

## Romans

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Romans 15:22-33



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Vss. 22-29

- In the concluding verses of Ch. 15, Paul essentially brings his message to the Roman church to a close. Here he shares with them his travel plans and where Rome fits in.
- Referring to his previous statement of how he was determined to take the Gospel to places where no one knew the name of Jesus, he explains that this is why he had not visited them earlier, as there was always one more place that needed to hear of God's salvation through Jesus Christ.
- He confesses that he had long been wanting to visit them in Rome and now it seems the opportunity was presenting itself. Having pretty well covered the eastern Mediterranean, now was the time to head west to Spain. When Jonah wanted to escape God, he found a ship that was bound for Tarshish, which is believed to have been in southern Spain, near Gibraltar, and represented the western edge of the known world. Paul wanted to take the gospel as far as he could and Spain was as far west as anyone could go!
- Further, Spain had become the source of many of the empire's best and brightest. Lucan the popular poet, Quintilian the greatest orator of the day, and even the philosopher Seneca who served as Nero's prime minister, all were Spaniards. Perhaps in addition to taking the Gospel to the last place on earth where it could go, Paul was thinking that a Christian influence in Spain could directly influence the whole empire.
- But first he must go to Jerusalem. For many months he had been on a mission to collect an offering from among the Gentile churches to take to the church there. The Christians in Jerusalem were suffering terribly from an economic boycott and the constant threat of violence. The boycott was cruelly effective, not allowing Christians to buy or sell anything or even work for pay. Food and other basic necessities were hard to come by. So Paul reasoned that since the Gentile churches had **spiritually** benefitted from their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, that the suffering church there should benefit **materially** from the Gentiles. Paul had collected a substantial amount from the churches of Macedonia (northern Greece / Philippi and Berea) and Achaia (southern Greece / Corinth).
- Paul perhaps felt personally indebted to the Jerusalem church. Though he had not been well received at first, the leadership there fully endorsed his mission to the Gentiles, asking only that the new Gentiles churches remember the poor. Now it was the Jerusalem church who were "the poor" and Paul was certain to remember them. Further, recall that the underlying theme of this letter to

the Romans was the unity of the church and surely such an offering from the Gentile churches of Greece would go a long way to build unity through all the churches of the Roman world. Paul had talked a lot about the value of unity, now he was putting the talk into action. Everyone knew that such a trip would be risky, but to Paul's mind this was worth the risk and was going to be a great experience, lifting him up so much by the time he left Jerusalem and arrived in Rome that he would come "in the fullness of the blessing of Christ!"

Vss. 30-33

- Just as Jesus once had set His face toward Jerusalem, now too Paul would go to the Holy City and would not be swayed. So Paul asked for prayers from the Roman church as he willingly walks into the lion's den.
- Notice how Paul words his prayer request. He does not ask for prayers of protection from the Jews, but only from "those who are disobedient in Judea". Paul doesn't ever want to paint the Jews as his enemies, especially when perhaps half of the church in Rome is made up of Jews who have been **obedient** to the call of Christ. Remember, it was Paul who said that our battle is **NOT** against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), so those in Jerusalem who may seek to do him harm are simply people who are not yet obedient.
- Paul also wants them to pray that his gift is well received. Would the Jerusalem church be insulted by the idea that they **needed** such a gift? That it was too much or too little? Or that because it came from Gentiles it was some how tainted and therefore could not be accepted? There was a lot riding on this project and Paul deeply hoped that the gift would be received in the same spirit that it was given. If it all went well then Paul would arrive in Rome filled with joy and would truly enjoy his time with them.
- Paul concludes with a blessing, the blessing of the peace of God. Even if you live every day in the shadow of the Colosseum or if you purposefully walk into Jerusalem's lion den, if the peace of God is with you, a person can live every day of the life with joy and not fear.