***Paul's Journey to Jerusalem
Romans 15:22-29
RO188-01***

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Please open your Bibles this morning to Romans 15 as we begin a new segment of steady, Romans 15:22-29. Our subject is To Rome By Way of Jerusalem - Segment Number One. Paul, the pioneer missionary, has spent years in God's service at this point in his life. He has preached the gospel of Grace Salvation and of Church Age doctrine from Jerusalem to Illyricum. That has covered the basic Mediterranean New Testament world. Paul had ministered specifically in un-evangelized fields rather than building on the work of other apostolic missionaries. Paul himself now feels free to change his area of ministry from the eastern part of the Roman Empire. His eyes are looking to the west and he is moving toward Rome. He feels that he can leave the churches which he has established in the hands of qualified pastor-teachers that he has appointed, and that these churches will now radiate out to reach the vicinities about them. So that he basically feels that this part of the empire has been evangelized and will continue to be so.

**Paul's Desire to Go to Rome**

In the very first part of the Book of Romans in Romans 1:13-15, Paul expressed his long-standing desire to visit the Christians in Rome. In Romans 1:13 Paul said, "And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. [14] "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. [15] "Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." And indeed, he was! Paul wanted to make it clear to these Christians that he had not ignored them. He was happy to know that his converts from other parts of the Empire had carried the gospel message to Rome and local churches had been established. Paul's previous plans on several occasions to visit Rome were always blocked in some way. He felt, of course, a deep obligation as God's special apostle to the Gentiles to teach those in the capital of the Empire. So, he wanted spiritual fruit and rewards among the Roman Christians as well. He was eager to go to Rome and now it finally seemed possible.

So, in Romans 15:22, we read of the apostle's intention. Paul says, "For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you." The reason that he is referring to is what he has been describing back in Romans 15:20-21 of his modus operandi in his missionary work, which was always going where no man had gone before, always establishing Christian ministries that were in pioneer fields. Up to this point, he has not been free to deviate from that objective.

So, he says, "For this reason" of having to evangelize in these untouched places, he was hindered from coming to them. That is, he was prevented. He says, 'this happened often.' He had often made plans to go to Rome and these had been frustrated repeatedly. He could not come to them, though that was his desire. So, Paul's extensive missionary work in the East actually consumed all his time and energy. He had no freedom to go westward. That is understandable. Those who are called to special Christian service usually find themselves totally consumed by the demands of that service, because the world in which we live is so spiritually benighted and the day in which we live is so lacking in churches and pastor/teachers who teach people the doctrines of Scripture, that the work is absolutely overwhelming. It is near impossible to get a handle on it, and the result is one has little time to do anything else. So, Paul in Romans 15:22 says that his need to evangelize in these special areas have repeatedly hindered him from going to Rome.

Then in Romans 15:23, he says 'but now the situation has changed.' He says, "but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you." Paul indicates that now he has no further place. When he uses the word "place" here, he means 'no further un-evangelized fields.' There is no place, now he feels, in the area in which he's ministered in the eastern part of the Empire where a person does not have access to the gospel. The churches are there and they're reaching out, and he has no further need, he feels, to continue in that part of the empire.

Nevertheless, he still has what he calls his "longing." This is an interesting Greek word. It looks like this in the Greek Bible. The Greek word "epipothia," e p i p o t h i a. "epipothia" indicates a deep emotional attachment and really a longing in the soul. For years, Paul has had a real longing in his soul for the Christians in Rome. It was a deep-seated desire and he never lost it over the years. Paul's friend, Dr. Luke, who wrote the Book of Acts, referred to this longing that Paul had for the Roman Christians at one time in Acts 19:21. Luke says, "Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" And Luke was very much aware of the fact that Paul frequently in their conversations would say, 'I've got to go to Rome. Rome is the place. We have to establish a strong Christian center in Rome because Rome is the pacemaker of the ancient world.'

So, Paul's desire was always there. And he says in Romans 15:23 now he has no further attachments in the regions in which he has been, and he still has the desire of many years long standing to visit them.

**Paul's Planned Itinerary**

**Paul's Long-Term Plans**

Then in Romans 15:24-25, Paul lays out the itinerary which he has planned. His coming to them is going to be a stop along the way. His coming to Rome will be a stop along the way to Spain itself. Romans 15:24 says, "whenever I go to Spain." He is going to go to the outer reaches now of the western part of the Roman Empire. The word "Spain" looks like this, "Spania," S p a n i a. And in New Testament times, all the land south of the Pyrenees Mountains, including Portugal, was referred to as Spain. In classical Greek, Spain was called "Hispania," H i s p a n i a, "Hispania." You can see that from that we get the word "Hispanic" for people who come from Latin American countries. And from the Latin, they had the Latin name converted into Greek, which was "Iberia," from which we also refer to Spain as "Iberia."

So, Paul says, "I'm headed for the Western limits. I'm going to go to everything beyond the Pyrenees Mountains. There he expressed the hope that he would see them, but he said, I'm going to see you only in a limited way. He said, 'as I am passing through.' It's a long Greek word, "diaporeuomai," d i a p o r e u o m a i, "diaporeuomai." This actually means "to journey through a place." Paul planned to go west to Spain. He's going to do it by journeying through Rome; Rome would simply be a stopover for a limited period of ministry. He was still committed, you see, to the pioneer service of going and laying new church foundations.

But he says, 'When I do arrive in Rome whenever I go to Spain, I hope to see you as I pass through, and I hope to get something from you: "to be helped on my way." This is the Greek word "propempo," p r o p e m p o. "Propempo" indicates that Paul anticipated that the Roman Christians would assist him in his ministry to Spain: 'You're going to help me in my effort to get there.' What Paul was hoping for was their help in prayer, their help in supplying him with provisions, and for their help in money. He recognized that he was a team with the home folks.

It is very hard for a missionary just to go out on his own and be able to sustain himself and still do the work. This is what Paul had to do on occasions, and we do read on occasion when he had to stop and practice his trade of tent making, which was a highly valued item, in high demand in the ancient world. And, he had to supply the finances for himself. Of course, when he was sitting there making tents, he wasn't out there teaching doctrine. You can't do both.

So, Paul prepared these people in Rome by saying to them, 'as I come passing through, I'm going to spend a little time with you, but I also hope to receive some help from you. I'll give you help in spiritual instruction, but I need your help in financial supplies of putting together what I need for this journey.' [Reading from Romans 15:24] "For I hope to see you in passing and to be helped on my way there by you when I have first enjoyed your company for a while." He is indicating that he is going to pause to have a period of Christian fellowship. The word "when" is actually this Greek word "ean," e a n, which is a conditional particle and it's a third class, which means "maybe I will enjoy your fellowship and maybe I won't." It's almost kind of humorous, 'when I have first enjoyed your company for a while.'

You know, when you go visit Christians, you never know for sure whether you're going to enjoy their company or not. The apostle Paul said, 'I hope for a good visit with you, the best of times, but he has been stung. When he got to Corinth, for example, the Christians in Corinth had a lot of mean things to say about Paul. They even suggested that he was getting rich off of them. Therefore, he wrote in his letters to them some very severe remarks concerning the accusations toward him. So, Paul knew that just because people are Christians, they're not always nice. But he said, 'I hope, maybe yes, maybe no, [That's what third-class condition means.] that we will enjoy each other's company.

The word "enjoy" is actually this word, it's the Greek word "empiplemi," e m p i p l e m i, and "empiplemi" means "to fill, to fill really full." So, what he' connoting here is "I hope when I get to you, I'll be filled." With what? Well, with the satisfaction of his longing for fellowship with them that he has had for many years. This is in the aorist Greek tense, which means at a point when he gets there. It's passive: it means that Paul is not the one who's going to control his being filled with their fellowship, it'll be up to them. It is a subjunctive mood because it is a potential third-class condition. So, Paul says, 'I am hoping for sweet Christian fellowship for a little while, while I'm passing through.'

**Paul's Immediate Plans**

Then in Romans 15:25, he says, "but now," and he gives them his immediate plans. That's his long-term plan to go to Spain via Rome. His immediate plan, he says, is to go to Jerusalem. "but now I am going to Jerusalem, serving the saints." Here again, he goes to perform a very specific ministry. The Greek word is "diakoneo," d i a k o n e o. Paul is going to Jerusalem on a mission of mercy. The object of this service is to a group of people that he calls in Jerusalem, "the saints," referring, of course, to those who are born-again believers there in that city.

So, as it turned out, Paul says, 'I'm going to go first to Jerusalem and I trust that this will be the last obstacle on my way to Rome after all these years.' Well, you perhaps remember what happened. He got to Jerusalem. He was there on a very special mission. The "diakoneo," the service that he talked about, is to bring money that had been gathered from churches to alleviate a famine under which the Christians in Jerusalem were suffering. When he got there, he made the mistake of trying to encourage the Jews who were so antagonistic to Christians and so antagonistic to Paul, because he ministered to the Gentile world, that he proceeded to perform a Jewish ceremony, taking a Nazarite vow and making an animal sacrifice (all of which was passe, now that Christ had come and risen, died and risen), and the result was that a riot broke out. So, it was two years before he got to Rome. He went to Jerusalem alright, but he just didn't stop off, deliver the money, visit with the brethren, minister a little bit, and then shove off for Rome. He got bogged down for two long years, tied up in Jerusalem.

**The Purpose Of Paul's Trip to Jerusalem**

In Romans 15:26-27, he explains the purpose of his trip to Jerusalem. In Romans 15:26, he explains the nature specifically of the ministry to the saints in Jerusalem. But he says, "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Saints in Jerusalem." Macedonia is the province that includes cities like Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Achaia was the province that included Corinth. So, these were major areas of the Greek world. Paul says that the Christians in this part of the Gentile world, "were pleased" to do something. The Greek word is "eudokeo" e u d o k e o. This means "to think well of" some idea. At some point in time, these Christians thought it would be a good idea to do something.

What they thought would be a good idea they were pleased to do is "to make a contribution." The word for contribution is the Greek word "koinonia," k o i n o n i a. I want you to notice something. In Galatians 2:9, this same Greek word is used by the apostle Paul, "koinonia." In Galatians 2:9 Paul says, "And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of 'koinonia.'" Exactly the same Greek word, "gave to me the right hand of contribution," "gave to me the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised." So, the apostle Paul is indicating that when this word "koinonia" is used by him, yes, it talks about a contribution of money, it's an offering, but it is at the same time an expression of Christian fellowship. It connotes a monetary contribution as an expression of Christian fellowship.

Now, it's amazing that Christians very often want fellowship. They speak about having fellowship, 'I'd love to have fellowship.' Well, here's a great doctrinal principle for you. You can enjoy fellowship to your heart's content by simply standing by the offering box and dropping in one sum of money after another. It's a fellowship with God that is eternal in its consequences! That's the point! It is a contribution, an expression of Christian fellowship that has eternal consequences for you if you do it, consequences in terms of personal blessings and of personal rewards in Heaven.

And this fellowship was a contribution, particularly, he says, to a certain group of people, a certain group of Hebrew Christians in the city of Jerusalem. He calls them "saints." He identifies them as "the poor," the "ptochos," p t o c h o s, "ptochos." Historically, this refers to the time when there was a great famine in Jerusalem. This famine affected the Hebrew Christians.

Paul himself had been involved in a mission of mercy such as this some years before in his career. That's recorded for us back in Acts 11, where he was engaged in bringing financial assistance to feed the poor people. In Acts 11:27-30, Luke says, "Now at this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] "And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. [The world referred to here, being the New Testament world around the Mediterranean Sea.] [29] "And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. [30] "And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders." So, here, years before, Paul had been engaged in just exactly the same kind of kind of an effort gathering money to help feed the poor, the believers who were in Jerusalem at that time, these who were saints, these who were born-again people.

The monetary gift from the Gentile churches was an expression of their common fellowship in the Church as the body of Christ. This was a very limited, restricted feeding the hungry program. I think you see that from the Scripture text itself. This is not a call for Christians to become engaged in a widespread feeding the hungry in the general public. The Bible does not condemn doing that. But all that the Bible stresses is that you should see to it that Christians who are in need are taken care of.

It is very difficult to take care of the legitimate needs of the general public. Down the street here we have what used to be the local bank. It has been empty for some time. On Thanksgiving Day, it had a big sign outside inviting the hungry to come in for a Thanksgiving dinner. So, I went right after the morning service. I certainly was hungry and fully qualified for that specification. There were these tables lined up in what had been this bank, and there were huge piles of bags of groceries because you got a bag of groceries as you left.

Here was two trucks outside putting the dinners together, and people were coming in. I got interested in looking at these hungry people as they sat there eating this free Thanksgiving Day dinner. One couple particularly attracted my attention. After the meal was over, they went up (They were casually but well dressed.) got the big bag of groceries, smiled and thanked everybody, and walked outside. And I sat at the window and watched them. They walked up to their huge Harley Davidson motorcycle, they put on their very expensive helmets, and they got on their motorbike and they zoomed off with a bag of groceries.

I had a problem wondering just how poor they were. I wondered if they were going, like all the rich people do, to East Texas (What is that little town, Jefferson.), in order to enjoy the Thanksgiving outing in the old Victorian city of Jefferson. That's probably where they were going. They had all their lunch with them. And I found it, as I looked around, that this was really a problem. How do you help people who are in legitimate need without being abused by those who do not deserve or need your help?

But Paul was dealing with a very legitimate need. When it comes to Christians, we have the capacity to know them, to have an insight to whether these people are deadbeats, whether they are like the Thessalonians were.

The Thessalonians, you know, said 'Oh Paul! We love prophecy. We love your preaching about the coming of the Lord. We love the fact that you told us that the Rapture is at-hand and we're going to do nothing but pray and fellowship and enjoy one another.' And they all quit their jobs. Then they were going finding the centers that were feeding the hungry. Paul said, 'When you find Christians who do that, the doctrinal principle that you apply is if they don't work, they don't eat, you let them starve. Sooner or later, they will decide that this is not a good way to do things and they will be responsible, as believers should be, in monetary matters.

Here in Jerusalem, the famine was widespread. The need was very real. The persecution of Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem had placed them at an economic disadvantage. It was tough to be a Hebrew Christian in the city of Jerusalem at this time. And when hard times of famine arose, the Hebrew Christians were hit harder than others with more because the Christians had less. Paul wanted to help these Christian leaders in Jerusalem care for the worst cases of needy believers among them. He himself had been admonished concerning the poorer Christians by the apostles when they had given him the right hand of Christian fellowship that he should be concerned for the poor, and he was, as we read in Galatians 2:10.

So, it was not, interestingly enough, beneath this famous, gifted, well-educated, experienced man to take time to help the needy brethren who were in-Christ who needed his financial assistance. This concern is what motivated Paul's trip to Jerusalem before going on to Rome. Paul knew himself, from personal experience, what it was like to be in need. In 2 Corinthians 11:27, Paul says, "I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." He knew it was no fun to be in that situation. So, he could be very sympathetic with the circumstance of the Christians in Rome.

In Philippians 4:12, the apostle Paul says, "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need." The apostle Paul says, 'In the Christian ministry, sometimes the Christians who have a lot are out there helping you. And sometimes the Christians who have a lot are sitting on it thinking that like an egg, it's going to hatch and produce more. And instead of sitting on part of it and delivering what the immediate need requires that they are capable of doing, they're waiting for the big kill.' And the apostle Paul says, 'In the meantime, those of us who are dependent upon the sustenance of God's people because of the ministry to which we've been called, we're having to do without. We're having to exist in shoddy circumstances, and sometimes we're having to do without the essentials of life, we experience privation. We go hungry and often go without.'

So, Paul, by personal experience, had a great sympathy for what these Christians were suffering in the city of Jerusalem. Therefore, he had called upon the Gentile churches, that he had founded, to contribute to the needs of the saints here in Jerusalem. In 1 Corinthians 16:1 this is alluded to. 1 Corinthians 16:1, Paul says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also." He's referring to that specific campaign that he had begun of collecting funds for these Christians. The Gentile churches, themselves, were pleased to send their financial assistance, though they themselves, as we shall see, were not all that well off in material things.

**Paul Also Hoped For a Bonus of Fellowship**

Paul is himself heading up a delegation that has been sent with money from various churches, and he is heading up this delegation, which is now going to Jerusalem to deliver this collection to the Christian leaders there. Paul also probably hoped by this to strengthen the bond, the spiritual bond, between Hebrew and Gentile Christians.

The persecution in Jerusalem had now hindered the numerical growth of Hebrew Christians, while Paul's ministry among the Gentiles had been extremely fruitful. So that, the Gentiles, from the time of the entrance of the first Gentiles in the household of Cornelius, were just taking over the Church and taking over the Christian community. The Gentiles were far in excess of the Hebrew Christians. And consequently, the characteristic Jewish qualities of the early Christian church were rapidly being dissipated. The customs of the Jews that had been characteristic of the early church were no longer observed, as these Gentiles without that background were coming in. So, the contributions from the Gentile churches was Paul's way of having them express their love and their commonality with these Hebrew Christians in Rome.

In Romans 10:12, Paul says, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him." Paul is stressing that Hebrew and Jewish Christians share a common ground. In Ephesians 2:14, Paul says, "For He [Jesus] Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." Here he's referring to probably the background of that dividing wall which existed in the temple grounds where the Gentiles could not come beyond a certain point. 'Now,' Paul says, 'Jews and Gentiles are no longer separated.' In Ephesians 2:18, Paul says, "For through Him [Jesus] we both have our access in one spirit to the Father. In Ephesians 4:4, Paul says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling."

So, Jews and Gentiles on a common ground, they have a commonality in Christ. So, it's very proper and right that one part of the body should be concerned for what is happening to the other part. Sharing one's material resources generously with needy believers is a biblical principle. This is a right thing to do. It is a right and proper thing to generously help a Christian get on his feet who needs your help.

Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need." What's he talking about? He's talking about one Christian, because of his own financial earnings, helping another Christian. Galatians 6:10, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." You see, it is not wrong to help the poor and the hungry of the general population as a Christian group. But this verse stresses that while we do good to all men, we are especially concerned with doing good to those who are in the family of God.

In Romans 12:13, Paul says, "contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality." Hospitality is an expression of helping a Christian in need. Hebrews 13:16 also stresses the propriety, the Biblical principle of sharing your wealth, your material resources to assist those in need. Hebrews 13:16, "And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased." And here, it is not only an expression of fellowship, but it is an expression of sacrifice to God. We don't offer animal sacrifices anymore, but when you help a believer financially who is in need, you are actually making a sacrifice to God Himself. In 1 Peter 4:9, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." So, the Scriptures are very clear that Christians should help Christians.

So, Paul says he's going to Spain. He's going to stop of at Jerusalem first with the gift and he's going to minister to the saints there, for the Macedonian and Achaean Christians have been pleased to make a contribution. That is, it has been something that has made them very happy to do. They did this without any pressures upon them. That's what this word "pleased" means. They, by their own choice, wanted to help their Hebrew Christian friends.

**The Reason for the Gentiles' Gifts**

Why did they do this first? Romans 15:27 says, yes, they were pleased to do so, because they are "indebted." The word here is the Greek word "opheiletes," o p h e i l e t e s; and that word means "debtor." Gentile Christians are in debt to Hebrew Christians. How? It is because all of the Gentile's spiritual enlightenment from the Gospel through the full counsel of Grace Doctrine came from Jewish believers. If it were not for the testimony of Jewish Christians, the Gentiles would still be lost in their pagan darkness. The Gentiles should not forget this. That's what Paul is alluding to.

Acts 10:11, for example, says, "And he beheld [That is, Peter beheld] the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground." If you read the verses that follow, this is Peter seeing what under Jewish Mosaic Law were unclean animals. And Peter was told to eat them. This was God's symbolic way of saying 'unclean Gentiles are now to be a point of contact with you.' Well, Peter got the message. In Acts 10:19, "And while Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are looking for you. [20] "'But arise, go downstairs, and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.' [21] "And Peter went down to the men and said, 'Behold, I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for which you have come?' [22] "And they said, 'Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well-spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you.'"

Now please remember that we are talking about 7 years after Pentecost here, 7 years where they never spoke to a Gentile, 7 years where the Gospel was propagated only among Jews. But the Jewish Christians were putting out the word. They thought the Gentiles were still out of the picture as they were under the Abrahamic Covenant. Now, along comes this vision from God, and it is made clear to Peter that the Gentiles are no longer untouchables. So, the Lord says, 'Go downstairs. I've sent a committee to see you.' He goes down; he finds that they're from the home of a Roman soldier, an officer in the Roman army, a centurion, a man in charge of 100 men. He says, 'We have come because God the Holy Spirit has told this godly man that you have a message to bring to him.' The result was that Peter went, gave the message. And lo and behold they believed it. And wonder of wonders, before Peter's very eyes, he saw these Gentiles baptized by the Holy Spirit. And in the early days of the Church, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places the believer in Christ, (it happens automatically at the point of your faith in Christ, but in the early Church,) the proof of that, the fact that that had happened, was demonstrated by the person speaking in foreign languages of the day that he did not know. And Peter heard these people speaking in foreign languages. Immediately, as he reported back to Jerusalem, he said, I couldn't gainsay that these people had become part of the same body of Christ that we were a part of, and that the Gentiles were now to have part of this.

Now, what if Peter, the Jew, had not been faithful to the mission placed upon him? The pagan Gentiles would be in their darkness. So, that's what Paul means when he says, 'That these Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia, we're very happy to bring these financial gifts.' The reason he says, 'it's a right thing to do because these people are indebted to them.' On what principle? He says, "for as the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, [That is, the things of the Gospel, and of Church Age doctrine which enables a person to rise to his position in the royal family of God.], they are indebted to minister, also to them, in material things."

The Greek word minister is a significant word. It looks like this in the Greek Bible, "leitourgeo," l e i t o u r g e o. The word "leitourgeo" means "to perform a sacred service." So, here again, giving money to feed the poor Christians, the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, was a sacred service to God, and it is a service with which God is well pleased. It is an act of worship. And what are they doing? He says, 'These people have given you spiritual enlightenment. It is right that they receive a certain category of things from you called "sarkikos," s a r k i k o s. This word is often translated as "fleshly," "things of the flesh." But here it refers to "things of the physical body."

If someone has taught you spiritual things so that you have been transformed from being just a mulling around animal like the rest of the population around you, you have been transformed by your knowledge of doctrine to being able to rise to the thinking of God, then you are indebted to that individual in terms of the physical needs of his body. He has given you something that is of such infinitely greater value that you could never repay him in material things. Long after you have gone into eternity, the very material things that you have given to the one who has ministered to you in spiritual things, is going to be multiplying rewards to you for all eternity. You see the system? God says, 'You give to the person who has provided spiritual enlightenment to you and you don't lose a thing! Everything you give to that individual multiplies rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ for you.' What a winning situation.

But Paul says, 'This is a matter of justice. It's not a matter of that it's a smart thing to do for you as a Gentile Christian, it is a matter of justice that you should help those who are now in need from whom you have received so much. It is in fact,' Paul says, 'in effect, a duty. It is the duty of the Gentile churches to take care of the Hebrew mother church in Jerusalem.' The spiritual principle is to care for the material needs of those who minister to our eternal spiritual needs. It is a spiritual principle to care for the temporal material needs of those who minister to our spiritual eternal needs.

The Jews have indeed blessed the Gentiles. I'll give you a few Scriptures. You may look at them at your own leisure. But the Bible is very clear that the Gentiles, as even the Abrahamic Covenant declares, are blessed because of the Jews. Isaiah 2:3, Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 60:3, John 4:22, Romans 3:2, Romans 4:16-17, Romans 9:5, Romans 11:17-24. We don't have time to pursue those verses, but all of those verses are emphasizing the basic principle: the Gentile is indebted to the Jew for the knowledge of the Word of God. And if the Jewish Christian had not come through, then the Gentile would be of all people, most miserable.

Yes, Paul says in Romans 15:27, they were pleased to do so and they are indebted to them. It's a matter of justice to do this, "For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things [and they have], they are indebted to minister to them also in material things." So, the apostle Paul has pointed us in the direction of some very exceptional Christians living in Macedonia and in Achaia who came through for supporting the Christians in Jerusalem.

Next time, we'll go back to the historical record of just how they did that. It is one thing to say, yes, they did this and that was a good thing to do. But it appalls us when we discover the conditions that surrounded these Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia. The average American Christian, were he in the position that the Gentile Christians of Macedonia and Achaia were in, would never give one cent to help somebody else. In 2 Corinthians 8&9 we have that dramatic section of the Bible that tells Christians how to handle their money. It is the classic, the final statement of Christian giving, and you won't find a word about tithing in it. So, those of you who don't like to be made uncomfortable, don't come two Sunday mornings from now, because if you're counting on the fact that if you give ten percent, that God is pleased with you, you're going to get blown out of the water.

The principles of 2 Corinthians 8&9 are totally different than the easy principle of ten percent giving that was in effect under Judaism. Once you paid your religious income tax of ten percent, you were home free. That's all God wanted from you. Pay your temple tax of ten percent, and that's all God wanted from you. Now, if you wanted to make offerings, fine, He'd commend that and He'd bless you for that. But that's all He demanded. But suddenly, under the New Testament and these Christians in Achaia and Macedonia were so well taught in doctrine that they understood the principle, that they didn't have a cent. 'But I earned it.' Yes, God gave it to you through your earnings. But it's still His. Now, if you were a Jew, yep, nine tenths of it was yours. God had no claim on it. Now, you who are a member of God's royal family, have nothing. It's all His; none of it is yours. Now the picture has changed completely of how you deal with your personal finances. And here is one of the greatest tragedies in the Christian community, one of the greatest hindrances to the capitalizing of our opportunity in these final years that we have before the return of the Lord. The greatest hindrance to the work of God: as Christians, we do not understand what it means to be a steward of God's wealth and to be able to handle that in a way that God will say "Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

Do you think you'll be happy in His presence when He must condemn you for the kind of a steward you prove to be? And the problem is that in the Age of Grace, nobody puts any pressures on you, you see. The only pressures we put on people are to teach them God's method from God's word. Then your response is up to you. Thank God for these Christians in the center of the Greek Empire here of the Greek world who knew how to handle their money even in the face of their own personal adverse circumstances. May we learn to emulate their example!

**Benediction**

Our Heavenly Father. We do thank Thee so much for Thy grace upon us for all that Thou has provided. We realize that indeed all that has made it possible for us to be here within the sharing of the Word of God has been provided by Thee. We do pray that Thou will help us all to develop a great quality of personal integrity in terms of how we handle Thy funds. May we be the stewards who delight in running in to make it possible for God's work to be executed. We pray that this hard lesson may be one to which we will be receptive as Thy Spirit instructs us. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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