

Romans 15:15-22

As we come to this part of Romans we might be easily be tempted to think it is only dealing with seemingly ordinary and mundane matters. Is this merely Paul's travel itinerary? Or do we see here, how God builds and advances His kingdom?

Summary

Romans 15:22-43 is not just about mundane travel plans but rather Paul's desire to bring the Good News of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

1. Seemingly Ordinary Itinerary vv. 22-29

Paul explains the reasons why he has not visited Rome. This was because the apostle had been occupied preaching the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum but now that his work was complete, he wanted to visit Rome and seek the church's help for his missionary journey to Spain (**Rom 15:22-24**).

Before he could go to Rome and then on to Spain, Paul had other pressing plans (**Rom 15:25-26**).

Paul desired to bring a monetary gift from the Gentile believers to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (**2 Cor 8; 9**). The Gentile Christians had benefited from the spiritual blessings of the Jews, so the least the Gentiles could do was to share of their material wealth with their poor and suffering Jewish brothers and sisters (**15:27**).

Once Paul delivered this offering to the Jerusalem church, he would then visit Rome and then make his way to Spain (**Rom 15:28-29**).

Whilst seemingly ordinary, Paul's travel plans reveal the global extent of the church. This echoes a theme that runs throughout the Bible (**Gen. 17:4; Isa. 2:2; Matt. 28:19**). As technologically advanced as our age is, we should not forget the simplicity of the church's task in advancing the kingdom.

God ordained His kingdom's advancement through the preaching of the gospel. When preachers herald God's Word, King Jesus ultimately wields His sword against the nations (**Ps. 2:9; Rev. 19:15**).

This is why the Reformation put such a high premium on preaching the Word (E.g. Second Helvetic Confession (1.4)

Through the preaching of called, ordained men, Christ wields the sword of His mouth and advances His kingdom He brings the nations into submission.

2. Requested Prayer vv. 30-33

Having communicated his travel plans, Paul proceeds to a request ((**Rom 15:30-32**).

Throughout his letters Paul tells the churches of his prayers for them (**Rom 15:13**).

Paul also asked his readers to lift him up in their own prayers. He pleaded with the church to strive with him in prayer so that his ministry would be effective.

Paul then closes this portion of his letter with a brief benediction (**Rom 15:33**).

God has ordained prayer as one of the means by which He undergirds the evangelization of the nations.

Paul knew this and therefore coveted the prayers of the church in Rome.

We should pray that the kingdom of God would come and that God's will would be done here on earth, as it is in heaven.

If we understand that the kingdom advances among the nations through the preaching of the gospel by men called of God then we must also lift these men up in prayer.

God will indeed answer our prayers to advance His kingdom though often in unanticipated ways. Paul had told the congregation at Rome that he wanted to visit them, yet his ministry kept him away.

He now had plans to first visit Jerusalem to accompany the offering from the Gentiles to the Jewish Christians and then to visit Rome (**Rom 15:32**).

Did Paul ever get to Rome? Did God answer the Roman church's prayers?

Yes, though not in ways they necessarily expected.

Paul visited Rome, though he did so in chains. Nevertheless, Paul end up living in Rome in a rented house, 'proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance' (**Acts 28:30-31**).

From a worldly perspective, the kingdom was stalled. Paul was a prisoner.

Yet we know the kingdom does not advance according to man's ways.

The progress of the kingdom is not measured in terms of the number of people that are converted nor in the cultural and societal institutions that Christians may control. Rather, success is measured in terms of obedience to our calling and conformation to the image of Christ.

3. Challenging Application

Though seemingly somewhat ordinary and mundane, this text beats with the pulse of the kingdom of God.

Paul was building the kingdom of God by taking the gospel into the nations, preaching the Word, advancing the kingdom through prayer, and carrying out his ministry with a firm hope that God would answer his prayers.

Are these the truths that course through our veins?

Do we seek to build the kingdom of God through His ordained means?

Do we desire the salvation of the nations?

Do we support the preaching of the Word through our attendance at the means of grace, our offerings, and prayer for God's preachers?

Do we have the firm hope that God will answer our prayers?

Our hope and prayer should be to build the kingdom and see God's glory extend throughout the world, that the gospel would spread to the ends of the earth.