



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 128

Boldness of Apostle Paul

Romans 15:17-21

Romans 15:14-21, *Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. ¹⁵ Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, ¹⁶ that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. ¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient— ¹⁹ in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, ²¹ but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."*

The whole section is written to defend the way in which he spoke to the Romans.

Paul had never been to that church.

Paul is not the founder of Roman church.

Paul never pastored that church.

Paul did not personally know that church or fellowship with that church.

Yet, throughout this tremendous epistle Paul had spoken to them with great boldness.

Paul had confronted them on some very crucial issues, not the least of which was the matter of the stronger and the weaker in chapters 14 and 15.

But he had been very bold in speaking to them and his boldness needs an explanation.

Paul touches on very personal matters.

Romans 15:14-21 the reason for his boldness.

Romans 15:22-33, Future plans.

Romans 16, personal greeting, and Final benediction.

Having written so boldly, he doesn't want to ruin the relationship with them before it can even get started.

Paul's looking at his ministry he sees himself as a priest to bring an offering to God.

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 am under apostolic mandate to function as a priest and win Gentiles that I might offer them to God as an acceptable to Him.

Paul the Preacher.

V 17, Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.

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.

It is a sin to boast if you are boasting in yourself.

It is not a sin if you are boasting in the Lord.

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.

Paul has every right to boast in those things which Christ has done.

1 Corinthians 1:31, *that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."*

2 Corinthians 10:17, *But "he who glories, let him glory in the Lord."*

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.

Philippians 3:4-8, *though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

1 Timothy 1:15-16, *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

Romans chapter 7.

In those three chapters you will find the wretchedness with which Paul sees himself.

2 Corinthians 12:7-11, *And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

¹¹I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.

Galatians 6:14, *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Paul 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 Saviour.
- His boast was never in himself.

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.

2 Corinthians 12:11-12, *I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.*

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 chiefs of apostles.

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.

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.

Colossians 1:29, *To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

I work hard but I know the power belongs to God.

It is not humility to deny what God has done.

When someone asks you **"Hasn't the Lord blessed your ministry?"**

If your answer is not anything at all, why we have got all kinds of problems then you are denying the Lord the glory that is due His name for what He has done.

It is not for me to take credit for that.

When someone says, "God has blessed your church!"

It is all God then that is 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.

From my own life I can say honestly that I am just spectator at our church.

I have no more to do with what God sovereignly designs to do than someone outside this congregation, except that I am 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.

We will gladly give Him glory for it.

When someone wants to deny the work of God here, it's very difficult to convince me of such a denial.

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.

V 17, Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.

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.

Paul 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.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-14, *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.¹⁴ For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans,*

Paul is rejoicing because when they heard his message it came not as the word of man, but as the Word of God.

Paul as a Preacher.

V 18-19, *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—¹⁹ in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

Five qualities of a master preacher.

a) Claim nothing but what Christ had done.

V 18, *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me,*

I will not take credit for something that was not done by Christ through me.

Humility.

Quality of a master preacher.

I will not take credit for what others have done in Christ apart from me.

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.

The temptation on any servant of God is to say that I am responsible for their salvation. I led those people to the Lord. I evangelized that group.

Those mature Christians over there.

I am the person 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.

You don't claim anything done by someone else as if it were done by Christ through you.

Paul was a marvellous instrument of God.

Acts 14:27, *Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*

He opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Acts 15:12, *Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.*

Acts 21:19, *When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.*

Paul took credit only for what God had done through him.
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 that we had ten thousand people saved.

He never gave a number 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.

2 Corinthians 10:13 & 16-18, *We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you.*

¹⁶to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment. ¹⁷But "he who glories, let him glory in the Lord." ¹⁸For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

The first characteristic of a master preacher is he claims nothing but what Christ has done through him.

The essence of humility.

He went where Christ led.

He preached to whom Christ called.

He received only for what Christ did.

He gave all the glory to Christ.

b) Preached obedience to the Lord.

He not only was humble, but he was faithful.

His message was obedience.

V 18, *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles 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, *Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,*

The message was obedience.

Romans 6:16-18, *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?¹⁷ But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*

Synonym for salvation, to obey from the heart the gospel delivered to you. It begins with an obedience to Christ.

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.

His message was no different than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who also preached obedience to Himself.

c) Personal integrity.

Paul had personal integrity.

We could say he was authentic.

He was not only humble, faithful, but he was genuine.

He was authentic.

V 18, *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—*

He preached his message to make the Gentiles obedient and the message came by word and deed.

The truest preacher is the preacher who lives in deed what he proclaims in word.

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 unauthentic, the one who is not genuine, the one who is not real.

But it is challenging to realize that here was a man whose life backed up everything he said. Christ proclaimed the message through his preaching and through His living.

- Paul claimed only what Christ had done by him, that's humility.
- Paul preached obedience to the Lord, that's faithfulness to the message.
- Paul had personal integrity and thus was authentic.

d) Divine Affirmation.

His work was given divine affirmation.

He was also one who was powerful.

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.

V 19, in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

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.

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.

When Paul preached, there were demonstrations of supernatural nature to show that the power of God was behind his ministry.

All you need to do is study the book of Acts and you will see that in detail.

2 Corinthians 12:12, *Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.*

Paul was given the signs and wonders and mighty deeds that are the marks of an apostle.

He bore the marks of an apostle.

Mark 16:20, *And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.*

The signs were to authenticate their message, that it might be made known that their message was true.

Is that still a valid accreditation?

Of course!

Still see the true preacher by the fruit of his preaching.

What is the greatest miracle of all miracles that can occur on this earth?

The miracle of transformation/conversion/transformation from the kingdom of darkness to light.

From Satan to Christ.

Salvation, from being a child of the devil to being a child of God. The new birth.

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.

Although that is not specifically the same as the authentication of the preachers of the apostolic era, it is nonetheless an authenticating sign.

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 **Acts chapter 13** and just flow through the rest of the book and we will see it there. His ministry was marked by power.

e) Work is completely fulfilled.

V 19, from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Jerusalem as a starting point all the way around to Illyricum. Illyricum would be the northwestern-most point of his ministry, way to the northwest 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.

I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

I have fully carried out the gospel of Christ.

It can mean two things.

I fully preached the fullness of God's gospel,
I preached the fullness of truth,
I preached all the counsel of God.

Acts 20:27, *For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

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.

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.

He maximized every opportunity and met the full range of responsibility God had given to him.

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

- He was in stripes.
- He was whipped.
- He was in prison.
- He was near death.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27, *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;²⁶ in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—*

He went through all of that and was unhesitating in filling up his ministry every place that God called him. He never said no.

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 is about a **1,400 mile** span.

It is 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 **18 month**, 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.

What a preacher.

- He was humble.
- He was faithful.
- He was authentic.
- He was powerful and
- He was thorough.

So, in defence of writing so boldly, I am writing boldly because I have an apostolic calling.

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.

That alone would be sufficient to identify the nature of his ministry, but he has one more thought.

Paul the Pioneer.

V 20-21, *And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation,²¹ but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."*

Paul has a call to the un-evangelized fields of the world. He has a call to the unreached people.

This is going to be a great help to him because he wants to go to Spain. 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.

Paul wants them to catch the vision of his heart.

V 20, *And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named*

The key to understanding the role of an evangelist.

Always the message is the same, preach the gospel.

Always I have done it with strong effort but also always I have endeavoured to preach where Christ was not named. Virgin territory is my calling.

Virgin territory is my calling.

V 23-24, *But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,²⁴ whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.*

He is a pioneer.
He is a missionary.
He is a church planter.

Let someone else water.
Let someone else build on his foundation.
He is not interested in that.

V 20, lest I should build on another man's foundation,

Is that wrong?

No, it's not wrong.

I hope it's not wrong cause if it is I am doing it.
It is not a question of wrong.
It is 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.

V 24, *"Whenever I take my journey to Spain, I will come to you."*

It is 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.

1 Corinthians 9:2, *If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.*

That's what marked him out as an apostle, the fact that people had come to faith in Jesus Christ through his ministry.

2 Corinthians 3:2, *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;*

Your coming to Christ tells the story about us. He is a missionary.

In order to sort of support that he finds justification in an Old Testament prophecy quoted in verse 21.

Isaiah 52:15, *So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.*

It's very close to the Septuagint version which is the Greek translation of Isaiah.

Clearly **Isaiah 52:15** is a Messianic prophecy.

The context is all about the Servant of the Lord, who is Christ. Many New Testament texts refer this whole section to Jesus Christ, the whole **Isaiah 52, 53** passage.

Isaiah saying that there is a time coming when Messiah will bring nations to Himself, to see His own glory. Those who have never heard about Him will hear about Him.

There is coming a day when the Gentiles will be reached with the message of Jesus Christ. Now the fullness of that Messianic prophecy,

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.

it is already happening, and we are a part of that gathering even today.

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.

Paul, that was a definition of his ministry. He was a priest who offered a sacrifice to God.

As such he speaks to all of us of the need for us to offer up those we have 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.

I am 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?

What new territory do I claim as a pioneer?