

“We Must Help One Another”
(Romans 15:22-29)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we considered the matter of pride.
 - a. What we can take pride in: in what God has done through us in Christ.
 - b. What we can't: everything else.
 - c. God hates pride, but He doesn't hate it when we take pride in Him.
 - d. This is what He made us for – to give all the glory of our lives to Him.
2. Consider Paul.
 - a. Paul tried zealously to be the best Pharisee he could.
 - b. As such, he tried more than any of them to destroy the church.
 - c. But God humbled him, emptied him of himself, laid him in the dust.
 - d. Once He did, God raised him up, equipped him, empowered him to be a powerful instrument in His hands.
 - (i) He sent him to preach to the Gentiles.
 - (ii) He worked through him, performing signs and wonders.
 - (iii) He granted him the fullness of His Spirit to give strength/zeal.
 - (iv) And in God's strength, Paul evangelized the whole Roman empire.
 - (v) He saw many trust in Christ, evidenced through their obedience.
 - (vi) He was often breaking new ground – this is what God gifted him to do.
 - (vii) And even though he might have been tempted to boast about himself and his accomplishments, and even though he might even have been tempted to boast in what the Lord was able to do through *him*, he didn't – he boasted in what *Christ* was able to do through him.
 - (viii) Paul was a humble man, humble by God's grace, and usable by God, because he was willing to give the glory to God.

B. Preview.

1. But because Paul had gifts to break new ground, he had not come to Rome.
 - a. The church already existed there.
 - (i) They already had an evangelical witness.
 - (ii) People could hear Christ and be saved.
 - b. As long as there were people perishing where there was no Gospel – Paul needed to go there first.
2. But now he desired to come. Why?
 - a. He had almost finished evangelizing; his work was nearly complete.
 - b. Spain, for one, still needed to hear the Gospel; and so Paul hoped to go there.
 - c. To get there, he needed the help of the Roman Christians.
 - d. But before he went there, he had something else to do first – he needed to deliver a gift the saints in Macedonia and Achaia had collected for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

3. And here we see two more wonderful examples of what God calls us to be as Christians: we see in Paul's life and in the lives of the saints – the Gentiles, living in Macedonia and Achaia – a wonderful example of giving, of putting self aside and ministering to the needs of others.
 - a. Paul's plans were not to have an easy life, a life focused on self, a life aimed at working only as long as he had to and then retire and do what he wanted to do the rest of his life – no his plans were to continue to serve Christ until he could serve no longer.
 - b. The same was true of these Gentile saints living in Macedonia and Achaia: they weren't concerned with their own comfort while their brethren – even their Jewish brethren – were suffering; they gave, even beyond what they could comfortably, to meet their needs.
 - c. What I want us to look at this morning is: Christ calls us to give to and help one another as a part of our work to promote the Gospel.
 - (i) First, we'll consider again the example of Paul.
 - (ii) Second, we'll consider the example of these Gentiles believers.
 - (iii) Let's remember again, that this is not just a work that we do, but a work that Christ does through us.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, again consider the example of the apostle Paul.
 1. He went out to preach the Gospel (v. 22).
 - a. Yes, he was called, this is what Christ chose for him; not everyone is called to this work.
 - b. But being called, the love of Christ (Christ for him, his for Christ) and of the elect constrained him.
 - c. He needed to preach the Gospel; he needed to tell others about the Good News; he needed to put himself aside to do it.
 - d. The Lord has a call on each one of us that we need to give ourselves to as well. To do it, we must in a certain sense put self aside, not ultimately.
 2. Now Paul wanted to go to Spain (vv. 22-23, 28).
 - a. Not for his own benefit, not for a vacation, but to evangelize.
 - b. He wanted to break new ground.
 - c. As I said before, he had finished his work evangelizing the Roman Empire.
 - (i) It may not be that he had been in every city and town.
 - (ii) But he had broken enough ground for the churches planted to finish.
 - d. But there was no Gospel witness in Spain.
 - e. Paul wanted to bring Christ's lost sheep there home.
 3. But to get there, he needed to stop in Rome to be helped by them (v. 24).
 - a. Here's a good example of how we need each other.
 - (i) Paul couldn't evangelize without the help of the church.
 - (ii) He needed their ministry: no one can do it all by themselves.
 - (iii) We need each other's assistance; none of us can minister effectively without the help of each other's gifts.

- (iv) We all need to give what God has given us for one another to promote the Gospel, whether through giving, prayer or service.
- b. But at the same time, Paul was not interested only in himself or in those who needed to hear him; he was also interested in the saints in Rome.
 - (i) They would benefit in the long run.
 - (ii) When Paul thanked the Philippians for giving, he said, “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account” (Phil. 4:17).
 - (iii) God would see; He would consider that they helped Paul evangelize; God would repay; He is no man’s debtor.
 - (iv) When you contribute to help others to do Christ’s will, you share in their reward. Ex: Don’t rob me of a blessing.
 - (iv) By helping Paul, the saints in Rome would store up treasure in heaven.
- 4. But surely, he also wanted to benefit them through his gifts (vv. 24, 29).
 - a. Paul’s desire to help others always moved him to put himself out for others.
 - b. You can bet that it was his intention not to be a burden to them, but a blessing. He always tried to minister to his own needs, and minister his gifts.
 - c. Christ calls us to have the attitude of a servant and not of a master.
 - d. Even Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life (Matt. 20:28).
 - e. Can we do otherwise?
 - (i) Let’s not be a burden to others, but a blessing.
 - (ii) Don’t throw the weight of your needs and concerns on others, but let those gifted to bear them come alongside and help you as they’re able.
 - (iii) Instead, start ministering your gifts – start giving.
 - (iv) You may find that you needs will be fulfilled in that way.
- 5. Paul wanted to go to Spain, but he couldn’t until he had first delivered the offering from the Gentiles to the poor saints in Jerusalem (v. 25).
 - a. Why were they poor?
 - (i) They were probably poor to begin with; Christ doesn’t call many rich (James 2:5).
 - (ii) Also persecution impoverishes; they were a heavily persecuted people.
 - b. Though he wanted to break new ground, he still felt an obligation to minister to the saints.
 - (i) Usually, we’re better in this area than in breaking new ground in getting the Gospel out.
 - (ii) We need to make sure we balance body ministry with our ministry to the world.
 - (iii) But we don’t want to neglect loving each other.
- 6. But once he was done there, he intended to go to Spain (v. 28).
 - a. Paul was a man who laid himself out to serve, to help others.
 - b. And as our Lord calls us to follow those who follow Him (1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7), we are to follow this marvelous example of our Lord Jesus being formed in the apostle Paul.
 - c. This is what Christ calls us to do; this is what He puts in our hearts to do.

B. Second, consider the willingness of the Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia to minister what they had to the saints in Jerusalem.

1. This is what they wanted to/what made them happy (v. 26).
 - a. “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased *to do so*” (vv. 26-27).
 - b. The same Spirit who worked in Paul was working in them.
 - c. He gave them the same heart: to minister to the saints.
 - d. Their brethren were in need; they had the ability, and so they gave.
 - e. They not only gave, but did so beyond their ability: “Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability *they gave* of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:1-5).
 - f. Not more than they had, but more than they could comfortably give.
2. Paul says this is what they owed the Jews (v. 27).
 - a. “And they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things” (v. 27).
 - b. The spiritual blessings they had were first promised and fulfilled to Israel.
 - c. Then it was Jewish evangelists that took the Gospel out and preached it.
 - d. Paul himself was a Jew.
 - e. If they had received so much from sharing in their Gospel – to the Jew first – how could they not take care of them when they were in need?
 - f. This debt compelled them – as did the debt of love.
3. Brethren, this is the debt we owe each other.
 - a. Christ has given us time, talents, and resources.
 - b. He tells us to use them to further His kingdom.
 - c. The way we do is by giving what we have to others to minister to their needs.
 - d. Let’s be encouraged by these examples to help one another.
 - (i) The example of Christ.
 - (ii) The example of Paul – following in His steps.
 - (iii) The example of the Gentiles of Macedonia and Achaia.
 - (iv) Remember our Lord told us and showed us: It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).
 - e. As we come to the Table, let’s look again to the Lord to fill us with His Spirit:
 - (i) To strengthen the effectiveness of our gifts.
 - (ii) To strengthen our desire to advance His kingdom through giving away what He has given us. Amen.