

Romans 15

How hope grows, what it does, and why it must reach the nations

SPEAKER	Steve Hawthorne
DATE	Sunday, July 26, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 15; Psalm 117; Isaiah 11; 2 Samuel 22
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:00:20 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Hope is not simply a mood or wishful thinking—it is something Christians do, together, as a response to God’s promises. Romans 15 grounds hope in scripture, shows it as an action aimed at God’s glory among all peoples, and calls us to participate in God’s mission by building up one another and extending that hope to the nations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Hope is something you do, not just something you feel—it is shaped by God’s promises and sustained by scripture’s encouragement.
- ◆ Christian hope is communal: we build up one another, bear with each other’s weaknesses, and long for others to mature in faith.
- ◆ God’s plan is global—his promises are for all peoples, not just Israel, and Christ came to fulfill those promises to both Jews and Gentiles.
- ◆ Every people group has something unique to bring in worship to God; God delights in the praise of all peoples, not just angels or one nation.
- ◆ Working with God means receiving his grace and using our gifts—his “charisms”—to serve and encourage others, both locally and globally.
- ◆ Mission happens both where Christ is known and where he is not; both supporting those in need and pioneering new frontiers reflect gospel work.

- ◆ The power to abound in hope comes from the Holy Spirit, filling us with joy and peace as we trust God's promises.

► 1:00:20

Steve opened by recalling Hope Chapel's origins, when a Bible study centered on Romans began decades ago. He noted that Romans 15 is his favorite part of the letter and that it's about learning how to hope—specifically, how to pursue God's great promises together.

1. Doing hope together

► 1:02:43

The message began with **Romans 15:1–7**, where Paul calls believers to bear with the weaknesses of others and to “please our neighbor for their good, to build them up.” Steve pointed out that while we naturally arrange life for our own comfort, the gospel pushes us to invest in the maturity of siblings in faith—what he called “doing hope together.”

“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.’”

ROMANS 15:1–3 ↗

The point is not self-denial for its own sake, but that Christ himself bore reproach for others—so we can build up, encourage, and receive one another as Christ has received us.

► 1:04:55

Steve clarified that when Paul uses “brothers,” he means “siblings”—all believers, not just men. He reflected on how scripture is written “for our instruction,” not as a degree program but as a way to discover what is marvelous and beautiful in God's purposes.

He highlighted two key actions from the passage: perseverance and encouragement. Perseverance is pressing on, stretching beyond comfort, and not just a personality trait but a spiritual quality. Encouragement comes from scripture itself—not from generic positive thinking, but from the specific truths God has revealed.

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

ROMANS 15:4 ↗

“Hope is something you do because there is a possibility of something marvelous and true and beautiful unfolding—not just a wish, but a response to God’s promises,” Steve said.

► 1:07:29

He reminded the room of the “trifecta” from [1 Corinthians 13:13](#): faith, hope, and love. These are not abstract virtues, but relational actions—trust, love, and hope are all things you do with someone, rooted in relationship rather than self-improvement.

2. Hope for all peoples—God’s global plan

► 1:09:36

Paul’s argument in Romans 15 quickly widens from the local church to “global hope.” Steve explained that Christ became a servant to both “the circumcision”—the Jews—and “the peoples” or “Gentiles.” He emphasized that Gentiles in Paul’s Greek is almost always plural, meaning “peoples” or “nations,” not just “non-Jews.”

God’s promises, first given to the “fathers” (Abraham and others), were always aimed at blessing all nations ([Genesis 12:3](#)). Steve noted that the Old Testament is full of “hundreds of intimations” that God intends to do something marvelous for every people group.

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

2 SAMUEL 22:50 ↗

He described how, during the Exodus, non-Jewish peoples witnessed God’s power, saw their own gods “fall off the shelf,” and asked to join Israel in worshipping the true God. Steve called this God’s “fame name”—God’s reputation for saving, so that all peoples would want to praise him.

► 1:12:19

Steve then traced a sequence through four Old Testament quotations Paul uses to show the widening reach of hope:

- **First:** God is praised “among the peoples”—Israel worships in the midst of others ([2 Samuel 22:50](#)).

- **Second:** The peoples are invited to rejoice with God's people ([Deuteronomy 32:43](#)).
- **Third:** All peoples are called to praise the Lord ([Psalm 117:1](#)).
- **Fourth:** The root of Jesse (the Messiah) will rule and the peoples will hope in him ([Isaiah 11:10](#)).

“Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!”

PSALM 117:1 ↗

Steve illustrated the point with a story of his daughter's crayon drawing—how a child's unique gift delights a father more than any perfect praise from angels or machines. In the same way, God desires the genuine, distinctive worship of every people group.

He added: “If God wanted perfect praise, he could just have angels do it. But he would actually die for every human to give him their best.”

“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”

ISAIAH 11:10 ↗

The vision is not just for one nation or group, but for people from every nation to find their hope in Christ, and to bring their unique gifts of worship.

3. The God of hope—abounding by the Spirit

► 1:15:17

“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.”

ROMANS 15:13 ↗

Steve paused here to emphasize that abounding in hope is not about “trying harder” or manufacturing optimism. “How do you turn your hope thingy on?” he joked, suggesting that if Hope Chapel could sell such a device, it wouldn't work for long. True hope is something the Holy Spirit gives, filling us with joy and peace as we trust.

“He’s not trying to make us feel depressed or weak,” Steve said. “He wants us to have joy and bonafide peace. The God of hope helps his people to hope in him.”

4. Working with God—grace and gifts in mission

► 1:21:35

The message shifted to how hope leads to action—working with God in his mission. Paul tells the Roman church that they are “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish each other.” Steve contrasted this with the morality-based religion he grew up in, where doing the right thing earned you credit. “That’s not what the gospel is about,” he said. Instead, believers already have what they need through God’s grace.

Paul says he writes “because of the grace given to me from God.” Steve explained that grace (“charis” in Greek) is not just about salvation—it’s how God equips people for every important thing. He referenced [Romans 12:6–8](#), where different gifts (service, exhortation, generosity, leadership, mercy) are described as “charisms”—gracious empowerments for the good of others.

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...”

ROMANS 12:6 ↗

“God is not looking for anybody great,” Steve said. “He gives gifts that are miraculous and lets ordinary people bring forth things that matter.”

► 1:24:08

Paul’s own gift was to be “a worship servant of Christ Jesus to the peoples”—which Steve paraphrased as helping people everywhere bring their gifts to God. He unpacked the role of priests in the Old Testament: not distributing blessings, but helping people offer acceptable gifts to God, and declaring those offerings “holy” by the Spirit.

“...the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

ROMANS 15:16 ↗

Paul’s goal was to see “the obedience of the peoples,” not through compulsion but through glad, willing hearts. Steve repeated: “You have never found a true report of God forcing someone to worship him. His ways are gentle and kind—he gives, and we can give him our best, willingly.”

5. Mission in two directions—support and new frontiers

► 1:26:16

Steve highlighted two kinds of mission in Romans 15. First, Paul wants to go “where Christ is not already named”—frontier missions, taking the gospel to places where it is not known. Second, he describes supporting believers in Jerusalem through a financial gift from Gentile churches—what Steve called “ministry at a distance,” helping those in need.

“...I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation...”

ROMANS 15:20 ↗

Steve made the point that both are valid, biblical forms of mission. Supporting the poor, as in Jerusalem, is good and necessary; so is reaching new peoples who have not yet heard the gospel.

► 1:29:03

He noted that prayer is another way we work with God—striving together in prayer for God’s mission and for one another. “Prayer is not just what works, but God’s way of inviting us to work with him,” he said.

6. Hope is a gift for all—how we respond

► 1:32:51

Steve closed by summarizing the four points: hope is something we do together; hope is for all peoples; we work with God through grace and gifts; and mission includes both supporting others and going to new places.

He invited everyone to practice this by forming small groups, reading [Romans 15:13](#) aloud, and praying for each other—to ask God to fill them “with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

“Don’t be afraid to pray out loud,” Steve encouraged. “Give a gift to someone else in your circle. The heart ministry teams are here to pray with you, too.”

► 1:34:35

The message ended with blessing: “May you please the living God with your worship and your joy. Amen.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Romans 15:1–3
- Romans 15:4
- 1 Corinthians 13:13
- 2 Samuel 22:50
- Deuteronomy 32:43
- Psalm 117:1
- Isaiah 11:10
- Romans 15:13
- Romans 12:6
- Romans 15:16
- Romans 15:20

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. How does your understanding of “hope” change when you see it as something to do together—not just a feeling to have alone?
2. What encouragement or perseverance have you received from scripture recently? How has it shaped your hope?
3. Steve described every people group as having a unique gift to bring to God. What might your own background or community contribute?
4. Where do you see your own gifts—your “charisms”—at work in building up others or in serving God’s mission, either locally or globally?
5. Who could you pray for or encourage this week, so that they might “abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Steve Hawthorne has served at Hope Chapel for decades and was invited to speak on Romans 15, a chapter he called his favorite in the letter. In this message, he drew on his long experience with Hope’s history, his knowledge of missions, and a deep love for seeing God’s promises reach every people group. He often blends biblical teaching with personal stories and practical ways to respond together in worship and prayer.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTuW2ZH6YIU&t=3620s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.