

Romans 15:22-33 *For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 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. 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 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. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.* In these verses, Paul demonstrates six characteristics of his own ministry that should be evidenced by each of us: (1) Providence, (2) Planning, (3) Priority, (4) Prosperity, (5) Purpose, (6) Prayer (MacArthur, Romans P.341-356).

I. TRUST IN PROVIDENCE 15:22 *For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.* In this verse, Paul expressed his trust in the providence of God. His plans had been to come to the Christians in Rome sooner, but he recognized the hand of God's providence in delaying him. **Definition of Providence:** *"The doctrine of divine providence, therefore had reference to that preservation, care and government which God exercises over all things He has created, in order that they may accomplish the ends for which they were created." ISBE.... "the divine intervention in the affairs of man... to bring about God's objectives"*

A. The Spirit of God hindered Paul from going into Bithynia: Acts 16:7 *After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.*

B. God intervenes by directing natural circumstances and the hearts of men – sometimes by miricals. Genesis 50:20 *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."* Joseph said this to his repentant brothers explaining why God had allowed them to sell him into slavery. **Jeremiah 10:23** *"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."* **Proverbs 16:9** *"A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps."* **Proverbs 19:21** *"There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel--that will stand."* **Philippians 2:13** *"for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*

II. CHARACTERIZED BY PLANNING Romans 15:23-24 *23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 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.* Paul's plan was to journey to Spain by way of Rome where the Roman Christians could assist him in his missionary trip.

A. Jesus spoke of planning: Luke 14:28 *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—"*

B. Paul had been assisted in his previous missionary journeys by Antioch Church.

C. Paul made many plans: Romans 1:13 *“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.”*

D. Satan thwarted some of Paul’s plans; 1 Thess. 2:18 *“Therefore we wanted to come to you--even I, Paul, time and again--but Satan hindered us.”*

III. FOCUSED BY PRIORITIES Romans 15:25-28 *“But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 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. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.”* Paul’s main priority was to preach the good news of Jesus Christ in countries where there were no churches (15:20) Yet, Paul was also focused on endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace amongst Christian brethren. There was conflict between the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and the Gentile believers. Thus Paul endeavored to help break down these barriers in Christians fellowship with an offering.

A. Paul had promised the apostles in Jerusalem that he’d remember the poor. Galatians 2:9-10 *“and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.”*

B. Great persecution and extended drought had impoverished the Christians in Jerusalem.

C. to make a certain contribution Contribution = koinonia = fellowship or communion. *In this context, it means a financial gift flowing out of this fellowship.*

D. In Christ, there is no dividing wall between Jew and Gentile: Ephesians 2:14 *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one (Jew and Gentile), and has broken down the middle wall of separation,”*

IV. BLESSED BY PROSPERITY OR FRUITFULNESS Romans 15:29 *29 “But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”*

A. True Christians will bear some fruit.

B. Jesus wants us to bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit, and fruit that remains: John 15:1-17

V. GUIDED BY PURPOSE Romans 15:30a *“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit...”* Paul’s guiding purpose was His love for His Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. So, the Purpose of SBBC is to “Express Christ’s love by...” 1 Corinthians 9:23 *“... ”*

VI. ABOVE ALL...PRAYER Romans 15:30-32 *30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*