

Romans
15:23-33



**Paul's Travel Plan
and
His Intention to Seek Support**

Romans

15:23-29

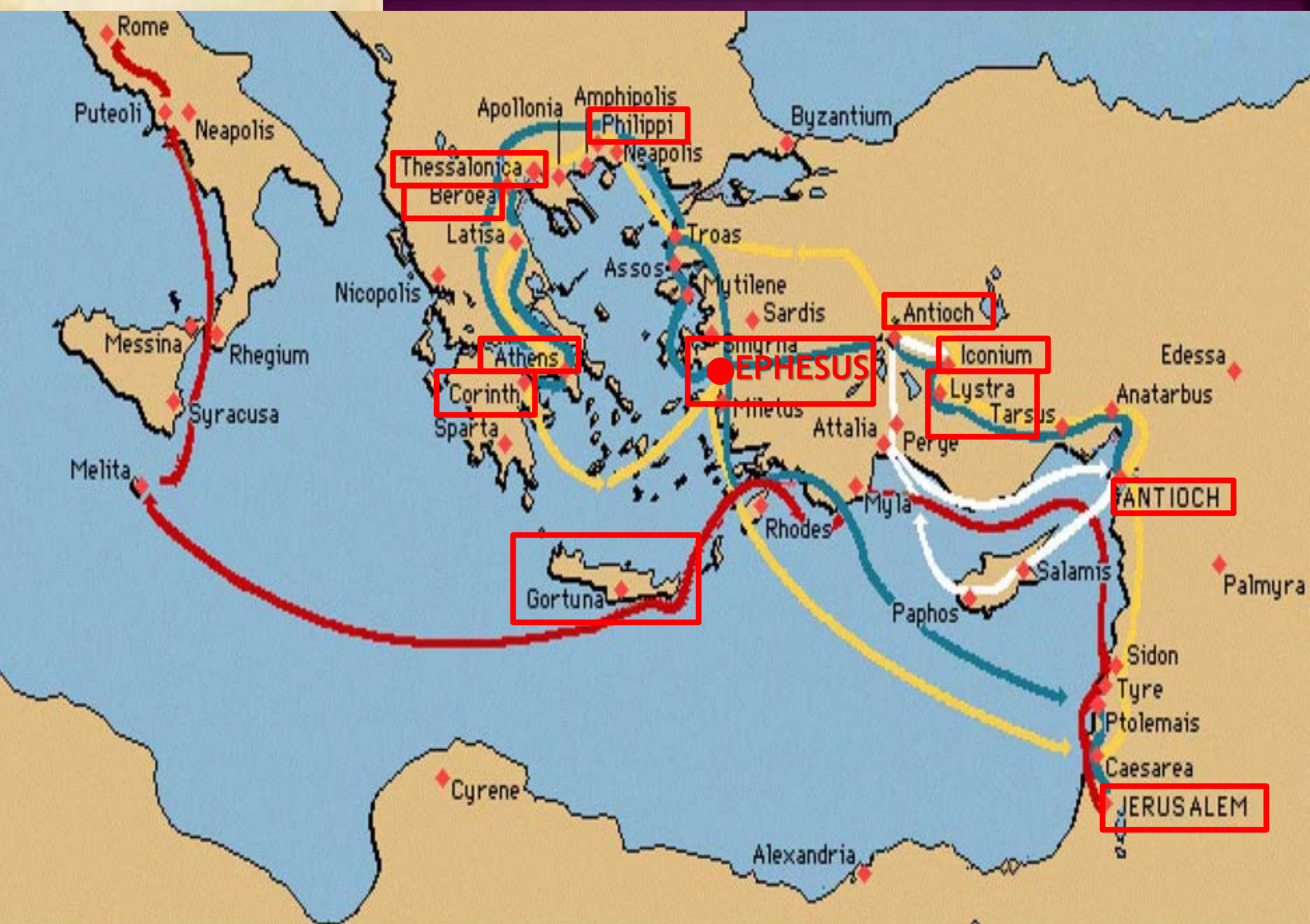


Introduction

But Now

(vv.23-29)

As we continue from the close of last Sunday's study, Paul uses a key phrase at the beginning of this section "*but now*" ($\nu\nu\nu\acute{\iota}$ $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$). Paul uses this short phrase to gain attention and to turn ones attention from his past work and present situation. He will repeat his intention of visiting Rome and, ultimately, "*to be sent on by*" the Roman Christians to Spain. In a moment, Paul will use $\nu\nu\nu\acute{\iota}$ $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ again; to introduce an interim trip to Jerusalem.



← Paul's First Journey
 ← Paul's Second Journey
 ← Paul's Third Journey
 ← Paul's Journey To Rome

Romans

15:23-24a



Onward to
Spain

²³But now, while no longer having a place in these regions and having a desire to come to you for *many years* ²⁴when I journey to *Spain*....

So Paul will now return to a thought that he has already submitted at the beginning of his Letter to the Romans; that being, his fervent desire to visit the house-churches in Rome. Note that he has longed to visit for “*many years.*”

However, he is clear that his stop in Rome will not be lengthy; since he has the desire to proclaim the Gospel westward, in “*Spain*” (Σπανίαν)! Did you know that “*Spain*” is only referenced twice in the NT? It is referenced in this verse and again, later, in verse 28.

Romans

15:23-24a



Onward to
Spain

²³But now, while no longer having a place in these regions and having a desire to come to you for **many years** ²⁴when I journey to **Spain**....

Lastly, according to a number of early church fathers (Clement in *1 Clement* 5:6-7 and Cyril of Jerusalem in *Catechesis* 17.26), Paul did travel to Spain, though there is no mention of this in Scripture. If Paul did journey to Spain, the timing of his arrival hardly took place within the time frame he envisioned when composing Romans. He was delayed by a two-year detainment in Caesarea and then in Rome (cf. Acts 24:27; 28:30). As we have discussed previously, Paul's arrival in Rome did not happen in the matter that he envisioned. Interestingly, throughout history, Jesus continues to use His "undershepherds" mightily, but seldom according to their own itineraries!

Romans

15:246



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...for I hope to see you **while passing through** and to be sent there by you, if, first, I might be filled [by being] with you for a time.

Paul describes his intended visit to Rome with the participle “**while passing through**” (διαπορευόμενος), which sounds relatively brief. This would explain the fact that our Lord Jesus and His Gospel is already being proclaimed in Rome. Thus, Paul’s thought is that staying in Rome for an extended period would be contrary to his already expressed *modus operandi* as we studied in vv.20-21. So, Paul is already looking beyond Rome toward Spain!

Romans

15:246



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...for I hope to see you **while passing through** and **to be sent** there by you, if, first, I might be filled [by being] with you for a time.

Paul's aim is "**to be sent**" (προπεμφθῆναι) to Spain by the Roman Christians. The Greek verb is a technical term that literally means to be equipped or supplied by. Thus, Paul is asking the house-churches in Rome to supply him with food, clothing, money, and, as was the custom of the time, a letter of introduction. This verb could also mean that Paul is asking for personal assistants in regard to translators and guides.

This may sound odd to our western ears that Paul is making such a request so late in his letter; however, he do know that Paul was never timid about asking for financial and personal assistance (cf. 2 Cor. 8-9).

Romans

15:246



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...for I hope to see you **while passing through** and **to be sent** there by you, if, first, I might be filled [by being] with you for a time.

There are three factors that may explain why Paul is requesting such assistance:

1. The fact is clear that Paul has not yet visited Rome and so has no personal contacts. Hence, Paul wants to build a relationship with the congregations in Rome through his letter to them. At the end of his letter is when Paul thinks it necessary to request their assistance;
2. Paul's effort to reconcile the "*weak*" and "*strong*" also precedes his request. This is actually a signal to the congregation that Paul desires their united support from all the groups in Rome, rather than only from certain factions; and,
3. Paul's tactic emphasizes the importance of laying a solid theological foundation prior to beginning a partnership in mission with the congregations in Rome.

Romans

15:24b



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...for I hope to see you while passing through and to be sent there by you, if, first, I might be **filled** [by being] with you for a time.

Though the end of this verse is quite awkward, grammatically, and it communicates an incomplete thought even with the bracketed insertion, whatever time Paul spends with the Roman Christians, he is quite confident God will use it for good so that Paul will be “*filled*” (ἐμπλησθῶ). Of note, this Greek verb is a passive, again, so Paul is making a request of God that he may be filled or satisfied in his visit to Rome!

Romans

15:25-29



*On to
Jerusalem*

²⁵But now I am journeying to Jerusalem while serving the holy ones. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia thought it good to do some [sign of] fellowship for the poor of the holy ones in Jerusalem. ²⁷Indeed, they thought it good, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles shared in their spiritual [blessings], they are also obligated to offer priestly service to them in the material things. ²⁸Therefore, after completing this and sealing this fruit for them, I will depart through you into Spain. ²⁹And I know that when coming to you, I will come to [the] fullness of Christ's blessing.

Romans

15:25



On to
Jerusalem

²⁵**But now** I am journeying to Jerusalem while serving the holy ones. Paul “*but now*” (ὡνὶ δέ), for the second time, introduces Jerusalem. This verse is a “locator” for us, since it provides a location in time and origin of Paul’s letter (cf. Acts 19:10, 21-41; 20:1). As you may remember from the introduction to Romans, it was probably in late-summer 55, when Paul was about to conclude his work at Ephesus and was about to return to Jerusalem with the offering gathered among the Gentiles for the poverty-stricken saints of Jerusalem, that he gave expression to his hope of going to Rome: “*After I have been there, I must also see Rome*” (Acts 19:21). He spoke of that hope again when he wrote to the Corinthians from Macedonia a few weeks later: “*Our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you*” (2 Cor. 10:15-16). “Lands beyond you”—this expression comes from a man who has been working his way westward “*from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum*” in NW of Greece; so, Romans 15:19 surely points to the West (Rome and Spain).

Romans

15:26-27



On to
Jerusalem

²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia thought it good to do some [sign of] fellowship for the poor of the holy ones in Jerusalem. ²⁷Indeed, they thought it good, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles shared in their spiritual [blessings], they are also obligated to offer priestly service to them in the material things.

As we read in 1 Cor. 16 and 2 Cor. 8-9, Paul is the main impetus for this offering and, in the 2 Cor. 8-9, Paul engages this task with fervor and seriousness. It would be an incorrect assumption to describe Paul journey to Jerusalem as a detour.

Additionally, in Acts 11, we are told of a previous offering that was collected and taken to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul (Paul). Now, Paul is engaged in the collection and delivery of a second offering to be taken to Jerusalem.

Romans

15:26-27



On to
Jerusalem

²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia thought it good to do some [sign of] **fellowship** for the poor of the holy ones in Jerusalem. ²⁷Indeed, they thought it good, and they are their debtors. For if the **Gentiles shared in their spiritual [blessings]**, they are also obligated to offer priestly service to them in the material things.

What's the purpose of the offering?

The answer is in the last half of verse 27. The offering serves as tangible evidence that the churches planted throughout Paul's missionary journeys (in Macedonia and Achaia) are fully united in Christ Jesus and in "**fellowship**" (κοινωνία) with the saints in Jerusalem. The use of κοινωνία is the lone appearance of this Greek noun in Romans and can also be translated as "**communion.**" So Paul views the collection as a concrete expression of the fellowship and communion which does exist in Jesus, since for these Gentiles to give a gift to Jewish Christians was a sign that the Gentile Christians now consider the saints in Jerusalem as members of the same family.

Romans

15:28a



On to
Jerusalem

²⁸Therefore, after completing this and **sealing** this **fruit** for them....,

Verse 28a envisions the fulfillment of the immediate task at hand. The use of the noun “**fruit**” (καρπός) refers to the collection being delivered to Jerusalem.

Note that Paul’s use of the verb “**sealing**” (σφραγίς), outside of Romans, was always employed in reference to the baptismal gift (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). Thus, here, Paul may be referring to the baptismal bond of fellowship which unites all believers with Christ Jesus and with one another!

Romans

15:28b-29



On to
Jerusalem

^{28b}...I will depart through you into Spain. ²⁹And I know that when coming to you, I will come to [the] **fullness** of Christ's blessing.

Paul certainly yearns to come to Rome, but, at this point, he intends for his initial visit to Rome to serve as a “launching pad” for his pioneering evangelistic work in Spain (cf. v.20). Through the support of the house-churches in Rome, Paul hopes to venture to Spain and his desire here only reinforces the interpretation of v.24..

Lastly, what seems to be in sharp contrast to his painful visit in Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1), the connotation of “**fullness**” (πλήρωμα) means that Christ's blessings on his visit will be a pure blessing without any admixture of something other than the Lord's blessing. Paul has already mentioned such in 1:8-15 and 15:14-33, which provides for us a Divine exegesis!

Romans

15:30-31



A Plea for Fervent Prayer

³⁰And I urge you, brothers, *through our Lord Jesus Christ* and *through the Spirit's love*, to struggle together with me in prayers to God in my behalf. ³¹that I might be rescued from those who are unpersuaded in Judea and [that] my service which is for Jerusalem might become acceptable to the holy ones...

Paul's urging of the Roman Christians has a twofold purpose. First, it's "*through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This phrase has served as a theme throughout Romans, especially in Ch 5-8. It speaks of the life God graciously bequeaths to all baptized believers in Christ Jesus. This reflects Paul's strong belief that Jesus, including the shared experience of His Lordship, is a bond between Him and the Roman Christians.

The second purpose is that it comes "*through the Spirit's love.*" This speaks of the love of God which has been poured out [Baptism] and remains with your hearts through the Holy Spirit, who was given to you [us]. Therefore, Paul's urging is based upon and flows through God's merciful and loving actions toward us [you] through His Son and by His Spirit!

Romans

15:31



A Plea for Fervent Prayer

³¹**[so] that** I might be rescued from those who are unpersuaded in Judea and **[so that]** my service which is for Jerusalem might become acceptable to the holy ones...

Paul then continues with the use of two purpose clauses as signaled by the use of “**[so]that**” (ἵνα). These two clauses describe why Paul seeks their prayers, but they also function “epexegetically,” explaining or clarifying what their prayers should entail!

Note that Paul offers two specific petitions: 1. “**I might be rescued from those who are unpersuaded in Judea;**” and, 2. “**my service which is for Jerusalem might become acceptable to the holy ones.**”

Romans

15:31



A Plea for Fervent Prayer

³¹**[so] that** I might be rescued from those who are unpersuaded in Judea and **[so that]** my service which is for Jerusalem might become acceptable to the holy ones...

The first petition clearly reveals that Paul fears for his life in Jerusalem. Throughout his letter to the Romans, Paul uses “unpersuaded” (ἀπειθούντων) to refer to those who do not believe in Christ Jesus; it can also be translated as “*disbelieving.*” As we consider Paul’s petition, Acts reveals to us that God does not seem to answer or grant this petition, at least not initially or entirely, since Paul is nearly killed in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30-31, 35-36; 22:22) and then, soon after, he becomes the target in an assassination plot (Acts 23:12-15). However, in the midst of all of this, God does rescue him from death in a most surprising and unusual way ...via a Roman Tribune (Acts 21-23).

Romans

15:31



*A Plea for
Fervent
Prayer*

³¹**[so] that** I might be rescued from those who are unpersuaded in Judea and **[so that]** my service which is for Jerusalem might become acceptable to the holy ones...

And Paul's second petition refers to "*my service*" (διακονία) and this certainly points to the offering from his use of the word διακονία. There are those who question whether the offering was received by the saints in Jerusalem. The Scriptural evidence points to the fact that the offering probably was received; though, in Acts, there is no explicit address of the offering itself. However, Paul's address to Felix in Acts 24:17 implies that the offering was warmly received and rebuts scenarios that claim a refusal of the gift.

Romans

15:32-33



The Conclusion

³²**so that**, after coming to you in joy through the will of God, I might rest together with you. ³³**The God of Peace [is] with you all. Amen.**

Paul, again, uses a ἵνα clause to open verse 32. This purpose clause points to the fact that if the two previous purpose clauses are granted, the result will be that “after coming to you in joy through the will of God, I might rest together with you.” Thus, by the grace of God, the outcome will be of joyful relief and mutual refreshment in Rome. Then, Paul concludes this chapter with a blessed reminder: ³³*The God of peace [is] with you all. Amen.*

Romans

15:32-33



The Conclusion

³²so that, after coming to you in joy through the will of God, I might rest together with you. ³³*The God of Peace [is] with you all. Amen.*

It's important for you to know that “*The God of Peace...*” (Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης) is a genitive. This identifies that God is the source of “*peace!*” As we have studies from 1:7, the Hebrew word “*shalom*” (.Wlv2) provides the intended “freight” of the NT term for “*peace.*”

Thus, in the Aaronic Benediction, of which you are blessed with at the conclusion of every Divine Service, is God's blessing and keeping, the shining of His face upon you and the bestowal of His grace to you, the lifting upon of His countenance upon you and the imposition of His saving name are all encompassed in .Wlv2 (cf. Num 6:24-27).

Romans

15:32-33



*The
Conclusion*

³²so that, after coming to you in joy through the will of God, I might rest together with you. ³³*The God of Peace [is] with you all. Amen.*

It is not a cessation of conflict or warfare! It is a blessing of health and wholeness in a reconciled relationship with your Lord God (5:10-11) and then also embraces a innumerable multitude of blessings God makes available to you, His dear child! Is it any wonder why Paul uses this term, “*The God of Peace,*” as his favorite characterization of God?

Romans

15:32-33



The Conclusion

³²so that, after coming to you in joy through the will of God, I might rest together with you. ³³*The God of Peace [is] with you all. Amen.*

Lastly, Paul desires that God's peace be "*with you all,*" is not only for the saints in Rome. As we see in St. Matthew 1:23; 28:20 and St. Luke 1:28, they illustrate how the Gospel Word of promise assures the Lord's people (you) that He is always with them (you)! God's peace in Christ remains a present reality for all His children; even, and especially, in the midst of conflicts, perils, temptations, and sufferings. Paul wants the Romans to be the kind of people in whom the Lord Jesus dwells; who has shown them that all discord caused by sin has been taken away and He has given them what is true, so that they may live a peaceable life in His truth...and so it is for you!

Next
Sunday



Romans
16:1-27

GREETINGS TO THOSE
IN ROME - AND A
WARNING!

PEACE
IN CHRIST
JESUS

