

Pushing the Mission as Far as Possible (15:22-24)

15:22 *For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;* 15:23 *but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you*
15:24 *whenever I go to Spain - for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while...*

No Further Place

- 15:22 repeats 1:13, creating a book-end that helps remind us of the context of the entire letter.
- “...I have often been prevented...” (15:22) is called a “divine passive.” In the Bible, when someone is acted upon and no actor is described, it’s often God.¹ Because of Paul’s previous mission (described in 15:19,20) God had not fulfilled the apostle’s desire to visit the believers in Rome. Notice Paul says “often.”
- READ Proverbs 16:9.

Paul’s Aim: Empire’s Border

- Paul’s desire to make it to the western border of the Empire is in line with Christ’s purpose in sending us the Holy Spirit from heaven, that we would be His “witnesses...even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
- How can we be involved in similar ministry?
 1. Go. Our second mission team of the year is now in Senegal, and, Lord willing, another will go in February 2018. Our membership has also been involved in other international missions.
 2. If you can’t go, give financially and commit to pray.

¹ “The passive is also used when God is the obvious agent...that God is behind the scenes is self-evidently part of the worldview of the NT writers. The nature of this book demands that we see him even when he is not mentioned.” Daniel B. Wallace, in *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 437-438.

3. We are Southern Baptist; we cooperatively give with other Southern Baptists to reach our county, state, continent, and the world every week. We are working on Operation: Christmas Child boxes now, which is a great way to touch the world for Christ!
4. Digitally. “...you are not your own...you have been bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20), and therefore your social media activity is not yours, either. It belongs to Jesus. Are you using it in a way to reach the world for Him?
READ 2 Corinthians 5:14,15.

The Church in Rome as Mission’s Home Base

- 94 Sundays ago we started worshiping together through this letter; on that Lord’s Day I told you “**Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to unify the local church for global mission through the right understanding and application of the Gospel.**”

Paul’s Current Mission (15:25-27)

15:25...but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. 15:26 *For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.* 15:27 *Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.*

The Threefold Nature of Christian Giving

- Paul uses three different words to describe giving in this section:
 1. “...I am going to Jerusalem **to serve** [διακονῶν, from διακονέω] *the saints*” (15:25). This word (from which we get our word “deacon”) emphasizes the meeting another’s need.
 2. “...Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make **a contribution** [κοινωνία, from

κοινωνία]” (15:26). This word, which also means “fellowship,” emphasizes the sharing or community involved in the offering.² True fellowship in the Church only occurs when we are willing to share to help others in the family of faith.

3. “...they are indebted **to minister** [λειτουργῆσαι, from λειτουργέω] **to them also in material things**” (15:27). This word (from which we get our word “liturgy”) emphasizes the religious or worship aspect to the gift. This offering to help others is an expression of our worship to God.

Churches Serving Churches

- During this time (around A.D. 46-48) there was a famine in Judea, and churches throughout the Roman Empire took up an offering to assist them. This offering is described here in Paul’s letter to the Romans, but also in several other passages: Acts 11:27-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9.
- Notice that “Macedonia and Achaia” were “pleased” to give (15:26). READ 2 Corinthians 9:7, where Paul is urging the Achaians to give in a cheerful way. Further, “the churches of Macedonia,” despite their “deep poverty,” begged Paul for the opportunity to give to this offering (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
- Paul compares this offering to Christ’s own incarnation (2 Corinthians 8:9); in other words, Christ emptied Himself of the right to the richness of being the

eternal Son of God to become one of us, with the goal of saving us who could not help ourselves.³

Honoring Those Who Came Before

- The Gospel mission started in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1:8), and so it is appropriate for those who benefited from it to help them financially.⁴
- Paul likely understood this financial support of the Christians in Judea to be a fulfillment of the O.T. prophecies of the Gentiles sending their wealth to Jerusalem.⁵

Bringing the Blessing of Christ (15:28,29)

15:28 *Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.* 15:29 *I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*

- Paul’s coming “in the fullness of the blessing of Christ,” in the context of his goal of global mission, points to God’s promise, through the multiplying of Abraham, to bless “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:1-3). Paul calls this promise “the Gospel” (Galatians 3:8).
- The fullness of being blessed in Christ comes when we are zealous for making Him known in all places. This is why Paul wrote this letter: so the Romans would deeply know and apply the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

³ The Son did not empty Himself of His divinity in the incarnation; He cannot cease to be what He has eternally been: fully and truly God. He did empty Himself of the rights and privileges of being God. Paul, in describing this, urges us to humble ourselves with each other in the same way (Philippians 2:1-18).

⁴ Paul makes a similar argument in teaching the need to support Gospel ministers (1 Corinthians 9:11,14; Galatians 6:6-10).

⁵ For example, see Isaiah 45:14; 60:5-17; 61:6.

² See Acts 2:44,45; Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:15 for similar uses of this word. The N.T. says that true Christian faith involves helping other believers in their physical needs (James 2:14-26; 1 John 3:16,17).