

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

Introduction

In the previous passage Paul offered a peek into his minister's heart. Now Paul provides a description of the ministry of God's messenger. Paul has made a convincing case that we are minister's of hope (vv. 4;13). We are messenger's of Christ—with a message about Christ. Our message is the gospel of hope. We are to faithfully fulfill our divine calling. "What is my call? What is my ministry?" We are called to faithfully serve Jesus. The messenger may be a professional preacher or gifted teacher, or a witnessing believer; but the principles remain the same for all of us.

In this passage Paul points out five things to help us with our homework in ministry:

1. We are to do a complete job where we are; Providence (vv.22-23)
2. We are to develop a vision for the whole world; planning (v.24)
3. We are *not* to neglect the immediate needs as we make global plans; priority (vv.25-27)
4. We delight to serve in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; purpose (vv.28-29)
5. We determine to seek prayer for ourselves and pray for others; pray (vv.30-33)

Do A Complete Job Where You Are (vv.22-23)

Romans 15:22–23 (NKJV) 22For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,

Look at the expression; "I also have been much hindered from coming to you." Hindered means 'to cut into' or 'cut out'. Paul wrote the book of Romans from Corinth. Paul says; "but now no longer having a place in these parts"—God has used providence to keep Paul moving in the direction that God had for Paul. The chapter in Paul's life at Corinth was drawing to a close. His job is finished. The task complete. And Paul has done a thorough job. Paul sets the example of staying where he is and completing the job God has called him to finish. Despite the enormity of the task and the difficulties to bear; Paul does what God told him to do. Paul stayed where he was—despite his desire to move on until the task was complete.

Do you remember the context of our passage? In verse 20 Paul said; "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel not where Christ was named"—to go where no one had gone before. Those who desire to go where no one has gone before find themselves in places of delay, hardship, and setbacks. God's plans will often hinder or delay our own wishes and desires. Paul evaluated God's will not in light of his plans but God's purposes in Paul's life. Is that what you do? We will sometimes say; "Lord, where can I go?" Paul would rather say; "Lord, send me to where you want me to go!" Paul's input was—"Lord, send me where no one has heard of you so that all may be saved by the Savior."

David Livingstone was asked by the London Missionary Society where he would like to serve Christ in the field. He replied, "Anywhere, so long as it is forward." You must have a vision and a goal before you can have a work. Take your disappointments and turn them into appointments

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

with destiny. “No place to go” may be the stepping stone to places and people that God has ordained you to serve and teach and minister and encourage.

Was everyone in Corinth saved? I doubt it. Were all the saints mature and perfected? I doubt it. Was there more work to be done? I am sure there was much more work that could be done in Corinth. But not by Paul. Sometimes God will urge the soul to move on! Paul to his credit had fully preached the gospel of Jesus Christ (v.19). I am convicted by Paul’s example. Sometimes it is easier to flee than to stay and face the problems and meet the needs of people (remember Columbine; remember the floods etc).

Paul’s leaving had nothing to do with fear or insecurity. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NKJV); Paul writes; *23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in castings often, in cold and nakedness—28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my concern for all the churches.*

Develop A Vision For The Whole World (v.24)

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.

For the Roman, Spain and Britain were the edges of the world. Perhaps Paul was implying something, like, “on my way to the edge of the universe I would like to stop by and see you!” The great cultural and historical scholar William Barclay suggests that Paul’s reason for going to Spain was to share Christ with the intellectuals. Such great minds as Lucan, Martial, Quintillian and Nero’s tutor Seneca were said to be from Spain. The future Emperor Trajan would be born in Spain. Spain was in many respects—the future. Perhaps Paul simply had a vision of the multitudes of people who had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul’s great dream was to go to Spain. Did he make it? There is no clue given in the Bible but church history seems to suggest that Paul did make the journey! Perhaps like David’s dream to build the temple he never saw his dream come true. The value of a dream or a vision is the goal that is placed in the human heart to accomplish great things for God. David never placed a single stone for the temple, but he was able to purchase the foundation and pass the work on to his son Solomon. Paul may or may not have made it to Spain but he placed in the hearts of Christians for centuries the seed of desire watered by the Word of God and enabled by the Spirit of God. Love for Jesus and concern for the lost provided the twin pillars of evangelism. Love and concern are our motives for world evangelism.

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

The Lord seems equally concerned with the journey as well as the destination. Where are you going? How do you plan to get there? The journey provides character and growth and maturation and understanding. Where am I going? Where are we going?

I don't know about you—but I'm going to Heaven. I long for Heaven. I will have an eternal dwelling place. Go ahead and long for the castles and tall spires of Spain. There is still a great work of God yet to be done. Yet at the end of the journey and the work—there is a great God!

Paul was filled with a deep desire to reach every man and every woman with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we dare have a global vision? “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,” Amen” (Matt.28:19-20).

Colossians 1:28-29 (NKJV); 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”

Paul had a strong expectation to have the help and fellowship and support of other believers in his attempt to reach the world with the gospel of Christ. When Paul visited the Roman church he expected to be filled with the company and fellowship and help of the believers; “And to be helped on my way (v.24b) “Sent on my way” I believe—in part—means—to be financially supported in Paul's mission to Spain.

Do NOT Neglect Immediate Needs As You Make World-Wide Plans (vv.25-27)

25But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

26For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

27It 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.

(v.25) Paul's longterm vision was to go to Spain. But Paul's short-term vision was to meet the needs of the saints in the here and now! To help with the saints in Jerusalem who were in deep trouble and experiencing overwhelming hardship! As you dream dreams and think about the future—do not neglect the present need. We might think of it this way; do not neglect the immediate needs of the saints in the here and the now! Paul's plan was to take an offering to the saint's in Jerusalem before he booked his flight or purchased his ticket to Spain. There were pressing needs in the here and the now! As much as Paul wanted to preach the gospel in Rome and Spain, the saints in Jerusalem and Judea were in dire straits. Many had lost their jobs; many

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

were starving; some were homeless. We cannot ignore ministry in the present in order to do ministry in the future.

Acts 24:17 (NKJV); “Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation.”

This means Paul had it in his heart for many years—to take up alms and offerings and bring them to the Jewish saints who had received Christ as Savior. Often godly plans are placed on hold—until just the right moment. Jesus is never late—but Jesus is rarely early.

(v.26) Paul announces his goal to go to Jerusalem to refresh the saints. There is an unfinished task at home for Paul. Since the Gentiles were willing to help out the Jewish believers in distress at home; in spite of generations of prejudice and differences in language and culture; the saints unite in a common cause to help those in need.

(v.27) Note the context. Since Gentiles were participants in the ministry of the saints in Jerusalem it was appropriate for the Gentiles to help! After all, they were the recipients, the benefactors, of the ministry that had begun in Jerusalem. The Gentiles could provide a physical support for the spiritual support that the saints in Jerusalem had imparted. Yet—the dollar that we take to the grocery—that seems so small—grows large in the agape box. The money we keep shrinks—and the money we give grows—how is it that even possible?

Paul cared deeply about people in need. He also believed the saints should unite together to provide help. Paul took up a special offering from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (think Phillipi, Corinth); and gave it to the churches in Judea and Jerusalem. Paul felt strongly about Christians helping each other in times of need. We should always be open to helping legitimate needs of local saints before we move to help in other nations. “I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Gal. 6:10; “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Are you a believer? Than you should consider the ministry to other believers throughout the world.

Delight To Serve In The Gospel Of Jesus Christ (vv.28-29)

28Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

29But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Once Paul has dropped off the offering and demonstrated the love and unity of the Jewish and Gentile believers; Paul plans to make his way to Rome. Paul kept his world-wide vision even in

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

the face of the pressing needs of the Jerusalem believers. Paul intended to evangelize Rome and Spain, and would not let the desperate plight of the present need—to keep Paul from his vision. Paul’s expectation is to make it to Spain; via Rome. Paul is filled with optimism about the future. When Paul wrote these words from Corinth—to Rome on his way to Jerusalem; he had no idea that a riot would break out on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. He would be placed in chains; kept under house arrest in Caesaria—for two years and receive an all expense paid trip to Rome—courtesy of the Roman government. But of course there was another ship wreck in his future; and a snake bite! Paul will go to Rome and face Nero. All this was part of God’s plan for Paul’s future. Jesus told Paul that he would be a spokesman for Christ to the great (Festus, Agrippa, Nero) and the not so great (you fill in the blank).

Now thousands of years later Paul continues to speak and to preach.

Perhaps like Paul you may worry that you will stand before God and have to apologize for a broken dream or a failed ministry goal or an unkept promise. Aren’t you glad—God can take our broken dreams and failed plans and give them to Jesus and he can still use them to expand His kingdom—based not on our imperfect plans and expectations—but His perfect plan and perfect will. God can use you right now—warts and all—imperfect—scarred—faulty—unfinished or out of order.

Listen—plan—expect—to hear Jesus say, “Enter into the joy of my reward, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy that I have prepared for you before your dreams and visions, before your success and failures, before the foundation of the world.

(v.29) “In the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ”. Paul served the gospel. Paul’s loyalty was to Jesus and to Christ’s gospel. There is no other message that can meet the desperate need of lost humans; ruined lives; broken people. The gospel brings life. The gospel is like an endless bouquet of flowers; beautiful, fragrant, colorful; gracious in its source; personal in its message; saving in its work (Eph.1:13); powerful in its might; practical in its work; glorious in its consummation. There is power in the gospel that we preach; but we need God’s power to preach it. The gospel is the good news of God’s love in providing a Savior. Jesus died for our sins. Jesus rose for our justification. His grace can save, his blood can cleanse, his power can keep us; His Spirit can qualify us; and and sanctify us; His joy can gladden us; His peace can calm us and He Himself can satisfy us!

Paul has already told the Romans; “I am a debtor to the Greeks and the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also” (Rom. 1:14-15).

Determine To Seek Prayer For Yourself And Pray For Others (vv.30-33)

30Now 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,

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

31that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

32that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

33Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

(v.30) Paul has a heart for prayer. Paul strives (I beg you) to enter into the fellowship of the love of Jesus and the unity of the Spirit. Pray for me. Pray for me and I will pray for you. To some—prayer is cliché; to Paul it is the source of power and strength. Paul begs for prayer. He doesn't appear to be ashamed to do so. Paul begs for prayer—not simply for himself; but to fulfill the ministry of Christ. Paul asks for prayer:

He prays for deliverance from the unceasing ridicule; the constant mocking; the consistent rejection; the persistent abuse; the constant threats; the ongoing persecution.

(v.31) What is the content of Paul's prayer request?

“that I may be delivered” (that) *hina—a word of purpose—in order that used three times;*

Deliverance—‘that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea

Acceptance—‘that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints’

Refreshing—‘that I may come to you with joy by the will of God’

That he may be rescued (delivered) from the unbelievers in Judea (the Jews). This answered prayer is recorded in Acts 21:17-20 and Acts chapter 22 and 23. The book of Acts records the miracles of deliverance and escape that Paul experienced from the hands of his enemies. But they are really enemies of God and the gospel. Are you shocked that so many people reject the message of salvation? Some people refuse the gospel and refuse Christ.

What is Paul's other request? That his service would prove acceptable to the saints. That is the saints in Jerusalem would accept the offering by the Gentile believers. Again the tragic truth—too many believers do not accept the ministry of God's servants. The servant can be a full or part time; a preacher or teacher or missionary or instructor or service provider. Paul needs prayer. All who are committed to Christ and the gospel and the ministry require prayer.

Refreshing—come to you with joy; by the will of God ‘refreshed together’; mutual ministry.

(v.32) Paul recites the standard benediction of peace. Peace comes from God.

We should note at least one thing about Paul's philosophy of ministry and missions at this point. Paul is committed to the sacred tasks of caring for the needs of the saints and evangelism to the world. The sacred duty is entrenched in Paul's vision of himself as a priest preparing sacrifices and offering those sacrifices (see 12:1 and 15:16).

The Homework Of The Minister

Romans 15:22-33

The minister with the heart for God will give credit to God for everything; including the privilege of being used by God to advance the gospel and prepare for Christ's current and future kingdom.

This is striking: Right in the middle of requesting prayer—Paul prays. The prayer is simple but forceful. Peace—we all need peace—within and without—inside and outside. Peace comes from God and if we want peace we must seek the God of peace. If a person could only have one request that request should be to receive the peace of God. Peace does not come from a magic genie in a magic bottle or sorcery or science or political processes.

Conclusion

Do you have a Spain? A place a journey a destination that you seek for Christ? Do you have a place to go and see and serve? Are you passionate in prayer? Prayer to God will often confirm our passion to dream and go and that those dreams and that destination is the direction God has entrusted to us! We pray to bring our will in line with God's plan. We pray as an opportunity to demonstrate our trust in God and God's future. We pray because praying is better than complaining. We pray because prayer refreshes and restores our fellowship with God.

Do you have everything you need for the journey? A reason to go. (v.30) For the Lord "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake"; for the love of the Spirit (vv.31-32) A desire to fulfill. A response to anticipate—and prayers—for peace. Paul has revealed his heart (vv.13-21) and done his homework (vv.22-32). His message: the gospel. His credentials: scars.

NO Scar

Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star—
Hast thou no scar?
Hast thou no wound?
Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent,
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned:
Hast *thou* no wound?
No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And, pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole: can he have followed far
Who has no wound nor scar?

—Amy Carmichael in *Toward Jerusalem*