

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey - 20:1-3: Greece; Romans

After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. 2 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece 3 and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Acts 20:1-4

But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Rom 15:25-29

With the word "now" we can stamp the date of the Roman letter after writing the second letter to the Corinthians and in Acts 20:1-3 where he is still giving instructions and about this collection and telling them he would be coming soon. Now "at this very moment" he is going.

"nuni... now, at this very moment (precisely now, neither before nor after...) and only of Time, almost always with the pres., very rarely with the fut... Not found in the N. T. exc. in the writ of Paul and in a few places in Acts and the Ep. to the Heb.; ... 1. of time: with a pres... with a perf. indicating continuance.. Eph. 2:13..." (Thayer, p. 430 3570)

The purpose of this visit is to minister to the saints. Paul uses a participle to make himself the action of the verb. He is he ministering on to the saint. He is the minister to the saints. He serves their needs and supplies what is necessary for them.

This ministry was first described by Paul as something he had already done with the Galatians and was now passing on to those in Corinth. At that time his own plans for going had not yet been decided upon. He was clearly leaning in that direction but had not committed himself.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. 3 And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem: 4 and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me. 1 Cor 16:1-4

Not long after writing this letter, his plans had crystalized and he had purposed in the spirit to go. This either means he had resolved in his own mind or that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to go. In his address to the elders at Ephesus, he also said that he went "bound in the spirit."

Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. Acts 19:21

It was not many weeks after this event in Ephesus that he wrote both the letter to the Romans and the 2nd letter Corinth. Note the number of times he spoke of this as a ministration to the saints.

I go unto Jerusalem, **ministering unto the saints**. Rom. 15:25
a certain **contribution for the poor among the saints** that are at Jerusalem. Rom. 15:26
ministration which (I have) for Jerusalem may be acceptable **to the saints**; Rom. 15:31
concerning the **collection for the saints**, 1Cor. 16:1
in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the **ministering to the saints**: 2 Cor. 8:4
as touching the **ministering to the saints**, 2Cor. 9:1
For the **ministration of this service** not only fills up the measure of **the wants of the saints**, but abounds also through many thanksgivings unto God; 2 Cor. 9:12

The next thing we hear about the journey to fulfill this ministry is revealed by Paul while he is preaching to the elders at Ephesus that he is still bound in the spirit to go unto Jerusalem and he still doesn't know exactly what is going to happen but he has been told by the Holy Spirit through the prophets "in every city" that bonds and afflictions abide.

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 save that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:22-24

That Paul already knew this seems clear from his final words to the Romans on this subject.

strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31 that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and (that) my ministration which (I have) for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; Rom 15:30-31

He knew that he was to have some problems in Jerusalem. The problems were made much clearer and more severe when he arrived in Caesarea. But by then, Paul had made some type of inner commitment that he would not break.

And as we tarried there some days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. Acts 21:10-11

All now know the rest of this story. He was arrested in Jerusalem by the Romans and sent to Caesarea. After more than two years he begins his journey to Rome still as a prisoner. The trip to Rome ends in the loss of the ship and more delays. It was probably more than three years from the time he wrote this letter until he arrived. When he did arrive it was not as a free apostle who could walk among them, but as a prisoner who could receive visitors but not go out.

But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds. Acts 24:27

And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

26. For it hath been the good pleasure

In I Cor 16:1-2 Paul spoke it as an order: "As I gave *order* to the churches of Galatia so also do ye. Either this order came after they manifested good pleasure or no one did it as a command, but as a blessing.

each man according as he has purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver. 2Cor 9:7

Good pleasure takes on out of the realm of strict command and into the realm of being well pleased, thinking something good, and having a willingness.

eudokeo signifies (a) "to be well pleased, to think it good" [*eu*, "well," and *dokeo*, ... not merely an understanding of what is right and good as in *dokeo*, but stressing the willingness and freedom of an intention or resolve regarding what is good, e. g., Luke 12:32, "it is (your Father's) good pleasure": so Romans 15:26,27, RV; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 1:15; Colossians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:8, RV, "we were well pleased" (KJV, "we were willing"); ... (Vine 2106)

It may (and in this case did) begin as a command, but it soon took on a different light. As with most of God's commands there is something within us that leads us to do it not as a command, but as something we know is good and we do it willingly.

of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution One wonders what happened to Galatia. Paul had told the Corinthians he had given order to them. Perhaps they did not comply, perhaps they never recovered themselves from the error Paul warned them, or maybe Macedonia and Achaia had given the bulk of the contribution and he did not want to mention all the other works that had been involved.

By inserting the term *contribution* here the translators may have done a disservice to English readers. It may have been more confusing at the beginning, but since Greek speaking people had to make this distinction we could have made it also. The term *contribution* is actually the word *fellowship*.

"koinonia... fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse, contact; in the N.T. as in class. Grk. 1. the share which one has in anything, participation, ... 2. intercourse, fellowship intimacy..." (Thayer, p 352; 2842)

As we look at the variations in translation, we see why it would have been better simply to keep *fellowship* or *communion* all the way through. Although the translators give us *fellowship*, *communicate*, *contribute*, and *communion*, they are often used for exactly the same thing yet given different terms. What Paul says is that there was a *fellowship* among the saints. Those who had having *fellowship* with those who did not. This is exactly the wording Paul used to the Philipians when he spoke of "***fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving.***" Take a look at the list and see if it doesn't change the way we look at our giving.

*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and **fellowship**, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42*

communicating to the necessities of the saints; given to hospitality. Rom 12:13

*For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain **contribution** for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Rom 15:26*

*God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the **fellowship** of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Cor 1:9*

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a **communion** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a **communion** of the body of Christ? 1 Cor 10:16*

*Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what **fellowship** have righteousness and iniquity? or what **communion** hath light with darkness? 2 Cor 6:14*

*beseeking us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the **fellowship** in the ministering to the saints: 2 Cor 8:4*

*seeing that through the proving (of you) by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of (your) **contribution** unto them and unto all; 2 Cor 9:13*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **communion** of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. 2 Cor 13:14

and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of **fellowship**, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; Gal 2:9

for your **fellowship** in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now; Phil 1:5

Howbeit ye did well that ye had **fellowship** with my affliction. 15 And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had **fellowship** with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; 16 for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need. 17 Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account. Phil 4:14-17

Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to **communicate**; 1 Tim 6:17-18

But to do good and to **communicate** forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Heb 13:16

for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem.

With the preposition *eis* Paul uses a term “denoting entrance into” “of a place entered.” When it is “used metaphorically, *eis* retains the force of entering into anything.” So we are to envision a circle drawn around the poor among the saints at Jerusalem and this fellowship enters into the circle. This is not just those who can’t have everything they want these are the poor who have to beg and are destitute.

ptochos... “to bow down timidly,” means as an adjective “destitute,” “mendicant,” ... intransitive “to be destitute,” “to lead the life of a beggar,” ... Whereas *penes* denotes one who has to earn his living because he has no property *ptochos* denotes the complete destitution which forces the poor to seek the help of others by begging. . . . (Kittel TDWNT 44340)

ptochos an adjective describing “one who crouches and cowers,” is used as a noun, “a beggar” (from *ptosso*, “to cower down or hide oneself for fear”), Luke 14:13,21 (“poor”); 16:20,22; as an adjective, “beggarly” in Galatians 4:9, i. e., poverty-stricken, powerless to enrich, metaphorically descriptive of the religion of the Jews. While *prosaiteis* is descriptive of a “beggar,” and stresses his “begging,” *ptochos* stresses his poverty-stricken condition. (Vine 4434)

The circle then of this fellowship is thus limited to those who are destitute and are lacking in the necessities of life. As James pointed out these are brothers and sisters naked (unprotected from the elements) and lacking daily food.

If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, 16 and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Jas 2:15-17

With two genitives that qualify these poor even further Paul narrows the circle. He has told the Corinthians, Galatians and Romans that this fellowship is for the saints in Jerusalem. If Paul is honest and a man of integrity then this money which was taken with the specific promise that it would go to these people could only be charged with misappropriating the funds if they went somewhere else. This fellowship between those who have and those who do not have is specifically for the needy saints in Jerusalem.

27. For it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are.

He repeats the verb of the previous verse. All that had been done since the very beginning had been a willing and enjoyable thing. Listen to Paul extol those in Macedonia for the attitude he sums up here.

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; 2 how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, (they gave) of their own accord, 4 beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: 5 and (this), not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God. 1 Cor 8:1-4

Paul now introduced the word *debtors* to describe this fellowship. It is a spiritual paradox. Those in Jerusalem were in poverty and the churches in fellowship with them were sending the money. One would think the debt and debtor would be the other way around. But it is not. The reason the church in Jerusalem was in this conditions was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. So the Gentile churches are in debt to those in Jerusalem for the spiritual blessings they now possess. This is similar to something Paul said to the Corinthians.

If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? 1 Cor 9:11

This was not a normal debt. It was a debt of gratitude. They were “held by some obligation, bound by some duty.”

opheiletes... one who owes another, a debtor prop. Of one who owes another money. . . Metaph. a) one held by some obligation, bound by some duty. . . to be under obligation to do something for some one. . . b) one who has not yet made amends to whom he has injured; one who owes God a penalty or whom God can demand punishment as something due, i.e. a sinner...” (Thayer 469; 3781)

As Jesus had been rich and became poor so we could become rich, so had the church in Jerusalem.

I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of

your love. 9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8:8-9

What had the church in Jerusalem done to have created this obligation. The list of their sacrifices is described in the following ways:

For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need. 36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, 37 having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:34-37

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. 3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison. Acts 8:1,3

Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. Acts 12:1-2

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; 33 partly, being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. 34 For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. Heb 10:32-34

We have no idea all that they suffered in order for the gospel to go into all the world, for men and women to be prepared to preach and teach, and for the stand they took for their Lord. Paul had been involved in a similar act years earlier. Although the famine was all over the world. The brethren in Jerusalem were especially in need.

And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. 29 And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea: 30 which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:28-30

For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things,

With a *gar* Paul gives the reason and cause for the above. What the saints had done for them in Jerusalem was a great debt. All the Gentiles were made partakers. Paul now uses the verb form of the word fellowship discussed above.

"koinoneo,... a. to come into communion or fellowship, to become a sharer, be made a partner... b. to enter into fellowship, join one's self as an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner..." (Thayer, p. 351-352; 2841).

The Gentiles had come into communion or fellowship with the saints in Jerusalem. They had *"become a sharer, been made a partner."* Here the concept of fellowship is clarified. The Gentiles were in fellowship by what they did on the first day of every week. The saints in Jerusalem were in fellowship because of the spiritual things these Gentile churches now possessed. By inspiration, Paul explains how God saw the early days in the church. From Acts 2 through Acts 8 the words of Jesus and the prophets were fulfilled.

and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Lk 24:46-47

And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. Isa 2:2-3

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8

God had foretold that all would come from and begin at Jerusalem. The price to those in Jerusalem had been high but the benefits they brought to the rest of the world was even higher. Their early sacrifices were making all that was then being done possible. God wanted it clearly understood that this was the truth and that there was an obligation that should have been felt. I believe it should still be felt today. Their faith and sacrifices make it much easier to believe that it is all true for what else would have led them to do what they did?

they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Owe is the same word as obligation above. The Gentiles were *"held by some obligation, bound by some duty."* This duty is to *minister unto them*. This is a different word than the one above. It was a common word the Romans would recognize as "render public service" or "do service" that is owed or one is obligated to do.

leitourgeo ... in classical Greek, signified at Athens "to supply public offices at one's own cost, to render public service to the State"; hence, generally, "to do service," said, e. g., of service to the gods. In the NT

(see Note below) it is used (a) of the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, who "ministered to the Lord," Acts 13:2; (b) of the duty of churches of the Gentiles to "minister" in "carnal things" to the poor Jewish saints at Jerusalem, in view of the fact that the former had "been made partakers" of the "spiritual things" of the latter, Romans 15:27; (c) of the official service of priests and Levites under the Law, Hebrews 10:11 (in the Sept., e. g., Exodus 29:30; Numbers 16:9). (Vine 3008)

While the saints in Jerusalem had suffered great hardship and done great sacrifices in order to fulfil their side of the fellowship the Gentiles could now make similar sacrifices in order to do service for them which is their side in the fellowship. Both bearing burdens to make it easier for the other.

For (I say) not (this) that others may be eased (and) ye distressed; 14 but by equality: your abundance (being a supply) at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become (a supply) for your want; that there may be equality: 2Cor 8:13-14

28. When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.

Paul now uses the conjunction "oun - to indicate that something follows from another necessarily). He has just finished explaining the importance of this fellowship between the Gentile churches that received the benefit and the saints in Jerusalem who sacrificed to make it possible. He will complete the thought at the end of the chapter by expressing his concern about the saints accepting this offering. Because of these two important considerations, Paul must see this through to the end. In his mind the end will be with he has *accomplished* this.

epiteleo epi, "up," intensive, and No. 3, is a strengthened form of that verb, in the sense of "accomplishing." The fuller meaning is "to accomplish perfectly"; in Romans 15:28, RV, "accomplish"; "perfecting" in 2 Corinthians 7:1; "complete" in 8:6 and 11; ... "(from Vine's NT:2005),

3. *teleo* "to finish, to bring to an end" (*telos*, "an end"), frequently signifies, not merely to terminate a thing, but to carry out a thing to the full. ... (Vine 5055)

Because this is a participle, Paul reveals that he expects to be the *performer*(the one who fully and completely accomplishes or accomplishes perfectly). Note that he selects and emphatic and intensified word. No only will he bring it through to the end(which he had already done when he gathered the money and had it prepared to send it on its way), but he will "*complete it up.*" He will oversee this work until it is completely and perfectly accomplished with no chance of any misstep or misunderstanding.

This can only occur when has sealed this fruit. The term *sealed* has a variety of meanings. The Roman soldiers sealed the tomb to be certain that no one tampered with it. We do this when we purchase a product that is sealed so we know it has not been opened and tampered with.

"sphragizo... To set a seal upon, mark with a seal, to seal; a. for security: Mt 27:66 ... b. Since things sealed up are concealed (as, the contents of a letter), sphragizo means trop. to hide... keep in silence, keep secret... c. in order to mark a person or thing; hence to set a mark upon by the impress of a seal, to stamp: angels are said... i.e. with the seal of God... to stamp his servants on their foreheads as destined for eternal salvation, and by this means to confirm their hopes, Rev. 7:3... Metaph... respecting God, who by the gift of the Holy Spirit indicates who are his... d. in order to prove, confirm, or attest a thing; hence trop. to confirm, authenticate, place beyond doubt..." (Thayer, p. 609 # 4972)

This could be Paul's meaning here. He wants to remain with this project until he is certain that all has been accomplished. Satan could seriously tamper with this effort. Any misunderstanding between the Gentile churches who had sent this fellowship and the saints in Jerusalem who received it could produce a serious rupture in the church. Paul had already seen this after his first journey to preach to Gentiles ended with him going to Jerusalem.

And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. 3 But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4 and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5 to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Gal 2:3-5

He went then by "*revelation*" (The Spirit told him to go). His concern at that time was that "*I should be running, or had run, in vain.*" Paul's role as the apostle to the Gentiles did not preclude him from preaching to the Jews(to the Jew first and also to the Greek), but if this controversy had not been resolved there would have been a terrible division between Jew and Gentile which would have seriously damaged the church. These "false brethren" were threatening to do to the Lord's church what Jeroboam did to the ten tribes of Israel. So Paul went that time and used his influence along with Peter and James to resolve this problem before it became too big.

Now he has a similar situation, and he does not intend to leave it until he has this sealed(a participle) Paul wants to be the sealer(the one who makes it tamper proof). A second meaning of seal could also have some bearing on Paul's thinking. He seeks to seal(mark as genuine) this sacrifice of gratitude and fellowship by going along and using the right words and right influence to bring it about. Either way, Paul will not stop what he is doing and go to Rome until it is tamper proof and accepted as genuine.

When all of this is accomplished, Paul will feel free to move on with his new plans. He intends to go through Rome and then on to Spain.