

Romans – Justified through faith

Week 23 – Romans 15:14 – 33 (Paul’s apostolic service & his travel plans)

1. Paul re-assures the Romans (v14-15)

Paul wants the Romans to understand his heart in writing such a strong letter – he’s not condemning them, he loves them and is cementing the true gospel they already know.

2. Paul’s ministry was priestly (v16-17)

Paul saw his apostolic service to be like that of the priests who offer the sacrifices to God, only his are living sacrifices; the gentile believers. See Isaiah 66:18-20

3. Paul’s ministry was a powerful one (v18-19a)

Although he doesn’t brag – only that it is Christ’s work through him. His ministry was not only about the verbal witness but also the miraculous deeds he did.

4. Paul’s ministry was a pioneering one (v19b-22)

These verses all too briefly describe ten hard years and Paul’s three great missionary journeys. Illyricum would cover parts of modern day Albania and Croatia! He always wanted to preach to unreached people. Again he quotes Isaiah and then explains the cryptic statement he made in Romans 1:13 – he’s been prevented from coming because of his passion for unreached peoples – an existing Roman Church would not have fitted into that calling.

5. Paul’s plan to visit Jerusalem, Rome and Spain (v23-29)

The three journeys mentioned, by sea, would be approx 800 miles, 1,500 miles and 700 miles. Considering the dangers involved at the time Paul is quite nonchalant about these extraordinary journeys! He wants to continue his pioneer work in Spain but will take the opportunity to visit them en-route after taking an offering to the Church in Jerusalem himself. The rich gentiles feel a debt to the Jews for their salvation and therefore are willing to repay it in material gifts. It is unknown if Paul made it as far as Spain.

6. Paul’s prayer requests (v30-33)

Paul recognizes that there’s a spiritual struggle against principalities & powers because of his calling and knows he needs people to stand with him in prayer. He also knows he has enemies in Jerusalem. Paul’s concern over his gift is because the Jewish Christian leaders would be seen to endorse Paul’s gospel and his seeming disregard for Jewish law if they accepted it, but if they reject it the relations between gentile and Jewish Christians could worsen. Paul longs for both sets of believers to be united. Paul finishes by praying that he’ll be coming to them in God’s will and then blesses all the Christians in Rome (both Jewish and gentile) with the peace (Shalom) of God.

“It is when we worship God, glorying in his holy name, that we are driven out to proclaim his name to the world. And when through our witness people are brought to Christ, we offer them to God. Further they themselves join in his worship, until they too go out to witness. Thus worship leads to witness, and witness to worship. It is a perpetual cycle.”

- John .R W. Stott