

Serve one another

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[0 : 00] We turn now this morning to our reading and we are back in Paul's letter to the Romans at chapter 15. You should find that on page 949 in our church visitors' Bibles.

And we're looking this morning at the first half of chapter 15, which is the third section, really, of the subject that we've been looking at in chapters 14 and 15, where Paul is continuing the application of the gospel that he expounds in the first 11 chapters of Romans.

It comes to chapter 12 at verse 1 and appeals to his readers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship.

The response to the gospel is worship. But Paul isn't talking about singing or sacraments or sermons or anything like that. He's talking about service. That's what worship means.

It means living as the people of God. In chapters 12 and 13, we saw what that means in terms of our character and our church life and our citizenship, indeed, all being shaped by the grace of the gospel.

[1 : 21] And in chapters 14 and 15, he's focusing particularly on some of the most difficult areas in our church life, which must also be shaped by the gospel of Christ, our Christian controversy.

That's what these chapters are about. It's when Christians disagree over secondary issues, over how the gospel applies to certain things, what you eat, what you drink, what days you might observe, what festivals, that kind of thing.

Often the things that cause great difficulty among Christians. But as we've seen, Paul is so clear. It's not so much what we believe about these things. It's how we react and behave towards those who disagree with us.

That tells us the most about the grasp of grace that we have in our lives. So he's been talking about the strong and the weak. Those who are strong, who understand more about the depth of the gospel and about the liberation that it brings to our Christian lives.

But here in chapter 15, verse 1, he addresses head on those who are strong, including himself. And he says this, we who are strong have an obligation to bear with, not the failings, but to bear with the weaknesses of those without strength, or the weaknesses of the powerless.

[2 : 38] That's our obligation, not to please ourselves, he says. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build up, not just to build him up, but to build up the whole church, it means.

Why? For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the approaches of those who reproached you fell on me. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance, patience, and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you all to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then verse 7 really begins a new paragraph. The ESV has got it wrong here, I'm not sure why, but verse 7, if you have an NIV, you'll see it begins a new paragraph.

Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. Welcome one another for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ became a servant.

[3 : 56] A servant of the circumcision. Better there than to the circumcised. Christ became a servant of the circumcision to show God's truthfulness.

In order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs. And in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it's written, Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name.

And again it said, Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him. And again Isaiah says, The root of Jesse will come.

Even he who arises to rule the Gentiles, In him will the Gentiles hope. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, So that by the power of the Holy Spirit, You may abound in hope.

Amen. May God bless to us his words. Well, if you turn with me to the passage we read in Romans chapter 15. But once again, Paul is speaking about how our Christian controversy, Even must be shaped by grace.

[5 : 14] And how we must serve one another in the church, Understanding that we are united for one ultimate purpose, The glory of God in the saving of people from every nation.

Now the world that we live in today is both larger and smaller, In a sense, than ever before. In our global village, Events that happen in one hemisphere, Hit the airwaves instantly in another hemisphere, And affect the lives of millions, Indeed billions.

Our public square, Nowadays, Spans the whole planet. And we trade, We travel, We traffic with the whole of this globe.

And yet, at the same time, The truth is that most people, At least in the West, Live perhaps a more privatized, And isolated, And self-preoccupied existence than ever before.

Vast horizons Coexist with incredible insularity. That's the fact of our lives, Isn't it?

[6 : 29] And in a sense, A similar syndrome often affects the Christian church, Because as Christians, Our eyes have been opened to the vast horizons of eternity.

Boundless vision and vibrant hope, Surely should be the defining qualities of every Christian at every church. But so often the truth is, That we are as parochial, We are as self-absorbed, As anybody else, In our thinking.

Our own lives, And our Christian lives, Our church lives, So often are self-centered, And problem-oriented, Instead of being God-centered, And kingdom-oriented.

We've lost the big picture, So often, Of what life is really all about. And that is why things go wrong, In Christian churches. That's why churches can become weak, And interned, And beset with quarrels, And with disagreement, And with strife.

I recall some years ago, Reading a book by one of the Chinese house church leaders, And he was commenting at one place in that book, About how people in the West, In Western churches, Seem to be preoccupied with very, Very different things, To the churches in China.

[7 : 47] And he said, You see it in your prayers. You people in the West, When you're praying for China, You're constantly praying, That there would be an end to persecution, And hardship. That there would be peace, For the Christians in China.

That's not what we pray for in China, He said. We pray that God, Would give us stronger backs, To endure, So that God may use us, For his glory in China.

But you, He said, You're so taken up with yourselves, And your own ease, You're asleep to that great missionary calling, That we're all called to.

It was very telling, He said that, The only churches, As he traveled in the West, And he saw them, The only churches that seemed alive, To God, And really vibrant, Were churches, That had a clear devotion, To world mission, And especially to mission, Among the unreached, Unreached peoples of the world.

That is, There were churches, That were taken up, With God's big picture, With the great horizons, Of the fact that God, Is bringing glory to himself, By bringing people, From every nation, And every people, And every tongue, Under the lordship, Of Jesus Christ forever.

[9 : 05] And so as churches, Because they saw that, They were vibrant, They were strong, Together, Sacrificially, They were serving one another, To serve that great goal, In step, With the mind, Of the spirit of Christ.

But likewise, When churches are not gripped together, With that common vision, Of course, That's when they drift, To be inward looking, And drift into dissension, And division, And destructive behavior.

Now these problems, That we face today, In churches, Are not new, Of course. These, House churches, In the city of Rome, Great city of Rome, With over a million people, In the first century, They were in danger, Of going exactly, That same way, Putting secondary things, As barriers, To their fellowship together, In Christ.

And the danger was, That these things, Would derail, Their mission, The mission, That God had given them, Right at the heart, Of the Roman Empire, As the gateway, To the whole world. And they needed, To be reminded by Paul, About the wonder, The sheer size, And the scope, Of the gospel of Christ, And to see their place, And their calling, In that great big picture, Of God's saving plan, For the world.

And that's why, Paul writes, This letter of Romans, To strengthen them, To reorientate them, To the centrality, Of that great, Missionary task, And to show them, That how they, Live together, In the church, As Christ's people, Is vitally important, To that gospel mission.

[10 : 41] Because it demonstrates, To the world, The transforming power, Of the gospel of Christ, Which is, The power of God, For salvation, To all who believe, Not only to the Jew, But also to the Gentile, All the peoples, Of the whole earth.

So in chapter 14, We've seen, Paul applying, The gospel, To the life of the church, And especially, Into these most, Difficult areas, Of church life, Where Christians, Disagree over various things, In this case, What should be eaten, Or not eaten, Or drunk, Or not drunk, Which days, Should be observed, Particularly, And in which ways, What traditions, Had to be taken account of, And so on.

Now whatever the position, On these particular matters, Paul says, We are to welcome, One another, Genuinely, Because we are united, By one gospel, And we are to love, One another, Because we are united, In one kingdom, Family forever, And the relationships, In that kingdom, Family, Are eternal, And therefore more important, Than anything else, In this passing world.

And now in chapter 15, As Paul comes to the end, Not only of this section, But to the end really, Of his whole exposition, And application, Of the gospel in Romans, He turns his readers, Right back to the very heart, Of everything, To the person, Of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Messiah, The one promised, In all the scriptures, The one who is crucified, And who is risen in power, To rule all the nations, Of this world.

And once again, He brings home, The very heart, Of his message. Not only, Are we united, By the gospel, And in one family of faith, We are united, Says Paul, With Christ himself, And for a purpose, Of glory in Christ.

[12 : 30] We are called, Do you remember, To be fellow heirs, With Christ. That's the wonder, Of our calling, Do you remember, Back in chapter 8. We are predestined, For glory, Says Paul, To be conformed, To the image, Of his son, The Lord Jesus.

And that's the hope, In which we are saved, And the road, To that glory, Is the road, That we share, Says Paul, In union, With the Lord Jesus himself. The one who did not, Please himself, But became a servant, And bore the weakness, And sin of others, So that he might be glorified, As the savior, As the first born, From many brothers.

We suffer with him, Says Paul, In order that, We might be glorified, With him. And that's, Part of what this means, Says Paul, Here in chapter 15.

You must, Also like Christ, Serve one another's weaknesses. For in doing that, You're not only sharing, In the experience, Of Christ himself, But you're sharing, In Christ's mission.

You're sharing, In bringing, To glorious completion, All the mission of Christ, By calling people, From every nation, To belong to him, Through the power, Of the gospel.

[13 : 49] So serve one another, He says. Serve one another, Because we are united, In that ultimate purpose. That all the world, Will glorify God, For his mercy.

So that at last, Also when he comes, We may finally, Be glorified with him. Now that's the message, Of these two, Paragraphs that we read together, In Romans 15, Verses one to six, And then, Verses seven to thirteen.

As I said, The ESV puts the, Verse seven, In the wrong place, With the paragraph division, Being after it. It should really be before it, As the NIV has. But each, If you look at these paragraphs, Each begins with a command, Which is then explained, By reference to the Lord Jesus, For Christ did not please himself, For Christ became a servant, Then it's reinforced, By quoting scripture, In each case, And then it ends, With a prayer of blessing, Where Paul shows, That not only is this way, Of humble, And of mutual service, The way to glorify God, In our churches, But also, In fact, It's the only way, To find the joy, And the peace, And the harmony, That we all long for, But which we so often, Don't have, Because we're looking for it, The wrong way.

Let's look at this, Section together, And let's see what, What Paul means us to see, First look at verses 1 to 6, Paul is saying, That we must serve one another, Because, He says, The pattern of the Messiah, Is at work in us, That means, Verse 1, That we who are strong, Who grasp most strongly, The liberating power of the gospel, We are to show our liberated power, He says, In bearing, Not the failings, But the weaknesses, Of the weak, Or of the powerless, Literally, Those who are without strength, We're to show it, In bearing with them, And not, In pleasing ourselves, Why is that, The way to show power, And strength, Well it's because, God's power, The power of God, For salvation, Is power, That is for, The weak, And the helpless, Chapter 4, Verse 21, God was powerful,

To do for Abraham, What he promised, When his body was weak, And as good as dead, Chapter 9, Verse 22, God shows his power, By enduring with great patience, Vessels of wrath, In chapter 11, God's mercy, Still woos, Unbelieving Israel, Despite her rejection, Because, Says Paul, God has power, To graft her in again, In chapter 14, Verse 4, He says, God is able, God is powerful, To make the sinner, Stand in righteousness, Before him, God's power, Is a serving power, He stoops, To save, Those who are powerless, To help themselves, Remember Romans chapter 5, While we were still weak, Powerless, Christ died, For the ungodly, And at the very end, Of this letter, In chapter 16, Paul says, That he writes this letter, So that the God,

[17 : 06] Who has power, Will make you strong, Will make you powerful, With his, Kind of power, A power that isn't for status, But for service, In the church, Now, How different, That concept of power is, From the world's concept of power, Isn't it?

The world's concept of power, Is that it's all about, Serving our own interests, It's all about, Pleasing ourselves, And not others, That's the heart, Of this great controversy, Filling our newspapers, At the moment, Isn't it? About the, News Corp, And the politicians, And Rupert Murdoch, And so on, It's all about power, It's all about, Who has power, To influence people, To control others, So that they might gain, Influence and power, For themselves, And isn't that quite often, If we're honest, Isn't that quite often, The way we think about power, And influence in the church, People are keen, Aren't they, To have positions in the church, For power, For the sake of status, For influence, To please ourselves, As how Paul puts it, But now says Paul, The evidence of real power, And real strength, That work in the church, Is where people are powerful, To stoop, To serve others, It was G.K. Chesterton,

Who said, I think we grow taller, When we bow, And Paul says, We have an obligation, To serve one another, Bearing each other's weaknesses, And that means, He says, Negatively, Not pleasing ourselves, And positively, Pleasing our neighbor, For his good, In order to build up, Not just to build him up, But to build everyone up, It's the same words, As chapter 14, Verse 19, It means mutual up building, But why is it an obligation, That we have, To do that, Not just an option, The answer, The answer is in verse 3, For Christ, Did not please himself, Now Paul's not just saying there, Well, We therefore ought to imitate Christ, Of course we should, And of course, That's true, But he's saying much more than that, He's saying that, What makes us Christian at all, Is that we, Have been united, To the Lord Jesus Christ, As a wife, United to a husband,

And that it's, His gracious power, That is at work, In us, That drives us, That animates us, That gives us, Spiritual life, Just turn back for a minute, To chapter 8, Just to see this again, And remind ourselves, What Paul says there, Chapter 8, Verse 10, Paul says in Romans 8, Verse 10, That Christ, Is in you, He says in verse 11, The spirit, Who raised Christ Jesus, From the dead, Is in you, To promise, A certain resurrection, Hope to us, And so then, Verse 12, He says, We are debtors, Same words as in chapter 15, We are under obligation, To be, What we truly are in Christ, Not, To live according to the flesh, He says, That is, Conformed to this world, Thinking about this world's, Power and glory, No, Not like that, But verse 14,

To be led by the spirit of God, As true sons of God, As heirs of God, Who live out the pattern, Of our older brother, The Lord Jesus Christ, Our fellow heir, Provided, Verse 17, Do you see, Provided we suffer with him, In order that we, Will be glorified, With him, Do you see, What Paul's saying, He's saying, We are united, By faith, To Christ, Who is God's, Anointed servant, Who suffered, For the sake of others, Who pleased not, Himself, And we, We are on the same, Road to glory, And we therefore, Share the same experiences, As him, He bore, Our sicknesses, And our diseases, As Matthew, When he quotes Isaiah 53, He bore, His own cross, Says John, In chapter 19, So we also are called, To bear our own cross, Said Jesus,

[21 : 31] And so also, Says Paul, He are called, To bear, The weaknesses, Of others, Serving not ourselves, But serving their good, And their health, And that's genuine, Spiritual power, Because that, Is genuine, Christian discipleship, It's walking, In the way, Of our Savior, Friends, Unless we grasp that, We will find ourselves, As Christians, Very disillusioned, About the Christian life, Many Christians do, They, They look for the power, And the glory, Of this resurrection life, That's promised to us, In the gospel, And they're looking, For a power, And glory, That they don't seem, To have in their own life, Doesn't seem to match, With reality, You see, They haven't read, Romans chapter 8, Or at least not properly, All that is real, But it's not yet, Says Paul, We're saved in hope, We wait, For our full salvation,

Of that glorious, Revealing of our, Resurrection bodies, But for now, We groan, He says, We who have the spirit, In all his present power, In this life, We wait, With patient endurance, As we groan, Because we're in a still suffering world, We live, In a still sinful church, And in still sinful bodies, With still sinful, And often very maddening, Christian brothers and sisters, Let's be honest, And don't we need, Patient endurance, In order to be able to bear, With one another at times, How do we find this, This endurance, This sustaining hope, In the midst of these struggles, As we walk the way, Of the Lord Jesus Christ, Serving, His people, Well, If you look back, At chapter 15, Verse 4, Paul gives the answers, From the scriptures, He says, In everything that was written,

In the past, To give us, Real encouragement, And hope, Because you see, If we understand the Bible, We will see, That our experience, Shouldn't surprise us at all, In fact, It should deeply encourage us, That's why Paul quotes, In verse 3 here, From Psalm 69, The reproach, Of those, Who reproached you, Fell on me, What his point is, Is that this has, Always been the pattern, Of struggle and suffering, For all the Messiah's people, Right from the very beginning, The psalmist David, You see, His experience, Echoed the experience, Of the Messiah, Who is to come, The servant king, Moses 2, Hebrews 11, Tells us, Bore the reproach, Of Christ, Though he considered it, A greater honor, Than all the riches of Egypt, And we also, Says the Hebrews writer there, We also are called, To bear the reproach, That Jesus endured,

Like in the Beatitudes, Jesus himself, Says that to us, Doesn't he? Blessed are you, When others revile you, When others reproach you, Same word, On my account, Blessed are you, Why?

Because it means, That we too, Are therefore serving, Truly, In the pattern, Of the Messiah, It means that, Christ himself, Is truly at work, In us, And that's why, The scriptures, Give us, Such encouragement, And hope, Because they teach us, That none of this struggle, None of the, The patient, Suffering, And serving, Of the saints, In the past, Was ever in vain, It was always used, For God's great purpose, Of his unfolding plan, Preparing for the coming, Of his son, The savior, And the scriptures, They tell us, That none, Of the suffering, Of the Christ himself, Was in vain, Although it seemed to be, At the time, No, It was accomplishing, All God's saving purposes, Forever, And because it tells us, You see, That none of our struggle, And suffering, And serving, In his redeeming pattern, Is for nothing, None of it,

[25 : 50] Because we too, Are caught up, In this great purpose, Preparing for the coming, Of the glory of Christ, Himself, It's been granted, To you, Says Paul to the Philippians, Not only to believe, But also to suffer, For his sake, As he brings, His glorious, Eternal plan, To completion, Through his church, And that's why, Paul prays here, In verses five and six, That God would give, This endurance, And encouragement, Through the scriptures, So that the church, Would live in such, Harmony together, Shaped by grace, That their corporate life, Will be a glorious, Testimony to God, The Savior, Because they are, One in heart, And in mind, And in voice, And it is a, Powerful witness, Isn't it?

When a motley, Crew of people, Of different races, And sexes, And class, And culture, When they are, Brought together, To truly live, In harmony, And in joy, With one another, Serving one another, For Christ's sake, It makes an impact, On people, It's a powerful witness, Great witness, To Christian, And non-Christian alike, To non-Christian friends, And family, When they see, And experience, What the care, And the love, Of a real Christian church, Is to their loved one, In a time of distress, Perhaps of illness, Or a bereavement, Or whatever, It's a great, And powerful witness, It's a powerful witness, To somebody, Who's only ever known, In their own life, And experience, Broken and fractured, Relationships, In their home, In their family, In their community, Hostile relationships, Interracial relationships, Whatever it might be, A powerful witness, When they see, A group of unlikes, Coming together, And serving one another,

In joy, And peace, And the harmony, That comes in Christ, It's living proof, Isn't it? That God, Is remaking, A broken world, When people see, A community, Serving one another, In the pattern of Christ, And that pattern, At work, In us, And isn't that worth, Bearing with one another for?

Isn't that something worth, Not asserting, And pleasing ourselves for, But rather, Pleasing our neighbours, For their good, And for the building up, Of the whole church of Christ, So that together, We truly, In harmony, Sing out to the world, A message, A message of the uniting, Glory of the grace of Christ, And you see, That is what our calling is, In the church of Jesus Christ, As Paul goes on to say, In verses 7 to 13, Serve one another, He says, With a pattern of the Messiah, At work in us, Because, The purpose of the Messiah, Is at work through us, As we do that, Verse 7, Just as Christ welcomed you, By sheer grace, He says, So you, Are to welcome one another, As people of grace, For the glory of God, Because not only, Are you united, To Christ himself, Sharing in his road to glory, You are united, In this marvellous purpose, Of his great salvation too,

We are called, To serve with him, To serve with, God's true, And faithful servant, Until all the peoples, Of this world, Are called to the obedience, Of faith, Until the promise of God, To Abraham at last, Is completely fulfilled, See, God's plan, Is being fulfilled, To a broken and needy world, As his grace, Lives in us, As the church, And overflows from us, To the world, As we live out, This transforming mercy, And as we proclaim, That mercy to the world, And so serving one another, In the church, Serves the purpose of Christ, In the world, For, You see, Verse 8, Christ, Became a servant, Not to the circumcised, Better to translate it, A servant of the circumcision, That is, He became, At last, The faithful servant of God, Who fulfilled the priestly calling, Of God's Israel, To the whole world, He showed God's faithfulness,

[30 : 15] Says Paul, His truthfulness, Confirming the promise, To the patriarchs, And in order, That the Gentiles, The nations, Might glorify God, For his mercy, That at last, In Christ, God's promise, To Abraham, Was fulfilled, That all the families, Of the earth, Would be blessed, Through your offspring, Christ, Is the servant, The true servant, Of God, The servant, Of the circumcision, You remember, Back to Romans chapter 3, Paul asked the question, Well, What was the point, Of circumcision?

And he says, Well, There was plenty point, In circumcision, It signified, The great missionary calling, Of God's people, The Jews were chosen, Says Paul, To shine God's light, To the nations, Of this world, They were entrusted, He says, With the oracles of God, But they were faithless, They broke trust, Circumcision to them, Came to be something, That just led them, Into pride, Into a sense of superiority, To the world, They boasted in the law, They boasted in their, Circumcised status, But they forgot, The whole purpose, Of their calling, And circumcision, Which was to serve, God's salvation, But did their, Did their faithlessness, Did that nullify, The faithfulness of God, Paul asked, Of course not, He said, By no means, No, God's faithfulness, Triumphed, Through Jesus Christ, To whom all the law, And the prophets promised,

So again, You see here in verse 8, That's what he's saying, Christ at last, Became the true servant, Not, To please himself, Not full of pride, As though circumcision, Gave some superior status, No, The opposite, He humbled himself, He did not, Please himself, But he became, A servant, Obedient, Even to death, To accomplish, All that God, Had promised to Abraham, In his circumcision, Romans chapter 4, Remember, Explicitly tells us, That Abraham's circumcision, Had a missionary purpose, The purpose of his, Circumcision, Paul says, Was to make him, The father of all, Who believe, Without being circumcised, So that the righteous, Righteousness of God, Would be counted to them, As well, By faith, That was God's purpose, From the start, And the whole of the Old Testament, Testifies to that, As it is written, Says Paul, And that's what he says here,

In verse 9, As it is written, And can you see, That every one of these quotes, He gives from the Old Testament, From the law, And from the prophets, And from the Psalms, Every one of them, Shows that it was God's purpose, Always, That every nation, Would come, To worship him, Every single passage, He quotes here, Speaks of the, Of the Gentiles, Rejoicing in God's great salvation, Verse 9, It's David's great song of deliverance, In Psalm 18, Where he is delivered, Through suffering, And in that Psalm, He praises God, The rock of Israel, Who vindicates his anointed king, His Messiah, And makes him the ruler, Over the whole world, Praise him among the Gentiles, Chapter, In verse 10, We've got even further back, Moses, Speaking from his song, In Deuteronomy, Chapter 32, Again, About God, The rock of Israel, Whom Israel would reject, But God, Through his great vindication, Of his people,

Would at last, Unite the Gentile nations, With them, So that together, They worship the one God, Of all the earth, Verse 11, Quotes from Psalm 117, That's one of the great, Hallel Psalms, It was sung, At all the great feasts of Israel, In the feast of tabernacles, And Passover, And Pentecost, And it shows you, That right at the very heart, Of the life, Of the Israelite faith, Was a call, To all the Gentiles, All the world, All the peoples, To extol, Their God, The God of Israel, There's only two verses, In that psalm, The very second verse, Goes on and says, For his great, And steadfast love, For his mercy, For his enduring, Faithfulness, Or truthfulness, Is what they praise God for, That's the very, Two things, That Paul puts together, Here in verse 8 and 9, In God's truthfulness, And God's mercy, And the final quote, In verse 12, Is from Isaiah,

[34 : 54] The great prophet, Whose enormous message, Of the reconciliation, And the recreation, Of the whole world, Underlies so much, Of what Paul is expounding, Here in Romans, He speaks here, From Isaiah 11, Where he talks about, The whole of the remnant, Of Israel, Being gathered together, With all the Gentile nations, From the ends of the earth, And it will be fulfilled, He says, As the root of Jesse, The son of David, Arises, To rule, The Gentiles, Remember how, Paul begins, This whole letter, In chapter 1, The gospel of God, He says, Concerning his son, Descended from David, The root of Jesse, And declared, To be the son of God, With power, By his resurrection, From the dead, Now here we are, At the end, The root of Jesse, Risen, To rule the nations, In him, Says Paul, Or the Gentiles hope, See, He's saying,

Christ, At last, Has become, The promised servant, The true, Israel of God, Through whom, The whole destiny, Of God's people, Is fulfilled, He is the light, To the nations, He is the one, That brings, God's salvation, To the very ends, Of the earth, As Isaiah had promised, What Paul is, Saying to the church, In Rome, Is that we are now, In the grand finale, Of all history, That's what's being, Played out, And this, Is what you, Are involved in, As the church, Of Jesus Christ, He says, We are called, To serve with Christ, In his pattern, And for his, Ultimate purpose, We too, In Christ, Have become, Servants of God, True servants, Of the circumcision, Isaiah chapter 61, Speaks of that day, When he calls, To God's people, And says, You will be called, The priests of God, You will be called, The ministers, The servants,

Of our God, We'll see, Later on, In chapter 15, That Paul uses, Exactly that language, Of his own, Missionary task, In verse 16, Of chapter 15, We are ministers, He said, Servants of Christ, In our priestly service, Of the gospel, But his whole purpose, You see, In writing to the church, In Rome, Is that they will see, That they have a place, In that, To strive together, With him, In partnership, In that mission, And we also, Today, Still share, That same calling, Chapter 1, Again, Paul says, I am obligated, To preach, The gospel, To all, To the Jews, And to the Gentiles, That's my priestly service, And we too, Paul says here, Are obligated, As a Christian church, We are called, Not to be pleasers, Of ourselves, But through serving, As Christ served, To share his purpose, By living as lights,

In this dark world, So that the world, Will see, The power, Of our glorious savior, They'll see it, At work, Amongst us, And they'll know, That the gospel of Christ, That we preach, Really is, The power of God, For salvation, For restoring, The mess, Restoring, The sinfulness, The selfishness, Of this world, The self-pleasing, The self-glory, The God denying, That's the essence, Of sin, Isn't it?

That's, What Paul says, In chapter one, It's the root, Of all the destructive, Forces in our world, That destroys families, And friendships, And marriages, And communities, And nations, But you see, Christ-like, Serving one another, Not ourselves, Christ-like, Serving in a church, That's marked by joy, And peace, And believing, That's focused, On the hope, Of the fullness, Of glory to come, That's a living witness, In this world, Of the real, Transforming power of God, That alone, Can ultimately, Transform the power of sin, And can remake, This world, As it's meant to be, And if we live like that, Says Paul, Verse 13, Our hope will abound, It will overflow, Into a needy world, That's the power, That overflows, That overflows, Into this world, When we, Like Jesus, Don't please ourselves,

[39 : 27] But when we live, As servants, Serving one another, United, In willing self-sacrifice, For one ultimate purpose, For the glory of God, As people, From every nation, Come to serve, And to find, Our hope in Christ, I ask again, Isn't that something, Worth living for?

Isn't that something, Worth loving, One another for? Even, Even when it's difficult, To love one another, Above ourselves, Even when we find it hard, Even when we, Disagree with one another, And have different views, Isn't that worth, Loving one another for?

For this great goal? It must be, But it's hard, Isn't it? We want to, But it's such a struggle, In these bodies of sin, And in a church, Full of sinners like us, But don't despair, Says Paul, You can, And you will, Serve one another, In the pattern of the Messiah, And for the purpose, Of the Messiah, Because he tells us here, In verse 13, And all the way through, This passage really, That the power of the Messiah, Is at work, Among us, Don't miss the end of verse 13, We need, Great endurance, And encouragement, And above all hope, If we are, Ever to be people, Who are filled with real joy, And peace, And believing, But you see, Paul can pray these things, For the church in Rome, In verse 5, And again in verse 13, Because God has given us power, He says, The power of the Holy Spirit, Himself, It was the Holy Spirit,

Who anointed Jesus, With power for service, In his baptism, It was the Holy Spirit, Who helped Jesus, Offer himself up, On the cross, For our salvation, It was through the Holy Spirit's power, We're told, That he was raised to life, And it's by the Holy Spirit's power, In us, That we together, Will not only hope, Says Paul, But we will abound in hope, Overflow, In hope to the world, That we will become, Ministers of hope, Servants of hope, In a hopeless world, There's a marvelous passage, In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, Where Paul says so wonderfully, That although we in ourselves, Have nothing, Our sufficiency, He says, Comes from the Holy Spirit, Who makes us sufficient, To be servants, Of this new covenant, See the power, Of the servant king, Is at work for us, And in us,

And among us, By his spirit, However hopeless, We feel as witnesses of Jesus, By the power, Of the Holy Spirit, Among us, He says, We can abound, And overflow, With this hope, And if together, We will allow, The spirit of Jesus, To lead us, In the pattern of Jesus, Then his power, Will be at work, Through us, To fulfill, The purpose of Jesus, Even through, People like us, But you know, The spirit, Empowers people, As he leads them, To obey, The words, Of Jesus, The path to power, The path to real spiritual power, For any Christian, For any church, Is the path of obedience, The obedience, The obedience of faith, The submission, Of all true spirituality, Obedience, To the spirit's words,

[43 : 09] Here, Bear with the weaknesses, Of those, Without strength, Among you, Don't please yourselves, Please your neighbor, For his good, For the upbuilding, Of the whole church, Live in harmony, With one another, Welcome one another, These are the words, On the path to power, Serve one another, Says the spirit of God, To us, Because you're united, In one purpose, To glorify God, For his mercy, To glorify, The father, Of our Lord Jesus Christ, That's the path, To spiritual power, Now the Christian world, Friends, Today is full, Of any number of methodologies, Offering power, Power to grow your church, Power to impact your culture, Power to freshen your experience, Power to bring revival, And on and on and on and on, Conferences are full of it, The internet, Is full of it, You can find it everywhere, But the apostle Paul,

When he writes to a church, Strategically placed, At the heart of a great city, To empower them, In their missionary zeal, He doesn't talk about, Any of those things, What Paul says, Is much more simple, Isn't it?

Live together, Like this, He says, In such harmony, With one another, In Christ Jesus, Because like Jesus, You don't please yourselves, But you become, True missionary servants, To the world, Live like this, And you will unleash, Real power, Gospel power, Witnessing power, Converting power, Live like this, With one voice, Unitedly, Bringing glory to God, And you will bring glory to God, Not only in demonstrating, That uniting, Restoring power of God, To outsiders, Arresting them, And drawing them in, But experiencing yourselves, The joy, And the peace in believing, That will encourage, Everybody's faith, And will instruct, And strengthen everyone, And help us, To work for the day, When the, The marvelous, Reconciliation, Of all things, Will be complete,

When Christ himself, Will return in glory, Live like this, And we'll see power, Can we be a church like that?

Notice that Paul says, That this strengthening, Of endurance, And unity, And hope in service, That we need, It comes from, The God of endurance, And hope, He says, Verse 5, The God of hope, Verse 13, It comes by, The power of the Holy Spirit, It comes through, The encouragement, Of the scripture, And it comes in answer, To Paul's prayer, In verse 5, And in verse 13, That's always the pattern, Isn't it?

[46 : 15] That's always the way to power, From God, By the spirit, Through the scriptures, In answer to prayer, Nothing complicated, Very simple, The spirit, Empowers us for service, As he calls us, To grasp, More and more, Of the wonderful, Mercies of God, By prayerfully feeding on Christ, In all the scriptures, And that's why, Paul wrote Romans, That's why we're studying Romans, Haven't you sensed, Sure you have, That as we've fed on these words, Over many months, The marvelous grace, And the mercy of God, Has been shaping us together, Has been humbling us together, Under his grace, Numbers of you have said to me, Just how surprised, You've been at how practical, This great theological letter, Of Paul's is, And so it has been, That's because there's nothing, More practical, Nothing that will shape us, And challenge us, And empower us, More,

Than discovering more, Of the depths, Of the glory of Christ, And his gospel, And the mercy, That fills us, With true and lasting hope, That's the path to power, Well, As we come to the end, Of, Of, Of, Paul's main exposition, In this letter, Then may the God of peace, Go on filling us, With joy, And with peace, And believing, So that the power, Of his Holy Spirit, Might overflow, In us, And our hope, Might indeed, Overflow, To this world, So we may serve, One another, In the power of his spirit, More and more, For the glory of God, Let's make that our prayer, As a church, In this coming week, Amen,