

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 15:23-33 - "Paul's Marvelous Ministry (Pt. 2)"

Romans 15:14-22, *"But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."*

We have come to the epilogue of Paul's great letter to the Romans, it is both personal and autobiographical. Having shared with the Roman Church his understanding of his special ministry to the Gentiles, Paul now looks into the future and lays out his travel plans.

Paul, at this point in his life, had an impressive list of missionary accomplishments, yet he had no intension of settling down into a comfortable retirement.

If you add up the miles of Paul's travel plans it would total a minimum of 3,000 miles.

What an example for us to follow!

1 Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*

There are many important lessons we can apply to our own lives.

I. Paul's Plans to visit Rome (vs. 23-24)

Romans 15:23-24, *"But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company."*

Paul for a long time had been hindered from coming to Rome but now the time seems to be right. And three factors have facilitated it:

1. The doors closed for him in the Eastern Mediterranean (vs. 23)

When God closes one door He often opens another.

Why?

Romans 15:20, *"...so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:"*

2. The God given desire (vs. 23b)

Notice it was a God given vision

Psalms 37:4, *"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."*

"... having a great desire these many years" (vs. 23)

This speaks to the need for persistence
Wait for God's timing

The key: the fulfillment of our desires are in God's hands.

A sustained desire over many years, which all the hindrances, frustrations, and disappointment, have not been able to quench, must surely have come from God.

What if it never happened?

It's better to have dreamed, and not see it happen, than to never to have dreamed at all.

3. Rome was a stepping-stone to Spain (vs. 24)

Lessons:

- Paul wanted the fellowship and support
- God provides through His people (not the world)
- We can't serve God alone!

II. Paul Plans to visit Jerusalem and then Spain (vs. 25-29)

Romans 15:25-29, *"But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."*

- A. Paul is talking about the offering taken among the Gentile churches of Macedonia (Northern Greece – Philippi – Thessalonica – Berea) and Achaia (Southern Greece – Corinth) for the poor saints in Jerusalem.
- B. Paul would be going 2,000 miles out of his way
- C. Lessons on Christian giving – we see how Paul viewed the offering.

1. It was a service to the saints in Jerusalem (vs. 25)

Minister – deacon or serve

James 2:15-17, *"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."*

2. The Gentiles were pleased to help out (vs. 26)

How about you?

3. The Gentiles were debtors to the Jews (vs. 27)

For us: 1 Corinthians 9:11, *"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"*

The offering was a humble, material, symbolic demonstration of their indebtedness.

4. It was seen as “fruit”.

Philippians 4:17, *“Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”*

5. It brings the fullness of blessings (vs. 29)

Luke 6:38, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”*

III. Paul requested prayer for his visit (vs. 30-32)

Romans 15:30-32, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.”*

A. Paul had said that he made mention of them always in his prayers.

Romans 1:9, *“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;”*

B. Paul asked them to pray for him – a common practice for him.

A reminder to pray for those who preach God's Word.

C. If Paul asked for prayer. It's because he knew it was useful, and effective.

James 5:16, *“...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*

D. Why don't we pray more?

Because prayer is difficult (vs. 30) strive together with me.

Illustration: Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46)

- We are in a spiritual battle
- Satan opposes us in prayer
- Our flesh fights us in prayer

E. The trinity and prayer (vs. 30)

What does Paul want them to pray for?

1. That he would be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea (vs. 31)

Paul had many enemies in Jerusalem

Why?

Because he was preaching to Gentiles

Paul was willing to die if need be.

Illustration: Paul in Caesarea – Agabus (Acts 21:8-14)

2. That his service will be accepted (vs. 31)

- A show of love and unity

3. For God's will (vs. 32)

Notice prayers true purpose – God's will

If so then, why pray?

a. it changes us

b. it's God's appointed means to victory and doing His will

James 4:3, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

What about Paul's three requests, did God answer them?

Yes, God always answers prayer, but not always the way we want Him to.

The second request we don't know about but the first and third requests we do.

God answers, but in His own way and in His own time.

Acts 21:14, *“And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”*

Paul's third Benediction (vs. 33) – *“...the God of peace be with you all...”*

Application for us:

1. Our ministries are not done until the Lord takes us home.
2. If God closes one door He will open another.
3. God often works His will through us by our desires.
4. We are debtors to those who minister to us spiritually.
5. God answers prayer – in His own way, and in His own time.