

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Credenda: "The Righteous by Faith" Shall Live (1:18-11:36)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous "Shall Live by Faith" (12-15:13)
 - A. A Living Sacrifice, Transformed not Conformed (12:1-2)
 - B. Transformed Communities (12:3-15:13)
 - 1. Think soberly about yourselves (12:3-8)
 - 2. Love without hypocrisy (12:9-13:14)
 - 3. Bear with one another in love (14:1-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

A Philosophy of Ministry

Romans, Part LXVI

Romans 15:14-21

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I. Introduction

Romans 15:14–21 (NKJV)

¹⁴Now 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. ¹⁵Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, ¹⁶that 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. ¹⁷Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. ¹⁸For 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—¹⁹in 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. ²⁰And 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, ²¹but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."

II. Ministering to the Gentiles

A. Paul's Commendation of the Romans (14-15a cf. 1:8)

Paul begins by commending the Romans. Though Paul has spent considerable time exhorting the Roman believers to *receive one another*, he has done so by way of _____ (15). He is *confident* that they are *full of goodness* – virtue, a desire to do the right thing – *filled with all knowledge* – aware of God's purpose to rescue all the nations from sin and death – *and able also to admonish one another* – capable of applying God's Word to one another.

B. Paul's Commission as a Priest in God's Temple (15-16 cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17)

In His *grace*, God made Paul an *apostle to the Gentiles*. Hence, Paul was compelled to write to the Roman Christians (cf. Rom 1:1,5; 1 Cor 15:8-10). He was called to serve as a *minister of Jesus Christ*, a *servant* in God's _____. So what was Paul's specific role in God's *temple*? He acted *as a priest* in God's *temple* – the ESV correctly translates this "*in the _____ service of the gospel of God.*" Paul served as a *priest* in God's *temple*, the Church:

¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19–22)

Paul describes the Church as a *holy temple in the Lord*. Jesus is the *cornerstone* of God's *temple*; the NT *apostles and prophets* were the *foundation* of God's *temple*; and believers are the living stones that make up the walls of the *Temple*; every local congregation is a *dwelling place of God in the Spirit*. The Church is the _____ of God. So Paul writes (1 Cor 3:16-17):

¹⁶Do you not know that [y'all] are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in [y'all]? ¹⁷If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple [y'all] are.

So Paul conceived of his ministry as a priestly ministry in God's temple, the Church. As a priest, he was offering up to God the Gentiles themselves. They were living sacrifices.

C. Paul's Confidence in Christ's Calling (17-21 cf. 1 Cor 15:9-10; 2 Cor 12:12)

Paul boasted in the labor to which the *grace of God* had called him. Hence, *he labored in word and deed* (18) to plant churches throughout the world. He planted churches (not watered them, cf. 1 Cor 3:5-15) among peoples who had never before worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so he could fulfill OT prophecy (e.g., Is 52:15).

III. A Philosophy of Ministry

The minister of the Gospel is to encourage the saints, consecrating them to God, by preaching fully the Gospel of God while depending upon God's Spirit.

A. Encouraging the Saints (cf. 1 Tim 4:12-16)

¹²Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. (1 Tim 4:12-16)

B. Consecrating the Saints to God (cf. Rom 12:1; 15:16)

Ministers of the Gospel are *servants* in God's temple, called to consecrate their people to God and offer them up as a sacrifice well pleasing to God by the power of the Spirit. Paul exhorts the Romans, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (12:1). Ministers of the Gospel perform a priestly function; they are to labor "in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of [their flock] may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (cf. 15:16). So note that the central portion of our liturgy is labeled _____. During this section, the duty of the minister of the Gospel is to *consecrate* the flock to the Lord's service that we may offer ourselves up to God *living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God*.

C. Preaching Fully the Gospel of God (cf. 1 Cor 3:5-7; Heb 4:12-13)

Central to the ministry of *consecration* is the *preaching of the Word*. Paul writes:

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Heb 4:12f)

God uses His word to expose our sin and correct us. Hence, the minister is to preach the Word. Paul writes to Timothy:

¹I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim 4:1-5)

IV. Conclusion