

Romans 15:14-33: Spend Your One Life Well

Tommy Meador / General Adult

Romans / Romans 15:14–33

Introduction

- Tom Brady - Played 23 seasons in the NFL. Retired at 45 years old. Strict work out regiment. Strict diet - 80% vegetables and 20% lean protein - mostly fish and occasional chicken. Disciplined so he could play football at a high level for over two decades. Won 7 super bowls.
- After 3 Super Bowls, in 60 Minutes interview, “Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there’s something greater out there for me? Maybe a lot of people out there would say, ‘Hey man, this is what it is.’ I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: God, there’s got to be more than this.... What else is there for me?”
- The interviewer, Steve Kroft, responded, “And what is that answer?” Brady smiled for a moment, and then his smile faded. “I wish I knew,” he said. “I wish I knew.”
- If you’re a follower of Jesus, you know what the “more” is. It’s NOT living for a career, a sport, wealth, or fame. It’s living for Jesus.
- You get one life. Will you spend it well? Will you spend it on what matters, or will you waste your life on pursuing things that will never satisfy your soul?
- What are you going to do with the time you have left on this earth?
- The closing chapters of Romans are personal. Paul reporting his upcoming plans to the church in Rome. As Paul talks about his plans, it’s evident that he desires to spend his life for the sake of Jesus.

- As we look at this passage, three questions to ask yourself to determine if you are spending your one life well.

What are you offering to God? (vs. 14-16)

- vs. 14-15 - Encouragement - While this church had some issues (Jew/ Gentile divide), Paul knew they had been changed by the Gospel. They were full of goodness (fruit of the Spirit), growing in their knowledge of God and able to teach each other. Paul had written bold reminders about the Gospel and how to live it out.
- Remember - Romans a missionary letter. Paul desires to visit Rome on his way to Spain on a missionary journey. Paul's heart is for the Gentiles who have yet to hear the Gospel.
- vs. 16 - Paul's a minister of the Gentiles. Minister = *leitourgon* NOT *diakonos*. Where we get our word liturgy. When we think of liturgy we think of the form of a worship service.
- Paul a priest of the Gospel of God. Paul NOT a priest but using language from OT to describe his ministry. In OT, priest offered sacrifices - sacrifices for sins of people and thanksgiving offerings.
- Jesus IS the sacrifice for our sins. In response to what Jesus has done, Paul, like a priest, offers a thanksgiving offering. His thanksgiving offering is his life of mission in response to God's grace.
- Paul saw living on mission as an act of worship - a way of giving thanks to God for how God had saved him through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- What are you offering to God as an offering of thanksgiving for what God has done for you?
- **When God is small to you, your worship will be small.**

- For some, our “thanksgiving” offering does NOT reflect that you understand who God is OR what He’s done for you. (e.g., - “I come to church a fair amount, doesn’t that mean I’m thankful. Or, I helped out at that church event. Doesn’t that show gratitude?)
- A worship offering of thanks is far more... [Romans 12:1](#) - Appropriate thanksgiving offering is your life as a living sacrifice - a life given to His mission where you invest in people for the sake of the Gospel as an act of worship.
- If God is small to you, you only see Him as:
- A problem-solver - God, will you fix it?
- An advice giver - God, what decision do I need to make that will make my life better?
- A dream supporter - God, will you give me what I need to accomplish what I want?
- Your view of God is way too small if you are always trying to reduce God to fit the life you want.
- **When you see God as sovereign Lord, you will reorient your life around His purpose.**
- He is King and you are to live your life as an act of surrender and worship to the King. There’s nowhere in all of God’s creation that He does not rule.
- He is King over your one life, and your days are numbered. Will you reorient your life around His purpose? ([2 Peter 3:9](#))
- Who are you presenting to God as evidence of your thanksgiving for the salvation God has given you? Who have you told about Jesus this year?

How does the Gospel shape your life? (vs. 17-29)

- When Paul writes Romans, he was on his third missionary journey. Over the years, he had seen God work miraculously among the Gentiles.
- Paul boasted in what Jesus had accomplished by His Spirit. The church at Rome shouldn't pat Paul on the back for the success of his missionary journeys. They should join Paul in boasting in Christ.
- At this point in Paul's life, he'd been living on the mission of God for over a decade, and the Spirit of God enabled him to travel from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum - about 1400 miles.
- Paul covered a lot of ground, but he was not done (vs. 20). Paul desired to preach the Gospel where Christ had not been named. He didn't want to build on someone else's foundation. Because of his missionary calling, no need to stay in places where there was already a thriving church. He wanted to go to places where there was no church.
- vs. 21 - Paul quotes from [Isaiah 52:15](#) which speaks of the suffering servant (Jesus) who will bring a message of hope to those who had not heard. The suffering servant had commissioned Paul for that very work.
- vs. 22-24 - Paul wants to take the Gospel to Spain, where the Gospel had not been preached. On the way, he wants to visit with the church at Rome. He had never been to Rome. It was not a church he had planted, but he wants to minister to the Roman believers in person, and he desires their assistance as he makes his way to Spain.
- vs. 25-29 - But first, he is going to travel to Jerusalem to be a blessing to the believers who were suffering because of a famine. The churches in Macedonia had taken up a love offering that Paul was going to deliver.
- vs. 27 - Paul sees the Gentile believers as indebted to Jewish believers because the church began in Jerusalem ([Acts 1:8](#)).

- vs. 28 - After Paul's visit to Jerusalem, he would be on the way to Rome and then Spain. However, those plans would be delayed because Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. He would be sent to Rome as a prisoner and be under house arrest when he finally arrived in Rome.
- This isn't just travel plans. This is a window into what shaped Paul's entire life. Paul's life was consumed with investing His life into the lives of others for the sake of the Gospel no matter where the Lord took him.
- You might not share the same calling as Paul - to travel the world as a missionary - but you do share in the calling to live your life on mission wherever God has you.
- Here's the question: "How does the Gospel shape your life?" It may be that the Gospel doesn't shape your life much at all. You think about Jesus on Sundays or when you're in a bind, but not in the way you actually live day to day.
- When the Gospel truly shapes your life, it reorders your priorities around God's mission.
- How do you know if the Gospel is shaping your life in such a way that you are living on the mission of God?
- **You serve even when it's inconvenient.** Paul wants to go to Spain. To go back to Jerusalem could have seemed like an inconvenience. BUT ministry is hardly ever convenient. We'd like to compartmentalize Gospel mission to an hour or so a week that we can schedule, but you never know when Gospel opportunities will present themselves.
- **You give even when it stretches you.** It stretched the church in Macedonia ([2 Corinthians 8](#)). But... following Jesus is committed to an open-handed life - whatever you have belongs to God, and God has every right to desire for you to use whatever He's given you for His glory, even if stretches you. Are you close-fisted with the resources that God has given you? How is God challenging you in your giving?

- **You go even when it's uncomfortable.** Paul's doesn't give us the details of the 1400 miles he traveled, but we know from the Book of Acts that he was mocked, run out of town, stoned, beaten, arrested, etc. He was met with many trials. It was uncomfortable. Where is God calling you to step into what is seemingly uncomfortable?
- When the Gospel takes hold of your life, you don't just believe differently. You live differently.

Who will you depend on to help you live for the Gospel? (vs. 30-33)

- Paul knows that he cannot live for the mission of God without the help of the church. He's already told the church at Rome he's coming to them that they might assist him on the way to Spain.
- Now he's asking the church to pray for him. We often forget about and overlook the importance of prayer. We often struggle to pray well, but we all desperately need to grow in our ability to pray.
- When we pray, we express our dependency on the God of all creation. Prayer is saying, "We can't do this on our own. We need you!" Prayer draws us closer to the heart of God and softens our hearts to His voice.
- In these final verses, Paul challenges us to pray in three ways:
- **Pray together.** We need to spend time alone in prayer. But, we also need to spend much time praying together. Praying together unifies us around God's will for our church. Praying together is a powerful way to encourage each other. Praying together not only demonstrates our dependency on God but also on each other. We're depending on each other to come before God on our behalf. We need to more often say, "Pray for me..." (When we have our quarterly prayer nights as a family of churches, you need to be present.)

- **Pray passionately.** “Strive” carries the connotation of wrestling or fighting. It’s praying without giving up. It’s wrestling until you know God has answered. We know what it’s like to pray passionately when a crisis hits close to home. But... we forget that lostness is the crisis that hits closest to home. We need more praying together for friends and family members who are far from God. We need to strive together more in prayer for the lost.
- **Pray specifically.** Paul does. He asks the church to pray that he would be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea. He wants to come to Rome refreshed. Often, are prayers are way to general. “God bless me. God help me. Etc.” We need to pray specifically as a church. E.g., for God to give us an opportunity this year to replant another church. Or, for the work taking place in our family of churches. Pray specifically for more children’s workers at Wando Woods and for young families to attend. Pray specifically about whether you should stay at our church or if you should be a part of a team to plant/replant another church.
- Here’s what you need to know. God doesn’t always answer our prayers the way we would expect.
- Paul wanted comfort. God wanted to give him influence. Instead of going to Rome as a preacher, Paul went to Rome as a prisoner. He was arrested in Judea, taken to Caesarea, then put on a ship to Rome with other prisoners.
- BUT... God’s plan was better. He was a witness to rulers ([Acts 23](#)). He was a witness in Rome to imperials guards [Philippians 1:12-13](#)). God used Paul’s hardships to give him even more Gospel influence.
- Palm Sunday connection: Jesus prayed too. On Palm Sunday, entered in Jerusalem and hailed as King, but by the end of the week, Jesus was staring death in the face.

- In the garden, Jesus strived with the Father while the disciples, who He asked to pray with Him, slept. Jesus prayed specifically, “Take this cup from me.” But, “Not my will but your will be done.”
- But, the Father didn’t give the Son an escape from the cross or an easier path. Because the Father was accomplishing your salvation through the death of His Son.
- Jesus accepted the Father’s will. Jesus left the Garden of Gethsemane with confidence and willingly went to the cross to drink of the cup of God’s wrath so we would never have to. He died the death we deserve only to rise again from the dead so all of our sins could be forgiven.
- Do you know the One who went to the cross for you? Have you placed your faith in the finished work of Christ?
- Believers, God will not always answer us according to our will, but He will always accomplish His will. Will you trust Him? Will you keep striving? Will you keep praying together? Will you keep being specific in the way you pray?