

## Looking forward to Rome # 51

Romans 15: 22-29

After much encouragement, admonition, and godly instruction, Paul shares his desire with the church in Rome to make his journey there and meet them face to face. He had traveled over vast regions of the world, preaching the Gospel and establishing churches, and yet he had never made it Rome. He was thankful for the church there and the great work they were doing for the Lord, but he also realized there was great potential for increased fruit within the city.

As I considered this heartfelt word from Paul, I thought of the many accomplishments he had already made. Churches had been established throughout the world, due in large part to his personal efforts and obedience to the Lord, and yet he was not satisfied. Paul sensed the great need to make it Rome and the urgency at hand. He did not desire to visit Rome as a tourist or spectator, but as a missionary of the Gospel. He longed to see more individuals come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Many of us are not as well traveled as Paul, but that is no reason to avoid sharing the Gospel and living for the Lord. We are all strangers and pilgrims as we journey through this life. This world is not our home; we are simply passing through to that eternal homeland of the soul. However, as we journey, we must maintain an eternal perspective through a spiritual lens. Hopefully this passage will enlighten and challenge us as we walk this road of life. I want to consider the [details](#) within the text as we think on: [Looking forward to Rome](#).

**I. Paul's Desire for Rome** (22-24) – These verses reveal Paul's earnest desire to visit Rome and personally greet the church there. He wanted to come alongside them in ministry. Consider:

**A. His Adversity** (22) – [For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you](#). Paul had shared his desire to visit them in chapter one and he reminds them again of this desire. He had purposed to come them on other occasions and was hindered from doing so. His plans to visit had not worked out as he desired, but Paul had not lost hope or abandoned his plans to come.

- There were times when Satan hindered Paul and on other occasions the timing wasn't right, but Paul was not dismayed. He never viewed a delay as utter defeat. He maintained his perspective and continued to pursue coming to them. There will be times when we face adversity and delay, but even then we must not abandon the work. If we will remain faithful, God will work in His time according to His divine will.

**B. His Accomplishments** (23) – *But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you...* Paul does not imply that there was nothing left to do in the areas he had visited or within the churches he had planted. He does not imply that there were no more souls in need of salvation outside of Rome, but that his mission had been completed in these areas. He earnestly desired to make it Rome in order to minister there. We see his willingness to follow the Lord and his sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit.

- There is a great lesson for us here. There will always be a work to do for the Lord. If we are honest, we never feel as if we have accomplished enough or as if our efforts have been adequate. There will always be something else to do: another person to reach, another visit to make, another young believer to disciple, and so forth. However, we must be sensitive to the leadership of the Spirit. We must be willing to follow God wherever He leads, allowing Him to set the course and agenda for our lives. Let us live our lives in light of God's desire and plans instead of our own!

**C. His Ambition** (24) – *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 was always looking forward and planning ahead. His desire was to spend time with the church at Rome, but did not view Rome as the final destination in ministry. Having a heart for all people, everywhere, Paul earnestly desired to visit Spain after spending time in Rome. He had no plans to neglect the church in Rome, but Paul always had his eye on the prize; he always kept the big picture in view.

- Isn't that challenging? We often get so caught up in the current demands and situations of our present work that we fail to see the big picture. We must be willing to look beyond the needs of our Sunday school class. We need to have more in mind than this week or this church year. We need to develop a vision for the greater plans God has for us. We must be willing to look beyond the walls of our church, its current ministries, and the needs of those here today. We need to grasp the work God has for us in the future, seeking to prepare ourselves and others for the work to come! There is more to engage in than what we currently see. I am convinced God has more for us than any of us realize at this present moment!

**II. Paul's Direction toward Rome** (25-27) – Here he reveals the path he will take as he makes his way toward Rome. He mentions:

**A. His Plans** (25) – *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.* Before traveling to Rome, Paul planned to go to Jerusalem in order to minister to the saints there. Although he had a burning desire to visit Rome, he was committed to the church at large. He was committed to following the

direction of the Lord instead of fulfilling personal wishes and desires. He had not forgotten the influence of the Jerusalem church in the lives of those who ministered unto him following his conversion. He remembered the grace shown to him by those within the church there. His roots were in Jerusalem and he was committed to their wellbeing as well.

- This serves as a challenge for us as well. Like the old saying goes: I never want to get above my raising. I remain thankful for those who influenced me in the faith. I am thankful for the prayers they prayed and their guidance for a young believer in the faith. I will always be thankful for my home church and those who labored faithfully for the Lord during my time there!

**B. His Provision** (26) – [For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.](#) The church in Jerusalem had fallen on hard times. The saints were struggling and the churches in Macedonia and Achaia had taken an offering to help them. Paul was determined to ensure this much needed gift was delivered to the church in Jerusalem. He felt it was of such importance that he could not entrust this mission to another. He felt compelled to make the trip and deliver the offering in person.

- This is a quite interesting scenario. Pentecost took place in Jerusalem. The church was born in Jerusalem. She was the mother church from which the other churches had been born. They were all planted through the efforts of missionaries sent out from Jerusalem. Now she stood in need of help, and the churches born through her efforts met the challenge. They likely didn't have the influence or notoriety of Jerusalem, but they could help by giving. They did what they could and the Lord blessed their efforts. We all have varied gifts and abilities, and we all have the ability to give of ourselves for the good of others!

**C. His Purpose** (27) – [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.](#) Paul revealed the reason for his journey to Jerusalem was fitting and right. The Gentile churches had benefited greatly through the spiritual contributions of the Jerusalem church and they were indebted to them for their gracious provision. They were established through the efforts and faithfulness of Jerusalem and were obligated to help them in any way they could, even monetarily.

- In our age of self-dependence and arrogance we often lose sight of this truth. Whether we want to admit it or not, we are indebted to those who were faithful in serving the Lord, influencing our salvation. Primarily we are indebted to the Lord for His great sacrifice on our behalf, but we are also indebted to those who sacrificed to meet our spiritual need. We may not like it, but this passage reveals our obligation to support the church financially for what she has done for us spiritually! Where would you be today had it not been for the faithfulness of the church?

**III. Paul's Devotion to Rome (28-29)** – Although he was not planning to come immediately, Paul intended to make it Rome. He reveals that commitment to them. Consider:

**A. The Example (28a)** – *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.* As bad as Paul wanted to visit the church in Rome, he would not allow his personal desires hinder the work he was expected to perform. He understood the need for him in Rome, but the need in Jerusalem was greater. Paul lived a godly example before the Roman believers. His witness revealed he would never forsake the church regardless of personal desires. His devotion to the church in Jerusalem was unwavering and they would receive no less when he made it to Rome. He was content to serve the Lord according to His divine plan, even if that meant placing his personal desires on hold. He maintained a proper focus.

- The church desperately needs those who are content to bloom where the Lord has planted them. Many cannot focus on the assigned task because they are too busy seeking something else to do. Many pastors can't serve a church effectively because they haven't given them their full devotion. They are always looking for the next opportunity or a perceived bigger work. Let us be faithful to the task at hand as long as it pleases God to leave us there. When He has another work for us to do, He will make that clear.

**B. The Expectation (29)** – *And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.* Paul fully expected a fruitful ministry when he finally arrived in Rome. He knew if he followed the direction of the Lord, he would arrive in Rome according to God's timing and plan. This would ensure the fullest of blessing for him and the church as well. He knew when God was allowed to orchestrate lives and ministries, blessings would follow.

- None of us knows what our future holds or where the Lord may lead us. We can't predict where or how we will be serving the Lord in the future, but we can be assured of His blessing and power if we will walk with Him according to His will for our lives. That offers great comfort and assurance. As the Lord leads our lives, He equips and prepares us for what we will encounter. There is peace and security walking with the Lord.

**Conclusion:** The majority of us will likely not minister in foreign lands, but that doesn't mean the Lord doesn't have a plan and purpose for our lives. He has placed us where it pleased Him and He will provide all we need to serve in this particular setting. We must be sensitive to His leading and willing to follow as He guides. We have received much and are expected to give of our abundance for others. Are you willing to serve at the bidding of the Master? Have you met Christ in salvation? If not, seek Him and respond to His will for your life!