

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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GAINING THE PAUL PERSPECTIVE

Romans 15:23-29

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The title of my message today is “Gaining The Paul Perspective” and I’ll be preaching from Romans 15:23-29.

My three points are as follows:

- The Paul Perspective includes planning for the future
- The Paul Perspective allows for interruptions
- The Paul Perspective knows when to move on

INTRODUCTION: As Paul closed out his letter to the Christians in Rome, he let the readers know his future plans. Paul always had a plan. He was never one to wander around wondering what God’s will was. He knew what God’s will was for his future because he was living in God’s will every day.

No doubt Paul was human and made mistakes, but he didn’t let any of those mistakes take him down. Whatever Paul’s sins, he must have confessed them and kept on going. If there was ever a Christian who was completely committed to sharing the Gospel, it was Paul. He made no compromises and held nothing in reserve. He seemed unstoppable. But Paul knew that he was human and that human lives have a time limit. He knew he wouldn’t live forever, and as you read Paul’s letters in the Bible, you will realize that he was competing with himself in a sense. With the limited time he had on this earth, he did his best to compete with time and win the race.

The proving ground for Paul was that Jesus was the Messiah and would set free from spiritual bondage those who believed. Either God would provide for Paul’s needs as a traveling preacher or he would not.

Paul knew God had called him to share the Gospel and he let everything go to do just that. The proving ground for Paul was that God would and did provide for him.

THE PAUL PERSPECTIVE INCLUDES PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

SCRIPTURE: Romans 15:23-24

But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, ²⁴ I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

EXPLANATION: I like how Paul worded this. He'd worked all the regions around him and had no new place to share the good news of Jesus, so he made plans to go west as far as he could, to Spain. And on the way, he planned to visit the believers in Rome and receive their help and enjoy their fellowship. God had proven himself faithful and Paul was about to step out into the proving grounds one more time and travel farther than he'd ever traveled.

ILLUSTRATION: A friend of ours named Phil Johnsey has the Paul Perspective – he's on a race to compete with the rest of the time he has left to make as much of a difference as he can. Around 2008 or so, he came to my office with this crazy idea about starting churches in Africa. He'd had a dream the night before and was trying to discern whether it was from God or caused by the pizza he ate before he went to bed.

APPLICATION: In our everyday lives, we should be plotting and planning how we will share a good word with someone. We should have a plan, like Paul. How are we planning our futures so that we can have greater impact?

Now, ten years later, Phil's ministry has started over 100 churches, provided education for the pastors, and it feeds thousands of kids per month. And he's still thinking about how much time he has left and how he can better compete with that time limit.

We can conclude his dream came from God and was not caused by pizza!

THE PAUL PERSPECTIVE ALLOWS FOR INTERRUPTIONS

SCRIPTURE: Romans 15:25-27

Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

EXPLANATION: Paul has his share of interruptions: jail time, shipwreck, court – all of them used in significant ways.

Now he was faced with another interruption to his plans. The big “however” in verse 25 indicates that Paul had an interruption. And this interruption came in the form of a blessing. If you look at your Bible maps, you’ll see that Macedonia and Achaia are far from Jerusalem. The further away you get from Jerusalem, the less the concentration of Jews and the more the concentration of the Gentiles.

As the Bible tells us, God’s message started with the Jews and was with them for several thousand years. Some outsiders joined the family of faith, but not many. When Christ came, the Gospel was open to both Jews and Gentiles.

ILLUSTRATION: You must pay attention to get this... the Gentiles came to Christ without all the history the Jews had with God. I’ve talked about this in previous sermons. A rather weak illustration is visualizing a group of people who’ve been in line for a long time and out of nowhere people who had not been standing in line are suddenly right up there with the group – and are completely entitled to be there. That might cause problems, right? Well, it did in some instances, now that the Gentiles had a full inheritance just like the Jews.

EXPLANATION: Now back to the scripture – Gentiles from far away heard of Jews who were poor and gave an offering for Paul to deliver. It is very possible these Jews had become Christians and because of their newfound faith, they had lost their jobs and everything they owned. Keep in mind there were many, many Jews who opposed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is one of the most beautiful happenings in the Scripture – I just love it! Those far off people, once known as filthy pagans, were grateful for their newfound faith in Jesus and wanted to give to the part of the body of Christ that was suffering, which happened to be the Christian Jews in Jerusalem – the historical home of the Jews. Prior to their conversions, the Gentiles would have never thought of giving an offering to the Jews and the Jews certainly would have never received it.

Look how Paul says it: *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.*

ILLUSTRATION: Let's go back to my illustration of the people in line. I am going to change it a bit. One group of people had been in line for a long time to receive a blessing. Another group of people came out of nowhere, had never waited, and now were in line to receive the same blessing. They all found out that there was plenty of blessing to go around. Those who were in line for a long time weren't jealous of those who had just arrived. And those who just joined the line were grateful to be included and decided to share their blessing.

I believe – this is my own personal belief – when the Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia gave an offering and asked Paul to deliver it to the Jews, he knew his work was done in this part of the world. He knew the Gospel would spread because the walls of division had come down. Verses 26 and 27 are only two scriptures, but they are so important.

APPLICATION: Paul had an interruption in his plans! Paul was an evangelist, but now he was delivering an offering. If you've ever known an evangelist, they aren't good at much else. (Ha!) They have one passion and one passion only. Paul's interruption was really a blessing because he saw the proving grounds had proven that haters can change! People who previously hated each other were now giving to each other – and at the same time, they were supporting Paul together.

What Paul preached was now being lived out. He said in Galatians 2:20 -- *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* -- And now that was being lived out by the people he reached.

THE PAUL PERSPECTIVE KNOWS WHEN TO MOVE ON

SCRIPTURE: Romans 15:28-29

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

EXPLANATION: Paul's delay wouldn't be for long. He'd make his delivery and he'd head to Spain. He didn't let anyone else take the offering from the Gentiles to the Jews. Certainly, he wanted to do it. How did those Jews feel when Paul showed up with an offering for poor Jews from a faraway land?

Throughout his ministry, you'll notice Paul had a good sense of when it was time to go. And this would be no exception. He was eager to take the Gospel to the outskirts of the known world. He stayed long enough to plant the Gospel and train workers. Sometimes that was just a few days, sometimes weeks, sometimes years.

CONCLUSION: What are we doing with our lives right now for the advancement of the Gospel? Most of you are probably praying for someone and witnessing to someone. Be like Paul, however, and have his perspective which comes out in verse 28: "*...so after I have completed this task, I will go.*" This might sound odd, but let it sink in before you judge. Don't get bogged down in any one ministry project and one way of doing things, by only reaching out to certain people or certain projects.

If you are sharing the Gospel with someone, think of it this way – the Paul Perspective: "*...so after I have completed this task, I will go.*" Tell someone about Jesus so they will believe, so you can go on to the next person. Volunteer in ministries so you can say "*...so after I have completed the task, I will go.*"

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com. Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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