



by Mercy

ROMANS 15:14-33

Devotional

Romans 15:14-33

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. ¹⁵ But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ 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; ²⁰ 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, ²¹ but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”

²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Day 1

ROMANS 15:18-19

¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—

In verse 16 Paul talks about his “priestly service” in making the Gentiles acceptable in the ministry of God. Here in verse 18 Paul describes what Christ has accomplished through his prophetic role in ministering the gospel. Paul’s description of his ministry includes four elements: words, deeds, signs, and the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament the prophets were raised up by the Spirit to communicate God’s message through word and deed. The prophets were also the ones through which performed signs and wonders. These miracles were intended not merely to show God’s power but as signs of the fulfillment of the promises of the covenant, or what the eschatological kingdom was going to be like.

Through Christ, Paul brings the Gentiles into Israel, or God’s kingdom through his words and deeds. Both of these were important. Through his words Paul communicated the good news to the Gentiles but it would have been for naught if his actions or deeds were not consistent with those words. The Old Testament prophets performed symbolic deeds that represented God’s words to the nation. Paul’s deeds were a manifestation of the good news he shared. For instance, Paul was continually suffering for the sake of bringing the good news.

The signs and wonders, which were performed through Paul and the Apostles by the Spirit, demonstrated the continuity between the ministry and message of Christ and those that followed him. While the miracles aren’t normative today we can still demonstrate the promises of God’s kingdom through our words and deeds. Through our words we can describe what God’s kingdom is like and through our actions we display a glimpse or taste of its reality living through us in the Spirit.

Part of Paul's goal in Romans 12-15 has been to show how the Gentiles, and Israel too, can be made holy. In other words, how can their words and deeds be made to serve or minister in God's kingdom. Paul is providing an outline for bringing our whole lives in service to the Kingdom. As Paul says in Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Prayer

Father, thank you for those you sent to me that I may know the good news and for those that were an example to me of how to live out the gospel. Give me wisdom to examine my words and deeds to bring them into acceptable service. Help me through your Spirit to live out the kingdom in everything I say and do. Amen

Day 2

ROMANS 15:19b- 21

^{19b} so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ²⁰ 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, ²¹ but as it is written,

*“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”*

Paul is crystal clear on his mission. You could say Paul likes to keep the main thing the main thing. While certainly there are many other aspects of ministry that Paul could have partaken in, it is clear that he wanted to make the good news of King Jesus the Messiah known to those who did not have any knowledge of him. This is something we see throughout Paul's letters in the New Testament.

- Ministry to Phillipi a leading city of Macedonia and a Roman colony, IE filled with Gentile and non-YHWH worshipping peoples. (Acts 16:11-40)
- *“But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles”* (Gal 1:15-16).
- *“On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles)”* (Gal 2:7-8).
- *“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, show the mystery was made known to me by revelation... This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”* (Eph 3:1-3, 6).

Paul had a clear strategy to reach the lost with the gospel. His aim, his calling, was to preach and bring the gospel to areas where no churches existed, and to plant churches where none existed before. It is not as if there wasn't more work that could have been done. There certainly were others who needed further discipling, clarity of how to follow Jesus and even more who could have been reached with the good news. Yet Paul trusted that God would work through other people, that his strategy to reach the lost would indeed further the gospel to the outlying areas. Let's be clear, strategy and having a plan is good, Paul had one.

There is one other component to Paul's ministry alongside his plan. Prayer. When the apostles were stuck, or when they needed to find a way forward they went to prayer. Private prayer, pastoral prayer, corporate prayer; their planning and strategy was always tied to prayer. This makes it abundantly clear that like Jesus we are willing to follow God's will and attune our strategy to His leading (Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, John 6:38). Let's make that our prayer today.

Prayer

Great Father in heaven. Your heart for the lost is undeniable. When we go astray, you woo us back. When lies and corruption are believed, you give us good news and truth. You have moved each one of us from the kingdom of darkness, to the kingdom of light. We pray Lord, that our ministry strategy would follow your heart. That our planning would be tied and connected to your will. As Jesus prayed in the garden, not my will but yours be done. Give us that strength. Humble us to see that the way forward is through you. Grant us eyes to see that the lost don't need more of our strategy, but of your goodness, mercy, and compassionate love. May we do your work through our lives, for the sake of King Jesus. It's in his marvelous name we pray, amen.

Day 3

ROMANS 15:24-29

²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

In (24b), the verb translated assist (propempō) seems already to have become almost a technical Christian term for helping missionaries on their way. It undoubtedly meant more than good wishes and a valedictory prayer. In most cases it also involved supplying them with provisions and money, and sometimes providing them as well with an escort to accompany them at least part of the way. (John Stott)

- On a scale of 1 - 10 how generous are you in assisting Gospel work? On the same scale how willing are you to assist Gospel work? What are some of the reasons (positive or negative) that you see standing behind the way you answered?

In v. 27 Paul speaks to the issue of motivation when he mentions the “debt” that the Gentiles owe in receiving the Gospel. On the one hand, he seems to be speaking figuratively here of the absolute riches of being included in the Gospel, on the other hand he is highlighting that believers have been given the greatest gift ever and anything that we do in response will pale in comparison to what we have received.

- Do you see your day to day, material choices as being a part of your spiritual “debt”? How does seeing the world through this lens change your outlook?

Prayer

Father what can we say in response to the gift that you have given us in Jesus Christ, except thank you from the bottom of our hearts! As we consider that we have been given righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, may our lives be marked as one giant Hallelujah from head to toe. Holy Spirit, spread throughout your people the gift of generosity. In addition to money, may we be generous with our time and our talents, with words of encouragement as well as exhortation. We pray for those throughout the body in need of funds to meet the basic needs of life or to continue their gospel work. May they find their sisters and brothers in Christ to be willing sharers of the riches that are ours in Christ Jesus. All this we pray in Jesus name. Amen

Day 4

ROMANS 15:30-32

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

The love that Paul encouraged in the Roman believers flowed freely through him. Can you hear it in his longing to see them, his compassion for suffering saints in Jerusalem, and especially in his passion for unreached souls? He believed absolutely that the gospel was the only hope for humanity, and was for all people. He knew he was God's chosen ambassador to bring this hope to the Gentiles. But he never thought he was working alone. He was part of a community in a new kingdom who were on mission and under authority.

Because this was God's mission, prayer was the first work before any decision or action took place. Paul invited the Roman believers to strive with him in prayer before he went to Jerusalem. What does it mean to strive in prayer? What does it mean to strive together? Striving implies exertion, intensity, struggle, perseverance; it implies there is opposition to overcome and a goal worthy of great effort. So Paul does not just assume God will bless his good intention. He submits to the way God has included us in His work, and asks for protection against opposition from the enemy, and for acceptance of the gift to their friends in Jerusalem. Because the Roman believers participated through prayer, they would also be able to participate in thanksgiving to God in answering their prayers. There would be a celebration of joy!

What do you feel passionate about?

How does meeting Paul in this letter challenge you?

Think about Paul's invitation to strive in prayer. Is that your experience?

Have you found joy in striving in prayer with others?

Prayer

Lord of all, We are praising you today for including us in your mission to the world. You are our only hope in a despairing world, our truth in a deceptive world, our life in a dead world. Forgive us when we are so unamazed and unmoved by our opportunity to bring the gospel to all people. And teach us to pray...for Jesus' sake, Amen

Day 5

ROMANS 15:33

³³ *May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

This call to spread the gospel and to pray for and help financially those who share the good news is under the umbrella of God's peace, his shalom. Paul's prayer that the God of peace be with his readers parallels similar requests in many of his other letters. (II Cor 13:11; Phil. 4:9; I Thes. 5:23; II Thes. 3:16.)

Check out this video from The Bible Project about God's shalom:
<https://youtu.be/oLYORLZOaZE>

The shalom (wholeness) that Jesus made a reality with his children is being extended to the Gentiles and is actually the power behind sharing it. So the shalom of Jesus is what makes it possible for us to spread his shalom! When Paul prays for the God of peace to be with us all it's much more than a nice moment, it's the only way to achieve the true furthering of his kingdom!

What does it mean to you that the God of peace is with us? God has entered the messiness of our lives. He sees us as we really are. He knows the mistakes we've made, the people we've hurt. He knows when we're trying our best and it still doesn't seem like enough. He understands that we are exhausted, tired, fed up. He knows that hearing the word "unprecedented" one more time might make us break something apart!

Shalom is peace and harmony and wholeness. Shalom is taking broken pieces and putting them together to completeness. Jesus brought us the ultimate shalom in himself--brought his wholeness to the brokenness of this world. The video above says that shalom is "Working together for each other's benefit." Let's remember that what God calls us to he also equips us for. Equips "us" plural, not "us" each as individuals. We live as the body of Christ that shares shalom, which means we don't all do all things. We work together and live together and support each other. We are dynamically whole as we share that wholeness of God's healing with all.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:7

Prayer

Triune God, we thank you for sharing your perfect peace with us. Cause us to love what you love. Give us your shalom so that we can work together for the good of all, brothers and sisters both inside and outside your church. Amen.