

[Romans 15.14-16 Purposes of Paul 196]

Now for the conclusion of the book of Romans. I have entitled the first part of the conclusion ‘The Purposes of Paul’.



We probably experience many of the same things in our culture as the Romans did in theirs—like sports in the Circus Maximus. And they experienced many of the things that we desire to experience in Christ.

We have looked at the major portion of the book, the doctrinal portion, and in that, the first 11 chapters dealing with God’s righteousness—how we enter into and how we experience here and now God’s righteousness.

Then he applies that righteousness of God in particular situations and environments, and then he gets into the conclusion which is a long conclusion, 11% of the book. So it’s not just a few verses like at the end of Ephesians or Colossians or other books that he or others wrote. It is 47 verses which I have broken into 4 parts: Purposes, Plans, Personal greetings—almost all of chapter 16, up to verse 24. And then Praise, 25-27, which is the ultimate conclusion of the book—even though 15.13 was something of a conclusion and summary, a prayer that we, and the Romans, may experience the abundant life.

- I. Introduction 1.1-17
- II. Provision of God’s Righteousness 1.18-8.39
- III. Vindication of God’s Righteousness 9-11
- IV. Application of God’s Righteousness 12.1-15.3

- V. Conclusion on God’s Righteousness 15.14-16.27
  - A. Purposes of Paul 15.14-21
    - 1. Purpose for Commendation 15.14

Now we focus on this first part dealing with the purposes of Paul. One of the purposes is to commend the believers. He pays some of the highest compliments you can pay to a fellow believer, verse 14.

15.14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

‘concerning you’, He is getting personal—as this chapter and a half all is personal, not only concerning Paul himself, but personal for the audience he writes to, actually introducing us to some of the individuals in chapter 16. Transitioning into a conclusion, ‘my brethren’. This book is written to believers, he acknowledges this more than once and we see the word ‘brethren’ later on as well.

He is on an equal basis; does not address himself as an apostle here, but as a brother, on the same level. In Christ we are all at the same level, all are sinners in need of salvation, Paul included. It is also a term of intimacy, ie, a close relationship. The closest relationship we can have is in the family: husband and wife, then brothers and sisters, etc.

And part of this is because of who he is writing to. He had never visited Rome or at least the churches, though now he has a plan to go. They are not as familiar as the Ephesians where he founded the church or Colossians or Philippians where he had had more intimate and closer ties with them. The Romans were a little bit more distant; he wasn’t the founder.

Some of the high points in this conclusion we can learn from. And there are things that make it valuable for us to look into these verses:

### Conclusion

> Nature of Paul’s ministry

This gives us insight not only into apostolic ministry but Paul’s ministry is such that we participate in it. We can learn a lot about ministry from the notes and description that Paul gives us concerning his ministry. So these are very personal passages that give us insight into Paul himself and his ministry.

> Its Focus:

The main focus from which we can learn a lot: the gospel message to the gentiles, especially the ‘gospel message’ which should be our focus as well—depending on our spiritual gift(s), not that we are always involved in evangelism, but we should never be negligent of the gospel message.

> Its Extent

He also gives us a few hints concerning the extent of his ministry and the plans that he had in terms of expanding that ministry. He mentions Iliricum and his outreach there; we have only the note here, but apparently he ventured into that area. We can make some applications on how we can reach out and be able to minister as well.

> Its Power

The power behind the ministry gives us insight into what we need to appropriate in terms of the ministry we have and the fact that God has called us to minister to other people.

That is the apostle Paul and some the highlights of this conclusions.

15.14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

He goes on, 'I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness'. This is kind of abroad term, but along with the other ones, this probably looks like a very high compliment in terms of their character and particularly their spiritual maturity. 'Full of goodness', ie, they were very evidently expressive of their faith with kindness, reaching out, meeting peoples' needs. So the main focus would be *godly character*.

### Commendation

1. Godly character

Very high compliments. You might ask why would he express himself in this way—remember he did not found this church—in fact this commendation of godly character, goodness, is part of the reason Paul is so complimentary. He will explain more in verse 15; he is not just flattering them. I think he has reports and is familiar with some of the individuals. He thinks that in general, they are a relatively mature group of people. So he commends them, gives them a grade you might say, expressing his appreciation for goodness and godly character.

15.14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

And as second thing, 'filled with all knowledge'. He is not referring to 'PhD's, or necessarily worldly knowledge, but in this context I think he is focusing on Biblical knowledge. They had an extensive and solid knowledge of Scripture; they were grounded in God's word. So they

not only had a godly character, but the basis of that was a Biblical foundation. In verse 15 he says he is reminding them, that is, he is aware that they know all the doctrines that are recorded in the book of Romans. He explains that he is just reminding them of things they already know. In fact the word 'filled' in verse 14 is in the perfect tense which gives the impression that they have a background of Bible teaching, knowledge and study. This is an on-going experience.

### Commendation

1. Godly character - goodness, 'full of goodness'
2. Biblically grounded - knowledge, 'full of knowledge' 3x

15.14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

That knowledge translates into outward involvement, being able to admonish one another. That word 'admonish' would be the word for 'counseling'. Actually some counselors have taken that Greek word, *νουθετέω* (*nou-theh-téh-o*), calling their work 'Nuthetic' counseling. It conveys wisdom, and we can read these verses that contain the same word. So it's not just 'correction' but has a lot of positives to it as well: Counseling that has not just admonishment but conveying wisdom and right living. The Romans, then, were able to counsel others, younger believers, or people with any needs.

Colossians 1.28 *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.*

Here it includes teaching, encouragement for wisdom to go in the right paths, right living—with the goal to present every man perfect in Christ. 'Discipleship' is another word to describe it. It is very broad and has the ability of moving people forward in the spiritual walk. And this is a continuous activity. The Romans from their maturity and Biblical grounding are able to reach out and encourage the body of Christ, especially individuals that need to move forward.

Colossians 3.16 *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Admonishing with songs—a broader concept that we have of the word. Again coupled with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.

1Corinthians 4.14 *I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.*

'Admonish' as in 'warn'.

So we have three characteristics that Paul commends, gives very high praise: Godly character, Biblical grounding and a ministry orientation, ie, they have an outreach. This is a picture of Christian maturity, the ability to be able to minister to others with the spiritual gift along the lines of counseling and discipleship.

### Commendation

1. Godly character - goodness
2. Biblically grounded - knowledge
3. Ministry oriented - admonish, counseling abilities

Now he continues with his purpose in writing, making it clear why he writes a letter.

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A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
1. Purpose for Commendation	15.14
2. Purpose of Writing	15.15-16

15.15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

I think he uses the word 'boldly' here not only to be understood as to why he is writing, but this is somewhat characteristic of Paul. He was not the founder of their church, not as familiar with many of the people in the congregations. He was not one of their leaders or elders and didn't have much fellowship with them. But I think this is part of Paul's pattern and had he visited in person he would have spoken somewhat boldly, as we can see in these passages:

### Boldly

- > Why? - not because founder, familiar, pastor, fellowship
- > Pattern - Acts 9.27 (Damascus) *But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.*

This was shortly after his conversion, so Paul started immediately speaking boldly. He was converted on the way to Damascus, continued his journey and even had some ministry there. So, it was characteristic of him, and, we see, even in his writing.

13.46 (Antioch of Pisidia) *Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.*

14.3 (Iconium) *Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.*

19.8 (Ephesus) *And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God*

He does not change even though he is not meeting with them face to face.

15.15 But I have written very *boldly* to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Reading Romans you might ask, 'Where do you find this *bold* attitude? Well, even though the word is not evident in Romans, although it does occur, it is the *concept* of boldness. He is very direct, clear, methodical in laying out all of the major doctrines related to receiving God's righteousness and/or salvation. He lays out in some details of the lostness of all mankind, in a bold fashion talking about the only way of salvation, so no compromise, no easing off or away from the gospel—only *one way* of receiving this righteousness—through the finished work of Jesus Christ. We have the most detailed theology, so very bold in the presentation.

Even when he talks about the relationship between Jew and Gentile, 9-11, he makes some very bold statements that are nowhere else in all the Bible—in fact these chapters are unique in all the NT, everything is set forth clearly and decisively, which, you might say, in a broad way is very boldly.

And again, he says in 15: 'so as to remind you again'; he is aware that they are Biblically grounded and know these doctrines—though perhaps not to the depth that he writes, perhaps part of the reason he writes this way—to make sure. Likewise we need to make sure we are clear about the doctrines and are able to communicate them, especially

the doctrines relating to the gospel. He is communicating as an apostle on the same level in order to have a refined and detailed exposition of soteriology and a record that they could use to further their counseling ministry.

15.15 But I have written very *boldly* to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

And ‘because of the *grace* that was given me from God’—a major theme throughout Romans. In fact we are undeserving in receiving God’s righteousness, but in this case, the grace that Paul acknowledges all of us have received, was given to ‘me from God’. So he feels obligated to communicate this grace even in the conclusion here. This is the foundation and part of the reason he is writing, boldly because of the grace given him from God.

So he is extending the ministry that he acknowledges is undeserved, elsewhere calling himself the ‘chief of sinners’; he is constantly reminding himself of his persecuting of the church, before Acts and the experience on the Damascus road, so everything is from the perspective of grace as he clearly indicates throughout the book.

15.15 But I have written very *boldly* to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

For verse 16, including 15 to have the whole sentence. The main emphasis of Paul’s writing, everything else explaining something about it, flows out of his ministry of grace and he explains a little of how he views his ministry. This book is written to both Jew and Gentile, and he reminds us of that ministry that only began with the purpose of reaching the Gentiles, but if you study Acts, you see that his pattern was to go to the synagogue but he also had the Gentiles in mind and viewed his primary ministry as being to Gentiles.

But not only were the churches at Rome, probably with a majority of Gentiles, but there was a significant number of Jews as well, and the rest of verse 16 is almost written with a Jewish flavor, you might say. I am going to highlight some of the words that would remind Jewish believers of their past Judaism because he is using essentially Jewish worship language here—sacrificial language at the end. But notice the words that he chooses. For the Jewish audience I think he is awakening them in their thinking; Paul has a Jewish ministry, not departing from

the background that God raised him in. Now it is transformed because of Christ, but it is related to what Jews would be familiar with. So not only is a ministry of Jesus Christ *to* the Gentiles...

## Terms

1. Minister - λειτουργός (lay-tour-gáhs) spiritual service or worship  
This word has the sacrificial idea behind it. In fact it is related to the functioning or ministry of priests. The word in its noun form only occurs 5 times. We have already encountered it in 13.6

Romans 13.6 *For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.*

This verse talks about the believer needing to submit to the government and he describes *civil* leaders using this same word. In order to emphasize that even though he might have an unbeliever occupying an office—may even be an atheist—from God’s perspective He sovereignly using him to accomplish things that God wants to accomplish in the government and within the nation itself. So the word is used to describe a *civil* leader, whether unbelievers or believers, using this Jewish concept of the functioning of a priest offering a sacrifice.

Hebrews 10.11 *Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;*

‘Ministering’ is the same Greek word λειτουργός (lay-tour-gáhs) This, when referring the Christ’s ministry is an elevated one from God’s perspective, but when God is using even an unbeliever it accomplishes spiritual purposes.

Hebrews 8.2 *a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.*

Ultimately it is a ministry of Christ.

8.6 *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.*

A word related to λειτουργός (lay-tour-gáhs). ‘He’ refers to Christ, so this is a ministry from the Jewish perspective relating to the entire sacrificial system that would have been focused in the tabernacle in ancient times and/or later in the Temple built by Salomon.

So it is the spiritual service and/or worship that would be related to the old system that Jews would be familiar with, so these words would immediately bring thoughts of the temple, of sacrifice, of worship, primarily on a sabbath or day designated to worship the Lord. Remember Romans 12.1, not the same word, but related ones: your spiritual ‘service of worship’ = λατρεία (lay-trée-ah). Now it is in Christ and noted as ‘spiritual’ worship.

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**Terms**

1. Minister - λειτουργός (lay-tour-gáhs)
2. Minister as priest - ιερουργέω (hieh-roo-géh-o)  
 We don't see it in English, but 'ministering as a priest' is one word in Greek which is ιερουργέω (hieh-roo-géh-o) referring to someone officiating as a priest in the Temple. This verb only occurs here in the NT. Some noun forms occur elsewhere in the NT. He speaks of proper worship, godly worship, but now in this context, 'a minister of Christ' and he is characterizing his ministry as now a new one, but not totally unrelated to what Jews would be familiar with in the OT. Obviously Christ is the ultimate, final and only sacrifice. And the ministry and the involvement is spiritual and there is not a ritual or animal involved.

So this is, you could say, a description of Christian worship. Paul is not a priest (of the tribe of Benjamin), but he has ministry that has relationship and is similar because it is related to the God of the OT—the God who has now fulfilled what ancient Israel hoped for an anticipated. So to serve as a priest of the gospel is the idea of the word.

The NT views us as priests. We have a ministry as a priesthood in that we are the mediators, the instrument that God has chosen to carry out the gospel to the world. In Revelation we are described as a kingdom of priests and it refers to every born-again believer and Paul would include himself as a priest, or like a priest, in that NT sense. And Peter describes us that way also.

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'So that my offering of the Gentiles'... Notice the sacrificial language; here Paul is *offering* the Gentiles. He is giving them up to God in terms of an offering. Every Jew would be awakened as Paul is a minister along the lines of things that they would be familiar with.

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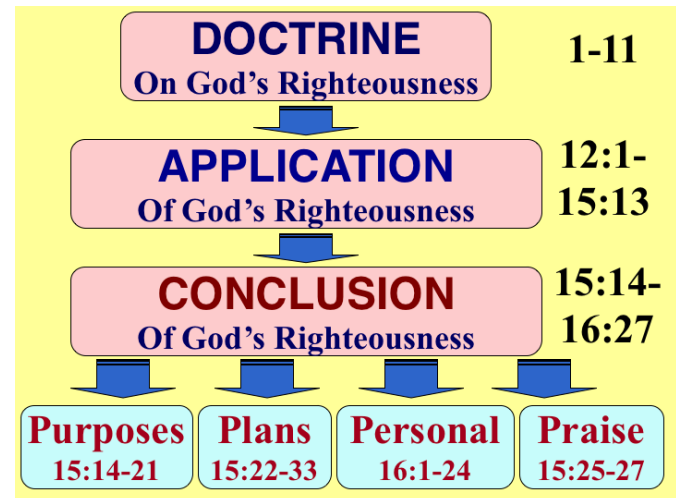
'May become acceptable'. Remember, every animal sacrifice had to be an animal that was acceptable, the best of the flock, no defects, protected. The Gentiles may be are acceptable only on the basis of what Christ has done on the cross. 'May be...' reminds us that sanctification is an on-going process. And if that wasn't clear enough, the last little phrase: 'sanctified', the animal was set apart, protected and then brought on that sabbath and given to the priest to be offered on the altar. Set apart: the idea of 'sanctified, cleansed in Christ', 'by the Holy Spirit'. This is positional sanctification in that positionally we are totally set apart, but it's by the Holy Spirit Himself.

**Terms**

1. Minister - λειτουργός (lay-tour-gáhs) spiritual service or worship  
Romans 13.6, Hebrews 8.2
2. Minister as priest - ιερουργέω (hieh-roo-géh-o) serve gospel as priest
3. Worship imagery - offering

That should be our goal of receiving commendation of Godly character, grounded in God's word and the ability to disciple and counsel those that we have an impact on. Would Paul commend you like he did he Romans?

[Romans 15.114-18 Essence of Ministry (1) 197]



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A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
1. Purpose for Commendation	15.14

Now we want to look at verse 14 again from the perspective of Paul's ministry. We have stressed that all of us that know the Lord Jesus Christ are in fact in the ministry. We will make a list of principles for ministry. Even new believers often are excited and ready to share their experience. That's ministry, doing what God would want us to do in terms of sharing with others the things that He has done in us. We can keep this in mind when discipling new believers.

15.14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Assuming that they are actively sharing, every believer is being utilized in ministry. And Paul was teaching people how to be involved in the lives of other believers.

### Ministry Essence

#### 1. All in ministry

This is the awareness that all of us are in Biblical ministry, serve the Lord, all are servants—bond servants—and we all have a place. Part of the reason God has left us here is because He has a plan for us in terms of His ministry in reaching the world.

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1. Purpose for Commendation	15.14
2. Purpose of Writing	15.15-16

Second, he gives his purpose for writing.

15.15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

He describes his writing as 'very boldly'. We talked about passages, particularly doctrinal ones that are very bold, very clear, very specific as to the lostness of man. 'On some points': this is not the entire soteriology or theology but some of the most important points in the area of salvation.

And another important point: 'so as to remind you' reinforces that they are filled with all knowledge. It seems like it was solid groups of churches, many of them, who were overall well-grounded, probably well familiar with soteriology. Paul reminds them of things they already know, probably giving more depth or organization, step by step understanding of the doctrine. But part of the purpose is simply to *remind*.

This gives another principle: it's good to remind, to review and not jump into a passage without its context. This is our nature; we need to remind one another because we tend to forget. Even if you have studied a doctrine such as soteriology, it is always good to be reminded to solidify things and bring them back to remembrance. Ministering to others, also, one should remind them, maybe using a new approach or a different way of saying the same thing. The whole book of Deuteronomy is reminding the children of Israel; especially the new generation had to be reminded of their past. They had to be reminded of what God had done in them and through them. And it is a re-stating of the Law.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry
2. Reminders needed

15.15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Reminding them again, 'because of the grace'. Everything that we are involved in is on the basis of grace. God could do it more efficiently, in a more powerful way Himself, but on the basis of *grace* He has given *us* a ministry, an opportunity to accomplish things that He desires. Not because He needs us or because he can't do it on His own,

but simply because graciously He has given ministry to us that *we* could have the joy of being able to enter into accomplishing the things that God desires to accomplish. So ministry in general is a work of grace.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry 14
2. Reminders needed 15
3. By grace from God 15

### Terms

1. Minister - λειτουργός (lay-tour-gáhs) spiritual service or worship  
Romans 13.6, Hebrews 8.2
2. Minister as priest - ιερουγέω (hieh-roo-géh-o) serve gospel as priest
3. Worship imagery - offering

Then we focused on the two words: minister and minister as a priest. That phrase is one word in Greek and means ‘officiating as a priest in the Temple’.

Paul knew what his ministry was all about. He knew what his spiritual gifts were; he knew the area that God had given him, and he had a clear vision of what God was going to do in his life and ministry. From our perspective we can draw a principle of knowing *our* giftedness. It is very useful to know your gifts, prominent and secondary, because those are the areas in which God is going to use you. We saw in chapter 12 where Paul gives goes into more detail. The concept is of every believer having one or a package of spiritual gifts.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry 14
2. Reminders needed 15
3. By grace from God 15
4. Knowing giftedness 16

So, if you don’t know what your gifts are, you need to find out what they are and then procede to use them. Once you know those gifts, you can ‘boldly’, as Paul says, minister with the *confidence* that God has equipped you to be able to accomplish things that are beyond our flesh or our natural abilities.

### Paul

- > Priest (16)
- > Proclaimer (17-19)
- > Pioneer (20)

So, also at the end of 16, Paul is mentioned as a priest—not strictly speaking in the OT sense—but more in the NT sense. We have talked about the believer as a priest in the NT from 1Peter and Revelation: we are a kingdom of priests, in the NT sense, relating to the ultimate high priest, Jesus Christ himself.

We will see in verses 17-19 that Paul had gifts that enabled him to be a ‘proclaimer’, primarily of the gospel. Then in verse 20 we will see that he also is a ‘pioneer’; as an apostle he was a pioneer.

That was not only a review but also and aplicación of the verses from the last lesson. So now we move forward beginning with verse 17.

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The third purpose that Paul mentions in this section is for the Gentiles.

15.17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

‘boasting’, qualified with ‘in the things pertaining to God’. I thought ‘boasting’ was prideful, not good, even sin. So how do we harmonize what Paul is doing? Actually, he uses this word quite often, both in the verb form and the noun form, even in the adjectival form.

### Boasting

1. Self-centered - sin
2. Pertaining to God - glorifying 2Corinthians 1.12; 12.1,6

The Jeremiah passage, 9.24, *let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me*. Which is exactly what Paul is doing through all his ministry, boasting not in his own resources or effort, but in what Christ has done on his behalf. He is giving a positive aspect.

Boasting, in and of itself, like other things in Christianity, is not evil per se. There has to be a balance. Boasting that is self-centered is sin. There is a passage in 1Corinthians 1 that identifies this type that is evil.

But in the things ‘pertaining to God’, we are not only free, but in fact, when we boast in those things we are actually *glorifying* God because we are giving Him the credit.

2Corinthians 1.12 *For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. 13 For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; 14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.*

So there is a spiritual boasting that is not evil, not bad, but pertains to what God has accomplished in the Corinthians. And they can even boast in what God has accomplished in Paul. These things are even glorifying to God.

12.1 *Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord...6 For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.*

More insight: there is a fine line between self-centered boasting that is prideful, improper and what glorifies God. In 12.1-6 he is actually describing and in some way boasting over these visions that God had given *him*, so they were pertaining to Him. So, this actually glorifies God. If you do a word study you will find a lot of other passages. In fact Paul uses this word probably more often, in the NT, than any other writer, and talks a lot about it.

15.17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

This verse continues ‘in things pertaining to God’ and that is the key here.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Then verses 18 and 19, together because it is one long sentence. In 18 he does not presume to speak of anything ‘except what Christ has accomplished through me’—which relates back to that ‘boasting’ what Christ is accomplishing through Paul. He is boasting in the obedience of the Gentiles, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the

Spirit, the extent of his ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum—the things pertaining to God. The key to it all: ‘what Christ has accomplished through me.’

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry	14
2. Reminders needed	15
3. By grace from God	15
4. Knowing giftedness	16
5. God’s Ministry	17-18

I would like to expand that a little more on the concept of ministry in terms of ministry being *God’s* ministry to utilize *us* which is an interesting concept. God could accomplish everything on his own, far better than we could do. But God has also *chosen* and desires to use us to accomplish the things that He is doing in the ministry. This is only a sampling of other passages that we could include in a list that gives us the sense that the ministry is one that God is desiring and accomplishing. Another principle: we are just His instruments.

Acts 14.27 *When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*

This is Paul and Barnabas giving a report to the church at Antioch of what God did on that first missionary journey.

15.12 *All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.*

That was at the Jerusalem council, giving a report—again, what God had accomplished, but *through them*.

2Corinthians 10.13 *But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. 17 But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.*

In the context of things God is accomplishing amongst the Corinthians and the involvement of Paul

Colossians 1.29 *For this purpose also I labor; striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*

Notice the two things again: Paul is striving, putting in the effort, doing the ministry, but it is in the power that God gives that he is able to accomplish anything. Ministry is spiritual—what God is accomplishing, involving us.

1Thessalonians 2.13 *For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*



Paul is the preacher, the one who delivered the word, but it is the word of God: He is the only that gave it and is working through it as Paul is delivering it to the Thessalonians.

Giving our own testimony is a form of boasting of what God has done. The same concept. There is a proper sense, no including the pride that we usually think of with this word.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

There are two components here: notice the ‘I’—we don’t want to minimize our involvement. You don’t want to magnify it, rather magnify what God is doing. But you also need to acknowledge that we are involved, God has desired to use us so you have God accomplishing things in the ministry but He uses us as instruments.

Paul doesn’t deny that he is involved: at the end of verse 19: ‘I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.’ He has the proper balance we dedicate ourselves, put the effort in, but we are simply the instruments that God wants to use. This goes through all the passage, starting verse 14: ‘I myself’... v 15: ‘but I have written very boldly’.

This is the letter Paul has written. He would acknowledge that through inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and the moving of the HS within him to write, and God giving him the insights to write—but he wrote it, ‘I have written very boldly’. So you see this theme...17 ‘I have found reason for boasting...20... ‘I aspired to preach the gospel’. This is his motivation, his desire, to preach the gospel....that I would not build on another man’s foundation’. He is not diminishing himself, but he gives credit to not only the source of power but in reality the essence of ministry is that it is God’s ministry.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry	14
2. Reminders needed	15
3. By grace from God	15
4. Knowing giftedness	16
5. God’s Ministry	17-18
6. Ministry instruments	18

That is our part, being humbly used as instruments, by grace. We also depend on prayer warriors, who are the ones doing the ‘heavy lifting’ of our ministry. All of this takes place *in Christ*. These passages refer to the *power of the Holy Spirit*. If we are in the flesh, that ‘short-

circuits’ the work of the Spirit within us to accomplish things. We can do the same thing in the flesh, but it won’t have the same impact as it would if God is working through the Spirit.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Other passages: 1Corinthians 3.21, Paul is addressing the factions speaking about whom they are following in the church in Corinth.

1Corinthians 3.21 *So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come;*

4.7 *For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

As we noted, self-centered boasting is man’s sin and is spoken against by Paul

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

We conclude with this one: ‘by word and deed’: Paul is saying ‘I try to live a life that communicated as well, ie, Christ accomplished things through me by not only the things that I spoke, and in this case wrote the book of Romans, but in my actions’. That is, his life was in accord with his preaching. When our words are not in accord with our life, we call that *hypocrisy*. Basically Paul is saying that we need to keep our life in balance and live a life of integrity. So personal integrity makes for a more effective ministry.

### Ministry Essence

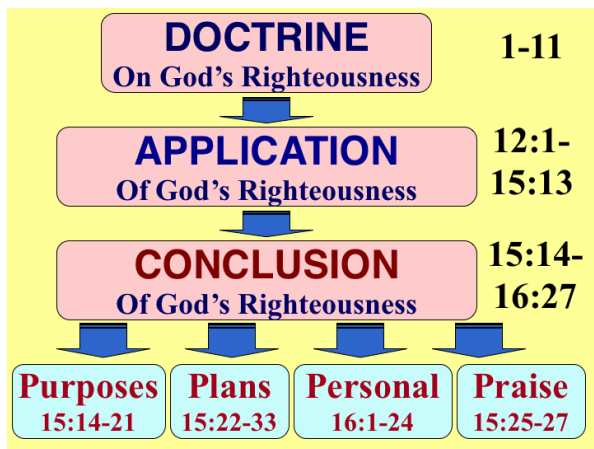
1. All in ministry	14
2. Reminders needed	15
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6. Ministry instruments	18
7. Personal Integrity	18

There will be more, but at least 7 elements of ministry. All of us are involved, it's good to be reminded and to remind those that we are ministering to, going over principles that Paul was doing with the Romans.

We need to prioritize those areas and avoid areas that we are not going to be effective in, recognizing the main point here, that all ministry is the Lord's, and He is accomplishing it—which we are humbly acknowledging, without diminishing the part we play, but we are instruments that He desires to use. And in accomplishing ministry we want to stress the need for personal integrity.

Sharpen your ministry with insights from Paul's ministry!!!

[Romans 15.17-21 Essence of Ministry (2) 198]



We are continuing in chapter 15 to complete this paragraph, the Purposes of Paul. Even some pastors don't realize what 'ministry' is really all about. Often they think that ministry is what a preacher does in front of the church. We need a bigger perspective on what ministry is. This is an important concept. Many do have a grasp of what Biblical ministry is—and are involved in some aspect of it in their personal lives.

This lesson continues this passage where Paul presents some of the major areas of ministry that he was involved in, and by doing that he tells us what ministry really is and we can draw some principles from what he says as he writes to the believers in the city of Rome. It appears from that first verse, 14, that he senses that they have a concept of ministry from the compliment he pays to them.

Paul has plans yet for his ministry, to go as far as Spain and he wants to involve the Romans. And then he greets people, apparently



some of whom he knew. Finally, he concludes the book with a few verses with praise—a typical conclusion. The 47 verses of his whole conclusion are longer than some books like Philemon.

I have thought of another area that Paul is describing concerning his ministries. This is Paul as prophet. One of the main functions of prophets in the NT, but particularly in the OT, is that they are writers of Scripture.

#### Paul

- > Prophet (15) writers of Scripture, inspired and inerrant. All the Scripture es revelation.
- > Priest (16) uses 2 words to describe
- > Proclaimer/Preacher (17-19)
- > Pioneer (20) as all apostles were.

He says, in verse 15, ' *But I have written very boldly to you on some points*'. Paul is writer of the book of Romans which is inerrant, so we can classify him as having a prophetic ministry.

Prophecy is more *revelation* and we believe that all of his writings are a revelation. In fact, when you think of prophecy, don't think so much about predictions—that's only a minor part of prophetic writings. The book of Genesis would be considered a product of Moses who considered himself a prophet. Joshua, the books of Samuel, the books of Kings are historical prophets, so one of the main functions is to record and write down revelation.

Then, verse 16, it is explicit that Paul is a *priest*; he uses two words to describe his ministry as a priest, using OT imagery, though of course he is not of the right tribe to be a ‘priest’. But in the NT, all believers have a ministry of priesthood.

He also describes himself as a *proclaimer*, o preacher, of the gospel.

And, as a *pioneer*, like all the apostles who spread the gospel in various places.

From these aspects of Paul’s work we can draw principles that are applicable to anyone in any time frame. We will have up to 12 principles in just this passage.

I. Introduction	1.1-17
II. Provision of God’s Righteousness	1.18-8.39
III. Vindication of God’s Righteousness	9-11
IV. Application of God’s Righteousness	12.1-15.3
V. Conclusion on God’s Righteousness	15.14-16.27
A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
1. Purpose for Commendation	15.14

So, in his conclusion, we have the purposes of Paul, starting with his purpose of commending the Romans, with very high praise. They have the ability to admonish or counsel as ministry and are functioning in that capacity. From their character and Biblical grounding they are able to admonish.

Part of being blessed in heavenly places, as in Ephesians 1.3, is being part of what God is doing in the world, and we have an important function in it. The question is not *whether* we are in ministry but whether or not we are faithful to what God has given us to do. This is an important principle: that all believers are in ministry—which is at least implied in verse 14.

### Ministry Essence

#### 1. All in ministry

I. Introduction	1.1-17
II. Provision of God’s Righteousness	1.18-8.39
III. Vindication of God’s Righteousness	9-11
IV. Application of God’s Righteousness	12.1-15.3
V. Conclusion on God’s Righteousness	15.14-16.27
A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
1. Purpose for Commendation	15.14
2. Purpose for Writing	15.15-16

Then in his purpose for writing he states: *I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again.* So they are familiar with soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, the heart of Romans. But he is reminding them and presenting a theological perspective on the doctrine, organizing the material and perhaps correcting any misunderstanding. We always need reminding, having material presented even from a slightly different angle, especially the basic doctrines.

And, in the last part of verse 15, all ministry is by grace, acknowledging that God is self-existent and doesn’t need us for anything. Ministry itself is a gift, a gracious act. He brought Paul to his knees with no evangelist present—which He could do to every single individual if He so desired, and His Holy Spirit could convict and bring people to an understanding of the gospel, without us or anything. But by grace He has chosen to involve us.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry	14
2. Reminders needed	15
3. Ministry is by grace	15
4. Knowing giftedness	16

Also, from the detail in this passage we can draw some conclusions about giftedness which, in Romans 12 he expounds upon telling that everyone has a gift as well. Ephesians 4 and 1Corinthians 12-14, also talk about giftedness, and putting all the pieces together, I believe we all have spiritual gifts, obviously through the HS. So, it is important to communicate to people younger in the faith to inform them and encourage them to begin functioning. So ministry is done, not by one person, but by a whole community of believers. One person is inadequate to do all that God desires, even in a small body of 20-30 people, and some of the churches in Rome were probably even smaller than that.

Remember, the early church in the 1st Century essentially turned the Roman empire upside down as Luke gives in the Acts 17.6, *These men who have upset the world.* Rome by itself had at least a million people, so can you imagine 12 men attempting to reach that many? Certainly the HS was moving in an active way, but I think believers had that sense of giftedness. Paul stayed very short periods of time in some places; there is no way he, by himself could minister all those people. He left people back in churches who ministered to one another within their gift, and certainly there were leaders who were to develop these individuals so that they would be grounded and able to minister.

So it is important to know one's gift. In the church culture we have kind of lost sight of that; we have minimized the importance of each and every individual.

I. Introduction	1.1-17
II. Provision of God's Righteousness	1.18-8.39
III. Vindication of God's Righteousness	9-11
IV. Application of God's Righteousness	12.1-15.3
V. Conclusion on God's Righteousness	15.14-16.27
A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
1. Purpose for Commendation	15.14
2. Purpose for writing	15.15-16
3. Purpose for gentiles	15.16

Then, verse 16, there is a purpose for *gentiles*. This is a main theme in Romans and a main teaching.

15.17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

And Paul could *boast* in things related to God. We looked at this concept that Paul uses more often than any other writer. It is not always bad or wrong; in things pertaining to God it is encouraged.

### Boasting

1. self-centered - sin
2. Pertaining to God - glorifying 2Corinthians 1.12-14, 12.1,6

15.17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

The key is what *God* has accomplished, and he boasts...

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

...even what God has done *through* him, not minimizing what he was involved in, but the proclamation of the gospel, the converts, the founding of churches. God gets the glory.

Then, in 18, he expands on the boasting. God is the one that accomplishes ministry but He has been pleased to do it through us. We look up all these verses showing that the ministry is what *God* is accomplishing, not any one individual or pastor.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry 14
2. Reminders needed 15
3. Ministry is by grace 15
4. Knowing giftedness 16
5. God's ministry 17-18
  - Acts 14.27
  - 15,12
  - 2Corinthians 10.13
  - Colossians 1.29
  - 1Thessalonians 2.13

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

### Ministry Essence

1. All in ministry 14
2. Reminders needed 15
3. By grace from God 15
4. Knowing giftedness 16
5. God's Ministry 17-18
6. Ministry instruments 18

Anytime you minister as one of His instruments, also there is the blessing, not just when someone comes to the Lord.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Then, this little phrase 'word and deed' is interesting. We look at these verses:

## Ministry Essence

...  
7. Personal integrity 18

Luke 24.19 *And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,*

Acts 7.22 *"Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.*

Colossians 3.17 *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

By 'word and deed' includes the things that we speak along with the way we live. They have to be 'in sync', not people that just 'spout' Biblical principles, but we want to live them out as well. I summarize that little phrase with 'Personal Integrity' which is very important in ministry. We are all working on that; we don't wait until we 'have arrived'. To the extent that we accomplish integrity, I think that enhances and make our ministry more effective.

Note the descriptive phrase in Luke 24.19 'mighty in deed and word' describing Jesus Himself. 'By word and deed' is *Christlikeness*. His life matched His preaching. This is the context of the two Emmaus travelers. This is their description of Jesus while He was talking to them. So He was known for personal integrity which is a powerful thing, as the text indicates.

Then, in Acts 7.22, one of the most important characters in all the OT, shows Christ-like characteristics in that His life matched His words as well.

And, in Colossians 3.17, it is an exhortation given to the church—to us.

In Romans 15.18, it is a description of Paul's ministry as well, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles—by 'word and deed'. It's personal integrity; our life should match the things that we communicate. An important element of ministry: we need to continually work on it and develop Christ-like characteristics.

The result of Paul's ministry was to reach the Gentiles and now he describes it 'in the power of signs and wonders'.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

In the book of Acts you see that the HS empowered Paul much like He had, prior to Paul, He had empowered Peter and the other apostles to perform 'signs and wonders'. So, today, in chapter 12, we talked about spiritual gifts, and some were miraculous gifts, and certainly Paul had a miraculous display of them, especially in Acts. But what kind of principle do we draw from this? It's God's confirmation of the message. Let's comment on this 'signs and wonders'.

## Ministry Essence

...  
7. Personal integrity 18  
8. God's confirmation 19

There are two main positions on the issue of on-going giftedness or on-going abilities as church history unfolds. The 'Cessationist' viewpoint says that these miraculous gifts such as Paul and Peter and the apostles had in the 1st Century have ceased. Then the other viewpoint says that God could give whatever gift an any point in His sovereign plan and miraculous gifts have not necessarily ceased.

Most of our circle of friends are cessationists—the very conservative, dispensational, fundamental. Personally I am kind of an exception; I don't want to limit God as He can give whatever gifts He wants at any point. Given that there are periods of time when there is an abundance of signs and wonders and miracles and powers—gifts of raising the dead, miraculous healings and other miracles.

You can see this in Scripture: most of the time, as time elapsed, there are no signs and wonders, not discounting that in an isolated place God might do something unusual, even in our age. Biblically, in the time of Moses, there were the miraculous plagues, parting of the Red Sea, and the time of Elijah and Elisha was characterized by miraculous abilities. In the time of Christ, certainly and in the book of Acts there are lots of examples including Paul himself.

I think in general, signs and wonders have a particular purpose, not to say that God cannot do them at any point. They have a purpose of confirmation; they did relieve suffering and pain, etc, but the main purpose was to confirm. Moses needed confirmation as did the children of Israel; they needed to see that God was working and changing things and to confirm who He was in order for them to begin the process of starting their nation.

Jesus made the point that they demonstrate that He is in fact the Son of God. In John the word *σημειον* (say-mée-on) is used to point to a

spiritual truth. The word ‘miracles’ or ‘powers’ are used in the other gospels. In John the word ‘signs’ is translated ‘miracles’ and if you look at the context, early already in His ministry, the ‘signs’ are used to confirm His Messianic claims are legitimate—that He is in fact the Messiah.

### Signs and Wonders

> Signs - point to spiritual truth  
miracles in John 2.11 *This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

The text tells us ‘His disciples believed in Him.’ If you follow through John, you can tie all of the claims to some of the miracles that John records. For example, He claims to be the ‘bread of life’, the source of *real* nourishment, spiritual life—then he confirms it with the feeding of the 5000. He said He was the resurrection and the life, and then He raised Lazarus and Himself.

We do not see in Scripture that ‘signs’ are the normative for the Christian life—as some teach. Also we have to remember that every one of the gifts can be counterfeited by Satan and this area is one of them. Christ refused the people that came saying they had done miracles and signs —‘I never knew you’. There are examples false apostles, false tongues, signs and miracles in the NT. True signs and miracles allow the observer to realize that this is not normal but something from God. It requires discernment as to what is genuine and what is not.

> Wonders - amazement

Acts 2.22 *“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--*

*5.12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s portico.*

2Corinthians 12.12 *The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.*

The main principle we can draw: when God works in your life in ministry, I think He will confirm it—not necessarily with signs and wonders, but I think you will get feedback, a sense of the Lord using you to lead someone to Christ, but also people will say that ‘that was helpful’, ‘it strengthened me’ or ‘gave me a new insight’.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Then there was the power of the Holy Spirit enabling to perform signs and wonders. This goes along with idea of the ministry belonging to and being of our Lord Jesus Christ—He is the one that is doing it. We are simply instruments and we need the enablement of the Holy Spirit. This also warns us if we are in the flesh we probably are not accomplishing anything eternal or long-lasting.

### Ministry Essence

...	
7. Personal integrity	18
8. God’s confirmation	19
9. HS enablement	19

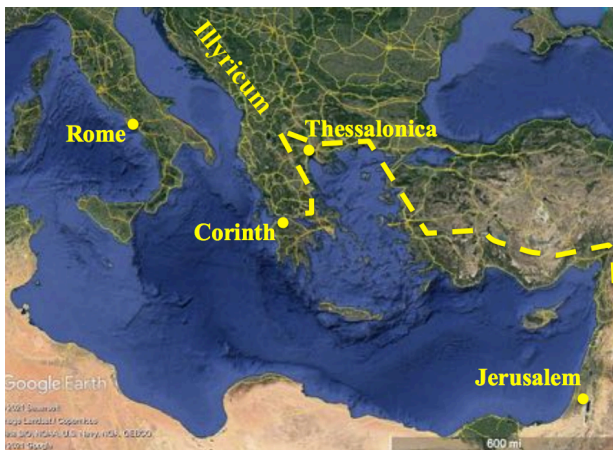
15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

And then this last little phrase: ‘from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum...’ There is a lot of discussion in the commentaries, but I think it is clear from the book of Acts. Paul did not start his ministry in Jerusalem, and Illyricum is not mentioned again. Paul began his ministry in Damascus, when He was converted. There are some passages that he actually ministered almost immediately after his conversion. He began to proclaim the gospel immediately. He was like a ‘baby’ Christian already starting to minister.

It was much later that he ministered in Jerusalem. He did get his verification there; also the Temple was there. He is probably saying, to the Jews, ‘yes, I had ministry in Jerusalem’. He is identifying that this is the beginning of Christianity, and he had a part in ministry at the very heart and soul of the beginning of Christianity in Jerusalem.





‘Illyricum’ is in on the other end of his area of ministry, and ‘round about’ suggests that he didn’t go in a ‘straight line’. Writing to the Romans, he was in Corinth at the end of the 3rd missionary journey. From Corinth he starts to back track via Ephesus. He wants to go to Rome, but realizing he didn’t have time, he wrote them a letter. He also wanted to go to Spain, even farther away.

15.18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,  
 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Then this last phrase: he preached to the fullest extent; you could say both geographically and also in terms of the opportunities that the Lord gave him for ministry. This book of Romans is an example of the thoroughness of Paul, the detail, the argumentation, the clear presentation of thought after thought that builds one on another. The book is the most detailed in terms of theology. Like a lawyer he uses legal terms throughout the book like a lawyer building a case.

**Ministry Essence**

- ...
- 7. Personal integrity 18
- 8. God’s confirmation 19
- 9. HS enablement 19
- 10. Ministry thoroughness 19

So, we need to view ministry not only in the power of the Holy Spirit, but in terms of *thoroughness*. There are lots of examples of his

ministering thoroughly. We need to think in terms of thoroughness as well—not scattered or intermittent, but a very thorough commitment to the work God has given us—not a half-hearted effort.

Part of thoroughness is having a *plan*, having an approach, a plan based on what God has revealed to us regarding the ministry He has prepared for us, and concerning the spiritual gifts He has given us. Not only are we empowered by the HS, but it takes a willingness to put oneself out and stretch, to jump in when the opportunity arises or when the Lord moves us in a certain direction.

[Romanos 15.19-25; Acts 16.6-10 Essence and Strategy for Ministry 199]

15.20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; 21 but as it is written, “THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY

He is already kind of transitioning into some of his plans: ‘And thus I aspired to preach the gospel’. Preaching the gospel was the primary ministry that God gave him. It may not be the primary ministry for all of us, but we will be involved in *some* way. The principle that I will draw is that we are related *in some way* to the gospel. So he is aspiring, planning, thinking, desiring to preach the gospel, and more specifically this goes along with his planning...

15.20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; 21 but as it is written, “THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”

... ‘not where Christ was already named’. It’s not that he did not go where the gospel had been preached. In fact his plan to visit Rome is an example: he didn’t found these churches and he didn’t necessarily have an extensive ministry amongst them, but yet he writes a letter and he plans to visit them. But he is a pioneer, a missionary with goals for areas that have not yet been reached.

‘where Christ was already named’ I think he means where people were not familiar with Christ, were not calling upon Him, not necessarily believing Him. So Paul had an outreach ministry and also spend time in some locations until a church was established and then he would leave and go to new areas.

So the principle here is that Paul's focus was on the Great Commission. And when you think of the Great Commission, you generally think of evangelism. But that is not the extent of it: Matthew 28.19 says, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*, 'make disciples', this is the command. The 'Go' is actually a participle: 'As you go...' As you pursue not only your life but your ministry, you make disciples—that is the emphasis. The stress on evangelism is more that what the verse is actually teaching. 'Making disciples' includes the whole range of ministry in terms of developing individuals, grounding people in God's word, encouraging people to use what has given them in the way of spiritual gifts. So, I think the focus of the Great Commission was at the heart of Paul; his ministry was not simply evangelism but included the full range. Romans is a good example of that.

### Ministry Essence

...	
7. Personal integrity	18
8. God's confirmation	19
9. HS enablement	19
10. Ministry thoroughness	19
11. Focus on Great Commission	20

All of our ministry will have a focus on some aspect of the Great Commission, even service ministries that support those that are preachers, teachers and those that are more involved up front. Service ministries often make those ministries possible. We need to keep reminding ourselves of the the Great Commission so we don't get involved in other things and leave it out of our goals.

15.20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; 21 but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

He describes more of his ministry—'so that I would not build on another man's foundation'. Paul had a particular ministry. We see a little of that in 1Corinthians where he describes the ministry of others: some plant, some water, some fertilize, some nurture...for the whole process he is using the imagery of the farmer. He saw his ministry as one of planting seeds and others would build upon the foundation he laid and he would leave behind elders and churches that would carry on the ministry. In fact if you study the book of Acts you will see that he focused mainly on certain areas. The main example would be Ephesus

where he spent some 3 1/2 years and it doesn't mention that he founded the churches at Smyrna, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Colosse or others in the surrounding area. But most scholars think that his focus was discipling believers in Ephesus and from Ephesus they sent out individuals that would plant churches in the various other locations. So Paul knew what his calling was and he knew that others had a part in it and his part was to plant the seeds and others would build upon that foundation. So he was not an individual that would build on another man's foundation because his was the cutting edge ministry.

### Ministry Essence

...	
7. Personal integrity	18
8. God's confirmation	19
9. HS enablement	19
10. Ministry thoroughness	19
11. Focus on Great Commission	20
12. Body ministry	20

So we not only focus on the Great Commission, but we are just part of a bigger plan that God has in terms of ministry, and there is a part that the whole body plays. Some of us want to encourage others to grow and to be involved in the word, be equipped and recognize their spiritual gifts—to get them involved in ministry and show that they have a place in ministry... Together as a body we fulfill all that God desires, although unfortunately today the church is very weak and I don't think it is fulfilling what God would have us do. But that is the design.

So we have 12 principles or 12 elements of the essence of ministry. This concludes our list.

15.20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; 21 but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

'As it is written': He is going to give a Biblical support of what he has said here. We will look at the context of the quotation:

Isaiah 52.15 *Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.*

The last part of Isaiah 52 leads into and is part of the description of the Messiah that focuses on the crucifixion. This is related to the coming of



the Messiah. Paul is not saying that he is fulfilling this passage but I think that it is part of everything else that he has just mentioned—that in some way his ministry is a *part* of fulfilling what Isaiah 52 and 53 are predicting. When the Messiah comes, He will in fact take the sins of the world. He will die for mankind. And in that he quotes Isaiah 52.15,

15.20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; 21 but as it is written, “THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”

‘THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE’. The ‘news’ of the Messiah, the gospel—and that is what Paul is all about, giving out this news. And there is coming a time when Messiah arrives, this news will be presented. Paul is saying that his ministry is just part of this—part of what Isaiah 52 and 53 is predicting, when Messiah arrives. From Paul’s perspective Messiah did arrive and his ministry was, in the 1st Century, what God was doing to fulfill the purpose of the Messiah. Those that had no news of Him ‘shall see’, that is, they will have spiritual insight...

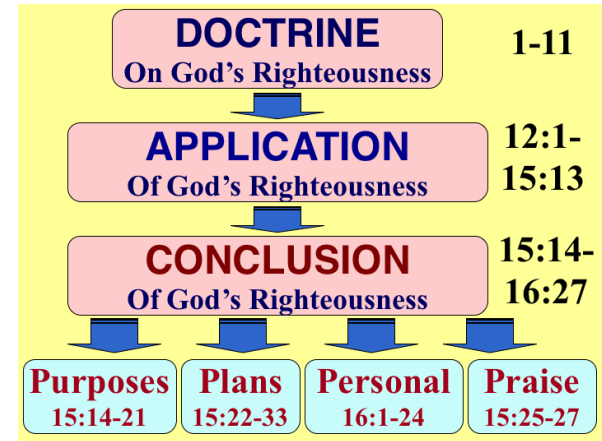
15.20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man’s foundation; 21 but as it is written, “THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”

...and in the last part of the verse: those that have not heard will ‘understand’. What kind of poetry is this? Two lines...synonymous parallelism. A lot of the prophets used poetry and Isaiah is an example. He used synonymous parallelism which is two lines with a rephrasing or restating with other words. The same idea using different words or phraseology. Here it is the idea of comprehending or digesting or absorbing spiritual truth—it will be grasped, obtained. The gospel message will be revealed; it will be understood, seen in a spiritual sense and Paul is supporting his ministry and is a part of a bigger plan when Messiah comes; people—like the Gentiles will see, hear and understand.

That is the paragraph with the purposes of Paul and it moves us into the Plans of Paul which begins in 15.22, and I see that going all the way to the end of the chapter, verse 33.

I. Introduction	1.1-17
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IV. Application of God’s Righteousness	12.1-15.3
V. Conclusion on God’s Righteousness	15.14-16.27
A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
B. Plans of Paul	15.22-33
1. Plans for Future	15.22-25
a. Past Hindrances	15.22



In verse 22-25 he give his plans for the future. Part of the sentence deals with past hindrances.

First, we look at the long sentence as a whole, 4 verses. We break it down so we don’t get lost in all the detail. And first we want to prioritize the main parts. As a reminder: a sentence has one or more independent clauses and can have dependent clauses as well. In this long sentence we have a combination of both in this long sentence.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while— 25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

A compound sentence has two or more independent clauses, and a complex sentence has at least one independent clause and one dependent clause. And a compound-complex sentence will have at least two independent clauses y at least one dependent.

An independent clause is one that can stand alone, that is, you can put a period at the end and it is a complete sentence.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while— 25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

A sentence can be started with 'for' and it may be an independent or a subordinate clause. This one appears to be just continuing a thought from verse 21, so is an independent clause. After this clause there is a semi-colon. Then the next two verses are subordinate with subordinate conjunctions: but, since, whenever. And in verse 24 there are dashes which have a parenthetical statement between them. Then the sentence finally ends at the end of verse 25.

This is a compound-complex sentence: there are at least two independent clauses and several dependent. The first is verse 22 'For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you'; Since 'for I hope...' is in a parenthesis and 'for' has the sense of 'because', this would be a dependent clause. The second independent clause is at the end of verse 25: 'I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints'.

A sentence gives you at least one main idea and here there are two: he had been prevented from coming and he was going to Jerusalem to serve the saints. These are the controlling ideas. Everything in between the two ideas in this case is not only subordinate but they tell us something about being prevented from coming and / or the going to Jerusalem.

Looking at these details, we start in verse 23: 'but now, with no further place for me in these regions', there is no verb, so it is not a clause. It probably goes with what follows. 'and since' this is the subordinating conjunction, and the whole verse is a subordinate clause which tells us of his idea of coming to them.

Verse 24 has three subordinate clauses: 'whenever I go ...', 'for I hope...' and 'when I have first enjoyed...'

Then verse 25 is the second independent clause.

It is best to do this type of analysis as you study the Bible, especially if there are long sentences like this one. By definition a sentence is a unit of thought. And sentences make up paragraphs. From this I create an outline. I summarized 22-23 as Past Hindrances, Present longings, then in 24 Planned hopes, and then 25 a Plan for Jerusalem. Then in verse 26 he has plans that are more immediate.

The first application that I want to draw from this goes back to verse 20 where I was referring to Paul's vision. And when it comes to *our* ministry we have principles which we listed. Now I want to talk a little about the Strategy of ministry—of which the majority of believers don't have. But if you have one, we think of what might be helpful in making your ministry more effective. I think Paul gives us his strategy or at least principles that underlie his strategy that he gives us.

The first thing is that Paul had a clear vision of who he was, what God had called him for. In fact God may not be as clear with us as He was with Paul. Paul got a direct vision of the Lord and guidance from believers to give him a clear vision for his ministry. In Acts and letters he refers to aspects of his ministry that he fulfilled and at the end of his life he wrote 2Timothy, which most scholars consider written within weeks or maybe even days of his execution, and he was able to say under inspiration 4.7, '*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;*

So we should identify what our spiritual gifts are and, though not absolutely necessary, it is helpful to have a good idea of how God is going to use you. This will prioritize the things you do in life, the effort you put in and it also it will prioritize the opportunities that come your way that God opens up that you will want to take advantage of. I think Satan will always try to distract us or divert us. And I don't think it is beyond him to present a spiritual opportunity in an area of ministry that is not part of what God has designed for us. So it good to have a clear idea how God wants to use us.

## **Ministry Strategy**

### 1. Clarity of Vision 20

Paul had a clear vision that he was on the cutting edge of evangelism and it was primarily to Gentiles, so when he laid out the plans he had a strategy. He doesn't state it but it appears that he prioritized major areas like Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and there were many others cities surrounding these, like Thesalonica. And on the 1st missionary journey he went to Lystra and Derbe in the Galatia area. He also had a priority of going to the Jew first, visiting the synagogue. You see the outworking of this in the book of Acts.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;

Part of this strategy: 'For this reason', going back to the vision he had and his plan...Romans 1.13 *I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been*

prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;

This had been a clear plan of Paul's, and now in chapter 15 he is reminding us of his plan and that he had been hindered from going to the Romans.

This is an example of another principle. We have our plans but ¿Who directs our steps? God. Look at Acts 16, the beginning of the 2nd Missionary Journey. Chapter 15 had been a Jerusalem council...

Acts 16.7 and after they came to Mysia [northwestern yellow], they were trying to go into Bithynia [purple north of yellow], and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

We can follow these on the map.

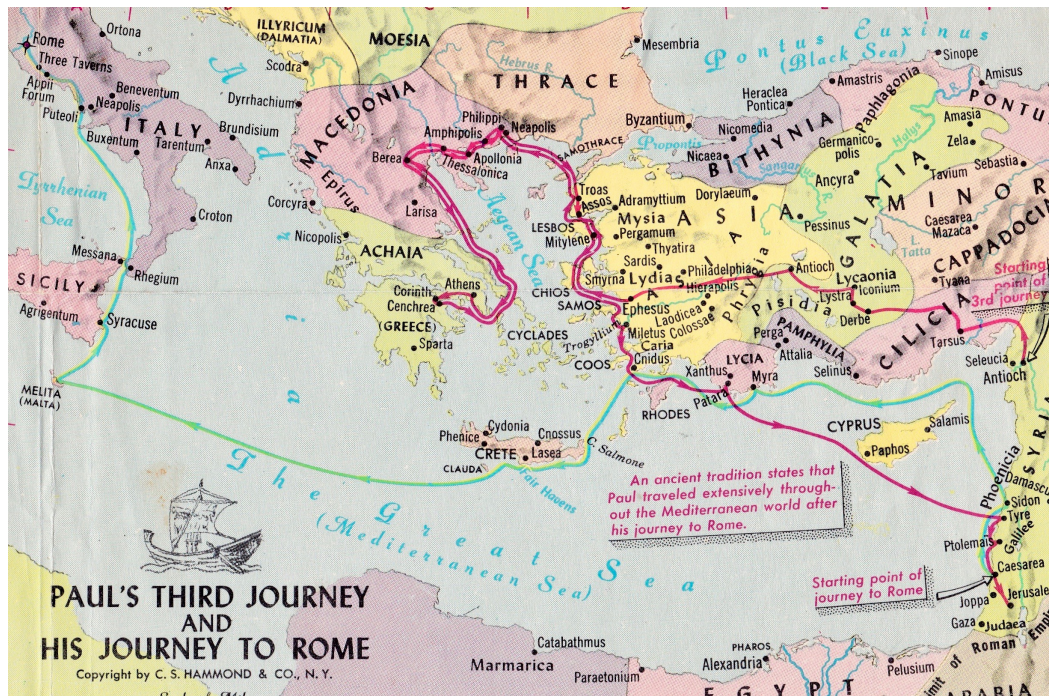
8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas [far northwest yellow].

9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia [north pink of Greece] was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

The Holy Spirit is clearly re-directing Paul, and in this case, very definitely. Now in verse 10 we see that this totally re-directs the ministry of Paul on the 2nd Missionary Journey. He is re-visiting the Galatian area that was the focus of his 1st Journey, and Phrygia on the edge of Asia, and it appears that he planned to go to Bithynia in the north of present-day Turkey, and perhaps even Mysia in the west. But the HS is re-directing them and he ends up in Troas...

10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Then in Troas way on the northwest coast and instead of going to Mysia he is going to take a boat ride to Neapolis, then inland to Philippi and other towns in NE Greece. And further re-directed he ends up at Athens and Corinth and from there he returns to Israel.



Acts 16.6 They passed through the Phrygian [eastern yellow section] and Galatian [green and middle yellow] regions, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia [eastern and middle yellow];

That is a clear example of what Paul is talking about in Romans 15.22. He had his plans but sometimes God revised them or redirects him and, in this case, it seems that Paul intended to go to Mysia.





We should have a strategy but we should leave room for the providence of God. Sometimes He will miraculously and directly like he did Paul. But in general I think God will use Providence. We submit to the Providence of God; doors open, doors close; opportunities present themselves and, if it is part of the vision that God has presented to us and we are comfortable with stepping out, I think that is what God wants us to do. But often something will intervene, and God will use a circumstance or a situation or a re-directing very clearly like Acts 16. So we need to be sensitive and trust in God's providence and sovereignty to allow His will.

### Ministry Strategy

1. Clarity of Vision 20
2. Controlled by Providence 22

In your ministry consider thinking through a strategy in the will of God!

[Romans 15.22-29; Acts 19-20 Strategy for ministry, Plans 200]

- |   |             |
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| a. Past Hindrances                      | 15.22       |
| b. Present Longing                      | 15.23       |

Now Paul is going to relate to the Romans in his present longing, that is, more immediate plans that are still future....

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--

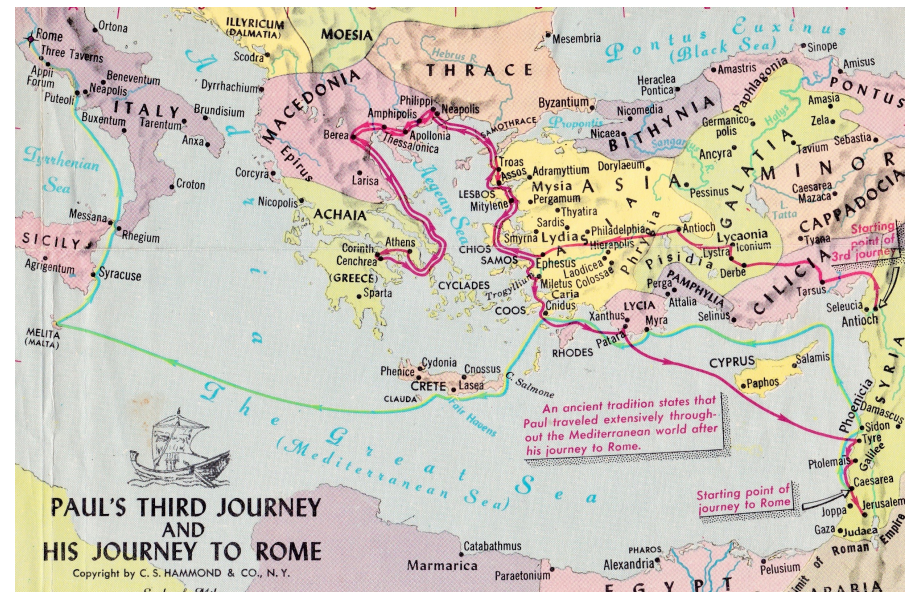
...Verse 23, 'but now, with no further place for me in these regions'. Now in terms of that clear vision, it's not that he had evangelized everybody, not that he had shared the gospel with every single person in these regions, but he fulfilled what God had called him to do, and he kind of alludes to that with 'no further place for me in these regions'. This is the 3rd missionary journey.

### Chronology

1. 53-57 AD - 3rd Missionary journey

Acts 18.22 *When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch. 23 And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*

19.1 *It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples...26 "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. 27 "Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."...29 he city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.*



We can find Ephesus on the map (far left edge of yellow section); he had founded the church and spent considerable time there. At this point he had already left Corinth (farthest south of red lines in Greece, the green area) and headed back ending up in Ephesus, Acts 19.1. And to give you a feel for Ephesus, in 19.29 it mentions a theater—the biggest



theater known in the ancient world, very well preserved as well. Paul was persecuted there. Some, a mob, was probably down at the bottom in the center of the picture, ready to rip him from limb to limb.



Verse 26, then this stirs some artisans, fearing to lose their livelihood selling statues of their goddess Artemis (Diana) for which there is a huge temple.

Now backtracking a little bit, verses 21 and 22:

*19.21 Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.*

This lays out the same plans that we have in the book of Romans. And it is in this time frame, in fact while at Corinth, he relays the same thing in the letter he writes to the Romans. Again, in Acts, 20.1:

*20.1 (Romans written) After the uproar had ceased, [the uproar at Ephesus] Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. 3 And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia [following the double red line on the map, the same route by which*

he had come to Corinth]....6 We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days....16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.



As we noted, it is while he is in Greece that he wrote Romans. So these Acts passages give us the context of Romans. We talked about the judgment seat in Corinth, called βῆμα (báy-mah):

βῆμα (báy-mah)



15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--

That's Paul plan, his desire; in fact he has probably prayed for the Romans, for this future ministry and has had a strong longing o yearning to make it not only to Rome but particularly Spain.

### Ministry Strategy

1. Clarity of Vision 20
2. Controlled by Providence 22
3. Committed to a Plan 23-24

Another principle we can draw: not only was Paul controlled by providence and yielded to the HS, but we see very clearly from all these verses that he was committed to a plan. He was not just waiting around to see what would happen, but he had a plan, a strategy.

We can plan also and it is good to envision the ministry that God has given you, allowing for the HS to direct or re-direct in which God will perhaps modify a plan of ours. But we ought to have a strategy and plan, knowing what our spiritual gifts are, knowing the way that God may use us. Part of that plan, especially for people like teachers or exhorters, may involve special training, taking certain courses or committed Bible study time as part of the plan. It can also envision particular locations or areas. So we should do some planning and let the Lord direct as He sees fit. In general, if you don't *plan*, then nothing comes about in terms of ministry.

- |   |             |
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| A. Purposes of Paul                     | 15.14-21    |
| B. Plans of Paul                        | 15.22-33    |
| 1. Plans for Future                     | 15.22-25    |
| a. Past Hindrances                      | 15.22       |
| b. Present Longing                      | 15.23       |
| c. Planned Hopes                        | 15.24       |

Paul has some hopes for his plans:

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--

'whenever I go to Spain' was part of his hopes, ...

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--

... 'for I hope to see you in passing'. He has already mentioned that he wants to Rome (1.15). On the map, Spain of course is far off to the left in a straight line west. This was the furthestest western extent of the Roman Empire at the time. And Rome controlled Spain; in fact they had a military operation there, had essentially established a colony in Spain. So Paul, at the writing of Romans is in Corinth and he is going to go to Jerusalem, and some time in the future he wants to go Rome, with the end destination of Spain. Lots of plans, waiting on the HS to clear the way to make it happen.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--

And here is some of what he desires when he gets to Rome: 'and to be helped on my way there by you,'. There is an interesting Greek word, that, virtually nearly every time it occurs, is related to a journey. προπέμνω (pro-péhm-po)

(Like Acts 15.3, *Therefore, by the church, ... 20.38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.*)

That word is captured by 'to be helped on my way'. The idea of being helped on a journey reflects a custom in the NT that when a missionary arrived the church would help them in a variety of ways. I think what Paul is thinking, and what the Romans would understand, was not that he was going to establish churches there, but he wanted someone to join him on his journey; usually he did take one or two others and they would go as a team. And obviously the church would also help financially and certainly they would be in prayer for him. So

he wants to be helped on his way to Spain by this well-established, several groups of individual churches.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--

And then he says, 'when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—'. Remember the high compliments that he paid to the Romans, so there were gifted people there, mature believers who would encourage him, have fellowship with him, share with him and be a part of the ministry that he had planned for going to Spain.

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B. Plans of Paul	15.22-33
1. Plans for Future	15.22-25
a. Past Hindrances	15.22
b. Present Longing	15.23
c. Planned Hopes	15.24
d. Plan for Jerusalem	15.25

And now he is going to plan for the Jerusalem trip:

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

Verse 25, 'but now, I am going to Jerusalem'. So from Corinth the next stop will be Jerusalem, and then in the future a trip to Rome on the way to Spain. This is the chronology of Paul:

#### Chronology

1. 53-57 AD - 3rd Mission (Romans written)
2. 57 (May) - 5th visit to Jerusalem

The book of Romans has already been written and he makes a 5th trip to Jerusalem. One trip is mentioned in the book of Acts. Obviously there are 4 others, one early on in his ministry to get approval for his ministry from the apostles from the mother church.

15.22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while--25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem servicing the saints.

The focus of this trip to Jerusalem is to serve the saints. Keep in mind that one of the things that Paul really is emphasizing in Romans is the possibility of division between Jew and gentile; in fact we say that in chapter 14 and first part of 15 was part of the reason that he writes chapters 9, 10 and 11—the potential division of the church and now he wants to serve the saints who would be predominately Jewish. The saints in Macedonia, in Achaia and even in Rome would be predominantly Gentile. And certainly all the way to Spain, even though there were Jews there, they would be mainly Gentiles. Now he wants to serve the saints in Jerusalem.

#### Ministry Strategy

1. Clarity of Vision 20
2. Controlled by Providence 22
3. Committed to a Plan 23-24
4. Continuing in priorities 25

I think we can gain another insight into forming a strategy. No matter what you plan, no matter what that vision may be, I think it is good to always fulfill what your immediate priorities have been. In fact we should always maintain priorities—they always come first even before ministry: your commitment to the Lord, your family, and then the church you are involved in—*then* your ministry.

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A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
B. Plans of Paul	15.22-33
1. Plans for Future	15.22-25
2. Plans in Immediate	15.26-27



In spite of his desire to make that trip, he is going to delay it, going almost a thousand miles in the opposite direction of Jerusalem, from Ephesus and Corinth, to continue a ministry that he began on these missionary journeys. And in the next passage he will give us some insight into what that ministry involved. So these will be his plans for the immediate time frame.

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A. Purposes of Paul	15.14-21
B. Plans of Paul	15.22-33
1. Plans for Future	15.22-25
2. Plans in Immediate	15.26-27
a. Generosity of Believers	15.26

In two verses he tells us something of that ministry that involved Gentiles and the generosity of the believers in the churches that he planted on these 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys.

15.26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.



Macedonia is the big pink area where Philippi was, Thessalonica and Beraea. Then Achaia, what we would call Greece, green on the map, with Athens and Corinth and Cenchrea (will visit this in the next chapter). He doesn't mention Asia (northern yellow), but it may be understood because it would be a part of the ministry in what he is

planning—taking a gift, contribution. Macedonia and Achaia 'have been *pleased*, not coerced or demanded. This is a voluntary contribution that they made. I think Paul suggested it, but they were more than willing to make a contribution. By the way, the word for 'contribution' is very interesting: *κοινωνία* (*koi-no-née-ah*) which means 'fellowship' as it is translated in most contexts. So it is a sharing of things in common. In general we share spiritual things in common, prayer, one another's burdens, but in this context fellowship includes monetary gifts, financial help, and the Macedonians were more than willing to make a 'fellowship' among the poor saints in Jerusalem.

15.26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Why would the saints in Jerusalem be poor? There was a situation of poverty to start with, Acts 4. Also in Acts 8, the persecution begins in Jerusalem. So a lot of believers lost possessions, property, money and even family. There were probably women that were thrown out on the street that didn't have means of support—because they were believers. So as a result of persecution. But also keep in mind that after Pentecost—there is not a passage that says this, but there are a lot of passages in the book of Acts that indicate there were a lot of believers that came to Christ at Pentecost, Jews from all over the Roman Empire, 3,000. In Acts it seems that a lot of them stayed in Jerusalem; there are encounters and other incidents that involved a lot of these people that never went back to their own country.

So now it is a city with probably high unemployment, people need food...the church in Jerusalem was probably strapped financially and some of the individuals had lost a lot as well. There were a lot of reasons that the church in Jerusalem was very poor. Acts 6: deacons whose first job was to serve food to those who needed it. That is an indication of a situation of poverty. And the individuals in Macedonia and Achaia were more than willing to meet the need.

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B. Plans of Paul	15.22-33
1. Plans for Future	15.22-25
2. Plans in Immediate	15.26-27
a. Generosity of Believers	15.26
b. Nature of Generosity	15.27



In verse 27 we have the nature of that generosity:

15.26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

‘Yes, they were pleased to do so’. The repetition of the Gentiles being more than willing to send money to Jews is an indication that they have been converted, have had a conversion experience. Interestingly Paul turns it around in the next little phrase...

15.26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

... ‘they are indebted to them’. They did it voluntarily but they also had a sense of indebtedness to them. This is where Christianity came, where the Messiah came—Jesus was Jewish, the Scripture came from the Jews, the church was predominately Jews; Jews were the ones that went out on the mission field and ministered to the Gentiles. So there is a sense that they are indebted because the Gospel came to them through the church in Jerusalem from where Christianity came. This gave as sense of indebtedness with gratitude behind it, not a negative perspective but more a willingness from overwhelming gratitude from what they had received from Jewish people.

And Paul was very interested in preserving the unity, that there not be a Jewish church and a Gentile church. From his vision, this was part of bridging that with Gentiles ministering to Jews. And he is going to expand that...

15.26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

‘For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things’—the Scripture, the OT, the gospel, conversion, spiritual growth—...

15.26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they

were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

... ‘then are indebted to minister to them also in material things’. So there is an interesting dynamic that I think Paul is doing behind the scenes to strengthen the unity of the body of Christ and giving opportunity for fellowship, ministry amongst the two very different groups that in the past and even in the present had a lot of antagonism between them. But there is a *unity* in Christ.

And now he is going to promise a visit in verse 28.

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3. Promise of Plan	15.28-29
a. Promised Visit	15.28

15.28 Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

‘Therefore, when I have finished this’...notice that he still has plans, these are the immediate ones, to go to Jerusalem. And, by the way, in Acts, things are not going to turn out *exactly* the way Paul envisioned: he is actually going to be arrested and he will end up in Rome, not by the means he had planned—probably a missionary journey—but instead he would have an all expense paid voyage to Rome courtesy of the Roman government.

15.28 Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

‘and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs’. That is the typical word for *seal* that we see elsewhere: we are sealed in the HS, physically as seal authenticated documents—in Revelation there is a document with seven seals on it, indicating not only authenticity and reality but a seal would give validity. His seal as an apostle he would put on this gift and this bond between Jew and Gentile. ‘on this fruit’, a word associated with ministry; he is envisioning this material/financial

contribution actually is the fruit of labor, ministry, the organization of some of these churches gathering collections and the money that would go a land composed primarily of people that they had lots of conflicts with. So it is looked as *fruit*, a word associated with ministry.

15.28 Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

‘I will go on by way of you to Spain’. Mentioning Spain 2 times gives us the certainty of his plans and reveals his desire for extended ministry beyond Macedonia and Asia minor, Achaia and certainly beyond Judea.

There is very little evidence that Paul ever made it to Spain. The scholars refer to 1st Clement in about 95 AD and it is the only little indicator that maybe he did make it to Spain. And it comes from this little phrase in a comment of Clement of Rome:

“He [Paul] taught righteousness to all the world, and when he had reached the limits of the West he gave his testimony before the rulers, and thus passed from the world.” —1st Clement- c. AD 95

‘reached the limits of the West’ make some believe that this was Spain, but it is so vague that you can’t be certain. And, after giving his testimony before the rulers, ‘passed from the world’, that is, he died. That little phrase is the only indication that Paul might have made it to Spain. There is really nothing else that supports it.

### Chronology

1. 53-57 AD - 3rd Mission (Romans written)
2. 57 (May) - 5th visit to Jerusalem
3. 57-59 - Imprisonment at Caesarea
4. 59-62 - Trip/Imprisonment in Rome
5. 62 - Journey to Asia & Macedonia
6. 64-66 - Visit to Spain ???
7. 67 (Fall) 2nd Roman imprisonment
8. 68 (Spring) Beheaded

In 57-59 Paul makes it to Jerusalem, gets arrested and, protected by the Roman military, sent to Caesarea, imprisoned and then eventually, 59-62 is the trip and imprisonment in Rome—where the book of Acts basically ends at about 60 AD; Acts 28 we have a record of that imprisonment. In Acts 27 is the journey to Asia minor and Macedonia and perhaps it was after that journey or from that journey he might have visited Spain. That would have been in 64-66.

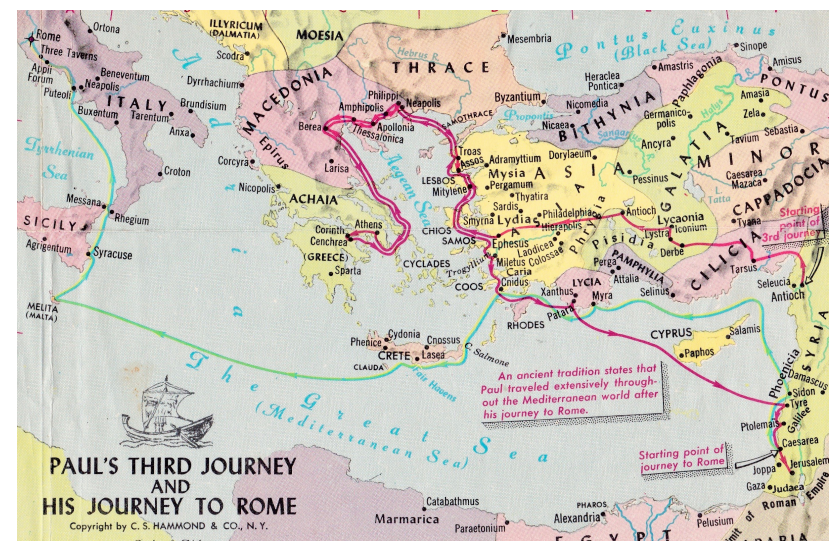
From 2nd Timothy we do know of a second Roman imprisonment because he writes from prison and anticipates being executed which some scholars put in the fall of 67. And in spring of 68 it is believed that died or was beheaded in Rome.

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3. Promise of Plan	15.28-29
a. Promised Visit	15.28
b. Anticipated Blessing	15.29

He anticipates blessing. God redirected and Paul didn’t envision all the details, but he did desire and anticipate blessing...

15.29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

... ‘I know that when I come to you’...He ends up in Rome through the 4th journey, Acts 27: shipwreck in Malta and finally in the Roman prison, and was a prisoner on that whole journey. It started in Caesarea (right lower corner of map, at the arrow), and you can follow the green line all the way to Rome (in the left upper corner).



## Ministry Strategy

1. Clarity of Vision 20
2. Controlled by Providence 22
3. Committed to a Plan 23-24
4. Continuing in priorities 25
5. Conformation of blessing 29

We might say, anticipating this blessing. If you have a strategy for your ministry and you carry out your plans, keep your priorities, God will confirm that what you are doing is actually what He desires.

15.29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

So he expected to be blessed by the Romans. And we can expect blessing if we maintain the ministry that God has called us to as well. He considered even the arrival there in Rome as part of that blessing and confirmation of God working in him.

So that is the little paragraph, beginning in verse 22, with the plans of Paul. And there is more about strategy to take from the next little part of Romans 15.

In your ministry, consider thinking through a strategy in the will of God.

[Romans 15.30-33 Prayer for Paul 201]

There are still some more points for ministry...

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| I. Introduction                         | 1.1-17      |
| II. Provision of God's Righteousness    | 1.18-8.39   |
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| A. Purposes of Paul                     | 15.14-21    |
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| 1. Plans for Future                     | 15.22-25    |
| 2. Plans in Immediate                   | 15.26-27    |
| 3. Promise of Plan                      | 15.28-29    |
| 4. Prayers for Paul                     | 15.30-33    |
| a. Prayer Request                       | 15.30-32    |

We will look at the prayers for Paul...he requests in a long sentence.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

'Now I urge you,...' This word is παρακαλέω (pah-rah-kah-léh-o) can be used in the sense of requesting something, asking for something, and in this case *urging* for prayer; it can be even used for 'comforting'.

This is one long sentence: There is a comma at the end of verse 30, then 31 starts with 'that', then a comma after 'Judea' and a semi-colon at the end. Verse 32 starts with 'so that' and ends the sentence with 'company'. So all of that is his asking for fervent prayer 'to strive together with me in your prayers' (30).

The main clause is: 'Now I urge you to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me'. Every thing else is telling us what Paul is urging. The subject is 'I', the verb is 'urge'. 'to strive together with me' is an infinite phrase that is an object of the verb telling what he is urging.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

Verses 31 and 32 are the content of the prayer or the things that Paul wants them to focus on. They include 3 subordinate clauses: rescuing, coming and finding rest in their company.

- |                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| B. Plans of Paul       | 15.22-33 |
| 1. Plans for Future    | 15.22-25 |
| 2. Plans in Immediate  | 15.26-27 |
| 3. Promise of Plan     | 15.28-29 |
| 4. Prayers for Paul    | 15.30-33 |
| a. Prayer Request      | 15.30-32 |
| 1) Provoking of Prayer | 15.30    |

So he is provoking (the alliteration for the word 'urge') them to prayer in verse 30, in the urging.

Subject = I, verb = urge, object = you...

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

... the brethren who are the believers in the church at Rome.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

There are 3 parts describing the ‘urging’: first, ‘by our Lord Jesus Christ’, and looking ahead in the verse we see the Trinity. Paul likes to structure a lot of his material around the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For example, we saw this in 14.17-18 and in 15.16.

### Trinitarian

1. Motive - Lord Jesus Christ

‘by our Lord Jesus Christ’ could suggest that Jesus Christ is the motivation for the prayer, emphasizing that our prayers should be for His sake. You could even say that the purpose of prayer is to serve the purposes of Christ, or the goal of prayer is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

### Trinitarian

1. Motive - Lord Jesus Christ
2. Basis - HS

‘and by the love of the Spirit’: I think this is the love that comes from the Spirit almost in parallel with the motivation for prayer from Christ. Now it is possible that he is referring to our love that is produced by the HS, that is, the love that HS pours out upon us, or looking at it from the perspective of the fruit of the Spirit, that which we can pour out to others.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

And, in the last part: ‘to strive together’ with me in your prayer to God for me’. ‘To strive together’ is only on word in the Greek text.

### Terms

1. Strive together - συναγωνίζομαι (soo-nah-go-néed-zo-mah-ee)  
The συν (soon) preposition = with  
=something done together.

This is the only place that this compound word occurs, but we have other uses of the verb without the ‘with’ aspect.

John 18.36 *Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting αγωνίζομαι (ah-go-néed-zo-mah-ee) so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”*

In the everyday usage of this word: in the Olympic games where the athlete would be wrestling, ie, strenuous effort involved. The word ‘strive’ is describing this. It is where we get the word ‘agonizing’ or putting in so much effort it’s causing pain. Jesus said that if His kingdom were of this world, his disciples would ‘fight’, struggle.

Colossians 2.1 *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,*

Paul has agony, struggle on their behalf.

4.12 *Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.*

‘Laboring in prayer’, almost similar to what we have here.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

### Trinitarian

1. Motive - Lord Jesus Christ
2. Basis - HS
3. Resource - God

Recognizing that we are praying to the only one that can meet the needs.

So, we can add to our strategy for ministry.

### Ministry Strategy

1. Clarity of Vision 20
2. Controlled by Providence 22
3. Committed to a Plan 23-24

4. Continuing in priorities 25
5. Conformation of blessing 29
6. Call for Prayer 30

Paul often asked others to pray for him and his ministry. If we have a strategy for ministry it is always appropriate to involve others for prayer. We appreciate and sense their prayers and watch their prayer being worked out. I myself have recently experienced a bicycle ‘crash’ which could have been serious. And then I was at the scene of a robbery by masked gunmen with big guns, but I slipped out of the way, got their license plate number, rode down a half a block and tried to call 911. That was a situation with a potential for a lot of negative things.

1Thessalonians 5.25 ...*pray for us.*

2Thessalonians 3.1-2 ...*pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified,...and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men;*

Ephesians 6.18-19 ...19 *and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,*

Colossians 4.2-4 ...3 *praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;*

4 *that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.*

1Timothy 2.1,8 1 *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

- |                             |          |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| B. Plans of Paul            | 15.22-33 |
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| 2. Plans in Immediate       | 15.26-27 |
| 3. Promise of Plan          | 15.28-29 |
| 4. Prayers for Paul         | 15.30-33 |
| a. Prayer Request           | 15.30-32 |
| 1) Provoking of Prayer      | 15.30    |
| 2) Pressing Need for Prayer | 15.31    |

Now Paul continues with the pressing need for prayer which is what I want to emphasize as we begin with verse 31:

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

The first thing he mentions: ‘that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea’. It is quite specific. What was he afraid of, what was he thinking about? Did he know of something that was going to happen to him, or some danger? He has already been kicked out of places, like Thessalonica, and now on the way to Jerusalem he anticipates trouble again. Let’s look at some passages in Acts. So the first thing he is praying for is for protection, and he refers to them as unbelievers, in Judea his final destination after landing in the coastal cities and making his way there.

### Prayer content

1. Protection from unbelievers - en Jerusalem, on missionary journeys, plots to kill him, false charges
  - Acts 20.3, 19, 22 *and now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.*
  - 24 *“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.*

Chapter 20 follows the riot in Ephesus in the theatre where he had troubles, and now he is talking about the Jews in Jerusalem. And on missionary journeys as well. Before he got to Jerusalem there were prophecies and warnings to Paul of what he was going to face, predicted by Agabus. His answer was that it didn’t matter to him, he had to do what God had told him to do. And here he is in in Corinth asking the Romans to pray that he be ‘rescued’ from the Jews.

21.4 *After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem....*

The believers knew what the prophecies were...

20 *And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;*

21 *and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*

These are the false charges that the Jews were making and there was a plot to kill him and a plot in Jerusalem as well.

In 2 Corinthians: rather typical of Paul's experiences:

2 Corinthians 4.8 *we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;*

*9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;*

*10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

*11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

*12 So death works in us, but life in you.*

Paul was rescued on different occasions, but he was willing to die, in fact he says that in some ways he is always dying in the midst of bestowing life. That's the first request.

The second request, ...

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

... 'that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints'. That the offering be complete for the believers in Jerusalem. But it might not be acceptable: coming from the 'dogs', defiled. So they had Jewish sensitivities. Notice that he focuses on it as ministry 'that my service for Jerusalem'. He wants a spiritual reception, not a rejection of the gift he is bringing.

#### **Prayer content**

1. Protection from unbelievers
2. Acceptance from the broader church in Jerusalem

We can say that in ministry we can expect conflict but through prayer, conflict resolution and wisdom we can see results, whether believers or unbelievers.

#### **Ministry Strategy**

- |                             |       |
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| 1. Clarity of Vision        | 20    |
| 2. Controlled by Providence | 22    |
| 3. Committed to a Plan      | 23-24 |
| 4. Continuing in priorities | 25    |
| 5. Confirmation of blessing | 29    |
| 6. Call for Prayer          | 30    |
| 7. Conflict resolution      | 31    |

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

Then verse 32: another purpose statement, 'so that I may come to you in joy'. He has already relayed his desire, but there are a lot of obstacles in Jerusalem. He could be killed there or on the way.

#### **Prayer content**

1. Protection from unbelievers - Acts 20.3,19, 22-24; 21.4. 20-21; 2Corinthians 4.8-12

2. Acceptance by believers -

3. Refreshing in Rome by church -

Once he arrived he wanted to be encouraged, 'find refreshing rest in your company'. Remember that he had already commended them and acknowledged that the majority of them were mature believers and grounded in the word, so Paul desired to have fellowship with them that would refresh him, that he would be encouraged, refreshed and motivated so that he could go to the western extent of the empire and minister in Spain. But notice: 'by the will of God'.

Were these prayers answered? Protection from unbelievers:

#### **Prayer Answer**

1. Protection - by Romans (Acts 21.27, 31,32)  
God used the Roman unbelievers to rescue and protect him from the unbelieving Jews

2. Acceptance - received by church (Acts 21.17)  
Only Acts 21.17 suggests that the offering was accepted. It seems to indicate that he was well received.

Acts 21.17 *After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.* So the 2nd prayer was answered.

3. Refreshing - imprisoned but fellowship (Acts 28.30-31)  
Even though in prison, somewhat of a house arrest, there are couple of notes, though not clear, that suggest he had some fellowship there. We can assume that the church ministered to him in prison. But as to Spain we have only that note that we have read from an outside source. We could say his prayers were answered because he is in the will of God.

15.30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

We want to resolve a little confusion concerning the will of God. We consider the different aspects of His will, putting these together to understand it. There are literally hundreds of passages referring to God's will. We need to think about some of them and understand.

Theologians are sometimes helpful in laying out the different aspects of the will of God. There are a lot of passages describing the *decretive* will of God. This means relating to God's decrees.

### Will of God

1. Decretive - relating to God's decrees. He has announced what he is going to do and what His will is concerning the creation—the whole universe and specifically mankind, even world history—things that He has decreed.

1' Sovereign will: God has total control of everything that takes place. He has decreed things that cannot be stopped. They will happen.

2' Purposes certainly fulfilled: What He has willed, He will accomplish. This gives us great security, such as for salvation.

3' Will not be frustrated by anyone: Nothing, not even Satan can stand in their way. Satan cannot thwart the decretive will of God; it will not be frustrated.

Romans 9.19 *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"*

Daniel 4.35 *"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*

A host in heaven and we on earth observe His will.

John 6.39 *"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.*

Revelation 4.11 *"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."*

4' Permissive will of God—He permits some evil things, but even these things result in His fulfilling His will.

things and Satan will not thwart the ultimate accomplishment of His will.

### 2. Preceptive Will

Precepts: generally His commands.

1' That which He commands; everything he commands. He gave many to Israel, many details. We disobey him, so we *can* disobey the things that He desires. All His commandments are revelation of what He desires. There are passages that speak of the preceptive will of God as that which He commands. Every commandment, not just the 'Big ones', the 10, but the Mosaic Law including all the little details: diet, dress, all the minutiae.

2' He does not compel creatures. He does not force us to love Him. He desires that we love Him with all of our heart, mind and soul, but He doesn't compel it. And when we do obey, we see an expression of His holy character:

3' Expresses His holy character. This is His standard and He desires that we do the things that reflect that character—those are the commands of Scripture. In fact we are commanded to be holy as He is holy. Obviously we fall short. We call that the preceptive will of God.

[Romans 15.30-33 Strategy for Ministry in the Will of God 202]

And it may be in the Sermon on the Mount, what we call the Lord's Prayer. It's really the prayer that *we* need.

Matthew 6.10 *'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.*

'Your will be done'. We pray this. It's probably related to the Preceptive Will of God.

1 Thessalonians 4.3 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;*

And this is a kind of command: 'this is the will of God, your sanctification'—that's God's desire. And we often fall short of carrying out what God desires in terms of our own sanctification. More specifically, 'that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality'; A clear guideline, moral statement, expression of the will of God. Do all Christians abstain from sexual immorality? Probably not. So this goes against the clear will of God. Then this verse with another example:

Ephesians 5.17 *So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*



It is foolishness to go against the will of God, it's damaging to us. 'but understand what the will of the Lord is'. Reading on you find several things—one of them is being filled with the Spirit, that's what God desires. Do we walk in the Spirit? Perfectly, every day, every moment? Or do we sometimes go our own way?

Then after that the whole relationship of husbands and wives and clear will of God: wives be subject to your husbands—that's the will of God. Verse 17 is a preface to all of that and the following verses are just the outworking of some of the specifics of the will of God in particular areas. It then goes on to 'children, obey your parents', 'slaves obey your masters', etc. They are expression of the Preceptive Will of God. And anything short of that is foolishness because it does damage to us as well.

Then there is a third category: Conditional

### 3. Conditional Will

God expresses His will but it is conditioned on certain responses. It might be a subset of the Preceptive Will. This is where God expresses His desire but it is conditioned on man's response.

1 Timothy 2.4 *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

The context is God—who... This is well known, and most of us at least think about it. God desires all to be saved; He doesn't desire anyone to go to hell, to be separated eternally from Him, but if this is His desire, He wills it. But this is not a Decretive Will passage because it would teach universalism: if this is God's will and nothing can thwart it, then that means that every man *will* be saved and none will be sent to hell. But we know otherwise because of clear passages. So we can call this God's Conditional Will: He desires...and those that accept Him *will* be saved and *will* come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3.9 *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

That is God's desire, but it is conditioned on the things He as set forth: how we approach Him. But He doesn't desire *any* to perish.

Those are 3 categories of the *Will* of God. And it is good to keep in mind when you come across other passages; you can put them in some of these categories to help you understand the context, particularly these

two, helping you realize that not every passage is a decretive passage, or if it is something that God desire as mentioned in these two passages.

### 4. Personal Will

We can talk in terms of us—and call that the Personal Will of God—how the Will of God can be worked out in *our* experience. Back to Paul, in the context of God's will in his life:

Acts 21.7-14, *When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.*

8 *On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him....*

10 *As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.*

11 *And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"*

Remember this is the very thing that Paul is requesting prayer for. And here we have a prophet proclaiming what is going to happen in Jerusalem.

12 *When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

13 *Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

14 *And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"*

That's the bottom line, that is, they resigned themselves to the will of God. They didn't want to see Paul persecuted or ultimately die/be killed. We have a prophecy by Agabus that says there will be trouble in Jerusalem for the one that owns this belt—that's Paul. And Paul responds. Some commentators say Paul is stepping out of the will of God—the HS is predicting this. I think they are reacting normally, I don't think they are saying, 'Paul, you need to do what the HS is saying here'.

If you read it carefully, the HS is not saying 'Paul, don't go'. But I think it is a normal, natural response, one that we would have with that clear warning of danger. We wouldn't want to see Paul hurt or dead. I see it more of a prophecy than a revelation of the will of God. And Paul *knows* the will of God; I think that is expressed at the end where the believers say 'The



will of God be done'. If this is what God desires, then we resign ourselves to it.

So how do we determine what that will is? Paul is convinced and seems to *know* it, so I think we can gain some confidence personally, much like Paul did. We continue with Acts 22:14 which goes all the way back to Paul's conversion; he is giving his testimony here:

22.14 *"And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.*

This is Ananias, the report or defense that he gives. God's will for him was that he *know* God's will. I think we can know the will of God on a personal basis. I don't think the Word of God is going to be explicit to us as it was to Paul who received direct revelation. What *we* have are the principles from the word of God we can use in determining a personal choice or decision. The point is that Paul could know the will of God.

Romans 1.10 *always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.*

Then we have passages like Romans 1.10. In fact this is kind of the guiding principle in the decisions that Paul makes. Paralleling the passages that we are looking at in terms of sharing his desire to visit Rome, this is in the introduction and he elaborates more on it in the conclusion. Notice: 'by the will of God'. The timing has to be in His will. He is convinced to go but that was part of the discerning the will of God and it is more a matter of timing.

12.2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Then, in 12.2, Paul begins to apply all of the principles that he has developed in chapters 1-11. To 'prove' or 'demonstrate' it, make it evident. So I think we can discern and make evident the will of God on a personal basis, without direct revelation, based on our understanding of the principles of God—how that works, what His plan is, how we fit in. That's why we have to have a clear vision for ministry and there are a lot of things that will eliminate a lot of the choices.

### Ministry Strategy

1. Clarity of Vision 20
2. Controlled by Providence 22
3. Committed to a Plan 23-24

4. Continuing in priorities 25
5. Conformation of blessing 29
6. Call for Prayer 30
7. Conflict resolution 31
8. Confidence in Will of God 32

We can have confidence in the Will of God in our ministry. And in fact we should be *seeking* it, not that God, for every choice, is going to give us a passage that will apply directly. In some cases it will not be clear until after we step out; this would be similar to Paul and the HS re-directing him. And providence may come into play in some of those situations.

So there is your strategy for ministry and all of the 8 categories that we looked at.

Prayer was requested in verses 30-32, and Paul concludes by offering his own prayer in verse 33.

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|-----------------------|----------|
| B. Plans of Paul      | 15.22-33 |
| 1. Plans for Future   | 15.22-25 |
| 2. Plans in Immediate | 15.26-27 |
| 3. Promise of Plan    | 15.28-29 |
| 4. Prayers for Paul   | 15.30-33 |
| a. Prayer Request     | 15.30-32 |
| b. Prayer Offered     | 15.33    |

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

'the God of peace'... There are a lot of references to the God of peace:

### Terms

1. Strive together - συναγωνίζομαι (soo-nah-go-néed-zo-mah-ee)  
John 18.36, Colossians 2.1, 4.12
2. God of Peace - 16.20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. *The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*  
This is the theme of many passages, many psalms. The God where peace is the origin—He is the author of it.  
Psalm 29.11 *The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.*  
Isaiah 26.12 LORD, You will establish peace for us, Since You have also performed for us all our works.  
Peace with God - Romans 5.1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*  
We can view this peace of God in 2 ways: it has to start with 'peace with God'. Justification brings peace with God, it is

a result of that relationship being established and forgiveness of sin. Once we have peace with God, we can live, regardless of the circumstances.

15.13 *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

I think this is what Paul is talking about in Romans 15.33. He desires that we have peace moment by moment and we can call that Peace *from* God:

Peace from God - Philippians 4.7 *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

This is the moment by moment, what God desires for us, that we experience regardless—remember we have read many of those passages already where Paul talked about being imprisoned, his life threatened, in sickness, health, etc, and in all of those circumstances we can have peace. The unbeliever does not have this; the unbeliever need peace *with* God—otherwise he is an enemy of God, Romans 5. The peace *guards* our heart because there are attacks...

9 *The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

As believers we can experience this peace not depended on circumstances. The implication: if you have the God of peace with you, you have peace because he will calm your heart.

1Thessalonians 5.23 *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The God of peace accomplishing our sanctification, moment by moment, experience by experience, circumstance after circumstance, we can experience that peace that comes from the God of peace.

Hebrews 13.20 *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

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

‘be with you all’, another conclusion. Then he adds: Amen. This is a Hebrew word that is transliterated into the Greek text, and then transliterated again into other languages such as English. The Hebrew

basically means ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. This was a very favorite word of Jesus, emphasizing the truth of the words He was speaking, and sometimes He would begin, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you...’ Or you could say ‘Amen, amen...’ In other words, ‘What I am going to tell you is of a truth.’ It is appropriate here as Paul starts to conclude: ‘Everything I have told you is truth’. So we can end with this truth.

In your ministry, consider thinking through a strategy that is in the will of God. The most important aspect of the strategy is what is God’s will for me.