

**December 5, 2021**

**Romans 15:14-21**

**SCRIPTURE**

**14**My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. **15**Nevertheless, I have written to remind you more boldly on some points[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15%3B1-13&version=CSB#fen-CSB-28303i)] because of the grace given me by God **16**to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a priest of the gospel of God. God’s purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **17**Therefore I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. **18**For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles, **19**by the power of miraculous signs and wonders, and by the power of God’s Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.[[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15%3B1-13&version=CSB#fen-CSB-28307j)] **20**My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else’s foundation, **21**but, as it is written,

**Those who were not told about him will see,** **and those who have not heard will understand.**

**COMMENTARY**

**15:14-16**. Paul was convinced that the Roman Christians were gifted by God for effective service and healthy church life. God does not build His church without seeing to these needs. Yet Paul also knew that God had uniquely called and equipped him as an apostle to the Gentiles. So what he wrote was sure to be useful in helping the Roman house churches grow to maturity. He served as a priest offering the Gentiles to God and wanted this offering to be holy, acceptable, and pleasing to God (12:1-2).

**15:17-19**. Paul wanted to boast in Christ Jesus to the Roman believers about how God had used him to spread the good news all the way from Jerusalem to the Roman province of Illyricum (modern Albania). God had approved of his ministry by authenticating signs and wonders and many conversions. The Roman believers would have been comforted by this testimony, for it illustrated the secure basis on which they had rested their hopes for salvation.

**15:20-21**. In 10 years, God had used Paul as a pioneer church planter in the eastern section of the Roman Empire. Paul felt his ministry was in keeping with OT messianic prophecy (Isa 52:15). He was the planter; others would come water the soil, and God would give growth (1Co 3:3-9).

**MAIN POINT**

The message of the gospel alone has the power to change the hearts of all people and draw them to Christ. For that reason, the gospel must always go forward into new places.

**INTRODUCTION**

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

* Describe the first time you remember God giving you a burden about a particular person or people group who needed the gospel. How did you respond to that burden?
* Who shared the gospel with you that you remember most vividly? What about that particular conversation stands out?

In this week’s session, Paul wrote to the Roman believers about his goal to continue to take the gospel into lands where it had not gone. Paul explained that doing so was part of fulfilling his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles. The Roman believers were already dealing with tension between the Jewish and Gentile Christians in the faith community. Paul explained that those who were far off also needed the gospel; thus, he pressed on.

**UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

* *ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:14-17.*

**The book of Romans is essentially the world’s most famous missionary support letter. Why did Paul reach out to the church in Rome in particular for support? What reasons did he give in verse 14?**

**When we pursue the same kind of spiritual maturity Paul found in the church in Rome, what benefit are we to the kingdom? Do you have an inner drive to become the type of Christian your brothers and sisters can depend on in this way? How do you get there?**

The goal of Paul’s life was to be filled with the gospel to pour out the blessing of the gospel to others. When he needed support, he knew he would find mature and helpful believers in Rome. When we seek intentional spiritual growth, we place ourselves in a position to be used by God readily.

**What was the aim of Paul’s life? Do all believers share this same calling? Explain.**

* *ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:18-19.*

Paul reminded his Roman audience that the entirety of his message was void of his own accolades. Instead, it consisted of the magnificent and miraculous things that God did through Paul, which resulted in the faith of the Gentiles. It was of utmost importance to Paul that he not be viewed as the power behind the Gentiles’ coming to faith, either through his eloquent persuasion or his passionate plea. It was Christ and His gospel alone that Paul preached among the Gentiles. Therefore, all credit for the gospel’s fruitfulness must go to God’s drawing them to Himself.

**What are some other things that might compete with the power of the gospel when considering our effectiveness at communicating it? What efforts or tools might others give credit to? Why is that dangerous?**

**Describe a time in your life when prolonged success eventually gave way to complacency.**

**In light of that, why is it important to continually pursue new goals for spiritual growth?**

Paul had completed his calling of preaching to the Gentiles throughout the eastern Mediterranean world. The evidences of God’s favor and work were the “signs and wonders” that accompanied Paul’s ministry. Paul did not intend to communicate that he had preached the gospel to every single person exhaustively in each region. However, his words here hinted at a change of season for Paul, which he identified more clearly in the next verses.

* *ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:20-21.*

Paul’s specific focus was to take the gospel where it had yet to go, so he was compelled to look to the Lord for new opportunities for gospel advance.

The phrase “has not been named,” meant Paul’s mark of distinction for an area where no other man’s foundation existed was an absence of worship of Jesus Christ. So clear was Paul’s calling that he would only consider new areas if there was no mention of Christ at all. Today, we refer to these areas as unreached people groups.

**How much of your time would you say is spent around other believers? When you have the choice of how you spend free time, how does that percentage change?**

**How does Paul’s pioneering spirit resonate with you? Are you more comfortable starting new works in areas where Christ is not spoken of, or do you prefer areas that are more seasoned with the gospel?**

Paul’s refusal to “build on someone else’s foundation” was an intentional metaphor that Paul used throughout his letters to refer the spread of the gospel. In modern context, the wording could seem arrogant, as though Paul did not want to share credit for his achievements with other evangelists. The wording of Romans 15:17-18, however, indicated that was not Paul’s intent. Rather, Paul understood the great need of evangelism in the face of relatively few workers. As a result, Paul felt compelled to take the gospel to people groups where no gospel work had been initiated in any way.

In verse 21, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15, which was a part of the famous “Suffering Servant” prophecies. For the Roman believers originally receiving Paul’s letter, these words would have been difficult to digest because they confronted outright the racial rift between the Gentiles and the Jews in the collective congregation. The Jews, who considered the Gentiles in their midst as those who “were not told about him” or “have not heard,” were now being challenged with the realization that those even further off than the Gentiles among them would receive the preached gospel. Similarly, the Gentiles in the Roman congregation were informed that, though previously on the outside of the people of God, now they were on the inside. New formerly-outsiders would be welcomed into the global body of Christ.

**Describe how you felt the first time you walked into a new church as an adult. As you grew more comfortable, how did that initial visit impact your willingness to welcome new people yourself?**

**What would you say are the most crucial components for reaching new individuals or people groups with the gospel?**

Paul’s understanding of his missional calling, coupled with his Christocentric view of history gave him urgency for spreading the gospel that few others on the pages of the New Testament demonstrated. He embraced the burden of being the one to carry the gospel to those who did not know anything of Christ. He actually listed that burden as one of his hardships in his famous list of sufferings for the gospel in 2 Corinthians 11. What fueled Paul’s burden, however, was his love for Christ and his memory of what his own life was like before he met Christ. Modern believers can and must share that same urgency today.

**APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**How “gospel aware” would you say the people on your street are? How do you know?**

**Where were you the last time you had a conversation with someone who didn’t know anything about Jesus? How did that conversation go? Were you surprised?**

**Who in your life has demonstrated the pioneering spirit with regard to evangelism the most? How would you describe their personality? What impact did they have on you?**

**PRAYER**

Pray that God would renew in you a commitment to sharing the gospel in the places where it still needs to be heard. Ask for unwavering dedication to the true gospel message of the Bible.