



Sermon Growth Guide

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THE FULL MEASURE | Romans 15:23-29

October 18, 2026

Key Verse: Romans 15:29. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

Big Idea: Paul's ministry included generous, sacrificial giving. He knew the spiritual must touch the material to experience the fullness of God's blessing.

Foundations

In these seven verses, we see Paul's vision of the church—a unique whole—a Kingdom presence at work in the world. Macedonia, Corinth, Jerusalem, Rome, Spain. We are reminded of his body metaphor in I Corinthians 12. “The body is a unit, though it is made of many parts...So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other...If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.”

He acknowledges that his pioneering work is done in this part of the world. He laid the foundation and now it is for others to go further. But, before he can head to Rome and onto Spain, he must go to Jerusalem to bring financial “fruit” from the wealthier Greek churches. Fruit, not simply money, but something produced from the committed faith of the Gentiles.

In II Corinthians 8:14 Paul writes, “At the present time your plenty will supply what they need so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need.” Might the plenty of the Jerusalem Christians be the “spiritual blessing” Paul refers to when saying, “For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jew's spiritual blessing, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessing.”

In this conclusion, Paul shifts from a theologian writing a comprehensive doctrinal essay to a pastor who longs to be with fellow believers to give and receive encouragement and support.

Paul understands that God's kingdom is made of a spiritual world and a physical world and Paul addresses the needs of both. Paul brings the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

Understanding God's Word

Read together Romans 15:23-29, II Corinthians 9:6-11, Acts 20:32-35

Paul longed to go to Rome for years and then to Spain. What kept him from going? He was an evangelist first and foremost. Why would he include fund raising for the Messianic Jews in Jerusalem as part of his mission? What spiritual connection does Paul make to the material gifts given by the Greeks?

Applying God's Word

R. G. LeTourneau led a phenomenally successful company but what makes him noteworthy is his commitment to live on 10% and give 90% to build God's kingdom. He paraphrases Malachi 3:10 this way “I shovel out the money, and God shovels it back – but God has a bigger shovel.”

God has big shovel. What can you trust him with? Are you missing out on the full blessing?

Witnessing God's Word

The world sits up and takes notice when we are generous. Not just generous but sacrificially generous. With our time, skills, and money. Paul makes it clear that the generosity of the Greeks will bring praise and glory to God. Is your generosity bringing glory to God. How might it increase?

I want to focus in on one verse toward the end, and one phrase of that one verse, and one word in that one phrase, and one letter... No. The verse is this: "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ." (Romans 15:29) In a series called Life Together, we talk about The Full Measure. It's one word in Greek, and it shows up a lot in the New Testament. The full measure. What does that inspire in your mind? I think about making cookies as a kid. I took Home Economics in Cheyenne Junior High. We made pinwheels. I learned about spooning the flour in and scraping it off the top with a knife to get just the right amount. But with the brown sugar—when I was a kid making cookies with my mom, I'd pack that measuring cup solid. If I pressed any harder, I would have made a brown sugar diamond. It came out like a brick! The full measure, pressed down, running over. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38) Isn't there a children's song? The full measure.

That phrase also makes me think about something more serious. Think about military service. It takes me back to being a chaplain honoring the ultimate sacrifice. The full measure means a black band is around a Police Officer's badge. For the Army, it's two boots filled with sand propping up an M16, helmet on top, ID tags on the handle. The full measure of sacrifice. It's a man hanging on a cross outside of Jerusalem two thousand years ago who didn't deserve to be there but gave his life away as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus gave the full measure to give us life. Nothing held back. The full measure.

But that same term, the full measure, is also used a lot, maybe more than anything else, to talk about money. That's how it is used here. Giving what we have to the work of the Lord. Will it be the full measure? Malachi said, " 'Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. 'But you

ask, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.' " (Malachi 3:8-10) Part of God's plan for his people from the beginning was that they would give back to the work of the Lord ten percent of all they gained. "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord." (Leviticus 27:30) The first fruits, a tenth of the flocks, the grain, the olives, whatever. The people of God were meant to look at their resources differently from other people. The first tenth, full measure, goes to God's work.

Old wisdom on finances is to give the first tenth to the Lord, the second tenth to savings, and live off the rest. If you can spend less than that 80% of your income, you will thrive and know peace. Peace doesn't come from more money; it comes from honoring God and ordering your use of what you have. You can make a million dollars and be miserable because you overspend it and there is never enough. You can make ten thousand dollars and be miserable because there is too little and the challenges are too great and you have no help. Trusting God with your finances means giving that first tenth to him, then starting to know him better as he cares for you and your needs. This is contentment and peace.

So this is the full measure in a financial sense. It was always the plan that the people of God would fund the work of the church, of ministry, of this mission to restore and renew fallen creation, this mission to evangelize and save souls from damnation, it was always intended to be funded by the first tenth of all we are blessed with. The full measure. That's what Paul is talking about. If it

seems like I'm pulling pretty hard on this one phrase, this whole passage is about money, funding, nuts and bolts financial stuff. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. He traveled around Asia Minor and Greece planting churches. The Jewish people were oppressed under Rome. They were taxed to the hilt. Gentiles were able, generally, to make more money. As the church grew in Jerusalem among Jewish background believers, persecution also grew. As the church grew out in these new, wealthy cities among Gentiles, Paul encouraged them to put financial gifts together to help their new brothers and sisters back in Judea. Paul is about to carry this money back to the Holy Land from Corinth where he is writing this, then go from Jerusalem to Spain through Rome. He needs the Roman church to support this financially. This is brass tacks, nuts and bolts kind of stuff.

"But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you." (Romans 15:23) That's a little funny. "Now that I've converted all of Asia Minor, Greece, and Northern Africa..." Really? But that's not exactly what he is saying. Paul's heart is to reach those who have not yet heard. His ambition is to tell people about Jesus who know nothing about Jesus and watch the Holy Spirit pull them from eternal darkness to everlasting light. He trusts those who have come to the Lord to cover the places where he has already been. Time to move on. But first this errand. "I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while." (Romans 15:24) It's a privilege to support someone out working for the Lord, isn't it? Abigail and I feel privileged when we get to do that. I can't go to Kazakhstan, but I can support you. I can participate by putting some money in behind you. Some things come along that I just want to be on that list, you know? At

some party in heaven, "Hey, here's the list of everybody that supported the seminary for the underground churches of Iran. Party tonight! St. Peter's back yard!" I'm not sure that's how it works; but do you know what I mean? I want to be in that game! Of course I'll give. Paul says, I'm going to Spain. Nobody's ever shared the gospel there before. I hope you will want to be part of that.

"Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem." (Romans 15:25-26) I've got this money in hand I need to take to relieve the pain in Jerusalem. The Gentile churches were happy to give it. God loves a cheerful giver; it beats a grumpy giver. But, also, they really should give, Paul says. "They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings." (Romans 15:27) Pay attention to the channels God used to pour his love and grace you're your life, the ministries, the institutions. Is God calling you to return material blessings to overlap the spiritual blessings you received? There is nuts and bolts stuff to ministry. There are walls to be rebuilt, ceilings that need repair, paint and carpet and elevators, and even places of food insecurity or medical needs. Real stuff. Let the spiritual touch the material. "So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way." (Romans 15:28) Now, did Paul make it to Spain? No. He was arrested and sent to Rome in chains, sat in the Mamertine Prison next to the Roman Forum—we think with Peter. He was executed by beheading south of the city. But these were his plans. This was the vision, and it was a worthy vision to support and give money to in full measure.

That's where we come to our verse. Are we going to deal in half-measures or the full measure? Are we going to dip our toes in the mission of God, or are we going all in? Do we look at giving, tithing, participating in what God is doing in the world, do we see that as, like, tipping Jesus?

A little extra when we are pleased? Or are we going at it like fully-devoted disciples of the Lord who gave his whole life, who poured out his broken body and blood for this? Paul is confident the church will respond with full devotion. “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.” (Romans 15:29)

Around here, we talk about 7 Values in Pursuit of Jesus, The First Pres Way. One of them is “Deploy Generosity: Invest who you are and what you have in what God wants to do.” We want to live generously following a generous, extravagantly generous, God. So, let me offer some nuts and bolts about our ministry together. The Gospel did get to Spain, just as it did get to Africa and Asia and Britannia and all around. Then it came to Colorado Springs. We are not finished. We are not finished, are we? Each year we fund this gospel outpost with what we have. I would love to say we all fund this ministry with ten percent. We should. You say, “Well, I’m retired. My income is not what it once was.” I hope when I’m at that stage, I am still devoting ten percent of my budget to the Lord. The work isn’t finished. I estimate, roughly, that if we were all tithing, First Pres would operate on a budget of 15 or 16 million per year. Our budget in 2026 was set for \$8.9 million. Just to keep up with inflation we need to increase that budget by 4%. But what if we wanted to expand our reach? I want to ask you to pray to increase your pledge by at least 6% this year. But maybe you could do more. I encourage you to take a firm step toward tithing. If you have never pledged, I encourage you to jump in. If we all bring the full measure, next year will be an incredible year for advancing the ministry of First Pres to reach Colorado Springs for Christ.

There will be special opportunities too, things you are just going to want to be a part of. We are reopening Café 225 with a Christian Counseling Center on

top and a restored Good Samaritan Coffee shop in partnership with Springs Rescue Mission. This is going to be a center of hope that changes lives. I want to be on that list. I want to be at that party! Don’t you? We will have missions opportunities, relief moments, we have plans to improve our Kids and Students ministry spaces, and maybe polish up our exterior—we need to keep at it. 2027 is a year for First Pres to bear fruit. The roots are healthy; the fruit is coming. Are we ready? Pray this week and come next week ready to bring the full measure.

Jesus gave the full measure for us. When we were lost in our sins, separated from God. A Holy God and a sinful man can’t have a relationship. That broke God’s heart. Jesus came to put it right. It wasn’t going to be a half-measure or a little gratuity. To pay the penalty for our sins, it took a whole life. He paid his whole life on the cross. The full measure. Then he rose again to prove that whoever believes in him can be forgiven and saved. The world says get all you can; Jesus says give all you can. Let’s bring the full measure and just see what the Lord intends to release among us.