

The Ministry of the Church - From God to the Glory of God

Rom 15:14-21 ¹⁴ Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. ¹⁵ Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, ¹⁶ that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. ¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient — ¹⁹ in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, ²¹ but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand."

In this passage we see Paul's ministerial goal as an example for setting the true goal for all pastors. But I would also point out that it has its application to all Christians as well. But I think that as this applies to the church it speaks in a two-fold manner to help ministers of the Word clarify what their calling is and how you as members of God's church are a part of that ministry.

We have seen that a church has been established in the very heart of the heathen government. I believe that it is in God's great wisdom that He has not seen fit to reveal who founded the church at Rome since some in the history of the church have over emphasized the importance of the church at Rome. Paul explains that he desires to see them, to be encouraged by them, but that his ministry has been to proclaim Christ to those who had not yet heard the gospel message from Jerusalem to Illyricum. An arc around Rome but not to Rome itself has been the missionary labors of the Apostle. Now looking yet further he explains that he hopes that on his way to preach Christ in Spain where the gospel has not yet been, he hopes to visit Rome on the way.

Paul makes it plain that he is pleased with the reports he has been hearing about the saints in Rome. You will recall how in his opening remarks he had noted that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole of the church world. In this passage he comments that they were filled with all knowledge and were able to instruct each other. But still he says, I have spoken very boldly to you. I really believe that we see in this passage before us this morning we get a glimpse of Paul's burden, and in so doing we see the makings of a faithful pastor's heart. So let us consider this passage under two headings: 1. Paul's priestly service in the church. 2. Paul's boasting in the church.

A. Paul speaks of his ministry as being a priestly service in the church. - *that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

1. He desires that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
2. He indeed uses priestly language here, though it must be noted that he does not give the title "priest" to the pastor.
 - a. It is not a sacrifice in order to bring salvation to the people - as per Romanish thinking - Mass
 - b. But it is merely a presentation of the redeemed to God
3. Paul's goal was to bring the Gentiles to obedience.
 - a. This why he had made it his aim to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.
 - b. Here he places those two goals side by side because they are essentially the same goal. (A people sanctified by the Spirit, and a people obedient through Jesus Christ.

Rom 12:1 Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

4. This is exactly what Paul has done, he has brought into being a sanctified and obedient people which he brings to God as an offering of worship.
 - a. This is not a result of his doing.
 - b. It does speak of his faithfulness in proclaiming the Word of God
 - c. And above that it speaks of the power and authority of the Word of God
5. Paul had faithfully proclaimed Christ crucified from Jerusalem to Illyricum and God had given the increase.
6. Our aim here in NW Arkansas can be not different, it must be to exult in Christ and his work through us to prepare for God an offering of a holy and obedient people.

B. And this brings us to Paul's second point - His boasting in the church.

1. This is not a self-centered sinful boasting.
2. It is a boasting of the power of God in using him as a instrument in His hand.
3. The only thing Paul would talk about was what Christ did through him. - *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient*

4. I want you to notice two things:

- a. First, Paul worked,
- b. Second, it was Christ working through him.
- c. This is how God gives us responsibility, but keeps all the glory for himself.
- d. We are instruments in His hand - as the axe cuts down a tree but cannot boast of itself as cutting down the tree.

Isa 10:15 Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up, or as if a staff could lift up, as if it were not wood!

5. Paul's teaching, preaching and application of the gospel was essential for the sanctification of the offering he is preparing for God. - *in mighty signs and wonders, **by the power of the Spirit of God**, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ***

- a. But it was not his teaching, preaching that saved sinner.
- b. It was the work of the Holy Spirit bringing men and women to faith. (John 16:14).

John 16:13-14 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

6. Once again we see that in all our work to prepare an offering for God, it is God who is at work.

- a. We see here is the importance of the instrument preaching the Word.
- b. And the necessity of the Spirit of God applying that preached word.

7. Without question, the church is the pillar and ground of the truth.

- a. But the Bible is the source of the truth
- b. The church is not write the Bible
- c. Nor does the church give the Bible it authority
- d. The Bible is the churches' authority

Conclusion: As a priestly service Paul is offering to God the offering God Himself has provided.

Paul is not offering a sacrifice for sin that has already been done by Jesus Christ once and for all. Paul is simply presenting to God what that sacrifice has accomplished.

Paul is offering to God a people redeemed by the blood of Christ.
Paul is offering to God a people that God has redeemed to Himself

A faithful Pastor can say - "I have preached the Word"

I have preached the word in simplicity and godly sincerity
I have not does this with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God
But he cannot say that he did it on his own.

We can come up with all sorts of arguments from logic and reason.

We can ask any one the source of their world
But we can only show the world our source of wisdom when we quote Holy Scripture.

The philosopher/apologist Justin the Martyr - while living in Ephesus he was converted by the study of the Old Testament prophets.

He wrote: "*Straightway, a flame was kindled in my soul, and a love of the prophets and of those men who are friends of Christ. Theirs is the **oldest and truest explanation of the beginning and end of things** and of those matters which the philosophers ought to know, because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed His Son, the Christ. I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable.*"

Paul reasoned from the Scriptures

Acts 17:2-4 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned with them from the Scriptures**, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." And **some of them were persuaded**; and a **great multitude of the devout Greeks**, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

May God be pleased to use us here in the same manner.