

Dear Heavenly Father,

### **Praise**

Paul said, “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!” (Rom 16:25, 27). I praise you today as the God of strength, the God who gives me the power to live above sin and share the good news of Jesus Christ. You are more than able to keep me from falling, and if I continue in the faith, you will crush Satan under my feet. Glory to God!

### **Today in Your Word**

Today you shared with me the conclusion of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. After calling the Romans to manifest the power of the gospel by living transformed lives, Paul concluded by sharing his heart as a missionary-pastor. This section of the letter is key to understanding Paul’s perspective on evangelism and discipleship, and it has significant insights for a biblical theology of missions. First, this passage teaches me that all missionary efforts are dependent on you, and the results must be recognized as the work of your grace (Rom 15:17–18). This means that while planning, preparation and resources are needed to accomplish the work of missions, the most important factor is the powerful, supernatural work of your Spirit. I need to remind myself on a daily basis that my ministry is completely dependent on your grace and power. Second, the task of missions is the priestly privilege of ministering Christ to the nations (Rom 15:16). Paul said that your grace enabled him to “be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God,” and he saw his task as the offering up of the Gentiles as acceptable to you. This is the perspective I must have, for it will motivate me to not grow weary in well doing. Third, missions must maintain a balance between the ultimate goal of establishing mature churches and the urgent need to evangelize those who have never heard the gospel (Rom 15:19–20). Paul’s approach to missions was to proclaim the gospel, establish a congregation of new converts, and then disciple those believers until they were mature enough to continue the cycle themselves. This means that it’s not enough to evangelize individuals or even to plant churches. The ultimate goal of missions is to see maturing fellowships of believers who are themselves reaching out to make disciples. I must never lose the urgency of evangelizing unreached peoples, and I need to recognize when it’s time to begin work in a new area. Fourth, those who carry the gospel to the unreached are helping to fulfill your purpose in salvation history. Paul saw his own missionary work as part of the redemptive plan you revealed in the OT and promised to complete through your Suffering Servant (Rom 15:21). This means that the joining of Jews and Gentiles into the body of Christ is the goal of salvation history, and I must make it my ambition to share in your plan of redemption. Finally, our churches must engage in partnerships of mutual benefit in order to advance the cause of Christ around the world. Paul stressed the need for partnership in missions, and as he looked to Spain, he knew that he needed help from the church in Rome to accomplish his goal. Indeed, part of Paul’s purpose in writing to the Romans was to make sure the church was theologically and missiologically grounded so it could partner with him in the Spanish work. This teaches me the importance of building networks of support between churches and the need to mobilize the full force of our congregations in the evangelization of the lost. (Based on Steve Strauss, “Missions Theology in Romans 15:14–33,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160.640 (2003): 457–74.)

### **Reflection**

Paul said the Gentiles were indebted to the Jews for the spiritual benefits they received from them (Rom 15:27). Am I making sure to contribute to the material, financial needs of those who labor to preach the gospel? Do I express thanks and give support to Jewish Christians today? After all, I have been grafted into the olive tree of believing Israel (Rom 11:17; cf. John 4:22).

### **Request**

Father, Paul asked the Romans to strive together with him in prayer in order that his work and ministry would be successful. Today, I pray for those who are my spiritual leaders, that you would defeat the plans of the enemy in their lives and use them mightily in the building of your Kingdom!

### **Thanksgiving**

Thank you for the many brothers and sisters I have in Christ who are working hard to spread the gospel! Many of them have labored for my sake, and I honor their service for you. Praise the Lord!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Suggested Hymn: “Disciples of All Nations” – Richard W. Adams.*

*Meditation Verse: Romans 16:17.*