

***Romans***  
***Message Twelve***  
***Reasons for the Trip 01***  
***Rom 1:8-12***

- 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
- 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;
- 10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.
- 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;
- 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. KJV

**Introduction:**

It is clear from this passage of scripture that Paul wanted to go to Rome but it is also clear that he did not have a certain word from the Lord that approved his desire.

This was a concern to him because he had already experienced having a desire to go to a place and preach only to have it shut down by the Lord and another door opened in a completely different place. This is the way that the ministry to Macedonia and Greece had opened up for him.

As we have said in previous messages, this letter to Rome is believed to have been written near the end of his third missionary journey as he departed from Corinth and began to set his eyes toward Jerusalem. But he was ever looking to the future.

The scriptures do indeed teach us to take one day at a time.

Matt 6:34

- 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. KJV

But, that does not preclude the servant of God from looking toward the future and formulating ideas about what might be next.

Matt 10:5-7

- 5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
- 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. KJV

Matt 10:23

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.  
KJV

We are simply warned against making plans without seeking and acknowledging the governance of God over our lives.

James 4:13-15

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:  
14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.  
15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. KJV

Paul was doing both. He was looking to the future and seeking the Will of God in his plans. He wanted to go to Rome but he wanted more to do what God would have him do.

We see in our own missionaries how that God has governed their lives, even surprising them with difficulties and illness, changing their plans often. But they continue to consider what might be next and to seek God's leadership in it. We have seen that doors open and close by the will of God, circumstances change, but still man must consider what his next steps might be if God allows.

Those of us who are not missionaries also have desires for the future and hopes that God might use us in some way to His honor and glory.

Now, think about the journey back to Jerusalem for Paul with this desire to go to Rome after this visit was over. He spent no time raising funds for the project. We are not even sure if he share his burden with anyone. But the Lord answered his prayer and arranged to have the Roman government pay for his tripe.

But he had to spend two long years in prison. While there he bore witness of the Christian faith to two Roman rulers as well as many soldiers and, no doubt, countless others. He made a miserable sea journey to Rome which included shipwreck and being marooned on a basically pagan island for a while.

We should notice this as we pray for things and be aware that God may answer our prayers but do it in a much different way than we anticipate.

Jacob asked for a blessing, if you remember, got it but then lived the rest of his life with a limp and a bad hip.

We can only imagine what Joseph prayed during that sad trip to Egypt to be sold as a slave and then that long time of unjust imprisonment. God had showed him in a dream while he was

young that his brothers would come and bow down before him and they did but the road he traveled to get to the place of 2<sup>nd</sup> in command in Egypt was a long and rugged road.

Jacob, renamed Israel, 'prince with God,' was presented with the lie that his favorite son was dead which caused him endless grief.

**So, consider the future, pray for what you long to see, but remember that God is Sovereign not only over whether He answers your prayers but How He answers them.**

**There is a statement in this little section of scripture that struck me as I was studying.**

9 **For God is my witness**, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

My question is this, "why would the great apostle feel the need to come so close to invoking an oath to affirm to the Romans that he was praying for the opportunity to come and see them?"

This is not an oath and we know that the Lord seriously warned us about invoking them.

Matt 5:33-37

- 33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
- 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
- 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
- 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
- 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. KJV

The Christian world has mostly ignored this teaching of Christ but there is sits in the Sermon on the Mount, plain as day, forbidding the taking of oaths.

Now, to be clear, Paul did not invoke an oath but he made what was probably the most serious affirmation he could make short of that.

And, again, the question is "why?"

Think of how painful it must have been for him to be distrusted in light of all that he had suffered to this point in the gospel ministry.... "I have suffered the loss of all things..." Phil 3:8.

But this affirmation of prayer tells us that this letter, which is the greatest doctrinal thesis in the NT, was born out of deep and profound prayer.

Let us remember where he was in his life and what he had been experiencing in the time frame

around the writing of this letter.

He was coming off his second encounter with Corinth and the doubts about him that were being actively and continually expressed there. It is entirely likely that he was sensitive to the idea of people disbelieving him, or at least minimizing his ministry.

1 Cor 1:11-15

- 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.
- 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
- 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?
- 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;
- 15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. KJV

In the identification of themselves with one of God's ministers, they were at least placing in a lower rank the others, including Christ and Paul. Notice also in v.15 that he was reacting to a perceived criticism.

1 Cor 2:1-5

- 1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.
- 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
- 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.
- 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:
- 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. KJV

I have often told you that this was a chosen approach by Paul, one that he could have done much differently than he did. But by doing things this way and coming in such an humble manner to Corinth, he was discounted by many of them.

They complained about not being able to understand him but the problem was their's not his.

1 Cor 3:1-3

- 1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.
- 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.
- 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? KJV

**The 'Problem,' if you will, is that the entire process is a spiritual process. It does not operate smoothly within the categories that natural men value.**

9 For God is my witness, **whom I serve with my spirit** in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

The gospel is preeminently and primarily a spiritual work. No part of it is to be separated from prayer or performed without spiritual enabling.

If the Holy Spirit does not bless, nothing eternally blessed happens. And He does not bless unless the Father is sought earnestly in prayer.

The natural human mechanisms we employ for deciding whether we can trust people can be, and often are, flawed.

Just look at our own track record of choosing trustworthy people to lead our country.

Then, consider the experience of Modern Christianity when it comes to choosing leadership.

How does this happen?

Dishonest people *study* the mechanisms of deceit.

Honest people do not, at least not so as to use them.

The Con Man recognizes that there are different personality types and each of them has a weakness. Each of them, that is, except the one who has been badly burned by fraud and has no intention, every, of giving up money or trust unless the person he is dealing with has unassailable and proven integrity.

### **The Mechanism of the Religious ‘Con.’**

**Step One** - Assault the character of the promoter of truth... or his intelligence... or his religious training.

Raise questions first about the person himself.

Remember what Nicodemus said in John 3.\

John 3:1-2

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* KJV

Nicodemus was apparently on the highest court in Israel. Early on they all knew that Jesus was operating in the Power of God.

They assaulted Him for His upbringing... His training.... His Knowledge.... the source of His power... even, finally, his political loyalties.

## **Step Two** - Then assault his teachings

By undermining men's confidence in the Person of Christ, they began to attack what He taught.

They first tried to debate Him but He had been more than a match for them since He was 12 years old.

So... they tried to catch Him with questions... that didn't work either.

Finally, they simply began to misrepresent Him.

## **Step Three** - Lying and false accusations are always the fallback option.

This is what is used when neither of the other two options works. So, it is not surprising that we find the Jews lying to Pilate about the supposed 'guilt' of Jesus as a traitor and an enemy of Caesar.

It should not surprise us, then, to see that Paul was also attacked by people who deliberately misrepresented his methods and his teachings.

It was obviously true that Jesus and Paul had a masterful grasp of theology.

They were also of the greatest caliber of character.

They were obviously selfless (we talked about this last week concerning Paul)

Yet, they were constantly attacked.

Remember that the Corinthians at one point in their rejection of Paul had chosen demon possessed men to lead them.

Sometimes we as human beings have a difficult time accepting ugly truths when they are plainly before us. For example, we don't want to think that there are demonized men and women in the pulpits of America this morning do we?

But the dislike of a notion can lead us to a disability to pay the proper attention to what we are seeing and hearing... resulting in us being deceived.

## **Conclusion/Application**

With all of this said, we are left with the question, "How can we choose for ourselves a person we can trust to be our minister of the gospel?"

Wrong choices have been being made from the beginning of time. It seems that the world before the flood chose Cain and his children rather than Seth and the sons of God as their mentors and

leaders. Noah, the greatest preacher (so far as we know) of the sons of Seth was almost totally ignored and rejected.

After the flood there is history which suggests that the majority of the world chose Nimrod and his wife Semaramis to be their spiritual leaders. Only the family of Abraham, almost exclusively, was delivered from their paganism to follow the True and Living God. Only men from his descendants were chose to speak truth to mankind and even most of their own family rejected them. Only a couple of rare cases of men outside of Abraham's Seed do we find in the OT being representatives of the True God.

Then we have John Baptist and Jesus, then the 12 but all of them also were from the bloodline of Abraham. Finally we begin to see men from other races becoming spokesmen for God but as soon as Titus, Epaphroditus and their like began to appear we also have false spokesmen from the Jews and then from the Gentiles seeking to deceive those who professed faith in God.

From earliest times, then, human beings who are awakened by God to their sins and are enabled to believe the message He has sent from heaven, the message of Repentance and Faith have been struggling and often failing in their quest and in their need to have men in their lives (and I do not apologize for saying 'men' because that is exactly what I mean) to guide them in their spiritual growth and development.

Let us look for a few minutes at some of the common elements that those men possessed who were actually the ones chosen by wise servants of God.

And, let us look at it in light of the criticisms leveled at Paul.

1. Don't let the preacher's style be the only determining factor in whether you value him or not.

1 Cor 2:1-5 (already used)

- 1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.
- 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
- 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.
- 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:
- 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.  
KJV

Especially, do not presume that because a man is humble and does not present himself as super smart and an expert in all things that he is not fully capable in many categories. He may truly be an humble man like Paul.

His humility emboldened some to despise him.

2. Don't assume that because you have difficulty understanding the man the problems is that he is failing... the problem may be your immaturity.

1 Cor 3:1-3 (already used)

- 1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.
- 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.
- 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? KJV

You actually should choose a man who labors to be understood rather than standing aloof and making no allowance for his audience.

3. Ask yourself if the man has a record of faithful service.

1 Cor 4:1-3

- 1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.
- 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. KJV

Notice, again, the expressed concern over criticism either perceived or real.

4. Question whether the man has ever sacrificed for the sake of the gospel.

1 Cor 4:10-13

- 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.
- 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;
- 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:
- 13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. KJV

If he is truly humble he is probably not going to tell you about it until he is sure you will not think him to be bragging.

5. Ask yourself if he ever takes a hard line on issues of sin.

1 Cor 5:1-5

- 1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication



- as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.
- 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.
- 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,
- 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. KJV

If he never takes a hard line he is a coward and if he is a coward he will ultimately lack the courage to tell you the truth about things that you really need to hear.

6. How concerned is he about getting paid?

1 Cor 9:5-7

- 5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?
- 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?
- 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? KJV

1 Cor 9:13-18

- 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?
- 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.
- 15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.
- 16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!
- 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.
- 18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. KJV

The man of God, once he has proven himself, should not need to invoke a near-oath for people to recognize that he prays for them and for the work that God has given him to do.

Let the dishonoring of Paul guide your thoughts concerning those who are faithful to the ministry work.

