

ALTARED STATE

"MOVING ON"

ROMANS 15:23-32

How big is *your* church? Some people prefer *big* churches. Others would rather go to a *small* church. Big churches often provide more opportunities for interaction and connection. Small churches are often described as being more intimate or more personal. When you think of “your church,” do you think of thousands, hundreds, or tens and twenties? Unfortunately we often equate success in church with large crowds. More people, more staff, and more rooms generally mean more success or blessing from God. Less people, less staff, and less money donated in church life is often interpreted as failure. These “less/more” valuations have been common conclusions regarding churches for centuries.

Instead of thinking of *your* church in terms of how many people can fit in your sanctuary, try thinking about the scope and range of your church. How far or how wide is *your* church? As much as you enjoy gathering with other believers near you, how many believers can you think of that you know personally in another city or another country? When you travel or vacation, do you also “do church” there as well? The family of God and our connection to it is not limited to one zip code. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are everywhere. Our love and connection to other believers should be everywhere as well.

Think of church like a collection of seeds. Seeds

We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.

– John R. W. Stott

are typically gathered and stored together in safe, dry places. Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and sesame seeds are packaged together for later consumption. As much as we love to eat dried and salted seeds, we understand that the primary function of seeds is not to provide calories for individual consumption. Seeds are gathered to later be planted. Seeds only gathered do not fulfill their ultimate design. Seeds dispersed make gardens, farms, and ultimately more seeds. There is a connection between the seeds of one place and the seeds of another place. The flowers in your yard share a generational and specific connection with the flowers in other yards around the world. Believers in Christ are like shared and dispersed seeds. *Your* church is not just one local storehouse of similar seeds. Rather, church is the seed of *your* garden growing in thousands of gardens and farms around the world. *My* church is part of *your* church a thousandfold around the globe.

Church is not just a grain silo of accumulated seed. Church is not limited to just one garden or one farm in full bloom. Church is the combination of local seed production and world-wide distribution of faith and love. The seeds of my church growing in other churches around the world is ultimate success. Gathering seeds in silos provides temporary nutrition. Spreading seeds for future planting guarantees continued harvest. How big is your church? In terms of distributed and planted seed, bigger than you could ever imagine!

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving often focuses on *what* we give. We often worry most about how much we can... cont. pg. 2

afford to give. Rather than focusing on the amount of our giving, perhaps we would do better to concentrate on where we give. Giving Away My Life, like many of the other Core Practices, involves generosity and sacrifice. What we give up and what we give out is a valid and serious matter to consider. But where we give is also an important part of the equation of Giving Away My Life.

The first century church understood that believers throughout the world were connected and responsible for one another. The believers in Macedonia and Achaia (Romans 15:26) had compassion and felt obligated to believers in Jerusalem. Believers in Judea were people that the Macedonians most likely had never met. Yet strangers in one area felt connected to strangers in another area through the connection of faith.

Giving Away My Life includes giving away my life to those far as well as to those near. God may be asking you to leave the comforts of home for a few weeks or even a few years to help bring the Gospel of Christ to those far away. This is an important part of giving away your life. For those not able to travel, there are other opportunities to give away your life to those far away. Fervent and consistent prayer for foreign believers, churches, and missions is of high value. Financial support for foreign missions is a significant way to give away your life. In a similar way, fervent and faithful prayer for others in foreign lands is a great way to give away your life. Paul asked for prayer from people he had yet to meet (Rom. 15:30-31). Consider giving away part of your time, resources, and compassion through gifts and prayers to those far away from you. Don't forget this important aspect of giving away your life.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 15:23-32

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 visit you, 24 I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see 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 Lord's people there. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. 28 So after I have completed

this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. 29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

30 I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. 31 Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there, 32 so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed. 33 The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle each geographic reference in this passage.
- * Underline the phrases “passing through” (v. 24) and the phrase “on the way” (v. 20).
- * Draw a box around the words “assist” and “enjoy” (v. 24) and “full measure” (v. 29).
- * Double underline the phrase “The Lord's people” in this passage
- * Draw a line connecting each use of the word “blessing” in this passage
- * Draw arrows from “they” and “them” in vv. 27-28 to whom they refer in this passage.
- * Draw a triangle over each member of the Trinity found in this passage.
- * Draw a box around the phrase “struggling by prayer” (v. 30).
- * Draw a line connecting Paul's statement of emotion in this passage.
- * Number each element of Paul's prayer request in vv. 31-33

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How could Paul have "no more place" to work in spreading the Gospel?
2. In what ways could the Romans "assist" Paul in his ministry (v. 24)?
3. Describe Paul's purpose for visiting Jerusalem (v. 25).
4. What was so special about the offering made by Macedonia and Achaia (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-5)?
5. Do Gentile Christians today have an obligation to support Israel (v. 27)?
6. How does Paul's mention of "full measure" (v. 29) relate to "fullness" mentioned in Romans 15:13-14?
7. Following to Paul's example, to whom and how are Christians supposed to pray (v. 30)?
8. What is "the love of the Spirit" (v. 30)?
9. What did Paul ask the Romans to pray specifically for him (vv. 31-32)?
10. Discuss some practical ways you can pray for missionaries and ministers you know?

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

As the Apostle Paul wraps up his grand treatise on faith, he speaks of his plans to go to the “ends of the earth” with the Gospel (Romans 15:22-33). Paul understands his unique mission to be the sharing of Christ in places unreached (Rom. 15:20). Paul senses that his work was complete in Macedonia and Achaia as the church was growing significantly there. In order to speak to those “who have not heard” (Rom. 15:21), Paul states that he wants to go to Spain. Spain was considered the end of the earth. “We cannot be certain why this was his goal, but apparently he wanted to begin another arc of gospel work, beginning from Rome and terminating in Spain. Rome held territory in Spain from the end of the third century BC, though it was not until the time of Augustus that the whole peninsula was subjugated and three provinces were created. Evidence of substantial Jewish settlement in Spain does not appear until the third and fourth centuries AD. So Paul could not count on using synagogues as bases of operation or rely on some knowledge of Jewish beliefs in the Spanish community. Moreover, Spain was resistant to Greco-Roman culture and was regarded as 'barbarian.' According to I Clement 5:6-7, which was written from Rome in about AD 96, Paul eventually reached ‘the limit of the west’” (David Peterson, Commentary on Romans, Kindle Version, 15:22-24). Many think this “limit” phrase is a reference to Spain. Paul wanted to make sure he shared the good news of Jesus Christ even “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

On the way to the farthest out reaches of the Iberian Peninsula, Paul intended to visit the Roman believers for the first time. The advanced theological content found in the book of Romans and the high praise Paul has for the believers in Rome (Rom. 1:8-12, 15:14, 16:19) serve as evidence for the claim that the church in Rome was strong and healthy. Paul did not need to lay a foundation in Rome because the church was already well established.

Rome was only a seven-day sea voyage from Spain. Paul could use his stop in Rome to rest, gather the assistance of financial support from the generous Romans, and perhaps even collect some Latin translators who could assist him in proclaiming the Gospel to Spaniards who spoke little to no Greek. Paul's mention of the

“contribution” made by Macedonia and Achaia (Rom. 15:26-29) served as an example of generosity that the Romans would do well to follow. Paul made an appeal to the Corinthians to be generous following the exemplary and unexpected generosity of the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-5). This sentiment is echoed gently here in Paul's final words to the Romans. Paul highlights the sense of obligation that the Macedonians had toward their Jewish brothers and sisters as these Jerusalem believers faced great need. Paul's contrast of Gentiles and Jews was not unique for just the Macedonians. Gentiles from the world over have much to appreciate and should have great gratitude for the Jewish heritage that is found in the origins of their faith. Paul is confident that the Romans would catch this same sense of gratefulness and share in the “full measure of the blessings of Christ” when he stopped to visit them on the way to Spain.

Did Paul ever make it to Spain? When would he have had the opportunity to do so? Luke records three major missionary journeys for Paul in the book of Acts. After his third journey, Paul is arrested in Jerusalem and ultimately imprisoned in Rome. The book of Acts does not tell us the final verdict of Paul's Roman incarceration nor of his death. If Paul dies at the end of this imprisonment described by Luke, then he never makes it to Spain. He most likely would have met with Roman believers during his imprisonment there, but would not have been prevented from traveling to Spain. If Paul did visit Spain in this scenario, he would have had to do so during the time just before his return to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1-6). Luke reports that Paul and his team make a second trip into Macedonia at this time. Paul could have visited Rome and Spain on such a trip. The timeline of Acts would require these visits to be extremely short.

A more compelling scenario posits that Paul may have been released from his initial Roman captivity. Comparing the conditions of Paul's house arrest (Acts 28) with Paul's description of his final imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:6-18) shows the last imprisonment as more challenging than the first. These different descriptions support the idea that Paul experienced two separate imprisonments. Between these two detainments, Paul would have

had potentially two years to travel to even the farthest reaches of Spain. Paul's final words in 2 Timothy speak of him as "finishing the race." This seems even more believable if Paul does complete a final tour of Spain.

Beyond financial assistance, Paul pleads for the Roman to join him in his struggle by praying to God for him (Rom. 15:30-33). This struggle is a shared "agony" (*sunagonizomai*) that invokes all the partnership of the Trinity (Jesus, Spirit, God; Rom. 15:30). The prayer is directed to God (the Father) with the encouragement and authority of Jesus (the Son) and the love of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit). This pattern of prayer is also an early expression of the three members of the Trinity who are all part of the activity of prayer. Prayer is a way we can partner with those who are on the front lines for Christ. Prayer is a struggle in and of itself. We should feel compelled to be fervent and persistent in the

battle of prayer for others. Prayer is more than just a "nice" thing to do. Prayer is the struggle of petitioning God to overcome this world and our shortcomings in it (Matthew 6:-13).

Paul registers two main prayer requests with the Romans: 1) that he be kept safe from opposing unbelievers, and 2) that the gift from Macedonian Gentiles would be accepted by the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Paul knew that he had enemies among the Jews of Judea. In the church, Paul had many detractors to his calling of Gentile ministry. Prayers for overcoming external opposition and for gaining internal acceptance among believers are just as needed today as they were in Paul's day. We should pray regularly for ourselves and those who have opportunities to share the Gospel. Ministry is struggle. When we are not struggling to share Gospel "sayings" with others, we should be struggling in Gospel "praying" for others who are sharing.

The Message of the Passage

Share. Share Jesus with others, especially those who have never heard. Share your resources with others in need. Share in the struggle of fellow believers with prayer. Joy and peace come to those who share.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 8:28-39 and your response to it.

1. Where does God want you to go to share the Gospel?
2. Where do you feel obligated to give or serve for Christ? Do you think it is healthy to feel obligated to bless others?
3. How do you "struggle" in prayer for others? What could you do to make this more of a consistent practice in your daily life?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 23 **no more place** “This opening draws attention to changed circumstances. Paul no longer sees a ‘place to work in the regions’ where he then was. This does not mean that he could not find a place where he could preach a sermon or two or where he could help build up the faithful. He means that there is no scope for his specific ministry of planting churches where the gospel had never previously been preached” (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 517).

v. 24 **enjoy/filled** “means literally ‘to fill a vessel so that the result can be described [as full].’ It can be applied, for instance, to the manning of a ship. It is used in an extended sense of fulfilling a wish, hearing a prayer, stilling wrath and anger, satisfying a desire, meeting obligation and carrying out work. It has the further sense of bringing to full measure, delivering a reward or tribute, filling a gap, enlarging” (R. Schippers, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 733-734).

v. 26 **contribution** The word used for the gift given is about more than money. The word “*koinonia* is the usual New Testament word for ‘fellowship’ enjoyed by believers in Christ. The money sent by the Gentiles is a tangible expression of this fellowship” (Douglas Moo, *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, 489).

v. 27. **owe** “Using the same verb that he used at the beginning of v. 26, Paul reiterates the free choice of ‘Macedonia and Achaia’ to participate in the collection; but he immediately adds, ‘indeed, they are indebted to them [the saints in Jerusalem].’ We can remove the apparent conflict between these assertions if we view the ‘obligation’ Paul speaks of as moral rather than legal. No one was compelling (or had the power to compel) the Gentile Christians to give money to the impoverished Jewish Christians in Jerusalem; they gave ‘cheerfully’ (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7) and without compulsion” (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 904).

v. 28 **made sure** Word is used in other literature for the act “of sealing bags of corn etc. to prevent their being tampered with and so to secure them for the assignee: . . . ‘to bring it safely into their possession.’ This will be an instance, then, of the commercial metaphors not infrequent in S. Paul. . . The present of money, symbolising brotherly fellowship, is the fruit received by the Jerusalem Church as the result of the spiritual labours of S. Paul, working on their behalf among the Gentiles. The seal was primarily a mark of ownership and authenticity and then secondarily of security and correctness (cf. Matthew 27:66)” (*Cambridge Greek Testament*, *Romans 15:28*, Studylight.org).

v. 30 **love of the Spirit** “An expression which might mean the love the Spirit enkindles in believers, the love the Spirit has for them, or even love the believers have for the Spirit. Not many hold to this third view, but either of the other two is possible. . . . the New Testament more often refers to the love the Spirit brings about in Christians (cf. Gal. 5:22), and that seems to be the most likely understanding of the words here” (Morris, 523).

v.30 **struggle** “The authority of their common Lord and the love by which the Spirit binds them together and his use of the extraordinary verb *sunagonisasthai* (‘struggle’ cf. Col. 4:12) to emphasize the earnestness, urgency and persistence with which they must join him in praying to God. Although some commentators have portrayed prayer as a struggle with God, comparable with Jacob’s wrestling with God (Gen. 32:22-32), there are no verbal similarities to suggest an allusion to that text here, and the notion of trying to exert pressure on God through prayer is foreign to Paul’s teaching. Paul uses the *agon* [struggle] terminology to describe his own costly apostolic mission, understood as a striving for the gospel. . . . The believers at Philippi are said to be involved in the same struggle for the gospel as Paul (Phil. 1:30). It may be, therefore, that in Rom. 15:30 Paul is saying that the Romans can share in the struggle of his own apostolic ministry as they unite in prayer for him” (David Peterson, *Teach Us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World*, 99).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I remember the days before Netflix when we would wait an entire week to watch the next episode. A whole week! We thought we would die of anticipation as we wondered how that cliffhanger would resolve. In today's world of instant gratification, waiting seems ridiculous and bothersome. We get frustrated when we have to wait a few seconds for a website to load. Paul waited. His great desire to visit the Roman church was derailed for years, not a few minutes while he waited for fast food, or a week while he waited on an episode. Years. Are you in a season of waiting? What have you been longing for in your personal life? Your spouse or child's life? Do you feel like you have been waiting on the Lord forever? Sometimes we see a glimpse of the end of the season, but, like Paul, our plans completely derail. Parents, you might be waiting to come out of a hard season with your child. Let me encourage you to stay the course. There is an abundance of blessing in waiting on the Lord. We don't have the aerial view He does but can trust this season of waiting will build spiritual muscle. It will increase our prayer life and refine our character drawing us into deeper intimacy and dependence on the Lord allowing us to see fruit we wouldn't otherwise see. I am praying God will give you a sense of excitement and anticipation during this season of waiting.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ro 15:23-33

1. How long had Paul wanted to visit the church in Rome?
2. Why was Paul going to Jerusalem and what was he taking?
3. What did Paul ask the Roman church to do for him?

What Do You Think

What is the spiritual blessing that the Jews shared with the Gentiles?

What R U Going To Do

Everyday this week attempt to put others as you wait in line or wait your turn. Watch people's response and pray for them.

Core Comp

Giving Away My Life - I give away my life to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:11 – Never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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