"The Heart of a Missionary"
Romans 15:20-33

Message by Michael J. Barnard November 8, 2026

Teaching Aim: To examine Paul's missionary zeal and his desire to take the gospel where it had never been taken before. To understand Paul's heart for the poor and persecuted Christians in Jerusalem and his desire to help them anyway he could; in this case, especially financially. To realize that we too are called to help the poor and persecuted in the church today. To recognize the importance of prayer as it relates to the success of any ministry.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD'S WORD *(BIBLE STUDY)*

Part I: Paul's longed to come to Rome but instead chose to share with those who had never heard the gospel message before. (Rom. 15:22-24)

1. According to **verses 20 & 21**, what had hindered Paul from coming to visit the church in Rome (**vs. 22**)? Has God ever opened the door for you to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone? What are some practical steps that you can take to share Jesus with others?

2. What did Paul mean when he said, *"he no longer has a place in these parts?"* (**vs. 23**) Was Paul implying that he had personally reached every man, woman, and child in the region with the gospel of Jesus Christ? What was he implying? What missionary strategy did Paul use for reaching into new regions with the Gospel message? (See **Acts 20:17-21, 27-28**).

3. According to **verse 24**, what country did Paul plan to visit as soon as he had an opportunity? What made this country particularly appealing to reach with the gospel of Jesus Christ? This region was also known as *"Tarshish"* in the Old Testament, what famous Old Testament character boarded a ship in there? (See **Jon. 1:3**) Do we know for sure whether Paul ever made it to Spain or not? What do scholars lean heavily on?

4. What city was Paul hoping to visit on his way to Spain (**vs. 24**)? Paul had heard great things about the church at Rome and wanted to visit them personally to meet the brothers and sisters in Christ there. (See **vs. 14**) According to **verse 24**, what else was Paul hoping for during his visit? Why is it important for Christians to assist in missionary outreach today? Have you ever supported a missionary? Did Paul ask for financial support for himself, or did he work and make his own money? Why did Paul choose to live this way? (See **2 Thess. 3:7-10**)

Part II: Paul's desire to help the persecuted church in Jerusalem. (Rom. 15:25-29)

1. Before going to Spain, Paul had another mission he wanted to accomplish first. What was it (**vs. 25**)? Why do you think the mother church in Jerusalem was so desperate for financial assistance from other believers? What made them different? How did the Jewish religious leaders treat any Jews who turned to Christ? (See **Acts 8:1-4; 22:4-5**) The preceding verses describe the persecution of first century Christ-followers throughout Judea and Samaria by Jews. What do you think it was like for a Christian to be living in Jerusalem during Paul's day?

2. Paul accepted collections in Macedonia and Achaia for the persecuted church in Jerusalem, but he also accepted collections in other regions as well (**vs. 26**). (See **1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:13-14; Gal. 2:10**) Why do you think Paul insisted on bringing this special love offering to the church in Jerusalem himself? Paul also brought representatives from the various churches that gave with him. Why do you think Paul did this? What makes financial accountability so important to any church? What are some steps that your church is taking to assure financial responsibly? Should church financial records be open to members and regular attenders alike to review? What should people not be allowed to see? According to **verse 26**, was the financial gift from the churches to go to the poor in general in the city of Jerusalem (meaning the Jewish public), or was it to go specifically to the poor and persecuted believers in the Christian Church?

3. In what sense were the Gentile Christians debtors to the Jewish believers and the mother church in Jerusalem (**vs. 27**)? The *"spiritual things"* referred to in **verse 27** most likely point to the fact that the Gentile Christians are forever indebted to the Jewish believers for the prophets, the Scriptures, the Messiah (Jesus Christ), and for the gospel message pointing the way to salvation. According to Paul, was it *"an option"* for the Gentiles believers to support the mother church in her poverty and persecution, or was it their duty? *Why?* (See **Gal. 6:6**)

4. How could Paul see this special love offering as *"a fruit"* of the Gentiles (**vs. 28**)? How might this financial "*love offering"* help in uniting both the Jewish and Gentile believers within the body of Christ? (See **Eph. 3:1-6**) What caused the division between these two factions in the early church? What was *"a Judaizer"* and why did Paul struggle with them? (See **Phil. 3:2-3**) According to **verse 28**, what did Paul plan to do once this gift (the love offering from the Gentile churches) was *"sealed"* (or given to the Jewish believers*)?*

5. What did Paul mean when he said that he will come *"in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ"* (**vs. 29**)? Does God promise to bless His Word when it is presented in its fullness? (See **Isa. 55:11**) Why do you think so many churches do not present God's Word in its fullness? In your own words articulate the gospel message in a minute or two? Note: I encourage you to memorize the following four Scriptures: **Rom. 3:23; 1 John 4:14b; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; John 3:16**.

Part III: The importance of prayer in the success of any ministry (Rom. 15:30-33)

1. What was Paul begging the Romans to do with him in **verse 30**? The Greek word for *"strive"* in can also be interpreted as *"agonize,"* like a wrestler agonizing in a wrestling match. The imagery used here is that of an athlete doing his or her very best to win. The verse paints the picture of Paul requesting his fellow believers to wrestle together with him in prayer. Why is it so important for believers to pick one another up during the difficult times? Is the primary purpose of prayer to move God around like a cosmic bellhop fulfilling our every desire, or is it to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ and to help us make the necessary changes in our lives so that we can be used by God? Why is submission an important component of prayer? (See **Luke 22:42**) When are your most precious times of prayer? In what location do you find that you pray the most effectively? What makes those areas so special to you?

2. What two prayer requests did Paul share with the church in **verse 31**? Paul would indeed be delivered from those in Judea, but not in the way that he expected. How was Paul finally delivered from the Jews in Jerusalem? (See **Acts 25:11-12; 27:1; 27:23-24; 28:16**)

3. What other two prayer requests did Paul make in **verse 32**? Paul came as a prisoner to Rome. Does that mean that he had no joy or refreshment during his time of confinement while he was under house arrest in Rome? Do we find God answering Paul's prayers favorably even while he was under house arrest? (See **Acts 28:14-15; Philemon 8-12**) We've heard it said that God answers our prayers, *"yes, no, or wait."* Sometimes this is because God has a better plan for us (See **Rom. 8:28**) Can you think of any examples in your own life where God had you wait for something better than you ever imagined? Who was Paul able to minister to while he was under house arrest in Rome? (See **Acts 25:13-21**)

4. One of Paul's major titles for God is *"the God of peace."* Why do you think Paul used this title (**vs. 33**)? What is the only way that we can find peace with God? (See **Rom. 5:1; John 3:16**) Have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? If not, why not do so right now in prayer?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Paul longed to take the good news of Jesus Christ to places where the gospel had never been presented before.
- Paul's desire was to go to Spain (the western most outreach of the Roman Empire), but he hoped to stop at the church in Rome along the way.
- We may not all have the gift of evangelism, but every Christian is called to share the gospel with other people.
- Fellowship with other Christians is essential to our spiritual wellbeing and to our spiritual growth.
- Gentile Christians are forever indebted to the Jewish believers for the prophets, the Scriptures, the Messiah (Jesus Christ), and the gospel message pointing the way to salvation.
- Fervent prayer is a key component to any successful Christian ministry.
- Christians should passionately pray for one another during the difficult times of life.