

<b>Series:</b> Romans	<b>Reference:</b> Romans 15:22-29	<b>Title:</b> Planting Healthy	<b>Date:</b> 2.12.17
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
Paul wasn't just an evangelist, he was church planter. That involved quite a bit of work, from preaching, to evangelization, to leadership development - all to see vibrant healthy giving churches planted in the Gentile people groups who would continue the work of the ministry as he left.			

## Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

Throughout Romans, Paul's been reminding us of the simple Gospel, and our call to bring it to the nations - or all people groups. If we remember from last week, Paul's just referenced his missionary journey from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum. A distance of about 1400 miles - in sandals! If we consider the danger & exertion this entailed, we can appreciate Paul's efforts to bring the Gospel to all the outlying Gentile people groups. He writes in 2 Corinthians 11 of the hardships he faced on these journeys...

*<sup>26</sup> I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. <sup>27</sup> I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. <sup>28</sup> Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.<sup>1</sup>*

In Acts 20 he says, <sup>22</sup>*“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup>I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup>However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.*

Jesus certainly came first for Paul even in the face of hardship & danger. So, he's just described to his readers that he was out doing all this & today he continues by saying... *<sup>22</sup>This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. That is...he's been out doing the work of the ministry.*

*Maybe they'd been expecting him. Couldn't just text everyone back in Rome & say, “Got held up, be there soon.” If someone's late & you're getting angry. Then they finally show up, and you find out they'd been doing something heroic, you'd feel pretty sheepish about being mad. Maybe they were all standing around miffed at when he was going to show up, until he wrote this - since that may've been what happened - but he plans to come now...*

*<sup>23</sup>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, <sup>24</sup>I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to*

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 2 Co 11:26–28.

*see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.*

Paul's desire for many years had been to visit Rome and then move onto Spain. Note, he's been held up for years. If you count all 3 of his missionary journeys it was about 12 year before he was arrested. It wasn't that he just went on a hike for a few months, handed out some Bible tracts and came home. He spent time in various places. Teaching & discipling people. He built up & helped to launch the local church in these areas. He traveled with others discipling them along the way, and at times leaving them to develop the church further. We know he stayed a year & a half in Corinth, 2 years in Ephesus, and probably significant time in other areas depending on situation & need.

That tells us something significant, because he says he has no more work in these regions. It's obvious he hasn't evangelized every single person in these regions. He isn't swayed by hardship, so that can't be the reason. So, how could his work be done in those regions? Well the answer is, Paul wasn't just an evangelist, **he was a church planter.** Much like what we did with Six:Eight. We didn't just come into town & verbally witness to a bunch of people & leave. We planted a church. So when we're long gone & pushing up daisies this church will continue on in its witness & evangelization of this region.

Paul's work is done in those regions, not because every person's a Christian, but because he's planted & built up healthy churches who have leadership, structure & will last far into the future to evangelize their own peoples. So, missions work isn't just about sharing the message of Jesus, it's about taking small groups of people who initially respond to that message & collecting them into local bodies with the same heart & kingdom vision. Therefore, in our ongoing discussion of unreached people groups, one is reached when there's an ample amount of Christian Churches able to evangelize their own people within its cultural borders.

Jesus last command was Paul's first concern for these regions. What was that last command? It's stated in Matthew 28, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

In succession we see firstly, someone has to GO. Which also means someone has to SEND them. To make disciples people have to have the Gospel shared with them (Faith comes by hearing). Scripture states who we go to - the Nations - people groups. Outside of evangelizing, what do we do? We baptize them - which simply means that we see them identify their lives with Christ, and assimilate themselves into the body of Christ which is the church. And we teach them to obey everything Jesus has commanded.

Now, if we think about all that entails, it's quite a bit of work. The work ranges from prayer, evangelism to structuring, training, preaching, teaching, instilling rights of passage, directing, redirecting, identifying, recruiting, modeling & training, deploying &

discipling leaders, etc. The ultimate goal is a viable local body of believers who has the heart to grow & reproduce itself in its own context & beyond to the nations once more. So Paul planted these churches & developed leadership to see them flourish.

In Acts 20 there's one instance we see clearly where he calls the Ephesian elders together reminding them of how he's lived, what he's taught among them, and then challenges them by saying, *"<sup>28</sup>Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."* Then he leaves them to go & continue the work elsewhere.

This is the reason why we have these letters written to the churches across the regions; the epistles of the New Testament. It's Paul's way of checking in, and addressing issues with these growing churches. Since left to our own accord we're subject to the law of entropy. A leader can press on an issue for a while & it becomes evident in a crowd, but as soon as he/she stops, the importance of that issue drains away.

For instance in leadership development of a church. We must always be recruiting & developing leadership. In the Vineyard we've boiled it down to the acronym IRTDM. Identify. Recruit. Train. Deploy. Monitor (explain).

Jesus wasn't a 1960's beatnik hippy just saying, "Wow, let's go like love each other!" He was operating within a religious structure, he preached in the Temple, and respected it. He was moving his disciples to develop a religious structure which cared for & nurtured the spiritual growth of people, and would reach out to the nations. That's because faith is about community & you can't have community without order, leadership & structure. And although our acceptance isn't based on what we do or how well we behave with Jesus, we still enter into a life of holiness & the pursuit of it. Jesus isn't sitting up in heaven all upset we organized, he's glad for it. And I think he glories in the various expressions of church. All these various bodies which share Christ at the center although they may look different on the outside. They're intimately tied to one another, and help each other when needed. One example he cites in the next set of verses...

*<sup>25</sup>Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there.*

*<sup>26</sup>For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.*

In 2 Corinthians 8 Paul describes the Macedonian churches and their giving - *And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup>In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup>they*

*urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.  
5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.*

One sign of a healthy church is giving. One of the requirements for leadership, and even membership of Six:Eight is that we tithe to this church. That is not something we monitor officially, but we do keep tabs on it, pray about, and address when needed. And when someone isn't giving financially it reveals there's something going on in them spiritually which is unhealthy. And when I say giving, I don't mean they occasionally leave God a tip in the plate. I mean ongoing consistent giving in line with what the Scripture urges us to.

I know of another church who had to ask their worship leader to step out of that position since they began to notice over a long period of time that he wouldn't tithe. They asked. He became belligerent. It revealed a pride & a hold money had over that man which ran very deep. In a short time he became so incensed he left the church & even ten years later he's still angry about it. Be careful when you meet the person who says, "Oh, the Church! Yeah, sure, they're all about getting your money!" That person is most likely immature, prideful & unable to understand the deeper issues of the heart as concerned with the spiritual aspects of material wealth. A healthy church is a giving church. Made up of people who want to bless others, and realize the need to do so. Even in their own poverty they give willingly, which reveals a real faith in the Lord.

It's interesting to note that much of Paul's writing has been to bring Jewish Christians around to understand the detrimental nature of the legalistic mind. That they needed to live out of Christ-Righteousness, not Self-Righteousness. To operate out of grace, not measuring themselves & others by the yardstick of the Law. Which meant realizing, God has always called them to bring this message to the Gentile nations. And this love offering from the churches in Greece was an expression of love from Gentile Christians to Jewish Christians. It may even be that Paul's writing this at the end of his letter to say to the Jewish Christians, "See, the Gentile Christians are loving you well, love them well in return." However, he does point out that the Gentiles also owe a great debt to the Jewish Christians for their heritage & stewardship of the Scriptures throughout past history.

It helped the poor Jerusalem church in a time of need, but it brought both sides together - it was humbling for both of them. A sharing & giving spirit unifies people.

Giving is contagious. The Corinthian church began it, and as Paul described their giving spirit to the Macedonians he says to the Corinthians, "*your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.*" (2 Co 9:2). A giving church is a contagious blessing. But what are some of the other results of our giving?

Well, this is certainly not exhaustive, but we can briefly look at 2 Corinthians 9...

*<sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

There's some tie to our spiritual growth with how willing we are to be giving people. If we sow generously, we reap generously - now that does not mean we will become rich. It means that there's a correlation with our character, spiritual formation, and even our material blessings. A giving spirit is part of the holistic picture of a mature believer.

*In v10 it says, <sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. In other words being a giving person is a step & part of being a whole well-rounded person in Christ.*

*Our attitude of giving will come out in every good thing we set our minds to - since he continues to say in v11... <sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.* Blessing is meant to be turned around & poured out to others.

We give. We're blessed. Then in turn we bless - it's cyclical. An attitude of giving isn't only practical in helping others, *but literally an act of worship to God...<sup>12</sup> This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.*

And finally, it is an act of encouragement, testimony, evangelism, and it brings favor of others towards you... *<sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.*

*In conclusion. We see that Paul was more concerned about the kingdom among the Gentile nations than he was even for his own safety & life. That he was more than an evangelist. He was a church planter. Which means developing vibrant bodies of Believers, forming them into a church which shares it's identity under Christ with all other churches throughout the world in all it's cultural expressions of faith within the various nations. A task fraught with a lot of work - IRTDM, he had to identify, recruit, train, deploy & monitor leadership to make sure these churches stayed on task with kingdom initiatives. That as churches develop and mature they organize with leadership & structure to be a blessing, and that one outcome of that is to be a giving body blessing others around it.*

This leaves us with two simple questions today...are we grateful for the leadership God has established in order to see the kingdom move forward in our local churches? And are we giving cheerfully to the work of the ministry? Since, if we stand in the way of leadership, and are non-active in our giving, we hamstring the work of the kingdom.

## Questions for CG Leaders - Focusing on Leadership Development & Giving

### 1. Leadership Development

1. Are we grateful for the leadership structure which God puts in place for our churches to run well?
  1. Discuss the following verse, 2 Timothy 2:2 - *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.*
  2. What does it mean to be a leader in a church? Reliable? Qualified to teach? Etc... Are there other verses you can think of?
  3. What does it mean to plant a church with a kingdom mindset, one devoted to internal spiritual formation, as well as evangelization & discipleship of the nations?
    1. Is this a job just for the clergy, or for the leaders to do?
    2. Are we all to be a part of it & how does that happen together?
    3. Looking at Ephesians 4:11-12, what's a leader in relation to others in the church?
      1. *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11-12)*
  4. Do we care for, and pray for our leadership regularly? Do that tonight.

### 2. Giving

1. Looking at 2 Corinthians 9:6-14 (printed on following page), discuss the following questions...
  1. What are the benefits to you in having a giving spirit?
  2. What does it mean to be a 'Cheerful Giver'? Are you one?
  3. What does a giving spirit do to a community?
  4. What does a giving spirit do in our relationship to God?
  5. How is God tied to our giving? What is our responsibility in these verses, what are His?
  6. Do you tithe? If so, what percentage? And, is that to the local church, or somewhere else? (these can be rhetorical if you think it's too personal)
  7. How is the church limited in its ministry when giving is not evident in its members?
  8. Read this short article together out loud, <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/what-would-happen-if-church-tithed>
  9. Then take that to the local church level which operates on a budget of \$200k/year, but that is based on only a 2% giving of it's members income. What would they be able to do with members who gave a full 10%? Do the math, and then imagine what could be done together!
    1. *(BTW - this is totally hypothetical - I have not looked up the giving for Six:Eight in prepping that question - if anyone should ask)*

## **2 Corinthians 9:6-14**

*6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."*

*10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

*12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.*