

An Example for All Christians

Romans 15:14-33

Reading of the Word

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.

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

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Open our hearts to your word this morning. By your Spirit embolden our church body in the preaching of your word. Cast aside anything of my flesh and save the lost in this time, in Jesus Name amen.

Warm up

Good morning. My name is Eric Mattie. It is my privilege to bring the Word to you this morning.

Introduction

Today we begin the closing section of Romans. What I read was just the beginning of what we will cover today

Don't be tempted to think that because the truths and teachings are not as straight forward in this section, that its time to close the book on Romans. "After all this just the conclusion." These section, as all of Scripture, has value to our understanding and our faith.

So let's get in to today's message

The title of my message today is: An Example for All Christians.

Ten Second Context:

With Paul wrapping up his teaching on retaining church unity among member who disagree and are different nationalities, he now gets personal in his comments to the Romans.

In this personal passage (14-33)to the Romans we see that God- the true author of Romans- we see God's word revealing Paul's heart. I believe the Lord is letting us see this, so that we will be challenged and stirred to living our lives as Justified by faith believers in not just doctrine and deeds, but also in heart motives and attitude.

So...Paul is an example for all believers in Three ways
Paul is an example in his...

1. Perspective on the people of God
2. Passion for His Calling and Ministry
3. Prayerful dependence on God and others

Let's dive into the outline: Paul is an example for all believers in his...

1. Perspective on the People of God v.14-16

V14

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

- Paul is now returning to the theme of the letters introduction where he is talking about his own ministry and vision.

Let me call out a couple of things to notice here

- **First Paul has a very affectionate tone.** Notice Paul calls the Romans believers, “brothers and sisters.” He does this starting at the very beginning of Chapter 1 but returns to it time and time again. However in this instance, there is an underlying affection here with the added personal emphatic “MY” brothers and sisters.

1. Recall, that Paul just finished talking about some very hard things in relation to the weaker and stronger brothers.
2. Add to that the fact that those listening could misconstrue his intent in that section.
3. Add to that the very fact that Paul and the Roman believers have never met face to face.
4. Plus add in that some circles felt the Apostle Paul was abrasive in the first place...

..this add-on of the word “my” brothers and sisters feels like a warmer sense of addressing them.

This modifier to the subject of brother and sisters add a sense of overflowing love coming from the heart of Paul to His true family of God.

Why is this important? It is important because of the second thing I want you to notice here.

- **Second Paul is affirming their a faith.** Notice Paul says I’m satisfied about you Romans. (many translations say convinced). Paul is saying he is confident in them. He is believing the testimony of the Romans whose faith is known around the world (Chapter 1:5).

1. Their faith manifests not only with occasional virtuous acts, but Paul is saying they are full... they are rich... in moral goodness. Complete in their lifestyle they are outstandingly kind, unselfish, generous, loving and humble.

2. Paul also affirmed their faith's depth by calling their knowledge amply filled. Of course Paul is referring to their knowledge of Christ and God.
3. He also affirmed that with that knowledge they were able to wisely instruct and counsel one another.

You might be thinking, "With such a glowing description shouldn't we be looking at the example of the Romans" Well in some ways yes, we should consider that.

Yet allow me to point out the greater example of Paul's perspective about the people of God...

Paul affirms the Romans are full of goodness- morally speaking, fill with all knowledge gospel wise and able to instruct or admonish one another

But when you take into consideration:

- Their goodness seemed to be deficient toward unbelieving Jews in Chapter 11:18 and warns them not to be arrogant in attitude in something they have received by God's grace
- Their goodness appeared to be wanting when Paul discusses that the weak have taken on a judgmental spirit. And the strong despised the weak.

When you take into consideration Paul implies in chapter 11:25 that they were ignorant of God's plan to save both Jew and Gentile... it doesn't seem like the Romans are as full of knowledge in God and the gospel.

As for their ability to instruct, This ministry to one another continues Paul thoughts about church ministry that the body of Christ are ministers of Jesus. Ministry work is to be done by members of the church and the elders, and pastors are to be equipping the members. Well they appeared to have been limited since he instructed them on how to handle the non-moral matter of what foods were and were not allowed to eat at their communal meal.

When you see these in the passage, you wonder if Paul seemingly flattering description is his way to brown nose them. That is, to get on their good side, in light of all the hard things we just addressed. Maybe Paul's preparing the path so when he come knock on the Roman's door and wants to fellowship and wants their help in going to Spain, that they don't open the door an exclaim, "Oh .. its you."

What we actually see here, is different than say the Corinthian letters, where Paul is rebuking and correcting the family of God. The Roman letter sees no tone like that.

Point

Even if these blemishes I just mentioned were found among the Roman believers, Paul is affirming affectionately his high regard to them as a Church.

Paul's perspective on the People of God, as Matthew Henry says, is "eager to believe good concerning others"

- Matthew Henry said we are not to be so simple as to believe everything said by hearsay, but not so skeptical to believe nothing.

Paul is extending a common courteous that we are all invited to have with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

- Assume the better of your fellow Christian as moderately mature believers.

Picture

You may ask, " But if I find my fellow Christian to evidence in their lives, their worldview, their worship and their work, positive proof that they are immature?"

I'm going to tell you, "Don't through the baby out with the bath water. We all have immature areas, We all have blind spots that we have yet to repent of.

We are encouraged to examine our life and hold each other accountable

- It is better to reach an immature believer in Christ, by the avenue of reminding and restating instead of self righteous judgement. Or a despised disposition- sound familiar?

Paul says this... "I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder".

Preach:

Let me encourage you,

Don't allow petty jealousy or insecurity cloud your perspective on the people God that you are around. Don't allow relational hurts from one experience in a bad relationship, over lap and stifle other potential good relationships.

As believers in Jesus we all at one point have understood our deepest need in our lives is to be saved from our sins.

Out of that need we have cried for Jesus to save us and forgive us of our many sins and mistakes.

What bonds us and therefore should affect our perspective of the people of God is not that we walk into this room having it all together.

Rather that we are all a work in progress. We are all a work of God's mercy, which we need everyday. God is the overcomer in our lives and God is sanctifying us to be like Christ.

Even the most moderately mature believer in Christ in this room- no matter how you may rank it. ...

- ...And that 's part of the problem, we rank righteousness through outside obedience or discipline of body and mind yet not knowing the motive of Heart.
- We Rank godliness through how well we know the Bible, the doctrines and theological precepts and answers not knowing if it has truly saved and changed or even challenged the person.

- We dare to rank maturity in Christ by the standards WE have got all together versus what others don't

Even the most moderately mature believer in Christ in this room no matter how you measure,

still has the need for Jesus to save them. To sanctify them

They still need Jesus to grow up the parts in their life that are immature.

So to restate it:

The example of Paul's perspective of the People of God is one that is eager to think the better of our brothers and sisters in Christ. To give them the benefit of the doubt. This is a heart attitude

If that proves to be difficult for a variety of reasons, then Be Gracious as God has been gracious to you.

Let's look at our second point

Paul is an example for all believers in his

2. Passion for Calling and Ministry v.17-29

Looking at v 17-21

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 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."

- SIDE NOTE: It's interesting because in the original language these 5 verse are one long complex sentence. While the English translations present several sentences.

- But immediately in this section of Scripture two English phrases pop our attention.
 1. “I have reason to be proud of my work...”
 2. “I make it my ambition...”

When it comes to being proud and having ambition, we can be thrown off that these words are in direct competition to walking humbly and doing the work of God

But reading these phrases in context is what is important here:

V 17

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.

- Paul’s mood of being proud or boasting in the work the Lord has done through him- is one that is thankful not vain or self glorifying. He’s thank ful to be used by God.
- He’s thankful of the grace of apostleship that the Lord has called him to. To bring Gentiles to obedience. What that means is Paul is presenting the Gospel and in the gospel there is the command of the Gospel to leave their former way of life and commit themselves to following Jesus. As a result God is working and regenerating hearts and saving them. And they area being obedient to the gospel call .
- By Paul’s own record in Corinthians, he has no game, lofty speech or wisdom. He talked of being weak, fearful and trembling.
- He was a normal man, saved by the grace of God. Desiring to glorify God through his calling to minister to the Gentiles. That calling was his passion. And that passion to glorify God by ministering to the Gentile became his ambition and life goal.

V 20

and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named.

- He mentions his ministry in light of prophecy of Jesus as the Suffering Servant (found in Jeremiah) to take the good news to places that have never heard. Paul sees his ministry as an extension of Christ ministry.
- Take note: We know that Paul preached in church's that were not planted by himself. So this ambition to preach where no church was planted was an evolving life goal for Paul that became his passion.

Some thing else about this passion comes up in the next few verse:

First verse 22

“This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.”
Romans 15:22

- Paul reiterates that while he longed to fellow ship with the Roman believers, it his passion to evangelize where the gospel had not been preached-- that kept him from going out of the way to visit them. This is his excuse for not seeing them. His passion kept him focused on the call and his life's mission.

Second, verses 23,24

But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, 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 have enjoyed your company for a while. Romans 15:23,24

- Again Paul has tunnel vision for his visit to Rome. Why because of his passion to minister to the Gentiles
- His plan was twofold: 1)restorative fellowship and 2) aid in getting to and sharing the gospel in Spain.
- Paul's plans are to go to Spain where the Gospel had yet to be heard.

Then verses 25-27

At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor 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, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings

Romans 15:25-27

- This project of Paul's was a collection for the church in Jerusalem that was struck by a famine around 46-48 A.D. There was a deep need to help.
- However, a strong motive for this gift was the unifying affect such a gift given by the Gentiles and then received by the Jews would have in the early church. Both the gesture of giving and the receiving would be a sign of recognizing and accepting each other into their family.
- Paul's passion to bridge any gap between the Jews and the Gentiles, was the outworking of his ministry to the Gentiles.

PREACH

Paul's passion for his calling and ministry, should be an example for us to take account of our life's call and ministry.

We know through Scripture study and bible summary that purpose of our lives is to glorify God in all we do. For the born again believer there is no difference between the secular and sacred work. We are called on by God to be productive, to have ambitions, until we are called home to heaven. But they are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to honor his working through us in these matters.

To walk humbly is not to soften our aspirations to do big things in the name of God. Nor is it to despise the little routine things we do everyday at our work.

I preached a message a few years ago called Consider Your Day. One of the points I had made is that:

We as God's people should measure our days not by what we do, but WHY we do what we do. Why is that important? Because Why we live exalts what we worship.

- Why do invest in to school? What do I work for at my job? Why do I raise my kids? What do I hope to get out of marrying someone? Why are my grandkids my pride and joy? Why is retirement the very thing I'm told to work for?
- Our ambitions are to be fueled through the purposes of God, His kingdom purposes and his glory. We are to Live Bigger than For Our Selves. Within those ambitions God is calling us to a person and people or a place in which we are minister to and shine the light of Christ . And, Lord willing, share the good news that saves people.
- Or Lord willing sharpen the believer around us.

You may not have a calling to fulltime ministry of preaching the gospel like a pastor.

But there are people in your life that have never been told of Jesus Christ. There are some people in your circles that have never heard the good news. This is not hard to believe when we live in the post Christian culture we do. There is an entire generation that has now not grown up in a church or religious setting. There are spiritually bankrupt people that we can help

Since you are in the world for your work and family and friends..., let the light of Christ shine bright. You will minister and share the gospel in your own unique way that I or the elders or pastors, may never be able to do. Or even get the chance to. Yes keep inviting them to church. But you may be the one to bridge the gap of knowledge that completely agnostic people don't have. That is our calling, that is our mission to go and make disciples of all nations for the glory of God.

Tim Keller a now retired pastor in the City of New York says ..."There are some needs only you can see. There are only some hands only you can hold. There are some people only you can reach."

What are you passionately living for? Does it consume your priorities? Does it paint over every task that you do and give you the tunnel vision needed to complete it?

So the 2nd example is

That example of Paul's passion for his calling and ministry, should stir our hearts both individually and corporately as a family of God to live out our life's calling, that is out life's goal, with the heart to glorify God.

Let's look at our third point.

Paul is an example for all believers in his

3. Prayerful Dependence on God and Others v 30-33

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, 31 that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. 33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

- This example is pretty straight forward.
- Paul is not looking for a formal meek-ish prayer. The word "appeal" has an urgent quality. This was not a mere request but a call or a summons to pray because of what was on the line.

So what was Paul facing? Why was he urgent to have others join in his prayers?

Here are the three specific requests.

First Request Verse 31

"that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea"

- Paul was fully aware of the violent opposition to the Gospel that unbelieving and disobedient Jews lashed out with.
- Paul was aware of it because prior to his conversion, he initiated that same persecution to Jewish Christians.
- Paul even received repeated warnings he says:

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.

Acts 20:22-24

- So you can see why he was looking for prayer warriors.
- Note: he wasn't afraid to die. Just desiring to be good and faithful to finish his ministry.

Sure enough...

“When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.”

Acts 23:12

Second Request Verse 31

“that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,”

Romans 15:31

- Paul was determined to fulfill his project and ministry of collecting donations to encourage the believers in Jerusalem regardless of the threat.
- The significance of this fund in Paul's eyes is so important that he is risking his life yet praying for his safety.

- He is also concerned for the Jewish believers rejection of this gift that he is asking for prayer that it be acceptable in their eyes.
- What is at stake for Paul is the unity of the church as a whole and the further advancement of the Gospel in the world.

Third Request Verse 32

“by God’s will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company”

Romans15:32

- Not so much a request but a definitely a hopeful result of God answering the first two request.
- Paul views his trip to Jerusalem and his trip to Rome as a linked venture. However the first goes it would affect if he made it to the second,
- In his statement, he is hopeful that his visit to Rome would be a relaxing one among Roman believers.
- Yet Paul submits himself – body and soul, comfort and mission- to the wise and sovereign will of God, when he says “By God’s will”

I say that because we know how these requests turned out-

1. Was Paul delivered from unbelieving Jews? Not exactly- Paul was arrested, but never slain.
2. Was the gift accepted by the Jewish believers? Acts doesn’t say explicitly, but Acts 21 and 24, hints that with Paul’s return all went well.
3. Did Paul get to Rome with joy and get refreshed. Not exactly- Paul reaches Rome- two years later and in chains.

While things didn’t turn out exactly the way Paul preferred, he was able to see how these things worked out “By God’s will”. In fact after being Rome for a while he wrote:

“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel”

Philippians 1:12

- Again that mission, Paul is seeing how God works all things together.

Prayer is both a conversation and encounter with God.

Paul's example for us is that we are not to be afraid to enlist prayerful help.

- The enemy would have us believe it's better to Lone Ranger our lives than to bother our Christian friends because they are too busy.
- All the passion in the world, still has to go up against the opposition to Jesus the world has. So we need God to answer prayer through others who may be praying bolder than us.
- Do not fall into independence idolatry- we are called to care for one another- we must fight that heart condition.

Paul's example for us is, also, that we are not to afraid to depend on God.

- We are to accept that as Christian we are solely dependent on God. To pray to God, expresses that dependence, trust and acceptance. Prayer is the voice of our faith.

Our Father know what is best for us to not only be relieved of but also what to leave on us and therefore allow our hearts to be dependently trusting Him.

So that's Paul's Example to all Believers. Let me assure you we are Christ following Church. What we see here is Paul's heart example that he is imitating Christ.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

Paul had Christ's perspective of the people of God and treated them as Jesus did. Courteous and gracious.

Paul had Christ's passion for calling and ministry and took up his cross, died to himself and stayed faithful to God's will just as Jesus did the night he

was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane on His way to fulfilling His redemption mission.

Paul had Christ's prayerful dependence of God and others again exemplified when Christ went to the Garden asked Peter James and John to Pray for him as He prayed under distress and full disclosure knowing what was coming saying to the Father "your will be done".

Let our lives be challenged and strengthened that we would Follow Christ as such.

Let's pray:

Father I thank you that you have examples throughout Scripture that we are to find encouragement from and be challenged in our own walk with you. My you bring unbelievers today to Christ as the answer the gospel to turn from and trust in Jesus. May myself and my brothers and sisters, gain the world view perspective how you see us, how you call us and how dependent we are to you and each other. To live out these examples more intently. That we might be the ambassadors in our work family and neighborhood, to brag on your grace that has saved us and planted joy that is found in you in our lives. In Jesus name.

An Example for All Christians

Romans 15:14-33

Paul is an example in his...

1. _____ on the people of God v. 14-16

2. _____ for His Calling and Ministry v. 17-29

(continued on other side)

3. _____ dependence on God and others v. 30-33

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1