

[Romans 15:4 – 16]

~ Three more reports after this one from Romans will conclude our Spiritual Safari commentary on this epistle; and then we will return to the Old Testament and consider first and second Chronicles. In this report, we are leaving the section of this book that deals with separation. We have exhaustively examined the three great principles of separation in our last several reports. One of those principles is that whatever we do, the child of God must do it with enthusiasm. We're all to be persuaded in our own minds – and grounded in sound doctrine – that what we are doing is pleasing to the Lord. Another principle was that we are not to condemn ourselves by that which we allow. If you do something and your conscience rebukes you, and you feel guilty about that thing, then it is definitely wrong for you. It doesn't matter what it is. Third, we must consider how other people are affected by the things we do and say because we don't want to offend them. And we learned the weak brother is easily offended by *many* things....

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

~ Here, Paul begins to instruct Jews and Gentiles they are one in the body of Christ; and how we are to glorify God in said body. I think this verse makes it more than clear that the Old Testament has a very definite application and purpose for believers today. I am sure most Christians do not realize exactly how practical and meaningful the Old Testament really is for us. Most Christians seem to have no idea that the Old Testament speaks of Christ and Him alone. Well, the Old Testament is there for our comfort and learning! The greatest sin in the church today is a complete and total ignorance of the Word of God. It's actually tragic the way most Christians are as dumb as a goat grazing grass on a hillside when it comes to the Bible.

I hear time after time, "... well, I don't know very much about the Bible..." – well, why don't you? It's been around since before you were born! These

things were written aforetime for our learning. Friends, God wants us to know His Word. Most people actually seem to boast that they aren't very learned in the Word of God. Frighteningly, these people are very active in the church, generally; and they are as busy as termites trying to express their opinions about the Bible. Well, they do about as much damage as a termite does, too! I think that is the greatest sin of this hour in which we live.

The only way we'll find comfort, peace and patience is in the Scriptures. That's what Paul just said! The Word of God is the *only* place we'll find any hope, too, by the way. The news media isn't going to bring hope. Movies and television offer no hope. Modern literature, art, music – or *ANY* field – will fail in regard to bringing comfort, peace and hope to a life. All the world has are dark and dismal days that are growing worse as the clock winds down on judgment.

1 Corinthians 10: 11 *Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come ~*

When we were studying Samuel, Kings — and King David, specifically — I received more readership than at any other time in this safari. Probably because David is such a huge encouragement to all of us. I talked to some people who were going through very dark times in their lives, and they said those reports came at exactly the right time for them. Many were blessed by the accounts of David's life. Well, friends — that's the reason God wrote these books. God put David's sin on international display; because God paints mankind exactly as mankind is. God also knows straight talk is the *ONLY* thing that can bring us hope down here....

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

~ This prayer is a pause asking for the blessings which are channeled only through the Word of God; and that they might have an effect upon both Jews and Gentiles. Paul knows they aren't going to see eye to eye on meats and drink, but he admonishes them to demonstrate that they are one in

love and in consideration one of another. Further, as we read on, we see there should also be a harmony in their praise which will reveal the unity of believers. True believers from any and all denominations should be able to sing the Doxology. See, Christianity is all about praising God; from Whom all blessings flow – it's not about being the only one with the answers. Genuine love for God and one another is the outward testimony the world should see from Christians....

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of God.

~ God receives all men who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior; strong and weak – simple and wise – high and low – Jew and Gentile. Paul says let both the strong and the weak receive each other in fellowship. The glory of God is the supreme objective. The reason I am so critical of others, and they are so kind and encouraging to me, is because they have more of the grace of God than I have. They seem to understand that we agree on too many things to allow one or two things to cause division! It's important to recognize that we are going to differ on some things; but we can agree on the major and important things according to Scripture.

If we meet around the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection, then we can disagree on *almost* all other doctrine. Many people disagree with me about speaking in tongues, for example; I don't think that is a gift for today – but some people do! I have been in churches where they speak in tongues – or, at least, they think they do; and I got along very well with most of them because I just kept praying they would someday realize a proper, correct and complete understanding of the Bible. Interestingly, one day when we are all in His presence, we're going to agree. All of you people will agree with me someday – every one of you. The reason for that is because both of us are going to have to change a whole lot of things that we believe! We're all going to be changed. Only when we are changed to be made like His image will we all agree. In view of

that truth, we should attempt to magnify the places where we agree today....

8 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:

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

~ When the Lord Jesus came into this world, He came as a minister of the circumcision. The ministry of Jesus was confined to the nation Israel. Jesus Himself said, *"I am sent unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel!"* That's Matthew chapter fifteen verse twenty-four. In Matthew chapter ten verse six, Jesus said to His apostles, *"go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."* The Gentiles came to Philip and said, *"sir, we would see Jesus."* Those Greeks were actually Jews who had returned from being out in the Roman world. Jesus came in that capacity to confirm the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God told Abraham that *from Abraham* He would bring One Who would be a blessing to the world. Christ had to come that way in order to be a blessing to the Gentiles.

Luke 2: 21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb ~

Jesus couldn't have been Jesus if He had not been born in the line of Abraham *AND* in the line of David; *AND* unless He followed the Mosaic System of Levitical. They called Him Jesus after He was circumcised. Jesus was brought up under the law because He came to fulfill the entire Mosaic System. When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them which were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons. Salvation came to Israel through Christ completing and confirming the truths of the Old Testament promises. That was the same method by which salvation was brought to the Gentiles. The only claim the Gentiles had was upon the mercy of God.

No promises were ever made to the fathers of anyone reading this report. I have no idea who my distant father was in the forests of Germany or Scotland. I couldn't tell you their names. What I do know is that God never made them any promises. I do know God made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Christ confirmed His truths to the Jews, but for the Gentile He made a way to obtain mercy. So, Gentiles are to glorify God. We need to all thank God that the Gospel came to our ancestors so long ago. That was only by His mercy, by the way! Our ancestors weren't some worthy and outstanding people that God couldn't live without. Frankly, most of them never did anything worthwhile....

10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

~ Notice how many times Paul says, "... as it is written...." – and Paul goes on to quote two Psalms, Isaiah and Deuteronomy in this section.

Deuteronomy 32: 43 Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people ~

This is a quote from the law *and* the end of the song of Moses! ~

11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

~ This is a quote from Psalm chapter one hundred seventeen; the briefest Psalm we have in the Scriptures. Notice it says *ALL* ye Gentiles and *ALL* ye people....

12 And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

~ Paul was writing to the Romans who were largely a Gentile Church. The church today is largely Gentile. Verse thirteen is a benediction; and it

concludes the doctrinal portion of Romans. This is where the believing heart finds the Rock of Ages! This is the shelter in the time of the storm. God is the God of hope. Only God can fill us with all joy and peace in believing. That's what the epistle of Romans should do for us. I hope this safari through Romans has brought many of you dear readers joy and peace. I hope it has strengthened your faith. It is knowledge that should bring much power to our Christian service, friends. From here, we continue the personal testimony of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. Remember, this epistle began very personally in the first seventeen verses of chapter one. Here, we return to that very personal aspect of Paul's life; his desire to visit Rome....

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

~ Paul seems to offer an apology for speaking so boldly in his letter. It wasn't as though they were lacking goodness and knowledge; but rather, they possessed qualities of understanding which enabled Paul to be explicit when talking to them about doctrinal matters. God wants to talk to *you* about these things, friends. That's the reason we have this epistle to the Romans. It's also the reason our Spiritual Safari has spent so much time dealing with this book of the Bible. I think we all want to understand it the best we can, right? Understanding this epistle will allow us to have a closer and more meaningful fellowship together. Paul is very humble and sweet about it all; he isn't lording over God's heritage....

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

~ So, we end this leg of our expedition with Paul explaining that he was the apostle to the Gentiles in a very special sense. Paul wrote in the authority

of the office given to him directly by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Paul is ministering to them as he wrote. This also gives weight to the inspired writings of Paul. Paul adopts the language of the Levitical priesthood and temple worship in describing himself as a minister preaching the Gospel. Paul is telling the church in Rome they are acceptable apart from the law or *any* religion! Paul gave the Gospel, but God gave the Holy Spirit to them when they believed. That *MUST* be kept in mind. I understand it is extremely difficult to grasp the depths of these truths; and yet Gentiles have entered into all that it implies! If you have never thanked God for Paul the apostle, you should do that now ~