

Intro:

Our Christmas series has been called *Christ and the Nations*. Our messages could be summed up by one word in each case:

Nations = division *and dependence*: ‘if haply they might seek God’

Galilee = light to the Gentiles

1. to discipline and direct Israel
2. to provide grace to all mankind

Trust = He is trustworthy

Today’s message can be summed up in one more word: Go!

Our title is: *Not Where Christ was Named*. We are looking at the missionary **philosophy** and **heart** of the apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. We will be in Romans for this message – Rm 15.20-21.

I used two key words describing the apostle’s ministry:

1. Philosophy [by which we mean: *a theory underlying or regarding a sphere of activity or thought*¹]
2. Heart [*one’s innermost character, feelings, or inclinations*²]

In other words, the coming of our Lord to and for the nations became the whole focus and motive of the life and ministry of the apostle Paul.

- God’s choice for Paul ahead of time (Ac 9.15)

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

- God’s call to Paul on the Damascus road (Ac 26.17)

Acts 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

- Paul’s testimony in Romans (11.13)

Romans 11:13 ¶ For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

¹ philosophy: Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

² heart: Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

- Paul's testimony to Timothy (1 Ti 2.7, 2 Ti 1.11)

1 Timothy 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2 Timothy 1:11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

I think that in our series we have shown that redeeming the Gentiles is Christ's mission.

God formed the nations to drive men to their knees; he sent Christ to be a light to the nations; he made Jesus the man they could trust.

I think in our introduction, I have shown you that Christ's mission became Paul's mission. Now let's read our text:

Rm 15.20-21

Proposition: The mission to the Gentiles is our mission.

I. Marvelous message (20b)

A. "Preach" = evangelize

1.

- a. "As in the OT..., so among the Gks. the term is used for the proclamation of news of victory."³
- b. Another word for preach: to herald [preach] – emphasis on the manner of delivery and office of the deliverer.
- c. This word emphasizes the content of the message – related noun is translated 'gospel' = 'good news'
 - 1) Lit. could be 'to good news it' or...
 - 2) 'To publish good news'; 'To proclaim victory'

2. "In _____ the Messianic secret is kept."⁴

- a. The 'evangel' is the good news the angels brought
 - 1) Lk 1.19

³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976). 2:710.

⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976). 2:717.

2) Lk 2.10

- b. The 'evangel' is the formerly hidden secret of Paul's preaching
– now published everywhere

B. Rm 15.19 – the gospel fully preached

- 1. Lit. 'having made full the gospel of Jesus Christ'
- 2. Paul pictures his activities in Greece and Asia Minor as complete, he has filled up the region with the gospel

C. The message and the messenger (Rm 10.14-15)

- 1. How shall they hear without a preacher? (– herald, the messenger in his office)
- 2. How shall they preach except they be sent? (– evangelize, proclaim the evangel)

Paul's testimony is that he is eager to proclaim this message in person in Rome (and beyond). (Rm 1.15)

We have seen in our series, and of course in our acceptance of the Bible, the marvelous message of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ that saves us from our sins.

This is Paul's message – the marvelous message of the gospel.

II. Singular strategy (20c)

A. How Paul conducted his ministry

- 1. We have seen that Paul is called as the apostle of the Gentiles
- 2. Paul's ministry is foundational among the Gentiles
 - a. Asia Minor – largely opened up through the direct, personal ministry of Paul
 - b. Greece – also opened up to the gospel through the direct, personal ministry of Paul
 - c. Rome – not begun by Paul, but certainly advanced by Paul, and to regions beyond (maybe as far as Spain)
- 3. Paul's ministry is among people who for untold generations have not even had any concept of the true God of heaven

“Paul here indicates that he believed that God had given him the ministry of establishing strategic churches in virgin gospel territory; like the early American pioneers who pulled up stakes anytime they could see the smoke from another person’s cabin, Paul felt ‘crowded’ by too many Christians.”⁵ [An overstatement for effect, I think.]

B. No disparagement of building on foundations

1. As we said, Paul was laying the foundation – a necessary task
2. Paul expected others to build on the foundation (1 Cor 3.5-8)
3. God’s specific call to Paul is not God’s specific call for anyone else, necessarily

But...

C. Ongoing ways in which men exist as ‘not where Christ is named’

1. Men who refuse to name Christ
2. Men who for generations have no knowledge of Christ

Little boy in pre-school who looked into our auditorium and said, ‘Look, they have a whole theater in there!’

Those in our community who are the peers of our children – their parents, or their grandparents, rejected Christ. They are ignorant of the Lord [except as a curse word].

3. Men who are blind to the meaning of Christ, though they might know his name

People in the sway of false cults and false churches have not really named Christ.

- Thus, Paul’s strategy can be our strategy to some extent:

“Biblical church expansion is one of God’s most effective means of counteracting apostasy and thus stemming an over-all decline in Christian work and fruit. Biblical churches, especially when independent of apostate alliances, are an effective means of sustaining

⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 896.

missions and schools that are independent, undenominational, and even interdenominational. Establishing such works is in accordance with the teaching and example of the apostolic church in Acts. There are many advantages to so working as to build upon no man's foundation (Rom 15:20). It is a Pauline method."⁶

III. Expansive effect (21)

A. Quotation from Isa 52.15

Isaiah 52:15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

B. In context, Isaiah says that those who see and understand the ministry of the Servant of the Lord will be completely astonished by what they see

1. They will see Christ's death for what it is: a death for them personally.
2. They will see their own guilt for the death of Christ: they will shut their mouths in astonishment.
3. Who are 'they'? The nations "So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him"

Weirsbe on Isa 52.15: "Many people have been tortured and killed in an inhumane way, but knowing about their suffering does not touch our conscience, though it might arouse our sympathy. Our Lord's sufferings and death were different, because *they involved everybody in the world*. The Gospel message is not 'Christ died,' for that is only a fact in history, like 'Napoleon died.' The Gospel message is that 'Christ died *for our sins*' (1 Cor. 15:1-4, italics mine). You and I are as guilty of Christ's death as Annas, Caiaphas, Herod Antipas, and Pilate.

"Now we see why people are astonished when they understand the message of the Gospel: This Man whom they condemned has declared that *they are condemned*

⁶ William McCarrell, "Vital Church Expansion", *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1953; 2002), vol. 110, p. 148.

unless they turn from sin and trust Him. *You cannot rejoice in the Good News of salvation until first you face the bad news of condemnation.* Jesus did not suffer and die because He was guilty, but because *we* were guilty. People are astonished at this fact; it shuts their mouths.”⁷

C. Paul’s understanding of Isaiah

1. When the evangel is proclaimed, when Christ is preached...
2. Then the blind nations will see
3. Then the deaf nations will hear

“‘To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand’ seems to be Paul’s life verse as a missionary.”⁸

Paul believed that the proclamation of the Good News would have a consistent enlightening effect among those “where Christ was not named.”

IV. Driving motivation (20a)

- A. Paul, having this belief, *strived* to preach the gospel: this is Paul’s heart
- B. Strive = “*have as one’s ambition, consider it an honor, aspire*”⁹
1. E. F. Harrison refers to Paul’s “drive.”¹⁰
 2. Compare 1 Cor 15.10, ‘I worked harder than them all.’

Conclusion:

Proposition: The mission to the Gentiles is our mission.

The evangel is the same: *Christ is for the Nations.*

The effect is the same: the nations will see and hear

The nations are the same: ‘blind, deaf, dumb, and ignorant’

Is your drive the same? Is your heart the same? Do you desire the salvation of the nations? How about your neighbour?

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Comforted*, An Old Testament study. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1992). Is 52:13.

⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981). 4:751.

⁹ Gingrich *Shorter Lexicon. Bibleworks Electronic Edition*, © 2001.

¹⁰ Everett F. Harrison, “Romans” in *Expositors*, vol. 10, p. 157.