

**The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript**  
**Episode 50**  
**Romans, Part 23 (Rom 15:1-13)**  
**January 23, 2024**

**Teacher: Matthew Halsted**

**Episode Summary:**

In Romans 14-15, Paul appeals to his christological convictions to help believers learn how to navigate for themselves life within a church full of different opinions. But he does this by way of appealing to Scripture, particular to Psalm 68 (LXX) in Romans 15. Matt argues that Paul's use of Scripture here -- like the many times before in Romans -- occurs within the context of a story so important to Paul, namely, the story of God's plan to use Israel to bless the nations (Genesis 12). This episode takes listeners through Romans 15:1-13 while revisiting the concept of a "storied approach" to Scripture. In doing so, one better sees how the story Paul tells was envisioned by him to impact life within the community of God.

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Pre-order Matt's newest book, *The End of the World As You Know It*. You can purchase through (1) Amazon or (2) Lexham Press (as well as other outlets).

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**Transcript:**

0:00 Hey friends. Welcome back to another episode of The Bible Unmuted. My name is Matt Halstead, and it is a pleasure to be with you once again this week as we continue our series through the Book of Romans. It's coming down to the wire. We are nearing the end. There is light at the end of the tunnel in our series on the Book of Romans. And I'm kind of sad about it because I really, really enjoy Romans, and I hope that you have too. I hope that it's been an encouragement to you. I hope it's giving you a lot of things to think about. I hope that you've seen new scenes on the pages of Romans. But it's sad because we're finishing up. Today we're in Romans 15 and there's only 16 chapters. So we'll do the first half of Romans 15 today and then we'll finish up probably... I think we have about two more episodes left in this series. So we'll wrap it up in the weeks ahead.

But a couple things... First, I want to say is that today is a special day in the life of The Bible Unmuted because it's episode 50; and I don't know, for some reason that that feels like a success.

It's funny because there was a part of me, I suppose, where I thought, "Okay, I'm probably going to do like 10 episodes and then this thing's going to peter out." But here we are - 50 episodes. That's pretty cool. Yeah. I don't know. I mean, I was pretty committed to it when I first started this. I'm like, okay, "I'm in this for the long haul. We're going to have fun. We're going to enjoy doing this." So, we're coming up on about, I guess, one year's time. It seems like, I don't remember the exact date, but I think we started in February of 2023, and this will be out on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, of 2024. So yeah, we're coming up on that 12 month mark a one-year anniversary. Fifty episodes! So yeah, it's pretty cool. Thanks to everybody who's been listening. I'm super thankful for each and every one of you. And it's fun to get emails and messages from folks who tell me that they really like this content; and I tell you that that's really encouraging to me because I've just dedicated my life to teach the Bible. And I've been doing this for a long time and I was in full time ministry for about 13-ish years or thereabouts. And you know, I'm teaching at the undergrad level. So it's still ministry; I still see all of this as ministry, teaching scripture. It's just so much fun. I just can't tell you how much fun it is. And I know many of you teach the Bible too. And you feel the same way. And there's just a privilege to lead folks in Scripture and to lead discussions and stuff. So yeah, it's been a lot of fun. So thank you all for being listeners and supporting the podcast. It just brings me a lot of encouragement because of when I hear folks who who've enjoyed the content. So thanks so much. So this is episode 50...kind of a birthday I guess. It's not really a birthday but podcast is one years old so that's pretty cool. Anyway so by God's grace we'll keep going and I'm looking forward to the next round of 50 episodes.

3:27 And, speaking of future episodes, guys, I'm so excited about this - we have a great lineup of guests coming up starting next week. I've spoken about this before. I've given you some sneak peeks as to who's coming on the show. We're going to have Robert Alter, the one and the only, Robert Alter. He's going to be on the show, we're going to chat this week, and I'm looking forward to recording; and that will come out a week from this episode. So it'd be like episode 51. So what a great, great way to kick things off for the next round of 50 episodes. So many of you know, Robert Alter, not too long ago finished a translation of the Hebrew Bible. And we actually use his translation at my school for our Hebrew Bible courses. I'm really thankful to get him on the show. We're going to have a lot of fun chatting about his scholarship, and just getting his take on the Hebrew Bible. I've got a range of questions. We'll just see how it goes. I'm just super stoked about it.

You know, it's kind of funny... I'm such a nerd, and I've always been too school for cool. You know what I mean? And so I totally nerd out when it comes to having guests on the show because I read their books and then I get them on the show, and it's a lot of fun.

So Robert is coming up and followed by a Barel Dov Lerner who's fantastic book, I finished it a couple weeks ago, it is just a great book on the interdisciplinary book on western philosophy and some philosophical concepts brought to bear up on the Hebrew Bible. And it's a super, super cool to have Barel on the show. I can't wait to ask him a ton of questions. I'm thinking depending on how long that conversation goes that it might be a couple of episodes in and of itself, because I have a ton of questions, It'll be a lot of fun. So if you haven't checked out any of his work, I highly recommend his latest book. I don't have it here in front of me, so I can't remember the title...it's on the tip of my tongue anyway. Anyway, just go Google it, Amazon it... Barel Dov Lerner and you'll be blessed by it. His book definitely gives you something to think about. To be honest, even I don't track with him on everything, and so I look forward to diving into some of those discussions more so maybe I can learn more about this stuff. I actually emailed him. I told him, "Even if somebody doesn't track with what you say, some of your exegetical conclusions, you still have a book that man is really good. You're giving people so much to think about it." And as someone like myself, and you guys know this too about yourself, when you are too school for cool, you just love good content. And even if you're not going to track with it completely, even if you don't completely agree with what maybe a scholar has done or said or whatever, when it's good content

it doesn't matter if you agree or not. It's just so stimulating to interact with, and you learn something even though you may not agree with it per se.

Even Robert Alter, he makes some translation choices that I would quibble about, but all of his translation choices are just super interesting. And so I love having guests on the show who have this ability to push us to think deeper, more carefully, and critically about the text. That's my passion. That's my goal anyway for this podcast is to really develop the rhythm of having content on here whether it's from me or from guests, or whatever that's done on the podcast. I want it to be done well, and I want I want us to really think critically about things that maybe we haven't thought about before; and it doesn't mean we all have to agree with one another. If you guys know me by now, you know that agreement is not a requirement for friendship. I love having people on the show that I don't agree with necessarily. That's my passion for this podcast, and for my life. And I know it's your passion too. You don't want surface level stuff. You want to get to the heart of the issue. You want to look at things on a deep level. And that's how we should all be, right? That's what we should pursue.

So anyway, all to say this is going to be so many cool conversations about the Hebrew Bible, and philosophy. I have a philosophy background too. And my PhD even was interdisciplinary. I used the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer and brought his philosophical reflections to bear upon the New Testament. And I just have a passion for anybody who does that in their work. So Barel's work is going to be fantastic.

We also as I said before I have a great lineup of New Testament scholars, too. So we really got the treat we got some great Hebrew Bible stuff coming up and some great New Testament stuff coming up. I've got Steve Walton coming on the podcast. I'm not sure when this one will drop per se, but Steve's an excellent scholar, just fantastic. I've known him for several years and he's currently working on the Acts commentary for *The Word Biblical Commentary Series*, which if you know anything about that commentary series, you know it's the real deal. I highly, highly recommend this commentary series - *Word Biblical Commentary*. So he's going to do the Acts commentary and I think it's a two volume set. So when it's out, it'll be a two volume set. So I'm really looking forward to talking with him about that. I'll even bring in some questions about the study of Paul. Like, what can we learn about Paul, the historical Paul from the book of Acts? So I think that will be a lot of fun to chat about. Of course, we'll talk about some ecclesiology stuff and maybe pick his brain about what was the early church's practice and thought about say, church planting; and what was their approach to church structure? We'll get into all that kind of stuff. That'll be a lot of fun.

And then last but not least, we're going to have David deSilva on the on the program. I actually don't have a date yet when we're recording. But he's going to be on the show. We're going to talk about all things Revelation. You know, he's written a lot on Revelation. He's done work on the Apocrypha. That'll be so much fun, too. We'll have to pick his brain on that. We might have to do a two-hour series or something and split that one up, too. So many things to talk about. I could do 50 episodes on just one topic, I think. But anyway, I've got a great lineup. Super excited about that and we'll have a lot of fun.

10:38 So today we are in Romans, (almost said revelation jumping ahead, right?), we're in Romans chapter 15 and we're going to split it in half. We're going to just look at the first 13 verses today. As I was writing up this this study today, I just thought it would be best to split that because there's just a lot of material we'd have to rush through, and I don't really want to rush through it. I mean the goal has always been through this Romans series to keep a 30,000-foot view. I never really wanted to get into the weeds too much; not because it's not important to do – it is - but because I think when it comes to Romans, and I'll mention more about this in the episode here, but when it comes to Romans, one mistake we often make is getting too much into the details that we forget

the story that Paul is writing; the canvas that Paul is painting on. And I didn't want to do that because I think with Romans we get so caught up in disputes about *dikaiosuné* and I mean we should I could talk about *dikaiosuné*, (righteousness), and we should talk about all those things. And we should you know go a million miles deep on those topics, but for this series I wanted to tell a story. What is Paul doing? What is the large picture about Jew Gentile relations, and the faithfulness of the Messiah, and how that brings about the covenant renewal all those sorts of things. So I want to stay up there and I think in this episode, actually, you're going to see why. You're going to see why that storied approach to Romans is important because in many ways it kind of bottlenecks here in Romans 14 and 15.

It's going to be fun episode today, because we're going to talk about all that. But we're also going to get into eschatology a little bit because I think eschatology is a feature here in this text. So we'll see how all that works in together. Well, without further ado, let's dive into Romans 15:1-13.

12:35 Let's begin by reading vv 1-7.

**Romans 15:1–13 (NRSV):**

**15 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. 3 For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6 so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.**

13:30 Okay, so that's verses 1 through 7. And it's reading from, as always, the New Revised Standard Version. So, where do we begin? Well, first, there's several things we need to attend to in this passage. So First off, you'll notice that this part goes very much with what we looked at last week in Romans 14. So for example, v 7 where it says, "*Welcome one another. Therefore just as Christ is welcomed you for the Lord of God*" that verse bookends the entire conversation that began in Romans 14. So again, Romans 14:1 says, "*Welcome those who are weak in faith,*" and now in Romans 15:7 we see, "*Welcome one another therefore just as Christ is welcomed you for the Lord of God.*" So that's what I mean that this book ends itself. You have a nice little passage start and finish here.

That was another reason why I said last week that Romans 14 and Romans 15 actually go together. They are two chapters which are part of the same section of thought, and in fact by the time you get to Romans 15:7 where it talks about Christ welcoming people, it becomes clear that this is the natural conclusion that Paul must reach. After all, Paul spent a large part of Romans 14 talking about how God has welcomed people into the church through the work of Christ. That is to say through his death and his resurrection. And we talked about how Paul conceived of the work of God through the lens of his messianic beliefs, and how Paul's ethical exhortations or christologically derived. We talked about that last week. We'll see more of that here this week.

15:17 So the second thing to notice is that there's a quotation from the Old Testament here in v 3. So let me reread vv 1 - 3 once again. "***We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. 3 For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is***

**written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”**” So the reason, says Paul, that the strong ought to be patient with the weak is because they should not be preoccupied with pleasing themselves. Why not? Well, because Christ did not please himself. And to back up that claim Paul quotes from Psalm 68:10 from the Septuagint when he says, **as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”**” So this quotation draws lots of questions and attention from scholars. So for example, why would Paul quote this verse instead of appealing directly to the death and resurrection of Jesus? In context, the psalmist is begging God to save him, and it’s a lament that he makes because of the persecution he’s receiving at the hands of apparently close friends.

Let me read Psalm 68:1-10 from the Lexham English Septuagint translation. Let me read from that so that we can kind of set the context of the Psalm itself. Now note that in the Hebrew Bible this is actually Psalm 69 in the Septuagint Greek version and this is Psalm 68. So there’s a difference in versification here. Anyway I’ll be reading from the Lexham English Septuagint vv 1-10. It says,

**Ps 68:1–10 LES For the end, on behalf of those who are being changed, by David.**

**2 Save me, O God,**

**because waters entered unto my soul.**

**3 I was planted in the mud of the deep,  
and there was no substance.**

**I came into the depth of the sea,  
and the storm drowned me.**

**4 I grew weary of crying aloud; my throat was sore.**

**My eyes were forsaken by coming near to my God.**

**5 Those who hate me for nothing increased more than the hairs of my head;  
my enemies, those who persecute me unjustly, were strengthened.**

**What things I did not seize,  
then I repaid.**

**6 O God, you knew my folly and my trespasses;  
they are not hidden from you.**

**7 May those who wait upon you not be put to shame because of me,  
O Lord, Lord of armies.**

**May those who seek you not be shamed because of me,  
O God of Israel,**

**8 because on account of you I bore reproach;  
shame covered my face.**

**9 I became a stranger to my brothers,  
and a foreigner to the children of my mother,**

**10 because the zeal of your house devours me,  
and the reproach of those who revile you fell upon me.**

So clearly the psalmist is going through a very difficult time. On the account of God himself, apparently, the psalmist says that he bore reproach. And as a result, he became a stranger to his brothers and a foreigner to the children of his mother. So there’s a feeling of alienation from those who are close to him. The reproach that he is bearing is one that he is not bearing in his own strength, though; because after all, he’s taking that complaint to God. He’s taking his struggle, his anguish, his feeling of despair, all of it, is being taken to his God.

So why does Paul use this Psalm as part of the speech of Jesus? And what does that have anything to do with the issue that Paul is addressing? I think it’s clear that Paul thinks he can use this Psalm as, say, lyrics of sorts for Jesus because of what he already believes about Jesus, and what Jesus has accomplished in his crucifixion. In other words, Paul’s christological horizon of understanding serves as a sort of path into the Psalm. It helps him to discover fresh meaning in

light of what he already believes about Jesus. Now second, it's important to note, I think, that Paul's christological horizon is at least in part, something bequeathed to him from the Jesus tradition. And it's not just from his own personal revelations of Christ. For example, this Psalm, the one that we've just read, that passage, the whole chapter; it is deeply enmeshed in the larger Jesus tradition and testimonies that we find in other writers of the New Testament. Notice, for example, how this Psalm is quoted or alluded to by other early Christians. Take John 2:17 for instance, and how it's used in that passage to describe the actions of Jesus. You might remember this passage. It is there when the disciples saw Jesus cleansing the temple and the text says that "*they remembered that in the scriptures it was written, "zeal for your house will consume me,"*" which is a quotation from Psalm 68:10 as well.

20:28 Now notice too that there is probably an allusion to Psalm 68:22. That's the verse that says, "*and they gave gall for my food and they gave me vinegar for my drink.*" There's probably an allusion to that in the crucifixion narratives where Jesus was offered wine mixed with gall. So for example look at Matthew 27:34. Early Christians apparently noticed how there were certain events associated with Jesus' life and his death that bore remarkable resemblance with the text of Psalm 68 (or the Hebrew Bible 69). And fast forward to Paul's own situation of writing to the Romans, he can easily find in this Psalm a saying that is quite consistent with what he already believes about Jesus. The point with using this Psalm I think is this: sometimes following God requires sacrifice. I think that's the point of Paul's use of the psalm, I should say. Christ's own sacrifice on the cross was costly to him personally; and it is the epitome of this point, the point that sometimes following God requires sacrifice. He sacrificed himself for the sake of others. In Jesus' case, he did it in the midst of enemies who were mocking him, who were alienating him, who were murdering him; and obviously it goes without saying that would have been tough to go through.

And the application for the Roman church seems apparent at this point. I mean, it was a church mixed with all sorts of opinions, various beliefs about dietary restrictions and other legal questions pertaining to Torah. What Paul wants to say to them is, you have to bear with one another, especially for those who are strong in the faith; those of you who believe that you have a certain level of liberty when it comes to these issues, you have a responsibility to bear with those brothers and sisters whose consciences don't permit such leeway. And in terms of modern-day application, I think there are perhaps a million different avenues we could explore here. But suffice it to say, I think Paul would envision a church that is self-sacrificial for one another; that while there may be disagreements, there should always be unity. If Jesus can endure the insults of his enemies, then surely the church can endure patiently with their brothers and sisters over these sorts of matters.

23:03 Next, I want to talk about eschatology. Why so? Well, because I think that's where Paul takes us in v 4. Let me read that verse once again. **4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.** So where do I get eschatology here? Well, I think that we can catch a glimpse of Paul's understanding of eschatology as it relates to his christology.

Let me unpack this a bit. I might take a minute, but let's unpack it. We're going to visit 1 Corinthians 10 to help us to see what's going on. So let me just back up here. So for Paul, as well as other Christians, the coming of Jesus marked a significant moment in human history. Jesus' advent brought about a decisive change in the history of God's dealing with humanity. Paul says this most markedly, I think, in 1 Corinthians 10 where Paul says that it is on the Christ people that, "*the ends of the ages have come.*" For those of us who grew up in evangelicalism, this might seem rather strikingly odd. We, after all, are accustomed to thinking about the end as that moment on the calendar near the final events of human history. It's all about the future, in other words, but for the early Christians, that's not really how it worked out.

They talk about the end with very different connotations, I think. It had more to do with the person and the work of Jesus than the final events. Now, of course, many early Christians, no doubt, thought that they were living somewhere near the final events of history; and that's okay because every Christian has the right, and I would actually say the responsibility to anticipate the Lord's consummation of history. But of course, we know that through the passing of time, Jesus has delayed his *parousia*. He has delayed his showing up. And I think a careful rating of all the relevant text of the New Testament testified to the fact that there would be an undesignated amount of time between the two advance of Jesus; between the first and the second coming of Christ. So what that means is, the end is itself a concept that encapsulates the person of Jesus.

25:27 Like I say in my new book, *The End of the World, As You Know It*, the concept of the end is not so much a reference to the final events (though it sometimes is); the concept of the end is not a time per se, but it's actually about a person. Jesus, after all, is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the, you guessed it, the end. So the so in the entire logic kind of works like this: if Jesus is the end, then his people, regardless of when they might be living, whether that be in the first century or the twenty-first; Jesus' people are participants in the end. How does that make sense? Well, we have already seen in Romans chapter 6 that we are participants in the body of Christ; we are in union with him by virtue of our baptism. Go back and read Romans chapter 6. And we are therefore his body, doing his work on this earth; and so we too participate in the work of the eschaton. It is truly upon the Christ people whom the ends of the ages have come. The question is, how are we being faithful to carry out the work that he's giving us to do? Are we faithful to actually be his hands and feet? Good question, but let's get back to the hermeneutics of it all.

For Paul, because we are the people in whom the ends of the ages have come, we can look back at the at the revelation of the Old Testament texts, and all the stories, and read them as having a particular christological relevance. This is what happens in 1 Corinthians 10. Go back and read that chapter. It's fascinating how Paul read the Hebrew story of the exodus; as a faithful Jew who believes Jesus is the Messiah, Paul reads it in light of the Jewish Messiah, in light of Jesus. And So check out that that chapter. I think it's really helpful and important.

And I think the same idea is present in Romans 15:4, "*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.*" So the scriptures are, for Paul, sources of instruction, and encouragement, and hope; they take on relevance for the Jesus people precisely because for Paul, he sees Jesus as fulfilling all those stories. And since we Gentiles are all united to Jesus, we participate in those stories as well. That's why I think Paul will say later what he does in Romans 15:13 he says, "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" Now, this this abounding in hope and joy and peace. And that happens through *pistis*, through the act of faith through being loyal to Jesus as the Messiah. So it's christological. And I say this a lot, not for you with the concept of christology, but simply because it's a concept that is weaved in and through the entirety of Paul's thought.

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29:50 Actually, what I think I'm going to do is we're going to read through 1 Corinthians 10 in just a moment. We're going to dive into that because I really want you to see how 1 Corinthians 10 factors into this larger discussion about the way Paul thought about eschatology with respect to his christology; which helped him to go back to read these Old Testament texts in ways in the ways that he did. And so I think by the end, it'll all make sense but kind of put a pin in that. We're going to come back to that in a moment. For now, let's just jump into this final little passage that we're going to explore vv 8-13. Let me read 8-13, and then we'll continue our discussion.

***Romans 15:8–13 (NRSV): 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,***  
***“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,***  
***and sing praises to your name”;***  
***10and again he says,***  
***“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;***  
***11and again,***  
***“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,***  
***and let all the peoples praise him”;***  
***12and again Isaiah says,***  
***“The root of Jesse shall come,***  
***the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;***  
***in him the Gentiles shall hope.”***  
***13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.***

So I could seriously spend a ton of time on just vv 8-9; specifically on the grammar and some of the translation issues that come up. But like I said before, my goal in this podcast series is to keep us around the 30,000-foot ceiling level so that we can get a wide angled view of the situation. So we're not going to jump into all those details. That's a great thing to do, but my goal here is to do something slightly different.

So as I said before, one mistake that people make with Romans is that they get so caught up in the weeds that they miss the bigger story being told. And as I said about justification, we get into the weeds of that. I'm not against getting into the weeds of justification or any of those particular topics that come up in Romans. You've got to get into the weeds. I get that. If there's anything that the past 500 years has taught us, it's that we've got to get into the weeds. And I'm obviously thinking here of the endless debates about justification in our post reformation world. Those are good. I like those debates. But for this series, again, we need to keep things in that wide angle



format. And you'll see why. Because there's a story that Paul is telling through Romans and you cannot see the story in the weeds. You've got to go about 30,000 feet up and you'll see the story. And in a moment, I'm going to take you through that story and you'll see why that story is important.

32:35 But let me just start with this question: how does this help us understand the section...this Romans 15:8-13 section? You know, what is the story have to do with any of this? Well, here's how I understand the situation. When Paul says in v 8, "*For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*" When Paul says all of that, I think he's referring to the way in which Christ has embodied the vocation of Israel to bring about the salvation to the world. That's the story that Paul thinks Jesus is embodying. Jesus has confirmed the promises made to the patriarchs. Again, we know these as the covenants and by means of those covenants, Jesus has brought Gentiles into the community of God's family.

You'll recall early on in the podcast in this series I talked about the Genesis 11-12 narrative. I need to rehash that once again here. I've mentioned this before. When it comes to that Genesis 11-12 narrative, the story to push the scripture, I'm hugely indebted to N.T. Wright for bringing this to our attention here. I've talked about that a lot. And so I just want to give credit to him where credit is due; that his storied approach has really helped me think through this this subject specifically. This particular story I'm about to tell here N.T. Wright is just the boss when it comes to that.

So let's go back when you when you get to Genesis let's go back to Genesis you remember that Genesis 12 is where God first calls Abraham to be the person through whom the nations would be blessed. In the story of Genesis as a whole this chapter 12 has a special narrative function because you can actually divide Genesis into two complete different sections: Genesis 1-11 and Genesis 12-50. Scholars often refer to Genesis 1-11 as universal history, and Genesis 12-50 they often refer to that as patriarchal history. So this leads a point of difference, a pivot point if you will, at Genesis 11 and 12. It's because it's there where this switch in thought happens, this change in the gear so to speak; it's all there that takes place at Genesis 11 and 12. I think that what happens there, this story that happens in Genesis 11 and 12 is a story that is carried on into the New Testament.

So if you read Genesis 1-11 very carefully you'll notice that it's the story of humanity; It's the story of everyone. God creates a good world. He creates humans to be its caretakers, humans take no care of their calling, and they plunge the world into chaos. You know the story. I know the story. The first human pair are only the beginning though; their descendants get worse and worse. Then you've got the serpent; and it's not just by human rebellion, but you have this spiritual creature, and he gets involved. There's a spiritual rebellion in Genesis chapter six that totally makes matters worse, and then between chapter 6 and 11 it's like total anarchy-chaos, but then something remarkable happens in Genesis 12. That's where God calls a family to be a blessing to the nations of the world. Why? Well because the nations were put under a curse. The Tower of Babel, and they needed healing. And so that's where the shift occurs; there's a shift in focus, that occurs here in Genesis 12.

Genesis 1-11 is all about humanity then then chapter 12 through 50 that really begins to focus on the Jewish family; the family of Abraham. Abraham is a pretty important guy. And as it turns out when you read Genesis 12-50, and through the Hebrew Bible as a whole, you discover that the family through which the world was to be healed; they actually need healing as well. Sadly, Israel shows itself to be in sin too, just like the world. And so that creates a dilemma, a fun issue, if you will. It's an issue for God to work out because Israel cannot rescue the world, and that's a problem. Why? Because God promised Abraham that he would use his family to rescue this world. He

cannot scrap that plan unless of course God shows himself to be unfaithful to the promise. But God cannot be unfaithful to the promise. It is against his nature, so God must use Israel to do the job. And so what God needs to do is find a faithful Israelite. And all throughout the Hebrew Bible there are clues that this is what God is going to do.

37:29 In Isaiah, take Isaiah for example. You have. The servant figure. He's clearly identified as Israel. The servant is Israel and this makes sense because Israel is God's entity that he will use to be of service and ministry to the world. And yet also in Isaiah, we get glimpses of how this servant figure is someone who will actually rescue Israel. And Long story short, there's a man who shows up years later. He's on the scene, and his name is Jesus of Nazareth. And according to Matthew's gospel, he begins doing things that appear to reenact the story of Israel. You've noticed this, right? We've talked about it before. Jesus as a baby, flees to Egypt with the Holy Family, and then they return home pretty much like an exodus. Matthew calls it an exodus in a sense. Jesus is baptized in the Jordan. He's tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. He stands on a mountain and declares the commandments of God. Jesus identifies himself as a servant, a foot washer of everyone who had come to him. Jesus ministers to not just Jews, but also Gentiles. He, like Israel, is exiled outside of Jerusalem to die, but as Ezekiel promised, Israel is resurrected; the dead bones live again in Jesus; the story of Easter. And it's in the story of Jesus that we see the story of Israel. Why? Because God promised to use Israel to rescue the world. He promised to use Israel to resurrect the world and to lead it out of its bondage, and back home. And in this way, Jesus is the rescuer of the nations by being the one who fulfills the covenants made to the patriarchs. In other words, by fulfilling the covenants, Jesus has rescued Israel and fulfilled Israel's vocation to rescue the Gentiles. He's done it all. He's done it all at once.

Now, in light of that story, let's go back re-read Romans 15:8-9.

***Romans 15:8–9 (NRSV): 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy***

I mean, that sounds like the Genesis 11 and 12 narrative, does it not? The rescue of the world cannot happen apart from the Old Testament covenant promises. That's so important to remember.

I want to say something and this is super important. Christianity is not a thing apart from the Jewish story. As Jesus says in the Gospels, salvation is of the Jews; salvation comes through the Jewish story. And that is good news for everyone. Jew and Gentile salvation can come to the Jews themselves, rescuing them from the exile of sin. And it can rescue the Gentiles in that way too; through the Jewish people. In this way, God has fulfilled his mission to restore the world through the family of Abraham; and the Gentiles praise him for it. This is why Paul will quote a litany of Old Testament passages in Romans 15:9-12. Those passages speak about Gentiles praising the Lord. These passages occur in the context of Paul's christological understanding of salvation history. There's a lot more to be said about this litany, about the passages is sited, but again, I think it's best to let ourselves hover over the big story at 30,000 feet and just admire what Paul is doing here. I think the big story is worth contemplation. It's worth our awe. I think it's a beautiful thing that Paul is doing, and it's within that context; this story that I've just related, it's in that context that Paul says what he says in Romans 15:13, "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*"

Here's the application to the situation at Rome. If it is through Christ that the world is reconciled as one family, then shouldn't that one family get along over matters such as questions related to dietary habits? Shouldn't the church be a preview of the New Jerusalem? Paul cannot imagine it

otherwise. And that's why he says for the church to "*welcome one another, for Christ has welcomed us all of us, Jew and Gentile.*"

41:50 One question a person might have is how do we know Paul is thinking along the lines of this story? I mean, I suppose someone might say to me, "Matt, how do you know Paul himself is thinking along the lines of this story, this Genesis 11 and 12 narrative?" Well, that's a good question. And I would answer this briefly by pointing out a few things. First, we all think in terms of a story, Paul included. Nobody wants to make nobody who wants to make sense of data, passes on information in that data at random, in piece meal. Nobody does that. Everything we say, for example, has a context in which we speak. Communication involves not just words, but also a living context in which those words can come alive; in which those words can make sense. And this is what one might call a story. Now, it doesn't mean that the stories in which we speak are correct. Perhaps we get our contexts or our narratives wrong. That happens all the time, in fact. And so we should always be willing and ready to critique our traditions. The stories we've been told, the narratives we've been given, and passing on; we should be open to critique. But no mistake about it, we always have a tradition in which we live in; through which we communicate. So conceptually, there's nothing illogical about me, as a biblical scholar, seeking to situate Paul's words in Romans within the particular story. That story, which makes the best sense to me, is the Genesis 11 and 12 story, the Genesis 11 and 12 narrative that I've mentioned before.

Let me just say here a little footnote that if you do want to go deeper into this storied approach to the New Testament again, check out N.T. Wright's, *The New Testament and The People of God*, published in 1992 by Fortress Press. I highly recommend that you go check it out. I've mentioned Wright a million times and for good reason. I mean, it's a great in depth introduction, this book *The New Testament and The People of God*, it's a great in-depth introduction into the sort of hermeneutics that I find persuasive. I don't agree with Wright on everything, though I think he's a fantastic scholar and on this stuff, I think he's largely correct. So go check that out.

So again, first thing I'd say is broadly speaking, conceptually speaking, we all operate within stories, Paul included. Paul is not just talking at random. He's operating within a story and our job as exegetes is to identify that story so that we can make sense of all the bits of data. So conceptually that's just the way communication works. It's the way hermeneutics works. There's always a narrative. So second thing, with respect to Paul specifically, I simply think he's a storied reader. For example let me identify what I mean by that. I think he's always cognizant of a story. He's always got his mind on the bigger picture.

44:50 Let me see if I can give an example this. When I read 1 Corinthians 10, we talked about 1 Corinthians 10 before when we're talking a little bit about eschatology...let's go there. Let's just jump into that. When you read 1 Corinthians 10, you'll notice how Paul situates the story of Israel's exodus; the bits of data that speak about Israel's exodus. You'll notice how that's situated within a larger narrative. In fact let me just read through the relevant portions here, and as I do, notice that Paul does not just repeat the data, the words, from Israel's exodus story. He situates all that stuff within a certain context specifically within the story, the context, that the tradition of Jesus the Messiah. So let me read 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

***1 Corinthians 10:1–11 (NRSV): 10 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.***

**6 Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. 10 And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.**

46:39 This passage is worth its own episode, I get that. But today I don't want to get into all the details. It's sufficient for our purposes today simply to notice how Paul situates the story of Israel's exodus into a larger narrative. He doesn't just merely repeat the facts about the original exodus story. The context from which he reads is christological. That's his horizon of understanding. The story for Paul is an exodus story that is retold through a christological lens and more. That old exodus has particular relevance and application for the Jesus people at Corinth.

So did you notice the references to Christ? He's got Christ back at the exodus, which is so fascinating. But the point is, is that he's telling he's using exodus data and bits of that story. He's situating that within his larger christological perspective. And that's my point: is simply say that Paul is a storied reader. You can disagree with Paul about the story that he tells, but you can't disagree with Paul that he tells a story. I think that's one way to put it.

Third thing: I think there are clues throughout Romans that suggest Paul is operating from the Genesis 11 and 12 narrative. For example, we saw in Romans 1-3 how Paul is at pains to show that the sinfulness is endemic to all of humanity. He's quick to highlight Gentile sin, for example; he also highlights and affirms the divine calling that was placed upon Israel to be a light to the nations, (Go back and read Romans 2). Moreover, in Romans 3, Paul spoke about how the nation of Israel as a whole was unfaithful to carry forth the oracles of God. And he also mentions how this unfaithfulness did not nullify the faithfulness of God to finish the job. And then, of course, in Romans 4, Paul shows that in Christ the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled, and in fact that covenant is fulfilled without respect to law keeping or ethnic privilege. We saw that in Romans 9; it's fulfilled outside of ethnic privilege, outside of law keeping. And of course, we could go on and on, but that would require repeating all of the previous episodes. At any rate, if all that exegesis is correct, then it sure fits well within that Genesis 11 and 12 narrative. I mean, all those bits and data from Genesis 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and Romans 9; all the exegesis, all of that that we've discovered, it sure fits well within that Genesis 11 and 12 narrative. And I think that narrative gives us meaning; it gives those words of Romans meaning. And it sure seems that Paul is following a certain storied approach, a narrative.

Look, I'm always open to reconfiguration and thinking afresh about how to situate Paul. But to me, at least at this moment in my own hermeneutical journey, I think something like this is exactly what is happening all throughout Romans.

49:43 Well, friends, that is it for today. Thanks so much for listening. It looks like we have about one to two more episodes left in our series through Romans. And then we'll move on to another series, another topic. I'm looking forward to that, but as I said, I'm pretty sad that we're ending this series. We're coming to the end, nonetheless, I do hope that our discussion so far have been helpful and enlightening. I hope they've been encouraging to you. It's always fun to wade through the biblical text, picking up this rock here and taking a peek behind that ridge over there. It's a fun journey. Thanks so much for walking with me through the text. Well, that's it for today. Blessings to you and yours this week.

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50:25 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a Patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.