

**BOOK OF ROMANS
PAUL'S DELAYS
ROMANS 15:14-33**

Introduction

After years of **DESIRING** and **HOPING** to visit the **SAINTS** in **ROME**, we see that **PAUL** offers an **EXPLANATION** here in these verses for his not having been to **ROME** up to this point in his **MINISTRY**.

Earlier in this **EPISTLE** we read of **PAUL'S** expressing his sincere **DESIRE** to visit the **ROMAN CHURCH** in *Romans 1:9-13*.

PAUL wrote this **EPISTLE** to them from **CORINTH**, some 600 miles southeast of **ROME**, as the crow flies. He admitted to having **PREACHED** the **GOSPEL** as far as **ILLYRICUM (15:19)**, which was just across the **ADRIATIC SEA** from **ITALY** but still some 400 miles away from them.

But rather than heading on up to **ROME** from there, he turned around and headed in the opposite direction back to **JERUSALEM**.

From all appearances, it seemed as though **PAUL** might never reach **ROME**. Some may have wondered if he really wanted to go there.

Here in these verses **PAUL EXPLAINS** his absence when it appeared that he might could have visited them with a little more effort.

One may wonder why this **EXPLANATION (EXCUSE)** is even preserved in the **TEXT** of the **NEW TESTAMENT**. How can this possibly be of **VALUE** to us?

In most cases, an ancient **EXCUSE** would not be of **VALUE** to those of a much later day; but **PAUL'S EXCUSE** has **GREAT VALUE**. In fact, we find that his **EXPLANATION** for not having visited, and his **FUTURE PLANS** to visit, are very instructive.

Here we see that **PAUL REVEALED** his **PRIORITIES FOR LIVING OUT HIS LIFE** and the **BASIS OF HIS PLANS FOR FUTURE MINISTRY!** **PAUL** informed his readers how he **DETERMINED**, on a **PRACTICAL, DAILY BASIS, THE WILL OF GOD FOR HIS LIFE**.

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PAUL'S EXPLANATION of the **REASONS** for his **DELAYED ARRIVAL**, his **PAST MINISTRY**, and his **FUTURE PLANS** here in *Romans 15:14-33* provides an excellent illustration of **HOW GOD'S WILL BECOMES EVIDENT** as our **MINDS ARE CONFORMED TO THE MIND AND WILL OF GOD**, and as we **LIVE OUR LIVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S GIFTS** and **CALLING** in our life!

Some may view these words as just an **EXCUSE**, but **THEY ARE INCLUDED IN THE SCRIPTURES FOR OUR EDIFICATION**.

We see here that *Romans 15:14-33* contains four paragraphs:

- (1) **Verses 14-16 — Paul's Reasons for Writing Romans**
- (2) **Verses 17-21 — Paul's Reasons for His Absence**
- (3) **Verses 22-29 — Paul's Reasons for Another Delay**
- (4) **Verses 30-33 — Paul's Requests for Prayer**

I. PAUL'S REASONS FOR WRITING THE ROMANS.(Vs 14-16)
COMPLIMENTS are not handed out by **PAUL** without good reason. All of his **EPISTLES** contain a number of instances with **STRONG WORDS** of **ADMONITION** and **REBUKE**.

PAUL informs his **ROMAN** readers in *verse 14* that his **REASON** for writing this **EPISTLE** is not because of their **IMMATURITY** or to correct any serious **DOCTRINAL DEFICIENCY** they had.

According to **PAUL**, these **SAINTS** scored well three specific areas of strength.

First, they were "full of goodness."

This seems to speak of their **DISPOSITION TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD MEN**.

Second, they were "filled with all knowledge."

DOCTRINALLY speaking, they had been well taught with no glaring deficiencies in their **BIBLICAL** and **THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE**.

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Third, they were “able also to admonish one another.”

In fact, it was the **ROMAN BELIEVERS’ “goodness”** and **“knowledge”** that qualified them to **“admonish”** one another.

In order to be able to **admonish** others requires that one be filled with both **“goodness”** and **“knowledge.”**

Now, the question arises why did **PAUL** write this **EPISTLE** to them? After all, it is possibly the most extensive, **SYSTEMATIC EXPOSITIONS OF DOCTRINE IN ALL THE BIBLE?** Might I suggest that he did not write this **EPISTLE** to **INFORM** them as much as he did to **REMINDE** them. (That’s what he is saying here!)

The old, old, story needs to be **RETOLD, NOT REPLACED** with something new! (*See 2 Peter 1:12–15*)

The great danger for **BELIEVERS** is similar to that of professional athletes— They can focus so much on the fine points while forgetting **THE FUNDAMENTALS**. Most games are won or lost because teams **EXECUTE** or **FAIL TO EXECUTE** the **FUNDAMENTALS** of the game they are playing.

It is the same way with **THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH!** The great danger for **BELIEVERS** is to **LOSE OUR FOCUS** on **THE FUNDAMENTALS** and begin to pay too much attention to the fine points.

In the words of our **LORD**, we may **“strain at a gnat and swallow a camel”** (see *Matthew 23:24*). **PAUL** wrote the **ROMANS** this **EPISTLE** to **REMINDE** these growing **BELIEVERS** of the **FUNDAMENTALS OF THEIR FAITH**. There is little **“new”** in **ROMANS**, but all of it is vital.

His motivation was to carry out his **GOD-GIVEN MISSION** and **CALLING** as an **APOSTLE** to the **GENTILES**:

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(Look at *Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:15-18.*)

Romans 1:5—“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name’s sake.”

PAUL perceived his **CALLING** to be a very broad one. He was not just **CALLED** to **EVANGELIZE** among the **GENTILES**; his words indicate he was **CALLED** to bring about **“the obedience to the faith among all nations.”**

PAUL sensed a **RESPONSIBILITY** to all **GENTILES**, even those he had not seen before and those he had not personally led to **CHRIST— A RESPONSIBILITY** to **MINISTER** in such a way as to **ENCOURAGE** and **FACILITATE** an **OBEDIENCE** which stems from **FAITH**.

Which is precisely what he did by writing this **EPISTLE** to the **ROMAN SAINTS**. He challenged them to the **OBEDIENCE THAT STEMS FROM FAITH**.

The imagery in *verse 16* is most interesting. **PAUL** speaks of himself as a **“priest”** who is **“offering”** a **SACRIFICE TO GOD—** The **SACRIFICE** of the **GENTILES!**

His **DESIRE** and **MOTIVATION** was to **PRESENT THE GENTILE BELIEVERS** at **ROME** to **GOD** as a **SACRIFICE** which is **ACCEPTABLE TO GOD** through the **SANCTIFYING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!**

His **MINISTRY**, whether from a distance by this **EPISTLE**, or in person, was directed toward the **EDIFICATION** and **SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE GLORY OF GOD!**

PAUL’S REASONS FOR WRITING THE ROMANS.

II. PAUL'S REASONS FOR HIS ABSENCE FROM ROME.
(15:17-21)

As we've said before, after years of hoping to see PAUL, some of the ROMAN SAINTS may have begun to wonder if he was ever coming at all.

So in *verses 17-21* PAUL DEMONSTRATED that it was his COMMITMENT to his CALLING and MINISTRY that kept him from ROME—that is, his PRIORITIES kept him from ROME.

Since his MINISTRY was his DEFENSE, PAUL found it NECESSARY TO DESCRIBE his MINISTRY. Here in *verses 17-19*, PAUL pointed to the SUCCESS of his MINISTRY, not to BOAST in his own accomplishments but to GIVE GLORY TO GOD and show that GOD'S HAND OF BLESSING was EVIDENT in his MINISTRY.

Some use their MINISTRY as an EXCUSE for AVOIDING OTHER OBLIGATIONS. PAUL pointed to the HAND OF GOD in his MINISTRY to show that he was ACTING IN THE WILL AND THE POWER OF GOD!

PAUL'S MINISTRY among the GENTILES bore the EVIDENCES OF GOD'S BLESSING and POWER. His success was the result of GOD'S WORKING THROUGH HIM. And so, as he went about PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL, the HOLY SPIRIT bore witness to GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER BY SIGNS and MIRACLES.

PAUL'S MINISTRY was that of an APOSTLE. He took the GOSPEL to places where the name of CHRIST had never been heard. The APOSTOLIC SIGNS and WONDERS that accompanied his PREACHING were PROOF to PAGANS that PAUL'S MESSAGE was one to be taken seriously because of the POWER OF GOD that was upon him!

These "*SIGNS AND WONDERS*" were GOD'S ACCREDITATION of PAUL as an APOSTLE!

In the last part of *verse 19*, PAUL indicated his BELIEF that his task was nearly finished. "*From Jerusalem ... unto Illyricum*" PAUL said he had "*fully preached the gospel of Christ*" meaning that he had FULFILLED his task as an APOSTLE. His task as an APOSTLE was to LAY A FOUNDATION. His MISSION was to PREACH CHRIST and to ESTABLISH CHURCHES in crucial locations so that the GOSPEL could then be PROCLAIMED by BELIEVERS from those CHURCHES.

His DESIRE was to PREACH THE GOSPEL where it had not been heard before. He did not wish to BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION of another. (*Vs. 20*)

The CHURCH at ROME already had a good FOUNDATION laid!

PAUL found the words of *Isaiah 52:15* descriptive of his CALLING, and so he quoted them in *verse 21*.

This explains why a visit to ROME was not high on his list of PRIORITIES and why he had not yet reached ROME. His CALLING as an APOSTLE was to LAY FOUNDATIONS where the GOSPEL had not yet been proclaimed. To go to ROME would have been going where the FOUNDATION was already laid. PAUL was too busy LAYING FOUNDATIONS from JERUSALEM to ILLYRICUM to go to ROME—up to this time.

He was finally considering a visit to ROME in his plans for future MINISTRY as described in the next verses.

III. PAUL'S REASON FOR YET ANOTHER DELAY. (*15:22-29*)
Verse 22 concludes PAUL'S EXCUSE of *verses 17-21* and introduces his next topic—his plans for the future.

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The good news of this paragraph was that **PAUL** was planning to visit **ROME**. The bad news is there is yet one more **DELAY**.

PAUL had been *“hindered”* from visiting **ROME**, hindered by his **CALLING** and his **MINISTRY**. His **DELAY** was not accidental but **PURPOSEFUL** according to **GOD'S PURPOSES!**

Given his **PRINCIPLES** and **PRIORITIES** as an **APOSTLE**, **HE** was still poised to go somewhere the **GOSPEL** had not yet been proclaimed—**SPAIN!**

His plan was to use **ROME** as a stopping place on his way to **SPAIN**. After a time of fellowship, he planned to proceed on to **SPAIN!**

But before he set out for **SPAIN** he had one final task that he had to accomplish. This task would take him back to **JERUSALEM** and from there he would set out for **SPAIN**.

PAUL would have to travel another 2,000 miles or so before he reached **ROME** when he could have gone directly to Rome some 600 miles from where he was writing. But this **MISSION** to **JERUSALEM** was a high priority.

The **CHURCH** in **JERUSALEM**, made up of mostly **JEWS**, was in dire straits! The **GOSPEL** had required that the **JEWS** in **JERUSALEM** **PROCLAIM** the **GOOD NEWS** to the **GENTILES** in distant places.

And the **GENTILES**, now wanting to show their **GRATITUDE** and **LOVE**, had **COLLECTED LOVE OFFERINGS** to **MINISTER** to the hurting **JEWISH SAINTS** in **JERUSALEM**. **PAUL** was taking **OFFERINGS** from the **GENTILE CHURCHES** he helped to establish back to those **SAINSTS**.

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Only when this task was completed would **PAUL** feel free to press on to **ROME** and ultimately to **SPAIN**.

IV. PAUL'S REQUESTS FOR PRAYER. (15:30-33)

PAUL'S PRIORITIES are seen not only in his previous **MINISTRY** but in his **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE** as well as in his **PRAYER REQUESTS (Vs 30-32)** along with his benediction.

A. PAUL requested that these SAINTS PRAY for him that he “might be delivered from them who do not believe in Judea.” (vs 31)

The hunter had become the hunted!

The danger ahead did not deter **PAUL** from pressing on to **JERUSALEM**, but it did prompt him to ask the **ROMAN SAINTS** to **PRAY** for him.

B. PAUL asked the SAINTS in ROME to PRAY that his service to the saints in JERUSALEM might be “accepted of the saints” (vs 31).

The **GENTILES** gladly gave to minister to the **JEWISH SAINTS**, but would the **JEWS** gladly receive these gifts? **PAUL** asked for **PRAYER** that they would.

C. PAUL asked for PRAYER that “with joy by the will of God,” he would come to ROME and be “refreshed” in their FELLOWSHIP. (vs 32)

GOD answered their **PRAYERS**. **PAUL** was delivered from the unbelieving **JEWS**, delivered the offering, and arrived safely in **ROME**, thanks to his arrest and the Roman government. (*Acts 20-28*)

Conclusion

An appropriate benediction is pronounced by **PAUL** in *verse 33*:
“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”