

Pt 51 Romans 15:14-21 Paul's Boldness

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Romans 15:14-21

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Last time we looked at verses 8-13 which spoke of how Christ is for ALL men, both Jew and Gentile. We looked heavily into Old Testament prophecies of how God's plan was always to include the Gentiles into His plan of salvation.

Here starting in verse fourteen, Paul is bringing his letter to a close and is going to explain to these believers in Rome, why he wrote such a bold and forthright letter to them and also reiterate his calling as a preacher unto the Gentiles.

I want to remind you who Paul's letter was written to. He gives us that information in Chapter 1 of Romans: **Romans 1:7** *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* So, it was written to the "Saints in Rome." The saved people in Rome. Believers in Christ in Rome. In shorter words, the Church at Rome.

At the time Paul wrote this letter he had never been to Rome. He longed to be there and even told them that in this letter. He did not start this church. He did not pastor this church. He had never even met most of the members of this church. Yet he was inspired by God to write a letter to them.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Just as Paul had mentioned in Chapter one, the Church at Rome was known for their faithfulness: **Romans 1:8** *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

This was a strong church and doctrinally sound. That is why Paul states what he did in verse fourteen that they were "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another." That word "**admonish**" means to "**warn, caution, or gently rebuke.**" Paul speaks highly of this Church and wants them to know how he feels about them.

So, Paul wants them to know why he wrote so boldly to them.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

As you know from our studies over the past 2-years, Paul covered a lot of very deep and personal subjects. He held nothing back. Some of the things Paul wrote may have ruffled some feathers, and he knows that, so he explains why his letter was so bold. He states the reason he did this was "**putting you in mind.**" Yes, they knew the truth. Yes, they were known to be faithful. However, he wanted to remind them of the importance of remaining in the truth so that they didn't stumble.

If you remember, he had covered a lot of things that may have been controversial, such as in Chapter 6 when he wrote this: **Romans 6:12-13** *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Some may have thought "**Who does he think he is speaking to us like that?**"

Also, in Chapter 8: **Romans 8:7-9** *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Really Paul? Don't you think we know that? Just what are you trying to say? Most church members today would have thought Paul was being "mean-spirited."

What gave Paul the right to do this? Well, he states it in the last part of verse 15: "**because of the grace that is given to me of God.**" In plainer terms, "**because what I'm doing is God's will.**"

The preaching of the Gospel is the most important thing in Paul's life. He wasn't in the ministry to make friends or to be on the cover of Christian Times Magazine, no, he was about the Father's business. Much like Christ, Paul wasn't there to do his own will, but that of the Father. If that means Paul ruffles some feathers along the way, then so be it. He would rather feathers be ruffled, and feelings hurt than to impede the cause of Christ.

We need more preachers like Paul these days. Too many men think they are running in the Most Popular Preacher Contest. Preaching has become so wishy-washy and weak that people get offended whenever someone comes along and preaches the cold hard truth. Listen, we need to preach the truth in love, but that doesn't mean you have to be cotton candy and sugar sticks. It doesn't matter if someone has been a Christian for a month or 50 years, we all need to be reminded of the truth. Especially if it stomps on our toes.

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Paul goes on to state his calling and that is to be a preacher unto the Gentiles. Yes, he preached unto the Jews as well, but the ministry God called him into was to preach Christ unto the Gentiles. That is why Paul became a missionary in all of the pagan lands. Although he preached in Jerusalem, he didn't focus his attention there or in the areas of Judea, instead, he ventured into the Roman and Greek colonies where the majority of the people were Gentiles.

Paul needs for the church to understand his mission and to get behind him and support him. He plans to stop off in Rome on his way to Spain where he will be meeting these from the church, and he wants their support.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

Again, this shows that Paul isn't doing this for his own glory or to be put on a pedestal, he is doing it for the glory of God. That word "glory" as it is used here is defined as "boasting."

Many men in Paul's position would "glory" or "boast" of all the accomplishments that have taken place, yet Paul is careful to inform them that the only thing he can boast about is the Lord.

He made this very clear whenever he wrote to any of the churches. When he wrote to the Corinthians, he said this: **1 Corinthians 1:29-31** That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

And in **2 Corinthians 10:12-13** For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 13 But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

To the Church at Galatia he said: **Galatians 6:14** But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

We must be very careful in our work for the Lord that we do not allow ourselves to think that we have done anything. If anything good is accomplished, it is because God did it and HE gets all the glory.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

Again, he stresses the fact that any of the things that were done, they were "wrought by Christ" and not himself. He would not DARE speak of anything he did, only what God has done.

Lesser men would exalt themselves. Many men today exalt themselves. They brag and boast of their "ministry." I can't even begin to tell you the many men I have talked to in the ministry that call it "their ministry." I am always conscientious to make sure anytime I speak of the ministry I am in that I never call it "my ministry," because it is not mine, it is the Lord's.

I know for a fact that I can do nothing on my own. I am not capable or smart enough to understand the Bible on my own. If the Lord does not illuminate the Scriptures, I have no understanding of it. I do not have the ability to stand behind a pulpit and preach to a congregation. I am not a public speaker. I am not polished in speaking. I can barely look people in the eye, but the Lord allows me to preach and teach the Bible and He is the one that enables me.

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Paul mentions the "mighty signs and wonders" that were performed when he worked among the Gentiles. For 10-years he had traveled the Gentile world over from Jerusalem to Illyricum. That around 2,000 miles back and forth.

Paul had traveled to more places than most men would ever see in their lifetime, going wherever the Holy Spirit led him. He said he "fully preached the gospel." He was just a willing vessel allowing God to work through him to bring the Gentiles to the light of the truth of the Gospel.

Did you know that most Christians will never even share the gospel with another person? Let alone travel the world over to do so. The average preacher will never physically preach outside of his own city – and except for publishing our sermons on the internet where they are heard all over the world, I am including myself in that. I have great respect for those whom God has called to travel this world over sharing the Gospel.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

I like what Paul wrote here "I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation."

Paul's mission was to reach the unreached. He went places that most would not dare to go. He didn't want to come behind some other man and preach.

Speaking of "building upon another man's foundation," there's a funny story I read about:

*Years ago Harold Ockenga was the pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, and Donald Barnhouse was pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. They were good friends, so they decided to do a tour together during which they would preach nightly. One night one would go first, and the next night the other would go first. Ockenga brought a different message every night, but Barnhouse brought the same message night after night after b-o-r-i-n-g night. So on their last night, Ockenga—who had memorized every word of Barnhouse's sermon—delivered his friend's message word-perfectly—same introduction, illustrations, conclusion, everything.

When it was Barnhouse's turn, he said nothing about it. He simply stood up to preach and brought a completely different message.

Afterward, when the lights were dimmed and they walked out together, Ockenga said, "They kind of liked your sermon I preached tonight, didn't they?"

Barnhouse replied, "Not as much as when I preached it here two months ago."

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Although not a direct quote, Paul is referring to that which was written in **Isaiah 52:15** So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

This is speaking of how the Lord Jesus would be revealed to the Gentiles (**those whom he was not spoken of.**) The Messiah was promised to the Jews but would also be revealed to the Gentiles. Paul was the chosen vessel in the New Testament to be the one to shine that light on them.

Next time, Lord willing, we will look at the rest of this Chapter as Paul describes his plans for visiting the Romans on his way to Spain and the things which has hindered him thus far from being with them.

* <https://voice.dts.edu/article/ask-dr-swindoll-fall-2015/>