

Romans 15:19-26 Commentary

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Click chart to enlarge

Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Romans Overview Chart](#) - Charles Swindoll

Source: Dr David Cooper
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- R **Ruin** (Romans 1:17 – 3:20) – The utter sinfulness of humanity
- O **Offer** (Romans 3:21-31) – God’s offer of justification by grace
- M **Model** (Romans 4:1-25) – Abraham as a model for saving faith
- A **Access** (Romans 5:1-11) – The benefits of justification
- N **New Adam** (Romans 5:12-21) – We are children of two “Adams”
- S **Struggle w/ Sin** (Romans 6-8) Struggle, sanctification, and victory

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	God's Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's chart above				

Romans 15:19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: en dunamei semeion kai teraton, en dunamei pneumatos [theou]; oste me apo Ierousalem kai kuklo mechri tou Illyrikou peplerokenai (RAN) to euaggelion tou Christou

Amplified: [Even as my preaching has been accompanied] with the power of signs and wonders, [and all of it] by the power of the Holy Spirit. [The result is] that starting from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel [faithfully executing, accomplishing, carrying out to the full the good news] of Christ (the Messiah) in its entirety. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: I have won them over by the miracles done through me as signs from God--all by the power of God's Spirit. In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ all the way from Jerusalem clear over into Illyricum. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: in power of signs and wonders, in power of the Spirit of God; so that I, from Jerusalem, and in a circle as far as Illyricum, have fully preached the good news of the Christ;

IN THE POWER OF SIGNS AND WONDERS, IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT: en dunamei semeion kai teraton, en dunamei pneumatos (theou):

- Acts 14:10; 15:12; 16:18; 19:11,12; 2Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4
- Matthew 12:28; Acts 1:8; 1Corinthians 12:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10, 11; 1Peter 1:12
- [Romans 15 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Keep the context in mind for Paul has just stated...

For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the **obedience of the Gentiles** by word and deed (Ro 15:18-note) (**Comment:** John Piper reminds us that "The

aim of missions is to bring about the **obedience of faith** among all the unreached peoples of the world. But that is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal—even of faith and obedience—is "**for the sake of His name.**" The fame of Christ, the reputation of Christ is what burned in the heart of the apostle Paul. The faith of the nations was not an end in itself. It was the way that the name of Christ would be honored. This is what filled him with such a passion for the Great Commission. Jesus had told Ananias "how much he [Paul] must suffer for the sake of My Name" (Acts 9:16). And he had never turned back from his willingness to suffer if only the fame of Christ would result. Near the end of his life he could still say, "I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13)-- from *The Pleasures of God* (cf the [obedience of faith](#))

Paul's explains how the **obedience of the Gentiles** was brought about, stating that it was by the **power of the Spirit** Who provided the inherent ability to perform the **signs and wonders**. (signs and wonders were the "**deed**" he had mentioned in the previous verse)

Power (1411) (**dunamis**) describes inherent power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. Ability to accomplish a task. In the present context the power is in the signs and wonders and the **dunamis** or power of the Holy Spirit. (Compare Acts 1:8 which also uses **dunamis**). Unless the Spirit of Christ enables us, we can do absolutely nothing of eternal value! (cp Jn 15:5, Jn 6:63).

The **NLT** paraphrase gives a good sense of the meaning of the original Greek:

I have won them over by the miracles done through me as signs from God--all by the power of God's Spirit.

The power of the Spirit was promised by Jesus to His disciples...

but you shall receive power (**dunamis**) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Paul reminded the Corinthians...

my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom (for human words and wisdom would rob the gospel of its power, eg as in an intense, emotional appeal), but in **demonstration** (setting forth or an exhibition of proof) **of the Spirit and of power** ("the sense is 'the powerful demonstration of the Spirit'" - Hodge) that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the **power of God**. (1Cor 2:4, 5)

Comment: Charles Hodge wrote that "Paul relied, therefore, for success not on his skill in argument or persuasion, nor upon any of the resources of human wisdom, but on the testimony that the Spirit bore to the truth. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the Gospel to be true."

It has been said that the great American preacher **Jonathan Edwards** read his sermons expressly for the purpose that he would not be guilty of using persuasive techniques to gain a response. The response he sought was that which was wrought by the the Gospel delivered in power and in the Spirit.

John Stott - It seems that the only preaching God honors through which His wisdom and power are expressed is the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both the weakling and the fool.

Charles Spurgeon agreed declaring that "The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls, nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul."

Vine comments on the phrase **in the power of the Holy Spirit**—Cp. Ro 15:13, and see note there. Cp. also 1 Corinthians 2:4. This clause probably applies both to what was stated in verse 18 and to what has just preceded. The Holy Spirit was the agent not only in the preaching but also in the signs and wonders. The effectivity of gospel ministry depends, then, not upon human power of eloquence, but upon the Lord, who works all by the Holy Spirit.

From the outset of this letter Paul had made it very clear that the effect of the effectiveness of Gospel was directly related with the fact that the

Gospel (euaggelion) is the **power (dunamis = inherent power) of God** for salvation (soteria) to everyone who believes (pisteuo in the present tense = they keep on believing - their continued believing does not save them but it does demonstrate that they are genuinely saved!), to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Ro 1:16-note)

Paul relied for success not on his own skill or eloquence, but on the powerful demonstration of the Spirit. In a rhetorical question to the Galatians who were being tempted to work out their salvation in the power of their flesh Paul asked...

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides (epichoregeo = continuously supplies abundantly and with great generosity as did patrons of the arts who underwrote productions of Greek plays) you with the Spirit and works miracles (dunamis = inherent power) among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:2, 3, 4, 5)

Paul was so convinced of his weakness and God's power that he said...

I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power (dunamis = inherent power) of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Cor 12:9b)

Writing to the Ephesians at the end of his great prayer for their inner strengthening, he declares...

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power (dunamis = inherent power) that works within us (Eph 3:20-note)

Writing to the Thessalonians who had been converted under Paul, Silas and Timothy's ministry in Acts 17:1-4, Paul explained that...

our (Paul, Silvanus, Timothy) **gospel** did not come to you in word only (first, the gospel was proclaimed), but also **in power** (second, it was proclaimed in power) and **in the Holy Spirit** (third it was proclaimed in the Spirit) and with **full conviction** (fourth, they believed the gospel they proclaimed); just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake (fifth, they lived among them as examples of the truth they proclaimed). (1Th 1:5-note)

Signs ([4592](#)) (**semeion**) refers to what distinguishes one person or thing from another (as in Lk 2:12-note below, Ro 4:11). Signs point to something and are a visible manifestation of an invisible reality that may or may not always be supernatural. Another meaning and the one in the present verse is as a reference to a miraculous event contrary to the usual course of nature and intended as a pointer or means of confirmation.

Vine on **semeion** - "a sign, mark, indication, token," is used (a) of that which distinguished a person or thing from others, e.g., Matthew 26:48 ; Luke 2:12 ; Romans 4:11 ; 2 Corinthians 12:12 (1st part); 2 Thessalonians 3:17 , "token," i.e., his autograph attesting the authenticity of his letters; (b) of a "sign" as a warning or admonition, e.g., Matthew 12:39 , "the sign of (i.e., consisting of) the prophet Jonas;" Matthew 16:4 ; Luke 2:34 ; 11:29,30 ; (c) of miraculous acts (1) as tokens of Divine authority and power, e.g., Matthew 12:38,39 (1st part); John 2:11 , RV, "signs;" John 3:2 (ditto); 4:54, "(the second) sign," RV; John 10:41 (ditto); 20:30; in 1 Corinthians 1:22 , "the Jews ask for signs," RV, indicates that the Apostles were met with the same demand from Jews as Christ had been: "signs were vouchsafed in plenty, signs of God's power and love, but these were not the signs which they sought ... They wanted signs of an outward Messianic Kingdom, of temporal triumph, of material greatness for the chosen people. ... With such cravings the Gospel of a 'crucified Messiah' was to them a stumblingblock indeed" (Lightfoot); 1 Corinthians 14:22 ; (2) by demons, Revelation 16:14 ; (3) by false teachers or prophets, indications of assumed authority, e.g., Matthew 24:24 ; Mark 13:22 ; (4) by Satan through his special agents, 2 Thessalonians 2:9 ; Revelation 13:13,14 ; 19:20 ; (d) of tokens portending future events, e.g., Matthew 24:3 , where "the sign of the Son of Man" signifies, subjectively, that the Son of Man is Himself the "sign" of what He is about to do; Mark 13:4 ; Luke 21:7,11,25 ; Acts 2:19 ; Revelation 12:1 , RV; 12:3, RV; 15:1. "Signs" confirmatory of what God had accomplished in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, His resurrection and ascension, and of the sending of the Holy Spirit, were given to the Jews for their recognition, as at Pentecost, and supernatural acts by apostolic ministry, as well as by the supernatural operations in the churches, such as the gift of tongues and prophesying; there is no record of the continuance of these latter after the circumstances recorded in Acts 19:1-20 ([Sign - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

The angel announcing Jesus' birth appeared to some shepherds staying out in the fields declaring

this will be a **sign** for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger. (Lu 2:12note)

Luke records Jesus' reply to

the crowds (that were) increasing (saying) "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a**sign**, and yet no **sign** shall be given to it but the **sign** of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a**sign** to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation." (Lk 11:29, 30)

Semeion is used in the NT some 69 times. Observe that it is most often found in the Gospels and Acts but that there is also a cluster of uses in the last book, Revelation, many of these uses referring to counterfeit signs (Matt. 12:38f; 16:1, 3f; 24:3, 24, 30; 26:48; Mk. 8:11f; 13:4, 22; 16:17, 20; Lk. 2:12, 34; 11:16, 29f; 21:7, 11, 25; 23:8; Jn. 2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31;

9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30; Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12; Ro 4:11; 15:19; 1 Co. 1:22; 14:22; 2 Co. 12:12; 2Thess. 2:9; 3:17; Heb. 2:4; Rev. 12:1, 3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20) For discussion of the counterfeit signs see notes on ([Rev 13:13](#); [13:14](#); [16:14](#); [19:20](#))

Jesus' turning water to wine was the beginning of His **signs** in Cana of Galilee, where He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. (Jn 2:11, cf other "**signs**" by Jesus - his healing of the official's son in Jn 4:54 feeding 5000 Jn 6:14 raising Lazarus Jn 12:18)

Luke records Paul's casting a demon from a slave girl when...

she continued doing this (proclaiming Paul and Silas were "bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation") for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. (Acts 16:18)

And what was the result of this supernatural event? It got Paul and Silas beaten with rods and placed in a dungeon in stocks. But what godless men did for evil, God used for good, allowing Paul to proclaim the gospel to the Philippian jailer and his household, all of whom were saved and who undoubtedly formed a nucleus for the first church in Europe!

Signs per se do not save a man but they do point to the Man in Whom there is salvation -- see especially Jn 2:23, 24, 25, ,12:37, 20:30, 31.

Paul used **sign** in this same letter to refer to the **sign of circumcision** (Ro 4:11-note), referring of course to an external physical act pointing to an inner spiritual reality of heart circumcision (cp Ro 2:28, 29-note).

In Acts **Luke** records miraculous signs (actually the word *dunamis*) writing that...

God was performing **extraordinary miracles** by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. (Acts 19:11, 12)

Then **Luke** records the ultimate result of the supernatural power was that...

the word of the Lord (the Gospel of God) was growing mightily and prevailing. (Acts 19:20)

Middletown Bible has a summary of some of the miracles Christ accomplished through Paul...

What were some of the miracles accomplished by Christ through Paul?

Acts 13:6-12 Elymas the sorcerer struck with blindness

Acts 14:1-3 Signs and wonders done by their hands

Acts 14:8-10 A man crippled from birth instantly healed

Acts 16:16-18 A demon cast out of a certain damsel

Acts 16:25 ff. Miraculous deliverance from prison

Acts 19:11-16 Many healed and demons cast out

What were the results of the miracles?

"Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (Acts 13:12).

"And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified...So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:17,20).

Wonders ([5059](#)) (**teras**) are similar to signs but appeal to the senses, being recognized as a phenomenon that needs to be explained. Something strange, exceptional, causing the beholder to marvel.

BDAG on **teras** - something that astounds because of transcendent association -- prodigy, portent, omen, wonder in our literature only plural and combined with *semeion*.

Friberg on **teras** - wonder, marvel, portent, something so unusual it arouses close observation.

Teras is derived from the verb **tereo** which means to keep, watch and thus conveys the idea of something which due to its extraordinary character is apt to be observed and kept in the memory. It is a miracle regarded as startling, imposing or amazing.

Teras refers to "something strange", a phenomena which compels one's attention and causes one to "look again" or causes the beholder to marvel. **Teras** is always in the plural and always translated "**wonders**."

Gilbrant - The term **teras** does not play any role in Luke's Gospel whatsoever; however, it plays a major role in Acts, occurring more there (nine times) than in any other New Testament book. Invariably it occurs in the construction *semeia kai terata*, "signs and wonders." These may refer to the cosmic portents announcing the arrival of the Day of the Lord (e.g., Acts 2:19; cf. Joel 2:30). But mainly signs and wonders confirm the apostolic testimony (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12) just as they attest to Jesus' own authority from God (Acts 2:22; cf. Hebrews 2:4). ([The Complete Biblical Library](#))

Vine on teras - "something strange," causing the beholder to marvel, is always used in the plural, always rendered "wonders," and generally follows *semeia*, "signs;" the opposite order occurs in Acts 2:22,43 ; 6:8 , RV; 7:36; in Acts 2:19 "wonders" occurs alone. A **sign** is intended to appeal to the understanding, a "wonder" appeals to the imagination, a power (*dunamis*) indicates its source as supernatural. "Wonders" are manifested as Divine operations in thirteen occurrences (9 times in Acts); three times they are ascribed to the work of Satan through human agents, Matthew 24:24 ; Mark 13:22 ; 2 Thessalonians 2:9 . ([Wonder - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

In short, **signs** are intended to appeal to the understanding and "**wonders**" to the imagination.

Someone has said that **signs and wonders** are like the finger prints of God, valuable not so much for what they are as for what they indicate of the grace and power of the Doer. Before the full gospel message was recorded in what we now call the New Testament, God often used signs and wonders to authenticate true preaching and teaching. The ministry of the apostles, especially in the earliest days of the church, was accompanied by authenticating miracles. But it is notable that the word wonders was never used alone. The wonders stirred up awe in the people, but they needed a sign to point them to something (SOMEONE) greater than the wonder itself! In other words, wonders were not an end in themselves, but a divine means to God's intended end so that in combination with signs they pointed to the Source.

Teras in Classical Greek - *Teras*, "wonder, sign, omen," refers in classical literature especially to cosmic wonders or signs, although there might be "signs" of an impending event in the less supernatural sense. The definition of "monster" or "monstrosity" occurs in some cases (e.g., the Gorgon's head, Liddell-Scott). In a religious context the term might denote divine "omens" or "portents," often requiring interpretation.

Thoralf Gilbrant on **teras** in the Septuagint (see all uses below) - *Teras* ordinarily replaces the Hebrew word *môphêth* in the Septuagint (34 times), although *pele/pâlâ'* (twice), *shammâh* (once), and *t^emah* (once) also appear. In Hebrew *môphêth* means "sign, portent, miracle," and it frequently stands in relation to *'ôth*, "sign" (cf. the Greek word *sêmeion* [4447]). The "wonders" (*terata*) Moses performed before the eyes of Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21) did not necessarily promote faith; in fact, they may even have had a hardening effect upon him (cf. Exodus 7:3). In and of themselves "wonders" are no guarantee of God's being behind the activity (Deuteronomy 13:1ff.). The term can refer to God's miraculous power and intervention on behalf of Israel, especially of the "miracles" worked through Moses in Egypt (e.g., Deuteronomy 29:3; cf. 1 Chronicles 16:12). Or it may depict divine punishment (e.g., Deuteronomy 28:45ff., of the curses that will come upon covenant violators). "Signs" can confirm significant events (e.g., Josiah's advent as king, 1 Kings 13:3 [LXX 3 Kings 13:3]; Hezekiah's recovery, 2 Chronicles 32:31). Cosmic portents will declare the arrival of that great eschatological Day of the Lord (Joel 2:30; cf. Acts 2:19). ([The Complete Biblical Library](#))

Charles Hodge - They are called **signs** because they are evidences of the exercise of God's power and proofs of the truth of his declarations, and **miracles** because of the effect which they produce on the minds of men.

Teras - 16x in 16v in the NT - always translated **wonders**.

Matthew 24:24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and **wonders**, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

Mark 13:22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and **wonders**, you simply will not believe."

Acts 2:19 'AND I WILL GRANT **WONDERS** IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and **wonders** and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many **wonders** and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Acts 4:30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and **wonders** take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

Acts 5:12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and **wonders** were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great **wonders** and signs among the people.

Acts 7:36 "This man led them out, performing **wonders** and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

Acts 14:3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and **wonders** be done by their hands.

Acts 15:12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and **wonders** God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Romans 15:19 in the power of signs and **wonders**, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

2 Corinthians 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and **wonders** and miracles.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false **wonders**,

Hebrews 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and **wonders** and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

Teras - 41 verses in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** -

Ex 4:21; 7:3, 9; 11:9f; 15:11; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 13:1-2; 26:8; 28:46; 29:3; 34:11; 1Kgs 13:3, 5; 1Chr 16:12; 2Chr 32:31; Esther 10:3; Ps 46:8; 71:7; 78:43; 105:5, 27; 135:9; Isa 8:18; 20:3; 24:16; 28:29; Jer 32:20-21; Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27; Dan 4:1-2; 6:27; Joel 2:30

Exodus 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the **wonders** which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

Ps 105:5 Remember His **wonders** which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth,

Joel 2:30 "I will display **wonders** in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

Divine affirmation does not require miracles. In fact, much and perhaps most of Paul's own ministry was not affirmed in such dramatic ways. But the **power of the Spirit** is always evidenced in some way when the gospel is proclaimed, even by the simplest and most uneducated preacher who seeks to glorify Christ. In fact the most miraculous authentication (establishment of the genuineness) of the gospel is not the physical signs and wonders accompanied it but the opening of blind eyes so that they are turned "from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). The power of the gospel is authenticated by the transformed lives it produces.

John Courson has this to say regarding the miraculous reminding us that...

the Holy Spirit is like steam in a locomotive. He's there to move the engine down the track—not to toot the whistle. Too many people look at the power of the Holy Spirit as a whistle-tooter, as an end in itself—but the Lord says, "You shall receive **power** when the Holy Ghost comes upon you to be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Thus, when people ask why we don't see more signs and wonders today, I say, "Go to Honduras. Go to Mexico. Go to Russia. Start evangelizing and watch and see what the Lord will do in you and the miracles that will flow through you." But even if you never see an external sign, wonder, or miracle, you're in good company. Jesus said of all of the men who had lived, John the Baptist was the greatest of them all. No man was greater—not Elijah who called down fire from heaven, not Elisha who raised the dead, not Moses who parted the Red Sea. Jesus said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). And yet John did no miracle (John 10:41). **So if you've never performed a miracle or even seen a miracle, take heart. You're in good company.** John did no miracle but "all things John spoke of this Man were true" (see John 10:41). What Man? Jesus Christ. Talking about Jesus is something I can do—and so can you. Yes, I would love to have the powerful, miraculous ministry of Paul. But in the meantime, I'll try to walk in the footsteps of John the Baptist, pointing others to the Lamb of God." ([Courson, J: Jon Courson's Application Commentary: NT. Nelson. 2004](#)) (Bolding added)

God-centered evangelism must be carried out "in the power of the Spirit of God." God's work must be done God's way in God's power.

Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6)

SO THAT FROM JERUSALEM AND ROUND ABOUT AS FAR AS ILLYRICUM I HAVE FULLY *PREACHED* THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST : Hoste me apo Ierousalem kai kuklo mechri tou Illurikou peplerokenai (RAN) to euaggelion tou Christou

- Ro 15:24; Acts 9:28,29; 13:4,5,14,51; 14:6,20,25; 16:6-12; 17:10,15; Acts 18:1,19; 19:1; 20:2,6
- Romans 1:14-16; Acts 20:20; Colossians 1:25; 2 Timothy 4:17
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

So that (hoste) ([term of purpose or result](#)) is usually used as a conjunction before a clause expressing an event, result, consequence, whether real or supposed. When you see a "so that" take a moment to determine what is the "event, result or consequence" to which this refers? In this context, it seems to express in a sense the consequence of the preceding section explaining the source of the power. The consequence of that power was that the Gospel spread far and wide.

From Jerusalem - Barnes notes that...

Jerusalem, was a centre of his work; the centre of all religious operations and preaching under the gospel. This was not the place where Paul began to preach, (Gal 1:17,18 "*nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days*) but it was the place where the gospel was first preached, and the apostles began to reckon their success from that as a point. Compare (Lk 24:49 "*And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*"). (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Fully preached the Gospel of Christ - It was the Gospel and not the signs and wonders that saved the Gentiles and brought them to the **obedience of faith**.

Newell - What a marvelous, absolutely tireless love-laborer was this man Paul. Illyricum was the next province to Italy. Between Jerusalem and Illyricum lay the province of Syria, with its capital at Damascus, but its spiritual capital Antioch; and next to it Cilicia, with its great center Tarsus, Paul's own home, whither he had been sent by the brethren away from Jerusalem persecution (Acts 9:30) ; and whence Barnabas brought him to the work at Antioch (Acts 11:25,26) ; next province Pamphylia with Perga and Attalia; and above that Pisidia, centered at another Antioch; then Lycaonia, and above that the great and difficult Galatia with the churches Paul founded there; next proconsular Asia, centered at Ephesus, of course, and the mighty work there and the "fighting with beasts"; then at Troas across the Aegean came the call from Macedonia, and its cities Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica, the saints of which lay so close to the apostle's heart; then Achaia, centered at Corinth, whence he wrote this present letter to the Romans-vast city, vast wickedness, but much people for the Lord. And so we arrive at Illyricum. And through all these regions just traced, Paul has fulfilled the gospel of Christ; insomuch that verse 23 informs us that he had no more any place in these regions. ([Romans Verse by Verse](#))

John Piper - Paul's missionary strategy was to preach where nobody has preached before. This is what we mean by **Frontier Missions**. Paul had a passion to go where there were no established churches—that meant Spain. What is amazing in these verses is that Paul can say he has "fulfilled" the gospel from Jerusalem in southern Palestine to Illyricum northwest of Greece! To understand this is to understand the meaning of Frontier Missions. Frontier Missions is very different from domestic evangelism. There were thousands of people yet to be converted from Jerusalem to Illyricum. But the task of Frontier Missions was finished. Paul's job of "planting" was done and would now be followed by someone else's "watering" (1 Corinthians 3:6) ([Desiring God](#)) (bolding added)

In the present passage round about is the verb **kuklo** which means if we take Jerusalem as the center or hub, Paul had fully preached round that hub until you come to Illyricum north of Macedonia. Don't miss what Paul is saying...you may need to look at a map to fully grasp the breath of his ministry ([in this map](#) Jerusalem would be on the bottom right to the center Illyricum in maroon/brown). I don't know about you, but I haven't even fully proclaimed the gospel round about my cul-de-sac and block on which I live (I am convicted)!

Round about (2945) (**kuklo** from **kúklos** = a circle) literally means in a circle or from the circle and so all around or round about. So as an adverb **kuklo** is used in the sense of going around in an arc or a curve.

Kuklo is also used as an adjective with the article and so means around, that which is nearby (Mk 6:36 = "surrounding countryside and villages", Lk 9:12+ = "the surrounding villages").

Kuklo is also used as a preposition with the genitive around = "**around** the throne" (Rev 4:6)

Kuklo - 8v - around(3), around*(2), round about(1), surrounding(2). - Mk. 3:34; Mk. 6:6; Mk. 6:36; Lk. 9:12; Rom. 15:19; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 5:11; Rev. 7:11

Kuklo in the Septuagint - over 200 uses!

Gen. 23:17; Gen. 35:5; Gen. 41:48; Exod. 7:24; Exod. 16:13; Exod. 19:12; Exod. 25:11; Exod. 25:24; Exod. 25:25; Exod. 27:17; Exod. 28:32; Exod. 28:33; Exod. 28:34; Exod. 29:16; Exod. 29:20; Exod. 30:3; Exod. 38:20; Exod. 38:31; Exod. 39:23; Exod. 39:25; Exod. 39:26; Exod. 40:8; Exod. 40:33; Lev. 1:5; Lev. 1:11; Lev. 3:2; Lev. 3:8; Lev. 3:13; Lev. 7:2; Lev. 8:15; Lev. 8:19; Lev. 8:24; Lev. 9:12; Lev. 9:18; Lev. 14:41; Lev. 16:18; Lev. 17:6; Lev. 25:31; Lev. 25:44; Num. 1:50; Num. 1:53; Num. 2:2; Num. 3:37; Num. 4:32; Num. 11:24; Num. 11:31; Num. 11:32; Num. 16:24; Num. 16:27; Num. 16:34; Num. 22:4; Num. 32:33; Num. 34:12; Num. 35:2; Num. 35:4; Deut. 12:10; Deut. 17:14; Deut. 21:2; Deut. 25:19; Jos. 6:3; Jos. 6:20; Jos. 15:12; Jos. 18:20; Jos. 19:8; Jos. 21:11; Jos. 21:42; Jos. 24:33; Jdg. 7:18; Jdg. 7:21; Jdg. 20:29; 1 Sam. 14:47; 1 Sam. 26:5; 1 Sam. 26:7; 1 Sam. 31:9; 2 Sam. 5:9; 2 Sam. 7:1; 2 Sam. 22:12; 1 Ki. 2:35; 1 Ki. 6:29; 1 Ki. 7:12; 1 Ki. 7:23; 1 Ki. 7:35; 1 Ki. 18:35; 2 Ki. 11:8; 2 Ki. 11:11; 2 Ki. 25:1; 2 Ki. 25:4; 2 Ki. 25:17; 1 Chr. 4:33; 1 Chr. 6:55; 1 Chr. 10:9; 1 Chr. 11:8; 1 Chr. 28:12; 2 Chr. 4:3; 2 Chr. 14:14; 2 Chr. 17:10; 2 Chr. 23:7; 2 Chr. 23:10; 2 Chr. 34:6; Neh. 5:17; Neh. 6:16; Est. 1:6; Job 1:10; Job 18:11; Job 19:8; Job 19:10; Job 29:5; Job 41:14; Ps. 3:6; Ps. 12:8; Ps. 18:11; Ps. 34:7; Ps. 44:13; Ps. 50:3; Ps. 76:11; Ps. 78:28; Ps. 79:3; Ps. 79:4; Ps. 89:8; Ps. 97:2; Ps. 97:3; Ps. 125:2; Ps. 128:3; Eccl. 1:6; Cant. 3:7; Isa. 6:2; Isa. 9:18; Isa. 19:7; Isa. 42:25; Isa. 49:18; Isa. 60:4; Jer. 1:15; Jer. 4:17; Jer. 6:3; Jer. 12:9; Jer. 15:14; Jer. 21:14; Jer. 25:9; Jer. 31:39; Jer. 32:44; Jer. 33:13; Jer. 48:39; Jer. 50:14; Jer. 50:32; Jer. 52:4; Jer. 52:7; Jer. 52:14; Jer. 52:21; Jer. 52:22; Jer. 52:23; Lam. 1:17; Lam. 2:3; Ezek. 1:4; Ezek. 1:27; Ezek. 2:6; Ezek. 4:2; Ezek. 5:2; Ezek. 5:5; Ezek. 5:6; Ezek. 5:7; Ezek. 5:12; Ezek. 5:14; Ezek. 5:15; Ezek. 6:5; Ezek. 6:13; Ezek. 8:10; Ezek. 12:14; Ezek. 16:57; Ezek. 23:24; Ezek. 26:8; Ezek. 27:11; Ezek. 28:26; Ezek. 31:4; Ezek. 36:3; Ezek. 36:36; Ezek. 37:2; Ezek. 40:5; Ezek. 40:14; Ezek. 40:16; Ezek. 40:17; Ezek. 40:29; Ezek. 40:33; Ezek. 40:36; Ezek. 40:43; Ezek. 41:6; Ezek. 41:7; Ezek. 41:8; Ezek. 41:10; Ezek. 41:16; Ezek. 41:17; Ezek. 42:20; Ezek. 43:20; Ezek. 46:23; Dan. 5:6; Dan. 7:7; Dan. 7:12; Nah. 3:8; Zech. 12:2

Illyricum is the area on the eastern shore of the Adriatic, extending from NE Italy to **Macedonia** (the former nation of Yugoslavia) ([dark brown region on map](#)). This of course implies that this would have most likely been during or after his 3rd missionary journey.

From Jerusalem to **Illyricum** (region of former Yugoslavia) was a span of about 1,400 miles. Paul was clearly **aman on mission!** Although Acts does not record Paul visiting Illyricum, he may have visited during one of his stays in **Macedonia** or alternatively one of his disciples (reproducers) carried the Gospel there in his stead. Either way while not mentioned specifically in Acts, clearly the Gospel had penetrated Illyricum (in the power of the Spirit).

Fully (4137) (**pleroo**) means first to fill up and here mean to fulfill, to complete, to carry out to the full (eg Lk 9:31+ at the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were "speaking of [Jesus] departure which He was about to **accomplish** [pleroo] at Jerusalem").

In the present context **pleroo** conveys the idea of faithfully executed, carried out to the full or of one's commission fulfilled, the commission originally given to Saul/Paul by Jesus, as our Lord declared to Anania "But the Lord said to him, "**Go**, for he (SAUL/PAUL) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; (Acts 9:15+). Think of **pleroo** as picturing Paul so thoroughly preaching the Gospel that it permeated, saturated and diffused abroad "filling up" all that region with good news of salvation in Christ. And his use of the **perfect tense** pictures the lasting impact of this filling up with the Gospel preaching.

Luke uses **pleroo** in a similar context in Acts 19:21+

Now after these things **were finished** (**pleroo** = THE MINISTRY IN ASIA - SEE Acts 19:20+ and compare Acts 19:10+), Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Paul makes a similar statement in Colossians writing...

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I **might fully carry out** (pleroo) the preaching of the word of God (Col 1:25+)

Paul gives some important parting instructions to Archippus using the verb **pleroo** in the context of his ministry...

Say to Archippus, "**Take heed** (**blepo** in the [present imperative](#) = obedience calls for [continual dependence on the Holy Spirit](#)) to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." (Col 4:17⁺)

Comment - "May fulfill" is in the [subjunctive mood](#) which expresses the possibility it may not be fulfilled and implies that the successful fulfilling is dependent upon some condition being met, that condition in context being to continually "**Take heed!**"

THOUGHT - Beloved what ministry has God assigned to you for our short sojourn on earth? (cf 1 Pe 1:17⁺) Are you fulfilling it? Will you be able to say "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Ti 4:7⁺)? "We shall have all eternity in which to celebrate our victories, but only one short hour before the sunset in which to win them." (R Moffatt)

Adoniram Judson a famous missionary to Burma wrote that "A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity... the same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. All the marks which we put upon it, it will exhibit forever... each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny... How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness! It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. Let us, then, each morning, (enabled by God's Spirit) resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone, indelibly (forever) marked."

Pleroo is also used of John the Baptist who "**fulfilled** his course (of life)" (Acts 13:25⁺). He completed His God-given assignment and so too did Paul fulfill his Gospel assignment.

THOUGHT - How about you beloved? Are you fulfilling your God given assignment, the stewardship He has given you?

Guzik offers an interesting thought - We sense that Paul would consider "bare" preaching, without the active and sometimes miraculous work of the Holy Spirit evident, to be less than fully preaching the gospel. (The Enduring Word Commentary Series)

In his last written words Paul reminded his faithful disciple Timothy that in spite of all the difficulties (including people deserting him and no one supporting him)...

the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. (2 Ti 4:17⁺)

To the very end of his earthly existence, Paul had faithfully passed on the knowledge of the Gospel throughout that immense expanse that stretched about 1,400 miles from Jerusalem to the Roman province of Illyricum!

THOUGHT - Father, would you enable each of us to be found so faithful to our calling. Amen.

Preached the Gospel - *Preached* is added in this verse by the translators. The Greek literally reads "**I have filled full the Gospel**" (I like that picture!) and could refer to preaching the full gospel message (cf. Acts 20:27) or to preaching throughout the full geographical area in which he was called to minister. Both meanings certainly describe Paul's ministry, but the **context** (which is "king" and which facilitates accurate interpretation) seems to indicate that Paul was affirming his faithful and full ministry in every place to which the Lord sent him. In other words although not every individual person in those areas had heard the gospel from Paul, he clearly believed that he had fulfilled his work there and it was time to move on to other places.

Gospel (2098)(**euaggelion [word study]**) is literally good news or glad tidings. In secular Greek it originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word **euaggelion** was commonly used in the first century as our words "good news" today. The idea then and now is something like this - "Have you any **good news** (euaggelion) for me today?" This was a common question in the ancient world.

Euaggelion was commonly used in the Greco-Roman culture as "a technical term for "news of victory." The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: "rejoice ...we are victorious". By his appearance it is known already that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms, joy fills the city, euaggelia are offered, the temples are garlanded, an agon (race) is held, crowns are put on for the sacrifices and the one to whom the message is owed is honored with a wreath...[thus] euaggelion is closely linked with the thought of victory in battle. " (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) This is a convicting definition - here a pagan messenger radiantly announces good news of an earthly victory. How much more radiant should we be who are the bearers of the great news of Christ's eternal triumph over sin, Satan, and death!

Hodge - The Gospel was to be preached to all nations. He filled all the countries with the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thus was it given to Paul, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Romans 15:20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: houtos de philotimoumenon (PMPMSA) euaggelizesthai (PMN) ouch hopou onomasthe (3SAPI) Christos, hina me ep' allotrion themelion oikodomo, (1SPAS)

Amplified: Thus my ambition has been to preach the Gospel, not where Christ's name has already been known, lest I build on another man's foundation; ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: and so counting it honour to proclaim good news, not where Christ was named -- that upon another's foundation I might not build--

AND THUS I ASPIRED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL: houtos de philotimoumenon (PMPMSA) euaggelizesthai (PMN):

- 2Corinthians 10:14, 15, 16
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

I like **Young's Literal** rendering...

and so counting it honour to proclaim good news

Aspired (it was my ambition)([5389](#)) (**philotimeomai** from **philos** = loved + **time** = honor) from **philos** = friend, loved + **time** = honor) means literally to "love honor" and so first means to strive or seek for honour. It evolved to picture one who earnestly aspired to something, implying a strong ambition for the goal in view. The emphasis is to long that a thing shall be accomplished and fully give oneself to the task in view. Paul was driven by a passion to make God's name known to all the unreached peoples of the world. He never stayed in a place long once the church was established. Paul earnestly desired and he made it a point for which he struggled, to penetrate into regions which had not heard the gospel.

Paul strived to reach those who had never heard about Christ. His one ambition was to carry the gospel to those to whom no other preacher had gone. God had called him to be an apostle, a missionary evangelist, not to pastor and to build upon the ministry of other men.

Paul's use of the same verb in his second epistle to Corinth gives one a sense of the value he placed on spreading the good news to the "unreached people groups"...

Therefore also we **have as our ambition**, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:9-[note](#))

In this passage to the Corinthians of course his heart's desire was to please His Lord and preaching the gospel to the unreached was of the similar level of importance undoubtedly because this was the commission his Lord declaring...

'Go! For I will send you far away to the **Gentiles**.' (Acts 22:21)...to open their (the Gentile's) eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:18)

Preach the gospel ([2097](#)) (**euaggelizo/evangelizo** from **eu** = good, well + **aggello** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) (Click word study on euaggelizo) means to announce good news concerning something. **Euaggelizo** was often used in the Septuagint for preaching a glad or joyful message (cf. 1Sam. 31:9; 2Sa 1:20; 4:10).

Euaggelizo/evangelizo in its original sense could be used to refer to a declaration of any kind of good news, but in the NT it (with 2 exceptions) refers especially to the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God and of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Most of NT uses of **euaggelizo** are translated "preach" or "preach the gospel," whichever fits more

smoothly into the context.

NOT WHERE CHRIST WAS ALREADY NAMED THAT I MIGHT NOT BUILD UPON ANOTHER MAN'S FOUNDATION : ouch opou onomasthe (3SAPI) Christo s hina me ep allotrion themelion oikodomo (1SPAS):

- 1Corinthians 3:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15; 2 Cor 10:13, 14, 15, 16; Ephesians 2:20, 21, 22
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

Not where Christ was already named - Middletown Bible Church has a pithy note on this passage for us to ponder (as good Bereans)...

Paul's church planting policy was to go to areas where the gospel had not yet been preached. Paul was a pioneer missionary, a trail-blazer, a church planter. His policy is also set forth in 2 Corinthians 10:14, 15, 16. The violation of Paul's policy is oft repeated in our day as over-aggressive men... will enter a community to start a church even though there is already a solid Bible-believing, well established assembly of believers in the area. This results in carnal competition and unnecessary confusion and it totally contrary to the New Testament pattern (see Pastor Parsons paper, The New Testament Churches and their Boundaries). How tragic to intrude into territory that has already been claimed for Christ when there are so many other areas that desperately need a gospel testimony. ([Reference](#))

Hodge comments that these are places "that had not previously even heard of Christ. Similar ambition has often stimulated modern missionaries, and by their labors the Gospel has been carried to countries that were previously strangers to the very name of Christ...It is through this means that God excites men to fulfill His purposes of mercy to the different nations of the earth."

William Barclay - Paul's ambition was to be a pioneer. It is told that when Livingstone volunteered as a missionary with the London Missionary Society they asked him where he would like to go. "Anywhere," he said, "so long as it is forward." And when he reached Africa he was haunted by the smoke of a thousand villages which he saw in the distance. It was Paul's one ambition to carry the good news of God to men who had never heard it. He takes a text from Isaiah 52:15 to tell his aim. ([Romans 15 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

That (2443) (hina) introduces a [purpose clause](#) (which should always stimulate the question "What is the purpose?") and explains the purpose of what Paul had just declared ("not where Christ was already named").

Paul as an apostle and "church planter" had a call to go where the gospel was not yet planted.

Albert Barnes comments that Paul "desired to found churches himself; he regarded himself as particularly called to this. Others might be called to edify the church, but he regarded it as his office to make known the name of the Saviour where it was not before known. This work was particularly adapted to the ardour, zeal, energy, and bravery of such a man as Paul. Every man has his proper gift; and there are some particularly fitted to found and establish churches; others to edify and comfort them. Comp. 2Co 10:13-16. The apostle chose the higher honour, involving most danger and responsibility; but still any office in building up the church is honourable. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Ray Stedman has an interesting comment **on not building on someone else's foundation, writing that** "Some weeks ago I shared with you a little booklet I ran across that described the difference between "Settler" theology and "Pioneering" theology -- a very interesting and humorous little booklet. This book says there are two kinds of Christians: Some want to be Settlers, to live around the courthouse and let the mayor run everything. They have lost all desire to reach out. But then there are the Pioneers, like Paul. They want to be getting into new areas that have never been touched adequately. I believe this is characteristic of the Spirit of God. He loves to thrust out into new areas....(Did you ever notice that the word for **news**, as in **good news**, is made up of the first letters of **N**orth, **E**ast, **W**est, and **S**outh?) We are to reach out with the good news, as Paul did." ([An Adequate Ministry | Romans 15:14-33](#))

Below is a contemporary illustration from [Our Daily Bread](#) of preaching the gospel where Christ was not yet named

While explaining the gospel to a young soldier in Kentucky, I referred to Jesus being crucified on the cross. He gave me a puzzled look and said, "I've never heard about that."

"You've never heard the story of Jesus dying on the cross for your sins?" I asked amazed.

"No," he said, "but I'd like to."

He listened with a look of wonder in his eyes. When I asked if he would like to accept Christ and become His follower, he said with determination, "Yes, that's what I'd like to do."

He was a middle-class high school graduate from a town in the United States but had never heard about Christ dying for his sins. Thinking back on that divine appointment and that soldier's response to the gospel, I have wondered how many other people among my daily contacts have never heard.

Paul told the Romans that it was his ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known (Ro 15:20). For us to do that, we may think we need a passport and a special calling. But with a prayerful alertness, we will discover opportunities right where we live. If we are longing to tell His story, Christ may lead us to those who have never heard. --D C MacCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You have called us, Lord, to witness,
Called to speak of Your dear Son;
Holy Spirit, grant discernment,
Lead us to some seeking one. --DJD

The next person you meet
may need to meet Christ.

Romans 15:21 but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND." (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: alla kathos gegraptai, (3SRPI) Ois ouk anegele (3SAPI) peri autou opsontai, (3PFMI) kai oi ouk akekoasin (3PRAI) sunesousin. (3PFAI)

Amplified: But [instead I would act on the principle] as it is written, They shall see who have never been told of Him, and they shall understand who have never heard [of Him]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: I have been following the plan spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says, "Those who have never been told about him will see, and those who have never heard of him will understand." ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: but according as it hath been written, 'To whom it was not told concerning him, they shall see; and they who have not heard, shall understand.'

BUT AS IT IS WRITTEN: alla kathos gegraptai (3SRPI):

But - term of contrast

Written (1125) (**grapho [word study]**) from root **graph-** = primarily means to scratch on or engrave as on an ornament, reports, letters, etc; **English** = graph, graphic, etc) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (John), paper, etc. ([Click to review all 191 uses of grapho in the NAS](#))

It is written occurs 76 times in the ([Click](#) for these uses). When we were children and our parents told us to do something and we questioned "Why?", the answer was usually "Because I said so!". Why are we commanded to be holy? Because God said so! A popular saying is

God said it, I believe it, that settles it.

This sounds good but isn't accurate because God's Word is true, irregardless of whether we believe it or not. A more accurate "saying" would be

God said it, that settles it!

It is written should put a stop to every complaint or excuse. Paul is saying don't judge but remember you will appear before Me to give an account (as the next verse clarifies). This sobering thought should motivate us to obey this injunction.

Grapho is in the **perfect tense** meaning that this "has been written and stands written". Paul saw his pioneering heart as obedience

to the Scriptures, fulfilling the passage he quotes from the Old Testament.

Remember that in the NASB, anytime you see a passage in **all capital letters**, that portion of Scripture is identified as a specific quotation from the Old Testament. In this case Paul quotes the last half of (Isa 52:15) verbatim not from the Hebrew but the Greek Septuagint (LXX). (The majority of the NT quotations are from the Septuagint). This is Paul's last of about **64 OT quotations** in Romans, more than any other NT book (**Matthew is second with 61 quotes** - the **Revelation has over 300** allusions to the OT, although most are not direct quotations)

THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND: ois ouk anegele (3SAPI) peri autou opsontai (3PFMI) kai oi ouk akekoasin (3PRAI) sunesousin (3PFAI):

- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

(Isa 65:1) "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' To a nation which did not call on My name.

Barnes notes that Isaiah 52:15...

is not literally quoted but the sense is retained. The design of quoting it is to justify the principle on which the apostle acted. It was revealed that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles; and he regarded it as a high honour to be the instrument of carrying this prediction into effect. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary).

Had no news - the pagan, idol worshipping Gentiles were totally in spiritual darkness, as Paul had reminded the predominantly Gentile saints at Ephesus writing...

Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands-- remember that you were at that time **separate** from Christ, **excluded** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** to the covenants of promise, **having no hope** and **without God** in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who **formerly were far off** have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:11, 12, 13-see notes Ep 2:11; 12; 13)

In the original verse (Isaiah 52:15) **"they who had no news"** is **"many nations"** referring to **"many Gentiles"** which implies the harvest of Gentile converts will be abundant ("many").

Note that this section of Isaiah 52 is a poor chapter break. A more logical break would included (Isaiah 52:13) at the beginning of Isaiah 53...

Isaiah 52:13 "Behold, My **Servant** (the Messiah) will prosper. **He** will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted". 14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so **His** appearance was marred more than any man, and **His** form more than the sons of men.15 Thus **He** will sprinkle (same verb used in Lev 16:19) many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of **Him**; **for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.**"

Isaiah 53:1-12 follows with the amazing prophecy of the **suffering Servant**, the fullest and clearest exposition of the of the substitutionary sacrificial death of Christ in all of Scripture.

Related Resource

- Verse by verse Comments on Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Had...news (312) (**anaggello/anangelo** from **aná** = again, back, repetition {like our English prefix "**re-**"= again thus "**re-**port" or "**re-**hearse" = to say again} + **aggéllō** = tell, declare related to **áγγελος** = messenger) means to bring back word and later to announce, to report. To rehearse, to show, to declare or tell of things done. **Anaggello** means to carry back good tidings, to inform, to provide information, with some contexts conveying the implication of considerable detail (see Acts 14:27, 15:4). In the 14 NT uses of **anaggello**, notice that most report or announce something that has to do with God, including His works and/or purposes.

Anaggello - 14x - John 4:25; 5:15; 16:13, 14, 15; Acts 14:27; 15:4; 19:18; 20:20, 27; Rom 15:21; 2 Cor 7:7; 1 Pet 1:12; 1 John 1:5

Although the Gentiles in the OT for the most part had "no report" or "announcement" of the gospel, this prophecy by Isaiah clearly predicted they would see and understand the gospel some day. Paul's ministry to Gentiles served as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Pastor Ray Stedman has some piercing comments regarding **evangelism: Do you have trouble obeying the Great Commission?** I find so many Christians who are seemingly ineffective in this matter of being a witness. They hear, over and over, the words of Christ, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" {Mk 16:15 KJV}, and yet they are never able to witness to anyone. Do you have that trouble obeying the Great Commission? It is quite possible that you have had that trouble because you have never realized that the motive that drives us out to seek the lost is never the imperative of a divine command -- that isn't enough. That is enough authority, but it isn't enough motive, it isn't enough ability. The motive that drives us out to seek the lost is not the imperative of a divine command, it is the impulse of an indwelling presence. It isn't the world's need that calls us out to the regions beyond, it is the love of Christ which constrains us; that is what Paul says {2Co 5:14}. This is the ministry, you see, that is effective, and that which will indeed make us become witness of his grace. "We cannot but speak of what God had done for us" {cf, Acts 4:20}, the early disciples said: "We can't do anything else -- we have become so filled and captured by what he is to us, by all the ability that he can give to us, and by all the adequacy that he is through us to meet every situation that comes to us -- we can't help saying something about it!" That is the impulse that makes us witness. ([The Minister of Jesus Christ](#)) (Bold added)

They who have not heard - the Gentiles who were "strangers to the covenants of promise", etc Eph 2:11, 12)

It had been foretold in [Isa 52:15] that Christ would be preached to the Gentiles and to those who had never heard of his name. [Mt 13:13, 14, 15](#).

Paul was writing for the instruction of both the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians at Rome, understanding that both would be reading his letter. It is interesting that Paul quotes this verse & states in essence that his ministry to the Gentiles was actually the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Understand ([4920](#)) (**suniami** from **sun** ([4862](#)) together + **hiemi** = to send or put) literally means "to put together". The basic idea is "to put facts together and thus arrive at an understanding." (Click word study of the related noun sunesis)

Suniami speaks of the comprehending activity of the mind which entails the assembling of individual facts into an organized whole. The idea is analogous to collecting the pieces of a puzzle and putting them together so that the completed picture makes sense. In the context of (Ro 15:20, 21) the "pieces of the puzzle" are the message of the Gospel (the "pieces" of which most of the Jews could not "put together"). "The completed picture" is the man who is saved by understanding and believing in the gospel (see note Romans 1:16). In sum, **suniami** refers to the Gentile's ability to **understand** the Gospel.

In a sad paradox, Jesus used **suniami** in describing the failure of the His own people, the Jews (cf John 1:11), to **understand** the gospel declaring...

Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, "YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT **UNDERSTAND** (**suniami**) AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE (quoting Isaiah 6:9, 10) FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM. (Mt 13:13, 14, 15)

Romans 15:22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: Dio kai enekoptomen (1SIPI) ta polla tou elthein (AAN) pros humas

Amplified: This [ambition] is the reason why I have so frequently been hindered from coming to visit you. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: In fact, my visit to you has been delayed so long because I have been preaching in these places. [NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: Wherefore, also, I was hindered many times from coming unto you,

FOR THIS REASON I HAVE OFTEN BEEN HINDERED FROM COMING TO YOU: Dio kai enekoptomen (1SIPI) ta polla tou elthein (AAN) pros humas:

- Ro 1:13; 1Th 2:17,18

For this reason (See discussion of **term of conclusion**)([1352](#)) (**dio**) is a term of conclusion and looks backward in this case. When you see this phrase always stop and ask "What reason?" Paul had just explained why he has not yet come to Rome. He explains in essence that *"I have been so entirely occupied in this leading purpose of my life, that I have not been able to come to you."* Throbbing in Paul's heart was a passion and yearning to reach out to all men everywhere to those who had never heard the gospel for that was his calling. He was called to be an **apostle** (a sent one) to the unexplored, the untouched regions of earth, carrying the name and good news of the Risen Christ. That was his calling.

In sum, the clear call to preach the Gospel to "Gentile fields" that were white unto harvest and had never even heard the name of "Jesus" ("Jehovah saves"), was the principal reason Paul had postponed visiting Rome. We should all be so "hindered"!

Often been hindered - much hindered, many times

Using the same verb Paul informed the Thessalonians that

we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit-- were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan **thwarted** (egkopto) us." (1Th 2:17, 18-see **note** 1The 2:17; 18)

Paul depicted the devil as somehow obstructing his strong desire to revisit Thessalonica. Here in Romans 15, he does not state "the devil made me do it" regarding his repeatedly being hindered from coming to Rome. The context explains that in his desire to sow the gospel seed in virgin territory, Paul had been too occupied to get to Rome in the past and that was the reason (**for this reason**) he was hindered.

Hindered ([1465](#)) (**egkopto/enkopto** from **en** = in + **kópto** = cut down, strike) means to knock or cut into, to impede one's course by cutting off his way; and hence to hinder, impede, thwart or interrupt. It means to make progress slow or difficult.

In classic Greek **egkopto** was used as a military term meaning to cut in on, throw obstacles in the way of, dig a trench, or break up a road so that normal movement is impossible. One of the countermeasures an ancient army would take against the opposition was to dig a massive trench that would prevent enemy troops from reaching its men. Another way to frustrate the enemy's progress would be to tear up a brick or stone road so that he could not traverse it.

In sum, **egkopto** means to interfere with the activity or progress of something, the word **hindered** stressing harmful and/or annoying delay or interference.

The **imperfect tense** of **egkopto** indicates continuation, and the **passive voice** indicates that the cause was from an outside source (in context this source would be the work of ministry although this does not preclude other sources of hindrance). The imperfect tense could be translated "I was being hindered over and over".

Egkopto is used of hindering one's Christian walk...

Galatians 5:7 You were running well; who **hindered** you from obeying the truth?

Peter uses **egkopto** to describe the ineffective prayer life of a husband who mistreats his wife...

1 Peter 3:7 (note) You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be **hindered**.

Middletown Bible asks...

Why was he hindered? He could not come until he had fully preached and fulfilled his ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum (v.19). But having fulfilled this task in those regions "he is now free to cast his missionary eyes on more distant horizons" (Murray) ([Reference](#))

Romans 15:23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: nuni de meketi topon echon (PAPMSN) en tois klimasi toutois, epipothian de echon (PAPMSN) tou elthein (AAN) pros humas apo pollon eton

Amplified: But now since I have no further opportunity for work in these regions, and since I have longed for enough years to come to you, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: and now, no longer having place in these parts, and having a longing to come unto you for many years,

BUT NOW WITH NO FURTHER PLACE FOR ME IN THESE REGIONS: nuni de meketi topon echon (PAPMSN) en tois klimasi toutois:

But now - Introduces a contrast. Having completed his work from Jerusalem to Illyricum, **now** he desires to move west to fulfill his calling to the Gentiles.

Place (5117) (**topos**) means territory, land, a defined place, an area. Figuratively (as in the present use) **topos** means an opportunity or occasion (cf Ro 12:19-note)

These regions - He is referring to Asia and associated Roman provinces in modern day Turkey ([See map](#)), as well as to the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. It was time now to advance the Gospel to the west (using Rome as base camp and moving on to Spain - see notes on Paul's "missionary vision" in Acts 19:21).

Paul set a dynamic example for every minister and teacher of the gospel to stay where he is and complete the job God called him to do—despite the enormity of the task and great difficulties. Paul was saying that he had now completed his task and finished his work in the eastern aspects of the Roman Empire. He had fought a good fight and finished his course. What a convicting example Paul is to so many ministers who long to flee instead of facing the problems and meeting the needs of God's people.

AND SINCE I HAVE HAD FOR MANY YEARS A LONGING TO COME TO YOU: epipothian de echon (PAPMSN) tou elthein (AAN) pros humas apo pollon eton:

- Ro 15:32; 1:10-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 2 Timothy 1:4
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

Longing (1974) (**epipothia** from **epi** = an intensifier or marking direction of the desire [**epi** = upon] + **potheo** = to yearn) (see study of related word **epipotheo**) refers to an earnest or strong desire for, a great longing, an intense craving to possess or having a great affection for. This is the only NT use of epipothis

The verb **epipotheo** was a favorite word with Paul and here describes his continual (the modifying verb **have** is in the **present tense**) natural yearning of personal affection for the saints at Rome.

Romans 15:24 whenever I go to Spain --for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: os an poreuomai (1SPMS) eis ten Spanian; elpizo (1SPAI) gar diaporeuomenos (PMPMSN) theasasthai (AMN) humas kai uph' humon propemphthenai (APN) ekei ean humon proton apo merous emplestho (1SAPS)

Amplified: I hope to see you in passing [through Rome] as I go [on my intended trip] to Spain, and to be aided on my journey there by you, after I have enjoyed your company for a little while. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can send me on my way again. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: when I may go on to Spain I will come unto you, for I hope in going through, to see you, and by you to be set forward thither, if of you first, in part, I shall be filled.

WHENEVER I GO TO SPAIN: os an poreuomai (1SPMS) eis ten Spanian:

- Ro 15:28; Acts 19:21
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

Paul had a world-wide vision. He longed and ached to reach the outer limits of the world. In the days of Paul, the western borders of Spain were considered the outposts of the civilized world. He was consumed with the passion to reach every man, woman, and child with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ who had died for them.

Sproul observes that...

Here we find the heartbeat of an evangelist, the heartbeat of a missionary, one who wants to go to those people who have never heard the gospel. Paul was a pioneer missionary. He loved to go where no one had ever labored, where he had to start from scratch, where he had to announce the gospel of God from the beginning point. (The Gospel of God: Romans)

Many Christians think that God gives His orders directly to them while they are moving. They think of the Christian life as going on automatic pilot, where they just float around, waiting for orders as they go. They never think of planning or looking ahead. But Paul did not live like that. For many years he had longed to go to Spain, and he planned to do so.

Barclay writes that...

At this time Spain was experiencing a kind of blaze of genius. Many of the greatest men in the Empire were Spaniards. Lucan, the epic poet, Martial, the master of the epigram, Quintilian, the greatest teacher of oratory of his day, were all Spaniards. Above all, Seneca, the great Stoic philosopher, who was first the guardian and afterwards the prime minister of Nero, was a Spaniard. It may well be that Paul was saying to himself that if only he could touch Spain for Christ tremendous things might happen. ([Barclay, W.: The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

Spain was on the far western side of the continent and had become a major center of commerce and culture, made accessible by way of the renowned Roman roads. Ruins of impressive Roman architecture still exist there today. At the farthest end of the Mediterranean, Spain was considered by geographers such as Strabo to be at the end of the earth with India on the opposite, eastern side of the world!

Moo comments that...

Parts of Spain (which in the ancient world included all the Iberian peninsula) had been occupied by Rome since about 200 B.C.; but it was only in Paul's lifetime that the Romans had fully organized the entire area.

Hughes writes:

David Livingstone was cut out of the same mold as the Apostle Paul. When Livingstone volunteered as a missionary with the London Missionary Society and they asked him where he wanted to go, he replied, "Anywhere, so long as it is forward." Paul dreamed impossible dreams. This was fundamental to the greatness of Paul as a missionary, for dreams always precede action.

FOR I HOPE TO SEE YOU IN PASSING AND TO BE HELPED ON MY WAY THERE BY YOU, WHEN I HAVE FIRST ENJOYED YOUR COMPANY FOR A WHILE: elpizo (1SPA)I gar diaporeuomenos (PMPMSN) theasasthai (AMN) humas kai uph humon propemphthenai (APN) ekei ean humon proton apo merous empletho (1SAPS):

- Acts 15:3; 21:5; 2 Cor 1:16; 3 Jn 1:6
- Ro 1:12; 1 Cor 16:5, 6, 7
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

For (gar) is a [term of explanation](#) which should always prompt a pause to ponder what is being explained.

I hope (1679)(elpizo) is used here in the sense of counting on something or looking forward to it and may also convey the sense of being confident that it will come to pass.

In passing (1279) (diaporeuomai) from **dia** = through + **poros** = a passing or passage a ford Eng. = pore) means literally to pass through and describes one's movement from one part or locality to another within a geographical area. In some uses means to travel throughout an area (Acts 16:4).

Guzik writes that "Paul had these plans; yet things did not work out according to his plans. He did go to Rome, yet not as a

missionary on his way to Spain. He went to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar, where he would preach the gospel on a different kind of frontier.. God had unexpected frontiers for the Gospel in Paul's life, giving him unexpected access to preach to the emperor of Rome himself. After his release from the Roman imprisonment at the end of the Book of Acts, we have reason to believe that Paul did in fact make it to Spain and preached the gospel there. (The Enduring Word Commentary Series)

Barnes comments that "Ancient Spain comprehended the modern kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, or the whole of the Spanish peninsula. It was then subject to the Romans. It is remarkable, even here, that the apostle does not say that his principal object was to visit the church at Rome, much as he desired that, but only to take it in his way in the fulfillment of his higher purpose to preach the gospel in regions where Christ was not named. Whether he ever fulfilled his purpose of visiting Spain is a matter of doubt. Some of the ("early church") fathers, Theodoret (Php 1:25-note; 2Ti 4:17-note) among others, say that after he was released from his captivity, when he was brought before Nero, he passed two years in Spain. If he was imprisoned a second time at Rome, such a visit is not improbable as having taken place between the two imprisonments. But there is no certain evidence of this. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

To be helped (4311) (**propempo** from **pró** = before + **pémpo** = to send) literally means to send on before or to send forward or forth. In the New Testament **propempo** is used in a specific technical sense of the custom in the early church of furnishing an escort, as well as supplies, for someone being sent out to minister in a distant field.

The custom of the early churches was to assist the missionaries, as Luke documents writing...

Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. (Acts 15:3+)

And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. (Acts 17:14+)

Paul expected the saints in Rome to bring him on his way to Spain (to provide what was needed for his journey).

As **Newell** rightly notes "Thus was the Gospel 'furthered' in those days,---yea, and even yet! For we find today companies of saints who by prayer and gifts, send the preach on to other fields!

Enjoyed (filled up)(1705) (**empiplemi** from **en** = in + **pímplemi** = to fill) means to satisfy, to fill, to fill in or up or to make full. Literally **empiplemi** referred to being filled or satiated with food. The expression to be filled with one, in the sense of being gratified, was sometimes used by the classic writers. The metaphorical sense then is used in this verse, the idea being that Paul desired to enjoy (be satiated with) the society or communion of the believing brethren at Rome. Paul did not shun fellowship and knew that "no man is an island", but continually sought and was encouraged by contact with other believers, a good model for us today.

Paul is contemplating a more extensive missionary journey than any before undertaken. He will return to Jerusalem with the collection from Greece, and then, on his way to Spain, he will visit the Roman Christians. Although those plans were revised by imprisonment in Jerusalem, the end result was the same: Paul saw Rome (cf. Acts 28:1-31+). Strong tradition and some evidence suggest that after release from prison in Rome he did travel to Spain in missionary activity - interesting. Won't it be fun speaking with Paul in Heaven!

Romans 15:25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: nuni de poreuomai (1SPMI) eis Ierousalem diakonon (PAPMSN) tois agiois.

Amplified: For the present, however, I am going to Jerusalem to bring aid (relief) for the saints (God's people there). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: But before I come, I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Christians there. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And, now, I go on to Jerusalem, ministering to the saints;

BUT NOW I AM GOING TO JERUSALEM SERVING THE SAINTS: Nuni de poreuomai (1SPMI) eis Ierousalem diakonon (PAPMSN) tois hagiois:

- Ro 15:26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; Acts 18:21; 19:21; 20:16,22; 24:17; 1Corinthians 16:1, 2, 3; Galatians 2:10
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

But now As much as Paul longed to preach the gospel in Rome and Spain, there was a more immediate need pressing in upon him—a need of enormous proportion. Even as he writes Paul pictures himself on his way to Jerusalem (present tense). Before Paul could take his trip to Spain by way of Rome, he first had to minister to the Jewish saints at Jerusalem. Paul did not forget what he was told by Peter, James and John when they encouraged him to go to the Gentiles but to never forget the poor (cf Gal 2:10)

Paul mentions this intended journey in Acts...

Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." (Acts 19:21)

(In Paul's defense before Felix) "Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings (Acts 24:17)

The saints at "**Jerusalem**" at the time Paul wrote this letter were suffering not only great persecution but great poverty. **John MacArthur** explains that

There was a famine throughout Palestine, and because of persecution by unbelieving Jews, many Christian men lost their jobs and many others were put in prison, making bad conditions still worse for their families. In addition to that, many foreign Jews who were visiting Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost were converted to Christ and decided to remain in the city, usually as guests of believers who lived there. (MacArthur, J. Romans. Chicago: Moody Press)

Serving (1247) (**diakoneo** [word study]) (Click word study of the noun form diakonia) which pictures carrying out of menial (lacking interest or dignity - ignominious, lowly) and mundane activities as waiting on tables or caring for household needs, activities without apparent dignity. In a sense Paul did "wait on tables" for he humbly set the table for both Jew and Gentile unbelievers with the Bread of Life, the Gospel of their salvation. Some ate and were changed eternally. Others refused to eat from the table he set and were judged eternally.

Since service associated with the word **diakonia** necessarily involved dependence, submission, and constraints of time and freedom, the Greeks regarded **diakonia** as degrading and dishonorable. Service for the public good was honored, but

voluntary giving of oneself in service of one's fellow man is alien to Greek thought. The highest goal before a man was the development of his own personality.

In Greek eyes, **diakonia service** is not very dignified. Ruling and not service is proper to a man. The formula of the sophist expressed the basic Greek attitude: "How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?" expresses the basic Greek attitude. For the Greek in his wisdom and freedom there can certainly be no question of existing to serve others.

Paul on the other hand was a called out, Spirit possessed man on a mission from His Lord and was not above any task for as he readily acknowledged he was not His own and his ambition whether at home (in the presence of Jesus) or absent (from the body) was to be pleasing to Him...

Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (Why? Read on)
For we must all appear before the judgment seat (**bema**) of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2Cor 5:9, 10).

Saints (40) (**hagios**) ("set apart ones", "separated ones," "sanctified ones," "holy ones") is literally a holy one and depending on the context refers to whoever or whatever is set apart (sanctified) for a special purpose. In the New Testament, **saints** are (positionally) holy ones both in character and conduct having been set apart by God to be exclusively His, to be dedicated to Him and (enabled by the indwelling **HOLY** Spirit) are called to manifest (experientially) holiness of heart and conduct in contrast to the impurity of the godless pagans. Saints are set aside for sacred use by God (cf notes on "a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." 2Ti 2:21-note)

Romans 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: eudokesan (3PAAI) gar Makedonia kai Achaia koinonian tina poiesasthai (AAN) eis tous ptochous ton agion ton en Ierousalem.

Amplified: For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make some contribution for the poor among the saints of Jerusalem. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: For you see, the believers in Greece have eagerly taken up an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem,

who are going through such hard times. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: for it pleased Macedonia and Achaia well to make a certain contribution for the poor of the saints who are in Jerusalem;

FOR MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA HAVE BEEN PLEASED TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION: gar eudokesan (3PAAI) gar Makedonia kai Achaia koinonian tina poiesasthai (AAN):

- Acts 11:27, 28, 29, 30; 2 Co 8:1-9; Galatians 6:6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

For explains why Paul is going to Jerusalem. To take the collection from the Roman provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, which were predominantly Gentile to Jerusalem which is obviously predominantly Jewish. [2Co 8:1-24 to 2Cor 9:15] The Gentiles are indebted to the Jews (Jn 4:22). And that debt is paid by praying for them (Ps 122:6), witnessing to them in love, and sharing our material gifts to assist them.

Macedonia and Achaia - Macedonia was a country of Greece, bounded north by Thrace, south by Thessaly, west by Epirus, and east by the Aegean Sea. It was an extensive region, and was the kingdom of Philip, and his son Alexander the Great. Its capital was Philippi, at which place Paul planted a church. A church had also been planted at Thessalonica, another major city of Macedonia. **Achaia** was a province of Greece, embracing the western part of the Peloponnesus, of which Corinth was the capital. The saints in Achaia had been concerned regarding the collection Paul writing...

for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the **Macedonians**, namely, that **Achaia** has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. (2Cor 9:2)

Pleased (2106) (**eudokeo** from **eú** = well, good + **dokéo** = think) means literally to think well of and thus to approve of or take pleasure in. From its usual sense "to take pleasure or delight in," a further sense evolved meaning "to decide for," "to select," "to prefer," and from this evolved the sense "to want," "to will," "to be willing or ready." This latter meaning is the emphasis in this passage. In reference to the charitable giving, Paul makes it clear that the Gentile's gift was a freewill offering. The Gentile believers were **pleased** to give such a gift to the suffering Jewish believers in Judea. They did it voluntarily. They did it **willingly**, not out of compulsion.

Writing to the church at Corinth Paul amplifies on the giving practices of the believers in Macedonia and Achaia explaining that he wished...

.to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of **participation (koinonia)** in the **support** (diakonia = service) of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. ([2Cor 8:1-9](#))

Their attitude in giving is summed up in Paul's exhortation... (2 Cor 9:7):

Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2Cor 9:7 cf Pr 14:21,31)

Contribution (2842) (**koinonia** from **koinos** = common, shared by all) refers to a sharing of one's possessions, with the implication of joint participation and mutual interest. **Koinonia** describes the experience (in contrast to koinonia as an **act**) of having in common or sharing with and describes an association involving close mutual interests and sharing. **Koinonia** is joint participation and cooperation in a common interest and activity.

Paul's choice of **koinonia** points to something more than money. The money was not a "soulless" gift, but the outward expression of and sharing of the deep love that binds Christian brethren in one body. (cf Paul's similar use of **koinonia** in [2Cor 8:4, 9:13](#)).

In short in this verse **koinonia** speaks of the Gentile saints participating jointly or having fellowship in the sending of the money to the Jewish saints in Jerusalem and of having fellowship with them in their necessities by making these necessities their own.

IVP Background Commentary notes that...

The poor became a title for the pious of Judea in some circles (especially members of the Qumran community)—perhaps mainly because most of them were poor. Jewish teachers considered the laws requiring care for the poor to be a major test of whether a Gentile convert had genuinely accepted God's law. Sending money to Jerusalem was a common Jewish practice in the Mediterranean, especially with regard to the annual temple tax. Jews throughout the world expressed their solidarity with Jerusalem and the homeland through the temple tax; here the Gentile Christian offering for Jerusalem expresses solidarity between Gentile and Jewish Christianity. This is a practical example of humble racial reconciliation, important to Paul's case in Romans. ([Keener, Craig: The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament. 1994. IVP](#))

FOR THE POOR AMONG THE SAINTS IN JERUSALEM: eis tous ptochous ton hagion ton en Ierousalem

- Proverbs 14:21,31; 17:5; Zechariah 11:7,11; Matthew 25:40; 26:11; Luke 6:20; 14:13; 1Corinthians 16:15; 2Corinthians 9:12; Philemon 1:5; James 2:5,6
- [Romans 15 Resources - Multiple sermons and commentaries](#)

Among the saints in Jerusalem - Barnes comments that...

The Christians who were in Judea were exposed to peculiar trials. They were condemned by the Sanhedrim, opposed by the rulers, and persecuted by the people. See Acts 8:1 (*And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*), Acts 12:1 (*Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them.*), etc. Paul sought not only to relieve them by this contribution, but also to promote fellow-feeling between them and the Gentile Christians. And this circumstance would tend much to enforce what he had been urging in Romans 14 and 15 on the duty of kind feeling between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. Nothing tends so much to wear off prejudice, and to prevent unkind feeling in regard to others, as to see about some purpose to do them good, or to unite with them in doing good. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Note that it is not beneath the apostle to give material help. He is not going up to Jerusalem to preach but to bring material aid. Christianity involves tangible temporal aid as well as the eternal Gospel.

Poor (4434) (**ptochos** from **ptosso** = crouch, which is a picture of one crouching and cowering like a beggar with a tin cup to receive the pennies dropped in) means poor and helpless and by implication can refer to those who are low, humble, of low estate and can sometimes include the idea of being afflicted or distressed. **Ptochos** indicates complete helplessness. Therefore, **ptochos** is sometimes translated "beggar" because of the helplessness of the individual, begging being the only means of survival.

Paul's choice of **ptochos** clearly speaks of a situation of extreme need by at least some of the saints in Jerusalem.

Classical Greek used the **ptochos** to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized.

Ptochos describes not simply honest poverty, and the struggle of the laboring man to make ends meet but also describes abject poverty, which has literally nothing and which is in imminent danger of real starvation.

Ptochos is used to describe "a **poor** man named Lazarus" (Lk 16:20, Lk 16:22;) and "a **poor** widow" (Lk 21:3)

Jesus' taught the rich young ruler that he should sell all he possessed and "distribute it to the **poor** (**ptochos**)" (Lk 18:22)

Middletown Bible has addresses an interesting question...

Why were the Jerusalem saints in such dire straits? We know that in the early days of the church the Jews in Jerusalem sold and shared their possessions: "They that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44, 45). This implies that even at this time there were needy believers. Persecution was probably the main reason for the poverty of so many. Throughout church history, believing Jews have been persecuted by their own people, disowned by their own families and ostracized from Jewish society. A foretaste of this is found in John 9:34, 35 (the man born blind was cast out of the synagogue, see also John 9:22), reminding us that when men cast us

out, the Lord Jesus is waiting to receive us (see also John 6:37). For a more recent heart-touching account of how a believing Jew is disowned by his own family, see our booklet, [Charlie Coulson, Drummer Boy](#) (about a Jewish surgeon at the Battle of Gettysburg who found Christ in a remarkable way). Another reason for the poverty of the Jerusalem Jews was a severe famine that seriously affected Palestine and because of this famine "every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea" (Acts 11:27, 28, 29, 30). ([Reference](#))

Barclay notes that...

In Greek there are two words for **poor**. There is the word **penēs**. **Penēs** describes a man who has to work for his living the man for whom life and living is a struggle, the man who is the reverse of the man who lives in affluence. **Penēs** is defined by the Greeks as describing the man who is **autodiakonos**, that is, the man who serves his own needs with his own hands. **Penēs** describes the working man, the man who has nothing superfluous, the man who is not rich, but who is not destitute either. But, as we have seen, it is not **penēs** that is used in this beatitude, it is **ptōchos**, which describes absolute and abject poverty. It is connected with the root **ptossein**, which means to crouch or to cower; and it describes the poverty which is beaten to its knees. As it has been said, **penēs** describes the man who has nothing superfluous; **ptōchos** describes the man who has nothing at all. So this beatitude becomes even more surprising. Blessed is the man who is abjectly and completely poverty-stricken. Blessed is the man who is absolutely destitute. (Barclay, W: [The Gospel of Matthew The New Daily Study Bible Westminster John Knox Press](#))

Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher, was once invited by a wealthy man to come down and preach in a country church in order to help them raise funds to pay a debt. The man told Spurgeon he was free to use his country house, his town house, or his seaside home. Spurgeon wrote back and said, "Sell one of the places and pay the debt yourself." That is how practical he was.