Serving with Joy in the Will of God
Romans 15:20-29 (NKJV)

When it comes to the will of God, are you seeking His will for your life? For the right college to attend, the right career path, the spouse that He has chosen for you, how to spend the money that He grants you each year? When it comes to moving to another city, to another state, or maybe just another house in the city that you live in? Are you seeking the will of God in all things, and whatever direction God moves you, speaks to you, will you go there with joy? In other words, are you serving in the will of God with joy—it can make all the difference.

Vs. 20-21 – “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.’”

- Paul looked at those who had not heard the gospel as his mission field.
- Rather than building on another man’s foundation, as he calls it, he wanted to pioneer a work for the Lord in places that had not yet heard.
- Not that it was bad to minister in areas that had already been plowed; he just had a heart for the areas that had not been plowed.

“I’m not going to dip into aquariums – I’m going to be a fisher of men.” – Jon Courson (Jon Courson’s Application Commentary, Thomas Nelson Inc, 2003, pg. 995)

Years ago, when we went to Albania, we shared the gospel and gave Bibles to people that had never heard. It was amazing how open the people were. It’s something that we have been praying about when it comes to missions—to go to those hard to reach places, to go where nobody else wants to go. We are currently praying that God would show us to the places that have not yet been reached for the gospel. And maybe God, by His grace, would use us to touch the world in these last days—He might even be calling some of you to go.

Vs. 22-24 – “For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts, and
having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.”

- Because Paul had a great desire to bring the gospel to those who had not yet heard, it had hindered him from getting to Rome to minister to the church there.
- Paul is writing this letter from Corinth.
- He had the desire, but his heart to bring the gospel to those who had not yet heard was greater.
- So the brethren in Rome had to take a backseat to the evangelistic work that needed to happen.
- Did you notice what Paul pointed out would take place when he got to Rome?
- To be helped and to enjoy their company. In other words, Paul was planning on support and fellowship.
- Fellowship that they enjoyed in the Lord, but also support as he was planning on taking the gospel to Spain.
- Paul was not bringing the gospel to the church of Rome—they had already received the gospel—but he was looking forward to the fellowship and support that they could offer one another.
- Paul spoke of his intent back in the first chapter…

“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.” Romans 1:9-13 (NKJV)

- In verse 24, the phrase “to be helped” can be translated, “to accompany or to escort.”
• Paul was hoping that when he arrived in Rome, on his way to Spain, that there would be some refueling, some refreshment, some fellowship, and even some support.
• They were not the total support; they were just help along the way.
• It was the custom of the day to help in this way.

I often tell our missionaries that we are just a help, not the whole when it comes to support. If God is in this, then He will always support it, and that support will come from many avenues. Don’t get the focus on the avenues or the lack thereof. Instead, focus on sharing the gospel and seeking the Lord for provision, and He always will. If He doesn’t then it should cause you to figure out why? Are you carrying out His vision, are you ministering the gospel to the lost, are you discipling the new believers into mature believers?

• So often I see ministries lose their way and die, either because they were not carrying out God’s vision or there was a lack of vision.

“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.” Proverbs 29:18 (NKJV)

• Many of us know the King James Version…

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

• Paul had no lack of vision, and with that vision came a plan.
• His plan was to visit the church in Rome, to receive support and fellowship, and then to make his way to Spain to preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard.
• And if that plan was of the Lord, then He would make a way to not only get there, but to make sure there was adequate support to accomplish the work.
• Notice there was also another part of the plan that he shares with the church…

Vs. 25-29 – “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It
pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

- Paul says he’s going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints there.
- Now, this might seem like a total contradiction to his calling to preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard.
- But Paul had a gift—an offering that he had been given by the Gentile believing churches, a gift to give to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem.
- Paul did it because he wanted to promote harmony—harmony between the Jewish and Gentile believers.
- They had been at opposite ends for so long, so divided, and now that Christ and the cross had brought them together, there was still some division going on.
- So the Gentile churches decided to help the struggling church in Jerusalem.
- Many of them were losing their jobs, some even put in prison.
- History tells us in 58 A.D. there was a great famine that went through the region.
- So Paul and the Gentile believing church decided to bless the Jewish believers in Jerusalem by taking up an offering.

How cool would that have been to receive a monetary gift from the group of people that they were struggling with in the church?

The word “contribution” in verse 26 is the word *koinonia*, which means, “fellowship or sharing.” Giving at its core—the greatest illustration of this is the cross. Jesus gave to bring us into fellowship.

- Let me ask you today, what are you doing to promote fellowship with the body of Christ, with those who might be hard to get along with?
- Paul, in verse 27, sees it as his duty.
- In verse 28 he calls it “fruit.”
- Do you see this as your responsibility before the Lord, and even better, do you see the fruit that will come as a byproduct of it?