

TO BE A MINISTER OF CHRIST JESUS

Romans 15:14-33 (Key Verse: 15b-16)

“because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

In today's passage we are going to hear from Apostle Paul who will begin to conclude his letter to the Romans. In this conclusion we see him acknowledging the faith of the Roman believers, saying they are full of goodness, knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Furthermore, through his personal testimony, Apostle Paul encouraged the Roman believers that, just like him they too have been called to be ministers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, through this passage we are going to learn what it means to be a minister of Jesus Christ, and how we today should conduct ourselves as ministers of Jesus Christ and be used mightily in this generation. May God be with all of us, to hear and receive God's word deeply.

The passage today begins with Apostle Paul who expressed confidence in the Roman believers, in **verse 14** it says: *“I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”* What Apostle Paul said here coincides with what he said at the beginning of the letter in **Romans 1:8** saying: *“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.”* Through this we can see that they Roman believers demonstrated excellence in their faith, they demonstrated genuine Christian values, and are able to correct one another with love. As a Christian community they did very well, they knew, and their faith was reported all over the world. However, one might wonder then, why did Apostle Paul write this letter to them, especially the way he wrote it? As we learnt in the past, we saw Apostle Paul first covering the great exposition of the gospel from **Chapter 1 to 11** covering all the fundamentals of the gospel, followed by the great exhortation to live by the gospel from **Chapter 12 – 15**. In **verse 15a** Apostle Paul said: *“Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again.”* The Roman believers needed to be reminded of this gospel, so that their faith might be strengthened, so that they might be encouraged as Christian believers.

Just like the Roman believers, we too even though we have accepted Christ as our Lord and savior we still need to be reminded of what Christ did for us, we still need to be reminded of our identity as Christian believers, we need to be reminded of the gospel and be encouraged to live it. That is why in our ministry, we emphasize weekly Bible study, even though we might have studied the scripture last year. When we do it again this year, we still are encouraged to put more effort, as most of you have seen, when study the passages again we always learn something new giving us strength and encouragement. And so, Apostle Paul, wrote this letter quite boldly on some points to remind the Roman believers on the gospel, to encourage them and to strengthen their faith.

What drove Apostle to share all this with the Roman believers? We know that for a long time Apostle longed to visit Rome, which he writes about yet again later in this letter, and this letter can be seem as a way to reach out to the Roman believers. However, on our key verse we see the main reason Apostle Paul did all this. Let us look at **verse 15b-16**: *“because of the grace God gave me / to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”* Here we can see that Apostle Paul did all these in obedience to the mission that God gave him. Paul's God given mission was to be a minister of Christ Jesus. What does it mean? Minister is used here to describe occupation of the priesthood office, now Apostle Paul's office of Priesthood was given to him by Christ Jesus to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gentile nations. Now Apostle Paul did not earn this position, but by the grace of God he has be appointed to be a

minister. And now this grace is not something to be taken light, but rather we should take it very seriously because Jesus paid a high price for it, in order for Apostle Paul to be granted this grace. Jesus had to give up his glorious position in heaven, come down on earth live among us sinners, be punished, ridiculed, hanged and killed on the cross.

Furthermore, to be a minister requires one to take their God given mission serious, it is not just a position or title that we can have, but rather it is a priestly duty for one to go out and preach the gospel sincerely to the gentiles, so that they might become an acceptable offering to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. So as much as we enjoy our fellowship, and friendship with our brothers and sisters and our sheep, we should remember that our fellowship should not just become a social activity, but rather we should share the gospel so that our sheep may be presented to God as an acceptance offering. This is why Apostle Paul reminded the Roman believers on some points of the gospel. First, he wanted to help them be strengthened in their faith so that they can be an acceptable offering to God. Secondly Apostle, wanted to help the Roman believers to view themselves as ministers of Christ Jesus as well. In **1 Peter 2:9** it says: *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* Through this verse we can see that being a minister of Christ Jesus is not reserved to a few among believers, but rather all who are saved by the blood of Jesus, have been called into a royal priesthood, we are all a chosen nation, God’s special possession. Jesus paid a high price, so that we can be saved but not only that, but to be used as his ministers, as his servants, to preach the gospel, to declare the praises of Jesus who brought us out of darkness into the wonderful light.

Yes, the Roman believers were faithful, and they loved Jesus, they were excellent in obeying his commands and teaching one another. But Apostle Paul wanted to encourage them to be mission centered, to share the gospel with other people, other nations. Apostle wanted to help them to not be ashamed of the gospel but go out and preach it. In the same, we also might think our church has grown, and we might relax and enjoy just having fellowship with one another. Apostle is urging us today, that we have been called as a royal priesthood, each of us is a minister of Christ Jesus, and our God given mission is to go out and preach the gospel to campus students and declare the praises of him who brought us out of darkness into the wonderful light.

But how can we declare these praises? What attitude should we have? Here we can learn from Paul’s testimony on what attitude we should have as a minister of Christ Jesus. **Firstly, Jesus was the center point of Apostle Paul’s ministry.** Let us look at **verse 17-18**: *“Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. / I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.”* Apostle Paul was a man with great talents, very bold, he spoke very well and many other things. However, when it came to proclaiming the gospel, he did not depend on his talents and abilities, yes God used them, but he did not depend on them, but Jesus Christ. That is why we see him giving all glory to Jesus Christ for his service to the Lord. Because Jesus was the center point of his mission, Apostle could deliver only the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations, he did not deliver his own ideas, but only the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Apostle ventured to only speaking what Christ has accomplished, he could raise many gentile believers who gave their life to Jesus and were used as gospel workers. In **verse 19** Apostle Paul said: *“...by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So, from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.”* So as ministers of Christ Jesus, we need to focus on Jesus, we need to depend on him so that he might be glorified, not us. This is how we can truly experience joy as ministers of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Apostle Paul had a clear and focused pioneering vision. Let us look at **verse 20-21**: *“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on*

someone else's foundation. / Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." Here we can see that Apostle Paul's vision was focused on gentile nations, where Christ Jesus was not preached, this helped Apostle to focus and have clear daily prayer topics on how to help the gentiles. In our ministry we too have been given a mission to preach the gospel to campus students, in the same way we have the privilege to focus and have a clear direction regarding our service to God and be effective. I remember Shepherd Jacob used to say that for one to be effective, you need focus and concentration. And indeed, when Apostle focused on his vision, to preach the gospel to gentiles where Jesus Christ was not known, he could be used mightily and raised many faithful believers. In the same way, God blessed the vision that he planted in pioneers of the UBF ministry to preach the gospel to campus students. Today, a ministry that started in a poor and war stricken South Korea is now used mightily, bringing many college students across the globe to Jesus Christ. Today this hall is filled, because of the vision that God planted in a young couple to focus and concentrate on preaching the gospel to Wits campus students. So to be an effective minister of Christ Jesus, we need to have a clear vision, focus and concentration.

Third, Apostle Paul wanted to serve God's ministry to the end. Let us look **verse 23-24**: *"But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, 24 I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while."* Glory to God, for using Apostle Paul who planted Jesus in the hearts of many gentiles. Through Apostle Paul's preaching of the gospel the gentiles could be transformed, they even offered material gifts to the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. Just as the Jews shared with them their spiritual blessings, they too wanted to share their material blessing with them. At this point, one might think it is time for Apostle Paul to rest after the great work he has done among the gentile nations. However, Apostle Paul was not complacent, he still was eager to preach the gospel and so he planned to visit Rome and continue to Spain and preach the gospel there. Through this we can see that preaching the gospel was Paul's life mission, it was not just a task that he needed to complete. As ministers of Christ Jesus, we have been called to be lifetime gospel workers. Being a minister of Christ Jesus is not like a job at Siemens. When we have this attitude and mindset, we can enjoy the blessing of being minister of Christ Jesus. When I think about these, I am reminded of Sh. Daniel and Miso, they were very old, but when meet them on campus you could never tell, they were always filled with joy to talk to campus students, they looked so young and vibrant. They were in this way because they wanted to serve God's ministry to the very end, and so they could be blessed with the joy of the Lord through these.

Lastly, Prayer. Let us look at **verse 30-31**: *"I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. 31 Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there."* After Paul, completed his mission work in preaching the gospel to the gentile nations and raising them as faithful servants of God, he had to go on a journey to Jerusalem to deliver the gifts from the gentile believers to the brothers and sisters Jerusalem who were living in poverty and in great need of the offering. However, there were some jews who were not happy with Apostle Paul on some matters such circumcision. Paul disagreed with them that circumcision was needed for the gentile believers to be saved, and because of this he was in danger of being harmed if he goes to Jerusalem. It could have been easy for Apostle Paul to avoid going to Jerusalem, however for the sake of delivering the gifts from the gentile believers and uniting the gentile believers and jews in Jerusalem he decided to go. Apostle did not allow opposition to hinder him from fulfilling his mission, but rather he prayed, he asked the believers in Rome to pray for him as he embarks on a journey to Jerusalem. So to be a minister of Christ Jesus, means we should not allow opposition to hinder us from fulfilling our mission, but rather we should pray, we should ask for prayers from our co-workers and other believers.

Conclusion

From today's passage we have learnt that because of the grace of Jesus Christ who died on the cross we all have been called to be a minister of Jesus Christ. Jesus paid a greatest price of all times, that we may be saved and that we can go out share the gospel with our brothers and sisters, so we must take this mission seriously so that we can raise brothers and sisters on campus and present them to God as acceptable offerings. We have learnt from Apostle Paul that in order to be effective, as a minister we need to have Jesus as the center point of everything, we need to do everything for the glory of Jesus and not ours. Furthermore, as ministers of Christ we need to have focus and concentration so that we can be effective. Furthermore, we should not consider our mission as something that should stop at some point of our lives, but rather we should consider it as a life mission. Lastly, we have learnt that in order to be effective as ministers of Christ Jesus, we need to pray, we need to ask for prayers from our co-workers, we need to create an environment where we pray for one another and share our prayer topics. God's wisdom in raising all of us as ministers is not to burden us, but rather to bless us. Let us therefore learn from Apostle Paul's testimony and apply his principles so that we too, can experience joy as we serve in God's ministry, so that we can bring glory to God by raising young men and women on campus and present them to God as acceptable offerings, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.