

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

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Let The Nations Be Glad

PART

2

TITLE

Our Holy Ambition

SCRIPTURE

Romans 15:5-24



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Well, good morning, Providence family. If you're a guest with us, we're really glad that you're here as well on this really special week for us to pause and to give thanks for the things that God has done in our life. If you have a Bible, turn with me to Romans 15. What we get to do here this morning is talk about something that's really pertinent to all of us, and that is what's the purpose of my life?

A few years ago, after his 50th movie and after amassing a personal wealth of \$180 million, Jim Carey, the actor, confessed these words, he said, "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer." We seem to know, don't we, that there's a deeper life purpose than what we're living. And yet, we all have trouble seeking to discern what that is. When we get lost or disoriented in life as to what our purpose is or what we should be doing, our instinct as humans is really an interesting impulse, and that is to accelerate. We think simply going faster to get through something that wasn't as satisfying as it needs to be, and so let's just do that fast so that we can perhaps get to something else. And so what we find is that when we are disoriented and we don't have that one pure holy ambition as to what God has called us to do and to be and we're not finding peace in it, what happens is we just do things fast.

We eat fast, we drive fast, we work fast. We try to fall in love fast. We try to love our family fast. We try to parent fast. We try to be a friend fast. We try to connect. "Oh, I want to be in a life group, and I wanted to be fast. Real fact. I need to get in and get out because there's other things I need to do today." We try to worship the Lord, and we try to do it fast. What's interesting is that the faster we live, the less pleasure and peace we feel. And the less pleasure and peace we feel, the more we tend to panic over how much time we have left on the earth to find our purpose. What I want you to know is that God really cares about you. The Bible confesses that He cares for you and that He wants us to know, He wants to help us to know our purpose. And the way that He helps us to know our purpose is He doesn't talk about you so much, or me. He talks about Him, He talks about His purpose.

He says, "You align your purpose to my purposes, your ambition in life to my ambition and for this world. What I'm going to do is I'm going to establish your life. I'm going to allow you to have this holy ambition, this one pure ambition. You can give your life to this and you can slow down in other areas, and you can find pleasure and peace in what I'm doing in your life." We've been looking at God's pure, holy, perfect ambition for the world, His purposes in the world, that Christ is on a mission to reach nations, to reach the people's in the of nations, and to make them glad by helping them to know who Christ is and to praise who Christ is and to enjoy who Christ is and to fear who Christ is. What I want you to know is that participating in some way in this mission, in this purpose is your purpose.

Last week, we talked about the ballast of a boat, the ballast of our life, that weight that sits heavy upon us, that truth that sits heavy upon us, that although it makes us less agile, it offers us stability and even keeps us afloat during storms. What I want to do this morning in Romans 15 is I want to fill our sails and help you learn how to fill your sail with a holy ambition. What God has called you to do, it's different than the person

who's sitting next to you. He has a purpose for your life. He has an ambition for your life. And when you see it, and it's a party of His big purpose, all a sudden what happens is it fills your heart with fire and energy and zeal and even enjoyment and peace in life.

What we find is this, is that how Paul wrote about his purpose in Romans 15, it gives us the ingredients for knowing how to discern our own. So in a moment, I want to read it, but first, I want to pray. So would you join me? Father in heaven, we come to you and we confess to you that we want to know why you created us. We want not only to know that purpose, but we desire that this is the first day of the rest of our life. And we desire to know what the rest of our days, you know how many there are, but we don't, we desire to know how you would ask us and want us and how you've created us to invest those days. And so I ask that you would give us clarity as we read from your Word. I pray for those who don't know Christ to hear today that you would help them to receive the good news. And for those of us who know Christ and who have received the good news, I pray that you would put upon our heart the great desire to spread this good news. And so, we look forward to what you are going to do in our life, and we look to you now. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Romans 15 starting in verse eight says this, he says, "For I tell you that Christ became servant to the circumcised," that's the Jews, "to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written: 'Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name.' And again it has said, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.' Again it says, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol Him.' And again, Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will come, even He who arises to rule the Gentiles and Him will the Gentiles hope.' May the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace and believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

In about eight or nine minutes, I'm going to read more. But it's such a long passage, what I want to do is to read that, and I want to tell you a central principle I believe that helped Paul understand his purpose on the basis of these. And this is what it is: is that our ambition, our purpose in life, it should align with Christ's purposes for the world. You see, every good and perfect thing comes from the Lord. Every good and right and noble thing, it all begins, it's source is the Lord. So you think about life, you think about grace, you think about friendship, you think about emotion, you think about beauty and justice, you think about forgiveness and grace, you think about being accepted, all of it begins with Him, it never begins with us.

And so, it's almost as though Paul, who's recognizing what's happening in the church of Rome is what happens when people don't understand their true ambition and how it aligns with Christ's mission. You see, what he's just been talking about in chapter 14, you can read that some other time, is how the church is literally splintering off in their own passions and their own purposes and ideologies and which newscast is offering the most accurate report, which holy day is the most holy day, and which food should we all be eating. What they were doing is they were all making personal convictions. And because it became their personal

conviction, they say, “Well, it must be the conviction of everybody. And so, this must be the passion of our church.” And everybody had one just like today.

There are things that you wish I was talking about right now. You say, “What he ought to talk about is this, this is the most pressing thing.” What I want you to know is this, is that’s precisely what he’s just led them through in chapter 14, and now he wants to say, “Now, this is how you identify your ambition. I want to show you how I identified mine.” And where he begins is this: it’s not the news. It’s not current events. It’s not what you think or what you like. It is Christ. And so, it’s almost as though he says this, “Before we talk about personal ambition in life, let’s talk about Jesus.”

And so in verse eight he says, “Christ became a servant to show God’s truthfulness.” This is why Christ came, one of the reasons. Next week, we’re going to start a series called Sent, where Jesus kept saying 38 different times, just in the book of John he says, “My Father in heaven sent me for this purpose.” We’re not going to talk about this one, but here’s another one. It says that Christ became a servant to the circumstanced, that’s to the Jews. He became a Jewish person living in a Jewish culture. Why did He do it? To show that God was trustworthy and true in what He had said, for He had made these promises. And so He says, “I’ve come to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,” these heroes of the faith that are scattered through the Old Testament. But not only that, notice what He says, “And in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.”

You see, up until this point, the Jewish people just assumed that because God had shown Himself to their patriarchs, Abraham and Moses, is that they were God’s special people. And therefore, all the blessings were intended to be for them. And so, what Paul is showing them here is this, is that Jesus came and ordered to prove God’s truthfulness. And one of the things that He had made a promise and what He’s about to show us is that He had made promises that Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. Later in our time this morning, I’m going to ask people who already know Christ to literally commit to take this good news to other people. But if you are new here, you’ve never heard of this or maybe you’ve never trusted Christ, my invitation to you is simply this, is to receive this good news. It’s to know that He is merciful.

You look at your life, let me just say something, you need mercy. So do I. We all need mercy and grace. We all deserve the wrath of God. It says the wage of sin is death, and all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. When Jesus came, and when He got here to the earth, He never sinned, and yet, He took your sin and my sin and all of our sin to the cross. He died for it. He was buried in a grave. And then to prove that He had power and authority in order to take away your sin, He rose from the dead. He says, “You trust me, I’ll forgive you of all of your sin.” That’s mercy, and it’s available for you.

But what I want you to see is what He does next is he says, “God in is grace, He’s made these promises.” Jesus came in order to show that God always is trustworthy and true when He makes His promises, and those promises were not just for the Jews, they were for the Gentiles. So what he does next is you notice in your Bible is he quotes four different places in the Old Testament; Samuel, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah. And

this is what they say, “Therefore, I will praise among the Gentiles and sing to your name.” “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.” “Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” “The Root of Jesse will come, even He who arises to rule the Gentiles, and in Him will the Gentiles hope.”

Now, this is what he’s doing, this is amazing, he’s saying, “I hope you know that God made promises.” And what he does is in showing us these promises is he takes... You see, the Old Testament is broken really into three big parts. It’s called the law, the prophets, and the writings. He takes the primary book of the law of God, Deuteronomy, the primary prophet, the longest one, Isaiah, and the primary book of the writings, the one that’s the longest, which is the Psalms. And what he says is this, is in choosing all of these different Old Testament passages, each one’s saying that it’s not just the Jews that God wants to bless and extend His mercy, but it’s also to people who are far, far away, Gentile people like most of us. What he’s doing is he’s saying, “Historically, it has always been God’s desire in the historical record of His revelation, from the law to the prophets to the writings, it all confesses that God almighty desires for all peoples and all nations to know Jesus Christ and to praise Jesus Christ and to enjoy Jesus Christ and to fear Him.”

And you notice the progress of experience for the Gentiles. He begins and he says, “Look, I’m going to praise you among the Gentiles.” In other words, they get to observe. “I’m going to go to a Gentile audience, and they get to observe me praising the Lord. I’m going to do it among them.” And notice it moves more intimate. In the next one, he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.” Now, all a sudden it’s not just you get to listen to me, you get to participate as Gentiles in praising and loving Jesus Christ. And then he takes it a step further and he says, “Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, let all the people’s extol Him.” What that means is, “I don’t need to be there anymore as the Jewish man, you can praise the Lord on your own because you have a real relationship with Christ.”

And then he gets all the way to the end and he says, “The Root of Jesse,” which is a name for Jesus, “will come, even He who arises to rule the Gentiles, and in Him will the Gentiles hope.” What that means is these Gentiles, just like you and me, when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe, we become citizen of heaven, citizens of His kingdom, and we get to hope in him all the days of our life. What I want you to know is that this is going to happen. You turn to the end of your Bible, and in Revelation 5 he says, “Worthy are you for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” And so this is what he’s saying, he’s saying that the entire record of Revelation in the Old Testament has pointed to the fact that God cares about all peoples knowing Him, because He wants to make them all glad.

And then he says, “And if you turn to the very end, which is the evidence of what is going to happen one day in life, where everybody, every single tribe, nation, tongue, there’s going to be a representative. Somebody’s going to be at the throne room in heaven.” What is he saying? He’s saying, “It’s going to happen.” And therefore, every effort that is aimed at the glory of Jesus Christ to know Jesus Christ and to help other people know and enjoy and praise and fear Him, whether it’s when you pray for somebody or you pray for your kids,

whether it's to give money to the church or to somebody who's hungry or to a missionary, whether it's to share the gospel, whether it's to feed someone a meal in the name of Jesus, whether it's to pour into your children to teach them or somebody else's child, whether it's in the nursery or childcare or wherever it is, whether it's you go to work and you do your best as unto the Lord in order that you would be distinguished as other people go, "Why is it that you always go the extra mile?" Whatever effort that you would give towards this end, you understand, it's going to be established.

Let me give you one illustration and we'll move on. If you were led to this harbor and somebody who was intimately knowledgeable about every one of these boats came to you and said, "Pick a boat. Enter that boat. Live on that boat. But know this for certain is that only one boat will remain afloat by the end of the day." Some of these boats is where you obtain acclaim, power, money, unlimited sex. Everyone represents some ambition. Everyone is the fuel for some ambition, but only one of them stays up, only one of them is afloat. It would be wise to board that boat, wouldn't it? It doesn't matter if it's a rowboat, if it's a canoe, right? You got this boat or you got a canoe, if the canoe is not at the bottom of the ocean by the end of the night, that's the one we want to get in. Doesn't matter how humble it is.

And so, God almighty gives us life and then He says, "You can live as you will. You can pick any ambition you want, any purpose, but know this for certain, there will be only one that will be afloat at the end of your life." It's just really wise to get on that boat. Which is why the Psalmist says in Psalm 90, "Let your work be shown to your servants." You see what he's saying? Look, if what you are about is going to be established and is going to endure, would you tell me what it is that you were doing so that I can align my life and my ambition and my purpose to what you are doing. And therefore, I can pray to you. Would you establish the work of my hands?

This is why it's so critically important for each one of us to be asking the question: "God, not what is your will to make my world happy and healthy." We live in His world, the question is, "God, how do I leverage my entire life on a mission that will be established forever to love you, enjoy you, and to help other people love and enjoy you?" Well, let's keep reading. In verse 14 he says, "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.

"But 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. In Christ Jesus, then I have reason to be proud of my work for God, for I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience; by word indeed, by the power of sign 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. And thus, I make it my ambition to preach Christ, not where Christ has already been nameless, I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of Him we'll see, and those who have never heard will understand.' And this is the reason why I have so

often been hindered from coming to you.

So the second thing I want you to see is this, is that our ambition should be directed by the Holy Spirit. You see, this is so critically important. For so many of us, we don't quite understand the Holy Spirit. There is some church traditions we spend a whole lot more time; it's probably a shame. Because your entire relationship with Jesus Christ is aided and fueled and empowered by His Spirit who lives within us. When we trust Jesus Christ, He comes into us and He begins the renovation project of our heart. He begins to speak to us and to help us. He comes into our heart, and what He does, He points us to Jesus Christ and says, "This is the character, this is the goal, is to become like Him." He illuminates the scripture so that... Listen, if you have ever read the Bible or had it read to you and you understood something, it's because God's Spirit is at work in your life. Otherwise, you go, "I just don't get it."

It is God Almighty by His Spirit that literally convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and it is God's Spirit who empowers our ministry. And so this is what's happening, Paul, he goes to that harbor and he looks at all of them and he says, "All right, if that's the boat that's going to stay afloat, if that's the one where my life... I'm getting on that boat." So Paul got on the right boat, but then once he got on that boat, he noticed that the potential of how to participate on that boat seemed to be unlimited. There's all kinds of different occupations. You could be a soldier on that boat. You could be a teacher on that boat. You could be a pastor on that boat. You could be a missionary on that boat. You could be a doctor, an engineer. You could be a mom or a dad. You could be all kinds of things, and you can do all kinds of things on that boat. And so what he did was he entered the boat and then what he teaches us is he says he looks to God and he goes, "All right, what's my task?"

And this is what each one of us has to do. First of all, we say, "Okay, God, your mission, that's what I want to be on. I want to be on that boat. Now, once I'm on that boat, what's my task? What's my ambition? What's my holy purpose?" And this is why it's so important, is because not every task that falls out of heaven from God has your name on it. There's all kinds of good things that can be done and should be done in the kingdom that He does not intend for you to do. He doesn't give you gifts for it. He doesn't give you affinity for it. The church doesn't affirm what you're doing. Right? So God Almighty, He gives us clues, and I want to show you how He does this. But here's the important thing, as you familiarize yourself with the Holy Spirit, with His voice, with His promptings, and how you keep close connection with the Holy Spirit is quick obedience and quick repentance.

When He tells you to do something, you do it immediately. And the reason is this, is that we should not presume for Him to keep speaking another sentence if we have not obeyed His last one. And then when we fail, we give quick repentance. "God, I just sinned with my mouth, with my heart, with whatever it is, would you please forgive me? I want to hear from you. I want to live in communion with you through your Spirit." What you'll find is this, is that as you familiarize yourself with His voice, the many false start ambitions of our life over a period of time, they condense down into one holy ambition. There's a lot of people because there's a lot

of possibilities in the world of how we can invest even on the right boat. There's many of us who have engaged in all kinds of different things, and we've not heard a calling from God of how we're supposed to engage. And so, we look back and we find all these ambitions that we started and we thought, "No, that's not it. That's not it."

Well, God is gracious, and so should we, and yet, as we continue to live and we're saying, "God, would you teach me, help me understand what you have for me?" what happens is it gets clearer and clearer as what part on the boat you're supposed to play. So notice what he says in verse 16, he says, "Let me teach you how I knew that my ministry was to reach unreached Gentiles." That was not everybody's. He says that was mine. How did I get there? Verse 16, "I became a minister of Christ to the Gentiles so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable," notice, "sanctified by the Holy Spirit." You know what that means? It means I would minister with the Gentiles and suddenly they would be born again in such a way I can't cause people to be born again. He says, "And so what I understood was this, is that when I saw the fruit of my labor, it was evident that the Holy Spirit was confirming that this is where I should keep working. I just looked and I said, 'Wow, look at the fruit that I could not bring about by myself, it must be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.'"

And then he goes on, he says in verse 18 and 19, "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience by word, indeed, by the power and signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." You see what he's saying? He's saying, "Not only when I serve unreached Gentile people who've never heard the gospel, not only do I see fruit that is proof that it's spiritual fruit, so it must come from Him, but not only that, but He gives me the power to serve in that way." There are some people in the room who would love to be able to stand here, this is your gift. But there's a lot of people that if we'd say, "Next Sunday, you're going to preach," it would be really heavy for you.

The reason it's because you that's not my thing, right? That's not my place on the boat. It's interesting, though, when it is, it can feel like some of the lightest work. And the reason is because we look and it feels like the Holy Spirit is holding up my hands, our hands. The fact is wherever it is that your gift is, he helps you. He strengthens your hands in those places. This is what he's saying, he says, "Not only do I see the evidence of the Holy Spirit confirming that I'm supposed to be working with Gentiles, unreached Gentiles, because they keep getting saved, but because the ministry is something that He strengthens in my life, it's enjoyable to me." And then he takes it a step further, in verse 20 he says, "I make it my ambition to preach the gospel not where Christ has already been named." In other words, the Spirit has put a burden in his soul that confirms his role.

I don't know if you've ever had this to where... It may be you where for some of you are like, "You know what? I think all the time about people who are in prison who need the gospel." Not everyone thinks like that. Some people it's people in Portland, people in Thailand, people in Raleigh, men, women, there's all kinds of different things to where it becomes this personal ambition to where it's not for everybody but it's in you. What is he saying? He's saying, "The Holy Spirit's burden in my soul confirms this is my role." And then notice what he said in verse 22, he says, "This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you." I love

this because what he's saying is this, is once you understand your holy ambition, it provides a rudder in your life that even allows you to say no to really good things, so that you're not spinning your tires doing 30 possible things, because you're doing your thing. This is what God has called need to do. He wanted to go see them, that's a good thing. And yet he says, "But this is the reason I've been delayed, is because I have this ambition, I had to plant this church. I had to go to these places who have never heard."

And so, how do you know your purpose? Well, the Holy Spirit gives us these breadcrumbs, the first is spiritual gifts. Nobody gets all the spiritual gifts, but all of us in Christ get at least one. You can read about them in Romans 12. You can just read some of the spiritual gifts like exhortation and teaching, to where he says, "Look, as you use your spiritual gift, God Almighty is glorified, the church is helped, the mission moves forward. And so you should look for your spiritual gift." In January, when we bring back that pathway, well, if you get to the third class, it's the serve part of the pathway, we help you identify your spiritual gift.

The second crumb that He gives us is natural ability, natural ability. What that means is you're good at things that aren't necessarily spiritual gift. Shooting free throws is not a spiritual gift. And yet, out of college, I could shoot really well. And so, I went to Africa, in Zimbabwe, and what I did oftentimes, most weekends, is I would go and do two or three clubs where I would share the gospel, teaching, a spiritual gift, and how I would get there is I would invite them to a basketball club to show them how to shoot. You're good at something, and that's part of how God desires for you to work on that boat.

A third is affinity. There's things you like. There's things that are easy for you. There's things that you like to study about, read about. You have a natural affinity. You sort of a bent. Some of you're just engineers, some of you are accountants, some of you are artists. All those places need somebody. Some of you have a natural disposition to protect other people. All of us have a place. Another clue is open doors. Sometimes you're like, "This is what I want to do. This is who... et cetera." The door doesn't open. You say, "Okay Lord, I need an open door, where is that place?" And then the last one is affirmation, and this is really important. It's important because the spiritual gifts and really all of our work on this boat, when it's really of the Lord, the church recognizes and says, "You should keep doing that."

We see God's favor in your life when you do that, to have other believers speak into it, to say, "I affirm that this is something that somehow God just continues to bless in your life." In my own personal life, let me just tell you a little brief story, I was saved when I was 16 years old. My parents were so faithful, I heard the gospel all growing up, but at 16 is when I really believed that my heart was born again. I wanted to share about the gospel. I was starting to read the Bible, and I fell in love with the Bible. And yet, I had a problem, and that is I had a speech impediment, I had a stutter. At one point, I still remember, I still remember in my room looking up and thinking, "Okay, what are some occupations where you don't have to talk?" That's where I was at, okay?

But I really cared about the Lord, and so suddenly, my college, they had these mission trips. They had sort of like today, they had these places you can go and you can sign up for a trip. And so I said, “You know what? Zimbabwe, Africa.” I don’t know why, I just had this inclination. There was just all these places, but for whatever reason, I was like, “That’s the one, that’s the one that I want to go to.” So I go to the very first team meeting, and the guys says, “All right. You’re on this team, it’s great. You each need to prepare a sermon because all of you have to preach at least once.” And I thought, “Well, I guess that’s confirmation, the door just closed, and I won’t do that. And so I’ll go up afterward and I’ll tell him why. And when he hears me try to tell him why, he’s going to go, ‘Yeah, this probably isn’t for you.’”

And so, I had a Bible in my hand and that was all I had in my hand, so I thought, “Well, I’ll just keep reading where I left off this morning instead of just wasting my time in this meeting that really didn’t matter.” And so I was in Exodus 1. It doesn’t take very long. You get a man named Moses and God says, “Go do this thing for me,” and he goes, “Oh, I got a problem, I got a speech impediment.” He goes, “Well, I made your mouth.” And I’m reading, and I’m like, “You got to be kidding me, was this really happening?” I was a three-year-old believer. I was saved when I was 16, this was 19 years old, and I’m like, “Is this really how it works?” I just believed it. I was like, “Man, I don’t think it is.” I kept reading, and when Moses said, “No, I’m not doing it anyway.” It says, “And the wrath of God burned against him.” I’m like, “Okay, I’m in, I’m in, I’ll go to Africa.”

And so I did. I literally landed on a Saturday, this is a true story, I promise you. Landed on a Saturday, I knew the next day was Sunday, somebody was going to get called upon, and so I hid. The missionary looked right at me and he goes, “What’s your name?” And I said, “Brian.” I was happy to be able to get that out. He said, “You’re going to preach in the morning.” “Of course I am. Yeah. This is a great plan.” And so, literally, I stayed up all night praying, “God, I need a miracle. These people have never heard. Even if it’s not for me, just so I’m not utterly ashamed, they need it, so just do it.” And for the first time I can remember, words just started flowing out of my mouth. I can’t not do it today because of that.

I love the Bible, I love to talk about the Bible. I get back, I’m like, “Okay, God, this is your boat, this is what I want to do.” I had a heart at the time to be a doctor, and I’m like, “Doctor, missionary, what do you want?” I just believe He was just like, “Man, start working in this church.” And so as a part-time, I was just like, “Okay.” We come out here to seminary, I’m working at the seminary, and a guy from Providence, his name’s Charles Fan, he’s not here anymore, but Charles calls me one day and he goes, “I’m on staff here at Providence. You don’t know me, I don’t know you, but I want to hire you as an intern.” Open door. He says, “Hey,” after a while, “I want you to teach this thing.” So I taught this thing, and he says, “You know what? You should teach again.” At one point in my life, there were so many possibilities, and now all of a sudden, my own life, right, He just continues to condense it, and He says, “This is your thing.”

My encouragement to you is this, is lean into the Holy Spirit, lean in and say, “God, speak to me, familiarize myself with your words.” And that gets to the last thing, and that is that our ambitions should be held humbly within the body. Once you know your holy ambition, do not assume that it is right, and therefore, everyone

who doesn't share it is wrong. We must learn to distinguish what is common for all believers and what is a calling for each believer. Verse 20, he says, "I make it my ambition to preach Christ, not where Christ has already been named." That's him, that's his calling, but notice what he anchors that too, it's something for all of us. Verse 21, he quotes from Isaiah 52, "Those who have never been told of Him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." You see what he's saying? What's common for all of us in Christ is we have a king who cares about people who've never heard. But what you're supposed to do about that is not the same as what I'm supposed to do about that, which is not the same as what Paul did about that. That's different.

I would keep reading, but I'm almost out of time, and so, you just keep reading. I'm going to show you some of the passages what are the ways that we engage. First, we all go. We all go. Jesus said, "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations." That's all of us. So we all go. And yet, whether our going is to the supermarket in Raleigh or to our neighbors, to the YMCA, or whether it's New York or New Delhi with the gospel, we all go. But our calling is different for each one. We all pray. Verse 30 he says, "I appeal to you, strive together with me in your prayers to God." So we all pray. And yet who we pray for and how long we pray, well, that's a calling that God gives to each one of us.

We all give. Verse 24 and 25 he says, "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain." He goes, "Look, these people in Spain, they've never heard, there's no church there, I have to get to Spain. So I'm going to pass here, I'm going to see you when I go there, and I hope to be helped in my journey." Meaning, "I'm going to take an offering to help me to get to Spain, to get the gospel there." But then notice what he says, "At present, however, I'm going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints." So this is what he does, it's amazing, he says, "Our brothers in Christ, in Jerusalem, they're going through this famine and they're starving. And so, I've gone around and I've taken an offering in a lot of these Gentile churches, and they've given money. I have to get there first, and then I'll come to you, and then I'm going to Spain." This is so important for this reason, is that the passion for unreached peoples does not negate our love for the reached peoples.

We all give, but how much and to whom is a calling. We hold that humbly. And last, we all serve. Paul's service was church planting, which is why in verse 19 he says, "From Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum... " Let me give you the land distance. New York all the way to Houston. "I have fulfilled the ministry since I no longer have any room for work in these regions. I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain." How can he say there's no more work? The reason is because he's a church planter. He had planted light-bearing churches in all of those places. His job, his job on the boat wasn't to pastor those people for long, it was to plant a church and move on to somebody else. People like Apollo, Titus, Timothy, they were called, they had that calling to stay in a city and shepherd those people. In other words, Paul didn't say, "Everybody who loves Jesus has to come to Spain with me." He says, "No, I need some of you to keep your job so that you can send me."

In other words, we all serve, but where and how is a calling. So let me encourage us to hold high what is for all of us and to hold humbly what is for us. And that gets to a place to where you need to commit to do something. On the card that I showed you last week, it's in the seat back in front of you, there's a card. I want

to ask that you would humbly say, “God, what do you want me to do? How do I engage?” You notice on that card it says there’s really four ways. It’s to pray, it’s to give, it’s to go, it’s to serve. And if you mark that, what you’re simply doing is this, you’re extending us an invitation to say, “Would you send me an email with more information? This is who I could pray for. These are some possibilities overseas of where I could give so that then I can take that information and pray about it.” And so I humbly ask you to fill out that card. And on your way out, at the doors, there’s a bucket. We ask you to just drop that off there. So let me pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you that you love us. And we thank you that we get to be a part of a mission that’s worth our life. And God, I ask that you would clarify our role on the amazing, amazing mission. You’ve given each one of us different affinities and abilities and gifts, interests, and open doors and affirmations, and I simply ask that you would use those over a period of time to confirm where we need to invest our life. Help us to hold that humbly, and yet, help us to hold that with great hope. I ask, God, that you would give us purpose and you would give us joy in slowing down to accomplish that holy ambition. So we sing to you now in joy and love. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.



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