

**ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH**  
**LOVING GOD AND LIVING GODLY – Chapters 12-14**

**LESSON 52 – THE HEART OF A MISSIONARY – Romans 15:14-21**

It's easy sometimes to read the Bible and compare ourselves to those God used in powerful ways...like the Apostle Paul. The obvious conclusion is, "Why bother?" Well...it's the pattern and not the person that God wants us to follow and it's Paul's pattern that we will look at in this lesson. We can imitate the principles in Paul's life and find success in our own ministries.

Romans is one of those books like Ephesians and Colossians, that make a noticeable, clear division between theology and practical application. For the first 11 chapters, Paul takes us through this concentrated curriculum of theology. Then, in chapters 12-16, he gives us the practical application of the theology he's explained. In this section of chapter 15, we see the heart of Paul the missionary. He praises the church in Rome and lays out the principles of ministry by which he serves the Lord.

**Paul's Praise for the Church in Rome**

Paul was like a father who deals gently with his children...an encourager, provider and teacher. With Paul we see how encouraging simple words can be. He encouraged the Romans for the character they demonstrated. It should be the goal of every Christian to be recognized as a good person because of the presence of Christ in their life.

Then Paul praised their knowledge...their knowledge of Christian truth...the kind of knowledge that produces goodness. Two kinds of knowledge are necessary in order to be a good person...

First, we have to have information...the facts about what God has done through Jesus; facts from the Bible; facts about theology. Unfortunately, that isn't enough. The second kind is the knowledge the Colossians and Romans had...spiritual understanding. We need both information and spiritual understanding to face the challenges of life.

Notice the progression in Paul's comments...goodness coupled with knowledge and spiritual understanding will manifest itself in ministry to others. Paul is talking about Christians who have a genuine desire to help others achieve spiritual maturity...and the spiritual wisdom and discernment to do it humbly.

**Paul's Principles of Ministry**

Having talked about God's ministry to the Gentiles in the first part of chapter 15, Paul now gives us the principles by which he has carried out the ministry God gave to him.

Paul's entire ministry was based on the grace of God. We are not only saved by grace; we also serve by grace. If we ever grasped the concept of God's grace in ministry, we would never become proud and never be discouraged. Ministry for God is all about His grace. We simply serve and leave the results to Him. If you are not serving Christ in some way, it's not because you haven't been given grace to serve...it's because you are not allowing God's grace to flow through you to others.

Paul saw ministry as a sacrifice to God and himself as a living sacrifice. All Christians should see themselves and their ministry in the same light. Serving Jesus as living sacrifices helps us keep the right perspective on ministry.

Paul anticipated that some of the things he wrote to the Romans might be interpreted as harsh, and he wanted to make sure they understood his motives. He reminds them that his ministry to them is by the grace of God. Boldness with grace is not offensive. It is speaking the truth in love. It is possible to speak the truth without grace...without love and that is what causes hurt and offense. Paul's ministry is an example in so many ways...truth, firmness, boldness, all delivered with grace, gentleness and love.

The will of God for Paul was to take the Gospel to and minister to the Gentiles. The knowledge of God's will for his life was like a road map for Paul. The same should be true for each of us. We should all know our spiritual gifts and what God has called us to do. Now that takes time but we should always be looking for clarification from the Lord about it. That kind of knowledge keeps us on track.

In verses 17 and 18, Paul is not bragging about himself. He is praising because of what Christ has accomplished through him. He was so careful with his words. He didn't say, "Look at what I have accomplished through Christ." He said, "Look at what Christ has accomplished through me." We hear too much today about what people have done and too little about what Jesus has done through them.

The goal of our ministry is not just to see people saved, or baptized, or join the church. The ultimate goal is their spiritual growth and service to God. Paul wasn't running around getting people saved and then moving on to the next town. He worked among them and wrote letters to them and sent workers to follow up with them so they would conform to the image of Jesus. We don't measure our ministry only by how many people are saved, but by their spiritual development.

Paul characterized his ministry to the Gentiles as what he both said and did. That's the only way he could stay for an extended time with those he had preached to...

his walk had to match his talk. The impact Paul had on people was not just intellectual...it was his life as well. Paul's life was a living book declaring the reality of Jesus...and our lives should be as well. The message of our ministry should be our life.

How did Paul have the energy, the strength, the zeal to do what he did? It's not because he was a "Type A" personality. It was because of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. It's easy to be a workaholic for God in our own strength without the Spirit, but it won't last. We all have to learn to depend on His Spirit and not on ourselves.

Paul's calling from God was to preach to the Gentiles where no one had ever preached before. He felt compelled to go and share Jesus. Now it's obvious that God has not called all of us to do what Paul did. We can't all serve as missionaries. Paul recognized his gifts and calling...to lay a foundation and let others build on it (1 Corinthians 3:10). We should be thankful that there are still people who have gifts and callings similar to Paul. There are still millions of people in the world who don't know about Jesus.

Whatever ministry God has called you to and equipped you for, remember this...it is only by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that your ministry can be accomplished for the glory of God. We don't have to be the Apostle Paul or anyone else. If we remember that, God WILL use us.