For The Gospel Part 2
Partners In The Gospel
Romans 15:22-33
Memory Verses: Romans 15:30

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Carrying a Baton – How many of you have ever run a relay race? Maybe in school, maybe in track, maybe you were that one kid who got picked last and spent the entire race dreading the moment that someone might try to hand you the baton. And that's the trick of a relay race isn't it. Everyone prepared, ready, willing, and working together to accomplish the same goal. One runner hands the baton off to another runner and so on until the race is over. Let's demonstate. But we don't use this baton.. no we use this (crowbar). Why? Cause we are trying to leverage our lives for the Gospel! This is our baton... this is what we share and what we pass on to one another. But if there is one weak link or if they can't seem to work together well... well then they are going to lose aren't they? Because a relay race isn't just about how fast you can go... **its about running the race together**!

There's an old saying often attributed to an African proverb... "if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." The whole point is simple. If we are for the Gospel then we are for the Church! If we are for going far for the glory of Christ then we must go together. If we are to leveage our lives for the Kingdom of God... then we must partner with good partners! This is what Stone Creek Church is about... partnering with good partners. This is what our Church network, that David spoke about a couple weeks ago, is all about... partnering with good parntners. This is what Pillar Norfolk and Kids on Fire in Zambia and The Sanfords in Papua New Guinea and Blue Ridge Pregnancy Center are all about... partnering with good partners. And if we have good partners will get to the finish line... together!

That's what this series is for. This entire year we've been talking about what it truly means to live lives sold out for Christ. What does it mean to do more with our resources for the kingdom of God? What does it truly mean to leverage our lives for the Gospel? And the answer is clear. We have been **given** the Gospel to **advance** the Gospel **together**!

Last week we saw how Paul was called to proclaim the Gospel and how Christ has called all of us to do the same. Not just me, not just our elders or deacons... but all of us. As Paul said, its our ambition to take the Gospel where Christ has not yet been named! For you that may be across the street or across the office to your co-worker.

You have a personal mission! But we also have a corporate mission. The Gospel is delivered by individuals, but those individuals are empowered through a collective. Through partnership. That collective is called the church. Get this: God has not left you to accomplish the mission on your own. He has given you a team, a vehicle, a tribe, and a group of encouragers who will keep you accountable and push you through to the finish line. God never intended the Gospel to advance through **isolated individuals**, but through a **united church**.

Partnership means that we rely on one another to proclaim the Gospel. As we've stated before. The church is plan A. We are the royal priesthood, ambassadors of the Good News. There is no plan B. Partnership means we rely on one another to live out the Gospel in our lives everyday. We can't do this thing alone! And this is what Romans 15:22-33 is all about! The main point this morning is this... **Leveraging Our Lives For The Gospel Takes Living Our Lives In Partnership** Today, we will see three ways we partner with other believers for the Gospel to be proclaimed.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **Partnership Means We Share The Work**. Look at Romans 15:22. What has Paul been doing? He says he was hindered from coming to the Roman Church. What hindered him? His calling to the unreached in the unreached areas. He wasn't neglecting the ministry in Rome... he was ministering as an extension of the Church at Rome by partnering with them in Foreign Missions. Paul couldn't come to Rome because he was on the mission field. Much like the Kornoelje's or Sanford's or Dickinson's or Lyttle's. They long to be here with us enjoying the comforts of family at Stone Creek but they have another assignment. Still, they are our partners in ministry! We can't go where they are... so they go for us, as an extension of us. The Church expands as local churches send! We share our people with the Cree and Senegalese and Papuans and the Zambians... so they can finish the mission or reaching the world with the Gospel! Get this... **partnering in the work means sharing the mission!**

Paul was reaching the unreached as part of the mission... but now look at 23-24. Now he has a new job to reach Spain. And he gives the Roman Church a new job as well. Help! Two different parties... two different jobs... same mission! They aren't doing identical things... one is going and one is sending and supporting... but they are both working towards the same objective. Everyone can't go... someone must support! And this in no way makes the Church at Rome less important or spirtually mature. Paul has a calling... but they have a role to play in that calling... and it matters. As senders, the Roman church provides support, encouragement, resources, hospitality, or other assistance that enables the journey.

Think about a football team. Everyone on the team has a different

role or assignment. The lineman are not skilled as receivers. The running backs aren't able to pass like Quarterbacks. They all must do their thing so the team has success. But they are all fighting for the same objective... score touchdowns, stop the other team, win the game. What would happen if the center decides he's going to go out for a pass on the next play because he wants to be a receiver? It won't work. The QB will die... and they will be penalized. A lineman may never throw a pass or catch a touchdown... but without them there is no way they can win.

Listen, you don't have to do somebody else's job to contribute to somebody else's success. And this is where the church has done a poor job of preparing christians to be partners. We think the person preaching or the missionary oversees, or the evangelist preaching a revival, or the church planter starting a new church as the Essential Christians and everyone else is expendable. But that couldn't be farther from the truth. We need prayer warriors, we need wealthy people who can support the ministry, we need encouragers, accountability partners, teachers, mentors, disciplers, soul winners in every single aspect of life. We said it last week... but your mission field is your life! You go to the mission field every single day! You are essential! Because without you there is no church!

When believers begin to see that we all share the same mission and we are essential to its fullfillment... something happens. We stop asking what the church has to offer me and we start asking how can I help my church accomplish what God has called us to do! Let me ask you... which question are you asking? What does this church have to offer me? Or... how can I help my church accomplish what God has called us to do? This is what it means to leverage your spiritual gifts and abilities for the Gospel. When we get this right... everything else falls into place! Then we truly become Covenant Partners.

Again, turn back to Romans 12:4-8. The game plan is simple... we all have different **roles**, one **mission**, and a **shared** responsibility! **We do the work of ministry by sharing in the same mission... but also by sharing the resources**. Look at 15:25-27. This is what it means to leverage your resources for the Gospel. When God gives you resourceces he intends for you to use them to serve the mission. The Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia, former pagan infidels who have now become believers... take up a collection for who.... their former enemies... the Jews in Jerusalem! This is incredible. Former rivals now partnering with one another... giving their finances for one another. Why? For the Gospel! For the mission!

What does that mean for us? What about if another church in our area is struggling financially and we can help... should we help? What about if a local para-church agency is in need of funds to reach the lost, protect the unborn, or serve the community... should we pitch in? What if a family in our church is hurting and struggling to make ends meet... should we do something? Of course! This is exactly what it means! If you have time, if you have money, if you have abilities, if you have vehicles, if you have health... then that is on loan from God for the mission of the church! You better use, it by God, or you might just lose it!

So don't lose this... we share the mission while we contribute in different ways... we partner with other believers in various aspects... we all do the work... but our work looks different! But the work we do... is for one another and for the mission! For The Gospel! **Leveraging Our Lives For The Gospel Takes Living Our Lives In Partnership.**

Second... **Partnership Means We <u>Carry</u> One Another's Burdens**. Look at Romans 15:30. Paul is begging the church to pray for him. But notice he uses the words “strive on my behalf.” The Greek word for strive means to fight for, contend for, come alongside. Paul isn't asking for a namby pamby “thank you for this day, help my friend Paul amen” type of prayer. No he is asking the church **partner with him in prayer**. To get on their knees and go to war with hell on his behalf! Why? Because Paul knows he's on the front lines. He is one of the last apostles. He is the church planting missionary to the Gentiles. He is the Elder of most of the churches outside of Jerusalem, and he is in danger of being stoned, beaten, or falling ill at all times!

Look what he says in vs.31. He is scared for his life. He is doing work in the hardest to reach places. He needs the prayers to continue boldly without fear. He knows that he is strong with God... but he also knows this... We are never **stronger** than when the saints are **laboring in prayer** on our behalf. Bottom line – prayer works! But only when prayer is taken serious! Church are we taking prayer seriously? Here's my challenge. This building is open every Wednesday from 6pm to 7pm. Plan to be here just one week out of every month.. to pray over the prayer list and go to war for your brothers and sisters in Christ! You aren't partnering if you aren't praying for one another! Simple as that!

We partner together when we carry one another's burdens in prayer... but also when we share in their struggles. Look at vs.32. Paul wants the company of the church and is looking forward to being refreshed in their company. This is what the church does for one another... we refresh one another! We carry one another! We bear with one another in love! We do the hard work for one another so that our partners will be able to continue the mission! Bottom line – partnership doesn't mean we never face **struggles**... it means we don't have to face them **alone**! So I'm going to do something really weird and out of the box... but this is totally a Holy Spriit thing.. Right now.. if you are here and you are struggling we want to pray for you! Right now! **Leveraging Our Lives For The Gospel Takes Living Our Lives In Partnership.**

Third... **Partnership Means We Depend On God Together**. Look at Romans 15:33. Very short and to the point. His point is simple. Preachers, missionaries, and the church are all important. The mission is important. Leveraging our lives is important. For the Gospel is important. But without God with us... its meaningless. Paul doesn't say get organized... get the best people on the right seat on the bus, get the best programs money can buy, get the flashiest most polished band and speakers and creative gurus to lead your churches. He says... May God be with you!

And that is why one of our motto's for the past three years has simply been this... find out **where** God is moving and **join him** there! We can't make God do what we want... but we can surely be with him if we go where he is! Let's partner together to be a part of a move of God! Wherever he is moving... let's move with him! **Leveraging Our Lives For The Gospel Takes Living Our Lives In Partnership.**

Application

So... church are we simply a group of individuals who attend the same building on Sundays for an hour and a half, or are we a people who share the same mission? When someone is hurting do we help carry their burden? When a missionary, ministry, church, or friend needs support, do we strengthen them with prayer, work, and encouragement so they can continue the mission? For the sake of our Lord God and the Gospel, can we stop asking what we can get out of our church and start asking what we can contribute to accomplish the mission of the Gospel through our church?Because leveraging our lives for the Gospel takes every single person running in the same race, doing their part, in partnership with one another!

Conclusion

Remember where we began today? Running a relay with the baton... but our baton is not a baton... its a crowbar! Our partnership means that we leverage our lives for one another for the mission of the Gospel! Thats true covenant partnership! I hand you the crowbar.. you hand me the crowbar... together we finish the mission! But this morning we have something a little different.. a little surprise gift. This morning we want everyone to have a crowbar. Yes it is small.. but it represents our partnership! It's a baton that we pass to one another to finish the mission. When you look at your crowbar I want you to remember our covenant partnership with one another! Remember to pray for one another, to carry one another's burdens, to work together, to depend on God together! **Leveraging Our Lives For The Gospel Takes Living Our Lives In Partnership.**