



“Open Church – Open Bible”

Min. Marossa Davis



Sunday Church School

MAY 30, 2021

“Ministry to Unbelievers”

Romans 15: 15-27

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Romans 15: 15-27

- v. 15 **“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,**
- v. 16 **that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.**
- v. 17 **I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.**
- v. 18 **For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,**

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Romans 15: 15-27

- v. 19 **through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.**
- v. 20 **Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:**
- v. 21 **But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: And they that have not heard shall understand.**
- v. 22 **For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.**
- v. 23 **But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;**

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Romans 15: 15-27

v. 24 **Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.**

v. 25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

v. 26 **For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.**

v. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”

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Our past 12 lesson texts have provided a good overview of Paul’s epistle to the Romans. Most of it was deeply theological, but once Paul ended his discussion of the future of Israel in chapter 11, he turned his attention to more **practical matters** related to the Christian life.

As he began Romans 12, he challenges his readers to present their bodies as **living sacrifices** (v.1) and to **shun conformity with the world** (v.2). He also reminded them of the spiritual gifts they had received (vs. 3-8) and how **love is vital to the Christian life** (v.9). As Paul closes his letter to the Romans, he focuses on his **own ministry** and **his plans for the future**, including a visit to Rome.

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TODAY’S AIM

FACTS: to examine Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles.

PRINCIPLE: to acknowledge that Christian ministry should extend outside of the Church.

APPLICATION: to boldly share the Gospel with those who have never heard it.

LESSON OUTLINE

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| I. MINISTRY PRIVILEGE | Romans 15: 15-17 |
| II. MINISTRY POWER | Romans 15: 18-21 |
| III. MINISTRY PLANS | Romans 15: 22-27 |

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I. MINISTRY PRIVILEGE ROMANS 15:15-17

Since Paul was “ the apostle of the Gentiles”, he closes the letter by reminding the Roman believers that **inclusion of others** besides Jews was **always part of God’s plan**. The Jews were God’s chosen people (15:8) and were given priority in hearing the Gospel (1:16), but once they rejected their Messiah, **Gentiles** were given the opportunity to believe. Quoting from numerous Old Testament texts (15: 9-12), Paul makes it clear that the message be taken to **everyone**.

Commending the Roman saints on their goodness, knowledge and ability to teach one another (v. 14), Paul states that he had been quite bold regarding some of the things he had written. He was not their Pastor or Founder, but he was the Apostle to the Gentiles and he saw it as his priestly duty to **remind** them of some things they already knew.

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The “**grace**” given to Paul, refers to the spiritual gifts given him as a minister of Christ (v. 6). The word “grace” (charis) is related to another word *charisma*, which is translated “gift” (6:23) and is used in reference to spiritual gifts.

As already mentioned, Paul had a special ministry to the non- Jewish world, that is the “Gentiles”, which simply means “nations”. This however, was not to the neglect of his own Jewish brethren, for whom he had great concern (9:1-5; 10:1-3).

The word rendered here as “**ministering**” means “to serve as a priest” and appears only here in the New Testament. It could be rendered “priestly duty” or “priestly service.” While it is true that we have only one high priest (Heb. 8:1-2), and all of us constitute a “royal priesthood” (I Pet. 2:9), Paul saw himself functioning as a priest by preaching the Gospel.

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One of the primary functions of a priest was to offer sacrifices. As Gentiles came to faith in Christ through gospel preaching (Rom. 10:13-17- last week’s lesson), they then became an **offering to God**. Their salvation was not just for their benefit but was also for God’s glory and pleasure. “Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost (15:16) means they were **set apart** by the Spirit who led them to Christ. Paul was the priest presenting the converts to God through Christ.

As far as Paul was concerned, he only wanted to “glory through Jesus Christ” about those things which pertain God (v.17). The Apostle Paul is a shining example how all our works should be centered on the Gospel.

II. MINISTRY POWER

ROMANS 15: 18-21

Rather than boasting in the things he had accomplished, Paul saw

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himself as **God’s instrument** (1 Cor. 3:5-6), a **mere clay pot** (II Cor. 4:7). God had used him to bring the Gentiles into obedience to the Gospel (cf. Rom. 1:5;16:26).

“**Word and deed**” (v.18) likely refers to Paul’s words and actions, not to the people he led to Christ. It is true that those God foreknew , predestined and called **would be justified and glorified** (8. 29-30), but God’s people have a role to play in this regard. In short, God not only ordains the end but also the means to the ends , which includes preaching the Gospel.

We must therefore share the Gospel with all, leaving the results in God’s hands. As Pastors, Sunday School teachers and other workers, we cannot make people believe. We can, however, prepare the soil, plant the seed, and water and cultivate as needed, knowing and trusting that God alone

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produces the growth (I Cor. 3:6).

The “**mighty signs and wonders**” Paul alludes to in Romans 15:19 were the various miracles that were part and parcel of the ministry of an apostle (II Cor. 12:12). Biblical miracles were instantaneous, complete, and could not be otherwise explained. These miracles were performed by the power of the Spirit of God (v. 19). Indeed all spiritual gifts originate with the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:2-11) . That is why the scribes were on dangerous ground when they accused Jesus of performing His miracles by Satan’s power. To do so would be blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mark 3: 22-30).

Early in his ministry Paul preached in Jerusalem until he was forced to flee (Acts 9:28-30). As Acts reveals, he preached in many cities in the Greco-Roman world. Where and when Paul preached in Illyricum (the former Yugoslavia) is not known, but it is likely this was the farthest Roman province

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from Jerusalem he had visited in his evangelistic work.

True to his missionary spirit, Paul wanted to share Christ and plant Churches where people had **never heard** the Gospel. This was not only a means of expanding the kingdom of God, but it kept him on the move and helped him avoid a ministry that had been started by someone else. In a similar way, some new pastors might attest that following a beloved Pastor who has labored many years in the same place is no easy task. Sometimes people are not always accepting of change.

Quoting part of Isaiah 52: 15, a verse immediately preceding the famous **Isaiah 53 prophecy**, Paul emphasizes that God’s plan included reaching all people. As a Pharisee, he likely had a very low view of Gentiles prior to his conversion. Now, however, he could wholeheartedly affirm that Gentiles were just as much the objects of God’s love as his own people were.

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III. MINISTRY PLANS

ROMANS 15: 22-27

Paul reiterated that he had planned to visit Rome many times but had been hindered from doing so. Since he faced all sorts of **unexpected events** on his missionary journeys (II Cor. 11: 24-28), we can understand why he did not have an iron clad itinerary concerning future plans.

As stated earlier, Paul did not want to stay in already evangelized areas (Rom. 15:20) but wanted to go to otherwise unreached regions. Rome already had a strong Christian community, so Paul was not planning on staying there on any permanent basis; he would only be passing through, with a relatively short stay. This was not a spur of the moment whim, either. It was part of his larger plan of **evangelizing new regions**. The next major body of land to the west of Rome was Spain, and this was Paul’s goal. From an ancient perspective, Spain was at the **edge of the world**, since no one knew if anything lay west beyond the shores of the Iberian peninsula.

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Paul may have planned to stay several months with the Roman brethren before setting off to new territory. It is implied that he hoped the Christians in Rome would assist him financially on his missionary endeavor to Spain. Moreover, he wanted to enjoy the fellowship of the Roman believers for a while.

Since Paul’s journey to Rome turned out quite different from what he anticipated, we do not know if he ever made it to Spain. Many conclude that Paul’s first Roman imprisonment resulted in his release, but this is not certain. Most think that after his release he traveled a few more years, was rearrested, and ultimately executed under Nero. Whether his travels ever took him to Spain, we do not know, but tradition says they did.

At the time of the writing of Romans, Paul was headed for Jerusalem for the purpose of delivering offerings that had been collected for the poor. But, it was while in Jerusalem that he was falsely accused, arrested, and ultimately sent to Rome as a prisoner.

Early in his apostolic ministry, Paul had been asked to remember the

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poor in Jerusalem, which he was more than willing to do. To accomplish this, Paul and others collected money from the predominately Gentile congregations to share with the poor disciples in the city where the Church had been originally founded.

There are many reasons why we should give to the Lord’s work and to those in need. Obviously, if people are hungry or in need of clothing, we are to help meet these needs as Jesus commanded (Matt 25: 31-46). While fellow believers should have priority, this does not eliminate helping anyone in need. As Paul wrote to the Galatians “ As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good until all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6.10)

Another motivation for giving has to do with a sense of indebtedness to someone or some group. Gentile believers had benefitted from the spiritual blessings first given to the Jews through the Gospel. They were, as Paul says “ partakers of their spiritual things ” (Rom 15:27). Consequently, it was obligatory for Gentile believers to share their “ carnal things”, that is their material

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blessings, with their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem.

In conclusion, Paul was not one of the original apostles. He had become an apostle later, upon his conversion. Up until that time, the apostles had been witnessing mainly to the Jews. But Paul knew that he was to minister to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16).

Even though he and his mission were recognized by the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:2-9), not everyone understood his unique Ministry. Even some who claimed to be Christians opposed Paul (cf. II Cor. 11: 6;

Gal. 2:4), and both Jews and Gentiles persecuted him for spreading the Gospel. No matter how imminent the danger, however, Paul continued with his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul lived with an **absolute conviction** that he was to fulfill the **Great Commission**, and so should we. Our Lord Jesus told us that we are to reach the entire world (Matt. 28: 19-20).

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Our role in fulfilling Christ’s commission may be different. Sometimes God even asks us to do what others would not. The people the Lord wants me to minister to will not all be same ones. He sends others to. He does this so that everyone hears His Word and has opportunity to turn to Him. (cf. Matt. 24:14). We need to seek out what God has for us. He equips each of us for a unique role in His work (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Paul was able to focus on Jesus and pursue his ministry with **confidence** despite what others said and did. He trusted his Savior to guide him straight to **those who had never heard of Jesus**. Are we willing to be that brave? Let us shine our lights to an unbelieving world and fulfill Christ’s commission.

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Finally, the Apostle Paul declared to his readers that he had written ...boldly to them. When we are doing God’s work, we need to do it **boldly** and not be timid. We need to do it **humbly**, but also do it with boldness. Paul was not proud. He said that he wrote with boldness “ because of the **grace**” that was given him by God.

Great works of the Spirit had confirmed Paul’s apostolic ministry, but his greatest work was that he had “ fully preached the gospel of Christ “ (v.19). Have we fully preached the Gospel? Many people talk about and practice lifestyle evangelism, meaning you show people the Gospel through your Christlike living. This is good. We certainly should practice lifestyle evangelism everyday. But we should also preach, teach, and share the Gospel when we can. We should seek to build bridges and nurture sincere relationships and friendships so that they will

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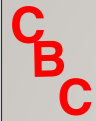
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listen when we humbly and lovingly share the gospel with them.

Paul’s great desire and goal was to serve Christ. He loved people, and he loved Christ. He wanted people to know the Lord Jesus Christ and then grow in their faith. This desire consumed him and moved him to serve the Lord. May his desire be ours also.

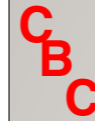
Our lesson brings out the point that, If you are not someone else’s **mission field**, you are a **missionary**. The end result of receiving salvation from God is a **passion** to share the Good News with others. We are not all called to be like Paul, but we can all be a part of the sharing process.



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Practical Points

1. All believers require thorough biblical teaching (Romans 15: 15).
2. Those who believe the Gospel are a pleasing offering to the Lord (v. 16).
3. We should never boast of accomplishments as our own, but only of what the Lord has graciously done through us (vs. 17-20).
4. We must be willing to go wherever the Holy Spirit leads, especially to those who have never had exposure to the Gospel (vs. 21-23).
5. Those who have benefited from the Gospel ministry owe a debt of material gratitude to those who brought them the Gospel (vs. 24-25).
6. Ministering the gospel involves meeting material as well as spiritual needs (vs. 26-27).



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For Further Discussion

1. What does Paul mean when he says that those who were saved through his preaching are an offering to God?
2. If our ministry is successful, who should get the credit? Why?
3. Share and discuss your personal experiences in witnessing to unbelievers. What aspects could use some improvement?
4. What should be the attitude of those who have been saved toward those who brought the Gospel to them?
5. When sharing the Gospel, should we be concerned about the material needs of the people we witness to? Why or why not?

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