"How to Serve the Lord"

Romans 15:15-21

12-27-2020

INTRODUCTION:

***Follow Paul's example of service for Christ!**

How did Paul serve Christ?

I. Paul served with <u>CONSCIENTIOUSNESS</u> (v. 15-16)

[A Great <u>Concern</u> for God's Work]

A. The <u>words</u> which revealed Paul to be conscientious (v. 15a)
("Boldly...putting you in mind" - A bold <u>reminder</u>)

B. The <u>motive</u> which inspired Paul to be conscientious (v. 15b)
("The grace that is given to me of God")

C. The <u>goal</u> which drove Paul to be conscientious (v. 16)
("That...the Gentiles might be acceptable [to God])

II. Paul served with <u>HUMILITY</u> (v. 17-18)

[A Great <u>Attitude</u> in God's Work]

III. Paul served with <u>DIVINE ABILITY</u> (v. 19)

[A Great <u>Power</u> for God's Work]

IV. Paul served with a <u>PIONEER SPIRIT</u> (v. 20-21)

[A Great <u>Vision</u> for God's Work]

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INTRODUCTION:

How we do something is as important as what we do.

In Romans 15:15-21, the Apostle Paul describes for us how he ministered (served) for Christ.

***Follow Paul's example of service for Christ!**

How did Paul serve Christ?

I. Paul served with CONSCIENTIOUSNESS (v. 15-16)
[A Great Concern for God's Work]

A. The words which revealed Paul to be conscientious (v. 15a)
("Boldly...putting you in mind" - A bold reminder)

"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly" -- After commending the Roman Christians for their "goodness" and spiritual "knowledge" and after showing his confidence that they had the ability to "admonish" one another (v. 14), Paul is quick to say that he still was careful to be boldly strong in this epistle to remind them about their faith (chap. 1-11) and their responsibilities as Christians (chap. 12-16).

--Paul is bold in condemning sin (chap. 1-3)

--Paul is bold in proving salvation by grace not works (ch. 4-5)

--Paul is bold in calling for sanctification (ch. 6-8)

--Paul is bold in proclaiming God's sovereignty (ch. 9-11)

--Paul is bold in exhorting to full surrender and service (ch. 12)

--Paul is bold in commanding obedience to government (ch. 13)

--Paul is bold in teaching Christians how to care for one another (ch. 14-15)

"In some sort" - lit. in some parts (of my Epistle).

In certain passages in Romans, Paul is very bold in his exhortation. The reason: He is conscientious!

"Putting you in mind" - lit. to put upon your minds again; i.e. to remind.

Someone who is conscientious about others, is constantly reminding them (EX: "Don't forget to. . . Remember to . . . Did you remember to?...etc.)

Like Paul, Peter conscientiously reminded God's people about God's Word: Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." (II Pet. 1:12-13)

Jude also said: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this . . ." (Jude 5)

NOTE: Paul's conscientiousness in reminding the Ephesian pastors of their duties (Acts 20:17-38)

A conscientious pastor will:

1) Keep his life pure (Acts 20:28a)

   Cp. I Tim. 4:16 - "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

2. Watch his flock (v. 28b)

3. Feed his flock (v. 28c)

4. Guard his flock from wolves (v. 29-31)

B. The motive which inspired Paul to be conscientious (v. 15b)
("The grace that is given to me of God")

What makes a person conscientious?

What motivates someone to really care about what they do for God and His people?

Answer: The Grace of God.

Paul testifies of such grace which saved him and placed him in the ministry (SEE I Tim. 1:12-14)

I Cor. 15:10 - "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

C. The goal which drove Paul to be conscientious (v. 16)
("That...the Gentiles might be acceptable [to God])

"Minister" = a servant who performs a public spiritual ministry

"Of Jesus Christ" = He is Master, and Lord!

"To the Gentiles" - while the twelve apostles primarily brought the Gospel to the Jew, Paul's mission was to the Gentile (Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:7-9; Ro. 1:5).

The words: "ministering...offering up...acceptable...sanctified" form a picture of the O.T. priestly sacrifice. Paul, like an O.T. Jewish priest ministered the Gospel to the Gentiles, thus making those hew on to Christ an offering that was acceptable to God.

SEE I Peter 2:5

"Acceptable" = well-pleasing

Paul's goal was that Christians would not just be an offering to God, but a well-pleasing offering! An offering that was sanctified (totally set apart for divine purposes).

Paul, being conscientious, stopped at nothing short of expecting those he ministered to to be holy! He was not merely concerned about the number of converts, but the quality of converts

(II Cor. 11:2 - "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.")

NOTE: All three persons of the Godhead are involved in the Gentiles' salvation ["Jesus Christ...God (the Father)...the Holy Ghost]

Are you conscientious about your service for Christ? Do you do your ministry (whatever it may be) with utmost care?

(Whether your ministry is teaching, S.S. or Jr. Church, bus driving, bookstore, cleaning, paying bills, ushering, helping in activities, etc.)

II. Paul served with HUMILITY (v. 17-18)
[A Great Attitude in God's Work]

V. 17

"Glory" - to boast in

Paul is saying, "I have something I can take pride in."

What is it? "Those things which pertain to God" (namely - "acceptable" and "sanctified" saints - v. 16).

Paul speaks in a strikingly similar manner in II Cor. 10:12-18.

NOTE: Paul's glorying was not in self -- but in what was accomplished "through Jesus Christ."

If you want to glory in anything, don't glory in yourself (because we are at best frail, dependent, depraved mortals who would have nothing and could do nothing outside of the grace of God).

Glory in God! - Jer. 9:23-24 - "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

V. 18

"For I will not dare to speak..." -

Paul would not dare be so arrogant as to boast about anything which Christ did not produce ("wrought" - lit. work out, accomplish) through him.

Many times Christian workers can be like King Nebuchadnezzar: "Is not this great Babylon that **I** have built...?" (Dan. 4:30)

Is not this the great church that I have built? . . . Are not these the souls that I have won? . . . Is not this the teaching skill that I alone possess? . . . Is not this the spiritual knowledge that I alone have attained?

We tend to forget that Jesus said: "Without me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

Any work we do (if it is not done through Him and for Him) will go up in smoke on Judgment day (I Cor. 3; II Cor. 5).

Don't minister "in the flesh."

Christ is the real worker; we are simply His tools, His instruments, His channels, His servants.

Christ should receive all the glory. "That in all things He might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

"By word and deed" - Paul led people to Christ because of his words (verbal testimony) and deed (lit. works - the consistent testimony of his life).

In our witness we need both lip (words) and life (deed).

*It is our words that make the Gospel understandable, and it is our deeds (works) that make the Gospel credible (believable).

III. Paul served with <u>DIVINE ABILITY</u> (v. 19)
[A Great <u>Power</u> for God's Work]

"Mighty" = powerful; undeniable because of their supernatural nature.

"Signs" = miracles that pointed men to God and drew men's attention to what God was doing.

"Wonders" = miracles that caused men to wonder or stand in awe or amazement.

Proof of apostleship was ability to perform signs and wonders.

SEE II Cor. 12:11-12

Heb. 2:3-4 - "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Though we are not apostles and don't perform signs, we do have <u>divine power</u> to utilize as we serve Christ!

Acts 1:8 - "But ye shall receive <u>power</u>..." - The same Holy Spirit who lived in Paul lives in every believer.

"The power of the Holy Spirit" - With the Spirit's power we are effective though we may be feeble and fearful when we serve. Without the Spirit's power, we are ineffective though we may be eloquent and self-confident.

SEE I Cor. 2:3-5

As the hymn writer put it in the song "Brethren We Have Met to Worship" - "All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down!"

The power of God enabled Paul to encircle all of the Mediterranean world with the Gospel and to plant an estimated 80-100 churches.

"Round about" - "The idea in the world is that of a complete circle, and Paul describes the territory already evangelized in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece as lying within a circle; that is, within the circle of the nations around the Mediterranean Sea." (Reinecker, citing Knox, p. 382).

IV. Paul served with a <u>PIONEER SPIRIT</u> (v. 20-21)
[A Great <u>Vision</u> for God's Work]

V. 20

"I strived" = I aspired, I was ambitious, I made it my honorable goal.

Paul endeavored to go where the need was the greatest! Where people did not hear about Christ.

"Lest I should build upon another man's foundation" - Paul was a church planter; hence was itinerant.

There is nothing wrong with building on another man's foundation (Jn. 4:38). (Actually, Paul commends those who do it rightly - I Cor. 3:10ff).

Paul had broad horizons, great expectations, a big vision of what God can do!

"From Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum" (v. 19) covers about 1,400 miles! (Wiersbe, p. 564)

This would be the equivalent of one man spreading the Gospel and planting churches from NY halfway across America.

In NYC, a church planter does not have to worry much about building on a foundation which belongs to someone else.

There are many unreached communities and ethnic groups. NYC is the greatest mission field in the world!

V. 21

Paul, citing Isaiah 52:15, shows Scriptural support for his pioneer spirit.

He desired those whose ears never heard the "sweetest story ever told" to hear such a message so that their spiritual eyes might be opened (Eph. 1:18) and so that their blinded mind (II Cor. 4:4) might be illuminated (heb. 10:32).

Song: "Untold millions are still untold. Untold millions are outside the fold. Who will tell them of Jesus' love? . . . And the heavenly mansions awaiting above?"