

Sermon Notes on “What We Learn From Paul’s Ministry” (Part 1) Romans 15:14-21

- In the last 47 verses of Paul’s letter to the Romans (15:14-16:27), he some closing remarks (his longest of all letters) on a number of elements regarding his ministry:
- A summary of his ministry (15:14-21)
- His future mission plans to visit Jerusalem, Rome and Spain (15:22-29)
- Some prayer requests (15:30-33)
- Personal greetings and recognitions of 37 people (16:1-16, 21-23)
- Some warnings (16:17-20)
- A closing benediction (16:25-27)

- **In verses 14-21**, Paul shares some highlights about his ministry which teach us at least **six invaluable lessons** we can emulate from his life and ministry (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil 4:9)

1. **Ministry is about mutual competency** (15:14)

- God always enables in us what He expects from us, so we need to know our sufficient resources (notice the words “*full*”; “*filled*”; “*able*”), but sometimes dormant competency undermines the competencies God has given to His people:
 - **Internal** competencies like our salvation (Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:3; 2 Pt. 1:3); grace (2 Cor. 12:9); HS (Gal. 3:3)
 - **External** competencies like His gospel (Rom. 1:16); providence (Rom. 8:28-29); Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17); prayer (1 Jn. 5:14-15); trials (Jms 1:2-4) and God’s people (Rom. 15:14 – “*able*”)

- Paul mentions **three important truths** about our competency in Christ that should encourage us in our ministry to one another:
 1. We have the ability to **behave right** (“*full of goodness*”): God has given His people that ability to live morally excellent and useful. This is accomplished when believers walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23), pray for God’s development (1 Th. 1:11 – Pray that “*God will fulfill every desire for goodness*”), fight the “*good fight of faith*” (1 Tim. 1:18); maintain a “*good conscience*” (Heb. 13:18); “*cling to what is good*” (Rom. 12:9) & “*stimulate one another to love and good deeds*” (Heb. 10:24).

2. We have the ability to **believe right** (*“filled with all knowledge”*): While we still need to grow in our knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), God has given us full positional knowledge in Christ (1 Cor. 1:5; 2:16; Col. 2:3) that needs to be fully understood and believed.
3. We have the ability to **build right** (*“able also to admonish one another”*): One of God’s building tools is the *“one another”* ministry and one of the most effective shared commitments is admonishment (to put something in someone’s mind that instructs, cautions, warns or counsels gently). Scripture is written for our *“admonition”* (1 C. 10:11) and it’s at the heart of our mission (Col 1:28) in making better disciples and God has given His entire church family the privilege of participating in this building ministry.

2. **Ministry is about needed courage** (15:15a: *“but I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again”*)

- Fear of people can keep too many people from loving and boldly helping other believers who may struggle with their beliefs or behaviors (Prov. 29:25)
- Paul share the hard truth about a number of beliefs: law (Rom. 6:14); Israel’s excuses for their unbelief (Rom. 10:18-21); the Gentiles temptation to be arrogant about their inclusion (Rom. 11:8); the *“weak”* judging the strong and the *“strong”* regarding the weak with contempt (14:10)
- Some will think we are enemies when we tell them what they need to hear (Gal. 4:16), but God’s people need to be reminded of things they already know (2 Pet. 1:12-15)

3. **Ministry is about a mission call** (15:15b-16a)

- Paul was called by God not only to be an *“apostle”*, but he was called to be a *“minister”* (one who publicly serves a king or in a temple)
- God gave Paul a **mission focus** (*“to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles”*): God gave Paul an effective cross-cultural, multi-ethnic ministry
- God gave Paul a **mission mentality** (*“ministering as a priest the gospel of God...”*): Paul viewed his ministry like a priest who offers the most acceptable offering (transformed *“Gentiles”*) who’ve been changed by the *“gospel of God”*.

4. **Ministry is about a Godward celebration** (15:16b-19a)

- “**Boasting**” is normally to be avoided by all believers unless you are boasting in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done (Gal. 6:14) or is doing in you and through you (v. 17-18; Jer. 9:24)
- God used Paul in “**word and deeds**” (the “*word*” is his gospel preaching and the “*deeds*” were the “*signs and wonders*” God was performing by which the messenger (2 Cor. 12:12) and the message were being authenticated. God normally does not use miracles as verifiers, yet He is able to do whatever he wants to show His unlimited power and most notably performs the miracle of the new birth.

5. **Ministry is about a faithful commitment** (15:19b: “*I fully preached the gospel of Christ*”)

- Paul’s ministry was far and wide and it spread from “*Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum*” (modern day Albanian where we support a church planting mission called Illyricum Movement)
- Paul was faithful (he “preached the gospel of Christ”); committed (“fully preached”) and was a great strategist (didn’t preach in every village and city, but strategic cities that would help spread the gospel around its region like he did with Ephesus – Acts 19:10)

6. **Ministry is about a gospel communication** (15:20-21)

- Paul was as pioneer evangelist (primarily preached where Christ wasn’t known), but he also helped and encourage other churches (like the Roman church he neither planted or visited)
- As we think about our role in the spread of the gospel, we can pray, share, support and go as the Lord leads.