

Roman 15:18-21

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[0 : 00] Please start with me in your copy of God's Word to Romans chapter 15. It looks like we may conclude the book of Romans in about a month's time.! I think we've got today and four weeks beyond to finish up chapter 16.

But I'm very excited about where we've come to today. This is a wonderful, wonderful text. We're going to look together at verses 18 through 21 of chapter 15.

But let me set the stage for you just a little bit before we read this together. Paul has finished now his doctrinal treatise. He's laid out for us this salvation, grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone forever.

And he then talked about how that should be practically working out in our lives. How our lives should be a natural response to these great truths. The gospel working in us should work out of us into the way we live.

The way we treat the world and the way we interact with one another. And he's completed that now in verse 13 of chapter 15. He kind of brings that to a close. And now we have kind of his concluding remarks in the remainder of the chapter.

[1 : 03] But there's so much good value in all of that together. And we looked last week at verses 14 through 17. But I'm going to begin reading in 14 and take us through 21.

So let's look together. Romans chapter 15, beginning in verse 14. I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

But on some points I've written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God. So that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.

So that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum, I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ. And thus make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation.

[2 : 12] But as it is written, those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand. Let's pray together. Father God, despite all of my preparation, and despite all of our ability to tune in and really key in and to take notes and really pay attention to what's happening here, we need you to intervene.

It is always a miracle of God when the word of God is planted in our hearts. And so we plead with you this morning to do that by your Spirit, that I pray exists in all of us.

That you will apply these truths, that you will work it into us, that you will soften us where we need to be softened, and harden us where we need to be hardened. That the natural outcome of this time together will be a life lived for your glory and praise.

We pray all this in Christ's name. Amen. So, last week I showed you from verses 14 through 17 some characteristic of Paul's ministry. Firstly, I pointed out his satisfaction, and we see that beginning in verse 14.

He talks about how he's satisfied with the believers. And we've just gotten to this conclusion of him bringing all of this correction, making sure that they really understood that they were proceeding in the truth as they ought to. And then here he says that he's satisfied with them, that they have these qualities that are working out into godliness in their lives.

[3 : 35] And so I proposed to you that his satisfaction was ultimately in God's sovereign goodness in sanctifying the church. That he knew that this church that he had not yet visited yet was being guided along by the Spirit.

That God was in control of their ultimate perfection. And we also talked about Paul's boldness in his part in the sanctification of the church. He says here that he's bold in his presentation of the gospel. He's actually making a bit of a defense for his ministry as he's writing such bold words to the Romans that he hadn't yet to meet at this time. And so we see that he also knew, though, that even though God is sovereign and in control of the perfecting of the church, he was meant to play a part. And the fact that he knows that God is in control of that is what gave him the boldness to press into the ministry that he was called to. And flowing out of that, and today I want to show you some other characteristics.

I want to show you Paul's humility, Paul's activity, what he was actually about the work of doing, and Paul's ambition. So look at the beginning of verse 18 at his humility.

[4 : 43] He says, for I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience. He recognizes that it's by the power of God that people come to saving faith.

And therefore, this word venture means that he wouldn't press on and that he wouldn't dare to be so bold as to claim that anything that has been accomplished in the obedience of the Gentiles was his doing.

Well, he's just said that he plays a part in it, right? He's just said that he's bold in his call to ministry. He knows that he must preach the gospel, right? Far be it from him not to. He's spurred on to preach the gospel, but he recognizes here and he exhorts us to recognize that God is in fact control.

And the only thing that we can boast in is in Christ himself. 2 Corinthians 12, verse 5, and then later in verse 9, Paul says, On my own behalf, I will not boast except of my weaknesses.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. And Galatians 6, 14, he says, and I hope you know this one, Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 59] So as Paul is carrying out this ministry, a uniquely called man, right? An apostle, an early saint, given the task of taking the gospel to the Gentiles, everyone but the Jews when you hear that term.

A unique call. He recognized that ultimately it was God's work being accomplished, even as he carried it out. So Paul was humble in his ministry.

Secondly, let's look at Paul's activity, the last half of 18 and through verse 19. He talks about bringing the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.

So that from Jerusalem, we get the extent there. So by the power of the Spirit of God. And I want to look at kind of three things about Paul's activity. Firstly, the centrality of the gospel.

For Christian ministry. The centrality of the gospel for Christian ministry. Christian ministry includes things beyond just preaching the gospel. It includes efforts to relieve poverty.

[7 : 07] Last night, as Wes mentioned, we got together, had a banquet for the D'Alonica Care Center to raise money to fund the D'Alonica Care Center, which is about preventing abortion. That's Christian work.

That's things that we should be about. We should be about feeding the poor, clothing the poor, bringing about justice. Those things are all important. But the gospel must be central.

And we see that's the case here with Paul. Notice he says, word and deed. So Paul spoke and Paul acted. But the emphasis here is on word.

Romans 10.17 says, So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. Paul knew this. He was fully aware of this. Verse 19b here in our text.

It says, Paul states that he has fulfilled the ministry. Fulfilled the ministry of what? The gospel. The good news of Christ. The very word of God. The first half of verse 20.

[8 : 04] Paul's ambition is to do what? To preach. Word. Preach the gospel. Verse 21. Paul quotes from Isaiah. That those who haven't been told will be told.

And those who haven't heard will hear. So again, there's an emphasis here on the word. The central part of Paul's ministry was word.

To speak the gospel. But there's a supporting role of deed, right? So he says, in word and deed. And that was accompanied.

The word that he brought was accompanied by miracles. By signs. We see that to be the case in Jesus' ministry. Jesus' deity was confirmed by miracles. Jesus first comes on the scene.

His ministry begins. And he does what? He turns water into wine. He makes himself known as part of the Godhead by performing miracles. We see this later to be true of the apostles.

[9 : 01] Mark 16.20. The apostles went out and preached everywhere. While the Lord worked with them. And confirmed the message. By accompanying signs. So the question.

For us today is. Do miraculous confirmations of ministry exist today? Is it possible that ministry is confirmed? That the messenger of God.

Is shown to be the messenger of God. By miraculous acts. I'd say to you yes. But then here's my opinion. But not of the same degree.

Believe that the early church days was a special time in Christian history. When God poured out lots of miraculous acts. In order to see the spread of Christianity go fast and wild the way it did.

We now have the record of such things. We have a record that bears evidence of that. I do still think it happens around the world. Although I've never personally been involved in a miraculous act to confirm my ministry.

[10 : 03] I do believe that it happens. But I just believe that it happens in a different degree. For example. First Corinthians 12.8 and 10. We see miraculous gifts given to the church. Not just the apostles. Right?

Given to the church. And that still exists today. So take that how you'd like. Whatever you want to do with that information. Yes. But we notice here that there's the emphasis on the word that is supported by deed.

By these miraculous signs. Which are carried out by the power of the Spirit of God. And then I want you to note too. As we talk about Paul's activity. The extent of his nature.

The extent of his ministry. Right? Firstly that it was thorough in nature. In verse 19 he says. I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.

As he talks about these regions that he's gone to. Has Paul brought every person who lives in this entire region. That he's traveled to faith in Christ? No. We know that's not the case.

[11 : 07] That's not what. So what does he mean when he says. I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ. And I believe what he's saying is that. He has faithfully ministered in every place to which the Lord sent him.

Everywhere to this date. When he was writing this. He had gone faithfully and served. He had done exactly what God had asked him to do.

And in that way. He had fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ. Paul was not deterred by anything. Put yourself in Paul's shoes.

Being led around a range of about 1400 miles at this point. That he had traveled. Three different trips that he's gone on so far. And note 2 Corinthians chapter 11.

Verse 23 to 20. Listen to the things that Paul's experiencing. None of these things deterred him. He had gone and been obedient to all that God had asked of him. In light of all this. It says. Far greater labors.

[12 : 05] Far more imprisonments. With countless beatings. And often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 40 lashes. Less one. 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods.

Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea. On frequent journeys. In danger from raiders. Danger from robbers. Danger from my own people. Danger from Gentiles.

Danger in the city. Danger in the wilderness. Danger at sea. Danger from false brothers. In toil and hardship. Through many a sleepless night. In hunger and thirst. Often without food. In cold and exposure.

Paul's life. Since he met Christ. Traveling and preaching the gospel. To these places. Where people hadn't yet heard the gospel. And I think most of us. If we picked any one of these things.

We would have taken a long sabbatical. After that. Right. Stoned. I mean. He was intended to be killed. Like they thought he was dead. When they stopped throwing stones at him. And yet he lived.

[13:03] Right. A day and a half. Adrift at sea. Oh. A night and a day. Excuse me. That's like. That's a full day. Right. Adrift at sea. I'm taking a vacation after that.

But God. Moved in him to faithfully serve. So the extent of his ministry was. Was thorough. In nature. It was also expansive.

I mentioned a minute ago. Fourteen hundred miles. He had traveled. So far. From Jerusalem. In the west. Till. Illichorum. I've been practicing this all morning.

You get it. Right. You can read it. Okay. Okay. Which is. Near Macedonia. This is the only place that is mentioned in the scriptures. Not mentioned in Acts. That he traveled there. But it's near Macedonia. So it's.

Supposed that he went on over. A little bit further. He pressed a little bit further. West. To this town. It's modern day. Slovenia. If you are a geography buff. Formerly Yugoslavia.

[14:02] You know that area. Just to the. East of. Italy. Right. And what he was trying to communicate to them. Was that. He had traveled to the. Far end. Of the Roman Empire.

To the eastern side. And that he had come now. To the. Remote part of what was considered. The eastern part of the. Roman Empire. And he was. On his way. Remember when he's writing this. He's hoping to come to Rome.

And go on from there. To Spain. This is his goal. We believe he did go to Spain. There's a good chance he made it. To Great Britain. As well. As he. As he traveled. But. We know from the record here.

This is where he's gone. So far. And so what he's. Saying. To the Roman believers. Is I have covered. The territory. That I've been given to cover. Until I come. To you.

Right. I'm coming that next step. I'm going further beyond. I'm going to go. On beyond. Where I've gone. So far. It was. This type of ministry. This type of life.

[14:56] This. This. Thoroughness. And this. Expansive. Nature. That allowed Paul to say. To Timothy. As he was close to the end of his life. Second. Second. Timothy. Four. Seven. I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now. For us. We may not be called. To cover an expanse of. Fourteen hundred miles.

And beyond. As we believe. Paul did. That may not be. What God intends for you. But we are all called. To be. Ministers. Of the gospel. Of God. Every one of us. I stand here.

As a pastor. I'm. I'm. Given the task. Of doing this very thing. But my role. Is no different. Than yours. When it comes to. Ministering the gospel. To those people. That I influence.

We all. Have our spheres. Our neighborhoods. Our classrooms. Places that we live. Right. Places of work. We all have. People that we influence. We all have.

[15:52] Particular. Things. Set out for us. For Paul. They were cities. For you. It might be a hall. On your college campus. Recognize that we are all called.

To serve in this way. And it is. A desperate prayer. Of mine. For those who come. To this building. On Sunday mornings. That at the end of our lives. We will be able to say. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

I have kept. The faith. So beyond this. Right. So here Paul. Sits. Writing. This letter. Beyond this though. We see his. Ambition.

Verse 20. And 21. He says. And thus I make it my ambition. To preach the gospel. Not where Christ has already been named.

Lest I build on someone else's foundation. But as it is written. Those who have not been told of him will see. And those who have never heard of him. Will understand. Now. Hear me very clearly. It is not wrong.

[16:47] To build on another's foundation. It's not wrong. To build on another's foundation. Right. That process is part of God's plan. To establish. And maintain.

His church. Right. The work of ministry. Must go on. Beyond. The apostolic call. To plant new things. Right. People have to maintain those things. For the health.

Of God's kingdom. It's part of the plan. First Corinthians 3. 6. Paul says. I planted. Apollos water. But God gave the growth. And so here we see. Apollos. Building on Paul's. Foundation.

Right. So. It's not wrong. To do this. But as. Paul. Very wisely. As he's carried along by the spirit. Quotes. From Isaiah. 52. 15. He recognizes that God.

Has a global purpose. For his glory. He wants his praises to be sung. Amongst. The nations. And as such. Someone needs to carry the gospel. To those peoples.

[17 : 43] Those peoples who have not heard. Therefore. They cannot. Understand. Romans chapter 10. Verse 12 and 15. I keep reminding you guys. That this would have been read.

In a sitting. Right. It would take about an hour. To hear this. It would have been an hour long sermon. Right. So people have this. Fresh in their minds. Romans chapter 10. Verse 12 through 15. Paul has said.

For there is no distinction. Between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all. Bestowing his riches on all. Who call on him. There's the global purpose. For everyone who calls. On the name of the Lord. Will be saved.

How then will they call on him. In whom they have not. Believed. And how are they to believe in him. And whom they have never heard. And how are they to hear. Without someone preaching. And how are they to preach.

Unless they are sent. As it is written. How beautiful are the feet. Of those who preach. The good news. Paul recognized. Fully. Right. That in God's intention.

[18 : 38] To save. The nations. He employs the gospel. As the means. Right. People must hear. In order to. Believe. And so he knew.

For God's glory. To advance across the earth. People needed to be. Sent. They needed to. Go. And I think. I hear. The heart behind.

The statements. We hear often. You're. You're either going to be a. Goer. Or a sender. You heard that. And I think what that does. For a lot of people. Is it. Is it. It makes it comfortable. To sit in church gatherings.

Right. To show up. Sit down. Listen to the sermons. Sing the songs. Give a little money. When. The offering. Comes around. For mission work. And say. Right.

Played my part. In the global purposes. Of God. And we should be doing. Those things. Right. Not all of us are called. As I've said before. Not all of us are called. To go to the. Unreached people groups. Right.

[19 : 34] Some of us in this room are. I know some of you. And I know that you're intended to go. You've stated that to me. Some of you. Are. And you don't know it yet. And that's going to happen in your life. God's going to. Shake you up. And send you to a people.

That you've never heard of. And you don't understand. How to speak their language. And you're totally foreign. To their culture. And he's going to. Send you there. And equip you. To carry the gospel. To that place. So there's certainly people. Who are going to stay here.

And we need to support you. And we need to financially support you. And prayerfully support you. And do all those things. But I just want you to hear. So carefully. That we are all. Being sent. We all have.

A mission field. In front of us. We are all. Missionaries. It's okay. That we've invented a term. For full time. Vocational. For missionaries. Totally acceptable. That we've done that. But it's.

Recognize that it's caused our minds. To flip around. Right? I'm a pastor. Must be my job. To share the truth. With other people. Right? Not your job. I have a special task.

[20 : 27] Of doing that. No. Right? Missionaries. Are meant to go. And plant churches. And share the gospel. And advance the gospel places. Must be that that's not my responsibility. I can't call myself a missionary.

No. No. A new term that's popping up here recently. Is the term church planter. Right? Have you heard that one? Someone will label themselves a church planter. Don't you have to be both a missionary and a pastor?

And an evangelist if you're going to be a church planter? Yes. You do. Right? Right? So I like to just say. How about a disciple of Christ? We're all that. How about a believer?

We're all of that. These things should be natural. In what we're doing. However. Some of you are in fact. Being called. And are going to be called. To go. To some of these.

Unreached. These places where there is. No. Foundation. So. Here's a little bit of. Statistical information for you. You've heard this before. If you've been here long. Unreached people groups right now.

[21 : 24] Are fairly. In a fairly standard way. Being defined as. As groups of people. Who have. Less than 2% of the population. Claims to be Christian. And recognize that's by survey.

People would just say. Yeah. I'm a Christian. We don't know if that's a. A legitimate number or not. But as a way of categorizing it. So currently in the world. There are 7,162. Unreached.

People groups. That's about 4.2 billion people. It's a big number. Is it not? Of that. 7,162. 3,040 of those people groups.

Are what they label. Unengaged. Which means there's. No Christians amongst the population. And there are no plans in place. To bring the gospel.

To those places. I mean like. They're on the map. We know they exist. And that is the extent. Of our planning. For these people. Total is about. 205 million people. And these statistics.

[22 : 19] Change all the time. And there's a lot of different sources on them. So. Just trying to give you the. The scope. Of what that looks like. Now. Your heart may immediately go to. 205 million people.

My heart breaks for them. I want people to have the life that I have in Christ. And that's a good thing. That's a good motivation to have. But I want you to have a higher motivation than that. I want you to see the heart of God. To make himself known.

Amongst the nations. It's going to happen. Right. We see in Revelation. Around the throne. There's someone from every tribe. Nation. Sitting around the throne. Praising God. It is going to happen.

We can be sure of that.

God's global purpose. For his praise. Is what we really need to get wrapped up in. God deserves to be praised. Amongst the nations. Does he not? Our God. Who has done so much for us. Who has delivered us.

From our sin and separation from him. Deserves to be praised. By all peoples. Wouldn't it bring you joy. To know. That someone. From every people group. In this world. Knew God.

[23 : 16] Had the revelation of him in Christ. And praised him for it. That gets me all excited. Right. Because I like praising God. I like heaping praises. On him. So we need to be.

Aware of our neighbor. Right. We need to be aware of the people that we work with. We need to be aware of the. Unreached. But also. The unengaged. The people that there is no plan for.

Yet. To carry the gospel to. I shared with you a couple of weeks ago. As we were in. Chapter 15. A people group I discovered. In the bathroom reader. Which is the weirdest place.

Right. But God does things in weird ways. Sometimes. A group of people that they call. The North Sentinelese. They live on. North Sentinel Island. It's in the Bay of Bengal. Which is to the east of India.

Okay. So if I could kind of. Wrap your mind. Into where that's at. It is a. A people group. That the only. Westerners. That have set foot on this island. Were killed. When they set foot on the beach.

[24 : 15] There were a lot of efforts. To try to. Connect with. The island. For a while. The. That's. Officially part of India. The Indian government. Would like. Drive boats. Into their harbor.

And just throw things. Into the water. And they would shoot spear. Arrows at them. That had no tips on them. Just as a way of warning them away. And so they would leave. They finally decided. It was just a total waste of money. Why.

Why are we trying to contact these people. That want nothing to do with us. And now they have a. An exclusion zone. Right. You cannot fly over the island. And you can't get near it. By boat. I like to think.

I'm a pretty innovative person. So there's a little challenge here. In my mind. Right. I mean. I don't believe that. God has called me. To go to the North Sentinelese. At least not at this. Stage in my life. The chances are.

If a. If a. Westerner stepped foot on that island. Pretty quickly. The entire island. Would die out from disease. You have to preach the gospel. Fast and furious. Right. You might.

[25 : 12] Maybe that's the way. You show up. And you say. You are going to die. In a couple of weeks. We need to talk about your soul. But I believe. I'm confident.

In the promises of God. That he intends. To save. A number. From these people. Right. That the North Sentinelese. As a people group. As a group. That gather together. On this little island. Some of them. Are going to know Christ. Someday. I don't know. How that's going to happen. Right. My. The only thing. I can think. Is that some of them. Venture off the island. Gospels preach to them.

And they take it back. To their people. But I don't know. How? I do not know. I want to commit our church. To pray. For the North Sentinelese. And we're going to do some things. To make you more

aware of them.

But we can at least. Do that. At very least. As a church. We can begin to pray. That the gospel. Somehow. Someway. Will reach this people. And who knows. Maybe someday. We'll send somebody.

[26 : 07] From our group. Maybe to sit off the coast. In a boat. Hoping somebody tries to leave. And you can snatch them up. I don't know. How this may happen. But. But I so.

Desperately. Want God to be praised. Amongst the nations. I want people. On North Sentinel Island. To know him. And sing his praises. Right. It's like. It's a dream of that. You can't even see. Into the. The island interior. It's so dense. Google Maps. It's just. It looks unoccupied. Like they live in. Forest. I want people in that forest. That we can't see from the air. Right. We can't get on the island. And I want them to sing his praises.

Forever. Because I care about. The glory of our Lord. So I hope that we take some cues. From Paul. Many of us. Often. Put him in a different category.

Of Christian. Like I've said. This morning. He had a special call. Right. We stick him off in a different category. Go. Oh. That was Paul. Right. Authored a bunch of the New Testament. Took the gospel to.

[27 : 01] The Gentiles. That's not me. Right. But the same God. That lived in Paul. And moved him. And accomplished much in him. Is the very same God. That lives in you.

The very same God. With the very same mission. Right. And he's given all of us. To that. And so. As we pray. And transition. To the Lord's Supper.

It's. It's my prayer for all of us. That we would believe that. To be true. Right. That we would know. That we have. A global God. Who wants to accomplish. Global things. Which start here. And go to the ends of the earth.

And that we would be. Desperate to be involved in that. And I promise you. If you make yourself available. You hear God's call in your life. And you heed it. You obey. And go. He's going to involve you.

In some super cool stuff. Right. You're going to experience him. In new ways. Which is the ultimate reward for us. That we get to see God. Move. And act. And carry his glory. Across this earth.

[27 : 57] Let's pray together.