

Romans 15:14-21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 September 2024

Preacher: Clay Naylor

[0:00] Open up your copy of God's Word to the Book of Romans. It's been a good journey going through this book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse.

I pray it's been a blessing to everyone's soul. I'm getting towards those final days, final weeks of finishing up this book. And today we will be in Romans 15, 14 through 21 will be our text today. But truly Romans is what some people have said, the gospel according to Paul. No other New Testament book gives us so much systematic theology and doctrine of what our salvation and our redemption means.

And in chapters 12, all the way up through where we're at today, Paul is now working out again the practical living implications of the gospel.

So if you have, in fact, believed and had true faith in what he has said in the previous chapters, if you believe those things, then your life will look like the final chapters of Romans.

[1:14] So God's saving grace always leads us to a new life in Christ and what it looks like to follow Jesus. So right thinking lives to right living.

And two weeks ago, at the beginning of the chapter, verses 1 through 6, we see that Paul calls the strong believers, those who are mature in Christ, to bear with the weaknesses and failings of weaker believers.

Then last week, we looked at how God, with the help of God, the Scripture, etc., helps us to be patient with one another and of one mind, we may glorify God.

And so we give verses 8 through 13, Paul gives more reasons for accepting one another, showing that Jews and Gentiles are in fact one in Christ, and that that was a part of God's essential outworking of salvation.

That was a part of his great plan for redemptive history, was to bring all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, into a single group that glorify him. So Romans is just chock full of gospel salvation.

[2:28] And again, it's like if our salvation was put on trial, Romans would be our case. Like that's what we would want to put forward in a legal sense of how we have been saved and redeemed in Christ.

Martin Luther in the Reformation, who obviously, he was sent away to study the Scripture, and Romans is what actually struck him more than any and kind of brought him to true faith.

But he wrote about the book of Romans, It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day as the daily bread of the soul.

It can never be read or pondered too much. And the more it is dealt with, the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes. So something beautiful about the book of Romans.

So again, we're getting into our text today. We see how God used Paul to establish the churches throughout the Gentile world, particularly the way he's referring to is the Roman world.

[3:38] So he explains his unique ministry that God gave him graciously to the Gentiles. And so this is kind of where we pick up today. Let's read our text together.

This is verses 14 through 21. He says, 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 have 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 Ikkarim, I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ. And thus, I make it my ambition to preach the gospel. Not only will Christ have already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but also as it is written, those who have never been told of Him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.

[5:21] And that's our text today. Join me in prayer. Lord, we again just offer up this time to You. I pray that You would just use Your Word to accomplish Your will in our individual lives and as our corporate body that You would work in and through us.

It would have the desired effect that You intended on us. So just help me to communicate clearly what is here in Your Word.

In Christ's name, Amen. So, as I said earlier, Paul is beginning to explain his unique ministry among the Gentiles and how he planted churches throughout the Gentile world.

And so I have just four points today to help you kind of walk through this verse by verse. But the first one is Paul, the partner in faith. Paul, the partner in faith.

This is verses 14 and 15. He says, I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to instruct one another.

[6:28] But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God. So it's pretty profound, I think, that Paul actually wrote his greatest letter to a church that he had never been to before.

in that kind of while. Like, he actually had never quite been to Rome yet. He had hoped to get there, and that's his plan to come to them. And eventually, he will eventually go to Rome, which looked, again, the center of the ancient world at this time.

All roads lead to Rome, so to speak. But he had actually never been there. So I think it's just profound that he wrote one of his greatest letters to a church that he actually hadn't met in person. So he goes out of his way to assert confidence in them. He says, addressing them, my brothers, meaning he assures them that he is satisfied, that he's fully convinced, fully persuaded that God has worked in them.

He says that they are full of goodness, which speaks to the quality of their moral character, their godliness, their godly living. Not necessarily perfect, but this idea of just growing in the goodness of God.

[7:42] And from whom, right, all goodness comes from. In fact, our English word, God, comes from the old Saxon term that means the good.

That's where we get God from. And so it's saying that the goodness of God has filled you. Psalm 119, verse 68, it says that you are good and do good.

Like God does good out of the overflow of who He is. He is good. So His goodness is given and enabled them not by their own strength or morality, but by the Holy Spirit.

He is convinced of their moral goodness and godliness. Now as you read in Galatians 5, like goodness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

So that moral goodness is seen visibly in good works, which God ordains in the lives of all believers. Then He goes on in verse 15.

[8:43] He goes, but on some points, I've written to you very boldly. Okay? So before we do that, He also mentions, I messed up my notes here, so forgive me, but the rest of verse 14, He mentions that they are able to instruct.

That's important to sort of point out. With all knowledge, able to instruct one another. And that word instruct means to admonish, to warn, to give counsel to somebody.

And with the knowledge that they've been given about God and the gospel and the word of God, from that knowledge, they are able to counsel one another inside the church.

They are able to give advice to one another and warn against wrong conduct. So, He's pointing out to ordinary believers, especially those who are mature and have a greater level of wisdom, that they ought to give one another just practical living, sound advice on everyday living.

And so, I think it's amazing that I'm thankful that I see our church just sort of doing this in so many ways. Like, we have been blessed with God's word and for many years been blessed with sound

teaching in God's word.

[10:08] And that has led to all of you counseling one another in God's word. admonishing one another, encouraging one another in God's word.

And that's what the church is supposed to do. It isn't just, well, you have a problem, so go talk to the pastors, right? It's, we can counsel one another according to the knowledge and maturity that God has given.

So, Paul is saying that to them. Like, I'm convinced that you have all the knowledge and all the truth you need to instruct and counsel one another. And then he goes on to verse 15.

On some of these points I've written to you very boldly. So that word boldly means daringly, decisively, openly. So meaning that he hasn't withheld anything from them.

Right? There's some stuff in Romans that are hard to wrap your head around and he doesn't hold back. He kind of like just says it how it is and lets them hear the truth.

[11:11] And he declared all the truth that was written in this letter to them very boldly. So, then he says by way of reminder. So, in some sense, the church, the believers in Rome did know about some of the things that Paul was writing about.

And I was reading on this and at least two different commentators said this and I was like, I don't know if I really agree with that, but they said that he was not necessarily pointing out their need to hear all this because they knew it already.

And I'm like, have they understood Romans already? Like, they understood the whole book of Romans already? And, I mean, that would be a bit far-fetched to me. But what I would say is that he knew they understood the foundational gospel message.

But his desire was to build upon, enhance that knowledge, to add to it. And as I said before, we never move on beyond the gospel, only into a deeper understanding of it, a more profound understanding of the gospel.

We greatly increased their knowledge of it and added on, built on, to what they already knew in their knowledge. So, I think that that's kind of what we're after in this text.

[12:28] So, there may be things that it would be good for you to hear again. Things for me to hear again. And it isn't saying that I don't think that you understand the simple gospel, but also, you need to grow in your profoundness of it and never tire of it.

Continue to grow in your knowledge of the depths of God's salvation for you. Everything he's written about in Romans, redemption, justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, adoption, all these things that he talks about.

Election. All these things he talks about in the book of Romans. You can spend the rest of your life pondering and never fully, fully grasp all those things that are there.

This moves us on to point number two. Another, this is verse that Paul played. Point number two, Paul, the priest. This is verse 16.

It says, 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.

[13:43] So you see here, he calls himself a minister of Christ Jesus. That Greek word means like to be subordinate to a public administrator, connecting it maybe to someone who served in the public worship of God.

And that's what he's kind of going after here. It's interesting when you look at the different terms for minister or ministry in the New Testament. You know, in our day, being a pastor can be a like cool, glamorous job where pastors get up on Sunday and they want to be the guy, the guy in the spotlight, the guy getting the attention and they're putting on productions more or less to entertain people and they like that.

They like being in the center. If you actually know me and Nathan, we don't like being up here. It's not our thing. We'd rather be behind the scenes doing things but out of compulsion we have preached the gospel when there was no one else able to do it for many years here and we stepped into that role but another word for minister that is used in Luke 4.20 and Acts 13 this one fits the description well for me.

It actually means under rower. How many of you have ever seen an old movie where it's like the Roman Empire and they're out in the ships and they have the oars? Anybody seen Ben-Hur?

Anything like that? It means that you're down there. It means that you are an under rower. Humble, lowly, unrecognizable.

[15:29] Spurgeon wrote this about being a minister of the gospel. He said, we are ministers. The word has a very respectable sound.

To be a minister is an aspiration of many youth. I mean that that's just cool to them. That's what they want to do. Get the attention. He says, perhaps if the word were otherwise rendered, their ambition might cool.

Ministers are servants. They are not guests, but waiters. Not landlords, but laborers. The word has been rendered under rowers.

Men who tug at the oars on the lowest bench. It is hard to work to row a galley. So meaning like a galley ship for like the Roman or Greek triremes.

Those on the upper bank had the advantage of fresh air. So those rowers on the top had the advantage of fresh air. Those who were beneath them were more closely shut in.

[16:33] But I suppose that the lowest bank of rowers would faint with heat as well as worn out was sore and travail. He says, Brethren, let us be content to wear ourselves out in the worst position possible if by our labor we can speed the passage of our great Caesar and help the progress of the trireme of the church in which it has embarked.

We are willing to be chained to the oar and to work through life to make his oar cleave the waves with not as captains nor as owners of the galley but as oarsmen of Christ.

That's what they did. They chained the slaves to the lower oars so they couldn't just run. They had their life dependent on how they rowed. So he goes like let us be content to speed the ship of Christ.

Lower oarsmen. So that's what this word means. So Paul says he is a minister of Christ Jesus. Right? He goes, he's a minister of the gospel and the gospel is used by Paul but in very rich language.

He calls it here the gospel of God. In Romans 1.9 the good news of his son. In 1 Corinthians 9.12 the good news of Christ.

[18:00] 2 Corinthians 4.4 the glorious good news. Ephesians 6.15 the good news of peace. and in Revelation 14.6 it's called the everlasting gospel or the everlasting representative of the old covenant.

I am a representative of the gospel. And so to the Gentiles remember and before Christ came Gentiles were excluded in a huge way from any form of relationship with God.

furthermore they were barred from access to the holy places and the temple. They were seen by Jews as unclean defiled. Keep in mind that's most of us in here that's you know anybody outside of the Jewish nation.

And he says they were defiled and unclean. but Paul now is writing of how the Gentiles may offer he can offer them to God in an offering that is sanctified and fully acceptable to him.

He has been God's instrument to bring about a great change in the redemptive plan of God where he took not just the message the gospel of God to the nations to the Gentile nations not just to the Jews and in this way he is completely different from Old Testament priests who just mediated for the Jews by offering sacrifices at the temple.

[19:32] And so remember this like prophets represented God to the people priests represented the people to God. What Paul is trying to say here is that he is a priest on behalf of the Gentiles.

He wants to represent the Gentiles to God and that Gentile converts are the offering that he is giving up to God and asking that it would be acceptable and pleasing to God and is set apart by the holy sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

And so if you want to there's just maybe two other places for you to turn but I'll spare you this one I'll just read this to you. This is Acts 9 10 through 16 but this is when Paul had been this is after he was confronted by Christ on the road to Damascus he was on his way to imprison and possibly kill Christians in Damascus he was set totally against Christ and Christ met him on the road and saved him so now he's blinded and he's in Damascus and God comes to a believer in Damascus named Ananias says verse 10 there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias the Lord said to him in a vision Ananias he said here I am Lord the Lord said to him rise up and go to a street that is called

straight and the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named

Saul for behold he is praying and he has seen a vision a man named Ananias come and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight but Ananias answered Lord I have heard from many about this man how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem and there he has the authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on your name so he's saying I've heard about this guy he's scary he's out to get us so I'm nervous to go to him and it says but the Lord said to him go for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and the kings and the children of Israel for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name so Paul from the very beginning he was God's chosen instrument to go to the

Gentiles and that's that's serious it means we should listen to him like God singled him out for that purpose and of course he shared with Jews along the way but his primary focus was for those who were outside the blessing of Israel and so he is that mediator in that sense that he preaches God's gospel and carries it to the Gentiles and makes that acceptable to God by the Holy Spirit those Gentile converts would be his offering to God so to think about this in our ways in what ways has God called and equipped and gifted you directed you to serve him by serving others in what way are you serving and sharing the gospel are you being faithful to that do you know what that is in what ways is God not only working in you through sanctification but working out of you through service to others it's important to realize those things and like all these roles that

[23:30] Paul had he was always pointing forward to Christ and his glory this goes on to point number three Paul the preacher Paul the preacher this is 17 through 19 he says 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 obedience spirit of God excuse me so that from Jerusalem and all the way around I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ so it's important to realize here that Paul's role was extremely unique he was called again to go to the Gentile world a pivotal moment in redemptive history and he was God's instrument to do that a huge role in expanding the church yet he always seeks to keep the spotlight on

Christ and not himself a lot of people would see that as a huge reason to boast in themselves like God chose me to do that in that cool and that's not at all he is aiming at the word proud here means to glory or to brag to boast and actually even means rejoice in Romans 5 the Hebrew translation would be hallelujah to give praise right so there are legitimate reasons to glory and exult in his work for God and what he has done on behalf of Christ that he has accomplished those things he actually wrote in Galatians 6 but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world so there is a permissive form of boasting it means to brag and to lay it on thick about that you love and appreciate and so this is a permissive form it's a humble acknowledgement of everything he has achieved and accomplished through

Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit so let me just pause here for a second what is it we all do it okay even if you're not a big talker you do it other ways what is your boast what is your brag what do you brag about what do you make a big deal out of is it something that honors God and glorifies God is it something that you're seeking to get attention for yourself are you more focused on your position or role in God's kingdom rather than on God himself are you concerned more about the temporal rewards of a position that you might hold versus seeing the Lord himself as your reward I think very few people in the scripture maybe it would be a tie between these two guys but John the Baptist and

Paul Jesus said about John there is no man born of woman greater than John so contemplate that and remember when John first came on the scene like he was the stuff like all the people were going to see him they were flocking to him from everywhere he had the big crowds he was like the man everybody was going to watch and his baptism for the remission of sin and eventually right Jesus came on the scene and all the people stopped going to see John and started to go see Jesus instead so you pick up on that so put yourself in John's position oh man I'm like not as popular or not as cool anymore and that's not that was not John's attitude but his some of the men who

John the disciple came to him and basically said that though they came to him this is John 4 and they said to him Rabbi he who was with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness look he is baptizing everybody now meaning like they're all going to him now not coming to see our cool show anymore and all are going to him and John answered a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given to him from heaven so meaning that any good thing that comes is only a gift of God and if it's a gift you can't boast about it it was something given that I am not the Christ but I was sent before him the one who has the bride is the bridegroom the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice therefore this joy of mine is now complete he must increase but

[28:54] I must decrease this is Paul's attitude as well he only wants to boast in glory and the fact that God has done things through him for his own glory he is quite content to be kind of behind the scenes and not be the one up front all the time if you actually know Paul's personality if you read about it he wasn't like that kind of guy he wasn't like what the Roman and Greek world was used to they wanted a warrior king like guy but he pointed all things to Christ and so do you cherish your role in the great wedding more than the wedding itself you rejoice when you hear the bride groom are you angry that you're not getting the attention anymore be very careful about all these things and Paul goes on and he says in the next part of this verse 18 he being very careful to point to where all this comes from for

I will not venture like meaning I won't even get close like I won't even try to get close to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me so meaning all of God's enabling grace all of God's strength and power that he gives to his people as we humbly! go to! him and! to carry out and accomplish his will for the purpose to bring the Gentiles to obedience so he's summarizing his entire ministry here at this point by saying God has accomplished all this work through him by word and by deed both by preaching about Christ and his actions his sacrificial love his service to them some people some ministries some churches get criticized for doing one or the!

there are whole denominations that go on mission trips and they just build schools and they give food to people and they don't preach the gospel while they're there then others may go and preach the gospel but won't actually feed the hungry won't actually help them so Paul is doing both by word and deed he is proclaiming Christ proclaiming the gospel and humbly serving!

those people so therefore in Christ who has worked through him to the Gentiles so something I thought about was like do you find yourself often frustrated and burned out in your service to God by serving others frustrated that others aren't seeing your work frustrated that you're not getting the recognition that you think you deserve if that's the case you're very likely serving in your own strength and for your own glory that's a dead indicator if you're feeling that way in your role but when you're doing it for God's glory and he supplies you the strength it's a whole other story then he goes on verse 19 that his ministry was accompanied by powerful signs and wonders referring to miracles that accompany

[32:15] Paul's gospel proclamation throughout his ministry so miracles he mentions a sign something that pointed to the power of God the power of Christ that those things came from this showed also God's mercy and love for broken sinners right so this is a sign like this is showing you this is pointing to God and his power these miracles then it says wonders that just simply means like these acts were so astonishing they were amazed by what they saw and so all these things accompanied Paul's preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles so he has covered the entire Gentile world there so I could ask you this question like how can Paul say that his work has been complete when many have still not heard in the gospel well you kind of see that in the following verses this is kind of cool like

Paul didn't necessarily go to every single Gentile city in the Roman world but he went to like a lot of main centers like Corinth Athens eventually he goes to Rome these places that were crossroads where he planted a church and from that church people went out and planted other churches do you also know that the Colossians that was planted by somebody who actually came to know Christ

in Ephesus when Paul was in Ephesus and they took that back and they started the church at Colossae so by that he bringing the gospel to all the outlying areas and so this leaves us with the last point point number four Paul the pioneer this is verse 20 through 21 he says and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel not where Christ has already been named unless I built on someone else's foundation but as it is written those who have never been told of them will see those who have never heard will understand so

Paul's main focus and it should be ours as well is to preach the gospel he says in areas where the name of Christ has not yet been spoken the name of Christ has not been heard there no churches planted this is what we would call in missions the unreached peoples people that have no access to the bible or to the gospel to the church and so he said thereby right fulfilling the prophecy spoken in Isaiah 52 talking about the Messiah he says Isaiah said almost 700 years prior he the Messiah will sprinkle many nations kings will shut their mouths on account of him for what they have not been told they will see what they have not heard they will understand so his desire was to find new territory where he could preach the gospel which explains in the following verses why he wants to go to

Spain which I have believed that he actually did end up in Spain since he's kind of gone around the Mediterranean world the Roman world at this point Spain was still kind of a target for him to go to a huge part of the Roman Empire and yet his ambition!

again not an absolute rule because it was fitting for him to go to Rome itself eventually the seat of all Roman power and influence that was his goal to eventually go there and so this verse particularly verse 21 verse 20 is the battle cry for our missions to go to the unreached peoples we need to go and fulfill the great commission I'm thankful that our church has in ways participated in this also thankful that I have friends that are abroad that are preaching to the unreached peoples I remember I remember when 9-11 happened and at that time my small god was the United States military and that's like what I wanted to do I wanted to join and

[36:47] I wanted to go fight because of what happened on 9-11 and a lot of my friends did and after that though like obviously I got turned down because I have a respiratory disease and I was so sad angered frustrated and and now I know why I am so thankful like God intended for me to fight a different kind of war the eternal and unseen war versus the temporal and there was another time when I had a lot of my friends that were getting ready to graduate and go overseas that were going to go do missions and to unreached peoples and I had that same feeling that I had a long time ago like I feel stuck here I can't go I want to go to the unreached but I feel like my health has sort of chained me here and one of my friends a guy named

Justin told me that I think God has like planted! you here to help disciple and train us so that we can go out you are the drill instructor you are the guy training us to go abroad that was such an encouragement to me to know my role and in Justin's wedding he gave us little pocket knives that had Matthew 24:14 carved on it so turn to Matthew 24 today Justin and his family are in a closed and dangerous Middle Eastern country predominantly Muslim they've been there for a few years now and this is one of those verses that rings hard on him to go and preach the gospel where Christ has not yet been heard the gospel has been yet to be proclaimed!

Matthew 24:14 this is what Jesus said verse 14 the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to the nations and then the end will come right astounding It's God's plan to reach all the nations all the peoples all the different nations around this world and to bring the men to one and Jesus says when that happens the end will come and so we have friends that are abroad doing this now seeking to usher in the kingdom of God and we can play that role here we can preach the gospel where we are at we can be involved in the sending and the praying of people overseas and so I ask that you would remember there's a bigger picture at work here than just what's going on here today that you remember the work of

God that is abroad and the so-called pioneers that are out there going to places where there is no church no Bible and to bring new converts from all these different nations into one people that we might glorify God with one voice so let's pray that that happens this isn't our home we're not meant to be here forever it's all going to come to an end so how does that alter your thinking about what you're pursuing and doing right now live for Christ and his kingdom and it will not fail so this is what

Paul is saying that he glories in what God has accomplished through him and his ministry to the