

Introduction:

Considering this great task, let us pray.

- I am here to ask you what is your ambition in this life?
- My hope today is to show you from the Scriptures what the ambition of Paul was.

In Romans 15:20 Paul speaks of a glorious ambition. He speaks of an ambition that is not of this world. He speaks of an ambition that is fueled by something greater than the pleasures of this world. His ambition was to preach Christ where he has not yet been named. I am asking you today to open your heart to the possibility of going where Christ has not yet been named. It is unwise and foolish to use statements such as I will never go or that is for other Christians. Yes, I can affirm that not everyone is supposed to go but I do know the Spirit of God moves where it wills. He will call whomever he desires to be his ambassador in a foreign land, to be his messenger in a land flooded with the present darkness of this world. He may call you to go to those who have never heard. He may place in your heart a holy ambition like none other. Now in defining “holy ambition” John Piper says that a holy ambition is something that God wants to do and you also really really want to do this. These two things go hand in hand. It is when your strong desire is aligned with the will of God outlaid in Scripture.

My hope is to show you 4 truths that fuel a holy ambition from Romans 15.

A holy ambition is fueled by Worship, Objective, Scripture, Senders

I will be spending most of our time on the first point and then we will move quickly through the last three.

1. Worship (Explain) Look at verses 15 and 16.

*It is essential to begin with Worship being the fuel of missions. Worship is the end for which we were created. God created the world to display the magnitude of his glory. And he specifically created us that we would experience his glory and know his goodness. He created us that we would worship him in Spirit and truth. He created us that we would love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We here in this room and the church at large need to gather around this vision and this purpose, that the Lord of heaven and earth would be glorified and worshiped as he ought. So, here we find ourselves in a predicament. Not all

peoples are worshiping him as he ought. And particularly in Paul's day the reality that Gentiles were worshipping God and were joined to his Kingdom was foreign. For it used to only be the Israelites who were the people of God. Yet now the Gentiles are entering into the fold of God. God's plan from before time is coming to fruition. People from all nation, tribe, and tongue, are coming to know the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now how does Paul describe missionary service in Romans 15? He describes it as someone who is like a priest preparing an offering to God.

Paul begins by writing, "on **some points** I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of **the grace given me by God** 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.

So the aim of missions is to be like a priest who prepares an acceptable offering to God. Romans 12:1 explains how the Gentiles are an offering to God. "Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." So, the Gentiles are an acceptable offering when their lives are a living sacrifice to God.

If we look at Romans 15:9 we can see that Paul is showing us that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy. He is already preparing his readers to see that missionary service is set on the nations worshipping God for his mercy.

Now how does this connect to us? We have received the grace of Christ Just as Paul has received the grace of Christ. Paul is a minister to the Gentiles because of the grace of God. So, Paul's worshipful obedience in the missionary task is fueled by grace. It is fueled by Christ. So, in the end Christ receives all the glory. Verse 16, **by the grace of God** I am a minister of Christ Jesus. Verse 17, **In Christ Jesus** I have reason to be proud of my work. Verse 18, For I will not venture to speak of anything except what **Christ has accomplished through me.**

***Because of the grace that Paul has experienced in Christ he longs for others to know this grace. When others experience God's mercy and grace they glorify God as Romans 15:9 says. And this cycle continues.** And so the missionary task began with the apostles and then is passed down to the Gentiles. We follow a legacy of worship. People from all across the world beginning with the apostles have entered under the Lordship of Christ. They have seen his goodness. They have tasted his grace and mercy. And the fruit of this is worship

filled obedience. **And in Paul's understanding obedience for the Gentiles was the advancement of the gospel.**

This is why Paul can say in verses 18-19, 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, by the power of signs and wonders, and 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.

This is incredible! From Jerusalem to Illyricum the ministry is fulfilled?? Just to put this in perspective this is Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri and the same population also. And Paul can say I am finished with my work here. The only reason he can say this is because the Gentiles have come to obedience. Paul has offered them up to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and they too are going to continue the ministry. They too will continue to plant healthy local churches in the regions which Paul has already travelled. And as Paul moves on the Gentile churches in this region will continue to worship Christ and they will continue to share the gospel with others.

And as Paul began to see the Gentiles come to saving faith in Christ. I can only imagine this passage was going through his head.

Isaiah 66:18-20

For I know^[b] their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming^[c] to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, ¹⁹and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. ²⁰And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord.

The nations who have not heard his fame or seen his glory will come to know it. Worship is the fuel of missions; worship is the fuel of a holy ambition.

1. A holy ambition is fueled by Worship.

2nd A holy ambition is fueled by an objective. Because Paul could say his work is complete, he then knew he would have to move on to other regions, particularly in his case it was Spain.

Paul tells us exactly what his holy ambition is. He says, in verse 20, and thus, (because my task is finished) I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation."

Paul's heart was to go where Christ has not yet been named! Where no one knows of him. Many people have said why go when there are lost people all around us? Here is what Jim Elliot, who was a missionary who gave his life in Ecuador said,

" I'll tell you why I left. Because those Stateside young people have every opportunity to study, hear and understand the Word of God in their own language, and these Indians have no opportunity whatsoever. I have had to make a cross of two logs, and lie down on it, to show the Indians what it means to crucify a man. When there is that much ignorance over here and so much knowledge and opportunity over there, I have no question in my mind why God sent me here. Those whimpering Stateside young people will wake up on the Day of Judgement condemned to worse fates than these demon-fearing Indians, because, having a Bible, they were bored with it, while these never heard of such a thing as writing.

He then prays, "God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus.

- a. Apply
2. Live your life for something great. Live your life for the winning of souls. It makes no difference who I am speaking to whether it were 1,000 souls or just you here in this room. We all have to wrestle with this call to go where Christ has not yet been named. There are many godly ambitions you may have in your life. I am saying to have a Pauline ambition that is spoken of in Romans 15 it is an ambition that is fueled by an objective to go where Christ has not yet been named. Charles Spurgeon writes,
3. "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for."
4. I served in Pakistan last summer and I woke up to hearing the call to prayer. Sometimes it was so evil I would wake up before the sun woke and would say Scripture to myself to go back to sleep. There are lands that are so dark, so depraved. They don't know Jesus. There are villages in Nepal where you

ask them who is Jesus and they would say I don't know does he live in the village next to ours?

A quote that always has stuck in my mind is this; "If I have one candle of life to burn, I would rather burn it in a land flooded with darkness than in a land flooded with light." This is why many go.

A holy ambition is fueled by an objective.

Thirdly, a holy ambition is fueled by Scripture.

Look at verse 21 with me, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

Paul had a holy ambition because as I said earlier a holy ambition is something which God has laid out in his Word and you really really want to do that. What was the driving factor of why Paul went to the Gentiles?

*It was the Word of God. He could not stay because the Word of God had gripped him. He said Isaiah 52:15 which says, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

Look back with me at the beginning of the chapter.

"And in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 2 Sam 22:50, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name."

And in Duet 32:43, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

And again Isaiah 11:10 says, "The root of Jesse will come even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."

Do you see what motivates Paul? It is the promises of God laid forth in His Word.

Why is this? Do you not think Paul would have said the reason I am going to the nations is because Christ himself commissioned me on the road to Damascus. Yet in Acts 13 this is what Paul says,

Beginning in verse 46. "And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. FOR so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the

Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” He is quoting Isaiah 49:6.

O Christian, if you wonder whether you are called or not hear with me the call of God.

*Ps. 22, “all the families of the nations will worship before you.” Ps 67, O God be gracious to us and cause your face to shine upon us that your way may be known in all the earth. Let the nations be glad, let the peoples rejoice. Luke 3:6, For all flesh will see the salvation of God.” Isaiah 52:10, The Lord has bared his Holy arm, in the sight of all the nations, that the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.” In Malachi 1:11 from where the sun rises to where the sun sets the name of the Lord will be great among the nations. Or here the call of our Lord, Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded and behold I am with you even unto the end of the age. Or here to promise of Revelation 7:9 which says, “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb”

What is your great motivation in life? In Paul’s case his holy ambition to go to the nations was fueled by the Scriptures.

And trust me I know not every American Christian is supposed to go to the mission field but there may be some here who have said God I will do anything for you except missions. I would kindly ask you to open your heart to see where the Lord will lead you.

Missions is not the only holy ambition in this life. (Walk through some other ambitions.) Make sure they are supported by Scripture and counselors and disciples and encouraging of it.

Lastly, a Pauline holy ambition is fueled by senders.

*The reason Paul wrote this letter was so that he could be supported by the Roman church on his way to Spain. V24 says, “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.”

What letter would you write if you were going to need supporters for the mission field? Would you write Romans??

Paul is showing the Romans what he believes! He is showing them his gospel. He knows theology, he knows the Scriptures.

Rom 1:18

Rom 2:5

Rom 3:23

Rom 4: This righteousness will be counted to us who believe in

Rom 5: God demonstrates his own

Rom 6 Wages of sin is death

Rom 7: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 8:

Rom 9 Behold I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

Rom 10: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe God raised him from the dead you will be saved.

Rom 11. Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable are his ways!

Rom 12. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Rom 13. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Rom 14. For if we live, we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord, so then in life or death we are the Lords.

Rom 15. I make it my aim to preach Christ where he has not yet been named

And in Rom 16. Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the

prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Preach the gospel, preach the Scripture, proclaim them, know them. What kind of gospel are you proclaiming?

Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile sinners to a Holy God through his life, death, burial, and resurrection. Only by grace through faith can we be saved. And the message of the gospel is what saves the lost. The message of the gospel is what brings the nations to Christ.

There is a common thing to remember when considering the Great commission. There are goers, there are senders, and there are disobedient. Somehow and some way we must be involved with the great commission.

So in conclusion,

What is your one holy and pure passion? What is your ambition? What is your ambition fueled by? Is it fueled by an all-surpassing vision to see specific peoples reached for the glorification of God? People from every tribe, nation, and tongue? Is it fueled from the Scriptures by the grace of God? Like Paul is your ambition fueled by the fact that there are those who have never been told of him but will see, and those who have never heard but will understand. Paul was filled with the Scriptures he was filled with the word of God. Increase your vision of God! What kind of God do you serve? Is it the God who crosses cultures, religions, families, social structures, politics, and whatever else you could think of to bring about the fame of his name.

Charles Spurgeon once said, If God calls you to be a missionary don't stoop to be a King.

Consider praying this if you have time:

One pastor prayed,

“O God, your gospel spawns missionary effort as the sun radiates light. The two are always found together. What then does our lack of interest in missions reveal about our grasp to the gospel among us. Revive in us the passion for Christian missions that thrust St. Patrick and William Carey and David Livingstone and

Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael and thousands of others out to the four winds, for the honor and glory of the Son of God. Dear Lord, deliver us from our convenience Christianity and lift us up to the infinite joy of kingdom-advancing missionary Christianity. In the holy name of Christ. Amen.”