

Encouraging and Speaking Boldly (15:14-16)

Encouraging (15:14)

15:14 *And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.*

- Paul began the letter speaking of the blessing the Romans were to him (1:8-13). Do you speak this kind of encouragement into the lives of others?

Boldness (15:15,16)

15:15 *But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,* 15:16 *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

- Paul appeals to his God-given office as his authority for writing the letter to the Romans. God’s mission is the source of Paul’s boldness, and not anything in himself.
- Even though they are “filled with all knowledge” (15:14), they still have need of the Word of the Lord and Christ-given teachers. None of us ever outgrow that need in this life.
- Let me give you three simple steps to being receptive to God’s “reminding” through teaching and preaching, no matter how mature and knowledgeable you are in the Lord:
 1. Listen expectantly.
 2. Listen prayerfully.
 3. Write.
- Paul holds the office he does because of God’s appointment.¹ It’s important to remember that God worked through fellow believers to show this

¹ Romans 1:5; 12:3; 1 Corinthians 3:10; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:2,7,8; Colossians 1:25.

appointment: first Ananias (Acts 9:10-19), then the prophets and teachers of the congregation in Antioch (Acts 13:1-4).

- Paul uses a different language that usual to describe his “ministering.” Usually Paul uses the language of serving to describe his ministry (Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23,25).
- Here, Paul speaks of himself as a priest by way of clear metaphor (“as”); Church leaders are never called priests in the New Testament.² All believers in Jesus Christ are a priesthood.³
- This figurative priesthood is one in which Paul proclaims the Gospel; those who receive the Gospel by faith are seen as Paul’s offering to the Lord.⁴ Compare this with the sacrificial language of 12:1.

² It is in the generation immediately after the close of the New Testament that the divide between a class of clergy and laity is created in the Church. Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 35-99), author of a letter to Corinth called First Clement, is the first in Church history to use the term “laity” as opposed to the presbytery and bishops. In 1 Clement 40.5, using the illustration of the separation of the Levites from the rest of the tribes of Israel, writes, “the layman [ὁ λαϊκός] is bound by the layman’s [τοῖς λαϊκοῖς] rules.” In contrast, “to the high priest the proper services have been given, and to the priests the proper office has been assigned, and upon the Levites the proper ministries have been imposed.” Clement uses Old Testament priestly language in application to pastors – **something the New Testament never does**. Sadly, this divide only increases for the next 1,500 years until Martin Luther recovers the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The Bible tells us that in Christ we are all priests!

³ See 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:9,10; 20:6.

⁴ A key reality to remember in all offerings to God is that the worshiper is only giving that which God has first given him/her. For example, even though in the old covenant worshipers brought a sacrifice to God at the tabernacle, it is God Who commanded the

- This fulfills the LORD’s Word through Isaiah: “...*the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory. I will...send survivors from them to the nations...to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations. Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the Lord...to My holy mountain Jerusalem*” (Isaiah 66:18-20).⁵

Boasting in Jesus Alone (15:17-19)

15:17Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. 15:18For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 15:19in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

construction of the tabernacle, instituted the sacrifices by which worshipers could approach Him, and by His provision allowed the worshiper to have an animal to sacrifice: “...*the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls*” (Leviticus 17:11). True worship is that which recognizes God has 100% made that worship possible. Be humble.

⁵ I understand Isaiah’s “*holy mountain Jerusalem*” to be revealed as the Church in the New Testament. Concerning the physical, earthly Jerusalem, READ John 4:19-24; Galatians 4:21-31 (esp. 4:25,26). In Revelation 21:2, “*the holy city, new Jerusalem*” is compared to “*a bride*” (the Church is the bride of Christ). In 21:9, the angel tells John he’s going to be shown “*the bride, the wife of the Lamb,*” and in 2:10 sees “*the holy city, Jerusalem.*” The true Jerusalem is the Spirit-filled Church of the Lord Jesus Christ on heaven and all over the earth. Evangelism and missions bring offerings from the nations (new converts) to Jerusalem (the Church).

- Boast in Jesus alone (1 Corinthians 1:29-31; 2 Corinthians 10:13-18).
- Notice carefully that Paul doesn’t count what we count (decisions, baptisms) when he considers the fruitfulness of his ministry. He points to a faith-based obedience to Christ as real proof.⁶ **We are not saved by works, but those who are truly saved by faith do works of obedience to their Lord and Savior** (Ephesians 2:8-10).
- God verified His final, perfect salvation for His people in Christ by “*signs and wonders*” (Acts 2:43; 4:29,30; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4). The “*signs and wonders*” are never stand-alone; they play a supportive role to the proclamation of God’s salvation.
- Paul isn’t saying he preached to every individual in this area; he is saying that, by his ministry, congregations were established in these areas that would spread the Gospel through the region.

Global Foundation-Building (15:20,21)

15:20And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; 15:21but as it is written [in Isaiah 52:15b], “They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand.”

- The apostles were foundational to the beginning of the new covenant Church (1 Corinthians 3:10,11; Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14). This doesn’t contradict Paul’s desire to visit the Roman Church (which he didn’t start); remember that he is visiting them to head on to Spain (15:23,24).
- God’s purpose is to save from out of all the nations!

⁶ He opens the letter speaking of obedience (1:5) and closes the letter speaking of obedience (16:26).