

Romans
Message Thirteen
Reasons for the Trip 02
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:

In the last message we looked at the words in v.9, “For God is my witness,” and we spoke of the reasons the apostle found it necessary to affirm his faithfulness to them in prayer and the selflessness of his intentions in purposing to come to them. In today’s message we will be looking at vs. 10-12 but in particular the core reason he stated for his desire to come, “to the end ye may be established.”

In that phrase we have a clue that Paul was concerned about the stability and direction of the church at Rome and we have already mentioned some of the reasons. Its proximity to Rome made it vulnerable to persecutions in a special way but also to compromise when it might come into favor with the government. As we have pointed out the church did survive the persecutions only to be seduced by the favor of the emperors of Rome.

We have also noticed in previous messages that the letter Paul wrote *from* Rome, the letter to the Philippians, took note of certain resentments within the Christian community at Paul and his involvement with the church there.

Phil 1:13-17

- 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;
- 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
- 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:
- 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
- 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. KJV

We have also taken note that this element in the introduction of his letter may not have set well with some of those at Rome. “How dare he say that we need to be established?” I can almost

hear someone saying.

“...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.”

Our exposure to the fake preachers of our day almost makes us hear Paul to be saying, “I am praying that I might be able to raise enough money to purchase a comfortable trip to come to you.” But, of course, Paul would never had said such a thing.

He longed for the Lord to make it possible for him to come to Rome and to attend his ministry so that it would be a profitable (“prosperous”) thing for them, that their spirits would be edified (built up, made stronger in the Lord) and that the church might be guided correctly toward the proper goals and targets.

In the undertone we hear him saying that his prayer is that they might indeed “be established” since he obviously has word from Rome that there are problems on several levels. The very nature of the book, the things he was seeking to teach them even before he arrived, tell us something of what he suspected the problems to be.

Defective soteriology - a flawed or underdeveloped understanding of the teachings concerning the gospel and the nature of human salvation.

A defective understanding of Salvation itself - how does the believer deal with the sin which remains in him? Is perfection possible? What is our status before God as redeemed people?

Deficient understanding of Sovereignty

Flawed understanding concerning the place of the Jews in this new world.

Struggles over different religious practices of Jews and Gentiles.

Struggles over internal divisions.

These things addressed by Paul point to his concerns for the doctrinal foundation of the Roman church. And, of course, without a **doctrinal** foundation there could be no biblical foundation as to faith and practice.

He lacked ‘comfort’ concerning them and was obviously concerned that they lacked ‘comfort’ themselves.

His place was stated quite clearly and frankly, “...**that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift...**” But before we delve into that, let us look at what he was hoping to do.

“...to the end ye may be established;...”

The word that Paul chose to use is a very interesting one. On the one hand it carries the idea of being firmly directed in a certain path and on the other hand it also has the meaning of certainty and fixedness. Let me give examples.

In Luke 9 we have a comment concerning the determination of Jesus to go to Jerusalem even when He knew He was going to be crucified.

Luke 9:51

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, KJV

There is the idea of direction and resolution in Luke's account.

Then, in Luke chapter 16 there is the story which is commonly called "The Rich Man and Lazarus." One of them, Lazarus, lives life as a pauper and a leper while the other lives a wealthy and prosperous existence. Interestingly enough the Rich Man was able to have a conversation with Abraham in the afterlife and he requested that Lazarus be sent with a drop of water to quench his thirst. In his explanation as to why this was impossible, Abraham used our word.

Luke 16:26

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. KJV

Here the idea is simply permanence. The gulf in place could not be crossed by those on either side of it.

Jesus used it in part of His conversation with Peter concerning the 'sifting' that Peter was going to endure at the hands of Satan during the sufferings of Christ. Jesus gave him instructions concerning his behavior after it was all over.

Luke 22:31-32

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. KJV

The text itself does not help us much with the meaning of our word but Peter's behavior after the Resurrection does. He became the leader, the one who 'steered,' the first church from the very outset of the prayer meeting at John Mark's house.

Other passages leave us with questions as well as we will see in the salutation which ends the book of Romans.

Rom 16:25-27

25 Now to him that is of power to **stablish** you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

- 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:
- 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. KJV

Does the idea ‘firmly establish’ or ‘firmly guide’ (or ‘steer’) seem proper and most applicable to you?

Paul used the word two more times together with ‘comfort.’

1 Thess 3:1-2

- 1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;
- 2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: KJV

2 Thess 2:16-17

- 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
- 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. KJV

I don’t know about you but the greatest comfort I receive comes from having some kind of certainty that God is guiding me and I am being enabled to follow His will.

1 Thess 3:11-13

- 11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.
- 12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:
- 13 To the end he may **stablish** your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. KJV

It seems to me that being ‘established’ in holiness means being led and enable to operate as holy people.

2 Thess 3:1-4

- 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:
- 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.
- 3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall **stablish** you, and keep you from evil.
- 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. KJV

Again, the word is connected with the idea of doing that which we have been commanded by God through His servants.

James urged us to be actively involved in the process ourselves.

James 5:7-9

- 7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.
- 8 Be ye also patient; **stablish** your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.
- 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. KJV

There is no question but that he was urging faithful obedience in light of the fact that the Lord is surely coming.

Peter also used the word in connection with the idea of obedience to God.

1 Peter 5:10-11

- 10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, **stablish**, strengthen, settle you.
- 11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. KJV

2 Peter 1:10-12

- 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
- 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- 12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be **established** in the present truth. KJV

So this, coupled with the way that Paul designed his letter, leads me at least to think that Paul was thinking of re-setting the direction of the church toward a model built around the theology of Redemption and re-setting their practice within the church to the pattern he was teaching in Asia, Macedonia and Greece.

But how was he going to do that? “**For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift...**”

The apostles were able, as we know, to directly grant special gifts of spiritual enablement, Grace, to individuals and groups of individuals. This Paul apparently intended to do at Rome. Unfortunately, we do not have the record of how well this was received.

You might be tempted to think that it had to be effective since it was Paul but please do not forget that the churches of Galatia were easily led astray by false teachers after he had established those churches and that Corinth continued to have problems even after he had been

there twice.

The capacity of the human mind to corrupt the purity of the gospel is and always has been a plague upon the True Church and we are witnessing its latest efforts in our day.

We are reminded that there is always danger for the church which strays from the clear message of the New Testament. There is always the need for us to be 'established' to be firmly and continually 'steered' in the very same direction that Paul would undertake to 'steer' the church at Rome.

But his experience at Rome also reminds us that there are enemies to following his leading even within what we think of as 'the church.'

Some things to remember:

The New Testament is the only guide we have for the formation and guidance of a New Testament Church.

This guide has worked extremely well over the last 20 centuries, handing off to us the responsibility to had it forward.

No one has yet come forward with a better plan.

All of the plans that have been and are being put forward now are failures at what Paul was aiming for, the holiness of the believers and the holiness of the church, consistent obedience to the voice of God as revealed in His Word.

All of those we read about in the NT who resisted the plan laid out by Paul are put forward to us a heretical men and women.

And, people did try to improve on the plan.

Rev 2:12-15

- 12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
- 13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.
- 14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.
- 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. KJV

Some at Pergamos were introducing new ideas, new doctrines, new ways of doing things. The Lord Jesus Himself warned them of His sure discipline upon them if they continued and did not correct their behaviors and their doctrines.

Rev 2:16-17

- 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
- 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. KJV

The “sword of my mouth” usually meant the Word of God. The Lord Himself apparently was going to send men to Pergamos and so empower them that the preached word would overwhelm and overthrow the false teachers. It is an affront to Him for things in one of His churches not to go as He has ordained through His apostles.

Rev 2:18-20

- 18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
- 19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.
- 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. KJV

There was a woman preacher at Thyatira who was apparently operating within the church and teaching the saints that it was OK to practice fornication. Is that not what much of the modern evangelical church is doing? Well... it is not OK with the Lord Jesus. In fact, it is downright disturbing to Him.

Rev 2:21-23

- 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
- 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.
- 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. KJV

You think that a church which insists that its membership refrain from fornication is judgmental and harsh? These are the words of the Savior!

Listen folks, this is not a light matter. The church was never given permission to reconfigure itself into whatever the loudest voices wanted. It is ever and always, even in 2019, called upon to be the church of Jesus Christ, the kind of church in which the members are faithful to God and in which He comes to commune with them.

Now, the problem for us is that we do not have an apostle to come to us with a spiritual gift and ‘establish’ us.

Don't you wish we did? But know this.... if there were such an apostle and he did 'establish' us with a spiritual gift, everyone, for the most part, and most of the so-called 'Christians' around us would be unhappy with us. There were people unhappy with Paul! Can you even imagine?

Our task is to seek God in earnest, pray continually, regulate ourselves according to His Word, and look forward to the Day when He visits us in power.

Why do we pray for Revival, for Awakening in our time? So that we can be 'established' as Paul intended to do at Rome.

“...that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”

The word 'comforted' is quite interesting. Some of you know, maybe many of you, that one of the words used in the NT for the Holy Spirit is 'paraklete' from the Greek, parakletos. This word is a derivative of that one. It is the preposition 'sum' which means 'together' with the word 'parakaleo.'

It is the comfort which saints know when the Holy Spirit comes to commune with them as they serve God in the spirit and according to His Word. There is ministered to them a consoling grace and sense of well being, a removal of the pricks of conscience, the assurance that they have done well and have been faithful.

This 'comfort' was a special thing to Paul and he was willing to make the long trek to Rome, to labor in and with the church, to set things in the right direction, so that he might experience it.

It is as if the saint can hear the words 'well done, good and faithful servant' even before the Great Judgment, for a moment in this life. There is nothing better to the soul that has poured itself into the project of being faithful to God according to His Word.

It cannot be known otherwise or in any other situation. To deliberately vary from His Word is to make this comfort an impossibility.

There is no mistaking the fact that Paul wanted to know this together with the people of God at Rome. It is difficult for us to think about this because we are not sure that we have ever really known such a thing. It comes when God visits His people and we should long for Him to visit.