Purpose
Romans 15:14-21, 30-33

FIRST THOUGHTS
We recognize the importance of being intentional about our health—brushing our teeth, paying attention to what we eat, and staying active. We try to show that same intentionality in our work by getting up when the alarm goes off and arriving on time. Likewise, as believers we are to be intentional about making Christ known to all people.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT
The church in Rome included both Jews and Gentiles, which created tension at times. But Paul called for harmony and unity, rooted in Scripture, so that the Jews and Gentiles could glorify God with one voice (15:6). This resulted in acceptance of one another rather than division among those who disagreed on minor issues (15:7).

The verses that precede this session's focal passage culminate in a prayer that God would fill believers with joy and peace. These qualities would take root in Christ followers through faith. Eventually, their lives would overflow with hope by the power of God's Holy Spirit (15:13). His call to the purpose of sharing Christ was preceded with a prayer.

JOINT MINISTRY (ROMANS 15:14-16)

Paul began wrapping up his letter with an affirmation for his ***brothers and sisters*** in Rome. He was ***convinced*** that they had the qualities needed to partner with his ministry. *Convinced* is a strong verb, expressing confidence in a statement or belief.

Paul grounded his conviction in three realities. First, he said the Romans were ***full of goodness***. Morally, they had moved from a position of being dead *in* their sin (Eph. 2:1) to being dead *to* their sin (Rom. 6:11). This did not produce inherent *goodness* in them, but they did demonstrate the goodness of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The gospel had changed them.

Second, the apostle assessed their ***knowledge***. They were not only morally sound, but they also understood the gospel intellectually. Their minds had been renewed, and they viewed the world around them through a biblical, Christlike lens (Rom. 12:1-2). Their *knowledge* complemented their *goodness*. Third, Paul praised their ability ***to instruct one another***. This Greek word had the sense of counseling others about avoiding or ceasing an improper course of action.

Paul's confidence in the believers at Rome also explains why he had addressed them ***more boldly on some points***, especially regarding ***the grace*** he had received from God. The truths Paul gave them were not new teachings. He simply wrote to ***remind*** them of the principles of grace.

Paul had not planted the Roman church, but he was called as the ***minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles***. This verse is filled with the language of the temple. As a minister, Paul served as a ***priest of the gospel***. He saw himself as a priest, not presenting animal sacrifices, but sharing the gospel with Gentiles across the empire.

Paul recognized that the Gentiles who came to Christ represented an ***acceptable offering*** to God, as they were ***•sanctified by the Holy Spirit***. Paul encouraged the Romans' partnership in the gospel, but he also made sure that they understood the importance of the *Holy Spirit* in his ministry. This was not a fleshly pursuit or work that he could attain by himself.

SPIRIT'S POWER (ROMANS 15:17-21)

Paul had ***reason to boast***, but not because of anything he had done. God had done incredible things through him. Many in Asia Minor and Greece were saved. Everywhere he had shared the gospel, people came to faith in

Christ. Yet, Paul's boasting was not selfish pride. He only boasted ***in Christ Jesus*** and in ***what pertains to God***. This was the priestly task that God had called him to fulfill (v. 16). Paul's boasting was in Jesus and the cross (1 Cor. 1:31; Gal. 6:14).

Paul ***would not dare*** to speak of his own accomplishments. ***Christ has accomplished*** everything through him. To *dare* is to show boldness in the face of danger. Paul refused to risk bragging about his own ability and instead deflected everything to the power of Christ. Jesus, not Paul, is the true agent of missionary success.

The ***obedience of the Gentiles*** refers to their embrace of the gospel for salvation. God used Paul's ***word and deed*** to open the hearts of Gentiles. Through preaching and acts of service, he shared the gospel with the power of the Spirit.

Paul had an ***aim*** that drove him to reach new people. He considered it an honor to ***preach the gospel where Christ has not been named***. Though Paul revisited places (Acts 15:36), his main mission was to evangelize unreached people. While he desired to preach in Rome, his goal was to preach in Spain (Rom. 15:24,28).

Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 to emphasize the worldwide impact of the Messiah. This is a prediction of Christ written more than seven hundred years before Jesus's birth. Paul saw this as a reference to the salvation of the Gentiles. They did not have the patriarchs or the law. They did not have the Hebrew Scriptures. But they heard the gospel and believed it.

FOCUSED PRAYER (ROMANS 15:30-33)

Paul pleaded with the Romans to support his work through their prayers. He listed two reasons for his ***appeal*** to prayer. First, he reminded them of ***our Lord Jesus Christ***. Out of loyalty to Jesus, he asked them to pray for him and for the work he was doing for Christ. Second, he appealed ***through the love of the Spirit***. This was not the Spirit's love for them, but the love that the Spirit produced in them for one another (Gal. 5:22-23). Their relationship with each other and the love they shared through the Holy Spirit was enough reason for the Romans to pray for Paul.

The apostle also encouraged the Romans to ***strive together*** with him. The Greek word used here is related to the English word "agonize," though *together* adds a corporate or shared meaning. Paul was headed to Jerusalem, where people hated him because he extended the gospel to the Gentiles. He knew that he would face stubborn Jewish opposition and coveted the prayers of the Roman Christians. Intercessory prayer is an important way of supporting those who take the gospel to unreached people groups.

Paul listed three specific prayer requests. First, he prayed that he would be ***rescued from the unbelievers in Judea***. Jewish leaders did not embrace Christianity and had tried to kill Paul already (Acts 9:29-30). Second, Paul asked that his ***ministry . . . may be acceptable to the saints***. Paul planned to bring money he had collected for famine relief to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-27; 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15). He knew that some Jewish leaders might see this as a bribe and treat believers in Jerusalem more harshly because Gentiles were helping them. He asked the Romans to pray that the gift would be *acceptable*. Third, Paul asked the Romans to pray that he could ***come to you with joy*** after presenting the relief offering. He left this visit up to ***God's will***, realizing that God had changed his plans before and could do so again (Rom. 15:22). Once he arrived in the city, Paul would be ***refreshed together*** with the Romans. This Greek term suggests lying down and resting.

Paul ended this section of the letter with a blessing of peace. Amid all the dangers, uncertainties, and conflicts he anticipated in Jerusalem, he commended the church to God. Corresponding to the Hebrew word *shalom*, this *peace* transcends understanding (Phil. 4:7) and can be given only by God. As the Romans prayed for Paul, he also prayed for them. He asked the Lord to give them peace.

Next Week – Prayer, 1 Samuel 1:9-18, 24-28