

Men to Men Ministry

Lesson 47 of 52 on Paul's letter to the Romans.

Living in Ministry

Teacher: Just Larry

Phone: 916-337-2648

Web address: <http://theoinsight.com>

Email: ljmonson@hotmail.com

Scripture – Romans 15:14-22 NASB

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

15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation.

21 but as it is written, "They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand."

22 For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you.

Introduction

You may have seen the title of this message, “Living in Ministry,” and thought, “Well, this message doesn’t apply to me because I’m not in the ministry.” If you thought that, you may not understand the New Testament truth that as a Christian God has given you spiritual gifts that you are to use in serving (“ministering” for) Him. There are no useless or inactive parts in the body of Christ. Several weeks ago, in our study of Romans 12 we learned

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly.”

Each of us is a person of service to each other. Every believer is a servant. Every believer is a priest with a ministry to fulfill.

Or you may think that you’re not “in the ministry” because you’re not financially supported in your ministry. You work in a secular job. But so did Paul—he made tents to support his ministry. All of us are just as much “in the ministry” as Paul was. Someday we all will give an account to God of how well we fulfilled the ministry that He gave us.

The only way you can say that this study doesn’t apply to you is if you are not saved.

If you have not been born again, you cannot serve God. In fact, you cannot do anything for God to try to earn your salvation. If you try to earn your salvation by serving God in some way, you’re only going farther down the path away from God. You could do as many good deeds as Mother Teresa did, but if you think that those good deeds will get you into heaven, you will be shocked on the day of judgment. Good deeds can never erase the guilt of your sins. If they could, then Jesus did not need to die. It is only when you confess the pride of your self-righteousness and trust in Christ alone as your Savior from sin that you then can serve God. So if you’re not saved, the application of this message for you is, trust in Christ right now!

Since all of us who have trusted in Christ will give an account to God for how well we served Him with the gifts that He gave us, it is imperative know some biblical principles for how each of us can carry out our ministries. In our text, Paul gives us at least a dozen such principles. (Don’t panic—we’ll only cover six today!).

Paul has just completed the major doctrinal and practical parts of this letter. He now turns to some personal matters that extend to the end of the letter. This is the longest closing section of any of Paul’s letters, perhaps because he had not yet visited the church in Rome, and he wanted to lay the groundwork for a possible future visit.

1. In this lesson covering 15:14-21 he describes his past ministry (Lesson 47).
2. In 15:22-33 he shares his future ministry plans (Lesson 48).
3. In 16:1-16 he gives extended greetings to those whom he knew in Rome (Lesson 49).

4. Next Paul follows with a final exhortation and encouragement (16:17-20)(Lesson 50).
5. Greetings from those who were with him in Corinth (16:21-24) is then given (Lesson 51)
6. A final benediction (16:25-27)(Lesson 52).

Commentary research - Exposition

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

15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

Paul was writing to them and had been a little hard on them. They needed it.

Everyone has a propensity to forget. To let things slide if not recalled constantly and constantly. Hearing things over and over is not a bad thing. There have been several times where I have read the same verse again and again and the result is not always the same. I have given the same sermon and every time the result was different.

Here in this verse is the reason for Paul's writing. The church was well aware of the factions within the church. They already knew that unity was the greatest characteristic of the church. Yet, Paul wrote again for no other reason than to show the consistency of the grace of God.

16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

As stated before Paul was a minister, (a person called to do something for the body) as a priest (a person to intercede for the body), so his efforts to honor God by his actions will be acceptable to God and be set apart for a divine purpose.

It must be noted here there are only two types of priests in the scripture. First was the priestly tribe of Levi. They were called to take the offerings of the people to the altar and offer them up. It was an act specifically called out in the Old Testament. The second type of priest is called the Melchizedekian priesthood. We find reference of this separate order in the Book of Hebrews, and it states that Jesus was the High Priest of the Melchizedekian order.

So what is Paul meaning when he uses the word Priest. He was minister of Jesus Christ acting out the role of a heavenly priesthood to bring the offering of the Gentiles to God. The key here is that which is done in heaven is to be done on earth. It is the action that is pointed out here and not the office.

17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

If there is a reason for boasting, to having pride, to shout to the roof tops it must be associated, done by, revealed by, provided by God. All glory goes to God. Because of the offering of the Gentiles (Paul's calling) there is a reason for shouting GLORY!

18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

All the voices in multimedia today seem to be crying out, "Notice me" or "Click on me" or "I am entertaining, watch me." We endeavor to do more than be entertained by the latest warm puppy emoticon. This verse is an example of all Christians. We are not distracted by all else but our goal in our vocation is to speak, see, and follow only Jesus. Because it will result in the obedience of the world around us.

- Word – the plumb line of scripture. What is our life filled with will determine our actions
- Deed – The testimony of our lives. These are the actions that we are called to do.

Why did Paul do what he did? Because he saw more than his ego. Because he wanted more than a pat on the back. Because Paul had a call. Anything less was a waste. Paul did not save the Gentiles. Paul's results were not because he showed up. Paul's results were that he became a priest, a minister, missionary to a people.

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Because of Paul's willingness to go to the unchurched, there were signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Geography was not my best class in school, so I had to look up these two locations. Jerusalem is in the middle of the so-called holy land at the far eastern end of the Mediterranean sea. Illyricum is in the Balkans which is now Romania. The distance between them is over 1,000 miles. That is a long way to walk.

20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

This is the calling of Paul. Not to be a minister, but he became one. Not to be a priest, but he became one. Not to be a pastor but he became one. But to be a preacher and evangelist to those who had not heard. For Paul, it was his greatest desire to reach out to the unreached.

At issue was that the church was growing so rapidly that it was harder for Paul to do the work of a missionary because the gospel was being spread by others. He was running out of places to go. Paul wanted to go to Rome to fund his furthest trip yet. He wanted to go to Spain.

21 but as it is written, "They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand."

So in conclusion Paul quotes Isaiah again. It simply states the purpose of Paul's life to bring the Good News, the Gospel to those who had not heard so they shall see and when they see they will understand.

Study discoveries -- Understanding the purposes of God in the world

There are several characteristics to Ministry to which we might find in our study scriptures. AMAZING NUGGETS ARE MOST OFTEN FOUND AMONG THE ORDINARY.

Four things 1. Person, 2. Motive, 3. Action 4. Aim

Four parts to any reasonable action are the person doing it, the motive of doing it, and the measured act of doing it.

- **Person:** One of the things that is really striking about this passage is the personal terms used by Paul:

Verse 14 “**I** myself also am convinced”

Verse 15 “**I** have written”, “because of the grace given **me**”

Verse 16 “**My** offering of the Gentiles”

Verse 17 “**I** have found reason for boasting”

Verse 18 “**I** will not presume to speak”, “Christ has accomplished through **me**”

Verse 19 “**I** have fully preached”

Verse 20 “**I** aspired to preach the gospel”, “**I** would not build on another man's foundation;”

Verse 22 “For this reason **I** have often been hindered from coming to you.

Paul is very personal here in Chapter 15. He uses all his pronouns. But there is something more to be seen here. He is using his personal experience the ‘I, me, my’ examples to encourage the members of the Roman Church to emulate his work. And to do so he appeals to his own ministry.

- **Motive:** Of direct interest to us tonight is the discovery of the personal purpose of Paul. It seems from Verse 20 we find the word in the NASB “ASPIRED”. It also has been translated as “**AMBITION**”, both are trying to translate the Greek word *philotiméomai*. Thayer, in his Greek lexicon, defines as:

- to be fond of honor
- to be actuated by love of honor
- from a love of honor to strive to bring something to pass
- to be ambitious to strive earnestly
- make it one's aim.

Putting all these definitions together there seems a need to express oneself, to strive to do something, all the while honoring someone else. It is more of a goal to do an act to honor than a personal desire. This one word “**AMBITION**” is a key to this section of Romans. It is the motive for Paul for his interactions with Rome.

- **Action:** From Romans 1:11 **For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established.** Here Paul had expressed a desire to go to Rome, to give a spiritual gift that would establish the church. He desired to establish the church. To set them on a course of hope and love. But he had not done so. In the book of Romans, we find a statement, 15:22 **For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you.** The reason seems to be something between the first quotation and the second. I must assume it is stated previously and it is found in 15:20 **And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation.** Paul's apology for not already having fulfilled his purpose of visiting Rome is that he had been in the business of preaching the gospel to people who had not heard it. Paul had prioritized his life by the single goal of 15:20, to preach to those who had not heard it.
- **Aim:** Paul full well knew Rome had heard the Gospel, as evidenced by the company of true believers to whom this epistle was directed. And further, He saw them as partners for his planned mission trip to Spain. He needed the financial support of the Roman Church to reach out to those who had not heard the good news.

Romans was written mostly to those he did not know. Please note here that the voice of Paul seems to soften. He had been almost harsh at times in the words he had written. As I read this aloud it seems to me that Paul was second-guessing himself. "I wonder if I was too harsh." "I wonder if I have become like the exampled strong and not accepted the weak." "Did I go too far?" Was I a little hard, instead of loving? So, Paul changes his tone. He talks about his life, his ambition, his calling. Further, He had to assure these Roman Christians they were not on the wrong path. Paul did not want to destroy when his method, his intention was to build up.

Principles of Ministry

1. IF YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN, YOU ARE IN MINISTRY.

Following our pattern of action of **PERSON, MOTIVE, ACTION, PURPOSE**

- You are in the ministry if you are a Christian. First to each other.
 - You the person, saved by grace
 - You have a motive and ambition to become what you need to be to others.
 - You have willful actions, to admonish within the church
 - You have a recipient. Admonishment is not outside of the church and only in love.

Paul affirms that the entire Roman church (not just the pastors) is **"full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another."** In other words, they are competent to minister to one another. Based on the Greek verb that is here translated "admonish." It means to **admonish, warn, or instruct**, usually in a corrective sense. It implies that there is a problem, whether immaturity or sin, in the life of the other person that needs to be overcome. Several times Paul uses the word to describe his ministry. He told the Ephesian elders (**Acts 20:31**), **"Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I**

did not cease to admonish each one with tears.” In Colossians 1:28 he wrote, **“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”**

He wrote to the Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 5:14), **“We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”** They were all to exercise this ministry of admonishing fellow believers who were “unruly” or “out of step.”

In our text, Paul says that he is confident that the Roman believers can exercise this ministry toward one another. While the elders may need to get involved at times, this is a ministry that the body is to engage in on a regular basis. If you know of a Christian who is drifting or going astray, it’s your responsibility to try to restore him to the Lord (Gal. 6:1). If you’re not sure how to go about it, ask an elder to coach you. But your relationship with the straying brother usually means that you are the most effective member of the body to try to restore him. You *are* your brother’s keeper. If you’re a Christian, you’re in the ministry.

2. NOT ALL ARE CALLED TO THE SAME MINISTRY

Paul’s ambition, aim, or aspiration, **was to preach Christ in places where Christ had not been yet heard.** V20. It was Paul’s calling by God to accomplish. The question that must be made here is whether this same ambition, aim or aspiration is the same for all in this room. Is it our honoring call to preach to the untouched? We as the Church have multiple avenues of ministry.

The two opportunities in this scripture a choice between being a missionary or an evangelist. To find a place of service in a church and teach and nurture or to go to those who had not heard. There is a difference between being an evangelist and being a missionary. It must be noted there is a difference between an office and a ministry: There seems to be only four **offices** in the early church: (1) **Missionary** a person who goes where few have gone before, to break ground, to open new fields for harvest, (2) **Evangelist** a person who has a goal of reaching the unsaved within a location that has already been opened and to preach to the unsaved, (3) **Pastor** a person who preaches and teaches with the goal of creating churches, to nurture them in sound teaching and bringing them up in faith, and (4) **Deacon** a person who pitches in, supports the church in acts of service, compassion, and intercession.

3. OFFICES AS COMPARED TO MINISTRY – NOT THE SAME THING.

We can see these four offices in those who carried the Gospel:

- Peter was keeping and nurturing the church in Jerusalem. (Evangelist)
- Apollos followed Paul’s path and nurtured and taught the churches Paul had started. (Pastor)
- James continued the work of the church in Jerusalem after Peter went to Rome (Pastor)
- Andrew was a preacher to the Greeks. (Missionary)
- Thomas went east toward India. (Missionary)
- Thaddeus went to the north to Armenia. (Missionary)
- Matthias became a pastor in Cappadocia (Evangelist)
- Tertius who was a helper to Paul scribe the words of Romans. (Deacon)
- Gaius was his host Paul in Corinth (Deacon)

- Erastus the city treasurer and keeper of the church finances (Deacon)

Each found a place of service. But as Christianity spread it was harder and harder for Paul to find a place where no one had gone before. However, Paul voiced a desire to visit Rome. For Paul, it was only a stop-over place on his way to the outer edges of the Roman empire. His calling, his divine ministry was to those not yet touched by Jesus. Paul's priority was much further west than Rome.

4. BEING A MINISTER IS DOING MINISTRY.

In Romans 15:16: *To be a **MINISTER** (priest) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, **MINISTERING** (the act of being) as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Paul uses a word minister twice in this verse; one as a noun and then as a verb. Neither was used to describe one of the previously stated offices: Missionary, Evangelist, Pastor, or Deacon. He uses this word as being incorporated in the four offices. A missionary is a minister because he ministers. An Evangelist is a minister because he ministers. A Pastor is a minister because he ministers. A Deacon is a minister because he ministers. And conversely anyone who ministers or gives service is a Minister. In this verse, he uses the word. *leitourgós*. The word has been translated in one of three ways:

- Servant: one who cares for (another), often with a focus on a specific task or duty, which can be practical or spiritual
- Minister: A person who has the vocation of being a representative of the whole. It is someone who takes care to build up, sustain and admonish.
- Priest: This last definition is being an intermediary between the church and God. It is bringing the Church to the throne of grace.

Each of these terms must be associated with the God they serve. Each must keep in mind if they do their part, God will do His part.

If I were to preach to those who had never heard the name of Jesus. I suppose it would be best for me to tell first about the change in my life. A personal testimony. But Paul after revealing to the Church his goal, his aim, his aspiration, and his High Calling of going to the unchurched, immediately turns to Hebrew Scripture. He quotes for the Romans from the words of the Prophet Isaiah in 52:16. No personal testimony of the road to Damascus, not the story of Jesus blinding him. No words of God spoke directly to Paul. If I were Paul that is where I would start. "I was walking to persecute heresy and "God opened the window to heaven and spoke to me." Now that is a story to get everyone's attention.

Instead, Paul quotes scripture. Not everyone has a story as dramatic. But we all have the scripture.

5. TO MINISTER EFFECTIVELY TO OTHERS YOU MUST KNOW AND APPLY BIBLICAL TRUTH IN YOUR OWN LIFE

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

Paul was writing to the church in Rome. He saw them as brothers, kin. Further, Paul was convinced that his audience, even with all the faults and seeming fractures, was of good at its roots. Instead of pointing out the factions Paul was now looking at the whole church in Rome. He was confident in them doing the right thing. They were being all they could be.

And they were to the brim full of great things:

- **Full of goodness.** They had made the big step to the justified and seen as righteous by God.
- **Filled with all knowledge.** I think this is a hyperbole, an exaggeration to make a point, like falling overboard and swallowing the whole ocean. Paul was saying they had enough knowledge to be grounded in the truths of God. They had enough to do what they were called to be.
- That knowledge was enough to **look deeply inwardly and outwardly at themselves** and provide strength, comfort, and acceptance.
- They had what was needed to be the Church.

6. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH INCLUDES REMINDING EACH OTHER OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.

- It is important to be accountable to each other. Our fellow Christians are the measure of our ministry. If you feel as if you can teach does not mean you should. If you feel as if you can preach, it does not mean you should. All Christians must use other's in the Body to either affirm or wave us off from a ministry that is really not your calling.
- We must be sensitive toward others who are doing their ministry. To support, to admonish, to serve the servers.
- Don't hesitate to be bold in challenging others or in reminding them of what they already know.

7. OFFER YOUR MINISTRY TO GOD AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP, PLEASING TO HIM.

Have you ever asked yourself how well your life goals line up with Scripture?

When I ask people what they want to do, I hear things like:

- "I want to be a great doctor, one of the best heart physicians in the world."

- “I want to teach kids.”
- “I want to maximize my talents and be the best that I can be.”
- “I want to just do what I love so that I never feel like I have to work a day of my life!”
- “I want to own my own business so I can make my own rules.”
- “I just want to make a good living so I can take care of my family.”

And there’s nothing inherently wrong with those answers. Some of them are really good. The issue is when I ask believers the same question, they seem to draw a blank. They seem to say that their ambitions have little to do with God’s agenda. It is all about what I want.

**God is doing something on earth he has told us about very clearly in Scripture—
and our understanding of our ambition must begin with His.**

We can ask ourselves “Where does God fit into the story of my life?” when the real question should be, “Where does my little life fit into the great story of God’s mission?” We’re like narcissists when it comes to the will of God. We want to know all about us. Many of us have ironically turned the will of God into an idol, seeking to know it more than we do the purposes of God and more than we do the glory of God.

Paul in Romans 15:14-22 is a story of how Paul saw his life. He was part of a grand story that superseded the outcome of his small one.

When Paul finally did get to Rome, he never left. He was imprisoned and ultimately beheaded there. And Paul knew that might happen. But he had prioritized his life into a grander story that he was sure would end in victory and in which no sacrifice was wasted.

Where he could look at tragedy and say, “That’s ok?” It ends in triumph. Where he would look back at any sacrifice and say, “Worth it!”

Would it not be great to live life that way? To see your through the lens of eternity and what God says he is doing in the world?

There have been countless men and women who have come to this point in their lives and felt their life was mattering little for eternity. Some have ended what we would call in tragedy: killed for the Gospel. But if you could ask them in heaven today they would simply say, “Worth it.” Only when you live for God’s purposes first and foremost can you say that. You want to know what God’s will is for your life. Have you started by asking what God’s purposes are on earth? “That by all means we may save some”.

Often I have heard of Christians talking about finding God’s will for their lives. I would reply, “The will of God for you is not lost. 2 Peter 3:9 ***“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”***”.

Remember last week and the quotations from three sections of the Old Testament? From the Law, from the Prophets, and the Wisdom writings. It's as if Paul is saying, "ALL of the Old Testament is organized around this truth: **God would make his name and**

salvation known among ALL nations." And therefore, I plan to organize my life around that purpose.

I want to be able to say when it is all said and done, and the book is closed on Just Larry, the one whose picture is on the front cover is Jesus.

It was John Piper who penned the words "Suffering in this world is terrible but limited. Suffering in the next world is terrible and eternal. And love sees it that way. Love does not shut its eyes to this world or that world. Love reckons with the reality of suffering here, and the worse reality of suffering there."