



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 48



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

PLANNING TO COME TO ROME

15:22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴ whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. ²⁵ But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷ It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸ Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. ²⁹ But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. ³⁰ Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, ³¹ that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. ^{NKJV} (Romans 15:22-33)

INTRODUCTION

When one is called into the service of King Jesus, everything changes. The dominant consideration is the stewardship that has been assigned, or the ministry to which the individual has been called. The commissioning of the prophets of old was an example of this. When Moses was called of God, he was keeping a flock of sheep on "the backside of the desert" (Ex 3:1). After his Divine calling, he became

absorbed with a different work, energetically pursuing his new leadership role for the next eighty years. He never kept sheep again. When Elisha was called, he was plowing "with twelve yoke of oxen before him" (1 Kgs 19:19). After his calling, he slew the yoke of oxen, boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, never again to return to plowing. When David was called to be the ruler of the

people of God, he was taken "from the sheeppcote, even from following the sheep" (1 Chron 17:7). That ended his career as a shepherd. When Amos was called, he was "among the herdmen of Tekoa," and a "gatherer of sycamore fruit" (Amos 1:1; 7:14). God took him from those involvements, and from then on he was known as a prophet of God. Prior to entering into His earthly ministry, Jesus

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OUTLINE

- < MUCH HINDERED (15:22)
- < A GREAT DESIRE (15:23)
- < JOURNEYS, HELP, AND ENJOYMENT (15:24)
- < PLANS TO MINISTER (15:25-28)
- < THE FULNESS OF THE BLESSING (15:29)
- < STRIVING IN PRAYER FOR A PURPOSE (15:30-33)
- < THE GOD OF PEACE (15:33)

was known as *“the carpenter”* (Mark 6:3). But after His baptism, He was no longer in the carpenter shop. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen when Jesus called them (Matt 4:18-22). They were never again known as fishermen. When Matthew was called, he was *“sitting at the receipt of customs”* (Matt 9:9). When called, he left that seat to follow Jesus, and never returned there again. These things are not coincidence.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

When Paul, then Saul of Tarsus, was called by Jesus into the Apostleship, he *“lived a Pharisee”* (Acts 26:5), excelling his equals, and zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal 1:14). But after Jesus called him, he never again was known as a Pharisee. He did not return to that elite

group, occupying his former position with a new testimony. Now he poured his heart and soul into the *“high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil 3:14). He became a *“living sacrifice”* to his God, being willing to *“very gladly spend and be spent”* for the sake of God’s people (2 Cor 12:15).

On One occasion, he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla because he was *“of the same trade”* as them, being tent makers. But Paul was not known as a tentmaker. If it was not for that solitary reference, we would never have known he made tents. That was not his primary work, with the Apostleship being on the side, so to speak. **He never wrote of making tents, or urged others to make tents. Jesus did not call him to make tents, but sent him to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”** (Acts 26:18). He labored with his hands to confirm he did not come to be served, and out of personal necessity. That was never his preference, focus, or emphasis. **He never neglected his Apostleship to earn a living!** When he worked with his hands, it was in order to the fulfillment of his higher calling.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

If we are to receive the real message of Scripture, it is important to know these things. The driving compulsion of Paul

was to fulfill his Apostleship – to be a faithful steward. Jesus gave him a message to deliver, making him an ambassador, and he labored to deliver it.

The relevance of this is that **Paul’s message was really a word from Jesus to the churches.** He was not delivering his own words, but the ones that were given to him. When he prayed for the churches, he did so with the heart of Jesus. When he had concern for the churches, he was reflecting the mind of Christ. He was driven by a heavenly agenda, not an earthly one, or one he himself conceived.

Paul will now share his fervent desire to be with the brethren in Rome. That desire was not driven by a fleshly association with them, for that did not exist. It was not because he had labored there, for he had not yet been to Rome. Rather, it was a keen sense of the stewardship of the things he had been given to see. **He knew those realities were designed to establish the saints, giving them a fuller grasp of the magnitude of salvation.**

Paul was a *“minister of Christ”* and a *“steward of the mysteries of God”* – things previously veiled to the sons of men (1 Cor 4:1; 2:7; Eph 3:4-5), but now revealed by the grace of God. He was diligent in allowing the river to flow out of his belly (John 7:37-39), pouring forth a message of life to the Gentile world. **He did not allow flesh to stop that flow.**

MUCH HINDERED

“ 15:22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.” Paul has already expressed his fervent desire to be with the brethren in Rome. Regularly in his prayers, he declared, he made *“request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.”* Having heard of their faith and love, he said *“I long to see you”* (1:10-11). Later he will say this desire had been with him *“for many years”* (v 23). Was all of this mere words – a mere fleshly politeness with no real substance?

Paul will now confirm this is not the case at all. **He did not merely have occasional and surface desires to be**

In this, Paul was *reflecting “the mind of Christ”* and of God. The Father and the Son do not speak casually about

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their desires for us. Ponder the Father saying, *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD,*

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thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer 29:11). Consider also the words of Jesus. “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). Those are revelations of the heart of the Father and the Son.

Those who have the Spirit of God speak in the same manner. They speak from their hearts, their conscience bearing them witness in the Holy Spirit (Rom 9:1). Professional courtesy, of whatever value it may be, is not given a place of prominence in the Kingdom of God. Valid speaking is driven by the “spirit of faith” (2 Cor 4:13), not a sense of social propriety. The words, therefore, of Paul were a very real depiction of his

These represent the cause Paul will now elaborate. That “cause,” or reason, related to his commission from Christ. **While his person entered into it, the cause was driven by a Divine agenda, not a personal one.** Like Christ, his meat was to do the will of Him who sent him (John 4:34). His desires for the brethren at Rome were not the result of knowing them after the flesh, but perceiving them in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

MUCH HINDERED

“I have been much hindered in coming to you.” Other versions read, “I have often been hindered,”^{NASB} “I have so often been hindered,”^{NRSV} “I was frequently kept from,”^{BBE} “I have so often been prevented,”^{NAB} and “my visit to you has been delayed so long.”^{NLT} **Paul’s intentions had been frequently**

manner of seemingly effective opposition. A brief rehearsal of some of these instances will serve to confirm this to your heart.

- ☐ Abel was killed by Cain because God accepted his offering, but rejected Cain’s (Gen 4:8).
- ☐ Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen 37:28), and put into prison because of a false accusation (Gen 39:20).
- ☐ Moses was opposed by the people he was leading to the promised land (Ex 17:4).
- ☐ David was forced to flee by king Saul (1 Sam 19:11-12; 21:10), and even from his own son Absalom (2 Sam 15:14).
- ☐ God’s prophets were murdered by wicked queen Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4).
- ☐ Elijah was forced to flee for his life from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-3).
- ☐ Micaiah the prophet was imprisoned by the king of Israel (1 Kings 22:26).
- ☐ Zechariah the prophet was stoned in the king’s court by the people to whom he prophesied (2 Chron 24:21).
- ☐ Job lost all of his possessions (Job 1:13-22), was afflicted with boils (Job 2:7), and scorned by his friends (Job 16:20).
- ☐ Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon, and sank into it’s mire (Jer 38:6).
- ☐ Uriaah the priest was brought out of Egypt by king Jehoiakim and slain with the sword (Jer 26:23).
- ☐ John the Baptist was beheaded by wicked Herod (Matt 14:10-11).
- ☐ Herod also killed James, the brother of John, with the sword (Acts 12:2).
- ☐ Stephen was stoned by his own countryman (Acts 7:59).
- ☐ Timothy was imprisoned (Heb 13:23).

Paul’s Experiences

In addition to these noble saints, we know something of the hardships faced by the Apostle Paul WHILE he was engaged in his Apostolic ministry. Hindrance was no stranger to him!

- ☐ Enemies forced Paul to escape from angry Jews in Damascus by being let down over a wall in a basket (Acts 9:25).
- ☐ He was expelled from the coasts near Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50).
- ☐ Because of hateful Jews, Paul was forced to flee from Iconium to Lystra and Derby (Acts 14:6).
- ☐ He was stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19).

The servants of God have always met with resistance, delays, and all manner of seemingly effective opposition. A brief rehearsal of some of these instances will serve to confirm this to your heart.

heart, even though they often appeared to contradict that fact. He will now explain why he was not able to do what his heart desired, i.e., come to Rome.

FOR THIS REASON

“For this reason . . . ” Other versions read, and “For which cause,”^{KJV} “This is why.”^{NIV} The “cause” or “reason” to which he refers is what he has said about his apostleship.

- ☐ “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.” (v 16a)
- ☐ “Ministering the Gospel of God.” (v 16b)
- ☐ “That the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (v 16c)
- ☐ “To make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.” (v 18)
- ☐ “I have made it my aim to preach the gospel.” (v 20)

blocked, even though they were noble, and in full accord with his calling. Many different times he had intended to come to them for honorable purposes, but he was kept from fulfilling those worthy intentions.

Right here we see a vital aspect of spiritual life. Religious hucksters, particularly in America, are fond of promoting distorted views of life in Christ. Often it is represented as a triumphant life in which all of your desires are met, and authority over surrounding circumstances is continually realized. While this view of things sounds pleasant enough, it summons a dishonest spirit into the arena of life. This is simply not the way life in Christ is lived, and it is nowhere represented in that manner.

The Manner of the Kingdom

The servants of God have always met with resistance, delays, and all

- ▶ He was beaten and cast into prison in Philippi (Acts 16:23).
- ▶ Because of fierce opposition, Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica (Acts 17:10).
- ▶ He was forced to leave Berea because of the aggressive hatred of Jews from Thessalonica (Acts 17:13-15).
- ▶ In Corinth, Paul was brought before Gallio by the Jews, who accused him falsely (Acts 18:12).
- ▶ In Caesarea, he was confined to Herod's judgment hall (Acts 23:35).
- ▶ He was held bound in custody for two years (Acts 24:27).
- ▶ In his trip to Rome as a prisoner, he was delayed for three months in Melita (Acts 28:11-16).
- ▶ While in Asia, he was so opposed that he even despaired of life (2 Cor 1:8).
- ▶ Paul was shamefully treated by the unbelieving Jews at Philippi (1 Thess 2:2).
- ▶ Hew was beaten five times with 39 stripes, beaten with rods three times, three times suffered shipwreck, and spent a day and a night in the open sea (2 Cor 11:24-25).
- ▶ He was subjected to perils of waters, robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren (2 Cor 11:26).
- ▶ He experienced weariness, painfulness, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, being without food, and being cold and naked (2 Cor 11:27).
- ▶ Paul was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to buffet him – a thorn that was not removed but could only be offset with grace from Christ (2 Cor 12:7-9).
- ▶ He was troubled on every side, persecuted, and cast down (2 Cor 4:8-9).
- ▶ He fought with wild beasts in Ephesus (1 Cor 15:32).
- ▶ When first attempting to preach the Word in Asia, he was forbidden by the

- Holy Spirit to do so (Acts 16:6).
- ▶ When he tried to enter into Bythina to preach the Gospel, the Spirit of Jesus would not allow him to do so (Acts 16:7).
- ▶ When he was determined to leave Corinth because of the opposition endured there, Jesus told him to stay, because He had “*much people*” there (Acts 18:6-10).

Simplistic and fundamentally dishonest views about the triumph of the believer are not to be entertained. Although such views are vigorously promoted among Western charlatans, they are false, and conform neither to Scripture nor spiritual understanding. With care, the saints should avoid embracing views promoted by those who are dominated by the flesh. Such views bring no benefits with them.

The fact that one is doing the will of God, and that He that is in them is greater than he that is in the

objectives, he was “*hindered.*”

I Was Hindered

At the very first of this letter, Paul told the brethren in Rome of his thwarted intentions. “*And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far)*” (1:13). It is quite true that some of this hindering was due to him being redirected to other areas by the Holy Spirit, as in Acts 16:6-7. However, Satan himself also hindered Paul, even when his desires were noble. To the Thessalonians he wrote, “*Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us*” (1 Thess 2:18).

The words “*much hindered*” include the idea of frequency as well as pervasiveness. Thus the NRSV reads, “*I have so often been hindered from coming to you.*” Other versions read “*hindered many times,*”^{YLT} and “*frequently kept*

Yet, Paul did not conclude that it must not be God's will for him to come to Rome. He continued to entertain this strong desire, even though it was thwarted again and again.

world, does not mean obstacles are all instantly removed. Our text is a case in point. Keep in mind that Paul was no ordinary man. He was the premier Apostle, having “*labored more abundantly than they all*” (1 Cor 15:10). His devotion to the Lord and commitment to His cause was unparalleled (Phil 3:8-14). His objectives and motives were pure and unmingled with selfish desires. The Holy Spirit bore witness to his integrity (Rom 9:1). Yet, he confesses that, in his noble

from.”^{BBE} **Yet, Paul did not conclude that it must not be God's will for him to come to Rome.** He continued to entertain this strong desire, even though it was thwarted again and again.

It is commendable when men and women of God entertain strong desires for good. It is also good when they retain them, waiting patiently for the Lord, and not abandoning them in despair. Honorable aspirations are to be kept.

A GREAT DESIRE

“²³ But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you.”The maintenance of godly

desires assist the soul to remain alert. **The people of God must not let go of godly and honorable ambitions, even though they appear to be frustrated**

on every hand. It is God's manner to “*bear long*” with His children before granting some of their desires (Luke 18:7). We should be familiar with this manner.

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NO LONGER HAVING A PLACE

“But now no longer having a place in these parts . . .” Other versions read, *“with no further place for me in these regions,”*^{NASB} *“there is no more place for me to work in these regions,”*^{NIV} *“since I no longer have any opportunity in these regions,”*^{NAB} *“now I have finished my work in these regions,”*^{NLT} and *“there is nothing more to keep me in these parts.”*^{NJB}

The candor with which Paul speaks is quite arresting. He can speak openly with the brethren in Rome because of the excellence of their faith and love. The Apostle is not speaking of persecution, as though he was finally being driven from that region, as he was from other places. Rather, he had *“fully preached”* the Gospel through those regions, planting the Seed of the Kingdom in every major city *“from Jerusalem to Illyricum.”* New churches had sprung up, and he had revisited brethren *“in every city”* where he had preached the Word of God, confirming them in the faith (Acts 15:36). He had fulfilled his work there.

believers, whereas before he had majored on speaking where Jesus had not been named. It was the same Gospel, but would open the things of God further to those who had already been joined to the Lord.

Those who are *“workers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9) should not easily be discouraged. They should rather be strong in the Lord. Nor, indeed, should they assume that the absence of opportunity means there is nothing more for them to do. They should rather search their hearts, seeking to fulfill godly desires, and being alert for further opportunities.

DESIRING FOR MANY YEARS

“. . . and having a great desire these many years to come unto you.” One version reads, *“I have been longing for many years to see you.”* Although the desire had not been granted, yet Paul maintained it *“for many years!”*

An impatient age, such as the one in which we live, knows nothing of such tenacity of soul! Lethargic souls cannot

(Psa 37:7). Do not be surprised if something you have longed to do for the Lord has remained unsatisfied for a long season! That is not reason to conclude that you have wanted the wrong thing. Paul kept his desire to go to Rome for *“many YEARS!”* He did not abandon the desire, for it was a good one, in keeping with his calling and the grace that had been given to him. He kept alert, and now, years later, it appeared as though the desire would finally be realized. Faith and hope have their own unique rewards.

Paul was busy during the *“many years”* this desire was not granted. He continued toiling in the fields, all the while waiting for an opportunity for this desire to come to pass. **I have no confidence in a way of thinking that leads a person into inactivity while he waits for his desires to be answered.** Such a posture does not bring honor to God, and actually robs the soul, putting it to sleep.

Holy desires cannot be nurtured and kept in an inactive environment. This is precisely why many souls have dropped into the pit of despair and ultimate unbelief. Rather than waiting patiently for the Lord, they gave up when their desires were not met immediately. Such poor souls forget that Noah had to wait one hundred and twenty years to be delivered from a wicked generation. And, he had to work diligently in the preparation of the ark all that time.

Let us have done with attitudes that interpret delay as a sign of hopelessness, or a lack of Divine approval. If the path is not smooth, let no person conclude it is wrong. Also, if we cannot do things we really desire to do, let us not sit down and pine away as though there was nothing else to do. Better to do everything we can where we are at, bringing honor to the Lord, and satisfaction to the soul. **There is no point in the life of faith when idleness is consecrated.**

The candor with which Paul speaks is quite arresting. He can speak openly with the brethren in Rome because of the excellence of their faith and love.

Now, because he did not desire to build on another man’s foundation, he began to look for other places to go. Rome immediately comes to his mind, for he has long desired to go there and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul did not imagine that his ministry was concluded, but that no further opportunity existed in that region. One further note of interest can be found in this text. He now seeks to minister to

keep a godly desire for a day or two, but are easily moved away from it by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. **A person who is not willing to wait for the blessing is not apt to receive it.** Impatience moves the soul into futility and vain pursuits. If others appear to be realizing their desires, but you are not, consider your ways. If your desires are good, and for the glory of God, then there is a word for you. *“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him”*

JOURNEYS, HELP, AND ENJOYMENT

“²⁴ Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.” Faith can plan beyond the vision

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of flesh. It is not restrained by human reason, unfavorable circumstances, or great challenges. In this particular text, we will be given a glimpse of the manner in which a person of faith reasons. If it is true that God *“is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”* (Eph 3:20), then we ought to declare war on miniscule thinking. **Many a child of God never advances far in faith because they think too small. They do not allow their thinking to go beyond their own persons, family, church, or means of employment.** Unfortunately, much of the religion of our times actually fosters this kind of thinking, putting the accent of life upon personal, domestic, and social matters. There is, however, another world, another Kingdom, another realm, that is to be the subject of contemplation and purpose. This frame of mind is seen in this passage.

JOURNEY TO SPAIN

“Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you.” Paul again refers to going to Spain in the 28th verse. In all of Scripture, these are the only two verses where *“Spain”* is mentioned. This was a more aggressive plan that was ever expressed by any person in Scripture. **The Apostle moved beyond the boundary of mediocrity, and purposed things that would be foolish to the flesh.**

Spain is part of Europe, to the west of Italy, just below France, and above Morocco and Algeria of Africa. It was a long trip under any circumstances. There is no record in Scripture that confirms Paul ever got to Spain. Some few human traditions affirm that he did, but offer no satisfactory evidence of it. Yet, Paul made his plans, obviously submitting them to the will of God.

Making Plans

There is a spirit to the text of Scripture as well as words, and we do well to note it. Throughout history many religious men have assumed postures in life that considered making plans a foolish activity. Such men would affirm they were waiting upon the Lord, and would make no move or determine any purpose until they were sure God had so directed them. These men quickly point out certain Divine affirmations to us. *“A man’s heart*

deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps” (Prov 16:9). And again, *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jer 10:23). On the surface, such thinking appears noble. However, it is nothing more than the offspring of unbelief, and betrays a lack of confidence in Divine direction.

Devising and directing, however, are not synonymous terms. These verses do not affirm it is sinful to purpose, plan, or devise. They do affirm that in the process of living, God directs the steps of a good man. **It is in the process of walking itself that the Lord directs our steps.** As it is written, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way”* (Psa 37:23).

- ☐ After remaining three months in Greece, *“when the Jews laid wait for him, as he [Paul] was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia”* (Acts 20:3).
- ☐ After meeting with Luke and company in Assos, Paul **“determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost”** (Acts 20:16).
- ☐ Paul wrote to the Corinthians of his personal determination not to make another painful visit to them. **“But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness”** (2 Cor 1:1).
- ☐ Paul told Titus to come to him in Nicopolis, where he had **“determined**

Devising and directing, however, are not synonymous terms. These verses do not affirm it is sinful to purpose, plan, or devise. They do affirm that in the process of living, God directs the steps of a good man.

It is God’s manner to give us liberty to purpose and plan. **These purposes are to be under the supervision of faith, and with a mind to remain sensitive to the direction of the Lord, knowing that He alone can lead us properly.** Thus it is written, *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”* (Prov 16:33). That is, the responsibility to think, purpose, and determine, is cast into man’s lap. As he takes up that responsibility, doing so in faith and with a mind to glorify God, Divine direction will take place, and God will be glorified in it. A few examples will confirm this to be true.

- ☐ Following the great awakening in Ephesus, when followers of curious arts burned their books, Paul **“purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome”** (Acts 19:21).

- to winter”* (Tit 3:12).
- ☐ Paul and company made an attempt to go into Bythnia with the Gospel, but were forbidden to do so (Acts 16:7).

Because decisions and purposes were made unto the Lord, He directed their steps. That did not mean all of their plans were carried out. They were not. **It is in the godly purposing itself that the Lord directs the steps of a good man.**

For example, God did not tell David to build a house for Him – at least not directly. David purposed in himself to do this. Following the successful housing of the ark of God, David reasoned, *“See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains”* (2 Sam 7:5). Nathan the prophet encouraged David in his determination to make a house for God’s presence. That very night, God revealed to Nathan that David himself would not build such a house.

Instead, Solomon would build it, for he was not a man of war (2 Sam 7:6-13).

Who would dare sit in judgment upon David for having such a desire, or determining to make such a plan? His was a noble aim, and because it was, and he was a good man, the Lord more precisely directed his steps and plans.

I have taken the time to make these few comments because of the uncomely simplicity that attends many people's thinking. They choose to sit idly by, waiting for a word from God. Yet, they do not put their present spiritual understanding to use, or seek to implement godly objectives with pure hearts and minds. Such attitudes complicate life for the children of God, for they do not reflect the nature of living by faith or walking in the Spirit.

You can think in a godly

"Accounting that God was able to raise him up" (Heb 11:19). None of these things were matters of revelation. They were, however, thinking that was driven by the knowledge of God and the belief of His promises. God did not raise Isaac from the dead as Abraham thought He would. He did, however, direct Abraham's steps **while he set out to obey the Lord.**

So it was with Paul. His commission was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. God did not present him with a procedural manual on how to do it. Nor, indeed, did He supply him with the precise words he was going to say. Instead, He cast the matter into Paul's lap. **While Paul worked through it with a pure heart and a mind dominated by the hope of the Gospel, the Lord directed His steps.** That direction was not always well in advance. Blessed is the person who can see the sense of these things.

military capital of the world. Nor, indeed, did he make it his aim to see the pomp and circumstance of the Emperor's court, or the famous games that took place in that city. His desires were molded around the work of the Lord. His fervent desire was to be with the saints in Rome, and thus his journey to Spain was planned with that in mind. That kind of thinking is something you cannot legislate to a human spirit. It can only come from a heart that has been filled with the love of God.

HELPED ON MY WAY

" . . . and to be helped on my way there by." Other versions read, *"and to have you assist me on my journey there,"* ^{NIV} and *"and to be sent on by you."* ^{NRSV} At least two things are intended in this expression. First, that necessities for the journey would be provided by the brethren. Second, that some would accompany him, perhaps even in the journey to Spain itself.

While Paul worked through it with a pure heart and a mind dominated by the hope of the Gospel, the Lord directed His steps. That direction was not always well in advance.

It was the manner of brethren to provide assistance to those who were traveling for the Lord. Thus we read, *"And being brought on their way by the church . . . And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens . . . And they accompanied him unto the ship . . . and they all brought us on our way . . . that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go . . . but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me"* (Acts 15:3; 17:14,15; 20:38; 21:5; 1 Cor 16:6,11; 3 John 1:8). We also read of Paul's trip to Asia, and of several who joined him in it. *"And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus"* (Acts 20:4).

manner, yet be technically wrong.

The example of Abraham's response to the command to offer Isaac will suffice to confirm this. God said to Abraham, *"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of"* (Gen 22:2). God gave no indication that Isaac would not really be offered, or that if he was, that he would be raised from the dead. Yet, Abraham thought in a godly manner – the way faith would reason. When coming to the mountain upon which Isaac was to be offered, Abraham said to his servants, *"I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."* On the way up the mountain, when Isaac asked him about a lamb, he replied, *"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering"* (Gen 22:5-8). The book of Hebrews tells us how Abraham reasoned,

ON MY JOURNEY

" . . . for I trust to see you in my journey." Other versions read, *"I hope to visit you while passing through,"* ^{NIV} and *"it is my hope to see you on my way."* ^{BBE} Not only did Paul determine to go to Spain (which it is doubtful he was ever allowed to do), he also purposed to visit the brethren in Rome along the way. His thoughts gravitated to Kingdom matters and the fulfillment of his stewardship. All of his plans, of course, were submitted to the purposes of God. But that did not mean he had no personal objectives. Here is how he stated his desire in the first chapter. **"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also"** (1:15).

It is of interest to me that Paul did not say he desired to stop by the "eternal city" of Rome in his journey to Spain, to behold its splendor as the political and

Such things are possible when a high value is placed upon the work of the Lord.

There is certainly room for more of this kind of response among brethren. It is my desire that our own fellowship will be noted for helping the brethren along their way. If it is thought that our provisions do not allow for such gracious assistance, let us ponder the affirmation of Scripture. *"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in*

abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work”^{NRSV} (2 Cor 9:8). In his journeys, Paul depended upon this type of response. It is the manner of the Kingdom.

ENJOYMENT FOR A WHILE

“ . . . if first I may enjoy your company for a while.” Other versions read, “after I have enjoyed your company for a while,”^{NIV} and “after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while.”^{NLT}

In his journeys, Paul depended on the refreshment and mutual edification that came from being with the people of God. On another occasion, when he was en route to Rome as a prisoner, even a heathen centurion named Julius granted Paul permission to go to his brethren and refresh himself. “*And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself*” Acts 27:3). He did not give him some money, and send him to some merchants. Rather, having become familiar with Paul’s manner, he knew there were a certain people, believers in

Christ, from whom Paul would derive needed things and refreshment.

Earlier, Paul said he anticipated being encouraged by the mutual faith of the Romans. “*I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong-- that is, that you and I*

The very tone of this verse contradicts the highly professionalized religion that characterizes our times. It is not unusual to find traveling evangelists preferring to stay in motels, and apart from brethren, in their journeys. It all may appear quite innocent, and we certainly should not be hasty to ascribe less than

We are living in a religious culture that does not know or nourish manners that are in keeping with the Spirit of Christ.

may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”^{NIV} (1:11-12). **He not only knew of the ministry members of the body have to one another, but relied upon that ministry.** It served to assist him in the fulfillment of his commission from Jesus. Thus he planned, on his way to Spain, to stop by Rome and be encouraged, edified, and thus assisted on his journey. **I want to stress that this is a kingdom normality.**

noble motives to our brethren. However, it is but another commentary on the spiritual impotence of our day. **We are living in a religious culture that does not know or nourish manners that are in keeping with the Spirit of Christ.** There is a lot of boasting about success, but relatively few evidences of hearts genuinely impacted by the grace of God. Of course, things do not need to be this way, and improvement can be realized.

PLANS TO MINISTER

“²⁵ But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.²⁷ It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.²⁸ Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.”

Care must be taken not to view this text from a strictly academic point of view. **There is a spirit in Apostolic expressions as well as a testimony or message.** These words reflect a certain spirit, or attitude, that characterizes life in Christ Jesus. To put it another way,

faith leads those who possess it to reason in certain ways – ways that bring glory to God and advantages to His people. Our text affords us a notable example of this way of thinking.

I AM GOING TO JERUSALEM

“*But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.*” Paul does not mean he is going to Jerusalem to preach to the saints, although he would no doubt do that. Rather, he was going “*with aid for the saints.*”^{RSV} As he will explain, there were poor among them that required assistance, and he was going to personally deliver it to them.

Note the versatility in Paul’s thoughts and ambitions. It testifies to the power and effectiveness of faith. In a single breath he speaks of going to Spain, stopping off at Rome to preach the Gospel to them and be helped on his way by

them, and to deliver some assistance to the brethren in Jerusalem. In a realm of religious specialists, that would have required at least three different ministries: (1 An evangelistic outreach ministry. (2 A ministry of edification to the people of God. (3 A relief ministry for the poor. However, here is a single individual who participates in them all. He does not speak of being overloaded with responsibility, but evinces a cheerful and expectant attitude. **Oh, how much can be learned by observing the manner in which godly people think and plan!**

Trip Mentioned Elsewhere

This trip to Jerusalem is mentioned elsewhere, and appears to have been a very important matter to Paul. Acts 19:21 informs us that Paul “*purposed in his spirit when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to*

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Jerusalem, saying, *After I have been there, I must also see Rome.*" Acts 20:16 relates that he intended to arrive in Jerusalem by the "day of Pentecost." Realizing he had enemies there, Paul, also spoke of how the Spirit was compelling him to go there. *"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there"* (Acts 20:22).

Being arrested on the way to Jerusalem, Paul testified before the governor, *"Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings"* (Acts 24:17). On the way, Paul had been gathering up monies for this ministry to the poor saints. He spoke of it to the

Luke informs us that Paul's intention to bring support to the brethren in Jerusalem was to be after *"he had passed through Macedonia and Achaian"* (Acts 19:21). In this text we find that he did not merely pass through those areas, but also constrained them to contribute to the work. They also made up a contribution for *"the poor among the saints in Jerusalem."* This was not something they were coerced into doing. Rather, it was something that *"pleased"* them, bringing satisfaction and joy to their hearts.

Testimony to the Corinthians

The collection gathered for the poor saints in Macedonia and Achaian was significant. It was a testimony to the

- ☐ It was the result of the grace of God being bestowed upon the people: *"the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches."*^{NIV}
- ☐ The collection was taken during a very difficult time, and when the people were themselves poor: *"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity."*^{NIV}
- ☐ They gave beyond their power, because they were willing within themselves: *"they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability."*^{NIV}
- ☐ They pled with Paul to receive the gift, fellowshiping with them in ministering to the saints: *"Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints."*^{NIV}
- ☐ Before they gave of their substance, they first, by the will of God, gave themselves to the Lord and to Paul and company: *"they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will."*^{NIV}

In this remarkable offering, Paul testifies they were reflecting the very spirit of Jesus Himself; *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"* (2 Cor 8:9).

Grace Enlarges Our Capacities

The brethren in Macedonia and Achaian confirm to us what possibilities there are for those who give themselves to the Lord. **The people of God must be delivered from small thinking!** For those who are willing to give themselves to the Lord and those who are doing His work, God can pour such grace into them that they will be able to give beyond their means, abounding *"in every good work"* (2 Cor 9:8). It is possible for those who have little to be so blessed they can sow *"bountifully"* (2 Cor 9:6).

Who is able to imagine what great things can be done for God by those who willingly and expectantly offer themselves for His use and service!

Under the Law, when gathering goods for the tabernacle, God told Moses to take offerings **ONLY** from *"every man that giveth it willingly with his heart"* (Ex

The people of God must be delivered from small thinking! For those who are willing to give themselves to the Lord and those who are doing His work, God can pour such grace into them that they will be able to give beyond their means, abounding "in every good work"

Corinthians. *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come"* (1 Cor 16:1-2).

While Paul was expecting to come to Rome, he was also attending to some other matters, such as this ministry to the saints in Jerusalem. The brethren in Rome, therefore, should not expect him at any moment. His spiritually fertile mind allowed him to speak without being limited to the present time.

IT PLEASED THEM

"For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem." Paul speaks of this occasion in such a way as to provoke to Romans to *"love and good works"* (Heb 10:24). In the book of Acts,

power of faith and love. Paul testifies to this offering in First Corinthians, and a glowing testimony it is! *"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God"* (2 Cor 8:1-5).

He also testifies that the churches in Achaian were ready a year in advance to make their contribution (2 Cor 9:2).

What a powerful testimony Ponder carefully what was said of that collection.

25:2; 35:5). The record of that giving will bless your heart.

“And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD. And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses. And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. And He hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work. Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it; and they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; and they spake unto

Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much” (Ex 35:21-36:7).

We must not be insensitive to the depravity of our times. Today the people of God are being taught and urged to depend upon financial experts, motivators, and fund-raising wizards to supply their congregational and other needs. The people of God are being asked to go down to Egypt for help, and trust in things other than God (Isa 31:1). They have been overrun by hucksters, who are lining their own pockets in the name of

been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” **The Spirit will not have the poor saints in Jerusalem to be supported out of a sense of pity.** That is not sufficient ground to contribute to their needs! There is Kingdom logic, as it was, for assisting the poorer Jerusalem brethren.

Here we are introduced to a form of thinking that grates against the flesh. Unless a person is walking in the Spirit and living by faith, this will make no sense. Of course, such people are not even accepted by God, much less considered to be resources for His work. The Gentiles were actually “*debtors*” to the Jewish saints. That is, the offering they gave was a payment of something they owed: “*indeed they owe it to them.*”^{NIV} The

Today the people of God are being taught and urged to depend upon financial experts, motivators, and fund-raising wizards to supply their congregational and other needs. The people of God are being asked to go down to Egypt for help, and trust in things other than God

religion. Religious institutions have done their best to sanctify fund raising methods that are rooted in the wisdom of this world. This is a serious matter.

From the building of the tabernacle to the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, God has always relied upon sensitive saints to do His will! For those who are willing to give themselves to Him, He will bless with the means to do His work, all the while having sufficiency for themselves.

The brethren in Macedonia and Achaia lived out the principle of giving that God honors: “*not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor 9:7).

THEY ARE DEBTORS

“It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have

point of this text is not that those of Macedonia and Achaia alone owed this debt. They were no more indebted to the Jews than were the Gentiles in Rome. Paul uses exactly the same argument to the Corinthians. “*If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?*”^{NIV} (1 Cor 9:11). He taught the Galatians the same thing. “*Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor*”^{NIV} (Gal 6:6). This is a Kingdom principle, and it is to be received and practiced in faith.

Earlier, Paul reminded the brethren in Rome that they were partakers of the benefits of the Jewish olive tree: “*you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root*”^{NIV} (11:17). The Gentiles are indebted to the whole Jewish

nation, as well as those holy Prophets and Apostles that sprang from their ranks!

The Heart of a Teacher

It might appear strange that Paul

Christ, come to give spiritual advantages to the saints. They come to assist them in having a broader vision of the Kingdom, a deeper understanding of what the Lord is doing, and a loftier view

and a work to be “finished.”^{NASB} He also calls the collection he is delivering “fruit,” or a harvest of spiritual seed. This was not, then, a mere charitable work.

However, the Apostle is not rambling, and his thoughts are not scattered. Rather, in him we see the heart of a godly teacher. He is showing us the pervasive nature of faith, and how the work of the Lord is fulfilled in us.

The words “sealed to them this fruit,” mean “safely handed over this contribution to them.”^{NAB} The idea is that **Paul was a trustworthy custodian of the money he was carrying, and would not be content until it was all safely delivered to those for whom it was gathered.** He was not like Judas, of whom it was said, “he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it”^{NIV} (John 12:6). Rather than Paul opening the “bag” and taking from it, he “sealed” it, reserving all of its contents for the appropriate recipients. There certainly is something to be said for trustworthy servants – those who refuse to take fleshly advantage of the stewardship that has been given to them. Like Paul, every servant of God is to take seriously everything that is done in the name of the Lord. No matter how servile the work, we must make no attempt to turn it to personal advantage. Paul had carried this money for some time, and would apparently carry it for an even longer time. Yet, when he finally arrived in Jerusalem, everything that was given for those poor saints would be faithfully delivered to them. **Even though he endured unspeakable hardships along the way, he did not rob the poor saints for his own good.** He faithfully guarded his stewardship. That is the standard of the Kingdom.

would elaborate on such a point. He was expressing his desire to be with the brethren in Rome, and has now developed at length a trip he was making to Jerusalem. **However, the Apostle is not rambling, and his thoughts are not scattered. Rather, in him we see the heart of a godly teacher.** He is showing us the pervasive nature of faith, and how the work of the Lord is fulfilled in us. He is unveiling the manner in which God works among His people, and how Divine purpose is woven throughout all of those workings. He is tutoring us in how to think.

of Divine intent. Such teachers assist the brethren to think in harmony with the Lord, and in concert with the Holy Spirit. Wherever such persons are found, they are to be treasured.

FRUIT THAT IS SEALED

“Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.” Other versions read, “So after I have **completed this task** and have made sure that they **have received this fruit**, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way,”^{NIV} and “So, when I have completed this, and have **delivered to them what has been collected**, I will set out by way of you to Spain.”^{NRSV}

There are different ways in which purported preachers and teachers approach the people of God. Some come as problem solvers. Others come as entertainers. Some come as experts in peripheral knowledge – knowledge that has no direct bearing on what God is doing. **Others, having the Spirit of**

Again, the manner in which a man filled with the Spirit communicates is noteworthy. Paul speaks of delivering this offering to Jerusalem as something to be “performed,” a “task” to be completed,

THE FULNESS OF THE BLESSING

“²⁹ But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.” Paul continues to speak in view of his Apostleship – his stewardship of the Gospel. He does not come merely as a friend, but as one who is an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor 5:20; Eph 6:30) and a laborer together with God (1 Cor 3:9). He regards the brethren in Rome from the highest point of view: “the called of Jesus Christ . . . beloved of God, called to be saints” (1:6-7). He now speaks of himself

as one bringing appointed benefits to such people – someone sent by Jesus.

I KNOW

“But I know that when I come to you.” Other versions read, “I am sure that, when I come unto you,”^{KJV} “I am sure that when I come to you,”^{WEB} and “I am certain that when I come.”^{BBE} **Faith genders confidence within the heart.** Here, Paul does not mean that he is sure he will get to them, for he has already been delayed for “many years.” What he

does mean is that he knows what will occur when he is in their presence. He so conducted his life, that he knew certain things would transpire when he was around those of mutual faith. He was “sure”^{KJV} and “certain,”^{BBE} of what would result from his presence with the brethren there. This knowledge was prompted by his own love for the people of God. It also resulted from his understanding of how Jesus regarded two or more being gathered together in His name (Matt 18:20).

This knowledge also posited the spirituality of the brethren in Rome, for nothing of spiritual benefit can be realized where one of the parties is recalcitrant, indifferent, or carnal.

THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING

“ . . . I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.” Other versions read, “the full measure of the blessing of Christ,”^{NIV} and “the abundance of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”^{DRA} This expression is quite different from Paul’s first intentions to go to Rome. After the burning of the cultic books in Ephesus, Paul said, “I must also see Rome” (Acts 19:21). Later, when Paul was put into a castle for his own safety, Jesus told him, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11). There was no word to him at that time of any fellowship that would be realized in Rome, and thus he thought only of going there and preaching as he was commissioned to do.

Now, however, Paul speaks quite differently. **It is because he has heard of a body of believers there, noted for both faith and love.** They have been so aggressive to believe God that their faith has been “spoken of throughout the whole world” (1:8). In view of this, Paul knows something most profitable will result from their meeting.

When we know men and women are filled with faith and love, we can expect good things to happen when we meet with them. When either faith or love is questionable, we will not have strong confidence that good things will result from being with such people. That is why Paul “longed” to be with the brethren in Rome. He knew of their commitment to the Lord and His people, and thus was confident profit would result from their company.

Fullness

What a marvelous word: “FULLNESS.” It is a Kingdom word, and common among those who speak in words taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). Prior to Jesus, there was precious little said about the experience of “fullness.” One time David spoke of “fullness of joy” that is found in the presence of the Lord (Psa 16:11). Every other reference to

“fullness” in Moses and the Prophets relates to earthly provisions, and what is associated with “the earth” (Num 18:27; Deut 33:16; 1 Chron 16:32; Job 20:22; Psa 24:1; 50:12; 89:11; 96:11; 98:7; Ezek 16:49; 19:7).

Since the enthronement of Jesus, a new kind of “fullness” has been made available to men. It is realized in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. What we have obtained in

(Matt 24:14), and especially to the poor (Lk 7:22). The Gospel proclaims the **grace** of God for men (Acts 20:24), expounds **God Himself** (Rom 1:1), and declares that **peace has been made** for men (Rom 10:15). It announces that **Jew and Gentile are brought together** in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:6), and that a **hope is laid up** for us in heaven (Col 1:5). When men receive this Gospel it comes with **power**, in the **Holy Spirit**, and with **much assurance** (1 Thess 1:5). The

As you can see, the Gospel of Christ is a full cup! How much it should be proclaimed to the church, expounded and confirmed! There is no message that should take the precedence over the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

salvation is said to be “of **His fullness**” (John 1:16). God has set in motion a glorious process whereby the saints can be “filled with **all the fullness of God**” (Eph 3:16-19). The whole church is growing up “unto the measure of the stature of **the fullness of Christ**” (Eph 4:13).

“Fullness” speaks of an abundance, copiousness, and richness. It is portrayed in the Psalmic expression, “my cup runneth over.” The idea is of a container that is full to the brim, and overflowing. There is no lack, diminishment, or scarcity of supply. And what is it that Paul associates with such abundance, such adequacy, such an overflow of benefit? It is nothing less than the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Blessing of the Gospel

The Gospel is associated with blessing, benefit, and advantages. It is a rich repository of Divine supplies, laden with profitable things. This marvelous Gospel is speaks of **Christ** (Mk 1:1), the power of **God** (Rom 1:16), and **truth** (Gal 2:5). It brings good news of **peace** (Eph 6:15), **faith** (Phil 1:27), and **hope** (Col 1:23). It announces a **righteousness** from God (Rom 1:17), **peace with God** (Rom 5:1), and the good news of **your salvation** (Eph 1:13). It announces a **Kingdom** that brings good things to men

Gospel is the means through which God calls us unto Himself (1 Thess 2:14). It announces a **blessed and jubilant God** (1 Tim 1:11), and brings **life and immortality to light** (2 Tim 1:10). The message brought by the Gospel is of such significance that **holy angels desire to look into it** (1 Pet 1:12).

As you can see, the Gospel of Christ is a full cup! How much it should be proclaimed to the church, expounded and confirmed! There is no message that should take the precedence over the Gospel of Christ Jesus. When rebukes and corrections are issued, it is in order to move people into a position where they can again drink from the Gospel fountain. **The administration of life disciplines is not the business of the church.** Its work is to feed the people with the nourishing words of the Gospel. When believers are turned away from the Gospel, efforts are to be expended to bring them again within its circumference. I find that the knowledge of these things is nearly extinct in our land.

Concluding Thoughts

The spiritual condition of the brethren in Rome would allow for the maximum of benefit from the Gospel. They would experience plentiful supplies of what it brought, including

righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17). **It would contribute to their faith, clarify what they had received, and throw light on their future.** Therefore, Paul looked forward to being with these dear brethren, and pouring upon them the nourishing and refreshing elixir of the Gospel of Christ.

Many believers are being given small measures of the Gospel, and therefore realize few of its benefits. Others, because of the smallness of their faith and the meagerness of their commitment, are incapable of receiving much from the Gospel. Neither condition, however, diminishes the Gospel itself.

There is a fullness to the Gospel of Christ that addresses the needs and desires of the saints. Every hungry soul will find rich satisfaction in this Gospel. There are no deficiencies in it, and no areas essential to salvation that are not addressed by it. Blessed are those who know this, and avail themselves of it.

STRIVING IN PRAYER FOR A PURPOSE

“³⁰ Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in

interest of kindred spirits. Such people take great texts of Scripture like Romans 8:28, and justify their own miserable complacency. Like the changeable

fellowship of believers and the communion of the saints. Paul thought nothing of begging the people of God to pray for him. He pled with them, urged them, and besought them. Elsewhere Paul spoke of those who “helped” him through their prayers (2 Cor 1:11). Frequently he asked for brethren to pray for him and his labors for the Lord (Eph 6:19; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1; Heb 13:18). **The prayers he urged always pertained to his ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ.**

In his ministry, Paul did everything possible to ensure that God was honored and the saints profited by his labors. He prepared his own heart and mind. He made godly determinations. He spoke of his desires to kindred spirits. He also urged the saints to pray for what he was doing.

God has place means at our disposal through which He works, and blessed is the person who sees it. In this case, the means were the fervent prayers of the saints. On one occasion, when he was in prison, he called for Timothy to bring the cloak he had left in Troas with Carpus, some books, and parchments on which to write (2 Tim 4:13). He admonished Timothy concerning availing himself of means for his health also. *“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”*^{NASB} (1 Tim 5:23). On another occasion, he provided for his needs by making tents (Acts 18:3).

prayers to God for me,³¹ that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.”

chameleon, they adapt to their circumstances, declaring it must have been God’s purpose for them to be opposed, or their ministry refused by those to whom it was ministered. Thus they sit down instead of rising up.

Throughout Scripture, you will find this general perception among the saints. It may be Isaiah, saying to take a lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on a boil (Isa 38:21). Or, it may be a good Samaritan bandaging the wounds of an attacked man, pouring oil and wine into them, taking him to an inn, and taking care of him (Luke 10:34). It may be a group of disciples lowering Paul over a wall in a basket, in order that he might escape his enemies (Acts 9:25). Or, it may be gathering a collection for poor saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26). It may be caring for the fatherless and widows in their

In his ministry, Paul did everything possible to ensure that God was honored and the saints profited by his labors. He prepared his own heart and mind. He made godly determinations. He spoke of his desires to kindred spirits. He also urged the saints to pray for what he was doing. **He did not take success for granted, or assume that because he was a premier Apostle, everything would automatically work for his good.** There is within the professed church a sort of fatalism that causes people to withdraw from involvement in the good work of the Lord. Many suppose that God works everything for our good without our own involvement, or the

But you do not see the slightest evidence of such corrupt thought in the Apostle Paul. **He knew the Savior does not work independently of those He has saved, and that God does not fulfill His good pleasure without the involvement of His children.**

WHEN BEGGING IS PROPER

“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit . . . ” Other versions read, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit,”*^{KJV} and *“I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit.”*^{NASB}

Here is a much neglected facet of the

affliction (James 1:27), or Onesiphorus frequently refreshing Paul when he was in prison (2 Tim 1:16).

God does not always or exclusively work by miraculous means. Sometimes Jesus uses His own people to minister to some of His saints are who hungry, thirsty, abandoned, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Matt 25:35-37). I well remember an occasion in 1960, when I was among a group of brethren who were praying for the needs of a poor soul who had been brought to our attention. While we were praying, someone left the room. I heard the front door gently close. Soon after we had concluded our prayers, the individual who had left returned. When asked why he left, he replied, "It was to put feet on your prayers." He had the means, and thus met the need.

Paul sought the assistance of the brethren. He asked for their money to help the poor, and now he asks for their prayers regarding the work to which the Savior had called him.

By Jesus Christ

Paul's urging is "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake." ^{KJV} It is for the Savior's glory, and for the success of His mission. He was Christ's servant, and it was Christ's Gospel that he was preaching. Therefore, he asks them to pray in interest of Christ's Person and work. He is asking them to pray out of a high regard for the One who saved them, and with an interest in Him being glorified.

By the Love of the Spirit

Here, the "love of the Spirit" is the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit (Rom 5:5). It is a love that overflows in an interest in and fellowship with the saints in their various ministries and capacities. **It is the business of saints to live close enough to the Lord to be able to recognize this love, and thus be properly motivated by it.**

STRIVE TOGETHER WITH ME

"... that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me..." Other versions read, "join me in my struggle by praying to God for me," ^{NIV} "join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf," ^{NRSV} and "in your prayers to God for me you

exert yourselves to help me." ^{NJB}

Praying is one thing. **Striving** in prayer is quite another thing. The words "striving together" are translated from a single Greek word, συναγωνίζομαι (sunagonizomai). When the word is transliterated, as in the preceding brackets, the word "agonize" becomes apparent. Literally, this word means "helping someone with great effort, join in a struggle, fight along with, help." ^{BIBLE WORKS GREEK MORPHOLOGY} This is a spiritually militant term that puts one in mind of Ephesians 6:12, where believers are said to wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The idea is that there are opposing forces seeking to frustrate the work of the

"offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" Heb 5:7). Three times He struggled with the powers of darkness before finally gaining the victory over them. Scripture says, "He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk 22:44). **He was striving in prayer!**

Paul urges the brethren to strive together with him, putting their shoulders behind the work with him. He urges fervent, aggressive, and effective prayers, for "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). I am persuaded that many godly causes are frustrated simply because they were not undergirded by fervent and earnest prayer.

DELIVERANCE FROM UNBELIEVERS

God does not always or exclusively work by miraculous means. Sometimes Jesus uses His own people to minister to some of His saints are who hungry, thirsty, abandoned, naked, sick, and imprisoned

Lord. Just as surely as Jesus sent Paul to do a work, the devil sends aggressive opponents to oppose it. One might simplistically view the whole matter as a mere technicality about which we are to have no concerns. But that is a wholly improper assessment of the case. In the Ephesians text, these opponents are the occasion of a strong admonition to put on the whole armor of God, part of which is, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph 6:18).

If a holy angel struggled against one of these principalities for twenty-one days, not even gaining the victory in that time (Dan 10:13), how can such powers be thwarted by casual and disinterested believers? Does any soul imagine they can be dismissed by a simplistic rebuke, or the shout of a novice? In combating some of these forces, the Lord Jesus Himself

"... that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe..." Other versions read, "that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea," ^{NIV} "that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea," ^{NRSV} and "that I may escape the unbelievers in Judea." ^{NJB}

Paul does not assume he is going to be delivered from ungodly men, but asks for prayer that he will be. He urged the Thessalonians to pray he would be "delivered from unreasonable and wicked men" (2 Thess 3:2). When acknowledging the Lord had delivered him from a great death in Asia, Paul added, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; **ye also helping together by prayer for us**" (2 Cor 1:10-11). Indeed, He confessed, "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim 4:18). He also knew the Lord would work with

the prayers of His people in that deliverance, and thus urged them to pray.

The very fact that he asked for prayer that he would be delivered from those who did not believe, confirms that such people do have influence. A power greater than themselves is working through them, namely the devil. For this reason, their influence cannot be negated by human wisdom.

It has not yet registered upon many professed believers that we are engaged in a war, with very real opponents. However,

Christ.” Unbelievers in Judea entertained thoughts of thwarting the preaching of Paul. **His deliverance from them involved the violent overthrow of their intentions and pretensions.**

God has presented Himself as One who *“frustrates the signs of babblers, drives diviners mad; who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness”* (Isa 44:25). **When, therefore, the work of the Lord is opposed, we ought to strive against such oppositions in prayer.** We have, after all, been raised up to sit *“with*

which is inherently unthankful. There might be objections that the gifts came from Gentiles, or that they were not sufficient, or that they should have come sooner. The complication here seems to be the aversion that many Jews had to the Gentiles. That antipathy could spread like a defiling plague, and thus Paul urged that prayers thwart such notions before they gained a foothold.

Also, there might be some difficulties with Paul delivering the gift. Certain men had circulated that Paul taught *“all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs”* (Acts 21:21). The accusation was not true, but could have marred the receiving of the gift. **It is good when gifts that are cheerfully given are also cheerfully received.** Sometimes it takes fervent prayer for that to happen.

COMING WITH JOY AND BEING REFRESHED

“... that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.” Other versions read, *“so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company,”*^{NASB} and *“Then, by the will of God, I will be able to come to you with a happy heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other,”*^{NLT} The *“spirit of faith”* that animated Paul (2 Cor 4:13), moved him to seek prayers for matters scarcely, if ever, considered by others. Some might think to pray for deliverance. Some rare souls might even think to pray for the gracious reception of the gifts that were delivered to needy people. But what of this final request?

Coming in Joy

Paul wanted to arrive *“in joy,”* being filled, as it were, *“with all joy and peace in believing”* (Rom 15:13). **His desire was to be with them in a cheerful state of mind, liberated from all grief and fear. This is a noble aspiration, and is to be sought by believers.**

Although the saints are to *“count it all joy”* when they fall *“into divers temptations,”* (James 1:2), trials and oppositions can have an adverse impact upon the human spirit. It is possible to be

It has not yet registered upon many professed believers that we are engaged in a war, with very real opponents. However, those who do know, are not ashamed to urge godly people to pray for their deliverance. When God’s work is opposed, and His servants maligned and resisted, prayer is to be made.

those who **do** know, are not ashamed to urge godly people to pray for their deliverance. When God’s work is opposed, and His servants maligned and resisted, prayer is to be made. That prayer is a fellowship of kindred spirits who have a genuine interest in the work of the Lord.

Spiritual Weaponry

The saints of God have been provided with spiritual weaponry, and it is effective. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor 10:4-5). The thoughts and imaginations are not always within ourselves. Sometimes they are in other souls, and casting them down frees those souls from bondage to those thoughts. Thus the NIV reads, *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to*

Christ” in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). In that position, God *“is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”* (Eph 3:20). Let us therefore enter into the fellowship of aggressive prayer, maintaining an active interest in the activities of those who are laboring in the face of opposition and threats.

ACCEPTABLE GIFTS

“... and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints ...” Other versions read, *“that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints,”*^{NASB} *“that the Christians there will be willing to accept the donation I am bringing them,”*^{NLT} and *“that the help which I am taking for Jerusalem may be pleasing to the saints.”*^{BBE}

Here is a most insightful request. Paul does not take for granted that the poor saints will receive the gifts that were graciously gathered for them. **He knew all too well the tendency of the flesh,**

“cast down” (2 Cor 4:9), “despair of life” (2 Cor 1:8), and have “sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil 2:27). Like Jesus, one can be “exceedingly sorrowful unto the death” (Matt 26:38), and be “acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). The human spirit can be so fatigued that death is even sought (1 Kgs 19:4). The servant of God can be provoked within by the sight of idolatry (Acts 17:16), or “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Pet 2:7). **It is possible to be in the midst of a great trial like Job, or Joseph, and thus not be at the pinnacle of joy.**

However, Paul wanted to come to Rome “with joy,” at the peak of spiritual life, and abounding in the grace of God. Such souls bring the greatest advantage, and are able to receive more fully. The marvel here is not merely that Paul wanted to come with a joyful spirit, but that he asked the brethren to pray that would happen. It seems to me that this opens a lot of possibilities for believers. We will all be the better if we come “with joy.” It is certainly in order to ask the God of heaven to cause that to happen. **Better to have the contagion of joy among us than the root of bitterness, or the gall of sorrow.**

Coming by the Will of God

The will of God drives the Kingdom. What God does, He does “according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:5,9; Phil 2:13; 2 Thess 1:11). Therefore, one might reason there is no need to pray about the will of God, for it will be done anyway. But that is not how the Lord governs His Kingdom. Jesus Himself prayed, “Thy will be done” (Matt 26:42), and taught us to do the same (Matt 6:11).

Paul has resigned himself to the will of God. He has longed for “many years” to come to those in Rome, but wants to do so in God’s own time. Such prayers will serve to make him more alert, so the Lord can guide him with His eye. It is quite possible to run swiftly to give the king a message, like Ahimaaz. But when asked concerning the message say, “I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was” (2 Sam 18:29). He had not run by the will of God! It is possible to have good desires, yet seek to execute them at the wrong time.

Coming by the will of God means coming at the most appropriate time, and in keeping with the Divine agenda. It involves coming in the blessing of the Lord, while in fellowship with Him.

After Paul had desired for “many years” to see the saints in Rome, and after

refreshed, and was well” (1 Sam 16:23). He was restored to his right mind.

“Refreshed” also carries the idea of rest, becoming calm, and relieved of all agitation. Here, the key is “refreshed **WITH YOU;**” i.e., the presence of the brethren in Rome themselves would contribute to the rest, recuperation, and

Coming by the will of God means coming at the most appropriate time, and in keeping with the Divine agenda. It involves coming in the blessing of the Lord, while in fellowship with Him.

he had been “hindered” in the fulfillment of that good and holy desire, he was willing to submit wholly to the will of God. Here is a perfect example of living out this truth: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov 3:5-6). **This is HOW you submit to the will of God!** It involves your will, but it involves more than that. You need more direction than your will can muster. Therefore, Paul begged the brethren to pray he would come to them “by the will of God.” It is quite true this does not fit into some theological molds. However, it is not our aim to make the Scriptures conform to human thinking, but to conform thinking to the Scriptures.

Coming to be Refreshed Together

The blessing of spiritual refreshment is to be coveted. Paul sought to be delivered from unbelievers. He desired for those receiving the gift he brought to do so graciously and thankfully. He wanted to come to the Romans clothed with joy, and by the will of God. All of this would contribute to his visit being a refreshing one.

The word “refreshed” is one of great significance. It includes the idea of **recovery**. When king Saul was troubled with an evil spirit from the Lord, young David came and played expertly upon the harp before him. As a result, the evil spirit left Saul. It is also written, “so Saul was

encouragement of the Apostle.

There are brethren in whose presence certain refreshment comes. While with them, the difficulties and oppositions encountered in the world are quickly forgotten. There is a greater liberty to speak of the things of God, and gain the refreshment that comes from such speaking (Job 32:20). It is good to have a reputation of refreshing the saints (Phile 1:7). For example, the only thing we know about the activities of Onesiphorus is that he “oft refreshed” the Apostle Paul (2 Tim 1:16).

An Exhortation

May Paul’s summons to fervent prayer enlarge your own understanding of this holy work. There is striving to be done in prayer. There is unity in prayer, where we strive together. **Through prayer, we can cause the ministry of our brethren to be more effective.** The Lord will deliver his messengers from unbelieving men through our prayers. When gifts or a word are delivered to brethren, our prayers can assist them to joyfully receive what they are given. We can pray brethren will come to us while dominated by the joy of the Lord, and that they will arrive in the heart of God’s will. We can seek for our gatherings to be refreshing ones.

What noble purposes are served by the prayers of the saints of the most high God! Let us give ourselves to prayer!

THE GOD OF PEACE

“³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” The “*God of peace*” is the One who gives peace. **The peace He gives is the environment in which spiritual profitability is**

The Lord raised up Solomon, among other things, to show the utter vanity of having your affection anchored to this world. Even though he had everything his heart desired, possessing it in abundance, he

mentioned five times in Scripture. **In each case, it has to do with Divine accomplishment – with making something occur in the people of God.** In our text, it is related to striving together with Paul in prayer. In Romans 16:20, it relates to the subduing of Satan to us. “*And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*” Philippians 4:9 connects it with doing what has been learned and received. First Thessalonians 5:23 associates it with the complete sanctification of the individual, spirit, soul, and body. Hebrews 13:20 speaks of “*the God of peace*” making us “*perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.*” **There are things to be done within the saints of God, and it is “the God of peace” who does them!**

Ponder if you have ever grown spiritually when in a state of inner turmoil. Consider what type of advancement in the Spirit you have realized when you had no inner peace. Reflect if you have ever moved a millimeter closer to the Lord while you were agitated within.

realized. Souls who do not have peace do not have power in prayer. They cannot profit from the presence of God’s servants, nor can they enter into their work with them. Put that to the test, and see if it is not true!

When describing the wicked, the remarkable power of God’s peace can be seen. “*But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*” (Isa 57:20-21). **From this perspective, the summation of wickedness is the lack of peace – the absence of spiritual tranquility.** That condition is what propels the soul into vanity – into a futile quest for satisfaction that can never be realized apart from God.

confessed, “*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun*” (Eccl 2:10-11).

There is no reason for any soul to pursue a path that has already been proven vain! Yet, those who lack peace in their soul consistently pursue it, oblivious to its vanity and heart-wrenching disappointments. Oh, how men need the presence and effectual ministry of “*the God of peace!*”

The phrase “*the God of peace*” is

Ponder if you have ever grown spiritually when in a state of inner turmoil. Consider what type of advancement in the Spirit you have realized when you had no inner peace. Reflect if you have ever moved a millimeter closer to the Lord while you were agitated within. It will take but a moment of reflection to confirm to your heart the importance of “*the God of peace*” being “**with you.**”

I take the sense of the verse to be this. **May the God of peace keep you united together in the noble work of prayer and participation in His work.** The exhortation of the Apostle is thus helped along by a prayer that God would cause it all to come to pass by being with them as “*the God of peace.*”

CONCLUSION

I have sought to share with you the manner in which the godly think. **Their faith is uncomplicated, but their thinking is not simplistic.** Faith broadens the perceptions and intentions of both heart and mind, bringing the ability to see further and more precisely. Faith constrains noble purposes, moving the believer to honorable intentions. It does not move the individual to take the

work of God for granted, or to treat His commissions with casualness. Whether it is Abel offering a sacrifice, Noah building an ark, or Moses leading the people out of Egypt, faith move individuals into action. It constrains men to God-honoring purposes and determinations. Faith will not let those possessing it be idle.

Faith can make plans – extensive

plans, and is willing to keep them for long seasons, even though they are not fulfilled in a manner suitable for the flesh. It moves the believer to willingly subject everything to the will of God, all the while beseeching the saints to strive together in prayer for deliverance, reception, and a joyful spirit. Human wisdom cannot put things together like this. It is too easily discouraged, and too anxious to plot its

own course, and devise its own ways. Flesh is too impatient to wait on the Lord.

May the Lord give us the mind set that is revealed in this text. May we not

balk at large ambitions, or draw back from making extensive plans that blend with our calling and the revealed will of the Lord. And may we be willing to wait for their timely fulfillment, unashamed to

confess them, and ask for the assistance and fellowship of the people through their prayers. May the Lord direct us to have such noble aspirations, that they are worthy of striving together in prayer.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/30/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 1-16 of the sixteenth chapter. The theme will be, **"A TRIBUTE TO UNCOMMON SAINTS."** In Christ Jesus, otherwise unknown people become great. They are greeted in special manners, and appreciated in special ways. There are people who excel in Christ, and they are spoken of in special ways. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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