

Romans 15 • A minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · October 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Romans, chapter 15, let's begin with prayer tonight. Father, we thank you so much for the opportunity to gather this evening, and we come, Lord God, and let it be known that we gather tonight in the name of Jesus and that authority that is granted through that name. We come, Lord God, to hear from you. We come to commune with you and open our hearts to you. We look to you, Lord, to fill this place and to open our hearts that we might hear your voice.

Lord, as we go through the scripture, it is our desire to see you in the word, but we know that apart from your Holy Spirit, we struggle to even gain any sort of an understanding, and so we are relying tonight on the work of your Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds and to tune us to your voice. Lord, fill us with understanding, wisdom, and peace. We look to you, Father, in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen, amen. I was very blessed to hear the final refrain of that last song, Jesus, Our Living Hope. And the reason it's such a blessing is because really that's what Romans, chapter 15, is largely about.

You're going to see that as we go through these verses, there's a great deal here about hope and our hope and why we're hopeful, why as believers we can be hopeful. You know, the world is looking for hope, and it's looking, of course, in all the wrong places, but the hope is in our Lord, and we'll deal with that as we go through it. In our last study of Romans, as we cover chapter 14, you'll remember that the Apostle Paul was addressing several issues that quite often arise between believers of varying maturity levels, and that's really what chapter 14 was about. He gave some examples where perhaps a new or immature believer might passionately hang on to some beliefs about what he called disputable matters, gray areas, things that aren't necessarily...they're not defined in the Bible and so forth, but they are a great concern and sometimes are even a matter of passionate debate among believers. You'll remember he used an example of a believer, and this was a big deal back in Paul's day, who considered it wrong to eat meat that had been offered in a pagan temple, and so Paul addressed that in the previous chapter.

He also addressed believers who considered certain days as special over and above another day or any of the other days of the week. He addressed that issue, which he, by the way, will address once again when we get to Colossians, but the whole theme of chapter 14 was not about why some people believe one thing and why some people believe another regarding disputable matters. What it was about was how we treat one another when we have differences of opinion. That's what the chapter was about. It's how I look upon a brother who has a belief that is different from me and how he may look upon me for holding a different idea or belief related to some of those, again, disputable matters.

These are not biblical issues. They're not doctrinal things. We're not talking about people who have a different sort of a thought process as it relates to how a person is saved or whether Jesus is God in human flesh or anything like that. These, again, are matters that are not directly recognized in the Word, but yet people hold very strong beliefs concerning. So as we turn to chapter 15, you're going to notice here that the first three verses of chapter 15 really belong to chapter 14 because this is where the Apostle Paul gives a summarizing statement concerning the things that really chapter 14 was all about.

So look with me in your Bible at chapter 15, beginning at verse 1, and it says, We who are strong, and when we use that or see that word strong in this chapter, we know that Paul is talking about we who are spiritually mature, all right? So he's talking about spiritual maturity, not physical strength, not even spiritual strength, really. It's maturity. He says, We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Now I want you to stop there for just a moment.

The weak, again, we're defining these terms, are those whose faith has not yet matured to a place of biblical understanding. So the message here that Paul gives is to bear with those who haven't really reached a place of maturity. You know, the church is full of people with all spiritual ages. We've got brand new believers among us. We've got people who've been walking with the Lord for decades and have been studying God's word, and they've grown and mature, and we all come together as the body of Christ.

But he says, You need to bear with the people that have some crazy things that they believe. When I was a new believer, I remember making some statements, or I thought I was quoting the Bible, but I was actually quoting things I had heard that I thought were in the Bible or maybe even was led to believe were in the Bible. You know, like God helps those who help themselves, that sort of thing. I remember saying that one time to a mature believer, and he didn't bear with me very well. As I recall, in fact, I remember he kind of left a trail of blood.

You know, he was like, That's not in the Word. And I was kind of flabbergasted because I thought it was, you know. God helps those who help themselves, isn't that in the Bible? No, it's nowhere in the pages of Scripture. But yet I believe that it was because that's where I was in the Lord.

Paul says we need to bear with people when they do things, when they say things, when they believe things that are really just not part of what the Bible, you know, teaches. There are some important words in this first verse that help give us even more insight into what the Apostle Paul is saying. And the first is he says we have an obligation. He says we who do walk in a level of spiritual maturity, we have an obligation. And you need to know that in the Greek, that word is in the present tense.

And what that means is it defines a continuing action. In other words, he's saying we have to keep on bearing with the weak. This is something that's going to be going on for the rest of your life, all right? Secondly, we have to be careful how we interpret the phrase bear with those who are weak. Because we tend to interpret, when we hear the words bear with it, we tend to think it means grin and bear it.

Or like, I can hardly bear it. We'll say, I can't bear this noise, you know, or I'm trying very hard to bear with all of this noise or something like that. Interestingly enough, the word that Paul uses in this first verse when he says we are to bear with those or with the failings of the weak is the very same word, Greek word, that he uses in the book of Galatians when he says something important. Let me put it up on the screen for you. It's from Galatians chapter 6 verse 2 where he says bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Same Greek word. And you can see in this context it means to carry, carry one another's burdens. Well that's the same idea that this word holds even here in Romans chapter 15. We are to carry the weaknesses of those who say and do kind of dumb things like I did when I was a new believer. We're to kind of carry them, carry them along.

You know, be with them, hang, you know, if somebody says something like what I blurted out, you know, hey, well, like it says, God helps those who help themselves. Be best to say, let's sit down, let's talk for a minute and just sit down with somebody and do it gently and not in front of a room full of people and say, I don't know if you're aware of it. But the Bible doesn't actually say that. I appreciate the fact that you're trying to quote the word, but that's really not there. And that sort of thing.

That's how we're going to carry somebody. We're going to carry somebody through the failings. So bear them up, support them, love them through their immaturities because everybody's immature at some

point. Nobody just comes to Jesus and is instantly mature. We go through a process of growing and learning and understanding the word of God.

So Paul goes on. Look with me in verse two. This is again is that summary statement of the previous chapter. He says, let each of us please his neighbor for his good. And notice what is the goal to build him up.

And that's what we're talking about when we talk about carrying those who are weak in their faith. They're still immature. Let's let's not. Don't say something. I'm not going to respond to you in such a way as to please myself.

I want to please you. I want to help you. I want to build you up. Instead of tear you down. I don't want to tear you down just because you made a dumb statement.

I want to build you up. And so he goes on. It's on in verse 3 to say, for Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. And that's a quote from Psalm 69. And it all underscores the fact that Jesus is our example.

And that's the point of verse 3. He says, for Christ did not please himself. Why did he say that? Because that's your example. That's my example.

We're not to say things to make me look smart and you look dumb, but we're not to think about how it's pleasing to me. I'm here to please you. I'm here to strengthen and encourage you. That's the example Jesus gave us. That's what he did for you and me, right?

He didn't reproach us. He carried our reproach. He bore our reproach and so forth. So having quoted now the Old Testament Psalms in verse 3, Paul does this in his writings. He'll say something, and then that'll like remind him of something else.

And so he uses that now as a springboard to talk to you and me about the Old Testament. Have you ever had somebody tell you, I don't study the Old Testament? Because I have. I remember I was getting my eyes checked. It was a number of years ago.

And I was in with the doctor and we got to talking. He said, well, what do you do? I'm a pastor. Oh, okay. And you know, I teach through the Bible and stuff.

We teach all the way from Genesis to Revelation. And he's like, well, I don't study the Old Testament. I was like, really? Why? It's not applicable.

I love the New Testament. I love the gospel messages. I love the epistles. They're wonderful, you know, but the Old Testament, it's really not relevant. And I don't think that that is a rare comment or belief.

I think a lot of people come into their walk with the Lord and they're not really sure the Old Testament really, you know, what's it for? What do I need it for, you know? Well, look what Paul says in verse four. For whatever was written in former days. And when he says that, he's talking about the Hebrew scriptures, okay?

Because the New Testament is not canonized yet. It's still being written. Paul is writing it. So he says, whatever was written in former days was written, why? What does he say?

It was written for our instruction, okay? That through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. And by the way, this is where we start talking about hope. Okay? So what is Paul saying here?

Well, this is yours and my New Testament explanation. For why we not only read, but study the Old Testament scriptures. Because they were written for our instruction. And by the way, that word instruction, it means teaching, okay? And that as we see what's going on in the Old Testament, and we learn from it, we learn to endure.

And that's why he says it is through the endurance and through the encouragement of those scriptures that we end up with hope. That's the final sort of it. God wants to infuse you with hope. And he's going to use the whole counsel of God's word to do it, not the least of which are the Hebrew scriptures. We love the, it's all God's word, right?

It's all inspired. It is all the word of the Lord to you and me. And we should not neglect the Old Testament scriptures in any way. Notice one of the key words in this verse is that word endurance. And that refers, that word endurance basically means steadfastness in the face of adversity.

Have you ever gone through anything that you would consider adversity in your life? Well, we all have dealt with some form of adversity, trials, troubles, problems, and we want to be steadfast in our faith and in our hope. We want to be, but sometimes we're not. But the scriptures were given to us that we might be steadfast, have that endurance, right? So Paul reminds us here that as we study the Old Testament, we gain a better understanding of what it means to patiently endure.

And I know that patient endurance is hard. I get a lot of notes from people who are going through really, really hard times, and they will often ask, what would you suggest that I study going through this

thing that I'm going through? It's very hard, very difficult, very painful. And I almost always encourage a deep study of the book of Psalms. And I do that very purposeful because David and the other psalmists, boy, I tell you, talk about adversity.

And David and the other psalmists show us how to deal with adversity. And what you learn as you go through the Psalms is that they knew how to cry out to God. And honestly, that's the answer. When people say, what do I do? What do I do, Pastor Paul?

I say, cry out to God. Don't cry to me, don't cry to your neighbor, don't cry to somebody, you know. Cry out to the Lord, cry out to Him. He knows what you're going through, and He wants to help you and guide you and give you that steadfastness. But it's funny how often we don't.

We don't cry out to the Lord. But boy, I tell you, you go through the Psalms, and you're gonna come away with an understanding of what it means to cry out to God when you're in that place of the deepest, darkest of despair. And I would encourage you, if you're here tonight and you're going through a difficult time, dig into the Psalms. Dig in and just let them feed your heart. And let them teach you how to approach God in times of difficulty.

You know, one of the things we see in the Psalms over and over again, particularly in the Davidic Psalms, is that David could be going through one of the most painful, challenging, difficult things of his life, but he starts off the majority of his prayers to the Lord with a word of faith. He'll just declare something about the Lord that is true. Or he'll even just say, Lord, you are steadfast and full of mercy. And he'll exalt the Lord for a period of time at the beginning, and then toward the end of the thing, he's just like falling apart. He's saying things like, Lord, if you don't raise me up, I'm not getting up.

But he starts off with these declarations of faith. That's a training for you and me on how to approach God during those specifically difficult times. And again, as we look again at this verse, I want you to notice again the goal here. He says that through endurance, through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. And this word is also in the present tense, hope.

And that means that we might keep on hoping, that hope might be ongoing. Oh, man. Hope is something that the New Testament authors talk a lot about as well. They talk about Jesus as our hope. They talk about the hope of glory.

And of course, that all surrounds the return of Jesus Christ. They talk about the hope that we have, knowing that God works all things together for good, for those that love him and are called according to

his purpose. They talk about hope in so many areas. I would encourage you to perhaps even do a study of the word hope. Do it through the Old and the New Testaments.

And see how God wants to infuse you with hope. And then you'll begin to understand why we lose sight of hope from time to time. It's because we lose sight of the promises of God that are directing us toward having a hopeful heart. Listen, if our hope is in this life, forget it. It ain't gonna happen.

This life offers very little to be hopeful about. When the Bible, I'll just, spoiler alert, okay? You do a study about hope in the Bible, it's gonna point you toward what is to come. It's gonna point you toward the promises of God. And keeping your eyes fixed on the promises of God and not on the pain and the challenges that we face on a day-to-day basis.

All right, let's keep going. I want you to check out verses five through seven because this is interesting. He writes here, "'May the God of endurance and encouragement,' I like that God is described that way, "'grant you to live in such harmony with one another "'in accord with Christ Jesus, "'that together you may with one voice "'glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. "'Therefore, welcome one another "'as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.'" All right, the first thing, if I were to ask you, what's the first thing you notice? About verses 5 through 7, 5, 6, and 7, when I look at this the first thing I notice is that Paul puts these verses in the form of a prayer.

Did you catch that? He starts off saying, May the God of, and that's really, that's a prayer. May the Lord bless you. May the Lord keep you. This is a prayer to God.

And because it is in the form of a prayer, that helps us to understand that what Paul is exhorting us to do in these verses are things that can only be done through the empowering work of God. That's why he couches these things in the body of a prayer, because he knows that this isn't something, I'm not just asking you to live in harmony with one another. He could have done that. He could have said, listen guys, I want you to live in harmony with one another. I want you to speak and praise God with one voice.

I want you to glorify God as a single person. Now go do it. Yeah, forget it. There's too many personalities. There's too many egos.

There's too many potential for offenses among people. Oh, you know, too many different ideas. What we need is we need the power of God in order to live out these realities. And that's why Paul starts this saying, may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live this way. May he grant you to live in harmony.

May he grant you to praise with one voice and to speak with one voice, to live in accord, to walk in accord with Jesus Christ. May he grant you the ability to do this. What he's not saying is because you guys don't have the goods. That's essentially what he's kind of insulting us in a very polite sort of a way. But that's OK, because we know ourselves and we know that we don't possess the ability to live in the kind of harmony and oneness as a body that he asks of us apart from the Holy Spirit.

It is through the Holy Spirit that we do that. So again, in verse 7, I want you to see at the end of this, he says, therefore, welcome one another. Now, if you have a New King James that you're reading from, you're going to see that instead of welcome, it says receive one another. I like that better, actually. The ESV says welcome one another.

I like the rendering of the New King James. Receive one another as you have been received by the Lord Jesus. I like that because I think that is more consistent with the essence of what Paul is saying to you and me as it relates to loving, caring, and blessing one another. Now, verses 8 through 11 are also interesting. Here, the Apostle Paul is going to kind of go on a quoting sort of a deal.

He's going to quote no fewer than five different Old Testament sources as he makes these following statements in verses 8 and following. He says, for I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised, and that means to the Jews. Why? To show God's faithfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. Do you understand?

Stop there, please. Do you understand that he's still telling us the importance of studying through the Old Testament? He's still talking about that. Why should we study through the Old Testament? Well, he says, listen, I want to tell you something.

I want to tell you why that God did what he did for the Jews and why this thing has all come to fruition. It's because God wanted you to know that the promises he made way back to the patriarchs, and by that he's referring to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and so forth, he wanted you to know that everything he promised to them is true and has and will come to pass. He says, in order to confirm the promises that are made to the patriarchs, that's why God wants you and me to study the Old Testament, because when we do, we see that those promises were fulfilled, right? And were encouraged. And what do we end up doing?

We end up glorifying the God of mercy. We end up going, well, God, you are incredible. I mean, the Jews, were they worthy of the promises God gave them? No. God told them so.

He said, I didn't pick you guys because you were bigger, stronger, better, prettier, or smelled better. That's a paraphrase. He said, I chose you. I chose you out of all the nations of the earth to show my glory, to make promises. But now Paul says, God did that so that we would look upon those promises that have been fulfilled, and we would glorify God for his mercy.

And that's what reading the Old Testament ought to leave you with. It ought to leave you with the awe of, this is crazy, how God bore with these people, loved these people, was so kind and forgiving and caring and longed to bless these people. I know we're in the middle of a verse here. Sorry for stopping that way. But it goes on in verse 9 to say, As it is written, therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name.

And again it says, he's going on quoting, Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him. And again Isaiah says, The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles. That's referring to Jesus. In him will the Gentiles hope.

There we come back to hope, don't we? It's in Jesus that we hope. It's interesting, you say, well what do you hope in? What stimulates your hope? Well, you know, this and that.

People name all kinds of things. Listen, our hope is stimulated by a person. Jesus is our hope. He is our hope. He is our hope of glory.

He is our hope in every way. Jesus Christ is our hope. It is in him we hope. It is in him that I know, that I know that I know my sins are forgiven. Why?

Because I've been a good person? No. Because Jesus bore my sins on the cross. And so now my hope is not only in the forgiveness of sins, but the promise of eternal life. Jesus is my hope.

So remember that. You know, we talk sometimes in church a lot about doctrines. And there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with doctrines. In fact, when you go to find a new church, maybe you move to a new community, it's not a bad idea to get on their website or stop in and say, hey, can I see your doctrinal statement?

That's not a bad thing. More people should do that. They should care more about the doctrinal statement than pretty much anything. But when it comes down to it, it's not about doctrines. You know, I think about Jesus' conversation with Martha at the tomb of Lazarus when he said to Martha, your brother will rise again.

And she said, oh, I know. I know he'll be raised up at the last day in the resurrection of the dead. And what she was doing is she came back and she quoted the doctrine, right? And Jesus had to say to Martha, Martha, honey, I am the resurrection. I am the resurrection.

Don't quote me doctrines. It's me. You know? And then in the book of John, we read these incredible statements that Jesus made. He said, I am the way and the truth and the life.

And no man comes to the Father except by me. Now, those are pretty powerful statements. But you'll notice that it all centers around the person of Jesus Christ, our hope. And, you know, it's interesting that when Jesus spoke that word, he used a very important word that is a very simple word. You use it every day.

But you forget sometimes grammatically what it means. And it was the word the. How many times today did you use the word the? Well, if you remember your grammar, the word the is what we call the definite article. Okay?

It means specifically it zeroes in on something. If I'm not zeroing in, if I'm making a general statement, I'll use the word a. Right? I might say to my dad when I was a young man, dad, I think it's time for me to have a car. Now, I haven't specified to him what kind of car I would like because he wouldn't let me have a Corvette.

But I might then eventually, as we're driving along, point and say that is the car I want right there. What did I do? I was very specific. That's the car that I want, right? I told him earlier I wanted a car, that's general.

But now I said there's the car I want, Dad, okay? Now that you know your difference between your definite article and your indefinite article, you know now that Jesus used the definite article when he said I am the way. He didn't say I am a way. The world says Jesus is a way to get to God. Jesus said no, no, I am the way.

He said I am the gate, you know, you must pass through me. He went on to say I'm not just the way, I am the truth. He didn't say I am a truth. He said I am the truth, definite article. And then he didn't tell us that he was a life.

He said I am the life. Do you understand? This is what this is Jesus saying, it all centers on me. I am the way, right? And you'll remember that Jesus made that statement because Philip said to him, Lord, show us the way.

Show us the way. He said I am the way. I am the way, right? You want to know the way? It's me, Jesus said.

He is our hope. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. And then Paul goes on in verse 13 to offer up another prayer. Look with me there. Verse 13, it says, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

That means according to your faith so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in what? Hope. There we, boy, we're seeing it, aren't we? Right? So that you may abound in hope.

Here's my question to you tonight. Do you abound in hope? Abound is an interesting word. It doesn't just mean you have hope. It means, it's kind of like the tigger, bouncing kind of hope, right?

Are you abounding in hope? Is it overflowing in your life, you know? Well, that's Paul's prayer, that may the God of hope fill you in such a way that you are abounding in hope. He is the God of hope. And if you're lacking in hope, then you need to come to Him and say, Lord, my hope is a little bit depleted here lately.

Life has been smacking me around, and I got the scars to prove it, and I need hope. I need a new and a fresh work of hope in my life, and I'm looking to you to do it, because here's why. Your word says that you're the God of hope, and so I'm going to come to you. I'm not going to go to the world, because whatever they have to offer is fleeting at best. I'm coming to you.

I think God likes that. I think God likes it when we come to Him and we say, it's you or nothing, you know? I don't think God cares about that. I don't think that puts undue pressure on Him. You know, we read verses 8 through 13 here, and these are important verses to look at, but you know, frankly, the whole grouping of verses 8 through 13 is all summed up in the first verse.

Let me show you on the screen kind of a translational comparison. We read it in the ESV, which said, for I tell you that Christ became a servant to the Jews, circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs. Look at the New Living Translation. This is kind of fun. Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises He made to their ancestors.

That's why He did it, to show His promises are always going to be kept. Do you believe that? Do you believe God's promises are sure? I do. And that's what also stimulates hope.

And why did He do this? Verse 9 again, in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. I love that. All right, let's move on. In the next three verses, 14, 15, and 16, Paul's going to make a somewhat personal comment here to the people in Rome, the Christians in Rome.

He says, I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct. That word means teach one another. But on some points, I've written to you very boldly, look at this phrase, 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. There's a lot of words there. This is one of Paul's common run-on sentences.

But he wanted the believers in Rome to know that he already knew that they knew these things. And you might say, well, why tell him then? Why go over it again? Well, he said, because I wanted to remind you. And he says, I know I've been kind of bold about some of the things I've said in this letter so far.

I know that. But he said, I wanted to remind you here, and by the way, we all need reminders. You know, people have said to me, you know, I've read through the whole Bible, now what should I do? I said, go back and start again. And then what?

Go back and start again. Because you know what? As you read through, not only is it a good reminder, but the Lord opens up new insights as you read. I've had people tell me, and it's even happened in my own life, where you've read a passage, and maybe you've read it dozens of times, and all of a sudden, doing, it's just like a light comes on and something new and fresh comes out of that passage. It's the craziest thing.

It's kind of like, wow, I read it this several times, but I still didn't get to the depth of what was being said here. So he says, I'm doing this by way of reminder, and I'm doing it according to the gifting, the calling that is upon my life. That's what he says here. Even though I know you guys are, you're mature enough to even teach one another. I wanted to do this so that according to the service that God has given me as an apostle, that I might encourage you to be an acceptable offering by the Holy Spirit.

And listen to how Peter talks about reminders. This is great. On the screen, from 1 Peter, 2 Peter, sorry about that, chapter 1, he says, Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities. Though you know them and are established in the truth that you have, I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus made clear to me, and I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. Three times.

Three times. He mentions reminders. Reminder, reminder, recall, right? We need that, guys. We need the repetition of learning.

You know, I've told you guys before that before I got into the ministry, I was in broadcast radio, and we learned because we would not only spin records and play music, and yes, it was back during records, but we had to play commercials. In fact, we had to record commercials, and we would get sick to death of them because they'd play them over and over again, you know. But one of the things we learned about commercials is how many times it takes for someone to hear a commercial before they really understand what's going on. Have you ever watched a commercial on TV and you said, I have no idea what that's all about? I have no idea what they're trying to sell me or who paid for that commercial.

And sometimes it takes several times, and you go, oh, it's a bank or something like that, or they're selling dishwasher detergent. I didn't get that the first 16 times I saw that. But, you know, we need, I'm saying all this to say that we need repetition. We need repetition. That's why Peter says, I'm going to do this.

As long as I'm in this body, I'm going to keep talking. I'm going to keep telling you even though you know. So listen, if you ever go to church and you come away going, well, it was a pretty good message, but I knew all that stuff. That's okay. Listen, as a teacher, I don't bring any new revelations.

I'm just reminding you of what's in the Word. Okay? So that's all we're doing here. All right. And now, Paul goes on to speak about the ministry he was given by the Lord.

Verse 17 and following, he says, 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 the ministry of the gospel of Christ. And what I see in these verses, and what I want to bring out for you, is the balance that Paul gives us here. Did you notice he said, that he was proud of what he had accomplished through the Lord. And it's interesting, but he went on to say, but I'm not gonna venture to speak about anything except what I have accomplished through him, through Christ, through the power of the Spirit. That's what I'm gonna brag about.

If I'm gonna boast about anything, I'm gonna boast about what the Lord has done, even through a tool like me. And I'm just one of the tools in his shed. And he pulls me out every so often, and he lets me work

in the garden of his kingdom. But I'm just a tool, so I'm not gonna glorify the tool. I'm gonna say, look how God used my life to bring about the purpose of his will.

And so he's telling us here that it's okay. It's okay to be proud of what the Lord has accomplished through you. You don't have to be all, oh, I haven't done anything. Hey, if the Lord did it through you, then brag about it, because you're not bragging about yourself, you're bragging about the Lord. But the other thing I want you to see here again is that our ministry and what we do for the Lord is to be empowered by the Spirit of God.

It is not to be a work of the flesh. It is to be a work of the Spirit. And that's why Paul says that, hey, what the Lord did through me was filled with the power of signs and wonders, he says there in verse 19. Signs and wonders, I can't do that. I can't do signs and wonders, can you?

Through the Holy Spirit, signs and, he can do signs and wonders, and he can even do them through you, but you can't do them. And so you see, you're not bragging about it, but it needs to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. And when we realize that it's God's Spirit who is behind all of it, there's no room left for boasting, you know? It's like, oh, look what God did. It's one of the most humbling things that can happen to you, when you look at what the Lord has done.

Maybe you've brought somebody to Jesus, maybe you shared Christ with someone, and they confessed their sins and put their faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, and then you begin to watch them mature, and you look at them and you go, Lord, look what you did. And you used me to do it. I'm blown away. That's craziness. But that idea, this idea of humbly seeing, knowing, I guess knowing is a better word, that the Lord is behind it all.

Even though we get the thanks, we get the reward, we get the crown, you guys, we get the crown. But why did we get that crown? Because God's Spirit empowered us. This is so beautifully depicted in the book of Revelation. Let me show you on the screen.

Revelation chapter four, I love this. And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever, and look what it says. They cast their crowns before him or before the throne saying, worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power for you are the one, you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created. Isn't that beautiful? Here are these 24 elders with these crowns on their heads and yet before the throne of God, they have to take them off and just cast them before the Lord and say, it's all you.

We got nothing, you know, to brag about, to boast about. It's all you. Glory to God. Glory to God. Paul says in verse 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, but as it is written, those who have never been told of him will see and those who have never heard will understand.

A quote there from Isaiah 52. Paul isn't saying, by the way, that it's wrong to build on the work started by another man. He's simply saying that wasn't his desire. He really felt like his apostolic ministry was to go to places where they never heard the name of Jesus before. And he wanted, that's where he wanted to go.

And if somebody was already handling an area, he'd say, fine, let him handle it. I'll go somewhere else. But he's explaining that that, his desire to reach new places, to help the believers in Rome understand why he hadn't been around to visit them. Look what he says in verse 22. He says, this is the reason why I've so often been hindered from coming to you.

Why? Because I keep finding new spots where there's nobody, they haven't heard Jesus. And I gotta go there first. Yeah, you know, you guys, you're already walking with the Lord. And I wanna be there.

I wanna come talk to you. But that's not my priority. My priority is to go places where they've never heard the name of Jesus. So look at verse 23. He says, but now since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, because they've been covered, and since I have longed for many years 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've enjoyed your company for a while.

So Paul says, you know, I really wanna come see you guys, wanna hang with you, wanna encourage you, be encouraged from you, and I'll do that. I'll make a quick stop on my way to Spain. And Paul had essentially covered the area to the east, and he wanted to move farther into the west. And Spain by this time was already a province, if you will, of Rome. And he wanted to move that direction and bring the gospel there and so forth.

You might say, well, Pastor Paul, I don't remember anything in the Bible of him going to Spain. Do we know if he got there? Well, here's the deal. We actually have no clear evidence in the Bible that Paul ever made it to Spain. We do know he got to Rome.

He didn't get there as he intended. But there are some interesting historical, we call them extra-biblical remarks that are made by the early church fathers and even some of the early church theologians that lead us to believe that Paul did make it to Spain after he was released from his incarceration at the end of the

Book of Acts. In fact, writing from Rome only about 30 years after Paul passed away, after he went to be with the Lord, a man by the name of Clement of Rome, who was, by the way, considered a disciple of Paul's, recorded that the apostle had traveled, quote, to the farthest limits of the West, end quote. There's also the testimony of a short manuscript. You may have heard of it.

It's called the Muratorian Fragment. I don't know if you've ever done any research on stuff like that. It's the oldest surviving list of New Testament books. In other words, the list of the books like you have in your Bible, Matthew to Revelation, this is the earliest fragment, and that alone makes this fragment very interesting because it reveals what books the early church considered to be inspired and canonical. But the fragment explicitly mentions Paul's journey, and it explains that he did go to Spain, but that Luke omitted it from the Book of Acts because he didn't go along with Paul.

And since he wasn't an eyewitness or whatever, he didn't record those things. Anyway, and then we have other historians from the fourth and fifth centuries that speak of Paul's journey to Spain as an established historical fact, but the bottom line is the Bible doesn't say it. So we have to kind of say, well, he might have made it to Spain. I don't really know for sure. We have these writings that say he did, but they were fairly, you know, they were after the fact.

So if somebody ever asked you, did Paul make it to Spain? You can say, I think so. But Paul goes on to explain why he can't come to Rome immediately. Look what he says in verse 25. He says, at present, however, I'm going to Jerusalem, bringing aid to the saints.

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor and among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, which we have, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. This was something that, this was a practice of Paul's, to take money to Jerusalem to bless the saints from the Gentile churches. And the reason they did this is because there was a need.

It's actually told us in the book of Acts. Let me put it on the screen from Acts chapter 11. It says, now in those days, prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus, stood up and foretold by the spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world. And then Luke tells us that this took place in the days of Claudius.

So the disciples determined everyone, according to his ability, to send relief to the poor. brothers living in Judea, apparently that was an area that was more hard hit, and they did so sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. So this started back because God predicted through one of the men who had a

prophetic gifting that there would be a famine, it came about, and therefore they began to send relief money, if you will, to the church or churches in Judea. Paul goes on, look at verse 28, when therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessings of Christ.

He says, I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. Paul probably sensed that there was a danger going back to Jerusalem, and we know that he had been warned prophetically about going back, that troubles lie ahead. And so what did he do? He said, would you guys pray for me? I love that.

The apostle Paul wanted people to pray for him. He wasn't above saying, would you guys pray for me? Pray that when I go there that the Jews in Jerusalem don't get all hot and bothered and upset and offended and make trouble. And pray that what I do bring to bless the believers there is an acceptable offering. And his heart, as you can see in these words, was to come to Rome joyfully and be a blessing to them.

And as I said, Paul did make it to Rome, but not as he intended. Because despite the prayers of the saints, Paul was arrested when he went to Jerusalem, and he was ultimately taken to Rome after quite a period of time. And he was only taken because he had appealed to the emperor to hear his case. And so he went to Rome basically in chains. And there was a lot of interesting stuff on the way, like shipwrecks and snakebites and all kinds of fun things.

But he eventually did make it to Rome, he was able to meet with the believers there. And that's, you know, frankly, where the book of Acts ends. But here in Romans chapter 15, we end with verse 33, which says, may the God of peace be with you all. Amen. And that's where we finish our study of Romans chapter 15.

We have just one chapter left to finish the book of Romans. So let's let's pray, shall we? Father, I thank you so much for the power of your word to challenge and encourage us in the things of the Lord, that we might continue, Lord, as we study your word ongoingly to grow in the grace and wisdom and knowledge that only you can give. We thank you, Lord, for the book of Romans, this incredible book that not only was written so many years ago by the Apostle Paul, but was preserved by your hand. Because this is the inspired word of God.

And we thank you for that. And we ask, Lord God, that as we go from this place, we would meditate on the things that we've learned tonight. And that you would show us, Lord, by your spirit, how to apply these things in our lives. Lord, you are our hope. You are our hope.

We declare it openly, honestly, and humbly. You are our hope. We commend our hearts to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King, and all God's people said together, Amen.