

## **Fulfill Greater Mission Work through Assistance by Blessed People <Romans 15:22-29>**

*Prelude:* Actually, there is a spiritual principle behind evangelism and mission work. Of course, we know that no one can close the doors that God wants to open; but we must also understand that when forces of darkness oppose the work of evangelism, God will definitely destroy such dark forces through the prayers of saints. It is only then that we can witness new doors of evangelism, connect with new bodies, and save new zones. Sometimes, we can only hear cries for the gospel based on the spiritual needs of the masses. Sometimes, we can only eliminate problems through the assistance of the masses, and bring the gospel to new territories. And sometimes, through the interaction with the masses, we can converge all the powers to spread the gospel to the ends of the world. Why does God want to work this way? This is because He wants the saints to collectively receive crowns. In this respect, God does not want believers to think that evangelism and mission work is associated with only certain anointed missionaries who are always fronting the battle. All the more, God is unwilling to allow local churches to enter into a state of self-contentment and disregard for missions. God wants believers to know the difficulties of evangelism and mission work, the dangers of starting up mission fields, the challenges of setting up churches, and thereby trigger the saints to contribute even more towards the extensive spreading of the gospel. Today, we see Paul telling the Roman church that he wanted to go to Spain to start mission work, and was willing to receive the assistance of the church. Thereafter, Paul mentioned that before arriving in Rome, he had to complete some matters relating to contributions to the poor and this matter involved the Greek and Jerusalem churches. We may ask why at that time, Paul shared the thoughts in his heart and what he wanted to do then in such details? The reason was to allow the Roman believers to know that the Lord had already planted these thoughts in his heart through the many years where he worked hard for the gospel. Therefore, his meeting, connection and even co-working in Rome did not come from others or him. Rather, it came from the Lord who fulfills all things. Sometimes, when we lack the spiritual sensitivity in matters relating to evangelism and mission work, we very easily focus on things related to people or church's strategies, and think that evangelism and mission work are things being driven by some missionaries, gospel organizations or churches. But actually this is not the case. When God prepares a person or a church to enter the path of world evangelism, God is very seriously leading and guiding at the front. God puts the vision and message in the hearts of His servants, and allows churches to hear about news relating to mission work, so that the saints continue to witness and participate in cross boundaries gospel ministry, and become a group of people who continue to be challenged by the gospel. As such, the church should value those regions or churches that God connected through prayers. We personally should also value those believers whom we meet from other regions or countries. There is potential network for evangelism in them.

### **1. The hindrances preventing Paul from visiting the Roman believers were removed <15:22-24>**

#### **1) In which areas did Paul encounter many hindrances?**

\* In <1:13> Paul mentioned about hindrances but did not share in detail how he was hindered. But from the earlier and later chapters, we can infer that the two greatest hindrances that Paul encountered were mainly:

- ① Because he was busy with the setting up and pastoring work in many areas, therefore he could not afford the extra time to visit Rome.
- ② Because the Roman Church was not set up by Paul, he did not want to build his ministries upon the foundation built by others. Therefore, he thought that there was no great urgency to make a visit there.

\* However, we see these hindrances being overcome. Firstly, Paul mentioned that he had completed his ministry in Achaia and Greece (there were no other places where he could further evangelise). Moreover, there was an even more important missionary reason for him and the Roman believers to gather, which was to receive the blessings from Roman believers and head for even further places to share the word, set up mission fields (through the assistance of blessed people), and that was why he mentioned Spain. Because of this even more pressing reason, Paul could see the significance in his meet-up with the Roman believers.

#### **2) What anticipation did Paul bring to meet the Roman believers?**

① **"...I have been longing for many years to see you..."**. Here, we see that Paul's decision to go Rome was not based on his own inclinations but he decided to go based on the most appropriate chance after many years of prayers, based on the people he met, and his wait upon the Lord's timetable. This also confirms that a blessed mission ministry must invest in time to examine God's guidance. Accumulated through these mission trips are several shepherding experiences, knowing the local people in greater depth, just like how Paul knew about Roman believers through Priscilla and Aquila when he was in Corinth <Acts 18:1-3>.

② **"...after I have enjoyed your company for a while..."** Paul wanted to visit the Roman church, whom he had been praying for many years, on his way to Spain. Paul greatly valued his spiritual exchange and communication with Roman believers in this matter of setting up mission fields from Rome to Spain. Why is this so? This is because people will always experience the restrictions due to differences in locations and cultures. If he wanted to head for Spain or the neighbouring regions, he would need the assistance and information of the Roman believers so that he could be sufficiently familiar with the people and mission fields there. Hence, we again see that a missionary does not recklessly head towards the mission fields. He needs to have

sufficient investigation, and have a little knowledge of the people there to have sufficient communications. Through this, God's will will be even more clearly revealed.

③ "...**have you assist me on my journey.**" Here the assistance which Paul mentioned has two significances. First, it is the need of intercession to receive strength, in particular spiritual support. If a missionary does not have the intercession of a group of people, his work is like based on his own single effort and he will be weak at the spiritual level. Second, it is the material and financial support that he could receive from the saints. In this aspect, it included a few people from the Roman church who could assist him in part of his journey. Here, for Paul to complete the ministry of "Roman Evangelism", he needed the strong intercession of the Roman believers in the background.

\*\* Try asking: How were these anticipations fulfilled practically? Actually, this was not through Paul going to the Roman church and telling them about his great intentions. Paul started by writing letters, and then in person brought the gospel revealed to him to go among them and give them the spiritual gifts (grace from gospel), and grow in blessedness together by confirming the gospel. Only the gospel is able to open a person's spiritual eyes, open up the heart of a person such that one can see the need to give up oneself to follow the Lord, co-work with the apostles to complete the commission of evangelising to the whole of Rome. One problem about mission organisations today is that they only talk about strategies, vision or share statistics on how the gospel is being spread. They do not share with the saints the message and grace from the gospel, and hence they cannot ignite the hearts of believers in missions.

### 3) Did Paul really go to Spain?

\* Perhaps no scholar or historian has an absolute answer to this question. However, Clement from Rome in AD96 ever wrote to the people of Rome a letter sharing about Paul, "He taught the whole world about righteousness, he went far to the west and testified before many rulers." Therefore, there may be some truth in some scholars' conjecture that Paul had ever been to Spain for mission work. It was also possible that after Acts and after being released from prison in Rome, he continued to head for Spain, he visited Spain and many neighbouring regions before he was eventually arrested, and under the persecutions of King Nero, he was beheaded. At this point, we can boldly say that regardless of whether the apostle indeed went to Spain, God yearns for today's churches to have such a heart and intentions like Paul's. When we understand that grace from the gospel is overflowing, we will not be self-contented, and will want to get out of our comfort zone, and continue to venture into mission fields that are more challenging. Once we have scattered the seeds of the gospel, established and strengthened the local church, we must continue to move forward.

## 2. The significance of Paul bringing the contributions from the Greek believers to the believers in Jerusalem <15:25-27>

### 1) Paul greatly valued the contributions from the Greek church that was brought to Jerusalem

\* Here when Paul wrote, "Now, however, I am on my way...", it is in the present tense, explaining that now, before Paul had reached Rome, he already took the great responsibility to set off to bring the contributions to the Jerusalem church. At that time, if Paul set off by sea from Corinth, he would have three routes, one route from Corinth to Jerusalem (800 miles), another route from Jerusalem to Rome (1,500 miles) and finally from Rome to Spain (700 miles). In total, there were 3,000 miles (or 4,800 km). If he set off from Corinth to Rome, it would only be about 1,000 miles (about 1,600 km). But why did Paul go the extra 2,000 miles of route? It showed the significance of the contributions which he brought to Jerusalem, and he also shared this with the Roman believers.

### 2) The significance of bringing the contributions from Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem

\* At this point, it was not mentioned why the Jerusalem church was poor, but possibly, like what the prophet Agabus had prophesized of the great famine that would come upon Jerusalem, hence the church could not receive the source of finance due to the persecutions from the environment. Therefore, they had to face the crisis of poverty. At this point, Paul's source of finance was in particular obtained from the wealthier Macedonia and Achaia churches to be given to meet the needs of Jerusalem. In this matter of provisions, Paul brought out a wonderful spiritual significance which is not about social welfare (where the rich helps the poor), nor about cross-cultural assistance (the Gentiles helping the Jews) but the significance of being indebted because of the gospel. Here, it is emphasized that the beneficiaries of the gospel (stable and wealthy Gentiles) giving the giver (weak and needy Jews). Such a relationship in the gospel is the most beautiful scene. This is similar to the Gentiles (wild olive shoot) humbly telling the Jews (olive root), "Because of you, we received the mystery of the gospel (because the gospel was spread from Jerusalem)", and the Jews who received help need not feel inferior but instead accepted the provisions with a heart to bless the Gentiles. Actually, such a relationship brings out the grace of gospel. Because in this world that does not have the gospel, those who help others will always think that they are better while those who received help will always be inferior. However, in the gospel, this relationship is even, because the blessings received by a person all come from the supreme grace of God. This is similar to what Paul started saying that he was indebted to many nations. This is the understanding which the most blessed evangelist or missionary should possess.

### 3) The lesson that is given to the Roman believers in this matter of provision

\* Think about the reasons why Paul told these things to the Roman believers. First, it is to show and teach them using a live example. This is because at the start of Romans Chapter 14, Paul had in particular talked about how the Gentiles and the Jews should accept one another in Christ, hence he brought out the wonderful example of how the Gentiles showed practical love to

the Jews to allow the Roman believers to praise the evidence of unity brought about by the gospel. Paul also wanted to appeal to Roman believers who had very ideal conditions (e.g. status, material wealth) to contribute towards the gospel. Actually, when God allows gaps in the conditions between one church and another, or one gospel group and another, it is to allow saints to come together to receive crowns. Therefore, when God's servants go around evangelising, and see such gaps, it is not only reasonable in the gospel to request the church/believers in a particular place to provide for the church/ministry of another place, but it is also a necessary action. This is because if the church that has more does not know how to give, what they have will gradually "rot" (in other words, cause believers to be self-contented).

### **3. Paul will go to Spain on the way to Rome <15:28-29>**

#### **1) There is direction in Paul's ministry**

\* Paul was already very clear about wanting to go to Rome, but he had other things which he had yet to complete (which is to finish doing the work relating to the contributions, to allow the Jerusalem and Greek churches to unite as one in Christ), and hence could not set out on his journey to Rome. Also, when he decided to go Rome, his heart was set to head for Spain. In reality, a missionary called by the Lord in this era does not have any place to settle down. After he completes each mission can he then determine the next challenge. Also, before he completes his mission, he is already aware of a greater mission awaiting him. His life is always being challenged by the Lord. Sadly, in reality, today, many servants look forward to their retirement years and a place to retire when they think that their age is catching up with them and they are more limited in their energy and strength to serve the Lord. When their spirits have such tendencies, their bodies and physical strength also deteriorate correspondingly. However, George Muller, a Reverend from England was the exact opposite, and a peculiar example. At the age of 70, he started world missionswork for 17 years. He travelled over 20,000 miles, went to 42 countries and evangelized to 300,000 people.

#### **2) There is evidence in Paul's ministry**

\* Paul told the Roman believers that he would definitely bring the full measure of the blessing of Christ to Rome. Actually, he could make such a bold declaration because he had already completed the commission that the Lord had entrusted to him. Hence, he not only brought with him the revelation of the gospel he received from the Lord to Rome, but also gave his blessings to them by sharing the evidences he saw from the mission fields and the results of his personal serving. Today, many missionaries only bring with them relevant gospel theories to the mission fields, but lack the substance which Paul's life possessed. This is because they are not faithful to the end in many of the ministries which are guided step-by-step by God. There is evidence in Paul's ministries. The churches he established with the help of the Holy Spirit brought about the unity of the Gentiles and the Jews. This is substantial gospel ministry. Hence, if we continue to see the records in the Book of Acts, we will discover that God removed several difficulties for him, such that he could arrive safely in Rome, be a great testimony for the Lord, spreading the gospel extensively through various routes leading to and out of Rome.

**受蒙恩的群体送行，完成更美的宣教事工《罗 15:22-29》** 序论：其实，传福音与宣教事工都是有属灵的原理为背景的。当然，我们会知道在神所要开的门没有人能够关，但我们也要晓得当魔军的势力敌挡福音工作时，神必然是透过圣徒的祷告来粉碎那样的势力，之后我们才会看见新的门，接触新的群体，拯救新的地带。有时借着众人的灵里需求，我们才会听见福音的呼声。有时候借着众人的送行，我们才能排除患难将福音带到新的领域。有时也借着与众人的互动，我们才能汇集一切的力量将福音传到地极。神为何要这么做呢？因为祂要与众圣徒一起同得冠冕。为此，神不愿意信徒认为传福音与宣教的事情是某些有恩膏的宣教士在前面作战而已。神也更不愿意地方教会进入自满或掉以轻心的状态。神愿意信徒知道传福音与宣教的难处，开荒的危险，建立教会的挑战，以此激动众圣徒为着福音的广传有更多的付出。今天，我们看见保罗对罗马教会说他要到西班牙开荒宣教的事，也愿意该教会给他送行。之后，保罗也提到他还未到罗马之前有那要完成的捐项的事，而此事是牵涉到希腊与耶路撒冷教会。我们可能会问说为何保罗在此要详细的提出他心里的想法与目前要做的事呢？原因就是他要让罗马信徒知道这些都是他这多年为着福音奔波时，主已经放在他心中的事了。所以，他与罗马将要相聚，甚至接触与同工的事并非是来自人或是他自己，乃来自成就万事的主。有时候，我们对传福音与宣教的事缺少属灵的敏感度，以至很容易只往着人的方面或教会的策略来想，认为这是某些宣教士、福音机构或是教会在推动的事。其实不然。当神预备一个人或一个教会踏上世界福音化的道路时，神是极其认真的在前面带领。神把异象与信息放在祂仆人的心中，也让教会听到宣教的情报，为的就是叫众圣徒不断的看见与参与那跨越地带的福音事工，成为一群能够不断为福音而受挑战的子民。为此，教会当看重那透过祷告而联结上的地区与教会，我们个人也当看重我们在另一个地区或国家所遇见的信徒。这些都带有福音联络网的潜在在其中。

## 1. 保罗探访罗马信徒的拦阻被解脱了《15:22-24》

### 1) 保罗是哪方面多次受拦阻？

\* 在《1:13》，保罗也说到有阻隔，却没有详细说到他如何受拦阻。但从上下文我们会晓得说保罗有可能最大的“阻隔”基本上有两个：

- ① 因为他忙于各地区的开荒与牧养事工，所以一直抽不出而外的时间走访罗马；
- ② 因为罗马教会不是保罗建立的，他也不愿意建造在别人的根基上建造他的事工，所以自认没有太大迫切的必要到那里探访。

\* 但可见这两个理由都被克服了。首先保罗说到他在亚细亚与希腊的事工都已经完成了（再没有可传的地方了），并且他与罗马信徒的相聚是有一个更加重大的宣教理由，就是要受到罗马信徒的祝福，往更远的地方传道开荒（蒙他们送行），那也就是他所讲的西班牙了。因为有这更迫切的理由，保罗才看见他与罗马信徒的相聚有极其重要的意义在其中。

### 2) 保罗是带着怎样的向往去见罗马信徒？

- ① “…这好几年，我切心想望到…”。在这里我们看见保罗在决定往罗马去的事，不是随心所欲，乃是经过多年的祷告，从他所遇见的人当中，等候主的时间表，到了最佳的时机在决定过去。这说明一个蒙福的宣教事工是必须透过时间察验神的带领的。并且，在这时段当中宣教之人必定累积许多牧养的经历与对当地之人的认知，如同保罗在哥林多这地方已经从亚居拉与百基拉得知罗马信徒的事了《徒 18:1-3》。
- ② “…先与你们彼此交往，心里稍微满足…”。保罗想乘着到西班牙的途中先经过他已经代祷已久的罗马教会去。确实，在罗马到西班牙开荒的事上，他很看重他与罗马信徒的灵里交流和相通。这是为什么呢？因为人都受到地区与文化的限制。若他要往西班牙或是那里临近的地带去，他必须透过罗马信徒给他的许多帮助或情报，他才能对那边的宣教之地和人群有足够的认识。所以在此，我们会看见一个宣教士不是鲁莽的往宣教之地去。他必定对那地方有足够的探讨，也与稍微认识那地区的人有足够的交通。借此，主的旨意会更加明确的显明。
- ③ “…然后蒙你们送行。”在此，保罗所说的送行可能有两种意思。第一就是需要他们代祷的力量，特别是精神上的支持。若一个宣教士不得到一群人的代祷，他的工作有如单枪匹马，在灵里层面是虚弱的。第二很可能就是物质和金钱上得圣徒的帮助，在这方面也包括能从罗马教会得一些人护送他走一段的路。所以在此处，保罗要完成当时的一个“罗马福音化”事工，需要罗马信徒在背后很强烈的代祷。

\*\* 试问：这些向往有怎能实现出来呢？其实，这不是借着保罗到罗马教会去将自己伟大的志向告诉他们。保罗乃是先写信过去，然后本人带着他所蒙受的福音的启示去到他们当中，将这些属灵的恩赐（福音之恩）分给他们，与他们一起在确认福音中一起蒙恩。唯有福音这样的开启人的灵眼，扩大人心，人才会看见要撇弃自己所有的来跟从主，一同与使徒同工完成罗马福音化的使命。今天的宣教机构的一个问题就是

只有讲策略，讲异象，或是给出一些福音被传递的统计，但却没有将福音的信息恩典带出来与圣徒们分享，所以无法激活信徒们的宣教之心。

### 3) 保罗是否真的到过西班牙吗？

\* 可能这个问题是没有任何学者或历史家能确实地回答。但罗马的革利免曾经在主后 96 年写给哥林多人的一封信中提到有关使徒保罗说：“他向全世界教导公义，他远至西极，在统治者面前作见证”。所以，一般学者所猜测有关保罗曾经到过西班牙宣教有可能是真实的。他很有可能在使徒行传结束时从罗马监狱得释放，继续往着西班牙前行，在探访过西班牙与周边地带之后再度被逮捕，然后在尼禄王帝的避害之下被斩首。在这点上，我们也可以大胆的说无论使徒真否到过西班牙，他这等心志是神愿意我们今日教会拥有的。当我们认识福音的恩典达到了满溢，我们不能自满，必要走出舒服的境界，继续踏上更有挑战性的宣教之地。一旦我们将福音的种子撒了，建立与坚固了当地教会，一定要继续前行。

## 2. 保罗将希腊信徒的捐项带给耶路撒冷信徒的意义《15:25-27》

### 1) 保罗何等看重将希腊教会筹出的捐项带到耶路撒冷的事

\* 这里保罗所写：“但现在，我往…” ，分明是指现在时态，说明保罗现在还没到罗马之前，自己身负重任要出发将这钱带到耶路撒冷教会。在当时来说，若保罗从哥林多出发以海路行走的话，他将有三段路程，一是从哥林多到耶路撒冷（800 英里），二是从耶路撒冷到罗马（1500 英里），罗马到西班牙（700 英里）。这一共是 3000 英里（4800 公里）。若他从哥林多出发直接到罗马，那只差不多 1000 英里路（差不多 1600 公里）。但为何保罗必要走着多出的 2000 英里路呢？这就说明他要将捐项带到耶路撒冷的事是多么重要，他也将此事告诉罗马信徒。

### 2) 将马其顿与亚该亚的捐项带到耶路撒冷的意义

\* 在这里未曾提到耶路撒冷教会平穷的理由，但很有可能如同亚迦布先知所预言的大饥荒已临到耶路撒冷，而教会也在环境的逼迫当中得不着经济的来源，因此面临穷乏的危机。在这点上，保罗特别是从比较富裕的马其顿和亚该亚教会得着经济的来源供给耶路撒冷的需要。在这这供给上，保罗带出了一个非常美好的属灵意义，那不是一种社会福利意义（富裕之人帮助穷人），也不是超民族相助的意义（外邦民族帮助犹太民族），乃是福音之债的意义。这里特别带出了在福音里的受益人（坚固与兴盛的外邦人）给施予者（软弱与有需要的犹太人）。这等关系是在福音里最美好的画面。这如同外邦人（所谓野橄榄）谦卑的告诉犹太人（所谓本橄榄）“我们能得知福音的奥秘都多亏你们（因为福音是从耶路撒冷传出来的）”，也在那领受帮助的犹太人来说不需自卑，反倒带着祝福外邦人的心来接受他们的供给。其实，这样的关系就带出了福音之恩了。因为在这没有福音的世界里，那帮助人的总是看自己为高，那领受帮助的人总是看自己为卑。但在福音里这关系是扯平了，因为人身上所蒙受的祝福都来自神至高无上的恩典，这如同保罗一开始也说他欠万民的债。这是一个最蒙恩的传福音者与宣教士所拥有的认知。

### 3) 在这供给的事上能带给罗马信徒的功课

\* 试想为何保罗将这事告诉罗马信徒呢？想必首先是要给他们看一个活生生的教材。因为在《罗马 14 章》一开始，保罗就特别谈到外邦人与犹太人在基督里当要彼此接纳的事，所以保罗在此特别将外邦人与犹太人在实际相爱上极美的例子带出来，好让罗马信徒赞叹福音所带来合一的证据。另外，保罗也有可能要呼吁这些这么有条件（例如：地位与物质）的罗马信徒为福音献出力量。其实，当神让一个教会与另一个教会，或一个福音群体和另一个群体有极大条件上的差距，都是为了让众圣徒在一起同得冠冕。所以，当神的仆人们到处传讲福音时，看见有这样的差距时，向一个地方的教会/信徒要求付出来供给另一个地方的教会/事工时，这是不但在福音里合情合理，也是一个必要的做法。因为那有多多的若不晓得分出去，他们所拥有的便会渐渐“腐烂”（换句话：叫信徒自满）。

## 3. 保罗要带着基督丰盛的恩典到罗马，在从那里往西班牙去《15:28-29》

### 1) 保罗的事工是有定向的

\* 保罗虽已经清楚要到罗马，但是他有还未完成的事（就是要办成之前所提供的事，让耶路撒冷教会与希腊教会真是在基督里同归于一），不能动身到罗马。另外，在他打算到罗马去的时候，他心里的定向是往着西班牙去。确实，一个蒙主呼召身负时代的使命的宣教士是没有落脚之地的。他完成了一个使命，才能确定的面对下一个挑战。另外，他在完成下一个使命之前，也已经意识到还有更大的使命等候着他。他的生命是一直被主挑战的。其实很可悲的是今天很多侍奉主的仆人每次想到自己的年龄老迈与精力有限的状态，就是盼望着退休的年日，向往找到退休的地点。当他们在灵里怀着这样的趋向时，身体与精力也就跟着衰退了。但英国的乔治穆勒牧师却带有一个极相反，以及奇特的例子。他 70 岁开始 17 年的世界宣教工作。他走了 20 万英里，到了 42 个国家，向 300 万个人传福音。

## 2) 保罗的事工是有证据的

\* 保罗向罗马信徒说他必定带着基督丰盛的恩典到罗马去。其实，他如此的宣告必然是来自他已经完成了主所托付他的使命，因此不但带着他从主所得的福音启示，也同时带着在宣教现场中所得见的证据和自己侍奉的果效到罗马去，将这些恩典分给他们。其实，今天有很多宣教士只是带着一些有关福音的理论到宣教现场去，但却缺少了保罗生命里所拥有的实质性内容。这是因为在许多神所按部就班带领的事工道路上没有忠心到底。保罗的事工是满有证据的。他靠着圣灵所建立的教会，所带来的外邦与犹太人的合一都是有实质性的福音事工。因此，若我们继续看使徒行传的记载，就会发现上帝为他排除种种患难，使他平安的到达罗马，为主作最美好的见证，也透过罗马的八方大道将福音广传。