

Subject: Paul's Ministry for Christ

Scripture: Romans 15:14-21

When you need help, you want someone who is committed and competent. You want someone who is knowledgeable and experienced. For example, when you get your car worked on, you want a mechanic who knows what he is doing. When you are sick, you want a doctor who is experienced and competent. And this is even more important when you need spiritual help because so much is on the line. You want someone to help that knows the truth and cares about your eternal welfare. In Romans 13, Paul reminded the church of this fact:

Romans 13:11 *...for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

For believers the day of our ultimate salvation when we see Christ and live with Him forever is closer than ever before. But for those without Christ, the day of judgment and eternal punishment is closer than ever. For this reason, believers and unbelievers should want a minister of the Lord who is committed and competent. Paul was such a minister. I want us to take a look at Paul's ministry because it was in many ways a model of excellence.

1. Paul's ministry as a PARTNER with others (vs. 14-15)

He wrote to the church and called them "brethren." He wrote to encourage them and remind them of their ministry to one another. They were full of goodness (high moral character and virtue, including kindness, honesty, and good works). They were filled with all knowledge (had a grasp of basic Christian doctrine). They were able to admonish (influence and correct) one another.

Paul didn't do all ministry all by himself, but he counted on believers ministering to each other. Paul taught them and encouraged them as a partner. This is similar to what he wrote:

Philippians 2:12-13 ¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* ¹³ *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

2. Paul's ministry as a PRIEST unto God (vs. 15-18)

The word "minister" is the word used for a priest. Paul saw himself as a person who presented souls to God as an acceptable offering. Paul was primarily a minister to the Gentiles. When he came into a city, he first ministered to the Jews in there was a synagogue, and then he ministered to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Gentiles could not enter the temple or bring sacrifices to God, but Paul says that the Gentiles were the offering themselves when they were saved.

Paul understood that God doesn't want programs or money or buildings. He doesn't need those things. He wants our lives to be offered as a sacrifice to Him.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The way to bring others to God as a sacrifice is to give them the Gospel (vs. 16).

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Paul's ministry was to glorify Christ (vs. 17). Paul knew it was Christ who worked in hearts to convert the Gentiles and make them obedient. Their obedience was the evidence of their faith and their salvation.

3. Paul's ministry as a PREACHER of the gospel (vs. 19)

Everywhere Paul went he preached the gospel. Paul and the apostles did mighty signs and wonders that confirmed the message, but it was the gospel that saved souls, and not the miracles. Are preachers today supposed to do mighty signs and wonders or was that a unique ministry of Paul and the apostles? Here's what the Bible says:

2 Corinthians 12:12 *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*

Hebrews 2:3-4 ³ *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;* ⁴ *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

4. Paul's ministry as a PIONEER for the gospel (vs. 20-21)

Paul travels covered about 1,400 miles (vs. 19, from Jerusalem to Illyricum). Think about the hardship and risks involved with his journeys. He wrote about it:

2 Corinthians 11:26-27 ²⁶ *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;* ²⁷ *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

Paul's ministry was far-reaching, risky, painful, and yet it was focused on the job at hand...to preach the gospel in pioneer areas where the gospel had never been preached. This is what he lived for. Do we share Paul's heart to get the gospel to people who have never heard it? How can it be right for some people to hear the gospel over and over when other people have never heard it the first time?