

**SOUND DOCTRINE FOR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS – Studies in Romans
Seeking Opportunities for Service (Romans 1:8-15)**

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

After Paul’s introductory remarks in vv1-7, he expands upon the personal greeting issued in v7, by complimenting them on their witness for Christ and affirming his genuine concern for them in prayer (vv8-9). He also becomes somewhat defensive in vv10-13 due to the lack of a visit on his part to these believers in Rome. At this point in his missionary ministry, he had received a fair share of criticism and wanted the Roman readership to know that his absence wasn’t due to any lack of sincere desire or effort on his part (Acts 19:21). Paul prayed and planned for such a visit, but in the providence of God, had been prevented rather than being provided that opportunity. Paul reveals the reason why much later in Romans 15:20-25.

Up to this point, God had been directing Paul into regions which were previously unreached by the proclamation of the gospel. But it also became obvious to him that such an outreach had been completed (15:23-24). So now, this dedicated apostle was seeking new possibilities for sharing the Christian faith, and planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain; after delivering an offering to the saints in Jerusalem (15:25-29). Paul had been called by God to be a spiritual pioneer and was ready for a new mission field in Spain, without bypassing the occasion to minister in Rome as well (1:14-15). Perhaps the expression which reveals his heart’s desire to take advantage of every circumstance for advancing the cause of Christ in our world is found in v9, “. . . **whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son.**” His service for our Savior was on an entirely different and higher level than anything he may have done as a Pharisee. It came from deep within his spirit, ever since his conversion to Christ.

Paul leaves no doubt in these opening remarks that he was a Great Commission Christian. He sought for every possible opportunity to share his faith with the lost, as well as doing his best to contribute to the spiritual growth of fellow followers of his Savior. He did not want to interfere with what had already taken place spiritually in Rome. But he also knew that God could and would use him when he did finally arrive there for his much longed for visit.

Do we possess the same eagerness in seeking to minister in ways that spiritually benefit those around us? The underlying reason for whether or not we do, is revealed next.