

## What Blesses God, Part 8 - Romans 15:23-29 – September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part eight of a series titled; "What Blesses God."
- In the interest of time, I won't take the time to go over the first seven ways we can bless God in beginning in verse one through twenty-two.
- This because, our eighth way in verses twenty-three through twenty-nine, though a firm grasp of the obvious, is actually a little surprising.

### 8. Giving to others (Verses 23-29)

- v23-24 Paul says with no place to go in these regions, and since he's longed to see them, he plans to when he's in Spain along his journey.
- v25-26 He says first, he's on his way to Jerusalem, as Macedonia and Achaia were happy to give financially to the impoverished Christians.
- v27-29 He says the reason why is, the Jews are owed material blessings, because the Gentiles have shared in the Jews spiritual blessings.

- Before we take and tackle the text before us, I think it would be incumbent upon us to first address a problem not so noticeable at first read.
- Let me explain, Paul had been telling them how he'd longed to see them there in Rome, and that he was eager to preach to them in Rome.
- Now, as the letter comes to an end, it's almost as if Paul is walking it back in his attempt to take care of some other pressing matters first.

Notice what he writes in the beginning of his letter, [Romans 1:8-12](#), (1) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. (9) God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you (10) in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. (11) I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— (12) that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Here's what he writes a few verses later, [Romans 1:14-16](#) (14) I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. (15) That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. (16) I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

He even explains sort of out of frustration, why it is that he's been unable to see them in Rome in the previous verses of this same chapter, [Romans 15:20-22](#) (20) It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. (21) Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." (22) This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

Then, it's almost like he's adding insult to injury when in the very next verses he says, [Romans 15:23-25](#) (23) But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, (24) I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. (25) Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.

- He longs to see them, is eager to preach to them, was hindered from coming to them, and now there's no more place for him where he's at.
- So why prey tell, does he say to them, that instead of coming to them, now that there's no more place for him, he will first go to Jerusalem?
- Then, if that weren't bad enough, he says that when he does go to Rome he will do so when he's in the area while on his Journey to Spain.

One commentator of this writes, "[This] is surprising. After the barrier-breaking gospel ambition of verses 20-24 we expect Paul to be hurrying towards Rome, just as fast as 'Virgin Mediterranean' can carry him, with his sights on Spain. Instead, we find him going in exactly the opposite direction, towards Jerusalem, and not for missionary work at all! He is not going for gospel proclamation. And he is going to a place where Christ has already been named. He is taking a much-needed collection of money from the Gentile churches in Macedonia and Achaia (Northern and southern Greece, including the Philippians, the Thessalonians, the Bereans and the Corinthians) to the poverty-stricken Jewish Christians in Jerusalem ('in service of the saints')."

- Question, does Paul's decision to do this imply that the financial support of impoverished saints rises to the level of preaching the gospel?
- Answer, yes! Here's why, absent the financial where-with-all, it is nearly impossible for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached to all?
- Lest you think that this is a sermon on money, let me hasten to say that it is not a sermon on money, at least not the way one might think.

- By that I mean, the financial support is a means to an end, namely, sending out those who will preach the gospel for people to be saved.  
- [Romans 10:13-15 NKJV](#) For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED." (14) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"

- I suppose you could say that the Apostle Paul is keenly aware that the preaching of the gospel requires financially supporting the gospel.
- It's for this reason the priority of financially supporting the impoverished Jerusalem church superseded Paul going to the Roman church.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest, this financial support for that church, was just as important to Paul as preaching and planting a church.

As the aforementioned commentator goes on to write, "This collection was very important to Paul. He writes of it in 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 and again in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Clearly he regards it as of comparable importance to taking the gospel to Spain. We need to ask why. He tells us that the Gentile churches made this collection gladly, and he says they were right to do it gladly, because it is in fact the payment of a debt )'...and indeed they owe it to them'. If it is a debt, then there must first have been some 'payment' from the Jewish Christians to the Gentile Christians. And there has: 'the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings', ...the very words of God."

- I'll close today's sermon by connecting the dots of giving to others with blessing the heart of God. When we give to others we give to God.
- Consider the parable that Jesus taught concerning our giving to another, and how that in turn, it's as if we had given to the Lord Himself.

**Matthew 25:31-46 NIV** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. (32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (34) "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, (36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' (37) "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? (38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? (39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' (40) "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' (41) "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' (44) "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' (45) "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' (46) "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

**James 2:15-16 NIV** Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. (16) If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?