

October 22, 2017

People Matter To Us

My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and are able to teach each other. But I've written to you in a sort of daring way, partly to remind you of what you already know. I'm writing to you in this way because of the grace that was given to me by God. It helps me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.

I'm working as a priest of God's gospel so the offering of the Gentiles can be acceptable and made holy by the Holy Spirit. So in Christ Jesus I brag about things that have to do with God. I don't dare speak about anything except what Christ has done through me to bring about the obedience of the Gentiles. He did it by what I've said and what I've done, by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit. So I've completed the circuit of preaching Christ's gospel from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.

In this way, I have a goal to preach the gospel where they haven't heard of Christ yet, so I won't be building on someone else's foundation. Instead, as it's written, Those who hadn't been told about Him will see, and those who hadn't heard will understand.

That's why I've been stopped so many times from coming to see you. But now, since I don't have any place to work in these regions anymore, and since I've wanted to come see you for many years, I'll visit you when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while I'm passing through. And I hope you will send me on my way there, after I have first been reenergized by some time in your company. **Romans 15:14-24**

Next week: Generosity, Romans 15:25-33

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“Christianity that does not begin with the individual, does not begin. Christianity that ends with the individual ends.” Thus, holiness, while it is always social, is also intimately personal. “It is a personal relationship with God, which involves a change (gradual, sudden or both) from the kingdom of self to the Kingdom of God through the grace and power of Christ” (E. Stanley Jones, 1942).

“It is a harrowing journey, a death to self—the false self—and no one wants to die. But it is the only path to life, to freedom, to peace, to true love” (Benson & Benson, 1989).

Did Paul ever get to Spain? There is no evidence whatever that he did. But his desire to do so, and the fact he wrote Romans as part of the preparation for such a trip, points out an extremely important lesson for us all. Perhaps God sometimes allows us to dream dreams of what He wants us to do, not necessarily so we can fulfill all of them—that might make us proud and self-satisfied—but so we will take the first steps toward fulfilling them. And perhaps those first steps (as they appear to us) are in fact the key thing God actually wants us to do. Paul may not have gotten to Spain. That didn't matter; the gospel got there fairly soon anyway. What mattered then, and has mattered enormously in the whole history of the church, is that, as part of his plan to go to Spain, Paul wrote Romans. We should never underestimate what God will do through things which we see as small steps to a larger end (NT Wright, 2004).

Whom has the Lord placed on your heart?

Who will experience the grace & love of Christ through you?

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