

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY THIRTY-NINE

Preaching and Traveling with Paul

Romans 15:17–29

I speak to you, most of you are younger than I, and I say, “Don’t stop dreaming. Don’t stop being open to a vision. Don’t stop listening to what God may have for you.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

W*E all can dream! God wants to do great things through us!*

Sometimes we hear God’s call to follow Him on a new adventure of faith but think that we’re too old or too young. Or that we lack the resources to accomplish such big goals. So, we wonder if we should scale down our heart’s passion. Slowly life’s distractions can dampen the flame of the mission that God has ignited in our hearts.

Paul’s passion for his mission never dwindled. When he wrote Romans, over twenty years had passed since he first met the Lord on the road to Damascus. The young Pharisee, then named Saul, was hunting Christians to arrest them when, suddenly, Christ appeared—blinding Saul with His glory. Trembling and astonished, Saul pleaded, “What should I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10). A few days later, God called him to bear the message of Jesus to the world, “to be his witness, telling everyone what [he had] seen and heard” (22:15).

With a determined spirit, Paul embraced his God-given mission, declaring,

My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.
(20:24)

What kindled the fire of Paul’s vision despite all the intense hardships and discouraging setbacks he faced during his life’s work? In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll get a glimpse of Paul’s heart and mind as he looks back on his twenty years of missionary service and looks forward to the possibilities that lie ahead of him. Let a spark from Paul’s passion ignite your own resolve to fulfill God’s vision in your life.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

You light a lamp for me.

The LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.

In Your strength I can crush an army;

With my God I can scale any wall. (Psalm 18:28–29)

Come close to God knowing that He makes *all* the difference. Thank Him for the way He lights up your darkness. Echo the psalmist's confidence in the Lord. Boldly express your faith in His strength to help you accomplish great things to make His name known.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you open Romans 15, step into the shoes of Tertius, the scribe who spent the winter of AD 56–57 with Paul, now in his late 50s. Through Tertius' eyes, see Paul's face and hands bearing the marks of age and mistreatment. Imagine the faithful scribe feverishly scratching on parchments the apostle's divinely inspired thoughts as they gushed from Paul's heart.

Little did Tertius know that this letter would become the fountainhead of eternal truths from which influential theologians like Origen of Alexandria during the second century AD or Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century drank and then nourished countless others.

At this doctrinal spring, Martin Luther would find grace to quench his sin-parched soul—emboldening him to nail his 95 theses to the door of the All Saints' Church in Germany to launch the Protestant Reformation. From Romans, men like John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards would spark flames of hope to ignite the Great Awakening.

Let's pull back the curtain on Paul, the man who was so stirred by God's magnificent love and amazing grace.

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Observation: The Mind and Heart of Paul

Observe [Romans 15:17–29](#) by reading it carefully to discover a few important facts or realities about Paul.¹ See how Paul's thinking, travel plans, and even attitude emerge from this personal section.

Paul's Thinking—Romans 15:17–21

Note Paul's mind-set in [Romans 15:17–21](#). What words or phrases reveal the satisfaction his accomplishments brought him in [15:17](#)? About what was Paul truly boasting, according to [15:18](#)?

As he looked back on two decades of mission work, what amazing feats did the Lord accomplish through Paul, according to [15:18–19](#)?

Paul served Christ as a missionary pioneer. Look in [15:20–21](#) for the words or phrases that show how he viewed his ministry. Note them below.

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Paul's Travels—Romans 15:23–28

Paul may have been aging, but his past successes never eclipsed his vision for future ministry. Look at the map of Paul's journeys in your Bible or the online map, "[Paul's Missionary Journeys](https://insight.org/maps)," at insight.org/maps. Locate the various geographical *places* or *people groups* that Paul mentioned in [Romans 15:18–28](#). Write them down in the chart below.

Paul's Travel Plans Romans 15:18–28	
15:18	
15:19	
15:22–24	
15:26	
15:28	

Paul's Attitude—Romans 15:22, 29

Now carefully observe [Romans 15:22, 29](#). Paul was a realist—unexpected delays happened. Yet, how was he also an optimist?

There are interruptions, there certainly are. But look at Paul's optimism. Does that sound like a man excited about his future? Does that sound like a man who's worried about the difficulties of his past? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Paul Accomplished Great Things for God

Interpret the Bible passage by taking a closer look at the words, phrases, and sentences to explore what they mean. Look at [Romans 15:17–19](#) in the Amplified, NET, and MSG translations. What did Paul mean when he said that Christ has done things “through” him?

The accomplishments were done through the power of Christ. In fact, Christ used Paul’s vocal cords as His mouthpiece. He used his hands as His writing instruments. God used Paul’s feet as His messenger to take it across all of Asia Minor, today known as Turkey. Magnificent. But Paul never saw himself as all that significant. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

We observed in [15:20–21](#) that Paul had the heart of a pioneer missionary. Look for the meaning of the word [pioneer](#) in Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary. Then, read the passage Paul quoted to underscore his motivation, [Isaiah 52:15](#). How would you explain Paul’s pioneering work and motivation?

If you love gardening, you know the first process after getting that soil prepared is the dropping of the seed. Paul put in the seed. Apollos came along later and watered it. Paul was the one who planted it. Not where Christ’s name was known and not on another’s foundation. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Isaiah’s vision of the Messiah reaching the Jews and the gentiles became Paul’s mandate. Reread [Romans 15:17–29](#) in the Amplified, NET, and MSG translations. Look at the big picture—how Paul shifted his focus from his past ministries or memories to his future travel plans. Explain the importance of having a forward focus.

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Let me give you a thought. Our dreams must be greater than our memories. How magnificent to meet up with people who say, “Let me tell you about a dream. Let me tell you about my plans.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Accomplishing Great Things for God

Throughout Scripture, God calls His people to accomplish great things for His glory! Whether it's David as a youth defeating the giant Goliath or the missionary of Tarsus traveling thousands of miles on foot spreading the gospel throughout the Roman Empire, God can do the impossible through willing vessels (*1 Samuel 17:1–10, 32–37, 45–49; 1 Corinthians 3:5–7; Colossians 1:28–29*).

Reflecting on the words of our Savior to His followers in *John 15:1–5*, what attitude must we embrace in our plans to do great things for God?

It says, “Apart from Me, You can do nothing.” We forget that. We are so capable. We are so able in ourselves. And if we're not, we know banks that'll help us out. We know people who'll come to our rescue. But Christ says, “When you trust Me as you should trust Me, you will lean on Me and realize, apart from Me you can do nothing.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Compare *Romans 15:17–29* with *2 Corinthians 11:24–28*. What do these passages teach us about the road to accomplishing great things for God? How did Jesus model for us determination, focus, and joy according to *Philippians 2:5–8* and *Hebrews 12:1–3*?

If you need the ultimate example, the best thing Christ ever did looked like defeat to everybody else, and that was when He hung on the cross and died. In his death, He opened the way to heaven. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Dream Big! Accomplish Great Things for God!

Now is the opportunity to live out this passage. Four timeless principles stream from our passage for you to apply.

First, *stay involved and available*. Paul always involved others in his mission. What steps to involve others can you take, knowing that life's greatest achievements are accomplished through joint efforts?

Don't go solo. No covered wagon was occupied by one person, there were families. There were partners, fellow dreamers. Stay involved. Don't burn bridges. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Second, *stay determined*. What abandoned projects has the Holy Spirit pointed out for you to go back to? What can help you keep your eyes on your goals?

Get your eyes off the obstacles, start looking at the goals. Accomplishments are never achieved without hindrances, so stay determined. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Third, *stay focused*. Take some time to thank God for the friends who have sustained your hopes and kept you focused.

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Fourth, *stay positive*. How will you keep your awareness of reality while maintaining your enthusiasm about accomplishing great things for God?

Based on early church writings, it's probable Paul made it to Spain, but the evidence leaves us with uncertainty. The book of Acts concludes with Paul still under house arrest in Rome. We know that, even while confined, Paul never ceased preaching, and the gospel never stopped spreading. The final lines of Acts embody Paul's enthusiastic spirit, as well as ours, as Paul's vision lives on through us. Paul said,

“So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it.” For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him. (Acts 28:28–31)



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Son, Jesus, the sinless sacrifice, who in His death opened the way to heaven for me. Enable me to keep my vision sharp. Help me dream big. Help me stay involved and available, determined, focused, and positive. May I accomplish great things for You by the power of the Holy Spirit! In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2008, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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