

Romans 15:14–21 (ESV)

November 30, 2025

¹⁴ I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. ¹⁵ But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ²⁰ and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, ²¹ but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”

I. Introduction

Paul explains his pastoral confidence and calling: he affirms the Roman Christians’ moral and doctrinal maturity, explains why he has written firmly on certain matters, and describes his missionary ambition, preaching where Christ is not yet known, driven by God’s grace and the priestly service of the gospel.

II. Exposition and Reflection

1. Paul’s Confidence in the Church (v. 14)

- Paul affirms the Roman believers as “full of goodness” and “able to instruct one another.” This is not flattery but an honest pastoral assessment: the church demonstrates visible love and knowledge.
 - Application: Be active in mutual discipleship in the church. Teach, correct, and instruct one another with humility and charity.
 - Where do you still need another’s instruction in your life? Whose life do you regularly speak into, and who regularly speaks into yours? If not, what intentional steps can you take to obey Paul’s command to counsel one another, such as identifying someone to disciple and someone to disciple you?
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2. Bold Correction Out of Grace (vv. 15–16)

- Paul explains why he writes “very boldly.” It’s not from arrogance but because of God’s grace given to him to serve Gentiles. Correction flows from commissioning. It’s not rude to correct one another, it’s loving.
 - The “priestly service of the gospel” shows ministry as sacrificial and worshipful, bringing Gentile worshipers as an offering to God.
 - Application: When correction is necessary, frame it as service to God and a means of building the church, not personal victory.
 - How can you make correcting your brothers and sisters in our church feel like priestly service rather than personal attacks?
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3. Gospel Ambition: Not Building on Another’s Foundation (vv. 17–21)

- Paul’s ambition is missional; to take the gospel to places that have not heard. He avoids “rebuilding” where others already laid foundation.
 - His confidence rests on God’s enabling presence, the Spirit’s power, and the truth of Scripture.
 - Application: Assess your ministry priorities. Are you attempting necessary new work or merely repeating comfortable ministry?
 - Where is God calling you to serve our church to invest in new gospel ground rather than only reinforcing familiar programs?
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John McArthur, In Defense of Boldness, Part 2

What sacrifice of redeemed souls am I bringing to God as a priest? What faithful, humble, powerful, thorough effort to present the gospel do I make as a preacher? And what new territory do I claim as a pioneer? I fear as we look at our lives we'll have to come up with the answer that we offer too little. We're just too busy. And we present the gospel so weakly, we're too timid. And, frankly, we tend to pile up on top of each other don't we? In building foundation upon foundation upon foundation and never ever going out to places where there is no foundation.

I don't feel in my heart that God's called me to be an evangelist, but I do feel the need so greatly that sometimes in my heart there wells up a tremendous desire to walk away from all of this and go to a place where there's nothing and begin to build something, a place where Christ is not named. Do we have the essentials to be as bold as Paul was? Thus does he commend himself to the church at Rome and to us in order that they might not only know his theology but that they might know

his heart and his heart was set toward God. And if we could pray a prayer along the same lines tonight, we might pray that Christ would use us to win more souls, to proclaim more faithfully and powerfully the Word and to establish the gospel in new territory for His glory.

Brian Cosby, *Instruct One Another*

When you hear the word “instruction” mentioned in the context of the church, you probably think of the pastor(s) or elder(s) in your congregation—and you would be right to do so. An elder should be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). The Scriptures teach us that “[an elder] must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine” (Titus 1:9).

But the Bible also teaches that all believers are to instruct one another. In Romans 15:14 Paul writes, “I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.” Likewise, he exhorts the Colossians to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).

We have the record of numerous believers in the New Testament who instructed others even though they were not pastors or elders. For instance, Stephen, the deacon, gave costly instruction to the unbelieving Jewish leaders about Jesus (Acts 7). Philip (also a deacon) instructed the Ethiopian eunuch about the meaning of Isaiah 53 and then went and “preached the gospel to all the [nearby] towns” (Acts 8:26–40). Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife, instructed Apollos concerning “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). The Apostle Paul charged older men and women to instruct younger men and women, respectively (Titus 2:1–6). Additionally, he commanded parents to instruct their children (Eph. 6:4).

Every believer is called to “speak the truth with his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25) and to “exhort one another” on a daily basis (Heb. 3:13). This doesn’t mean that everyone is called to hold the office of elder or deacon; God has reserved those offices for men who meet the biblical qualifications (see Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). But it does mean that—in whatever situation we find ourselves—we are to instruct one another according to the truths of Scripture.

The several Greek words that scholars have translated as “instruct” in our English versions of the New Testament can mean “teach,” “admonish,” “counsel,” “prove,” or even “warn.” The principle of “instruction” is rather broad. Even though the context of each specific passage determines the meaning, the idea of “instruction” includes a variety of God-honoring, truth-seeking, and humility-infused words and actions.

Consider the following three ways in which all believers are called to instruct one another: First, we are called to show our brother or sister the “speck” in his or her eye—after, of course, we first recognize the log in our own. This takes shape when we “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) or admonish others by humbly pointing out areas of inconsistency in their walk with Christ and warning them of potential dangers.

Second, we can teach others to know and love sound doctrine. In our day, many in the church are running from a robust study of doctrine to embrace more pragmatic methods of Christian growth. This is not the biblical pattern. Paul exhorted Timothy to be “trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6). If you are a small-group leader, you must move beyond mere facilitating to be able to explain and defend such important doctrines as justification and sanctification. This means that we need to set aside time to learn and meditate on the truths of Scripture so that we will be adequately equipped to teach others. Seeking out resources from knowledgeable pastors can prove to be a great help to this end.

Third, the Lord commands His people to instruct others in how to fulfill their life-callings in a variety of ways. Seasoned saints are called to bring along younger believers. Older women in the faith can have an effective ministry of instructing younger wives and mothers in how they may love their husbands and children (Titus 2:3–5). Fathers have the great privilege and responsibility of bringing up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). In various seasons and life stages, we all need the loving guidance of those who have walked the path before us to teach us how to make wise decisions and faithfully fulfill God’s leading in our lives.

As a member of the body of Christ you have been given various gifts for the building up of that body to maturity. In God’s kind providence, He has seen fit to establish mutual instruction as one integral component toward this end. May God show you ways in which you may humbly and diligently instruct others, for His glory, your joy, and the benefit of other believers.

Romans 15:22–33 (ESV)

December 7, 2025

²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

I. Introduction

Paul describes his travel plans and his present ministry responsibility, carrying a collection to Jerusalem for the saints, explaining motives: mutual obligation between Gentile and Jewish believers, the priority of helping the needy, and the need for the Romans' prayers for protection and success.

II. Exposition and Reflection

1. Mutual Obligation Among Christians (vv. 25–27)

- The Gentile churches' contribution for Jerusalem displays tangible gratitude and solidarity. Spiritual blessing implies material responsibility.
- The principle: sharing gospel benefits includes sharing in practical needs.
- Application: Promote outward generosity. Your giving expresses the gospel truth: we belong to one body, the body of Jesus Christ.
- How do you demonstrate material solidarity with the wider body of Christ? In what ways can you be more generous with your time and money? How can you prioritize supporting needs within your local church first?

2. Strategic Mission and Pastoral Prudence (vv. 22–24, 28–29)

- Paul explains his travel was delayed by ministry opportunities elsewhere, and why he intends to pass through Rome on the way to Spain. He wants to come with the “fullness of the blessing of Christ.”
 - His plans show strategic missionary thinking: finish the current work, honor previous commitments, then pioneer new ground.
 - Application: We should plan our missions and church initiatives with prudence, fulfilling current responsibilities before launching new ventures.
 - Where might we need to exercise patience and finish responsibilities before starting new initiatives? What pioneer work can you help with in Staunton and beyond?
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3. The Urgency of Prayer and Danger (vv. 30–32)

- Paul asks for prayer “by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit,” a triune appeal specifying deliverance from disobedient opponents and success for the collection.
 - Prayer is corporate warfare. Paul asks the Roman church to “strive together” with him.
 - Application: Mobilize the church in targeted prayer for missions, for spiritual safety, and for the acceptance of offerings.
 - What specific needs should we be praying for in our church’s ministry and missionaries? What steps can you take to pray more earnestly for these?
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Charles Spurgeon, *The God of Peace*

Now, dear brethren is there anything I can plead with you this morning, in order that you may always dwell in peace and love? God has happily commenced a blessed revival amongst us, and under our means, by the help of God, that revival will spread through the entire kingdom. We have seen that "the word of the Lord is quick and powerful." We know that there is nothing that can stop the progress of his kingdom, and there is nothing that can impede your success as a church except this. If the unhappy day should arrive let the day be accursed when it does come when you amongst yourselves should disagree, there would be a stop to the building of the Lord's house at once, when those that carry the trowel and bear the spears do not stand side by side, then the work of God must tarry. It is sad to think how much our glorious cause has been impeded by the different failings out

amongst the disciples of the Lamb. We have loved one another, brethren, up till now, with a true heart and fervently and I am not afraid but that we shall always do so. At the same time, I am jealous over you, lest there should come in by any possibility any root of bitterness to trouble you. Let us this morning throw around you the bands of a man, let us unite you together with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken, let us entreat you to love one another; let us entreat you by your one Lord, one faith, one baptism, to continue one; let us beg of you, by our great success, to let our unity be commensurate therewith. Remember "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The devil wants you to disagree, and nothing will please him better than for you to fall at ears among yourselves. The Moabites and Ammonites cut down one another. Do not let us do that.

Don Carson, *Ministry*

In this prayer before us in Romans 15, verses 30 and following, we find Paul not telling others what he prays for, but *soliciting prayer for himself*. "Pray for me," he says, and for his ministry. This becomes a model of what we should pray for with respect to Christian leaders and Christian ministry.

1. Paul wants this prayer to be offered up with earnestness, urgency, and persistence.

He says in verse 30, "I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." Paul often solicits prayer briefly elsewhere, but here his plea is long and urgent. He urges prayer "by our Lord Jesus Christ" and "by the love of the Spirit," grounding it in who Jesus is and the Spirit-given love believers share. Because Christians have the Spirit and therefore love the brothers and sisters, they must show that love in prayer. Persistent prayer is not unbelief but faith, as Jesus teaches in Luke 18. Thus, Paul urges prayer that is earnest, fervent, urgent, energetic, and persistent.

2. Paul wants prayer for himself in connection with his ministry.

He asks for two things: "Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea" and "that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints." Paul is bringing financial aid from Gentile churches to Jerusalem, but he knows the dangers from unbelieving Jews who view him as an apostate, and he knows even Christians in Jerusalem may struggle to receive his ministry. While our circumstances differ, Christian leaders today still need prayer for protection from unbelievers and for their ministry to be acceptable among Christians. The first recourse in evaluating or responding to Christian leaders is prayer.

3. For Paul, prayer for his ministry inevitably envisages further ministry.

His request is not only about surviving Jerusalem but about what comes *after*: “so that, by God’s will, I may come to you with joy.” Paul is always thinking ahead to Jerusalem, then Rome, then Spain. Every prayer request is tied to the advance of the gospel beyond the immediate crisis.

4. Paul expects prayer to result in joy and mutual refreshment.

His hope is to come “with joy” and “be refreshed” together with the Roman believers. Prayer for ministry is not merely crisis-management; it is directed toward shared encouragement, fellowship, and the ongoing spread of the gospel.

R. C. Sproul, *God's Designs for Us*

In the second half of Romans 15, Paul expresses his desire to visit the church in Rome. He says in verse 23 that for many years he has wanted to visit them, but that he has been prevented from doing so because of all the work God has given him to do elsewhere. Now that this work is finished, however, he hopes once more to be able to go.

It is interesting to reflect on Paul's experience, because it is a lot like our own and can be a comfort to us. For years Paul had had a perfectly proper and spiritual desire to visit and encourage the church in Rome. Yet, though God had given him this hope, God frustrated it repeatedly. Has this kind of thing ever happened to you? In fact, Paul did finally get to Rome, but when he got there, it was in chains.

He states that he intends to visit them on his way to Spain, but he cannot come right away. The reason is that he is being compelled to go in the opposite direction: to Jerusalem. Great poverty had come upon the saints there as a result of persecution at the hands of the unconverted Jews. The saints in Macedonia and Achaia, however, were sending relief funds to them, and Paul was to be the messenger. The trip to Spain, therefore, had to be delayed.

"So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain, therefore, and visit you on the way" (verse 28). This was Paul's plan. This was the burden God had put on his heart. But there is no evidence in history that Paul ever got to Spain. We don't know for certain that he didn't, but we have no evidence that he did, either.

We see here not only that God delayed some of the dreams He gave Paul, but also that God may never have granted some of the ambitions He put in the apostle's mind. Yet the hope of going to Spain doubtless kept Paul going in times of stress and enabled him to be encouraged and to endure. Also, that hope must have lit fires of similar hopes in the breasts of others, so that if Paul did not get to Spain, somebody else did, and that somebody caught the vision from Paul.