

2. Mercy was the culminating theme of Romans 9-11 as well; our need and receiving of mercy through Christ unites Jews and Gentiles

Romans 11:30-32 Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹ so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. ³² For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

3. The theme of mercy is vital to the unity of Jews and Gentiles, and of the church as a whole
 - a. If God has shown us mercy, how can we not show the same to each other?
 - b. God has taken the catalogue of all our sins, all our evil thoughts and intentions, all our vicious words and thoughtless actions, all our selfishness and blasphemy and greed and self-indulgence... all of that mess, and covered it with the blood of Christ... shown us extreme mercy
 - c. How can we not glorify God for His mercy to us?
 - d. How can we not also glorify God for His mercy to others?

C. Believe God's Prophecies to the Prophets

vs. 9-12 as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." ¹⁰ Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." ¹¹ And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." ¹² 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."

1. Golden Chain: Paul lists a series of quotations from the Old Testament
2. One from each of the major sections of the Old Testament: one from the Law, one from the History, one from the Writings, one from the Prophets
3. Paul's point is obvious and clear: God has always intended for the Gentiles to be united with Jews in true worship of God
4. This is to quiet Jewish Christians from thinking God never intended to save Gentiles
5. This is also to encourage Gentiles that God is their God too
6. Some Christians think that the church was God's "Plan B"

- a. Some dispensationalists think this... that the church age was the grand “parenthesis” inserted between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel 9
 - b. God’s original plan was to save only Jews
 - c. When the Jews rejected Christ, God then turned to the Gentiles... Plan B
 - d. The original call of Abram and these prophecies refute this strange way of thinking forever
7. Jews themselves have had a hard time grasping that God does not show favoritism, and that He had saving intentions toward the Gentiles

Acts 22:21-22 "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" ²² The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

- a. They thought that God had chosen the Jews in order that He might ultimately reject the Gentiles
 - b. But God, in His original call to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, showed His intention to save a great multitude from every tribe on earth
8. These prophecies prove forever God’s intentions were inclusive, including BOTH Jews and Gentiles
- a. The common link word in all these quotations is “Gentiles”
 - b. The common theme in all cases is united worship for God and for His Christ
 - c. The first three, it seems, implies the Jews are urging the Gentiles to worship the true God... and the fourth one says they definitely WILL worship

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." ¹⁰ Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." ¹¹ And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." ¹² 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."

- i) In the first one, David in Psalm 18:49 / 2 Samuel 22:50, is celebrating his own deliverance from Gentile enemies, and there is more a sense of triumph over them...

Psalm 18:43 You have delivered me from the attacks of the people; you have made me the head of nations; people I did not know are subject to me.

- ii) but if you look more closely, it is seen from a Messianic sense... Christ was hated by all the earth, and has triumphed over our true enemies; now he will rule all nations by His power
- iii) David and Christ are singing praise to God among the Gentiles, and they are listening to that song with delight
- iv) In the second quotation, the original text is Deuteronomy 32:43; the original context is one of celebrating God's deliverance from enemies; but whereas in the first quote David is celebrating in the midst of the Gentiles, now the Gentiles themselves are urged to join in the celebration

Vs. 10 "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people"

- v) What a glorious prefigurement of our heavenly praise, Jew and Gentile together worshiping Christ in perfect unity; again, note the theme of REJOICING... a joyful celebration in heaven... why not also on earth??
- vi) The third quote carries this theme deeper: a direct command to the Gentiles to praise the Lord, Psalm 117, and to celebrate; amazing, the second and only other verse of that briefest of Psalms gives the clear reason for the Gentiles to praise the Lord

Psalm 117:1-2 Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. ²

Psalm 117:2 For his mercy has been abundant toward us: and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.

It is on the basis of God's mercy and truth, the very attributes Paul extols here in Romans 15:7-13, that the Gentiles will worship God

- 9. The final prophecy is a prediction that the Gentiles will in fact glorify God for His mercy in Christ:

Vs. 11 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."

- a. This is a clear prediction in Isaiah for the future of the church
- b. The "Root of Jesse" is Christ
- c. He will arise to rule over the ends of the earth
- d. The Gentiles will HOPE in Him

So we see a progression:

First, David rejoices in the Lord in front of the Gentiles

Then, Moses urges the Gentiles to celebrate with His people

Then, The Psalmist extends the command to ALL the Gentiles... ALL nations

Finally, Isaiah predicts that every nation will hope in the Root of Jesse, the Messiah

Thus Paul's ministry to the Gentiles began and will ultimately be fruitful

Thus also Jew-Gentile unity makes perfect sense

D. Rejoice in Hope, United by the Holy Spirit

Vs. 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Tone is delightful, filled with good attributes for the people of God
 - a. God
 - b. Filling
 - c. Hope
 - d. Joy
 - e. Peace
 - f. Trust
 - g. Overflow
 - h. Hope
 - i. Power
 - j. Holy Spirit
2. These are truly delightful frames of mind, dispositions of soul
 - a. God will spread a banquet of worship in the heavenlies in the future
 - b. BUT He wills for some of the crumbs to fall from the table now so we can feast on it in the present
3. Paul is speaking a benediction on the church at Rome
 - a. Pointing them to God... His power and provision to fill them

- b. Pointing them to the Holy Spirit... who ministers these good things to each one of us
- 4. The future is unspeakably glorious
- 5. That future will be shared by people from every race
- 6. We'll all be stunned, amazed, stupefied, astonished and overwhelmed at the same time
- 7. That future is guaranteed by the faithfulness of God to His promises
- 8. "As you trust in Him" is the key
 - a. Only by believing in the promises of God can this kind of joy-filled unity in a local church be fulfilled
 - b. Only by knowing what our future is in the eternal plans of God, and trusting that God has the power to bring it about can we taste it now, ahead of time

IV. Review and Application: Unity and Joyful Worship of God's Glory

A. Review

1. Problem: Jew-Gentile disunity
2. Paul's Ten Remedies to the Problem of Disunity in the Church
 - Understand God's Ultimate Purpose: His Own Glory
 - Understand God's Second Purpose: Our Delight in His Glory
 - Obey God's Command: Accept Each Other
 - Follow Christ's Pattern of Acceptance
 - Understand Christ's Servanthood to the Jews
 - Understand Christ's Commitment to God's Truth
 - Believe God's Promises to the Patriarchs
 - Glorify God for His Mercy to Both Jews and Gentiles
 - Understand the Prophecies of Jew-Gentile Unity
 - Hope in Our Glorious Future Together

B. Apply to Your Own Life

1. All problems of disunity are ultimately in view
2. Issues of reconciliation within the church body continue to be paramount

C. Apply to our own Church

1. The church must be a place of open, warm acceptance of people
2. This does not mean acceptance or tolerance of sin, of course
3. But it does mean there

D. Meditate Frequently on our Heavenly Future: Full Delight in Worship

1. Give full primacy to worship in your mind and thought
2. John Piper put it best in *Let the Nations Be Glad*

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church,

E. Live for the Future Glory of God in the Advance of the Church

1. This church needs to become more and more committed to world missions
2. The joy and delight of unreached people groups should be a primary focus of this church