

ROMANS 12:1-16:27 | LIFE TODAY*Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 46***ROMANS 15:15-16:27 | PAUL'S MINISTRY TO ALL***Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 51***ROMANS 15:20-23 | PAUL'S CONTINUED MINISTRY AND FUTURE PLANS***Supplemental Resource: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 51***VERSE 20 - BLACK**

Paul discusses his preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, also referred to as the Gospel of Christ (as stated in verse 19). He did this in places "not where Christ was named." While some might interpret this as places where Christ is not known, other interpretations could be valid based on the grammar.

If Paul wanted to say "places where Gentiles were calling upon the name of Christ," there are more natural ways to say it. One would expect an active tense verb, but interestingly, Paul uses the passive tense verb ὀνομάζω [onomazo], which could imply the "place in which Christ received His name," that is, in Judea. He not only uses the passive tense, which is uncommon in this context, but also the aorist tense, indicating a single action at a specific point in time rather than an ongoing action. If Paul's mission was to preach Christ in Judea, he would have been building on someone else's foundation. Instead, he was called to go to other nations with a universal kingdom message, later receiving the mystery of the grace dispensation.

To argue that "where Christ was named" refers to Judea, consider Paul's actions. Although he did not preach in Judea, he did preach in Ephesus, where Apollos had already "named" Christ prior to Paul's arrival (Acts 18:24-28). If Paul meant, "I don't go where Christ has already been preached," then he either overlooked Ephesus or was mistaken. However, if in Romans 15:20, Paul meant, "I do not preach in Judea," his comment aligns perfectly with the events in Ephesus and likely elsewhere. We could also add the examples of Antioch (Acts 11:19-21), Cyprus (Acts 11:19-20), and Rome (Romans 1:8).

VERSE 21 - BLACK

Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15, suggesting that the preaching of Christ in regions far from His birthplace fulfilled prophecy. This further supports the non-typical interpretation of verse 20 as previously discussed. The preaching of the gospel of grace was not foreshadowed in the prophecies. Paul introduced the message of grace after proclaiming the Kingdom message, and he referred to such preaching to the Gentiles as "unsearchable" (Eph. 3:8). If he is referring to the "unsearchable" preaching here, how can he also be quoting a prophet who spoke 700 years earlier?

VERSES 22-24 - BLACK

When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, including the passage in Romans 15 where he speaks of "having no more place in these parts" and his long-standing desire to visit Rome, he was likely in the city of Corinth. This conclusion is based on several contextual clues:

1. **Timing of the Letter:** Romans is generally dated to around 57-58 AD. This timing coincides with Paul's third missionary journey.
2. **Internal Evidence in Romans:** In Romans 15:25-26, Paul mentions his plan to go to Jerusalem to deliver a collection for the poor among the saints there. This plan aligns with what is described in Acts 20:2-3, where it is recorded that Paul was in Greece, specifically in Corinth, for three months before he set out for Jerusalem.
3. **Proximity to Other Locations:** Corinth's location would fit Paul's description of "having no more place in these parts," as he had extensively evangelized the regions of Macedonia and Achaia by that time. His work in these regions had reached a point of completion, enabling him to consider new areas for ministry, such as Rome and further west.
4. **Connection to Phoebe and Cenchreae:** In Romans 16:1, Paul mentions Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, a port near Corinth. The connection to Cenchreae further supports the theory that Paul was in Corinth when he wrote the letter.

Paul expressed a desire to travel to Spain, there is no conclusive historical or biblical evidence to confirm whether he actually made the journey.

VERSES 25-26 - BLACK

Before embarking on his journey to Spain via Rome, Paul must first visit Jerusalem to deliver his highly publicized offering for the "**poor saints which are at Jerusalem**". These were faithful Jewish individuals who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and trusted Him to establish the prophesied kingdom one day. They had literally given everything to this cause (Acts 4:34), and now, due to the delay of the kingdom, they were destitute. Paul's love for them (whom he once persecuted) was such that he was compelled to gather an offering to care for them.

VERSE 27 - BLACK

The donors, who were believers, were Gentiles in the traditional uncircumcised sense. However, they had become "partakers" of the "spiritual things" of the Jerusalem saints.

There are two perspectives to consider.

Firstly, we could adopt a Kingdom perspective, assuming that the Gentiles became partakers of the kingdom's promises. This is a common evangelical view with various interpretations. However, in my opinion, the Kingdom's substance belongs solely to the Jews. A Gentile who enters the Kingdom's promises would convert and would no longer be a Gentile. Indeed, the term "partakers" is *κοινωνέω* [koinoneo], implying a "full partnership" rather than mere sharing of blessings.

Secondly, we could adopt a grace-gospel view. By the time Paul wrote from Corinth, he had proclaimed both the kingdom gospel in the synagogues and the grace gospel outside. I believe that the revelation of the dispensation of grace occurred because Israel had rejected the Kingdom. Therefore, the Gentiles were now "full partners" in the spiritual things God offered in grace, but never "full partners" in the Kingdom.

Hence, the Gentiles had a "duty" to minister to believing saints in material aspects.

This message targets specifically the Gentiles living during the era of the "saints" (those offered the Kingdom). One could argue that today's Gentile believers have a spiritual duty to bless Jews, but this argument seems somewhat forced. I believe Christians should willingly bless Israel when possible, but I hesitate to label it a "duty."

VERSE 28 - BLACK

Paul is confident that he will visit Jerusalem and thereafter, Spain. However, the book of Acts reveals that he was arrested in Jerusalem, sent to Caesarea, and then to Rome two years later. Here, he spent a significant amount of time under house arrest and in prison (Acts 21-28). It remains unknown whether he ever reached Spain.

It's important to note that none of the Apostles were omniscient. Paul's confidence is understandable and appropriate, but sometimes circumstances beyond our control can change the course of events.

VERSE 29 - BLACK

These verses would make more sense if I interpreted "the gospel of Christ" as "the gospel of grace," yet I am undeterred. Paul's 11 references to this Gospel each align with it being the Gospel of Christ coming to reign in His future, physical, fraternal Kingdom. When Paul promises to come "**in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ**," he is not promising that there will be a fullness of the kingdom (for it has been put in abeyance). Rather, it is with the "**fullness of the blessing**" that he is confident in. The word "**blessing**" is εὐλογία [eulogia], from which we get the English word **eulogy**. It is a word that could even be translated as "praise." In fact, the next time Paul uses it is in Romans 16:18, where it is translated "fair speeches" and used in a negative sense. Taken in this light, Paul says near the end of the epistle what he said near the beginning, that he is "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16). His desire is to come with fullness of the praise of the Gospel of Christ, unashamed of it from beginning to end.