

[Romans 15:25 – 16:2]

~ When you send your donation to a church, ministry, charity – or an individual – do you know how that money is being used? Do you consider the priorities of its mission? Is it simply an emotional appeal that sways you to give? Do you ever support anything at all? Well, our Spiritual Safari will consider two points that must be considered completely before we support any cause, organization or ministry; if we want to give according the Word of God, that is!

This report is also going to contain some review as we have just one additional report remaining in the epistle to the Romans. I trust and pray that this part of our expedition has been more than wonderful for you and that it has blessed your heart in a very new way. I also trust these Roman reports have stretched your understanding; and that we can now look back and praise Christ, look ahead and trust Christ, look around and serve Christ and look up and expect Christ! These are things that every single one of us can do today! ~

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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 fellowship for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

~ Paul called “giving” a “fellowship!” That’s because we have fellowship when we give! Fellowship isn’t sitting around congratulating one another for the guacamole they made at Bible study; and fellowship isn’t a potluck dinner or a game of volleyball, either! Having dinner together is a supper club event – and nothing else. Eating at the Moose Lodge or the Elk Club may be fellowship as far as the world is concerned; but for believers, fellowship is sharing the things of Christ. Paul had severely persecuted the church at Jerusalem and now he wanted to go back and have fellowship with them by taking them a gift!

Acts 24: ¹⁷ *Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings ~*

That's the historical record of what Paul did. The collection was a tremendous burden on his heart. He writes about it in many places. As we read on, it is made clear that offerings are made by free will. Every man should give according to the purpose in his heart; not grudgingly or of necessity because God loveth the cheerful giver! Now, the only way to give is by free will; but Paul also makes it clear that they had a moral obligation and a debt to pay! See, the Gentiles had received the Gospel from the nation Israel. That made them responsible to the Jews.

John 4: ²² *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews ~*

The Gospel had begun at Jerusalem, of course. As a result, Macedonia and Achaia were obligated to the church at Jerusalem. Many of the saints there were having extreme financial difficulty at this time, too. This enabled Macedonia and Achaia to pay a debt in a tangible realm. What we have here are foreign missions acting in reverse! The missionary church is always obligated to the home church, by the way – although very few people seem to realize this fact. I see many so-called missionary efforts that are very prosperous, but in which sound doctrine and proper, correct and complete Bible teaching is totally and wholly neglected. Maybe I should just leave it at that as we move on now....

²⁷ It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

²⁸ When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

~ Going to Spain was heavy on the heart of Paul the apostle. This is a demonstration of true commitment and genuinely directed zeal, friends; in taking the gift to Jerusalem – which placed him in the hands of his enemies

and caused him to be arrested, by the way. We thoroughly examined in Acts that Paul wasn't out of the will of God at that time. I totally disagree with those who say Paul was out of the will of God when he went back up to Jerusalem. "Sealed to them this fruit" is a strange statement that simply means Paul wanted a receipt of the offering he was taking them! Moreover, Paul wanted the church at Jerusalem to see some fruit of their missionary efforts in him.

If you are going to give to anything – *ANYTHING* – you ought to know exactly where it is going and *EXACTLY* how it is being used. I was trying to stay off of the subject of Christian giving in this report, but this is an area where there is grave danger of gross sinning. The two things that *MUST* be known when handing out money are (1) you have to know what it is doing and (2) you better be *DEAD* sure that cause you are supporting is actually getting out the Word of God. Further, that giving out of the Word of God *MUST* be properly effective in the hearts and lives of those it is being given to. And all of that *must* be verifiable.

Actually, your giving is sinful and shameful when you give to someone who has made some sentimental appeal, for example, by showing you pictures of baby orphans or dying dogs. How much of that organization is overhead? How do you know that money is actually feeding those starving little children? How do you know the Word of God is being taught to those orphans properly, correctly and completely? Do you really know where your giving is going? You need to be aware that *MOST* – *MOST* of the so-called "orphan" causes are corrupt governmental puppet fronts or religious racketeers who know *YOU* are stupid. More than *HALF* of the children you see aren't even really orphans. Mom and dad have the neighborhood children come around and they take a picture of them all eating a bowl of rice and – voila – you have been conned. Is there a man who actually teaches the Bible in a way that you can see? Well, that had better be your cause which you support, or your money would be better used by driving down the road and throwing it out the window! No, I'm not kidding!

Don't kid yourselves, friends: God *HATES* sinful giving, and He will not only not bless us for it, but it will be a cursed act for both you and the recipient. Most so-called preachers seem to ask for money only so they can get back

on the air the next day and ask for more money! That's the reason I denounce *ALL – ALL – ALL* video ministries and *MOST* radio ministries. They act as if they're going to die if you don't send them five dollars right now. The only reason Paul wanted to take this gift to Jerusalem was to let them know there was fruit for their labors in sharing the Gospel. Alright, I know I'll be severely criticized for my self-incrimination and hypocritical statement – just remember, this is what the Word of God teaches. If you don't like it – *TOO BAD* – for *YOU!* ~

29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

~ We can be sure that Paul went to Rome in the will of God and in the fulness of his apostolic office. God gave Paul divine insight into his prosperous journey to Rome. Going to Jerusalem and encountering all the trouble that he did – and which led to him being sent to Rome – did not mean Paul was out of the will of God. I suppose traveling on a prisoner ship wouldn't look very prosperous to most of us; but that's the way God used Paul at this time.

It's both easy and common for the child of God to question whether or not they are in the will of God when troubles come, and dark days appear in their lives. As I write to you, I am having a great deal of trouble in my life and my feelings are genuinely very much disturbed. I question if I am in the will of God many times. Well, the Bible tells me that my feelings and my difficult circumstances don't mean I'm not in the will of God! In fact, it is more likely that I *AM* in the will of God. If you find yourself in the calm where everything is just fine and you have a pocket full of gold, then there is a *HIGH* likelihood that you are *NOT* in the will of God. I know many of us don't want to hear that; and some will reject it – but I didn't say that – God did....

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

~ We have lingered in this area because this is very personal, and Paul is laying bare his heart. Further, we're seeing how Christianity functioned in the first century. This is the practical side of our life in Christ, and it is very important; because we see many things work out here which we should – and need to – see. Paul spent a lot of time establishing the doctrine in the first part of Romans; so, we also spent a whole lot of time examining it and considering it completely. Here, this is one of the most solemn, serious and earnest appeals by Paul for prayer that we will find in the Bible. Paul recognizes he is facing serious danger; and he has come to the place where his ministry is facing catastrophic crises. The enemy is appearing to Paul at every turn he makes. There was a very good reason for him to fear now, too — because the preceding events proved a very clear and present danger.

Well, I have to ask for prayer now in the same way Paul did – through the Lord Jesus Christ! Everything that came to Paul did so through Christ. Just as Paul asked the believers to stand with him in prayer *THROUGH* Christ – not *TO* Christ – I ask you to pray for me *THROUGH* our Great Intercessor and Holy High Priest and through the love of the Holy Spirit! We go *THROUGH* Christ to God the Father! Love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit which joins all believers together. I hope you are all praying for me because I am praying for all of you dear readers.

When Paul says “*strive together*” — he doesn't mean *against*; the word “*strive*” means to “*agonize!*” See, prayer, for Paul, was a tremendous exercise. His prayers had meaning. Here, Paul is asking them to pray for his personal safety so he could come to them in the fullness of the blessing of God. I cannot stress to you how much we need this type of praying; and I need this type of praying particularly right now. I'm not talking about prayer by rote or grouping me in with a long prayer list; those are important, and I have a prayer list – but – sometimes that list is gone over a little too hurriedly. Only in great agony and with tremendous exercising of our souls do we truly lay hold of the arm of God and cause it to be moved. This is something that is desperately needed today – I need those types of prayers....

31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

~ Paul's life was in jeopardy from unbelievers in Judaea. The religious rulers wanted to kill him. Paul wanted to be delivered from that. The Jews in Jerusalem were likely to be hesitant to accept a gift from Gentiles; but Paul wanted them to accept this gift that he had for them. Paul's prayers were answered even though he was immediately arrested; because he was also placed into the hands of the Romans. That enabled him to appear before kings and fulfill the will and Word of God. That is critical for us all to see and understand....

32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

~ So, Paul concludes his prayer request, and his prayers were answered! His life was spared, and the church in Jerusalem accepted the gift he had brought them. Paul still had much joy; even during the two years of patiently waiting in jail in Caesarea – and even after the shipwreck along the way. Paul arrived in Rome in chains, but he arrived in the joy of the Holy Spirit. All of us believers need that kind of joy today. Genuine. Whether Paul found rest and refreshment in Rome is certainly debatable – I think he did.

2 Timothy 4:⁶ *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing ~*

This shows Paul knew peace in chains, shipwreck, and being down there in that dank, dark and terrible Mamertine prison. My prayer is that you may know that peace and that I may also know that peace....

XVI

¹ I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

² That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God by beginning in the last chapter of Romans. We took a long time going through this book of the Bible. Here we see the relationship of Christians; one to another. This is where the Gospel will be demonstrated by walking in shoe leather, as they say, in the first century of the Roman Empire. Even down there in that totally and completely pagan empire, there were Christians. Witnesses for Christ walked down the streets even as persecution broke forth upon them on all sides. The joy of the Lord was in their hearts. This will be the most revealing chapter we have seen yet in Romans. That is all certainly a blessing to my troubled soul. I hope it is to yours, too.

We're going to leave the dizzying mountain peaks of doctrine and come back down to the pavement of Rome now. The Gospel is going to be translated into life here; we're not living on the moon with high and pious platitudes. Our final report will bring us into a stark reality. Some neglect and others omit this chapter entirely – but it shouldn't be that way. Dr. Newell made this comment: *".... this chapter is neglected by many to their loss."* That is so true! There are thirty-five persons Paul mentions by name. They were all either believers living in Rome, or they were believers who were with him at this time. It is widely accepted that Paul was in Corinth when this epistle was written.

A mutual love and tender affection is expressed in this chapter which was a contradiction of Roman philosophy and practice. It is also rather unlike many churches today. These Christians were different, friends. The Romans marveled at them and wondered about their love for each other. First, we'll see Phebe who was a deaconess and the woman who carried this epistle to

Italy. What an amazing and important document she had in her hands. I hope you can be with us next time for our final report from Romans ~

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