Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

In Defense of Boldness, Part 2
Scripture: Romans 15:17-21
Code: 45-115

Romans chapter 15 verses 14 through 21. We are studying now, beginning with this 14th verse, what is the epilogue to the great Magna Charta of the Christian faith, the epistle to the Romans. This is the epilogue. The main body of the letter concluded at verse 13 of chapter 15 and now Paul goes back to some personal things, some things that are on his heart in reference to speaking to the Christians at Rome. In fact, in a sense he goes back to his original introduction, picking up some of the same themes that he introduced in chapter 1 verses 1 through 17.

He opened this great epistle by calling their attention to the theme of it, the gospel of God in chapter 1:1 to 5. He then greeted his readers in chapter 1 verses 6 and 7. He revealed his desire to preach at Rome in chapter 1, verses 8 through 15. And now as he comes back to some of those same themes, there are some more personal things that he wants to say. First of all, in our section, verses 14 to 21, he gives the reason for his boldness. Then in verse 22 through 33 he speaks of his plans for the future, which plans include a visit to Rome. Then in chapter 16 verses 1 to 23 he greets people who are very special to him and closes with a final benediction or doxology in verses 24 to 27. So this is the epilogue where he collects all of the thoughts beyond the main argument and theme of the book to press upon the hearts of his readers and our hearts as well.

And he begins the epilogue, as we noted last time, by a marvelous commendation of the church at Rome. In spite of the fact that he has been very bold with them and spoken very straightforward and forthrightly to them, he is persuaded, he says in verse 14, “of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish or counsel one another.”

And we saw last time what a wonderful commendation this is. And we noted especially that the church that is full of goodness, filled with all knowledge is competent to counsel as a matter of the very life flow of the church. The people are able to nurture and share and strengthen one another. So the Roman church was capable of effective ministry. And the things that he has said to them he has said only by way of reminder, as he adds in verse 15, "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly” than you might have assumed me to have written, is the implication “in some parts of the letter, as putting you in mind," that is reminding you. I've written to remind you and I've been bold that my reminder might come with strength. The reason for this is is because of the grace that is given to me of God. In other words, I have written to you under a mandate from God. I have written to you because I have received not saving grace, but apostolic grace, as he mentioned it in chapter 1 and verse 5, by whom we've received grace and consequently apostleship. So in my calling as an apostle

I have written boldly to you, not to for a moment suggest that you are not a good church but rather to remind you who are a good church indeed of things that you need to hold fast.

Now in discussing his apostolic calling, the grace that is given him of God, he refers to himself in three ways — .as a priest, a preacher, and a pioneer — just to give them a rich insight into his own ministry. Last time we looked at Paul the priest. Notice again in verse 16 just briefly. Part of that apostolic commission is that I should be the “minister,” is the word in the Authorized. The word *leitourgos* is one who performs a public service, most specifically a service of worship to God. And so it is a word that can refer to one who is a priest, who offers something to God. "That I should be” by analogy “a priest of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles," and then the word “ministering.” which is never used anywhere in the New Testament except here. It means to serve as a priest. I am then serving as a priest on behalf of Jesus Christ, ministering the gospel of God and the offering which I bring to God as a priest is the Gentiles, that their offering might be acceptable, “having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

And last time we saw that he pictures himself as a priest, bringing an offering to His God. The offering is the saved Gentiles that he has reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. So Paul stands as a priest, presenting his offering, a cleansed, purified acceptable group of Gentiles, who by faith in Jesus Christ have entered into the washing of regeneration and been cleansed by the blood of Christ and are now fit to be received in God's presence. In 2 Corinthians 11 he talks about presenting the church as a chaste virgin to Christ in some similar terminology.

So in Paul's looking at his ministry he sees himself as a priest to bring an offering to God. We closed last time by trying to turn that to our own attention and ask the question: What am I offering God? If I am a priest, and every believer has a function as a priest, we are a kingdom of priests, we are kings and priests. We are called to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God. Some of those sacrifices might be like Hebrews 13, the praise of our lips. Some of them might be the giving our resources, but surely part of our offering is to offer the Lord those whom we have led to the kingdom through the presentation of the gospel. Paul says I am bold because I'm under apostolic mandate to function as a priest and win Gentiles that I might offer them to God as an acceptable to Him.

Secondly then, and for tonight we want to notice that he is a preacher. Paul the preacher as well as a priest in verse 17, he says, "I have therefore that of which I may glory or boast through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God." Now that verse is a transition from the priest to the preacher. Paul has something to boast about, both as a priest offering souls to God, and as a preacher proclaiming, with great effect, the saving gospel. He has something to boast about. You say, "I thought it was a sin to boast." It's a sin to boast if you're boasting in yourself. It's not a sin if you're boasting in the Lord. Look at verse 17, "I have therefore that of which I may boast through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God," not to me. In things which pertain to God, that is which have been accomplished by God, in things which have been done through Jesus Christ I will boast. A godly pride

is a legitimate pride, not an illegitimate one. And he has every right to boast in those things which Christ has done. First Corinthians 1:31, I read it to you this morning as we opened our worship service, he says, "He that glories, let him glory (In whom?) in the Lord. He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord." In 2 Corinthians I believe it's chapter 10 and verse 17, "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." Again repeating the very same phrase. We have every right to boast of the things which God has done. The preacher has no right to boast in himself because nothing is done of eternal consequence through human strength, even the human strength of a called and anointed apostle. But in the things which pertain to God, in the things accomplished through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is reason to boast.

Paul put no trust in his own flesh. Read the third chapter of Philippians. Read 1 Timothy chapter 1. Read Romans chapter 7. In those three chapters you will find the wretchedness with which Paul sees himself. Then read 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and see again how he gloried and boasted only in his weakness and in his infirmity because in his weakness and infirmity he was made strong and God accomplished things through his weakness and he would boast in what God had accomplished.

In Galatians 6:4 he says, "I will glory in the cross. I will boast in the cross, in nothing of myself will I glory, but in the cross." In fact, he says, "God forbid that I should glory or boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And in 1 Timothy 1:12 and following where he gives that wonderful testimony we've already studied in our morning hours, he boasts in the Lord, how that he who was the chief of sinners obtained mercy through Christ Jesus. And so he says, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen." His boast was in the cross. His boast was in salvation. His boast was in the power of God through him to win others to the Savior. His boast was never in himself. And ever and always when he opened his mouth to speak he spoke of what Christ had done, what God was able to do by His power through the weakness of Paul.

Listen to what he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 11 and 12. "I am become a fool in glorying. You have compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles though I be nothing." In other words, he says, you make me out as a fool because I glory when you ought to have compelled me to boast of the things God has done. I ought to have been commended by you because I don't come behind the chiefest of apostles. In other words, I don't take a back seat to anybody in terms of what God has done through me, though myself I am nothing because the signs of an apostle were wrought among you through me, implied, in patience and signs and wonders and miracles. I don't take a back seat to anyone in what God has done through me. I don't take credit for it but I will glory in what God has done. Any servant of the Lord should be eager to boast in what the Lord has done and do so with a humble heart.

In Colossians 1:29 Paul says, "For this I also labor," that is the perfecting of every believer, "For this I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me powerfully." In other words, I work hard but I know the power belongs to God. It is not humility to deny what God has done. When

someone says, "Hasn't the Lord blessed your ministry?" And you say, "Oh it's nothing, it's really not anything at all, why we've got all kinds of problems," you are denying the Lord the glory that is due His name for what He has done. It's not for me to take credit for that. When someone says, "My, God has blessed your church!" I don't say, "Oh, it's really nothing, we're just loaded with problem people and the place is basically a disaster held together by thumb tacks and tape, you know." That's not humility, that's denying God His glory. God has done a mighty thing here and we do not deny that and will not deny that. Nor will we take credit for that.

As I tell men all the time, I'm as much a spectator at Grace Church as anybody who comes there. I have no more to do with what God sovereignly designs to do than someone outside this congregation, except that I'm closer to it and have had the privilege of seeing the Lord Jesus Christ do by His sovereign power what He willed to do in this place. And we will gladly give Him glory for it. And when someone wants to deny the work of God here, it's very difficult to convince me of such a denial.

And there are such detractors incessantly. Another one was passing out fliers in your car this morning — maybe you got one — wanting to deny that this is the work of God. Such strikes no blow at John MacArthur. It isn't my work, but it does strike a blow at the glorious work that God has done here. And many thousands of people are testimony to what He has done, and many of you are in the kingdom because the Lord worked through the fellowship of this church. And the thanks and the praise is all God's. Any human being is only an instrument. No brush ever took credit for painting a masterpiece. No bow ever took credit for a beautiful violin virtuoso solo. Nor does any man take credit for what God does.

So, Paul says, "I have reason to boast in the things which pertain to God that have been done through Jesus Christ." And when a person ceases to think about or talk about and begin what he has done and begins to boast in the power of the Lord, then his perspective is right. So he glories as a priest in what Christ has done as he offers the Gentiles. He glories as a preacher in the power of the message. In 1 Thessalonians he says in chapter 2, "We thank God," verse 13, "without ceasing because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the Word of God which effectually works also in you that believe. And you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus." He's rejoicing because when they heard his message it came not as the word of man, but as the Word of God.

And so, in verses 18 and 19 then, he begins to speak of himself as a preacher. And beginning in verse 18 he says, "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, 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."

Now here Paul is saying, "I see myself not only as a priest but as a preacher." And in those two verses he gives five virtues of a master preacher. Five virtues of a master preacher and I take them to my own heart, believe me. Let me give them to you, five virtues of a master preacher as he testifies to his own preaching ministry.

Number one, and he already has alluded to it in verse 17, number one, he claimed nothing but what Christ had done through him. He claimed nothing but what Christ had done through him. In verse 18, "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me." I will not take credit for something that was not done by Christ through me. Now that's humility. That's humility. That's a virtue of a master preacher. I will not take credit for what I have done apart from Christ and I will not take credit for what others have done in Christ apart from me. You can take it either way. I will not take credit for what I have done apart from Christ. Or you can take it this way, I will not take credit for what others have done in Christ apart from me. I will only take credit and give all the credit to God for what Christ has done through me.

That's such an important perspective because the temptation on any servant of God is to say, "Well, I'm responsible for their salvation. I led those folks to the Lord. Yeah, I evangelized that group. Well you see those mature Christians over there, well I'm the guy that brought them along. I was their teacher and their model and their example." If it's true, then give God the glory. If it's not true then don't claim it. You have no right to such a claim. Humility says you don't claim anything that is done apart from Christ as if it were done by Christ through you and you don't claim anything done by someone else as if it were done by Christ through you.

Paul was a marvelous instrument of God. In Acts 14:27 it says that he opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. He opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. In chapter 15 verse 12 they listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. That's all they would ever speak about. Paul says, "I'll only tell you what Christ did through me, nothing more, I take no claim for anything else," only what God had wrought among the Gentiles through them," chapter 15 verse 12.

Chapter 21 of Acts, I think it's verse 19, is a similar one. "And when he," that is Paul, "had declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry," again, 21:19. So, you see, he took credit only for what God had done through him. That's true humility. True humility is not to deny what the Lord does. True humility is to acknowledge what the Lord does, give Him the credit but not to step beyond that. He made no great evangelistic claims. He didn't say, "Oh, we had ten thousand people saved." He never gave a number, really, because he never really knew what went on in the heart. He stole no credit from others and he made no exaggerations of anything. He limited his affirmations of what Christ had done through him to nothing more and nothing less than what he could perceive the Lord to have done.

In 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 13 he says, "We will not boast of things without measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God has distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. We stretch not ourselves beyond that as though we reach not unto you, for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ, not boasting of things without measure, that is, of other men's labors."

In other words, he says we never go beyond what the Lord has done through us. Now you have to understand that he repeats this issue several times. Here in our text of Romans 15. A couple of times it's mentioned by Luke in the book of Acts, and here it is with explicit terminology in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, “we never boast of things beyond measure, that is, of other men's labors.” And again in verse 16, "We do not boast in another man's line of things." We take no credit for anything beyond what we know to be the work of God in us. And then he says when we do take credit, verse 17, "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord, for not the one who commends himself is approved but whom the Lord commends."

So, the first characteristic of a master preacher is he claims nothing but what Christ has done through him. And that's the essence of humility. He went where Christ led. He preached to whom Christ called. He receipted only for what Christ did. And he gave all the glory to Christ.

Secondly, the second mark of a master preacher, he preached obedience to the Lord. He not only was humble but he was faithful. His message was obedience. In verse 18 he says, "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient,” obedient." Literally, to make the Gentiles to win obedience. He saw the message of the gospel as calling people to obedience, calling them to submission to the lordship of Christ. Romans 1:5, his apostleship was for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name. He preached no gospel without obedience. The message was obedience. In chapter 6 we remember very well verse 16 from our study there, "Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness, but God be thanked that whereas you were the servants of sin you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you." That's a synonym for salvation, to obey from the heart the gospel delivered to you. It begins with an obedience to Christ.

And so, the apostle Paul had his ministry marked out by the proclamation of obedience. He preached obedience to the sovereign Lord, a willingness to submit to His command and His rule. And his message was no different than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who also preached obedience to Himself.

The third virtue of a master preacher here is he had personal integrity. He had personal integrity. And we could say he was authentic. He was not only humble and faithful but he was genuine. He was

authentic. Would you notice the end of verse 18? He preached his message to make the Gentiles obedient and the message came by word and what? And deed." And the truest preacher is the preacher who lives in deed what he proclaims in word. Is that not so? Obviously it is. What I have said and what I have done are the message I have preached. There is no greater deterrent to the working of the power of God than a disparity in the life of the preacher between his word and his deed. Therein is the essence of hypocrisy. There is the phony. There is the unauthentic, the one who is not genuine, the one who is not real. But it is thrilling and it is challenging to realize that here was a man whose life backed up everything he said. And Christ proclaimed the message through his preaching and through his living.

So, he claimed only what Christ had done by him, that's humility. He preached obedience to the Lord, that's faithfulness to the message. And he had personal integrity and thus was authentic. Fourthly, the fourth mark of this master preacher, his work was given divine affirmation. His work was given divine affirmation. And we'll add the word "powerful." He was not only humble, he was not only authentic, he was not only the genuine preacher but he was also one who was powerful. And power flows out of everything else, the right message, the message of obedience; the right character, authentic. Out of that comes the flow of power as God authenticates that authentic servant.

Notice verse 19, "Now through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God." Attendant to the ministry of Paul were mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Spirit. God used those to produce conviction. He used those to produce faith. Here was a man preaching a message. There were a lot of people preaching messages. There were a lot of messages being preached all over the world of that time. There were orators a dime a dozen. And there were religionists as common as any kind of speaker, proclaiming some cult or some religious view. How did the people know which was from God? How did they know who spoke the truth? God authenticated the true preachers with these mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is, when Paul preached, there were demonstrations of supernatural nature to show that the power of God was behind his ministry. And all you need to do is study the book of Acts and you will see that in great detail.

In 2 Corinthians 12:12, I already mentioned to you, he said that he was given the signs and wonders and mighty deeds that are the marks of an apostle. He bore the marks of an apostle. In that somewhat disputed passage, but nonetheless a true passage, at the end of Mark 16 verse 20 it says, "The apostles went everywhere, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following." The signs were to authenticate their message, that it might be made known that their message was true. You say, "But is that still a valid accreditation?" Of course it is, though today we do not have the healing wonders, and the casting out of devils, and the raising of the dead, and all of those kinds of things that attended the ministries of the apostles, you can still see the true preacher by the fruit of his preaching, can you not? And what is the greatest miracle of all miracles that can occur on this earth? It's the miracle of what? Of regeneration, the miracle of

transformation, the miracle of conversion, the miracle of a transformation from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, from Satan to Christ, salvation, from being a child of the devil to being a child of God, the new birth. And today I believe where you have a true preacher of the true gospel, his ministry is attended by the work of the Spirit of God in the transformation of souls. And although that is not specifically the same as the authentication of the preachers of the apostolic era, it is nonetheless an authenticating sign. We don't need the confirmation of the message by signs and wonders, the message can be confirmed by comparing it with what? With the Scripture, and the message will be determined to be true or false by how it squares with the Word of God.

So, to put it in simple terms, where you have a servant of God, faithful, humble, genuine, proclaiming the Word of God, there will be what we might call gospel triumph. There will be a powerful result as lives are transformed. There was in the ministry of Paul. Start with chapter 13 of Acts and just flow through the rest of the book and you'll see it there. His ministry was marked by power. And so it is even today.

Fifthly, the final virtue of a master preacher is his work is completely fulfilled, his work is completely fulfilled. And we could say he is thorough, he is thorough. Oh Paul was so thorough. He says in verse 19, from Jerusalem...from Jerusalem as a starting point all the way around to Illyricum. And Illyricum would be the northwestern-most point of his ministry, way to the northwest, above north and west, way up in the corner of Greece. From all the way at the southeastern tip of Jerusalem to the northwestern edge of Illyricum, that whole range of Gentile territory, including the Jewish area of Palestine wherein he ministered to some extent, his ministry extended all that are across the Mediterranean and he says, "Through all that area," notice the end of verse 19, "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Now what does he mean? Well it could be translated, "I have fully carried out the gospel of Christ." It can mean two things. It can mean I fully preached in the sense that I preached the fullness of God's gospel, I preached the fullness of truth, I preached all there was, like Acts 20 where he says, "I have not failed to declare unto you the whole counsel of God," Acts 20:27. It could refer to the fullness of his message. Or it could refer to the fullness of the range of places that he went, all the way from Jerusalem to Illyricum.

Now I personally believe that the best translation or the best understanding is the fullness of the range rather than the fullness of the message. We know he preached the fullness of the message. Colossians 1 says that he desired to make every man perfect in Christ and so he worked hard to bring about that perfection. Acts 20, as I quoted, that he gave the whole message of God, holding back nothing. But here I think the essence of the text is that he fully preached in every place the Lord called him and sent him. He maximized every opportunity and met the full range of responsibility God had given to him. Is it any wonder that when he comes to the end of his life in 2 Timothy he says, "I'm now ready to be offered because I have finished my course." “I have finished my course." His

commitment was to do the work of the Lord absolutely without thought of what the cost would be.

He was in stripes. That is, he was whipped. He was in prison. He was near death. Five times of the Jews he received 39 stripes, three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, a night and a day in the deep, in journeyings often perils of waters and robbers, and his own countrymen and pagans and in the cities and in the wilderness and in the sea and among false brethren, in weariness, painfulness, watching, hunger, thirst, fasting, cold, nakedness and all the care of the churches, that's 2 Corinthians 11 again. He went through all of that and was unhesitating in filling up his ministry every place that God called him. He never said no. Oh, what a faithful servant. His work was completely fulfilled, clear from Jerusalem as a starting point to the place called Illyricum on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea opposite Italy and northwest of Greece.

That range, as best I can ascertain, is about a fourteen hundred mile span. It's very likely that he visited Illyricum during his eighteen months in Macedonia and Achaia. We can see that in Acts chapter 19. At some point while he was there during that eighteen months, he must have gone to that remote place. But in all that range he gave the fullness of the counsel of God, winning people to Christ, founding churches, extending the Redeemer’s kingdom with such power that no one could ever doubt that God has His hand on his life and he was under divine appointment. What a preacher. He was humble. He was faithful. He was authentic. He was powerful and he was thorough.

So, in defense of writing so boldly, he says, "Look, I'm writing boldly because I have an apostolic calling.” And then he goes in to defending what that is, it is the calling of a priest who wants to offer a sacrifice a praise to God, namely as many Gentiles as could possibly be won to Christ. “And I am bold because," he says, "I am a preacher and God has called me to preach over a span of fourteen hundred miles to reach as many as I can for the cause of Christ."

That alone would be sufficient to identify the nature of his ministry, but he has one more thought. And that is what I like to call Paul the pioneer, in verses 20 and 21. This is a marvelous insight. He tells the Romans, I'm not only a priest and a preacher, but I am a pioneer. He states that from God, listen to this, he has a call to the un-evangelized fields of the world. He has a call to the unreached people. And this is going to be a great help to him because he wants to go to Spain and he wants to use the Roman church as a place to get all of his stuff together and get a little bit of support so he can go on to Spain. So he wants them to catch the vision of his heart. Look at verse 20. "Yes," he says, "so as priest and preacher I have strived” a very strong word, strong effort “to preach the gospel not where Christ was named." And you can underline that in your Bible. That is a key to understanding the role of an apostle. That is the key to understanding the role of an evangelist. Always the message is the same, preach the gospel. And always I have done it with strong effort, but also always I have endeavored to preach where Christ was not named. Virgin territory is my calling. Virgin territory is my calling.

Look at verse 23, he says, "But now having no more place in these parts." Why? Because the area in which he was was already evangelized. He says, "I've got to go on," and verse 24, "I want to take my journey to Spain because Spain has never yet been evangelized." And we'll see about that in our next study next week. But he says, "I have been called to the unreached people." He's a pioneer. He's a trail blazer. He's a missionary. He's a church planter. Let someone else water. Let someone else build on his foundation. He is not interested in that. Look at it, verse 20, "Lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Is that wrong? No, it's not wrong. I hope it's not wrong cause if it is I'm doing it. Wrong, no. It's not a question of wrong; it's a question of his calling. Some are called to lay the foundation. Some are called to come along and build on that foundation. The role of the pastor-teacher is to build on the foundation that is laid. The role of the evangelist, the apostle, the sent one, is to lay the foundation. The church needs both. He might visit a church founded by someone else, like the church at Rome, but not to stay there. He had absolutely no interest in staying there. Verse 24: "Whenever I take my journey to Spain, I will come to you." It's only a stopping off point on a way to an un-evangelized field. Paul was not interested in building on other men's foundations. He had the call of a missionary. And when he led people to Christ in 1 Corinthians 9:2 he says that was the seal of his apostleship. That's what marked him out as an apostle, the fact that people had come to faith in Jesus Christ through his ministry. To the Corinthians in the second letter, chapter 3, verse 2 he says, "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men." Your coming to Christ tells the story about us. He is a missionary.

And in order to sort of support that he finds justification in an Old Testament prophecy quoted in verse 21, "But as it is written to whom He was not spoken of, they shall see and they that have not heard shall understand." That is an adaptation out of Isaiah 52:15. It's very close to the Septuagint version which is the Greek translation of Isaiah. And clearly Isaiah 52:15 is a Messianic prophecy. The context is all about the Servant of the Lord, who is Christ. And many New Testament texts refer this whole section to Jesus Christ, the whole Isaiah 52, 53 passage. But what the text of Isaiah is saying is that there's a time coming when Messiah will bring nations to the Messiah Himself, to see His own glory. And those who have never heard about Him will hear about Him. And those who have never understood will know. And that's exactly what the verse says, look at it, "As it is written (in Isaiah 52:15) to whom He was not spoken of," that is to whom Messiah was never spoken of, "they shall see, and they that have not heard of Him will understand." In other words, there's coming a day when the Gentiles will be reached with the message of Jesus Christ. Now the fullness of that Messianic prophecy, I believe, comes to pass in the Second Coming. I believe it comes to pass when Jesus Christ comes back and gathers redeemed Gentiles to Himself. But I believe it begins to be fulfilled in the ministry of the apostle Paul, who goes out to reach these Gentiles, to begin to gather them to their Messiah. And that is already happening and we are a part of that gathering even today.

So, what an example he is. May God give us many pioneers, many people who do not feel the call of God to build on another man's foundation but feel the call of God to build a foundation of their own. I

was happy the other day to talk to someone on our faculty at the college who said, "I don't think I'll be here long, I believe God's called us to go to the mission field." And pursuing where they were going to go, the answer came to an un-evangelized place. May God give us pioneers. May God work in the heart of many of you, His called, to go to places where Christ is not named. Or even in this city, in this culture, in this church to go to people who do not name the name of Jesus Christ.

I was so thrilled in our visitor's reception this morning. As people came by, I noted many who were not Christians. One dear lady and her husband were there together without a Bible and they looked like they had just come in out of the darkness, as it were. And she said yesterday she came out of a detoxification center from alcoholism, and they said their life was in such shambles they had come here to the church to try to find some help. And there were folks there gathered around them, ministering to them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now that's territory where Christ is not named.

There are some people who feel the burden for that. That's the passion of their heart. In fact, if you put them in with a bunch of Christians for very long, they get very, very irritated. They're not happy there. They want out. They've got to reach the unbelievers because that's the passion of their heart. May God give us people like that, people whose zeal is for the lost, pioneers.

For Paul, that was a definition of his ministry. He was a priest who offered a sacrifice to God. And as such he speaks to all of us of the need for us to offer up those we've led to Christ as a sacred offering to Him. He was a preacher who faithfully proclaimed the Word of God. Every opportunity God gave him he took it and used it to its fullest extent. And I asked my own self, as you ask yourself, "Am I so faithful in the proclamation." And then he said, "I'm a pioneer and I go to the places where Christ is not named." In all of this he becomes an example to us.

What sacrifice of redeemed souls am I bringing to God as a priest? What faithful, humble, powerful, thorough effort to present the gospel do I make as a preacher? And what new territory do I claim as a pioneer? I fear as we look at our lives we'll have to come up with the answer that we offer too little. We're just too busy. And we present the gospel so weakly, we're too timid. And, frankly, we tend to pile up on top of each other don't we? In building foundation upon foundation upon foundation and never ever going out to places where there is no foundation.

I don't feel in my heart that God's called me to be an evangelist, but I do feel the need so greatly that sometimes in my heart there wells up a tremendous desire to walk away from all of this and go to a place where there's nothing and begin to build something, a place where Christ is not named. Do we have the essentials to be as bold as Paul was? Thus does he commend himself to the church at Rome and to us in order that they might not only know his theology but that they might know his heart and his heart was set toward God. And if we could pray a prayer along the same lines tonight, we might pray that Christ would use us to win more souls, to proclaim more faithfully and powerfully the Word and to establish the gospel in new territory for His glory.

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