

The Pattern for Ministry # 50

Romans 15: 14-21

Preachers, pastors, and evangelists are often misunderstood. Often those who hear them walk away from the message feeling as if they were judgmental, harsh, lacking in compassion, self-righteous, and even disconnected from reality. I will admit, I have sat under preaching that left me feeling that way as well. In fact, I am sure I have been guilty of the same, but I can assure you that was never my intention or desire.

Preaching and ministry is a multi-faceted work. We are expected to comfort, encourage, exhort, confront, and evangelize at all times. [2 Tim.3:16 – All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.](#) As a young believer, there were times I was certain my pastor had talked with my parents or friends and prepared a message to address my life personally. As I grew in the faith I realized that was not the case at all. He was just following the direction of the Holy Spirit and being effective in the work he was called to do for the Lord.

As we consider our text today, Paul addresses his ministry for the Lord and the various aspects associated with it. This isn't really a defense of his ministry, but rather an explanation of the approach and responsibilities associated with ministry. He wanted the Roman believers to understand his approach and embrace his ministry to them. Let's consider the various [facets](#) of Paul's work as we think on: [The Pattern for Ministry](#).

I. Paul the Exhorter (14-15) – Here Paul speaks of his role as an exhorter of believers. Consider:

A. His Confidence (14a) – [And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren.](#) Paul was fully persuaded of their faith, and more importantly, the Lord they served. Their lives reflected the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing their faith was founded in Christ, and experiencing their desire for service, Paul sought to encourage them in the Lord even more. He wanted to ensure continued growth among a body of believers who were portraying a godly witness unto the world.

B. Their Character (14b) – [that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.](#) The church at Rome was thriving for the Lord. They had received salvation by faith and were filled with the goodness of the Lord. They were maturing in wisdom and knowledge, growing abundantly in their faith. In fact, their faith had reached the point where they were now able to admonish (*lovingly correct or rebuke*) one another. Again, Paul sensed maturity and growth among the church in Rome and he wanted nurture and encourage that.

C. His Concern (15) – *Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God.* Being aware that some may have perceived his teaching up to this point as harsh and critical, Paul seeks to reveal the purpose for his admonition and rebuke. He wanted them to embrace his work and ministry to the Gentiles. He sought to reveal his love and devotion for them. He had received this calling from the Lord and he was determined to fulfill the work God had given him. His admonition was not out of anger, but of deep love and concern for their salvation. He had experienced the grace of God and longed for them to experience that grace as well.

II. Paul the Minister (16) – *That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.* Along with being an exhorter, Paul also served as a minister to the church at Rome and the Gentiles at large. Notice:

A. His Calling (16a) – *That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.* He identifies as their minister. This speaks of his public service in ministry unto the Gentiles. In essence Paul identified as the priest of Christ unto the Gentiles. He was simply being obedient to the call he received from the Lord. Paul had walked away from fame, fortune, and a secure lifestyle to follow the call of God. He wanted to fulfill this calling, being faithful unto the Lord.

B. His Commitment (16b) – *ministering the gospel of God.* Paul well understood the work he was called to engage in. He had been chosen of the Lord for a special task. He was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. He was expected to share the good news of salvation received by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ the Lord. There were occasions when Paul was forced to engage in other activities, but wherever he went and whatever he did, he sought to share the Gospel with those who had yet to receive Christ. He had surrendered his life unto the Lord as a minister of the Gospel and he was committed to fulfilling his obligation!

C. Their Conversion (16c) – *that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.* Paul speaks of the desired result of his efforts: the salvation of Gentiles by the grace of God. Although they were not Jews, grace had been extended to them. The same offer of salvation was available to all people. Paul wanted to ensure they too heard and had the opportunity to respond to the Gospel. Once they heard the Gospel and received Christ by faith, they too would be acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Paul well understood the veil of separation had been removed and salvation was now available to all who would believe. He wanted to reach every Gentile he could with the Gospel.

III. Paul the Preacher (17-19) – Now we see the role Paul served as a preacher of the Gospel. This was his passion, his reason for living. Everywhere he went he encountered those who had yet to come to Christ by faith. This presented an opportunity to preach the Gospel daily. Consider:

A. His Delight (17) – *I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.* Although he dealt with much adversity, pain, and rejection, there was also joy and glory for Paul. He is not lifting himself up in arrogance, but rather rejoicing in the glory of God. He could think of nothing he would rather do than fulfill the call to share the Gospel. Everyone who received Christ by faith was added to the family of God. This brought joy to Paul and glory to the Lord. He knew his work was not limited to this life. He was engaged in matters of eternal significance. This provided the strength and peace he needed to endure in adversity.

B. His Discernment (18) – *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.* There could be no doubt Paul had been very successful in ministry. The Lord had wrought mighty works through the life of Paul. He had experienced and revealed the awesome power of God on many occasions. Countless souls had been saved and many churches were now started and prospering through his efforts. Paul declares that he would never boast in his accomplishments, but he would boast of Christ. He never wanted anyone to assume his abilities had resulted in any goodness. He wanted those who knew him and heard his preaching to look to Jesus! He alone is worthy of our praise and He alone can provide for our needs. If Christ couldn't be glorified through it, Paul refused to speak of it.

C. His Dependence (19) – *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* Paul wanted the church to know that he fully relied on the power of the Holy Spirit to equip and guide him in service to the Lord. He knew apart from the Lord he would be unable to accomplish anything of lasting value. He had nothing to boast of in himself, but everything to boast of in Christ. All that he had accomplished, the souls that had been saved and the churches that had been established, had been done by and through the power of the Spirit. Through his dependence and the guidance of the Spirit, much work had been accomplished for the Lord. *1 Cor.2:4 – And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*

- It is interesting to see the reach of the Gospel through the ministry of Paul. He had preached the Gospel from Jerusalem throughout the world unto Illyricum, the area formerly known as Yugoslavia. It is amazing what can be accomplished through a surrendered life that depends upon the Lord rather than human ability.

IV. Paul the Planter (20-21) – Finally Paul mentions his work as a church planter. He was passionate about preaching, and he was equally passionate about planting churches in unreached areas of the world. Consider:

A. His Focus (20) – *Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.* Paul reveals his passion for new church plants throughout the world. He was literally a trailblazer for the Gospel. He was willing to preach in areas where believers already existed, but he was not content to remain in those areas. Paul did not seek to ride the “coat-tails” of another man’s work, but strove to take the Gospel to unreached places where people had never heard of Christ or the Gospel of grace. He didn’t want to simply add to what another man had started; he sought to plant churches and begin new works for Christ.

B. His Fruit (21) – *But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.* Paul quotes the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the Gospel being taken to the Gentiles. This prophecy was being fulfilled through the faithful ministry of Paul. He was reaching people who had never heard of Christ or the Gospel and their eyes were being opened to the truth. Unreached people were hearing the Gospel and embracing it by faith. Paul was seeing people come to faith in Christ all over the known world.

- This serves as a reminder to us that the Gospel is not limited to certain geographic locations. In fact, the Gospel has the power to break down all barriers and enlighten people of all races. The prophecy of Isaiah continues to be fulfilled today as unreached people groups hear the Gospel for the first time and respond by faith unto salvation!

Conclusion: It is evident, through his own admission, that Paul’s ministry was multi-faceted. His work required much effort, preparedness, focus, and reliance on the Lord. It wasn’t always easy or well received, but he always followed the Lord. His commitment and dedication resulted in the salvation and growth of many in the faith.

We need those with the commitment of Paul. Granted, our efforts won’t always be understood or embraced, but we must remain faithful. There are many who have never heard the Gospel who need to hear of the saving grace of Christ. Believers need encouragement and loving admonition. The church is responsible to provide that. Are you willing to be used of the Lord as He chooses? Have you received Christ as your Savior? If not I urge you to respond to the call of salvation and begin this wonderful journey with the Lord!