



May 17, 2026

Ambition for the Gospel

Romans 15:18-21

Paul was a pioneer missionary. He traveled extensively and purposefully to take the gospel to the unreached. His missionary zeal inspires and challenges each of us in our endeavors to share the gospel. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15, "They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand." The prophecy from Isaiah points to Christ's return, but it also reflects the ongoing work of evangelism that should characterize the church today. Missionary endeavors that began in the apostolic age must continue until Jesus comes again.

In verse 20, Paul says: "I aspired to preach the gospel..." The word "aspired" (φιλοτιμέομαι) originally carried the idea of loving honor and therefore striving earnestly toward a goal. It came to mean making something one's ambition or highest aim.

Paul uses the same word elsewhere:

"Therefore we also have as our ambition... to be pleasing to Him." 2 Corinthians 5:9

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life..." 1 Thessalonians 4:11

For Paul, preaching the gospel where Christ was unknown was not merely a ministry assignment—it was a holy ambition.

Key thought:

Paul's ambition was to take the gospel to people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. My prayer is that our ambition would be to take the gospel to people who need Jesus.

Paul's Ministry (vv. 18–19)

1. Complete Dependence on God

Paul never viewed ministry as personal achievement.

He says: "For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me..."

Paul understood that any effectiveness in ministry came through the power of Christ, not human ability.



Ministry that honors God is ministry that depends on God.

- The message was Christ's.
- The power was Christ's.
- The results were Christ's.

Paul was gifted, educated, disciplined, and courageous—but he knew none of those things could save a soul. Only God changes hearts.

We must never substitute talent, strategy, or personality for dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

2. Clear Definition of Goals

Paul had a definite mission: “To bring about the obedience of the Gentiles...”

He knew what God had called him to do.

Paul's ministry was not random or reactionary. He intentionally took the gospel into unreached regions. He measured success not by comfort, popularity, or numbers, but by faithfulness to the mission.

A church without gospel ambition eventually becomes inward-focused.

Our “Ignite” goals:

Our vision is to ignite a movement of authentic followers of Christ by reaching 1000 people with the gospel and releasing 200 equipped leaders from the next generation for Church leadership by 2028.

People Need to Hear the Gospel (vv. 20–21)

1. Examine the World Through the Lens of the Gospel

Paul looked at cities, cultures, and people differently.

He did not merely see political centers, economic opportunities, or social problems. He saw people without Christ.

Where others saw Rome, Corinth, or Ephesus— Paul saw souls.

We must learn to evaluate the world spiritually.



UNENGAGED AND UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

A people group is unreached when less than 2 percent of its population is evangelical Christian. A people group is unengaged when no evangelical church planting strategy is being implemented among them.

- 7,324 unreached people groups - 4.8 billion people
- 3,118 unengaged and unreached people groups - 282 million people

2. Enter the World Through the Lens of the Gospel

Paul did not wait for unbelievers to come to him. He crossed borders, cultures, and comforts to take the message of Christ to those who had never heard. The gospel compels movement.

Some are called to cross oceans.
Others are called to cross the street.
But every believer is called to engage.

3. Engage the World with the Gospel

Paul's confidence rested in the power of the gospel itself.

He believed:

- The gospel saves sinners.
- The gospel transforms lives.
- The gospel reaches every culture.

The answer for a lost world is still the gospel. The church must lovingly, boldly, and faithfully proclaim Christ.

Conclusion

Chuck Swindoll once said: "Paul's dreams were always greater than his memories."

Paul never allowed yesterday's victories to become today's resting place. There were still people who had never heard. Still cities without the gospel. Still souls without Christ.

That same mission remains.

The question is not whether the world needs the gospel.

The question is whether we have the ambition to take it to them.

May God give us:

- Paul's dependence,
- Paul's vision,
- and Paul's gospel ambition.