

Pastor Richard Schwartz

"Pray That By God's Will I May Come To You: The Apostle Paul's Desire To Visit The Church In Rome"

Romans 15:22-33

1. Paul here refers back to what he has just said. Paul has so often been kept from coming to Rome because of his mission to bring the Gospel to those who had never heard it before. Although he desired to build up the existing churches, including the one in Rome, his first priority was to preach about the work of Jesus Christ to the unsaved.
2. The spread of the Gospel had been very successful in the regions to which Paul had been ministering, so Paul desired to come from Ephesus, where he had spent several years, and travel to Spain by way of Rome. Paul had longed for many years to see the believers in Rome since he had never been there before.
3. Although Paul passionately wanted to visit Rome, he still had ministry to do before he headed there. He knew that there were many poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem, where the spread of the Gospel had first begun, so he resolved to bring them aid from the believers at Macedonia and Achaia. Twice, the Holy Spirit testifies in these verses that these believers were pleased to offer assistance to their brothers and sisters in Christ in Jerusalem.
4. Not only were the believers in Macedonia and Achaia pleased to offer material aid to those in Jerusalem, Paul tells us that there was a sense in which the Gentile believers owed it to the Jewish believers to help them. The Gentiles had only come to know God because they had come to share in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ, as the Gospel had been extended to them. So, the Spirit teaches us here that it was only natural for the Gentile believers to help their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ in whatever way they could.
5. Paul planned to deliver the material aid to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem and travel to Rome on his way to Spain. Paul trusted God that when he arrived in Rome that it would be in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.
6. The Apostle Paul appeals to his brothers and sisters in Christ at Rome, through the love that the Spirit gave to them for him, to strive together with him to pray on his behalf to their God.
7. Paul requested prayer for three things. The first prayer was that he would be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. The second was that the aid he was bringing to Jerusalem would be an acceptable offering to God for the poor Jewish believers there. Paul's final request was prayer that by God's will he might come to Rome. God answered all these prayers, but not in the way Paul planned.
8. The prophet Agabus warned Paul that if he went into Jerusalem, he would be delivered into the hands of unbelievers. However, Paul would not be deterred in his mission to bring aid to the Jewish Christians and preach the Gospel to the unbelievers in Jerusalem. As he always had been, Paul was willing even to die for the sake of His Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.
9. Charging Paul with teaching against the Jewish religion, the people of Jerusalem seized him, started to beat him, and tried to kill him. Although God did deliver Paul from the massive mob of unbelievers, the Roman soldiers arrested him. Paul would indeed travel to Rome as he had desired, but he would go in chains instead of freely.
10. After many trials and tribulations, including several courtroom trials and a shipwreck, Paul would arrive in Rome. This was all by the will of God as Paul trusted his life to Christ no matter what happened and persistently continued to preach the Gospel to everyone he encountered on his trip from when he wrote this letter to his arrival in Rome.
11. Paul did come to Rome, and we know from his testimony that he never lost his joy in Christ. But the trip would not happen in the same way that he had planned. Instead, the providence of God would bring Paul to Rome in chains. Yet Paul trusted the God of peace who would bring him there and crush Satan under his feet.

Application

1. No matter how great our planning or how noble our intentions are, we cannot avoid the providence of God. He will have His way in our lives whatever we do. Therefore, as Paul did, we must passionately resolve to serve Christ even if it means suffering and difficulty along the way.

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2. Sometimes our prayers will not be answered in the way we want them to. We must keep praying and trust that God's will is to work everything together for our good.

Romans 15:22-33

²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Acts 19:21

²¹ Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Acts 21:10-14

¹⁰ While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

Acts 21:30-33

³⁰ Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. ³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done.

Acts 28:16-17

¹⁶ And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him. ¹⁷ After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.