

## **34. ROMANS SERIES: Paul's Journey's and Future Plans**

### **Romans 15:14-33**

We are coming to the close of Paul's epistle to the Roman Church, so what we would expect to find at the end of a letter is exactly what we find at the end of this New Testament epistle. We find a number of personal remarks, greetings and salutations.

In the passage under consideration today, the Apostle Paul gives something of an autobiographical account of his ministry amongst the Gentiles. Yet he also gives an account of what his immediate and future plans are as well.

Please Read Romans 15:14-33

**Verse 14:** Having offered up a prayer for the believers to be granted the experience of the blessings they have in Christ, Paul states his confidence in the Roman church. This statement is what he personally believes concerning them, his beloved brethren. He had never met the majority of them, but he had heard plenty about them (1:8).

Paul knows that the believers in Rome are full of goodness, or generosity of heart and action (Gal 5:22; Eph 5:19; 2 Thess 1:11), and also of all knowledge, or practical discernment of all kind. They weren't perfect or infallible, yet they did have a mature understanding of the truth and its implications. This being so, Paul acknowledges that they are also able to bring the truth to bear on the minds and consciences of one another as the occasion called for it.

**Verses 15,16:** Though they have these things (15:14) and are able to admonish one another, Paul felt the need to remind them of certain principles, perhaps because some had forgotten the implications of them for their lives, or to simply keep these principles in the forefront of their minds due to the prevailing errors of the time. This he does in a spirit of love and concern, though with firmness (6:1ff; 11:20,21; 12:3; 13:1ff; 14:1ff).

He also has done this from a sense of duty and obedience to the Lord, in order to fulfil his ministry toward them as an apostle called by God (1:5; Eph 3:8). This was the rightful role that Paul was to take toward the Roman Church, for this was the ministry that God

had called him to. Paul is keen to fulfil his ministry, a ministry whose aim it is to offer the Gentiles to God as a willing sacrifice (Is 66:20; Rom 12:1) pleasing to Him, having been set apart and cleansed by the Holy Spirit unto Himself (1 Pet 2:5).

**QUESTION:** How does Paul's address to the Roman Church (15:14-16) provide an example for us?

**Verses 17-21:** In his ministry, Paul had an abundant reason to glory in Christ for the preaching and success of the gospel (1 Cor 15:9,10). God had borne abundant testimony to Paul as His called preacher, giving Paul no reason to claim the work of others as his own. Through the proclamation of the truth, in supernatural wonder producing signs (proof of his divine appointment and message), and the inner transforming work of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:4; Gal 3:2-5; Heb 2:5), there is now no further place for the foundation work from Jerusalem to Illyricum, thus completing his ministry in the east (Acts 13:1-14:26; 15:36-20:3). Paul's calling had been to establish churches where Christ was previously unknown (1 Cor 3:10), and thereby fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Is 52:15), and this he had done successfully in the east.

**Verses 22-24:** Paul's mission had been to make Christ known wherever He was not known in the eastern part of the Roman Empire (15:19-21). This aim therefore had prevented Paul from visiting the church in Rome, especially since a church was already established there. But now his eastern mission was completed and he had the opportunity to visit (1:10,11).

However Rome was not his primary objective, for keeping with his mission aim he was seeking to take the gospel to the western part of the empire, beginning with Spain. So Rome was a much-desired stop over, but also perhaps his headquarters for the western mission work. Paul sought to enlist the Church of Rome in this enterprise, seeking practical help from them for this work.

**NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE:** Explain the idea expressed in Romans 15:27?

**Verses 25-27:** Before Paul heads west he must first go east to Jerusalem in order to deliver to the saints there the financial aid given by the churches throughout the east. The churches of Macedonia and Achaia had entrusted Paul with financial aid to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem. This was something they had voluntarily did, recognizing their debt to the Jews for the gospel, and wanting to acknowledge their indebtedness to them for it.

The Gentiles had received from the Jews the gospel, therefore the debt of gratitude demanded material aid to the suffering Jews, from whom they had received much blessing. Without the Jews there would have been no good news for the nations, and this

the Gentiles recognized.

**Verse 28:** Paul's aim therefore, was to perform the entrusted task at Jerusalem and then to travel to Spain via Rome. But did this plan come about? There is no historical record of it being so, however early church writers assume that it did happen. Certainly Paul's arrest and imprisonment greatly affected his plans.

Paul saw the financial aid package as a seal or confirmation of his work among the Gentiles. This display of sincere gratitude toward the Jews was surely evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these Gentile Christians. It would also prove to the Jewish believers the genuineness and sincerity of the Gentile believers who were now part of the church with them.

**Verse 29:** Paul does know that when he arrives in Rome, it will be with the full measure of gospel blessings. This is possibly a reference to that spoken of earlier in this epistle by Paul in Romans 1:11,12.

**Verses 30-32:** In these verses Paul pleads with the Roman church that they pray for him, out of regard to the Lord Jesus Christ and because of the bond between them brought about by the Holy Spirit. He requests three things for prayer:

1. That the Lord would deliver him from the unbelieving Jews in Judea who seek his life (remember that he was being constantly told of this on his journey to Jerusalem).
2. That the Christians in Jerusalem might favourably receive the financial aid package (He was concerned that they might be prejudiced against the Gentile Christians).
3. That he may be able to travel to Rome according to the purpose of God, with joy, and be strengthened there with the believers.

**Verse 33:** Paul here offers up a prayer for the church at Rome, that God the Author and Source of peace might grant the experience of true peace to the church there.

## INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

Explain the significance of Romans 16:13?

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