

# Romans 15:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

## Analysis

**Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named** (οὕτως δὲ φιλοτιμούμενον εὐαγγελίζεσθαι οὐχ ὅπου ὠνομάσθη Χριστός, houtōs de philotimoumenon euangelizesthai ouch hopou ōnomasthē Christos)—Philotimoumenon (strived, made it my ambition) indicates deliberate strategic focus. Paul's missionary principle was pioneer evangelism: preaching where Christ was not yet named (ouch hopou ōnomasthē Christos). He prioritized unreached regions over established churches. This wasn't arrogance but recognition of his specific calling: apostolic church-planting among Gentiles, not pastoral nurture of existing congregations.

**Lest I should build upon another man's foundation** (ἵνα μὴ ἐπ' ἀλλότριον θεμέλιον οἰκοδομῶ, hina mē ep' allotrion themelion oikodomō)—Themelion (foundation) is Christ himself (1 Cor 3:11) and the apostolic testimony about Christ (Eph 2:20). Paul avoided building (oikodomō) where others had laid foundations—not from competitiveness but from missional focus. He left pastoral work to others (like Apollos, 1 Cor 3:6) while he pressed into unreached territory. This models strategic mission: diverse callings working complementarily.

## Historical Context

Paul's pioneer principle explains why he wrote to Rome (a church he didn't plant) but planned only to visit briefly (vv. 23-24, 28-29) en route to Spain—new territory.

This also explains his lengthy Ephesian ministry (Acts 19-20) versus brief stops elsewhere: Ephesus was strategic for reaching Asia Minor. His missionary strategy was intentional, not haphazard.

## Related Passages

---

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

---

1. How does Paul's ambition to preach where Christ is not yet named challenge or inform contemporary missionary strategy and personal evangelistic priorities?
2. What is the difference between Paul's avoidance of building on others' foundations and inappropriate competition among Christian workers today?
3. In your ministry context, are you called to pioneer work (planting/evangelism) or building work (pastoral care/discipleship), and how do you know?

## Interlinear Text

---

οὕτως	δὲ	φιλοτιμούμενον	εὐαγγελίζεσθαι	οὐχ	ὅπου
<b>so</b>	<b>Yea</b>	<b>have I strived</b>	<b>to preach the gospel</b>	<b>not</b>	<b>where</b>
G3779	G1161	G5389	G2097	G3756	G3699

ὠνομάσθη	Χριστός	ἵνα	μὴ	ἐπ'	ἀλλότριον	θεμέλιον
<b>was named</b>	<b>Christ</b>			<b>upon</b>	<b>another man's</b>	<b>foundation</b>
G3687	G5547	G2443	G3361	G1909	G245	G2310

οἰκοδομῶ

**I should build**

G3618