

(15:20-21) - 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. - Paul was a pioneer missionary. His desire was to preach the Gospel where it had not been preached. God used him greatly to establish churches in areas where Christ was before unknown. He was not seeking honor for himself in this task but to glorify God in Christ. His desire was to see sinners saved and God's people edified. He quotes *Isaiah 52:15* to show that his mission and desire was the fulfilling of prophecy in God's purpose to save His elect among Gentiles. This prophecy of God through Isaiah was part of the prophecy that follows in *Isaiah 53* concerning the great and powerful work of Christ as the suffering servant who would save His lost sheep by His own obedience unto death. The calling of God's elect out of every nation is the direct fruit and effect of the saving work of Christ on the cross (*John 6:37-44; 12:23-26,31-33; 17:1-5*).

This also establishes the message that ministers of Christ are to preach. It is the good news of salvation by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His finished work of redemption by which sinners are justified, forgiven, and ultimately glorified based on His blood and righteousness alone. Another important truth that is supported here is that God uses the means of the preaching of the Gospel to save His elect people. Those who would reason that God's elect will be saved without hearing the truth of and believing in Christ and Him crucified and risen again have no scriptural support. God glorifies Himself in the salvation of His people by the Lord Jesus Christ and in their calling by the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(15:22-24) - 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. - Paul's zeal and desire to preach the Gospel in other place had hindered from visiting these believers in Rome where Christ had already been preached and where the Gospel was already known. Paul expresses a two-fold desire: (1) to visit the believers at Rome and enjoy fellowship with them, and (2) to preach the Gospel in Spain. Since Rome was on his way to Spain, he planned to visit with them on the way. We know that Paul did go to Rome but not as he had hoped. He eventually went there as a prisoner, and we have no record that he ever went to Spain.

(15:25-26) - BUT NOW I GO UNTO JERUSALEM TO MINISTER UNTO THE SAINTS. FOR IT HATH PLEASSED THEM OF MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA TO MAKE A CERTAIN CONTRIBUTION FOR THE POOR SAINTS WHICH ARE AT JERUSALEM. - As much as Paul wanted to visit Rome and go to Spain, there was a more immediate need for him to go back to Jerusalem. Paul mentioned this intended journey in *Acts 19:21*. Believers in Jerusalem at this time were in poverty, not only because of great persecution from the enemies of Christ and His truth, but also because of a great famine in the land. The believers in Macedonia and Achaia had collected money and gifts to help their poor, suffering brethren in Jerusalem. This is a great

example of believers caring for one another as we are one spiritual family under Christ. This is a great example of true, godly love of the brethren (*1 John 3:17-18*).

(15:27) - 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. - The Gentile believers had benefited from the Jewish believers in things pertaining to God and salvation. As we studied in chapter 11, the Gentiles are very much indebted to the Jews because God set the Jews apart and preserved His Gospel in that nation. In this sense salvation is of the Jews. Christ Himself, as to His humanity, was a direct descendant of Abraham. On the other hand, the Jews are in no way indebted to the Gentiles. The Jews were the first believers. The Jews received no advantage from the Gentiles, but the Gentiles had received much from them. As they had received spiritual advantage from the Jews, as a means of hearing the Gospel, these believers, therefore, felt indebted to share their material blessings with the Jewish believers. The Gentiles knew God had used the Jews to spread the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Gentile believers showed how they valued this by sharing their material blessings.

(15:28) - WHEN THEREFORE I HAVE PERFORMED THIS, AND HAVE SEALED TO THEM THIS FRUIT, I WILL COME BY YOU INTO SPAIN. - Paul intended to go to Rome, on his way to Spain, when he had finished this task and, literally, "put his seal on this fruit of theirs." Paul commended their gifts as the fruit of faith, love, and gratitude. These Gentile believers did not give reluctantly, legally, or proudly as if to earn God's favor and blessings by their giving. They knew that all the blessings of salvation we possess are the product of God's mercy and grace to us in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Eph. 1:3*), and we cannot earn and do not deserve the least of these blessings. In that day a seal was used to stamp anything as genuine and to distinguish it from a counterfeit. This fruit of giving was convincing evidence that their faith was real and that Gentiles had received the Gospel, not in word only, but in truth.

(15:29) - AND I AM SURE THAT, WHEN I COME UNTO YOU, I SHALL COME IN THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. - Paul's expectation was to go to Rome and enjoy their fellowship "*in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.*" As we know, his journey to Rome was under many hardships and in much opposition. He finally got to Rome but as a prisoner. This, however, did not rob him of the fullness of the blessings of Christ and the joy of fellowship with the believers in Rome. It also did no harm to the ministry of the Gospel of Christ but actually promoted that ministry. Even in his confinement in Rome, he wrote to the church in Phillipi - "*Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace*" (*Php 1:7*); and, "*But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear*" (*Php. 1:12-14*).