

The Heart for Ministry (15:14-33)

- In Romans 15:14-16:27, Paul turns to matters like his reason for writing, his travel plans, and sending greetings to people he knows. One of the great things that becomes clear about this man of God from this passage is the fact that Paul has a heart for the lost. Paul has a deep, burning desire to see men saved. Paul's heart for the ministry becomes very clear. He wanted men to know the same Jesus he himself knew so well.

1. Paul's Purpose for Writing (15:14-21)

- Paul commends the Roman believers for 3 qualities: they are "*full of goodness*" (goodness of disposition) and filled with "*all knowledge*" (ie., instructed in doctrines). Because of these qualities, they can "*admonish*" (to instruct or counsel) one another.
- At the same time, Paul acknowledges that he has written rather boldly. Paul faithfully and boldly gave to them the whole counsel of God. The reason for this boldness is that he has been called to the ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal 2:9). It is amazing that God chose a Jewish rabbi, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee to be the apostle to the Gentiles.
- Paul defines his ministry as "*ministering the gospel of God....*" - it is conceived of after the pattern of priestly offering. Paul describes the Gentiles who would be saved through his ministry as the offering or sacrifice that he as a priest would make. To him, service in the gospel is an act of worship. When the Gentiles live their lives glorifying God, their offering to God is acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Gentiles are accepted by God and are holy in the fullest sense. The only fruit God recognizes is that which is accomplished by the Spirit's working.
- As Paul considers his call to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, he can glory in God that he has received such a call. God has moved the hearts of men because of his preaching. Yet it is what Christ has wrought through him, not what he has wrought personally. Paul sees himself, in the scheme of things, as an instrument in the hands of Christ. Through him, Christ has made the Gentiles obedient in the faith. The power of Paul's ministry was confirmed by signs and wonders (cf Acts 13:6-12; 14:1-3; 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 19:11-16). He regards them as "signs of an apostle" - confirming the preaching of the gospel (2 Cor 12:12). When the NT Scriptures were completed, signs were no longer needed, and they passed out of existence.
- From Jerusalem to Illyricum, Paul has preached the gospel and has seen the fruit of his labour. Paul planted churches in strategic cities, so that from these cities the gospel could go out into the surrounding areas (cf Acts 19:10). Paul followed a certain policy in his gospel ministry. His calling was to go to the unevangelized areas with the gospel, to do pioneering work for the Lord. Paul sees his pioneering heart as obedience to the Scriptures. Isaiah 52:15 reveals that the

gospel should be preached to the Gentiles; and he regards it as a high honour to be the instrument of carrying this prophecy into effect.

2. Paul's Plans for Travelling (15:22-29)

- Paul tells of his immediate and his future plans:
 - For some time, Paul wanted to go to Rome (1:10-12). But up to the time he wrote this letter, he has been hindered from doing so (1:13). At last, his work is finished in the areas he ministered, and he is now prepared to penetrate some new regions and lay the foundation of other churches.
 - Rome lies in the path of Paul's next missionary venture – all the way to Spain. He would stop at Rome on the way there. Paul hopes that the Roman believers will assist him on his journey.
- But before Paul could take his trip to Spain by way of Rome, there is something he has to do (Acts 19:21). He is carrying some funds designated for the poor saints of Jerusalem, funds given by the churches of Macedonia (northern Greece) and Achaia (southern Greece). The Gentile believers were pleased to give such a gift to the poor Jewish brethren. They did it willingly, not of necessity (2 Cor 9:7). In Paul's mind their financial gift was appropriate. Paul evidently sees the offering as symbolizing the unity of believers. These Gentiles owed their salvation to the Jews, ie. the salvation of Christ has its roots in the Jews. It is only fitting that Gentiles should minister to Jews in "carnal" (or, material) things. When this is done, Paul would go by Rome on the way to Spain.
- Paul would indeed head for Rome after his time in Jerusalem, but not in the way he planned. He went to Rome as a prisoner! Whether Paul ever got to Spain is uncertain. Nevertheless, whatever happens, Paul is sure of the blessing of the Lord in doing His work.

3. Paul's Plea for Prayer (15:30-33)

- Romans 15 closes with a plea for the believers in Rome to pray for him (cf 2 Cor 1:11; Eph 6:18-19; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1). We have the privilege and responsibility of being part of the ministry and the work of others by praying earnestly for them. Paul uses 2 motives for prayer:
 - "*for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake,*" which is an appeal to Christ's authority (Matt 28:18).
 - "*for the love of the Spirit*" - Paul is saying, 'If the Holy Spirit has produced His fruit of love in you, show that love by striving together with me in your prayers to God for me.'
- Paul specifically requested prayers for 3 items:
 - First, for his immediate enterprise of going to Jerusalem (v31a) - to be protected from the unbelieving Jews in Judea. He knew that he would be in danger, and subsequent events confirmed the fear (Acts 21:27-32). The unbelieving Jews in Judea had been opposed to Paul's conversion. False

reports had been circulated about Paul and his ministry. When Paul went to Jerusalem, he found himself in the midst of an angry Jewish mob that was determined to kill him. It is remarkable that he escaped with his life (Acts 21-23).

- Second, Paul wanted the Roman believers to pray that the gift he is taking would be received by the Christians in Jerusalem (v31b). Many, even among Christians, might be prejudiced against the apostle from the reports constantly in circulation among the Jews that he was opposing the customs of Moses. In addition, many of the converts from Judaism might be unwilling to receive an offering given by "Gentiles."
- The 3rd item for prayer relates to his coming to Rome (v32) - to arrive in Rome by the will of God. No matter how strongly he wanted to go, he left it all in the sovereign hands of God (James 4:14-15). Man proposes but God disposes. Paul did go to Rome by the will of God; but he went in bonds. He arrived in chains as a Roman prisoner, but it was in God's will, and it was for "*the furtherance of the gospel*" (Phil 1:12). Paul came to Rome with joy (Acts 28:14-15).
- All three requests were answered! God answers every prayer. But Paul's prayers were answered differently. He was not delivered from those in Judea; he was delivered to those in Judea. He was then delivered to the Romans. God got him to Rome as a prisoner and a preacher!

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