

(14) I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points, I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

(17) In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience --- by word and deed, by the powers of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God -- so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the Gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of Him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.” (Isaiah 52:15)

(22) This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and there to be helped on my journey to you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

(25) At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and, indeed, they owe it to them! For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When, therefore, I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessings of Christ.

(30) I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's Will I may be refreshed in your company. May the God of peace be with you all. Amen!

Think on these things:

- 1) Though he says he has written boldly to the church at Rome (v.15), what characteristics in v.14 are cited that indicate he sees this church as solid and mature?

He says that he knows these folks are really good people, with Biblical knowledge to ground them, and the ability to instruct one another (see Hebrews 5:11-14).

- 2) What does Paul say is his particular Christian calling in life? What is his goal (v.16)?

Paul says he is the minister (Apostle, Romans 11:13) to the Gentiles in priestly service of the Gospel of God. As his goal, he seeks for the Gentiles to be received by God as an 'acceptable offering,' fully sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

- 3) V.18 offers insight into what Christian testimonies ought to be. What is that nugget of truth?

My testimony will not be anything but 'what Christ has accomplished through me.' Our "testimonies" are not to be about ourselves...but about God's work in and through us!

- 4) What was Paul's ambition as a missionary (v.20)? See also 1 Corinthians 3:4-10.
Paul desired to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in "new" areas, places where the gospel had not been presented before. He didn't want to overlap the work of another missionary, but to pioneer the truth in areas needing to hear the message of God's salvation.
- 5) What do you think of Paul's statement in v.22, that God "prevented" him from coming to Rome? Have you ever felt that God held you back from doing something at a certain time? Explain.
Paul was wise in recognizing that God had not opened that door for him yet. While on his missionary journeys, Paul had experienced the same experience trying to go into Western and North Central Turkey (Asia and Bithynia, Acts 16:6-8), where he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit. God closed one door but opened another. --- The second question is a chance for class members to share such an experience (God closing one door, but opening another).
- 6) How did Paul explain that stopping in Rome would be mutually beneficial (v.24, 29)?
In v.24, he says he wants to enjoy their company for a time and be 'helped' by them along in his journey. In v.29, he is confident that he will come among them to share the fullness of Christ's blessings.
- 7) Vs. 25-27 and 1 Corinthians 9:1-14 (especially 11-14) are part of a key principle of scripture: we who benefit from the ministry of our church leaders have an obligation to support them with our money (through tithing) --- a "material" obligation for a "spiritual" benefit. Can you think of other uses of tithes in the church?
Besides providing for the income of our ministers, tithes from the people pay the utilities, cover costs to run an office and, possibly, provide social services, and pay for supplies and materials used for our various programs with youth, adults, music, education, room furniture, church vehicles, and insurances.
- 8) Not identified in this passage, do you know historically why things were so bad financially in Jerusalem at this time, why they needed help? (See Acts 11:27-30)

The Roman-ruled world experienced a 'great famine.' This apparently hit Jerusalem very hard.
- 9) What personal concern does Paul ask the Church in Rome to pray for (vs.30-31)? Did God answer Paul's prayer the way he wanted? Skim Acts 21:27-22:29.
Paul made two prayer requests: 1) that he would be delivered from unbelievers in Judea while there; and 2) that the gift offering he was delivering to the Jerusalem saints would be acceptable. The latter was accomplished. However, the unbelievers in Judea lied about Paul (saying he took a Gentile into the Jewish Temple) and tried to kill him during a riot, resulting in Roman soldiers saving him at that moment and incarcerating him until his ultimate appearance before Caesar.
- 10) Did Paul ever make it to Rome (see Acts 28:11-16, 30-31)? Did he go on to Spain as he hoped?
Paul did not make it to Spain according to the biblical record, nor by extra-biblical records. Acts teaches us he went from incarceration in Israel to Rome by boat (with a shipwreck experience), and lived under house arrest there. He wrote Timothy about his pending imminent death (2 Tim. 4:6-8), so we understand that he was put to death by the Romans shortly after this letter following his trial before Caesar.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: