

## [Romans 15:15 – 26]

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~ In our modern day of “instant” communication, our ability to communicate has slowed dramatically; consisting of instant messages that are ignored and forgotten, voice mails that are not listened to, impersonal emails and overly-personal social postings. What’s missing is any semblance of character, personality, warmth and sincerity; that which comes only from personal interaction. It is the most sincere form of expressing that which is in our heart. Well, Paul’s letter to the Romans was handwritten, warm and extremely personal – and it was from his heart. Likewise, this safari report on Romans was written personally for you, my beloved reader....

***15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,***

***16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.***

***17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.***

~ Verse seventeen is dependent upon the two preceding verses we concluded our previous report with. Paul adopts the language of the Levitical priesthood and temple worship in describing himself as a minister preaching the Gospel. Here, Paul offers up the Gentiles as an offering unto God! Notice how humbly Paul does this; and Paul was a very humble man, too, by the way. He is not writing with any officious mannerisms whatsoever. That’s when he adds verse seventeen!

In view of the fact that Paul had been apologetic for writing so boldly, I think he now recognizes the saints in Rome probably didn’t even need his instructions. Even so, he wanted to come to them and bring it to them

anyways. In spite of that realization, he writes in confidence to Roman Christians. There are no personal assumptions here. Paul acknowledges he is a servant of Christ Jesus; and he also proclaims he is doing God's will. There is one thing that should *NEVER* characterize the servant of God: *PRIDE!* Each of us should always take the position that we are willingly serving the Lord Jesus Christ because we love Him – and He is always the One Who is ultimately in charge of all matters....

***18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,***

***19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.***

~ If we are to determine whether Paul founded the church in Rome - or whether Peter founded the church in Rome - you'll really need to understand this passage – so read our report *VERY* carefully. A correct understanding will prevent false assumptions. Paul said he would not take credit for the work of God being done by others – especially amongst the Gentiles! Paul couldn't take credit for the Day of Pentecost, for example. Paul only spoke of those things that God had done through him. Paul couldn't speak about the fact the Gospel went to Cornelius through Simon Peter, for example. That was the first time the Gospel went to a Gentile, too. Paul didn't – couldn't – take credit for that. If the church in Rome had already been established, Paul would have passed it by and kept on going towards Spain. That's what the apostle is telling us in this personal account....

***20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:***

~ Paul had a peculiar ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles; Simon Peter had a ministry almost exclusively to Jews. Both were accredited by many signs and wonders! Those "*mighty signs and wonders*" are the credentials God gave the apostles and ministers in the early church — because they had no New Testament at that time. The sign gifts were their credibility.

Today, the Word of God is our credibility and final authority. Sign gifts were *ONLY* given to establish the church on a proper foundation.

**Ephesians 2:**<sup>20</sup> *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

That does *NOT* mean the apostles are the foundation; because there is no other foundation that any man can lay except that which is Jesus Christ. However, the apostles are the ones who put down the foundation of Christ! Since the apostles did that, we need to be very careful about who the apostles are – and about who we are listening to and learning from, too, by the way. Paul had the credentials God had given to all of the apostles.

**Acts 14:**<sup>3</sup> *Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands ~*

These were the marks of the apostles and the early preachers of the Gospel. Again, they didn't come down the road with a New Testament in their hands. They came with *THESE* credentials: mighty signs and wonders. Then came the day when "*mighty signs and wonders*" were no longer the mark of an apostle.

**2 John 10:**<sup>10</sup> *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed ~*

The question of our authority today is established through sound doctrine – *NOT* signs, friends. The great tragedy of the hour in which we live is the number of people who are carried away with religious fanaticism, wrong teaching, false doctrine and just made-up peanut theology. We see it plaguing and permeating this forum on which I began teaching. Social media is literally the landfill garbage dump of human thought and emotion. There is a movement of the Spirit of God — no question; but there is also a moving of Satan. The devil is as busy as he can possibly be around here!

MANY people are – and have been – carried away and trapped by those things. Paul has been excruciatingly careful to explain the Kingdom of God

is *NOT* meat and drink and it is *NOT* these signs. The outward physical things aren't part of the Gospel equation. It is *RIGHTEOUSNESS* that matters. There are all kinds of groups that have a phony religion, but they aren't living for God — not for one moment of their lives. They boast of having signs — such as speaking in tongues or healing — and they say they demonstrate their faith by those things. Well, may I say? — You better have a *clean* tongue and a *clean* life; and you better have been *healed from sin* to make those claims. When Christ genuinely comes into our lives, He will clean us up. See, what we need is *sound* doctrine! We do not need tongues or *ANY* other outward signs at all. What we need is the Word of God taught properly, correctly and completely.

Now, Illyricum was a province of the Roman Empire bordering Italy and spanning down to the Adriatic Sea; and up to the Danube. At this time, Paul had preached that far. Of course, Paul hadn't quite reached Rome at this time. There is no record in Acts regarding this visit, either. Our reasonable conclusion is that Paul went many places that we have no record of. Some people believe Paul even made it to Spain. I believe this epistle reveals that to be true. It is also highly likely Paul went through Great Britain because Paul covered the Roman Empire....

***<sup>21</sup> But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.***

~ It was a point of honor — not competition — that caused Paul to go as a pioneer to the places where the Gospel had not yet been heard. Paul had a peculiar ministry, and he was a *true* missionary in every sense of the word. Paul would not minister where others had gone before him. By the way, that is the definition of a true evangelist according to the New Testament. An evangelist is *NOT* someone who comes to a town or a city where committees have been working and churches have been cooperating. When everything is set up and a man walks in and begins — that is *NOT* evangelism. Paul never had a committee working ahead of him. The mayor never came around to welcome Paul to town; only the Chief of Police — and that was only to arrest him and jail him. When you go where the Gospel has never been preached, *THAT* is true evangelism and *THAT* is a true missionary. The mere fact that Paul desired to go to Rome makes it more

than clear he was the founder of the church in Rome. We're going to see there were a group of people in Rome whom Paul knew. We know Paul led some of those people to the Lord, because the record tells us he did.

**Isaiah 52:** <sup>15</sup> *So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider ~*

It seems that this verse from Isaiah was Paul's life verse as a missionary. He was thrilled to preach to those who were spiritually blind. His message was always the same: turn to Christ. Many did, too! That was always accomplished by preaching the Word of God. There's no thrill on this earth quite like preaching Christ and having people turn to Him. That was the life experience of the apostle Paul....

<sup>22</sup> ***For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.***

~ That is no exaggeration – Paul had *MANY* hindrances. Interestingly, many Christians seem to become so enamored by the far away places with strange customs, but they utterly neglect their home church – if they even go to church. Many want to go way off into the world to do missionary work – and some of them are called, I'll grant that – but, too many Christians are *not* called; they're merely enchanted by the ways of life in other countries and the strange people there. They have no concern for their neighbors who have never heard the Word of God properly, correctly and completely. If you want to raise funds to support orphaned children in India or dying dogs in Katmandu, you'll likely receive a lot of support. However, if you attempt to teach the Bible in sound doctrine, the world will absolutely turn their backs on you. Why do you think that is, friends? When we neglect to support the man who actually believes God and teaches the Scriptures by rightly dividing them – and we go off onto the mission field completely ignorant of the Bible – then all we are doing is taking problems and compounding them by spreading them all over the world. Well, Paul wanted to take the Gospel message to the entire world – specifically to Rome in this epistle – where he had never been; and that's when he makes this unusually strange statement....

***23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;***

***24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.***

~ There has been some question about what Paul meant when he said he “*had no more place in these parts.*” Did he mean there was no more opportunity to preach the Gospel in that section of the Roman Empire? Were the doors completely closed to him? Had everyone been saved around that area because every nook and cranny had been evangelized? Well, my opinion is “*no*” but I could be wrong. See, Paul and the other witnesses had been faithful to the Word of God. Luke said *everyone* – both Jew and Gentile – had heard the Gospel. That doesn’t mean they had all turned to Christ, but they had all heard it.

So, Paul is looking for new territory out on the frontier. I don’t think Rome was the final destination for Paul; in fact, I know it wasn’t because it says he wanted to go to Spain. Paul had come from one end of the Roman Empire, and he desired to go to the other end. We have no record of Paul ever going to Spain; but we had no record of him going to Illyricum, either. If Paul hadn’t mentioned that in this epistle, we would never have known. I think Paul *DID* go to Spain at some point, personally. See, when Paul came to the end of his life he said, “*I have finished my course.*” I don’t think he could have said that if he had not gone to Spain. I doubt many of us will be able to make the bold claim that we finished our course in this life...

***25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.***

***26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.***

~ So, this leg of our Spiritual Safari ends with Paul wanting to go west to Spain and east to Jerusalem; and he wanted to take a gift to Jerusalem by his own hands — because with his own hands he had wasted the church and persecuted them. Now, he wanted to somehow make amends for that.

That is from the heart of Paul the apostle, and this is all very, very personal  
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