

1. Making plans – The future mapped out.

RO 15:23 But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, ²⁴ I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.

Only by taking into account the restless pioneer spirit of Paul can we understand how he could claim to have "no more place . . . to work" in the regions where he had been laboring. Plenty of communities had been left unvisited and several groups of believers could have profited from a visit, but his eyes were now on the western horizon (see [Ac 19:21](#)).

His mention of "many years" suggests his desire to go to Rome had been born even earlier, though not crystallized into resolve until the successes at Ephesus showed him that a move to more needy fields was in order.

Others could carry on after he had laid the foundation.

Now a still more remote objective than Rome comes into view: Spain (v. 24), the frontier of the empire on the west. Thus his stay in Rome will be limited. Though Paul looks forward to fellowship with the believers there (cf. [1:11-12](#)), he hopes to go beyond. Openly, he announces his hope that the Roman church will assist him in making the Spanish campaign a reality. This sharing will naturally include their prayers on his behalf, their financial cooperation, and possibly some helpers to go with him. If Paul were ever to reach Spain, he would no doubt feel that he had realized in his own ministry a measure of fulfillment of the Lord's Great Commission ([Mt 28:18-20](#); [Ac 1:8](#)). Whether Paul actually reached Spain is not certain.

Planning is valid – it is essential in this day and age. It is important for us to know where we are going.

2. Care is more than looking after our own. It's about the Kingdom of God.

²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

The contemplated trip to Spain by way of Rome will have to be postponed, however, until another mission is accomplished, namely, his impending visit to Jerusalem. So three geographical points lie commingled in the mind of the apostle: Rome as the goal of much praying, hoping, and planning; Jerusalem as the necessary stop on the way; and Spain as the ultimate objective. Obviously the journey to Jerusalem was critical in his thinking; otherwise, the lure of the West might take precedence over everything else. So Paul explains just how important this trip to the mother church is, so that his readers will understand that he is not dilatory about visiting them.

The principal reason, for remaining in the East so long is the situation necessitating this final trip to Jerusalem. Paul's churches were made up mainly of Gentile converts. While the Jewish-Christian element in the church had an interest in the growing work among the Gentiles (Ac 11:21-22; 15:4), some were concerned that these Gentiles were not being required to accept circumcision in accordance with the OT provision for receiving proselytes into Israel (Ex 12:48) and were not keeping the various OT laws, such as avoiding unclean foods (Ac 15:1, 5). A further concern was the rapid growth of the Gentile churches, while growth in Jerusalem and Judea had diminished because of persecution and other factors. Jewish believers might be outnumbered before long.

As the leading apostle to the Gentiles, Paul found this situation troubling.

What could be done to cement relations between the Jewish and Gentile elements in the church?

He felt that the answer might well lie in a great demonstration of love and desire for unity on the part of his churches toward the mother church in Jerusalem, using a gift of assistance to the poor Christians there similar to what Barnabas and Paul had brought years before from the Antioch church (Ac 11:27-30). The gratitude of the recipients was real and lived on in the memory of Paul. Perhaps on the quick trip Paul made to Jerusalem as reported in Ac 18:22 he conferred with the leaders of the church there about this plan. At an earlier period he had expressed eagerness to help the leaders at Jerusalem in ministering to their needy (Gal 2:10). Shortly thereafter he began to inform his congregations of the plan and their responsibility to participate in it (1Co 16:1; cf. 2Co 8-9). Soon after writing to the Romans, he prepared for the trip to Jerusalem, accompanied by representatives of the various churches bearing the offerings that had been collected over a period of time (Ac 20:3-4).

Do we owe it to people to look after them ???

3. Finish the task then move on.

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

The completion of the service at Jerusalem would free Paul to make good on his announced purpose to visit the saints at Rome. He looked forward to it as a time when the blessing of Christ would be poured out on all. It would be a time of mutual enrichment in the Lord (cf. Ac 28:15 for the account of his reception by the Christians in Rome).

One thing we need to develop in modern Australian Baptist Churches is a finish the task mentality. We need to complete what we start. Too often I have seen and heard churches changing their focus every couple of years and consequently never seem to achieve what they desire. They jump from one program to the next, Purpose Driven church, purpose driven life, Alpha, Christianity explained, Seeker sensitive services, radical worship. All very good programs and valid, but we need to firstly, give them a chance to work and

secondly, see it through. We need a commitment to our plan, work at achieving the aims and goals, sure we tweek it when it needs it but we need to stay focused on what we have ahead.

I have come to believe that the vision of this church and the plan of this church is to finish what was started when this church was built among the vacant blocks that have become houses and homes. We are to minister to those around us. It was the vision of the church then and I do not believe God has changed that vision. Our mission is among our ministry field. Those out there. We need to be finding ways to service the people of this community.

By that I do not mean bring them to a church service but to be a service to them. I get the feeling in churches these days we have mixed up the meaning of service. We need to service people so they know that Jesus is interested in them.

4. Paul gives us a hint at how. Join the struggle – Pray.

RO 15:30 I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

At the time of writing, Paul was aware of stubborn Jewish opposition to him and his work. The attempt on his life when he was about to leave for Jerusalem ([Ac 20:3](#)) clearly shows that his apprehension was justified. He had experienced deadly peril before and knew that prayer was the great resource in such hazardous times ([2Co 1:10-11](#)). So he requests prayer now, the kind involving wrestling before the throne of grace that the evil designs of other people may be thwarted (cf. [Eph 6:18-20](#)). He strengthens his request by presenting it in the name of the one whom all believers adore--the Lord Jesus Christ--and by adding, "by the love of the Spirit," i.e., by the love that the Spirit has (cf. [5:5](#)). We should never think impersonally of the Spirit, as if he denotes the power of God.

5. **Its about service again** –Paul talks about acceptable service. Last week he wanted non-christians to become acceptable to God now He wants his service to be accepted to people.

31 Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,

He understands that some won't like him or his gift or his message. He wants pray to ask God to change people's hearts before he gets there. We need to be praying that God will work in people's hearts before we get to them, before they get to church.

6. When I am finished –you're next.

32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

33 The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

What's Paul's aim in going to Rome – refreshment for Him and them – again its about service.

It is about completion.

We need to finish our job,
then
look to the next thing.

We are actually in that state as a church. There are things to be done before we move on. Just as Paul was worried about people's reactions to him in Jerusalem – we need to confront some issues. Some people need reconciliation, some need to get off their high horses, some need to just get on with it rather than talking about it.

What is it that you have to complete??

What is it that we have to complete?

Do it.

Other wise we can't move on.