

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Take God's Word and be finding if you would please, Romans chapter 15. And let me tell you that when I look at a congregation like this and I think of the thousands that are here under this one roof, I feel very much like Ben Franklin must've felt when he saw that lightning and thought, "Oh, if I could only harness that."

Do you know, one of the problems of Christianity is this: that we think when we come to God and sit in a worship service on Sunday morning that somehow we've done God a wild favor. I mean, we have the idea that this is somehow what God requires of us and that we have fulfilled our duties and our obligations to God when we come and sit and sing and listen to a sermon. And so we sit, soak, and sour. But God did not call us to sit, to soak, and to sour, but to serve. Now I want to tell you something. If you are saved, you're saved to serve. Say Amen. Listen, my precious and sweet friend, you have been called into the ministry. Now, not in the sense that I am a minister, a pastor of this church, but all of us are called to be ministers and servants of the Lord Jesus.

Now we're going to be looking at two chapters today, so we're only going to be able to take the highlights out of these two chapters, but I want you to find the key word in these two chapters. You're in Romans chapter 15, look if you will in verse 8, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister," do you see that? Okay, now look if you will in verse 16. Paul says, "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ." Now look if you will over in verse 25, "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints." Now look down in verse 31, "That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea that my service," and by the way, this is exactly the same Greek word as minister, right here, "that my ministry which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." Now look if you will in chapter 16 and verse 1, "I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant," and the word here literally means "minister," it's the same word, "of the church which is at Cenchrea."

Now what is the theme here? It is ministry. Ministry, ministry, ministry. Every member is a minister. Now Bellevue Baptist Church has a mission statement, are you ready for it? We exist for the purpose, number one: of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. We're here to give Jesus Christ glory and honor. Number two: making Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations. Here and abroad, that's why we're here. Number three: moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, see. We exist to help you to grow up, so that you can serve. That's what we exist for.

Now, folks, there is no such thing as an inactive church member. That's an impossibility. Every church member is active. Either he's building up or he's tearing down, but he's active. Either he's a part of the team and helping or he's not a part of the team and he's hurting. And you say, "Pastor, is that true?" Yes, it is true. In the book of Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30, the Lord Jesus said, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." Every member of this church is gathering or scattering. Every member of this church is working with the Lord Jesus or working against the Lord Jesus.

Now having said that, let me tell you again, nobody is excluded. If you are a member of this church, this message is not “to whom it may concern,” it is to you, it has your name and address on it, and God wants you to serve and to minister. You’ve been called into the ministry. I’m going to give you six areas where you need to minister. They’re going to come right out of these two chapters and I want you to ask yourself this question as we come to each of these six areas, “God, am I willing that You would minister through me this way?”

Now first of all, the very first ministry that I want you to look at is the ministry of **encouragement**, the ministry of encouragement. Now in chapter 15 let’s read the first seven verses, “*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor, for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.*” Jesus was willing to suffer for the Father, that’s what that means. “*For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning,*” that is, the Old Testament Scriptures, now watch it, “*that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*” Now watch verse 5, “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*”

Now the key to this, these seven verses, is Romans 15 verse 5, “*The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded.*” The word “consolation” here is a word that we don’t use much in modern English today, but there is a word that we do use a lot, and it’s the word encouragement, and it’s exactly the same word. He is the God of encouragement, and what he is saying in these seven verses is that we need to encourage one another. Now if you’re a strong Christian, according to verse 1, you are to encourage the weak Christian. You’re not here to please yourself. This church does not exist to make you happy.

Sometimes the choir might meet sometime and they would say, “Well, when’s the best time to have choir practice?” And someone will say, “Now let me see, if we did it at this time, this hour, no, that’s when I bowl,” or someone would say, “No, that’s when I have children in school,” and so I choose the time that’s going to be best for me. Well, if the time that’s going to be best for you is not going to be the best time for everybody else, then you need to give up the time that’s best for you. That’s what he’s saying. You don’t please yourself. You don’t put yourself number one.

The Salvation Army’s done so much good. I thank God for the Salvation Army. William Booth started with the poor in London and started the Salvation Army. When William Booth got to be a very old man, they were having a convention of the Salvation Army, and they wanted William Booth to come and speak, and he couldn’t come and speak. He was too weak, too old, too feeble. And he was on his sick bed, and so they said, “Well, would you send us a telegram? Just send us a telegram.” And he said, “Yes,

I will.” And he sent a one-word telegram. Just one word in that telegram. What do you think it was? It was the word “others.” Others.

We don't please ourselves, that's what he's saying. Romans 15 verse 2, “*Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good unto edification.*” You see, when we do this, this is what brings us together. Romans 15:5, “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus.*” The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey, Amen? God wants us to be together. God wants us to encourage one another, to lift up one another.

C.S. Lewis, a brilliant Britisher, a literary genius, wrote a book about how the devil works, and he called that book *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape was the name that C.S. Lewis gave to the devil. And he talked about the devil's nephew, who was called Wormwood. He was a demon, the nephew of Satan. And Wormwood and Screwtape are talking about how they can sabotage the work of God. And they get to talking about the church. And here is what Screwtape, the devil, says to Wormwood. Just listen to this, quote, “The church is a fertile field if you just keep them bickering over details, structure, organization, money, property, personal hurts, and misunderstandings. One thing you must prevent. Don't let them ever look up and see the banners flying. For if they ever see the banners flying, you've lost them forever.”

What he's saying is, “Just keep them picking at one another, just keep them criticizing one another, never let them see the glory of God. Because, Wormwood, if you do that, you've lost them.” Now folks, what we need to do today is to get our eyes on the glory of God and begin to love and serve one another.

Did you know in 1917 the bishops of the Orthodox Church in Russia, were having a convocation, and they were having a heated debate. And the bishops and the leaders were fussing and fighting and feuding, going back and forth, back and forth. Just a few doors down the street in 1917 the Bolsheviks were meeting. They were plotting the overthrow of the Czar. They were plotting a revolution. They were planning and plotting the thing that we have called communism, that has hurt, killed, maimed, damned so many souls. They were planning and plotting a diabolical scheme. But over here the bishops were debating. Now just what was it that the bishops were debating during this whole time? It was whether or not they were going to use eighteen-inch candles or twenty-two-inch candles. That's what the debate was about. While the empire was crumbling around them.

Now, folks, let me tell you, you and I need to be in a ministry of encouragement. There's not a mother's child that doesn't need encouragement. We are to encourage one another. The God of all consolation, He has been patient with us, and we need to be patient with one another. I need patience, you need patience. Let me say something. If you're a guest today and you came to this church to find something to criticize, you can find plenty to criticize, and if you don't know enough, come see me and I can tell you some more. And, I'm going to tell you something else, if you want to criticize, you can start with the man in the pulpit, because I have many things.

No, listen, folks, if you want to come to a church like this and find a blessing, I'll guarantee you, you'll find a blessing. You want a blessing? You want God to bless you? This place is full of blessings! It all depends on what you want to look for. People need encouragement. Some people think they have the gift of criticism. One Pastor said, "Brother Brown, would you please stand and lead us in a word of criticism?" People need to be encouraged! Everybody's hurting, there's a heartache, there's a tear on every pew! You want to minister? See the banners flying! Get your eyes on Jesus. Put your arm around a brother or a sister and help them on. That's the ministry of encouragement. Would you say, God give me the ministry of encouragement?

Second ministry. You've been called not only to the ministry of encouragement, but you've been called to the ministry of **evangelism**. Look if you will in Romans chapter 15 verse 8, "*Now I say that Jesus was a minister of the circumcision,*" when he says the circumcision, that's a term for the Jewish nation, "*was a minister to the Jews for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.*" Jesus came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus came to bring the Jewish nation to a saving faith in Him. That's why He came. Not that the Jews alone would be saved, but through them would all the nations of the world should be blessed. The Bible says in John chapter 4 and verse 22 that salvation is of the Jews, and so it came through a Jewish Messiah. We have the Jewish Scriptures and God brought this message to those early followers, that they might be a blessing to the Gentiles.

Now notice, we're talking about evangelism. Jesus came as an evangelist to seek and to save that which is lost. And now look if you will in Romans 15 verse 16. Paul says that He did this, "*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*" Now Paul says, "Jesus came to minister," that is, through evangelism, "and now He has given me the ministry of evangelism," and Paul became the great evangelist to the Jews. And what Paul is saying, that as Jesus Christ came and set an example to minister, and as I came to minister to the Gentiles, every child of God has been called, saved to serve, and saved to win and to bring souls to Jesus Christ.

Now I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I want you to listen to me very carefully about what I'm about to say. If you're a member of this church, I don't care how faithful you attend. I care not how beautifully you sing, how eloquently you teach, how liberally you give, how circumspectly you walk, if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you're not right with God. I'm just telling you. You are not right with God. You are not right with God, you are not right with God! You are guilty of high treason against Heaven's King! You have been called to minister. You have been called to bring souls bound in the golden chains of the Gospel and bring them and lay them at Jesus' feet. Don't you boast about your salvation, don't you boast about your piety, don't you boast about your spirit-fullness, don't you tell me about your spiritual gifts, if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ. What right do you have to call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ if your business is not His business? And what is his business? The Son of God came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Do you know what a headhunter is? In business, when a company needs an executive, a CEO, some high-level executive, they're very hard to find, people like this. And so they have professions, people who seek out professional people, professionals who find professionals.

In the business they call them "headhunters." And one headhunter was saying this. Very interesting story. He said, "The way I look at an executive to find out what he really is like," because so many times all of us put up fronts. He says, "I go into the man's office, and after we've talked awhile," he said, "then we begin to have some small talk." He said, "We begin to talk about sports, we begin to talk about the weather, we begin to talk about travel." He says, "I pull off my coat, I loosen my tie, I may even put my feet up on a coffee table, and we just talk for a while. And we get to laughing. And we may be having coffee or whatever, just very relaxed." And then he says, "When the man is disarmed, when he's not thinking, when he's not all prepared, I lean over and I look him right in the eye and I say, 'Tell me, what is the motivating purpose of your life?'" He's not prepared for the answer. I mean, he's just right there, "What is the motivating purpose of your life?" And he said, "Many times these executives just kind of come apart; they don't know what to say."

He said, "I asked that question to one man. I looked him in the eye, got sober, I said, 'Bob, what is the motivating purpose of your life?'" He said, "He didn't hesitate. He said, 'To go to Heaven and take as many with me as I can.'" Well I like that. That's the motivating purpose of my life: to go to Heaven! And to take as many people with me as I can. Would you pray, oh pray it, mean it, mean it, don't just say it, but mean it, "Lord, lay some soul upon my heart and win that soul through me." If you can't win an adult, win a child; if you can't win your neighbor, win somebody else's neighbor; if you can't win somebody in your family, win somebody in somebody else's family. If you can't bring a soul to Jesus, help somebody else to bring a soul to Jesus.

Third ministry you need to be a part of. Now, folks, you've been called into the ministry. There's a ministry of encouragement, there's the ministry of evangelism, and I don't think I'm going to hear much shouting on this next point, but there's the ministry of **giving**. The ministry of giving. Look if you will in chapter 15 now, and begin reading in verse 25 through verse 27. Paul said, "*But now I go to Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. And it hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*" The word "carnal" means fleshly things. Now here's the whole point. The Gentiles in Greece had taken a love offering. And the love offering was for the Jews in Jerusalem. And Paul says, "Look, they didn't mind doing that. They were happy to do that. Because salvation is of the Jews. They had received an incredible spiritual blessing from the Jews, so he said, "Why, if they have blessed so much, if they've blessed so much, why should we not take our material things, our mundane things, and help them when they are in need?" Now,

there're different kinds of offerings for different kinds of needs, but service to God is giving. It is the ministry. He calls it here "the ministry of giving."

Now, when we come to the close of this service, we're going to receive an offering. We do it every, every Sunday. Well, that's worship to God. It's also ministry. We're not just taking an offering; it's not a mere contribution. It represents a spiritual debt. Paul said, "We do it because we're debtors." Did you know every one of us is in debt? I mean, we're in debt. I'm not talking about what you owe the credit card company. We're in debt.

You're sitting on a chair. Where'd it come from? There's a light shining down on your head. Where'd that come from? There's a sound system here that's helping you to hear. How did that happen? The roof that's over your head, all of the ministry, all of the accouterments, all of the blessings here; where did that come from? Somebody did it for you. Do you think this all just floated down out of Heaven? Where'd it come from? I am telling you, dear friend, the blood, sweat, tears, prayer, faith, and sacrifice of people have provided what we enjoy today!

We're debtors. We're debtors to the founders of this church. We're debtors to the apostles who suffered, the martyrs of the faith. We are debtors to Jesus Christ and His precious shed blood. How can we sit in a service and fail to want to give as unto our great God, because if we've been so blessed spiritually, should it pain us that we give some of what we can't keep anyway? Think about it. Some people, again, they think they've done God a wild favor if they give a little bit of money.

"He dropped a dollar in the plate and sung with might and mane, 'When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain.'" No, no. What a joy it is to give.

In Kansas, I was reading about a man in Lincoln, Kansas. His name was Davis; he was a farmer. And Davis started out as a farm hand, but he was very frugal, very hard-working man. And old farmer Davis accrued a little fortune. Now he married a woman and his in-laws didn't want him to marry that woman because they felt that she was marrying beneath her status in life, beneath her level, her social equal. And so they began to be against everybody.

But old Davis collected some money. As a matter of fact, he amassed a small fortune. And people would say to Davis, "What are you going to do with that money? Why don't you build a municipal swimming pool? Why don't you help in the orphanage?" He said, "This community ain't done nothing for me. I ain't going to do nothing for it." And he said, "My in-laws are not going to get one dime of what I have."

Davis' wife died and he built a monument to her and to him. It was a love bench, a statue. He's sitting on one side, she's sitting on the other side of it. Very impressive monument. And he liked that monument so much that he got a sculptor to come and build another monument. This was a monument of himself kneeling at his wife's grave. And then he liked that one so much he commissioned this man to build another monument, this time a monument of his wife, who's already gone to Heaven, kneeling

at his grave where he would be buried. And since she was in Heaven, he had wings put on her.

And then he lost his fortune. Somehow things reversed on him. He became almost penniless. And he died in the poor house. And when he had a funeral, nobody came. Just a small handful of people, just enough to stick him in the ground by his monuments. Oh, there was one person who came, a Mr. England who'd built all those monuments, the man who had collected all of his money to build those monuments. And in the story I read, the sad thing is this, that those monuments now are sinking down into the soil of Kansas, and before long they're going to be buried and nobody will see his ole monuments anyway. He died broken, bitter, penniless, and hated because he lived for himself and his self alone. You're going to leave some kind of a monument.

You know one thing that bothers me? We are about ready to have a great transfer of wealth. I mean, there is a generation who has amassed a lot of money. Some of you, you have money; you don't know what you're going to do with it. You're going to go, the government's going to get a lot of it, your kids are going to get a lot of it, they're going to get divorced, they're going to fight over it, they're going to be at one another's throats, you're going to ruin them. You better start investing in something that's going to count. They say you can't take your money to Heaven. Oh yes, you can, if you'll invest it in something going to Heaven. The only thing I know going to Heaven is the souls of men. But I'm going to tell you something, friend, all that you're going to hold in your cold, dead hand is what you've given away, that's it. You cannot take it with you.

Maxey Jarman, businessman, you know Jarman shoes, gave away so much money, he gave away money, and then finally he had a financial reverse and somebody said to him, "Maxey, all of the money that you gave away, now that you're having these difficulties, do you ever think about that money?" He said, "Oh, yes. Praise God," he said, "that's the only thing I have left." You see, that you can't lose. What you invest in souls, there is a ministry, it is a ministry of giving. Would you say, "Oh, God, give me the ministry of encouragement. Oh, God, give me the ministry of evangelism. Oh, God, give me the ministry of giving!"

Now here's another ministry, and you've been called to this ministry. It's the ministry of **prayer**. Look if you will now in Romans chapter 15 and verses 30 and 31. Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake," now notice, notice this is not just to help build the church, not just for Paul's sake, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service," there's the word again, "which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." Paul says, "Listen, I minister, I am going to minister." But he says, "I have enemies. I need protection. And I need reception. Would you pray that I would be delivered and that I would be received? Would you pray?" Folks, prayer is a ministry. Prayer is not getting ready to serve, prayer is service. You can do more than pray after

you've prayed, but you really can't do much more than pray until you've prayed. And some of you say, "Pastor, I don't have much money to give, and it's kind of hard for me to encourage other people because I don't get around other people very much." The one thing you can do: you can pray.

I was preaching a revival meeting as a youngster in Jacksonville, Florida. And I was with a boy named Ernie Harvey. He and I were in college together. It was his home church. And Ernie said, "Adrian, I'd like for you to meet my mother." I'd never met Mrs. Harvey. Ernie a big old tall, strapping athlete. He and I played ball together. I went up to meet Ernie's mother. We went up to a little tenement, a little flat, threadbare, on the back side there, very poor. This little woman came out. And she had crippling arthritis. Her hands were very puffy. Her joints were swollen, her knees were swollen, she could hardly stand up straight. She looked like an angel in the face, but a devastating case of crippling arthritis. And we visited with her.

And then she said, "Boys, how did the revival go last night?" Now I was the young evangelist, going to college to play football, and full of myself, and thinking I'm more important than I was. But she said, "Boys, how was the meeting last night?" I said, "Wonderful, wonderful, God came down, it was glorious," and I began to tell her all the things that happened. The tears popped out of her eyes. She said, "I knew it, I knew it." She said, "Adrian, the whole time you were preaching I was on my knees praying for you." I thought, "Oh, Adrian, you numbskull, you ignoramus, you lout! Look at that little body! What pain it must be for her, for this lady to even get on her knees! But what a ministry!" And you've been called into the ministry.

Now, let me just quickly tell you what the next ministry is. It's the ministry of **fellowship**. Look in Romans chapter 16 verses 1 through 7, "*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant,*" a minister, "*of the church which is at Cenchrea,*" and then Paul lists in this sixteenth chapter, twenty-six different people! Not only was Paul a soul-winner, but he was a friend-maker. And he tells us how that we are to minister. I'm just going to read the headings. In Romans 16 verse 2 we minister by receiving people. In verse 3 we minister by greeting people. In verse 5 we minister by loving people. In verse 6 we minister by helping people. In verse 7 we minister by honoring people. In verses 17 through 18 we minister by guarding the fellowship against all kinds of false doctrine, that our fellowship might be pure.

So here's the sixth way, now, that we're to minister. Not only the ministry of fellowship by loving one another and oh, how sweet it is, how good it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in fellowship, and may the God always cause you to understand that we're to love, receive, greet, encourage, honor one another.

And then the last of all, there's a ministry of **worship**. Look if you will, I saved the best for the last. That's what we've been doing today. Chapter 16 verse 25 through the end. Here's the bottom line. I mean, Paul has given us the book of Romans. Now here's the book of Romans. I mean this is the constitution of Christianity. This is the greatest treatise ever written on the faith! If I had to be shipwrecked, I'd want to be shipwrecked

with nothing else to read, if you could just give me the book of Romans. But now, let's get to the bottom line, I mean the bottom line of the bottom line. Here it is, Romans 16 verse 25 through 27, *"Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever."* That's it! That is it! To God be the glory! Through Jesus Christ! All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

Friend, we need to stop moaning and groaning about living in the last days. There's never been a greater day, a greater age to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Old Vance Havner said, "I'm proud of the business I'm in and the company I work for. The president is God's Son. And His office door is always open so that a country preacher like myself can walk in day or night and talk to the boss. I have stock in the company, and I've been cashing dividends for over sixty years. I made my investment where banks don't break, that is moth-proof, rust-proof, where thieves do not break through and steal. I'm not just a member of the firm, my father is the head of it, and I am a member of the family. My bank can't fall, my business can't fail, because I am a laborer with God." Isn't that good?

All right, now, folks, I want you to say out loud, repeat after me, "I have been called," "into the ministry." "I am saved to serve." "God, make me a servant." "God, make me a minister." "And God help me not to lie." You know what you just said.

Now look, folks, God has called you, God is calling us, you look around, look around. Think what will happen if all of us really begin to minister. We'll turn this place upside down and inside out for Jesus Christ. Enough people, friend, to change the world for Jesus if we just understand that we've been saved to serve. God has called you into the ministry. You don't just sit, soak, and sour, but serve.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus, Lord God, that You will anoint the members of this church, not this church corporately, though I want You to bless it corporately, but Lord, bless it corporately by blessing it individually. And Lord, that as individuals, each one of us varying in gifts and ability, might know, dear Lord, that these six ministries are ministries that each of us in our own way can do."

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to help you to get it settled right now today. I want to help you to pray to receive Jesus Christ. Would you pray a prayer like this? "Dear God, I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment. But I want mercy. God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Thank You for loving a sinner like me, like I am. And Lord, I believe that Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He paid for my sin with His blood on the cross. I believe that You raised Him from the dead. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for me. And now," pray this, "now," pray

it with your heart, “now, right now, I receive You as my Lord and Savior right now. This moment, right now, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. I turn from my sin, I crown You Lord of my life, and by Your grace and for Your glory, I will follow You all the days of my life if You will only help me. In Your name I pray, Amen.”