



Sermon Notes | Gospel Ministry | Romans 15:14-21

INTRODUCTION

As we look at the back half of Chapter 15, we are presented with some personal comments and details from the Apostle Paul. Previously, in Chapters 1-12, the Gospel of God was expounded, and then in Chapters 13-15, the application was prescribed. But now, Paul conveys details about his ministry. And we, confident in the God-breathed Word, know that these details are not superfluous, but have purpose. In conveying these details, Paul is confirming his Apostolic credentials, as he did, for example in Galatians.

Galatians 1:11-12

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

And Paul is providing defence of his legitimacy as an Apostle, as he also did in Galatians, and in 2 Corinthians.

Galatians 1:1-2a

Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers who are with me...

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

At the same time, Paul is also serving to provide an example for us about 'ministry'—his 'ministry clarified'. He provides testimonial details in his writings about 'ministry' and how believers should respond. He explains the 'Ministry' of the Apostles to the Corinthians, for example.

1 Corinthians 4:1-15

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me, Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes,

who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still like scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Having made this explanation, Paul then states:

I Corinthians 4:16

I urge you then, be imitators of me.

Paul makes this command to other churches as well. To the church at Philippi, for example, Paul, having provided testimonial details concerning his life and the 'ministry', states:

Philippians 3:17

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

And to the Church at Thessalonica, Paul asks for prayer for the 'ministry', and then commands the brothers to be disciplined and 'imitating'. He writes:

II Thessalonians 3:6-9

"Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate."

This repeated call seen in the New Testament, to imitate Paul and the Apostles, does not mean that we are to copy everything they did. NO. We are not Apostles, nor have we been 'called' to the office of Apostleship. Apostleship was a unique calling, having specific requirements, among which was to be a witness to Christ's Resurrection, and we meet none of these required credentials/characteristics, thus are not 'called' to the signs of Apostleship.

And in addition to being a witness to the Resurrection, the true Apostles were called to 'signs and wonders and mighty works'. Paul, speaking to the Corinthian Church, reminds them of this fact, for though he sees himself as the least of the Apostles, he is well aware of the Work of the Spirit and the Power of God working in his 'ministry', and the 'signs and wonders and mighty works' that accompany all true Apostles. He points this out to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 12:11-12

I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles (false apostles), even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

And to the Romans Paul states:

Romans 15:18-19

For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.

We do not have this call or this office of 'signs and wonders'. We are not given this endowment. Even so, many today want the title of apostle, and want these signs and wonders, and try to claim them, yet are without the 'proper characteristics' of an apostle. They skip over that they are meant to 'imitate' Apostolic holiness, but this is not glorious enough for them. And while we are not called to be apostles today, we are called to life in Christ, and are called to follow Him and be 'ministers' of the 'Gospel of God'.

Paul's 'ministry' is therefore a paradigm for 'Gospel Ministry', and the principles in Paul's life and ministry are the same for us. Paul speaks of his life and his ministry in today's study.

Romans 15:14-21

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of

*my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience --- by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God --- so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled this ministry of the gospel of Christ, and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written,
"Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand."*

Our Father: Lord, in light of this passage and these details of the Apostle Paul, may we glean and see from them, Father, a life and an example following Your Son, and the true Gospel Ministry. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands and feet to live out this Gospel Ministry. Amen

Paul's example and paradigm are embodied in the rest of the New Testament. There is nothing new, only the consistency of Paul's example and exhortation. Let us look at the first of these principles.

I. CONCERN FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH: (v. 14)

Romans 15:14

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

Consider what brings joy and satisfaction in your life. Give it a moment to consider. Generally we have two satisfaction categories or groups: Us or Others, and these are tied to what you achieve or accomplish. For some, what 'you' attain, your aims and goals achieved or received, are what you desire. For others, what 'others' attain or gain from the Gospel is your goal, a concern for the spiritual growth of others. Your prayer life generally will reveal and reflect whether your concern is for us or others.

For Paul, his concern was for 'others'. The spiritual growth of 'others' was more important than his own welfare. We read of Paul being stoned at Lystra, and unconcerned for himself, carries on.

Acts 14:19-23

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Paul, at the expense of his own welfare, returns to the dangerous and hostile environment. His concern was direct, and was for the discipleship for others. We find another example of Paul's concern for 'others' in Corinthians. He states:

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not being merely human?

Paul's concern is manifested in his prayer life, where he shows us his concern and longing for others.

Colossians 1:9-10

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...

Note the prayer items: knowledge, wisdom, understanding, worthiness, bearing fruit. Paul's anxiety was not for himself, but for the ongoing daily concern for all the churches. He writes:

2 Corinthians 11:28

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

And therefore, we are not surprised to read his comment here in Romans.

Romans 15:14

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

Note the emphasis: He is satisfied concerning these Roman brothers. And note the affection he speaks with. He is happy, pleased and satisfied. His joy is coming from 'others growth', not his own inward reprieve. The outward spiritual growth of the Roman church brings him satisfaction.

And we read of his concerns for the Colossian church, and all the churches. He states:

Colossians 2:1-5

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say

this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Concerned for these churches, their knowledge and intellect, he finds them advancing and growing, and it is satisfying to him. What is satisfying to Paul? His letters explain.

1. They are 'one' and full of goodness, and have moral quality.
2. They are being filled with the knowledge of God's mystery. They are growing in assurance in their spiritual knowledge.
3. They are able to instruct one another, to counsel, warn, advise, and admonish one another.

As Paul shares 'I am satisfied', you also can share truth, and admonish one another. You can 'instruct others' into spiritual growth also. Is doing so your concern also? Do you gain 'satisfaction' in knowing that others are growing spiritually in Christ, are growing in goodness, are able to counsel one another? Do you have 'Gospel Ministry Concern' for the spiritual growth of 'others'?

II. CALLS TO REMEMBER: (vv. 15-16)

Romans 15:15-16

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of a reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

What do you find yourself reminding 'others' about? Is it calendar items, or your needs? Paul was focused on reminding 'others' about the 'Gospel of God', about 'Gospel living', reminding them to 'remember' the important things, and reminding them how to 'obey'. He reminds Timothy, for example, to remember Christ.

2 Timothy 2:8

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.

And he describes to Titus what he should call to remembrance among the 'others'.

Titus 3:1

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.

He explains his actions and mindset clearly when he states:

1 Corinthians 4:17

That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

And now, to the Roman church, Paul refers to his 'reminders' to them, written boldly.

Romans 15:15

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God...

I am not writing something new, he explains. You know these things. I am simply, by way of reminders, bringing to mind those matters that are rooted in Apostolic authority.

Paul's role is Gentile Ministry. Paul has been 'appointed' to this role, and given the grace to carry out this purpose of 'bringing the Gospel' to the nations. His three missionary journeys bear this fact out, and Acts confirms it.

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said to him [Ananias], "Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

Paul was given 'grace' to bring the Gospel to the nations, and 'grace' gave him 'boldness' to write with Apostolic Authority. Paul's 'ministry' was 'bold' from the beginning, his preaching, his rebuking, and his apologetics, and 'grace' gave him 'boldness' to write with authority.

Acts 9:27

But Barnabas took him [Saul, not yet called Paul] and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus."

Acts 13:46

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles..."

Acts 19:8

And he [Paul] entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Romans 15:15

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God.

But 'boldness' was not just Paul's claim to fame. 'Boldness' was the character and the prayer of all the disciples. 'Boldness' was prayed for. 'Boldness' was called for. There was purpose for 'boldness', a role to serve in having it and using it.

Acts 3:29

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

Titus 2:15

Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as brother.

Though Paul calls for 'boldness' and being 'direct' and to the point, these are gracious 'bold' calls to 'remember'. This is 'Gospel Ministry'. 'Grace' has been given to Paul, and 'grace' is given to us also as Christians, and in that 'grace' is the reminder to us to be 'bold'. 'Grace' is not personality. It is not just for the fired up Christians. But 'grace' is 'boldness'. Some of the most 'gracious' of saints are 'bold' yet are filled with 'grace'.

And we move on. Paul was appointed to be a minister to the Gentiles.

Romans 15:16

...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

We note that Paul employs 'priestly language' in this verse, for Paul is in 'priestly service' to the Gentiles. Paul is not a priest, and not a Levite. Paul is a Benjaminite. So his descriptive language is a metaphor. Paul is describing the New Covenant 'priestly' principle that is true of all believers, being living sacrifices. He states:

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The Old Covenant had required the obedience of sacrificing animals daily, but the New Covenant required dead animals no more. Animal sacrifice was replaced. Dead animals had been replaced with new realities, with 'saints' sacrificing their lives daily for holy living in Christ.

Philippians 2:17

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Neither sacrifice brings about our salvation effectively. There is only 'ONE SACRIFICE' that can do that, and only JESUS CHRIST was able, and has done this.

Hebrews 10:12

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...

However, both old types and new types of sacrifices are required for 'sanctification'. Sacrifices are the point of continuity, whether they be animals or saints. But the character of the sacrifice for 'sanctification' has not changed. All sacrifices must be acceptable to God, must be made holy, and must be sanctified. Paul pictures himself as a 'priest-type' figure. He is using the language of the Gospel to present himself in this way. The Gospel makes one holy. Paul explains his ministry.

Ephesians 3:4-12

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Colossians 1:21-29

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he (Jesus) has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister

according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me...

The Gentiles are made holy by the Gospel of God. By Christ the Messiah, believers are made holy in Christ. Unclean Gentiles were now made holy and clean by Christ via the Holy Spirit. This reality is both a 'priestly' and a 'prophetic' picture.

Isaiah 66:15-20

*For behold, the LORD will come in fire,
and his chariots like the whirlwind,
to render his anger in fury,
and his rebuke with flames of fire,
For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment,
and by his sword, with all flesh;
and those slain by the LORD shall be many.*

Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the LORD.

For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

'Those far off shall see my glory'. Paul's ministry is a preview of this. And Isaiah calls us to remember the plan, and the priesthood, and the prophecies of God. Now with Gentile inclusion, people far off are seeing and coming. Look up and around. It has begun. This is 'Gospel Ministry'.

III. CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST'S ENABLEMENT: (vv. 17-19a)

Romans 15:17-19a

In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God...

What attributes do you account as 'good' in your life, and in your 'ministry'? Is it hard work, the help of others, good planning, good graces? For Paul, it was only Christ. Christ enabled him. And he knew it.

2 Corinthians 11:30

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Paul was ever conscious that his only boast was Christ Alone. And Paul demonstrated this truth in his writings. We read, for example:

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Philippians 1:21

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God...

Paul is always conscious that nothing comes from us, it is all God. Our sufficiency is only by Christ's enablement; every second is by Christ, and only Christ. This is what Scripture teaches. This is what Paul is proclaiming. It is only what Christ has accomplished in me.

Romans 15:17-18

In Christ Jesus then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed...

So therefore, it is not hard to imagine this conversation with Paul:

"Paul, what a ministry! You've accomplished so much! So many have been saved."

Paul's reply: "It was not me. It was only Christ."

"Paul, you pressed on to new cities. You were strong. Not everyone would have such resolve."

Paul's reply: "It was not me. It was only Christ."

"Paul, you had choices, yet you pushed on from the beatings, from prison."

Paul's reply: "It was not me. It was only Christ."

"Paul, your words, your deeds!"

Paul's reply: "It was not me. It was only Christ. It was only by Christ. I will take nothing for myself."

Nothing in the New Testament betrays Paul's conviction: Only by Christ and the power of the Spirit of God! This fueled Paul's 'ministry'. He takes no credit for his 'ministry'. If not the Son, then the credit goes to the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:19

...by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ...

A commentator describes it like this:

No brush ever takes credit for a painting masterpiece, and no violin takes credit for a beautiful piece of music. That would be ridiculous!

Paul was aware that he was just the brush, the instrument. His purpose was just to be an extension of Christ's 'ministry'. What Christ began to the Jews, Paul extended to the Gentiles.

Colossians 1:24-25

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known.

We struggle with our boasts and our attributes. Are we conscious of Christ's fulfillment in us, or are we acting in vain, lacking in awareness of the power of Christ? Worse still, are you giving credit outside of Christ? This can be subtle.

However, in 'Gospel Ministry' we must echo with Paul: It is only ALL CHRIST! We are but the instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.

IV. COMPREHENSIVE FULFILLMENT: (vv. 19-21)

Romans 15:19-21

*...by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written,
"Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand."*

What is 'ministry fulfillment' to you? Is it linear, simply your life ending? Is it qualitative, that is, to keep on doing many things, doing anything, something? Or is it doing things in the Name of Christ? What is 'ministry fulfillment' to you?

Paul understood that 'ministry fulfillment' was not only doing things appointed, that is things in the Name of the Lord, but was fulfilling that post fully, completely, thoroughly, and comprehensively. He says to Archippus, Philemon's son, for example:

Colossians 4:17

...See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.

And to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:5

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

And of himself, Paul writes:

2 Timothy 4:6-7

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Notice Paul's use of priestly language, and he does not think of his 'ministry' as just one aspect of life. No. To Paul it was the purpose of his life. It was not just about his faith, though he 'kept the faith'; it was about 'the faith'. And it was not just about running the race, it was about 'finishing the race'. And it was not just about the fight, it was about the 'good fight'. Paul has committed his whole life to serving, proclaiming the Gospel, fulfilling his God-given mission to the Gentiles.

Paul describes/recounts his 'ministry life' to the Elders of Ephesus, where he was 'immersed' in their well-being and understanding.

Acts 20:17-24,27

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him, And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and

the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ...for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."

Such commitment takes time. From the early Church experience, it was said that it takes 'three years' to make a disciple. Such is 'comprehensive fulfillment' and Paul's example to us. Paul lived for 'fulfilling' his 'mission'.

Acts 20:31

Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Romans 15:19

...by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God --- so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled this ministry of the gospel of Christ.

It was during Paul's third and final missionary journey that Romans was written, and ended with Paul finally ending up in Rome. Paul had blazed a missionary trail in Asia Minor and Macedonia, north and west of Jerusalem, east and south of Rome, a wide area. But now Paul writes to Rome. He has been working in the east, but now is setting his sights westward, and towards Rome.

Romans 15:22-24

This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

This is Paul's conscious summary of his ministry, ten years of committed work. His journeys span two continents, in three mission journeys, to this point, but Paul is far from being done yet. He seeks now to go further west, to Spain, in order to preach to Gentiles. He will not build on another's foundation. Others would have that job. Paul was clear on his particular role. His job was to lay the foundation.

Romans 15:20

...and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation...

1 Corinthians 3:5-6

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God God gave the growth.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The foundation for all is Christ Jesus, and therefore, Paul's was a 'foundation ministry'.

Romans 15:21

...but as it is written,

*“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”*

Such is 'Gospel Ministry'. Bringing the good news concerning the 'suffering servant, Jesus Christ' to Israel and many more elsewhere.

Isaiah 53:4-12

*"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;*

*upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned --- every one --- to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.*

*By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?*

*And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;*

*when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."*

This is the 'Servant of Israel', Jesus Christ. He says of Himself:

Luke 22:37

For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: "And he was numbered with the transgressors." For what is written about me has its fulfillment."

John 12:38

*...so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:
“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”*

And the Apostle Peter confirms that Christ committed no sin nor deceit.

1 Peter 2:22

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

There is no question that the 'Suffering Servant' was Jesus Christ!

And it must be noted that the prophecies of the Cross were also prophecies of the Crown.

Isaiah 52:13-15

*Behold, my servant shall act wisely,
he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.
As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred,
beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—
so shall he sprinkle many nations,
Kings shall shut their mouths because of him,
for that which has not been told them they see,
and that which they have not heard they understand.*

Romans 15:21

*...but as it is written,
“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”*

This is a reference to the Second Coming of Christ Jesus, and the Nations bowing to Him. Paul recognizes his ministry is a preview of 'national sprinkling'. Paul sees a 'forerunning' of prophesy, of Old Testament fulfillment and reality. It is a tribute to Christ.

Micah 4:1-4

*It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it,
and many nations shall come, and say
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,*

*that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many people,
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore;
but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,
and no one shall make them afraid,
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.*

This is a preview of Messiah, demonstrating how people who have not yet heard "will understand" (Romans 15:21) the marvellous truth, when Gentiles from every tribe and tongue will have their eyes opened, their ears opened, and their minds opened, and will understand, and will see Messiah, and will respond 'rightfully'. This is 'comprehensive fulfillment'. This is prophecy fulfillment. And Paul sees, in his 'ministry', his role in this fulfillment. And as believers, we too have a 'Gospel Ministry'.

Have you 'concern' for the 'spiritual growth' of others? Do you have 'concern' for calling others 'boldly' to remember? The call to remind others to remember is meant to be fulfilled completely. Like Paul, our 'ministry mind' must be focused and committed to ALL CHRIST JESUS! Him in us, and through us.