

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XXXI : PAUL'S MINISTRY AND TRAVEL PLANS — CHAP 15:14-33

The Letter Closing (15:14-16:27)

Paul's sustained argument about the nature and implications of the gospel is at an end. So he returns to where he began: speaking of the Roman Christians and of his own ministry and plans (cf. 1:1-15). He thereby completes the 'epistolary frame' around his portrait of the gospel.

The elements that Paul includes in this final section of the letter are typical of his letter conclusions:

Paul's travel plans	15:14-29	1 Cor. 16:1-9
Request for prayer	15:30-32	cf. Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1-2; Phlm. 22
Prayer-Wish for peace	15:33	2 Cor. 13:11c; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 6:23; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16
Paul's associates	16:1-2	1 Cor. 16:10-12, 15-18; Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:20
Exhortation to greet one another	16:3-15	1 Cor. 16:20b; 2 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 4:21a; (Col. 4:15); 1 Thess. 5:26; 2 Tim. 4:19; Tit. 3:15b
The 'holy kiss'	16:16a	1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12a; 1 Thess. 5:26
Warning / exhortation	16:17-19	1 Cor. 16:13-14, 22; 2 Cor. 13:11b; Gal. 6:12-15 (?); Eph. 6:10-17 (?); Col. 4:17
Eschatological wish / promise	16:20a	1 Cor. 16:22b; 1 Thess. 5:24
Concluding 'grace'	16:20b	1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; Col. 4:18c; 1 Thess. 5:28; 2 Thess. 3:18; 1 Tim. 6:21b; 2 Tim. 4:22b; Tit. 3:15b; Phlm. 25
Greetings from Paul's associates	16:16b, 21-23	1 Cor. 16:19-20a; 2 Cor. 13:13; Phil. 4:21b-22; Col. 4:10-14; 2 Tim. 4:21b. Tit. 3:15a; Phlm. 23-24
Doxology	16:25-27	Phil. 4:20

“Two things are evident from this chart. First, while Paul tends to include certain elements in his letter closings, there is considerable variation both in the items that he includes and the order in which he places them. We should not, then, be surprised if Paul includes some elements in his conclusion to Romans that are not found elsewhere (e.g., the warning about false teachers; the doxology?) or excludes some that he often includes (e.g., an affirmation about the authenticity of the letter; cf. 1 Cor. 16:21a; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17a). These variations may well point to specific circumstances surrounding the composition of Romans. Second, the conclusion to Romans is by far the longest of Paul's letter closings — matching in that respect its counterpart, the letter opening.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 884f]

PAUL'S MINISTRY AND TRAVEL PLANS (15:14-33)

“Paul's travels are the leitmotif of this section and identify it as a discrete literary unit. It falls into three basic parts, marked by the address 'brothers' in vv. 14 and 30 and the transitional 'therefore' in v. 22. In vv. 14-21, Paul alludes to his past travels — 'from Jerusalem to Illyricum' (v. 19b) — to explain why he has written to the Roman Christians. His focus shifts to his future travel plans in vv. 22-29. Here Paul tells how he intends to 'pass through' Rome on his way to Spain after delivering the collection to Jerusalem. Verses 30-33 are closely tied to this last matter, as Paul asks the Roman Christians to pray for that visit to Jerusalem. This section therefore reveals the degree to which Paul's past ministry and especially his anticipated itinerary shape the content and emphases of the letter. A certain degree of reflection on the stage of ministry Paul has completed; concern about his reception by Jews and Jewish Christians in Jerusalem; preparations for his visit to Rome — all these contribute to the way in which Paul explains and applies his gospel in this letter.

“The way in which the letter opening and closing 'frame' the body of Romans is seen all the more clearly when we note the way in which the contents of 15:14-33 match those of 1:1-15, and especially 1:8-15:

Commendation of the Romans	15:14	1:8
'Apostle to the Gentiles'	15:15b-21	1:3, 13
Hindrance in visiting Rome	15:22	1:13a

'Indebtedness'	15:27	1:14
Desire to minister for mutual blessing	15:29	1:11-12
Prayer	15:30-32	1:9-10"

[Moo, *Romans*, pg 885f]

Looking Back: Paul's Ministry in the East (15:14-21)

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. (Rom 15:14-21 KJV)

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done — by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." (Rom 15:14-21 NIV)

And I am persuaded, my brethren — I myself also — concerning you, that ye yourselves also are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge, able also one another to admonish; and the more boldly I did write to you, brethren, in part, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me by God, for my being a servant of Jesus Christ to the nations, acting as priest in the good news of God, that the offering up of the nations may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have, then, a boasting in Christ Jesus, in the things pertaining to God, for I will not dare to speak anything of the things that Christ did not work through me, to obedience of nations, by word and deed, in power of signs and wonders, in power of the Spirit of God; so that I, from Jerusalem, and in a circle as far as Illyricum, have fully preached the good news of the Christ; and so counting it honour to proclaim good news, not where Christ was named — that upon another's foundation I might not build — but according as it hath been written, 'To whom it was not told concerning him, they shall see; and they who have not heard, shall understand.' (Rom 15:14-21 Young's Literal Translation)

“As he did in the letter opening (1:11-12), Paul again displays sensitivity about presuming to write to a church that he had neither founded nor pastored. Hence the commendation and almost apologetic tone of vv. 14-15a. But, as he also did in the opening (cf. 1:5, 14), Paul quickly tempers this hesitancy with an assertion of his right to address the Roman church: as a mainly Gentile congregation, it lies within the sphere of apostolic responsibility that God has allotted him (vv. 15b-21).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 887]

v 14 — NOT INSINCERE FLATTERY — “Paul’s address, ‘brothers and sisters,’ signals the transition to a new topic. After exhorting the Roman Christians as length (12:1-15:13), Paul now commends them for their spiritual maturity. *Undoubtedly Paul walks on eggshells in his desire not to offend the Christians in Rome by assuming an authority over them that they would not recognize. But there is no reason to think that Paul is insincere in what he says of them here. Through trusted co-workers (e.g., Prisca and Aquila; cf. 16:3), Paul had access to good information about the Roman Christian community — information about both its problems and its strengths. Thus he can say, emphatically, ‘I myself am convinced’ that ‘you yourselves are full of goodness, being filled with all knowledge.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 887f]

“The fulsome language is of course exaggerated, in the way that courteous compliments in the East tend to be. Paul would not expect it to be taken literally and phrases the first two items in deliberately vague and nonspecific terms — ‘full of goodness, filled with all knowledge.’ But the third and climatic phrase has more point — ‘able to admonish one another.’ For this is Paul’s way of stressing his confidence in the maturity of the congregations to which he writes: they are able to engage in the delicate business of mutual instruction and correction among themselves; they do not need any help from Paul on that front. Here Paul will have in mind the mutual interdependence of the members of each church: they have the resources in the Spirit’s engraving through one another to cope with all their problems.” [Dunn, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 866]

“[I]t is difficult to believe that Paul is likely to have thought that the Christians in Rome, if they were not favourably disposed to

him after reading or hearing fourteen and a half chapters of his epistle, could be won over at this stage by a flattering sentence. It seems more probable that he felt that, in addressing the particular exhortation of 12.1-15.13 to a church which he had not himself founded and which he had so far never even visited, he had taken a liberty, with reference to which, while, in view of his commission as apostle of the Gentiles, there was no need of any apology, a word of explanation would nevertheless be appropriate. **Nothing which he had said in 12.1-15.13 had been intended as a calling in question of the spiritual adulthood of the Christians in Rome. Paul recognized that it is courteous to assume that one's fellow-Christians are moderately mature until they have given positive evidence of their immaturity (contrast, e.g., 1 Cor 3.1 and Gal 3.1, which were addressed to people who had already given proof of their immaturity). What we have here is Christian courtesy, not flattery,** though there is no doubt an element of hyperbole in the use of the words ['full,' 'filled with,' and 'all' knowledge.] [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 752]

PAUL HIMSELF — “Gk αὐτὸς ἐγώ [autos egō]. Paul uses the emphatic nominative pronoun to underscore the sincerity of his conviction, probably because he is afraid that the rest of the letter might have given the opposite impression.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 887]

THEY THEMSELVES — “The corresponding καὶ αὐτοὶ [kai autoi, ‘even yourselves’] underlines Paul’s acknowledgment of the Roman Christians’ adulthood as Christians: they themselves — quite independently of him — are already believers, and it is therefore both his right and his duty to expect them to be frank and sincere in their dealings and to have a firm grasp of the truth of the gospel, and so to be capable of admonishing one another.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 752f]

FILLED — “Gk. πεπληρωμένοι [peplērōmenoi], the perfect connoting that the Roman Christians are in the condition of being filled.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 888]

GOODNESS — “The word is ἀγαθωσύνη [agathōsunē]. It occurs only in biblical Greek (16 times in the LXX) and in related literature and only in Paul in the NT. It means ‘uprightness,’ ‘goodness’ in Eph. 5:9 and 2 Thess. 1:11 and (perhaps) ‘generosity’ in Gal. 5:22.... ‘Goodness’ translates a rather rare word that can denote general ‘uprightness’ in conduct or, more specifically, ‘kindness’ and ‘generosity’ toward others. In so general a commendation, it should probably here be given the broadest possible meaning. The Roman Christians’ ‘goodness’ flows from their comprehensive understanding of the Christian faith (‘all knowledge’). Indeed, so complete is their understanding that they are ‘able to admonish one another.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 887f]

v 15 — “**But if their knowledge of the faith is so extensive, why had Paul bothered to write them so long a letter? Paul admits that he wrote ‘rather boldly’ in certain parts of the letter, but he did so by way of reminder.** We may again spot a bit of diplomatic exaggeration in this assertion. But certainly the Romans would not be fooled by Paul into thinking that they already knew everything contained in this letter — unless, indeed, they were a collection of the most insightful theologians who ever lived! Paul must intend his language seriously; and what he is saying is that the things he has taught them and exhorted them to do all derive from the faith that they hold in common with Paul. In his letter Paul has done nothing but to explicate, for them in their circumstances, the implications of the gospel.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 888f]

PAUL’S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY — “**But however much Paul might want to tiptoe carefully around the Romans’ sensibilities, he will not surrender his right to address them, and to address them with authority.** For, as he indicates in the last part of this verse, his ‘bringing to their remembrance’ gospel truths is based on ‘the grace that was given to [him] by God.’ By this, of course, Paul does not mean that general divine grace that underlies and empowers all of Christian existence. As in 1 Cor. 3:10; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:2, 7, 8, Paul refers to that special gift of God’s grace which established him as an apostle; cf. 1:5, ‘the grace of being an apostle.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 889]

EMPHATIC: REMIND YOU AGAIN AND AGAIN OF TRUTHS ALREADY KNOWN — The Greek word used here is ἐπαναμνησκῶν [epanamimnēskōn]. Look at how this word is constructed [from Vine’s Expository Dictionary]:

μνησκῶ [mimnēskō] is the simple verb meaning ‘to remind, to remind oneself, to remember’

ἀναμνησκῶ [anamimnēskō] adds a prefix meaning ‘back,’ meaning ‘to remind, to call back to one’s mind’ with a little heavier emphasis (Mark 11:21; 14:72; 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Cor 7:15; 2 Tim 1:6; Heb 10:32)

ἐπαναμνησκῶ [epanamimnēskō] adds yet another prefix meaning ‘upon’ and is used only here in Rom. 15:15

“The double compound verb ἐπαναμνησκῶ [epanamimnēskein, ‘remind’] is found in the Greek Bible only here; but the thought that **men need to be reminded again and again of truths they already know** is, of course, continually presupposed and acted upon both in the Bible and outside of it, though — not unnaturally — it is expressed directly only occasionally. Here, in view of the contents of v. 14, we may assume that Paul is specially desirous of drawing attention to the fact that he had been appealing to knowledge already possessed by the Christians of Rome.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 754]

v 16 — PAUL THE PRIEST — “Of special relevance for the matter of Paul’s authority over the Roman Christians is the purpose for which God called Paul to be an apostle: that he might be ‘a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.’ As God indicated in his initial call of him (Acts 9:15; cf. Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:16), Paul was given a special responsibility for the Gentiles: a call that the Jerusalem apostles duly recognized (Gal. 2:1-10). The Roman church, a mainly Gentile church (cf. 1:6-7, 14-15), therefore lies

within the scope of Paul’s apostolic authority. However, it is interesting that Paul does not in v. 16 name himself an ‘apostle’ but a ‘*leitourgos* of Christ Jesus.’ With this word, Paul may simply be describing himself as a ‘servant’ or ‘minister’ of Christ. But the sacrificial language in the last part of the verse makes it more likely that he intends the term to connote *priestly* ministry specifically. Thus Paul goes on to describe his ‘ministry’ here as consisting in ‘serving the gospel of God as a priest.’ The purpose of this ministry, further, is that ‘the offering’ might be the praise, or obedience (cf. v. 18), of the Gentiles, but it is more likely to be the Gentiles themselves (cf. NIV, ‘that the Gentiles might become an acceptable sacrifice’; Calvin says that the gospel is ‘like a sword by which the minister sacrifices men as victims to God.’). *Paul therefore pictures himself as a priest, using the gospel as the means by which he offers his Gentile converts as a sacrifice acceptable to God. The language of ‘priest’ and ‘sacrifice’ here is, of course, metaphorical; Paul makes no claim to be a ‘priest’ or to be offering sacrifice in any literal sense. This is made altogether clear by his reference to the Gentiles themselves as the sacrifice* (‘Paul ... no more calls himself a priest in the strict sense of the term, than he calls the Gentiles a sacrifice in the literal meaning of that word.’ – Hodge). In keeping with the rest of the NT, Paul assumes an eschatological transformation of the OT cultic ministry, in which animal sacrifices are replaced by obedient Christians (cf. 12:1) and the praise they offer God (Heb. 13:15), the temple by the community of believers (e.g., John 2:21; 1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Pet 2:5), and the priest by Christians (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) or Christian ministers. *But one thing has not changed: to be ‘pleasing to God,’ sacrifices must still be ‘sanctified.’ And so, Paul acknowledges, it is ultimately God himself, by his Holy Spirit, who ‘sanctifies’ Gentiles, turning them from unclean and sinful creatures to ‘holy’ offerings fit for the service and praise of a holy God!*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 889ff]

SERVING THE GOSPEL OF GOD AS A PRIEST — “*There can be no question of the cultic imagery here. ἱερουργεῖν [hierourgein] means basically ‘perform the work of a priest’ (ἱερός, hieros, ‘temple’ + ἐργός, ergos, ‘work’). The word does not occur in the LXX, nor elsewhere in the NT. But in Philo and Josephus it consistently denotes the priestly offering of sacrifice.*” [Dunn, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 860] Note Young’s Literal translation: “*acting as priest in the good news of God.*”

THE END OF AN ERA: THE OFFERING OF THE GENTILES — “προσφορά [prosphora] can mean either the act of presenting an offering (as particularly in Heb 10:10, 14, 18; also Acts 24:17), or, as here, that which is brought, the offering itself (as in Acts 21:26; Eph 5:2; Heb 10:5, 8). The offering is probably ‘the Gentiles’ — the idea very likely developed from Isa 66:20, where it is the diaspora Jews who form the eschatological offering; but it could be the offering made *by* the Gentiles — that is, the priestly ministry of the Gentiles (cf. 12:1) conjoined to Paul’s priestly ministry as evangelist. *The (eschatological) transformation of traditional Jewish categories and cultic distinctives is striking. Not only is the priestly ministry of Paul ‘out in the world,’ but the offering breaches the fundamental cultic distinction between Jew and Gentile which prevented Gentiles from even getting near the great altar of sacrifice in the Temple (the law which forbade Gentiles to go beyond the Court of the Gentiles was firmly established and unyielding; cf. Acts 21:28); the point is the same if the reference is to Gentiles as the sacrifice, since only ritually pure / clean sacrifices were acceptable.*” [Dunn, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 860f]

v 17 — BOASTING IN CHRIST — “*This verse is closely related to vv. 15b-16: this boasting I do — in claiming so central a role in God’s purposes for the Gentiles — is perfectly legitimate, for it is a boasting ‘in Christ Jesus’ and ‘with respect to the things of God.’ Paul condemns boasting in one’s own achievements (cf. 3:27; 4:2-3); but Paul’s priestly ministry to the Gentiles is not of his own doing — it is the work of God’s grace in his life. ... Verse 17 is a hinge verse in the paragraph, drawing a conclusion from vv. 15b-16 and setting up Paul’s further discussion in vv. 18ff.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 891]

v 18 — CHRIST THE ACTIVE WORKER, PAUL THE INSTRUMENT — “Paul now further justifies his ‘boasting,’ explaining specifically how it is a boasting that is ‘in Christ Jesus.’ With perhaps an intentional glance at his earlier use of the cognate adverb in v. 15 (‘rather boldly’), Paul claims that he would not ‘be so bold’ as to speak ‘of anything other than what Christ accomplished’ through him. What Paul earlier alluded to — ‘grace given to me by God,’ ‘sanctified by the Holy Spirit’ — he now makes clear: the success of his ministry is due entirely to divine enablement. Christ is the active ‘worker’ in the things of which Paul is speaking; Paul is simply the instrument.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 891f] “*What Paul has done as the [Priestly or Levitical servant] of Christ Jesus has not only been a subordinate service subsidiary to Christ’s own priestly work, it has also been something which Christ has actually Himself effected, working through His minister.*” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 758]

THE GOAL AND MEANS OF PAUL’S MINISTRY — “At the end of the verse, Paul specifies the goal of what Christ has accomplished through him — ‘obedience of the Gentiles’ — and its means — ‘by word and by deed.’ In making the Gentiles’ obedience the object of his ministry, Paul sounds again a key note in this paragraph and in Paul’s initial introduction of himself to the Romans; cf. 1:5: ‘through [Christ Jesus our Lord] we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith of the Gentiles.’ And ‘obedience’ will therefore have the same meaning here as in this earlier verse, denoting comprehensively the believers’ response to the Lord Jesus Christ, including, but not limited to, faith.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 892]

v 19 — “*The first part of this verse continues Paul’s description of the means by which Christ has ‘accomplished’ things through him. ‘By word and by deed’ (v. 18) is the general summary of these means; the two ‘by’ phrases at the beginning of v. 19 (Gk. ἐν [en] which is instrumental in both places) go into more detail.* It is tempting to connect the first of these phrases with ‘by deed’ and the second with ‘by word’ in a chiasmic arrangement. Paul would then be identifying the ‘deed’ part of his ministry with ‘signs and wonders’ and the ‘word’ part of his ministry as accomplished by ‘the power of the Spirit.’ However, Paul would obviously attribute all that he accomplishes in ministry — whether ‘by word’ or ‘by deed’ — to the power of the Spirit. This

makes it more likely that ‘by the power of the Spirit’ refers to all the means of ministry that Paul identifies in vv. 18b-19a. And, while ‘the power of signs and wonders’ probably relates to the ‘deeds’ part of Paul’s ministry, it is unlikely that Paul intends the phrase as a complete description of his ‘work.’ For there is no good reason to confine the term ‘deed’ or ‘work’ to miraculous works only; and Paul’s apostolic ‘work’ included many other kinds of activities.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 892f]

POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD — It might have the sense of ‘the power that is the Spirit’ but is more likely subjective: ‘the power exercised [through me] by the Spirit.’

SIGNS AND WONDERS — *“‘Signs and wonders’ is standard biblical phraseology for miracles, the former term connoting the purpose of the miracle and the latter its marvelous and unusual character. The phrase occurs especially often in descriptions of the miracles at the time of the Exodus and in the history of the early church. Paul may then choose to illustrate his apostolic work with this phrase in order to suggest the salvation-historical significance of his own ministry. For Paul is not just another apostle; he is the apostle to the Gentiles, the one chosen to have a unique role in opening up the Gentile world to the gospel. Many scholars think that Paul’s conception of his role goes even further: that he thinks of his offering up the Gentiles and / or their gifts (e.g., the collection; cf. vv. 25-28) as fulfilling the prophetic predictions about the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem at the climax of salvation history. However, we have seen reason to doubt whether Paul views his role as so narrowly eschatological. That Paul saw himself as a significant figure in salvation history, with a central role in the Gentile mission, is clear; but that he thought his own efforts would bring that mission to its conclusion is not clear at all. ... σημεία [sēmeia, ‘signs’] and τέρατα [terata, ‘wonders’] occur together in the LXX 29 times; and 15 refer to the Exodus events (Exod. 7:3, 9; 11:9-10; Deut. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Neh. 9:10; Ps. 78:43; 105:27; 135:9). In Acts, the phrase refers to the miracles of Jesus (2:22) and then to the miracles accomplished in Christ’s name by the apostles (2:43; 4:30; 5:12), including Paul (14:3; 15:12). The phrase also occurs in Mark 13:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; 2 Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4.”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 893f]

JERUSALEM AND ILLYRICUM — *“Why does Paul choose Jerusalem and Illyricum as the geographical limits of his previous ministry? We would have expected Paul to identify Antioch as the jumping off point of his distinctive outreach to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-2). Many scholars think that Paul is thinking more theologically than geographically and that he uses Jerusalem to denote the starting point of the Christian movement. But this suggestion does not square well with the obvious personal and geographical focus of the verse, a focus confirmed by the reference to Illyricum. Probably, then, Paul alludes to his own ministry in Jerusalem. The Book of Acts gives plenty of evidence of such ministry (9:26-30; cf. 26:20), although Paul’s own comments (e.g., Gal. 1:18-19, 22) suggest that it was quite brief. But, however brief, Paul can legitimately claim Jerusalem as the geographical beginning point of his ministry. And Illyricum is appropriately chosen as the other limit. The Illyrians inhabited a region north and west of Macedonia; and the Romans carved out a province in the area, occupied today by northern Albania, much of Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Paul is probably referring to this province.... Noting that neither Paul nor Acts mentions missionary activity of Paul in Illyricum, many scholars think that Paul may be claiming only to have preached ‘as far as,’ or ‘up to the boundaries of’ Illyricum.... But it is quite possible that Paul ventured into Illyricum during his apparently circuitous trip from Ephesus to Corinth on his third journey (Acts 20:1-2). The ancient geographer Strabo mentions that the Egnatian Way passes through Illyricum on its way from the Adriatic Coast to Macedonia. Knowing Paul’s preference to stick to well-traveled Roman roads, then, Paul may easily have preached in the southern regions of Illyricum during the movements mentioned by Luke in Acts 20:1-2.”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 894f]

ROUND ABOUT — *“The following [kai kuklō] has sometimes been taken to mean ‘and round about it (i.e. Jerusalem).’ But ... this explanation is surely to be set aside as quite unlikely. The probably explanation is that in using [kuklō, literally, ‘in a circle’] Paul has in mind one, or two, or possibly all three, of the following thoughts: that the area which he has covered in his preaching may be said to form a great arc; that he has not gone from the one to the other point mentioned by the most direct possible, but by a circuitous, route; that between the two limits he has made numerous missionary journeys in various directions from various centres.”* [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 761]

FULFILLING THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL — *“How can Paul claim that he had ‘fulfilled’ the preaching of ‘the gospel of Christ’ in these regions? Does not this language suggest a finality to preaching in the eastern Mediterranean that hardly accords with the relatively small number of churches that had been planted? ... [The best explanation seems to be as follows:] Paul claims that he has brought completion in the regions designated his own special apostolic task of planting strategic churches. As Knox puts it: ‘He could say that he had completed the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum only because this statement would have meant for him that the message had been proclaimed and the church planted in each of the nations north and west across Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula — ‘proclaimed’ widely enough and ‘planted’ firm enough to assure that the name of Christ would soon be heard throughout its borders.’”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 895f] *“Paul’s statement that he has completed the gospel in the area mentioned is not to be taken in an absolute sense but in relation to what he understands to be his own particular function in the service of the gospel, namely, that of a pioneer preacher.”* [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 763]

V 20 — PAUL’S CALLING AS A PIONEERING MISSIONARY — *“In this manner’ at the beginning of the verse looks both backward and forward, linking Paul’s fulfilling of the gospel in v. 19b with the procedure that he describes in v. 20b-c: ‘But in this way I am fulfilling the gospel (v. 19b): by striving to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, lest I build on another person’s foundation.’ By ‘where Christ has not been named,’ Paul means places where there is no worship of Christ at all.*

Paul here indicates that he believed that God had given him the ministry of establishing strategic churches in virgin gospel territory; like the early American pioneers who pulled up stakes anytime they could see the smoke from another person's cabin, Paul felt 'crowded' by too many Christians. His purpose was therefore 'not to build on another's foundations' (see also 2 Cor. 10:13-18). As he does in 1 Cor. 3:9b-15, Paul uses the metaphor of a building to describe the work of ministry. And, as that passage makes clear, Paul does not intend to say anything disparaging in general about the work of 'building on the foundation,' for example, further evangelism and pastoral care. It was simply that he knew that his commission from the risen Christ did not include these activities. To adopt Paul's metaphor from the same passage, he had been given the task of 'planting'; others, like Apollos, were there to 'water' the fragile new growth (1 Cor. 3:5b-8). How does Paul's expressed reluctance to build on another's foundation fit with his assumption of some degree of authority over the Roman Christians through this letter and with his anticipated visit to them? That the Roman church lacked 'foundations' because it had not yet received the imprimatur of an apostle is unlikely — although it is quite likely that the church had not been founded by, nor visited by, any apostle at this point. We should rather recognize that *the desire Paul's expresses here is just that, and not an absolute rule. For in pursuing his pioneer church-planting ministry, Paul would often have to engage in other ministry activities or to work with churches that he did not himself found (e.g., Antioch). And, as Paul will explain in the next paragraph, his letter and planned visit to the Roman church are means by which he hopes to advance his pioneering work into a new field — Spain.*" [Moo, Romans, pg 896f]

"Verse 20 has — not unnaturally — seemed to some to be inconsistent with Paul's addressing the Christians of Rome and with his expressed intention of visiting them. Some have thought that he was himself conscious of inconsistency between his stated principle and his purpose of visiting Rome, and have suggested that the anacoluthon at the end of v. 24 may be the result of his embarrassment. It has also been suggested that v. 20 was meant to assure the Christians of Rome that he did not intend to missionize there, while others have thought to discern in this verse an indirect reproach for those judaizing agitators who were in the habit of following him and causing trouble in the churches which he had established. But it is quite unnecessary to look for an explanation of v. 20 along the lines of either of the last two suggestions mentioned.... *That there is inconsistency between this verse and Paul's visiting Rome is only to be maintained on the assumption that Paul thought of the particular commission which he believed God had entrusted to him in a singular rigid, unimaginative and legalistic way, quite out of keeping with all we know about him. And v. 20f is anyway not a statement of an absolute rule to be followed irrespectively of all other considerations, but a statement of Paul's own earnest desire and endeavour, grounded in his understanding of God's special assignment to him, to act as a pioneer missionary rather than as one who builds upon foundations already laid by another. There is no suggestion here that he felt himself under an absolute obligation to refrain from ever visiting a church which had been founded by someone else; and Rome was after all a very special case.*" [Cranfield, Romans, vol 2 pg 764f]

v 21 — "As he so often does, Paul clinches his point with an OT quotation. The quotation is from Isa. 52:15b. Paul has probably chosen to quote this text for at least three reasons.

- First, it justifies Paul's decision not 'to build on another's foundations' (v. 20); for the text speaks of bringing a message to those who have not yet heard.
- Second, it accords with Paul's sense of calling to Gentiles, since the ones who have not had it announced to them and have not yet heard are 'kings' and 'nations' (cf. v. 15a).
- Third, it alludes to the content of Paul's gospel. For Isa. 52:15 is part of the famous fourth 'servant' passage, and the 'him' concerning whom these Gentiles have not been told is the Servant of the Lord. *Paul's pioneering church-planting ministry among the Gentiles is fulfilling the OT prediction about the Gentiles coming to see and understand the message about the Servant of the Lord.*" [Moo, Romans, pg 897f]

"Paul sees the words of the prophet as a promise which is even now being fulfilled by the spreading of the knowledge of Christ, the true Servant of Yahweh, to those who have not yet heard of Him, accomplished by his own mission." [Cranfield, Romans, vol 2 pg 765]

Looking Ahead: Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain (15:22-29)

For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia

This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were

Wherefore, also, I was hindered many times from coming unto you, and now, no longer having place in these parts, and having a longing to come unto you for many years, when I may go on to Spain I will come unto you, for I hope in going through, to see you, and by you to be set forward thither, if of you first, in part, I shall be filled. And, now, I go on to Jerusalem, ministering to the saints; for it pleased Macedonia and Achaia well to make a certain

and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. (Rom 15:22-29 KJV)

pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. (Rom 15:22-29 NIV)

contribution for the poor of the saints who [are] in Jerusalem; for it pleased well, and their debtors they are, for if in their spiritual things the nations did participate, they ought also, in the fleshly things, to minister to them. This, then, having finished, and having sealed to them this fruit, I will return through you, to Spain; and I have known that coming unto you — in the fulness of the blessing of the good news of Christ I shall come. (Rom 15:22-29 Young's Literal Translation)

“This paragraph begins (vv. 22-24) and ends (vv. 28-29) and thus has as its main theme Paul’s intention to visit Rome. As he did at the beginning of the latter (1:13), Paul semi-apologizes for not having come sooner. Even now, he cannot come immediately, for he must first travel to Jerusalem on an important ministry errand (vv. 25-27). *And, while sincere in his desire to visit Rome, Paul makes it clear that Rome is not much more than a top on his way to his ultimate destination: Spain (vv. 24, 28). Paul here hints at one of his main purpose in writing Romans: the need to get help from the Romans for his projected Spanish mission.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 898f]

v 22 — “Therefore’ might link this verse with the missionary principle that Paul has just enunciated (v. 20) — I have been hindered in coming to you because I did not want to build on another’s foundations — but more likely connects it with his description of his missionary work in the eastern Mediterranean (vv. 17-19, esp. 19b) — I have been hindered in coming to you because I was concentrating on ‘fulfilling the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum.’ It was the needs of ministry in these regions that ‘hindered’ Paul ‘many times’ from coming to Rome.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 899]

MANY TIMES — τὰ πολλά [ta polla] is probably temporal — ‘these many times.’ So Young’s Literal Translation: “*Wherefore, also, I was hindered many times from coming unto you.*”

v 23, 24a — “*But now’ contrasts the situation in the past, when Paul was prevented by gospel ministry in the east from coming to Rome, with the present situation, in which, having ‘completed’ that ministry (cf. v. 19b), he is free to move on.* We would therefore expect Paul to announce in the sentence that begins here his plan to come to Rome. And this seems to have been Paul’s original intention, which he hints at in v. 24 — ‘I hope to visit you as I pass through’ — and spells out in v. 28 — ‘I will go away through you.’ *But, as he sometimes does, he allows subordinate ideas to crop up to such an extent that he never gets around to finishing his sentence. We have here, then, an unfinished sentence.* It begins with two parallel participial clauses: ‘having no longer an opportunity in these regions’ and ‘having the desire for many years to come to you.’ Both are probably causal, the former explaining why Paul can now come to Rome and the latter why he plans to. The previous hindrance of ministry in the east has been removed; and Paul’s long-held wish to visit Christians at the very seat of the Roman Empire can now be fulfilled. The third subordinate clause (v. 24a) is temporal: ‘when I go to Spain.’ This clause could be dependent on the second participial clause in v. 23b — having the desire for many years to come to you when I go to Spain — but it is probably dependent on the assumed main clause — [I will come to you] when I go to Spain... The indefiniteness of the construction is not, then, due to uncertainty about Paul’s plans for the visit but to uncertainty about whether his Jerusalem visit will allow him to carry it out.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 899f]

NO MORE PLACE IN THESE PARTS — “Paul’s meaning here is simply that his presence is no longer required in the regions in which he has laboured up till now, since in them the pioneer work of evangelism which is his special task has already been accomplished.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 766]

THE UNFINISHED SENTENCE — English versions handle the problem in different ways. Only the NASB retains the syntax of the original, indicating the breaking off of Paul’s sentence in v. 24a with a dash:

“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 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 — but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.” (Rom 15:23-25 NASB)

“But now, no more having a place in these regions, and having the desire for many years to come to you, as I go to Spain — for I hope to visit you as I pass through and to be helped on my way there by you, if I might first for a while enjoy your company. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.” (Rom 15:23-25 Moo’s translation)

KJV, NIV, and TEV add the missing main clause:

“But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on

my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.” (Rom 15:23-25 KJV)

“But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.” (Rom 15:23-25 NIV)

NRSV and REB turn the second [echōn, ‘having’] in v. 23 into a finite verb:

“But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints” (Rom 15:23-25 NRSV) [Moo, *Romans*, pg 899]

SPAIN — “Parts of Spain (which in the ancient world included all the Iberian peninsula) had been occupied by Rome since about 200 BC; but it was only in Paul’s lifetime that the Romans had fully organized the entire area. Until recently, scholars seemed confident that there was a significant Jewish presence in Spain by this time; but this is now questioned. Why Paul had chosen Spain as his next mission territory cannot be determined; the most we can say is that Paul was evidently confident that the Spirit was leading him there.... [Some suggest] that Spain would have represented for Paul the OT ‘Tarshish,’ the ‘end of the earth’ (cf. Isa. 66) to which Paul must travel to complete his task of bringing Gentiles as an offering to Jerusalem and thus usher in the parousia.... *Whether Paul ever arrived in Spain is a point that we can never be certain about. The NT never reports such a visit; and the evidence of the Pastoral Epistles suggests that Paul turned back to the east after his trip to Rome (see also Phil. 1:25-26; 2:23-24, if written [as is likely] from Rome). But an early Christian document, 1 Clement, can be interpreted to suggest that he did reach Spain.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 900f]

v 24b — “Paul elaborates on what he has hinted at in vv. 23-24a: that he hopes to fulfill his desire to visit the Roman Christians on his projected journey to Spain. Paul also mentioned his intention to visit the Roman church at the beginning of the letter, but he claimed there that his purpose was to ‘preach the gospel’ in Rome (1:15). Now, however, Paul speaks generally of ‘enjoying their company,’ hints at a fairly short stay (‘for a while’), and treats Rome as little more than a layover on his trip to Spain (‘while passing through’). *The best explanation for the difference in emphasis (there is no contradiction) between these two statements is Paul’s sensitivity about financial matters. For Paul makes clear in this verse that he hopes his ‘layover’ in Rome will result in his gaining material support from the Roman Christian community for his Spanish mission: the verb propempō is a regular technical term for missionary support (see Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; 1 Cor. 6:6, 11; 2 Cor. 1:16; Tit. 3:13; 3 John 6). Probably, then, Paul is reluctant even to hint at this request for help at the beginning of the letter; only after he has ‘built a relationship’ with the community through his letter does he think it appropriate to bring up the matter (see his letter to the Philippians, in which he gets around to thanking the community for its financial help only at the end, 4:10-20).... What kind of support Paul hoped for is not specified. In keeping with the basic meaning of the verb — ‘accompany,’ ‘escort’ — he might be hoping for coworkers to join him in the work. Help with the customs and languages of the new territory may also be included; and almost certainly financial and logistical support.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 901f]

v 25 — **PAUL’S MINISTRY TO JERUSALEM BY MEANS OF THE GENTILES’ COLLECTION** — “*Only one last obligation in the east prevents Paul from fulfilling his desire to visit Rome and then to move on to evangelize in Spain: ‘But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.’* As Paul makes clear in the following verses, the ministry he intends to have in Jerusalem is a very specific one: sharing with the Jewish Christian community there the money that Paul had gathered from his won mainly Gentile mission churches. This ‘collection for the saint’ was a major focus of Paul on his so-called ‘third missionary journey’; each letter he wrote on the journey mentions it (cf. also 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9). By speaking of the collection as a ‘ministry,’ Paul points to the fact that it was a means by which Gentile Christians could express in a very practical way their love and concern for their less well-off brothers and sisters. It is the need to bring this collection to Jerusalem that hinders Paul from coming straight to Rome. Paul apparently plans to travel to Rome almost immediately; and this suggests that he is writing from Greece after he had finished gathering the money from the Gentile churches (cf. Acts 20:2-3).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 902]

v 26 — “Having mentioned his purpose of ‘ministering’ in Jerusalem, Paul now explains what he means by it in vv. 26-28a, before returning to his starting point, his projected trip to Rome and to Spain, in vv. 28b-29. His references to the Roman provinces of Macedonian (= modern northern Greece, Macedonia, and southern Albania / Macedonia) and Achaia (= the bulk of modern Greece) are of course intended to denote the churches that were to be found there (e.g., at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth). As his letters to the Corinthians suggest, Paul has not been shy about exhorting these churches to participate in the collection. But their participation is, nevertheless, of their own free will: they were ‘pleased’; they ‘freely decided’ to make a contribution (see TEV: ‘that decision was their own’). Paul suggests something of the significance of this contribution by calling it a *koinōnia*, literally, a ‘fellowship.’ Here the word clearly means ‘that which is readily shared,’ ‘contribution,’ but there is certainly an allusion to the word’s common use in Paul to denote the loving intimacy of the Christian community. As Paul makes explicit in 2 Cor. 8:4 and 9:13, the Gentile Christians’ contribution to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem is an expression of this

unity and intimacy.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 902f]

FOR IT PLEASED THEM — “ἠὺδόκησαν [ēudokēsan] expresses the voluntariness of the offering, the fact that it is the result of a decision freely and responsibly taken by the churches taken by the churches concerned. *There is no need to see any inconsistency between this emphasis and the evidence in 1 Cor 16.1-4 and 2 Cor 8-9 of Paul’s own eager and energetic promotion of the collection; for a Christian’s decision because he has been enabled to recognize, and strengthened to do, his duty by the faithful exhortation of another Christian* (though it is, of course, true that there are some forms of psychological and social pressure which Christians are sometimes tempted to exert — and indeed do not seldom exert — against their brethren, which do in fact rob the decision to do what is right of its proper freedom and so of its human dignity — but we have no reason to suppose that Paul had gone beyond the bounds of proper Christian exhortation).” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 771]

THE POOR AMONG THE SAINTS — “Paul’s identification of the recipients of this expression of fellowship, ‘the poor of the saints in Jerusalem,’ can be interpreted in three different ways: (1) ‘the poor saints in Jerusalem’ (KJV); (2) ‘the poor among the saints in Jerusalem’ (NIV; NASB; REB; NRSV; cf. TEV); (3) ‘the poor, that is, the saints in Jerusalem.’ Both the first options assume that ‘poor’ is an economic designation. The first, however, suggests that all the Christians in Jerusalem were poor and that the collection was meant accordingly for them all, while the second suggests that only some of the ‘saints’ were poor and that the collection was directed specifically to them. The third rendering, however, taking ‘the poor’ and ‘saints’ as having the same scope, assumes that ‘poor’ is a theological description, drawn from the OT and Jewish tradition that used the term to denote the ‘righteous’ and taken over by the early Jerusalem church as a self-description. The NT contains passages in which ‘poor’ has this theological nuance (e.g., Luke 6:20; Jas. 2:5). But Paul gives no hint of such a nuance here; and surely an economic meaning is more likely in a context where he talking about a financial contribution. Of the first two alternatives, the second is to be preferred since it explains better why Paul uses both ‘poor’ and ‘saints.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 903f]

V 27 — THE MATERIAL OBLIGATION FOR THOSE WHO MINISTER SPIRITUALLY — “Using the same verb that he used at the beginning of v. 26, Paul reiterates the free choice of ‘Macedonia and Achaia’ to participate in the collection; but he immediately adds, ‘indeed, they are indebted to them [the saints in Jerusalem].’ We can remove the apparent conflict between these assertions if we view the ‘obligation’ Paul speaks of as moral rather than legal. *No one was compelling (or had the power to compel) the Gentile Christians to give money to the impoverished Jewish Christians in Jerusalem; they gave ‘cheerfully’ (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7) and without compulsion (2 Cor. 9:5). But Paul did want the Gentile Christians to recognize that they had received much from the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and that this had placed them under a moral obligation to reciprocate. Specifically, the Gentiles (i.e., Gentile Christians) have ‘received a share in the spiritual things’ of the Jewish Christians — that is, in the gospel and all its associated blessings. Paul alludes here to a central theological theme of the letter: that the salvation enjoyed by the Gentiles comes only by way of the Jewish Messiah and the fulfillment of promises made to Israel (1:16; 4:13-16; 11:17-24; 15:7-8). There is a sense in which the spiritual blessings of the new age belong especially to the Jewish Christians; and Gentile Christians should acknowledge and give thanks for their ‘sharing’ of these blessings with them. And it is by ‘serving’ the Jewish Christians with ‘material things’ that the Gentiles can express their sense of indebtedness and thanksgiving.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 904f]

THEOLOGICAL / PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE OFFERING — “*These verses reveal that the collection was more than a charitable enterprise; it was a strategic theological / practical enterprise as well. For Paul understands that the Gentiles’ status as members of the people of God is inextricably tied to a salvation history that has an indelible OT / Jewish cast. Gentile Christians, many with no previous ties to Judaism and living far from Jerusalem, need to understand this also; and their giving of money to the ‘saints in Jerusalem’ will go a long way toward solidifying this sense of ‘indebtedness.’ For their part, Jewish Christians need to understand that salvation history has moved on from the days in which God’s people were mainly restricted to Israel. Moreover, their willingness to receive a financial contribution from Gentiles will signify their acceptance of this new situation. It is precisely Paul’s concern about the Jewish Christians’ response to the collection that surfaces in his request for the Roman Christians’ prayer (vv. 30-33).*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 905f]

“*More open to dispute is the significance of the collection to the Christians in Jerusalem itself. Here the evidence is more ambiguous, an ambiguity which may well reflect the different understandings of the relationship between Jerusalem and the churches of the diaspora, as between Paul and (some of) the Jerusalem leadership, and which may indicate Paul’s careful nuancing of his language in the light of these differences. Thus the request (or would Jerusalem have phrased it more strongly?) that Paul should ‘remember the poor’ (Gal 2:10) may have been understood (in the light of the importance given to alms giving within Jerusalem) as the next best thing to circumcision, as the act of righteousness most important for the loyal covenant member. Hence, perhaps, Paul’s repeated emphasis, by way of contrast, on the freely willed choice of the Gentiles’ giving (vv 26, 27). Whereas food laws and sacred days were a matter which divided Christians, the responsibility to care for the poor Paul saw as a strongly consistent and still binding obligation of biblical revelation, essential for communal harmony and for the unified identity of the scattered congregations.*” [Dunn, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 873f]

MINISTER, SERVE — “Gk. λειτουργῆσαι [leitourgēsai]. The choice of this verb (cf. also Acts 13:2; Heb. 10:11) may suggest that *Paul views the collection as an act of worship*, since it is often used in the LXX with references to the cult. But the verb is also used in secular Greek of the work of civil servants. It is possible, though not clear, that the priestly associations of the cognate word [leitourgos] from 15:16 are still present here.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 905]

v 28 — “Paul now makes the transition back to his ‘main’ point in this paragraph: his projected visit to Spain via Rome. However, as we have seen, Paul gets tangled up in his syntax in vv. 23-24a and so ends up there only implying his plan to make this trip. Now he makes it explicit in the main clause of the sentence: ‘I will go away through you to Spain.’ But the timing of this trip depends on the ‘ministry’ to the saints in Jerusalem, as Paul indicates in a compound subordinate clause: ‘when I have completed this [service] and placed a seal on this fruit for them.’” [Moo, Romans, pg 906]

SEAL — “The main point Paul makes is clear enough: he cannot leave for Spain until he has delivered the collection. But what he means by ‘put[ting] a seal on this fruit’ is not clear. ‘Fruit’ refers to the collection itself. But what does it mean to ‘seal’ it? Many translations (e.g., NRSV; NIV; TEV; REB) and commentators suggest that Paul simply refers to the safe delivery of the money. But affixing a seal to something is often an official affirmation of authenticity; perhaps, then, Paul, as the ‘apostle to the Gentiles,’ intends to accompany those delivering the collection to Jerusalem in order to affirm its integrity and insure that it is understood rightly.... See, e.g., Esth. 8:8, 10; John 3:33. All three other Pauline uses of σφραγίζω [sphragizō] refer to believers being ‘sealed’ with the Holy Spirit, and in each text the idea of ‘authenticating’ believers, ‘marking’ them as truly redeemed, seems to be intended (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). In the NT the verb is also used with reference to the ‘sealing’ of the tomb of Christ (Matt. 27:66), the ‘sealing up’ (in order to keep secret) of apocalyptic teachings (Rev. 10:4; 22:10), the ‘sealing’ shut of the abyss (Rev. 20:3), and ‘marking’ so as to identify people (John 6:27; Rev. 7:3, 4 [twice], 5, 8).... *[One scholar] notes papyrus texts that speak of ‘sealing [sacks] of grain’ in order to guarantee the correctness of their contents. These texts are close to the idea here of ‘sealing fruit.’ For a view similar to the interpretation I have adopted, see Calvin; Murray; Cranfield. Reference to an affirmation on the part of the Jerusalem Christians of Paul’s apostleship is unlikely since it is the collection, not Paul that is sealed.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 906f]

v 29 — “Paul here breathes ‘a sigh of relief’ as he contemplates his eventual visit to the Romans. For by then the collection will, he trusts, be safely delivered, the poor Christians in Jerusalem somewhat relieved of their crushing burden, and a stronger fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers secured. When he comes to the Romans, then, he will come ‘in the fullness of Christ’s blessings.’ ‘Fullness’ emphasizes the completeness of the blessing that Paul anticipates in Rome. If we translate literally, this blessing would seem to be one that Paul imparts to the Roman Christians through his ministry. But it might be legitimate to assume that Paul thinks not only of his coming but of the results of his coming; and he may then be alluding to a mutuality of ‘blessing’: Paul ministering to the Roman Christians, and the Christians there encouraging and helping Paul (cf. the mutuality in 1:12).” [Moo, Romans, pg 907]

A Request for Prayer (15:30-33)

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. (Rom 15:30-33 KJV)

I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed. The God of peace be with you all. Amen. (Rom 15:30-33 NIV)

And I call upon you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in the prayers for me unto God, that I may be delivered from those not believing in Judea, and that my ministrations, that [is] for Jerusalem, may become acceptable to the saints; that in joy I may come unto you, through the will of God, and may be refreshed with you, and the God of the peace [be] with you all. Amen. (Rom 15:30-33 Young’s Literal Translation)

“Paul often includes requests for prayer toward the end of his letters. Often, however, those requests are very general. His request here, however, grows directly out of his reference to the collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem in vv. 25-28a. Paul asks the Romans to join him in praying for two things: (1) personal safety (v. 31a); and (2) the Jerusalem Christians’ willingness to accept the collection (v. 31b). But Paul has not forgotten his visit to Rome; he makes clear that it is through a positive answer to these requests that he will be able to come to Rome with joy and to find rest for his soul there (v. 32). The paragraph concludes with another typical Pauline letter-closing feature: a prayer-wish that God might be with his readers (v. 33).

Paul’s deep concern about his upcoming trip to Jerusalem and the success of his great collection enterprise shows through clearly here. It is certainly an exaggeration to think that concern about this enterprise was the motivating factor for his letter to the Romans. But, involving as it did the relations between Jew and Gentile in the early church, it was one of those converging factors that led Paul to focus so strongly in the letter on the implications of salvation history for Jew and Gentile in the people of God. And, although he does not come right out and say so, what Paul says about the collection may suggest that he is also concerned about the attitude of the Roman Christians themselves to the collection.” [Moo, Romans, pg 908f]

v 30 — “**PRAY FOR ME**” — “The fulfillment of Paul’s hope to come to the Romans ‘with the fullness of the blessing of Christ’ (v. 29) depends on what will happen when Paul goes to Jerusalem with the collection. And so he ‘now’ ‘urges’ the Roman Christians to pray for him. The word is a strong one, and Paul accentuates it by his twofold qualification: ‘through our Lord Jesus

Christ and through the love of the Spirit.’ The first ‘through’ might be paraphrased ‘in the name of’: it introduces the authority by which Paul makes his request. ‘Love of the Spirit’ might mean ‘the love of the Spirit for us;’ but, in a context where relations among Christians have been so central, it probably indicates ‘the love that the Spirit inspires’ (REB; cf. TEV); for example, the love that believers have for one another, a love ‘that has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 909]

STRIVE TOGETHER WITH ME — “The verb Paul uses here, συναγωνίζομαι [sunagōnizomai], occurs only here in biblical Greek; but its simple form, ἀγωνίζομαι [agōnizomai], occurs eight times in the NT. This word means ‘to engage in conflict,’ and can be used both literally (e.g., of military battle, cf. John 18:36, or athletic contests, cf. 1 Cor. 9:25). Particularly important for Paul’s use is the application of this word to the spiritual struggle of the righteous person in this life. Thus, Paul uses it to describe labor in ministry (Col. 1:19; 1 Tim. 4:10), spiritual ‘striving’ (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7), and prayer (Col. 4:12).... Paul’s request is that the Roman Christians ‘strive together’ with him in prayers. Paul’s use of the metaphor of fighting or wrestling may imply something about the nature of the prayer that he is requesting: that it involves a ‘wrestling’ with God (the image may originate in Jacob’s wrestling with God, Gen. 32); or that it must be especially diligent. *But Paul’s use of the language of ‘striving’ to describe his own ministry might suggest rather that he is inviting the Roman Christians, through their prayers, to participate with him in his ‘struggle’ to complete his ordained missionary work. Though so many are unknown personally to him, Paul can nevertheless ask the Roman Christians to identify with him in his own struggle so that they might sincerely pray on his behalf. As Calvin remarks, Paul ‘shows how the godly ought to pray for their brethren, that they are to assume their person, as though they were placed in the same difficulties.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 909f]

V 31 — FIRST PRAYER REQUEST: PERSONAL SAFETY — “The first thing that Paul wants the Roman Christians to pray for is his personal safety: ‘that I might be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea.’ ‘The disobedient’ refer to unbelievers; and that Paul had good ground for this request is clear from what happened when he did reach Jerusalem with the collection: the Romans had to take him into custody in order to keep the Jews from killing him (Acts 21:27-36).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 910]

SECOND PRAYER REQUEST: SUCCESS OF HIS MISSION TO JERUSALEM — “[H]is second request is that the Roman Christians pray that ‘my ministry in Jerusalem might be acceptable to the saints.’ As the parallel language in v. 25 shows, ‘ministry’ (or ‘service’) refers to the collection. And it is possible that this second request might be closely related to the first. For Paul might think that it would be pressure put on the Jewish Christians by their unbelieving fellow Jews that would lead them to reject the collection. But Paul does not draw this connection; and the distrust about Paul and his law-free gospel among Jewish Christians themselves was great enough to give him ample reason for the concern he expresses here. For, while Paul’s relationships with the Jerusalem apostles were apparently cordial enough at this point (see, e.g., Acts 21:18-25; Gal. 2:1-10), his own letters reveal that various conservative Jewish-Christian groups continued to be hostile to him.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 910f]

V 32 — GOD’S ANSWER TO PAUL’S PRAYER — “The purpose clause in this verse could be a third prayer request, parallel to the two in v. 31, but it probably expresses the ultimate goal of those requests: that Paul might ‘come in joy’ to the Roman Christians and find refreshment there with them. ‘Through the will of God’ probably modifies ‘come’ rather than ‘find rest’; but, in either case, *Paul thereby reminds his readers that all his plans and hopes are subordinate to the will of God. We find a somewhat ironic confirmation of this in the way in which God ‘answered’ Paul’s prayer here. He was delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, but only by being locked up by the Romans for two years. The collections was, apparently, accepted by the Jewish Christians (or at least most of them, cf. Acts 21:17), but Paul’s subsequent arrest in the in the temple precincts must have raised Jewish Christians’ suspicions about him again. And Paul did get to Rome and experience some measure of joy and refreshment (cf. Phil. 1:12-19; 2:25-30), but he arrived there in Roman chains.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 911]

V 33 — “*In the prayer-wish that climaxes the first part (15:14-32) of his letter closing, Paul address God as ‘the God of peace,’ that is, ‘the God who gives peace.’ Paul refers in Romans both to the peace of a new, harmonious relationship with God (cf. 2:10; 5:1; 8:6) and to the peace that should characterize the relations of believers with one another (cf. 14:19). It is difficult, and probably unwise, to restrict the meaning of the word here to one or the other: ‘peace,’ like the Hebrew shalom, embraces the panoply of blessings God makes available to his people in the age of fulfillment (cf. also 1:7).*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 911]