

# Romans 15:23-29

## Plans



*Context* – vs. 20 – Paul wanted to carry the gospel and begin churches in places where the gospel had never been heard before. He was a bit of an explorer and adventurer. But he felt he had been just about everywhere and had actually started perhaps dozens of churches in the major cities of Southeastern Europe and Asia Minor.



**Vs. 23** - Now it appears that he had both run out of new places to tell of Jesus, and had worn out his welcome in most of the places he had been. He had made a lot of enemies wherever he had gone - governors, city officials, priests, gospel-resistant Jews, merchants.

**[1 Cor. 4:11-13;  
2 Cor. 6:4-10;  
2 Cor. 11:23-33]**





ITALY

Rome  
 Forum of Appianus?  
 Forum of Trajanus?

Tarracena  
 Puteoli  
 Neapolis  
 Pompeii  
 Brundisium  
 Paestum  
 Tarentum  
 Buxetum

Syracuse  
 Croton  
 Rhegium  
 Messina  
 Panormus

SICILY  
 Agrigentinum  
 Catania  
 Syracuse

Malta  
 (Melita)

D

Cyrene  
 Leptis Magna

AFRICA

ILLYRIUM

MACEDONIA

ACHAIA

Patrae  
 Elis  
 Corinth  
 Delphi  
 Olympia  
 Pylos  
 Sparta

Crete  
 Knossos  
 Fair Haven

LIBYA

LIBYA  
 Cyrenaica

MOESIA

THRACE

PERGAMUM

LYCIA

CRETE

EGYPT

EGYPT

ASIA

PHILADELPHIA  
 EPHESUS  
 LAODICEA

AMPHYLIA

RHODES

CRETE

EGYPT

EGYPT

BITHYNIA & PONTUS  
 GALATIA

AMPHYLIA

AMPHYLIA

CYPRUS

EGYPT

EGYPT

CAPPADOCIA

AMPHYLIA

AMPHYLIA

AMPHYLIA

AMPHYLIA

AMPHYLIA

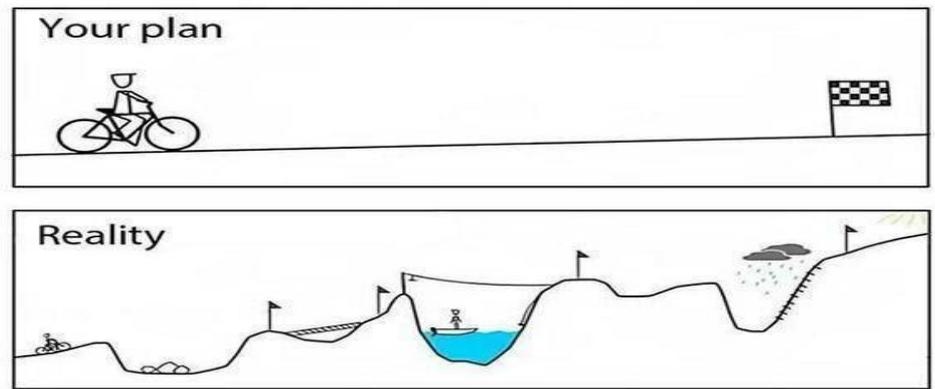


Paul never made it to Rome on this trip. He would suddenly become obsessed with going to his homeland. Although he grew up outside of Judea's borders, (Tarsus) he felt a bond with his people and was compelled to present the gospel of Jesus in Judea one last time – one more try! It would be his *fifth* trip to Jerusalem, each previous one being met with increasing hostility. This time, he would be marching into the lion's mouth and everyone that knew and loved him knew it! In the entire world, there was no more fierce resistance to the gospel of Christ than in Judea! When it happened, even Paul knew that this was going to be his grand finale, his farewell tour, his last go-around, his final roundup, his swan song, his going out with a bang,.. and then in all likely hood, a painful and fearful end! He was feeling his advancing age now and it seems obvious that he was determined that he should not die of natural causes if he could help it!



Contrast how you would prefer to die?

He is writing to them as if this trip to Jerusalem was routine – no big deal. There is no question that in the letter to the Roman church Paul was trying to downplay the dangers he knew he would face. He writes as if he didn't have a worry or care in the world. He did not want them to worry. But when he finally came to them, history tells us that he came to them as a prisoner of the Roman government.



While we are busy making plans, God is in charge of what actually happens next! He changes plans! He has plans too, and His plans trump our plans! Are you okay with that?

Vs. 25 - Paul has made plans after his trip to Jerusalem to visit Spain before going on to Rome. But the plans do not work out. He will be taken for his own protection and transported under armed guard to Caesarea on the coast. There he will be held in limbo for 2 years. When the governor plans to ship him back to Jerusalem for trial Paul knows he will never survive, much less get a fair trial. He invokes his Roman citizenship, demanding his right to have his case heard in Rome. He is taken there by ship, and along the way shipwrecked on the island of Malta, and where he remains for 3 months during the notoriously bad weather. Then he is taken on to Rome where under house arrest he awaits trial for 2 years before the case seems to dissolve and he is released. He then lives as a free man for another 2 years, spending time in Ephesus and a couple of other cities that we know of. He goes on to Spain, and somewhere around the end of two years is arrested again and transported back to Rome where, after a period of two to three more years of confinement, he is executed (beheaded) in late AD 66 or early 67 at the behest of the emperor Nero.



**Vs. 25** - “...*for the service of the saints there*”. He was trying so hard to join the Jews and gentiles into one church rather than two. He was certainly hoping to do more than provide for the poorer Christians in Jerusalem. By bringing a generous offering of gentile money for Jewish-Christian poor, he was trying to build bridges between gentiles and  
Jews!



**Vs. 27** – Paul was trying to build into the gentile churches a sense of salvation history, and in that historical context, a sense of gratitude. Thus the offering for the Jerusalem church that was collected from the churches in northern and southern Greece.



He wanted an acknowledgment from the gentile believers that the Jews held a unique place in salvation history and should be held in honor. At the same time, he wanted Jewish believers to acknowledge that the gentiles were legitimate and equal partners in the gospel purposes of God. In that way they could pull together (a rowing metaphor) in unison, instead of the chaos of racial tension.

To what lengths would you go to discourage division and promote unity in the church between people that seem to have developed antipathy toward each other, that are disagreeing disagreeably, that do not like each other?! Why bother?



Disunity is harmful to the purposes of God in and through the church! The intent of Jesus was to build a team of people that loved each other unconditionally – a team called “the church”! They were to be that shining “city on a hill”, a beacon of light that caught and held the attention of the world!

***“All men will know you are my disciples if you...***

...go to church faithfully

... know the Bible well

... have a great family life

... give money and time to good causes

... pray a lot (and even fast)

... simply tell them you are a disciple of Christ

... don't follow the more extreme cultural trends

... don't drink, smoke, gamble, watch TV, or care about the latest electronic devices

... are an honest person with good morals

... don't use swear words or vulgarities

...



