

PERSONAL GLIMPSES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE
(Part Eight – Exposition of Romans 15)

TEXT: Romans 15:22-29

We're beginning to feel like we know the great Apostle Paul as he shares his heart in these closing chapters of his letter to the Roman believers. We can understand what motivated him to be such a tireless worker for Christ. He was a driven man, consumed by his three-fold calling as priest, preacher, and pioneer. He did not judge others who had a "settled" ministry, but he felt very strongly that God had called him to preach the Gospel where Christ had never been named before (v. 20). Therefore he boasted in what God had done through him "to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed" (vv. 17,18).

In verse 22 he cites this unique calling to be a missionary pioneer as the reason he had not yet visited the Roman believers. Paul certainly was not looking for an excuse to avoid them! His explanation in this passage tells a lot about his character. Here we find traits that we would do well to emulate.

OUTLINE: This passage is a commentary on the adage: "Man proposes, but God disposes."

I. God's PROVIDENCE(v. 22; 1:13)

- A. God doesn't always explain why He hinders (Acts 16:7).
- B. God honors pure motives even when He providentially hinders (1:9-13; 2 Chron. 6:8)
 - 1. He may adjust the timing (v. 23).
 - 2. He may allow someone else to do it (2 Chron. 6:9; Deut. 3:25-28).

II. Paul's PLANNING(vv. 23-29)

- A. We should prayerfully and carefully make plans for ministry (vv. 24, 28).
- B. We should finish one job before we start another ("having no more place in these parts")
- C. We should make it a priority to repay our spiritual debts (vv. 25-28).
- D. We should look for spiritual blessings as confirmation of God's direction(v. 29).

CONCLUSION: A famous poet has said, "The best-laid plans of mice and men are apt to go awry." That phrase is often quoted by those who wish to make the observation that we make plans, but they don't always work out. The Apostle went deeper than that here. Paul made plans based on noble spiritual considerations, but he was flexible enough to take back his own agenda if God showed a different one. We need to have the same attitude and policy. Otherwise we will likely be frustrated, discouraged, or unfruitful.