



Sermon Notes | Gospel Priorities | Romans 15:22-33

## **INTRODUCTION**

Towards the end of chapter fifteen the Apostle Paul is listing 'ministry details' to the Roman Church. Last week, and earlier in the chapter (verses 14-21), Paul is looking back on his ministry, presenting a paradigm with examples of 'Gospel Ministry'. And now (verses 22-33), Paul sets forth plans for the future, 'Gospel priorities', plans, actions, initiatives, and efforts, that need to come before other things.

Romans 15:22-33

*This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for words in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*

*I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

Father, plant these words deep. Shape and fashion us that we may have priorities, 'Gospel Life Priorities'. We seek these in Christ's Name. Amen.

We all have 'priorities', even the most aimless and disorganized among us. We all have twenty-four hours, seven days, and twelve months in a year. A simple reflection of this, 'our time', regardless of how ambitious or apathetic we are, will reveal our 'priorities'. So let us survey our week. Where did our efforts go this week? What demanded our time? There was work, and household duties, and the raising of children, but beyond these obvious and common tasks and endeavours, where did you spend your time? The issue is not if we have 'priorities' but rather what those 'priorities' are. Let us

do a quick inventory. And where one is sitting on Sunday morning is not the only barometer of one's 'priorities'. This text serves as a help to us, providing us with the 'priorities of a Gospel ministry' and a Gospel life'. And so we consider the Principles of Priorities.

### **I. GOD'S WORK BEFORE YOUR LONGING: (vv. 22-23)**

Romans 15:22-23

*This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you...*

Paul has been hindered and prevented from coming to Rome for a long while now. Why? He had an appointment to God's work first.

Paul was not hindered from going to Rome by lack of desire or indifference. In fact, he 'longed' to go and visit Rome, and had for a long time (verse 23), but he could not go. God's work came first. God's 'priorities' had become Paul's 'priorities'. His personal 'longing' was set aside. One might question, but wasn't Rome also God's work? And yes, it was, but by God's appointment. Paul would indeed soon arrive in Rome, but in God's time, and in chains, and arrested. He was called to 'different work' and his 'longing' took a back seat to that 'priority'. Paul has a 'priority' to focus on. He was called to present the Gospel to places which had never yet heard the Gospel. Rome has already heard and received the Gospel, and therefore is not part of the 'priority'. Paul alludes to this fact when he states:

Romans 15:18-20

*For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience --- by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God --- so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation...*

Paul's delay in visiting Rome was not a matter of days or months. No. It was a point of 'years', yet Paul continues to look forward to his ultimate visit, and awaits the visit with patience, denying his own desires for the sake of God's appointment. The visit to Rome is desired, but is not an urgent matter. How often do we allow our longings, our subtle plans, to become urgent over God's work, over God's divine appointment? How often do we rationalize, saying or thinking, 'God knows... He understands', and with these words put our own plans first? This is important. How often do we trump God's priorities with our own desires? But in Paul's case, he does not go to Rome ahead of 'God's priorities'. Paul goes to where the Gospel is needed, and now, he has yet another purposeful priority to attend to before he can actually go to Rome. Jerusalem has a need to be attended to. He longs to go to Rome, but with 'priorities' in place, first he will go to Jerusalem.

Romans 15:25

*At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.*

We recall how Paul speaks to Rome in the beginning of the letter. He assures the Roman Church of their place in his heart, and in his prayers, and of his longing to visit with them, but Paul's first priority is to God. He thinks rightly, Your will be done, God!

Romans 1:8-13

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world, For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you --- that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.*

Paul has patiently waited for many years to be able to make this visit to Rome, and now he sees a break in his work, a break which will allow this visit to finally take place.

Romans 15:23

*But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and I have longed for many years to come to you...*

And so, we see that Paul has, in his purposed 'Gospel Priorities', established two principles which he follows.

1. To Pray: Paul prayed to know God's will. His longing to visit Rome was not wrong, but he understood that God's will was to come first. God's will was the top priority. We also must remind ourselves what we must do: Seek God's will first.

2. To Finish: Paul was intent on finishing what he was called to do. He did not take this lightly. He did not put his personal longings ahead of the work he was called to do. Starting any work is easy, but bringing it to completion, bringing it over the finish line, is much more difficult. We've seen this happen so often with our own good intentions: Bible reading plans, hospitality intentions, fellowship plans, for example, intended to be accomplished, but then lost to a reactive lifestyle. But Paul 'finished' the work he was initially called to do. His 'eastern' work was now complete, and as he turns to his 'western' work, he can look to his longings. He sees a way to fit his longing in, without turning from his 'priority', without delaying his 'priority'. He is officially going to Spain now, and he will visit Rome on his westward way. But God's way first. He has one more official visit to make, to Jerusalem, and 'then' on to Rome. Paul's 'priority' was not his own personal longing, but to 'finish the work' that God had given him to do before all else.

Do you have longings that impede you from your divine finish, from finishing strong? The 'Gospel priority' is to put God's work first, and then to attend to one's own work and play.

## **II. HELP OTHERS VS HELPING YOURSELF: (v. 24)**

Romans 15:24

*I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.*

And so, Paul, who is fulfilling his 'missionary work', has completed his eastern focus, and now his new focus will be to head westward towards Spain, but first Paul intends to deliver 'a collection' of money for needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Paul describes his intended plans for travel in his letter to the Corinthians, whom he will be visiting in the days ahead.

1 Corinthians 16:5-11

*I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits, But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

*When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.*

Paul is seeking help from Rome, which makes sense, not just because fellow believers are there, but also because Corinth was a Roman province. He intends to make his way to Corinth, as God wills, visiting Macedonia first, and he is asking and expecting that Corinth will be of help to both him and Timothy, who is also making his way to Corinth. Paul is seeking 'missionary help' along the way. He is not asking for help for his personal self. His request for help is focussing on 'others', and his assumption is that Rome will help. Paul is encouraging 'others' to help/to give to 'others'. He naturally assumes that they will help, not for any personal goals or gains, but because it is for the cause of God's Work, it is for 'mission work', and therefore is a 'Gospel priority'. It is a 'priority' to help others who are "doing the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 16:10). It is a 'priority' to help those who are giving the Gospel to others. Therefore Paul assumes that they 'will help' those who will be taking the collection to Jerusalem, and the Gospel to Spain.

To 'help the missionary work' is to 'help others', and 'helping others' must therefore be part of our 'Gospel priority'.

### **III. SPECIFIC AID OVER GENERAL AID: (vv. 25-26)**

Romans 15:25-26

*At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.*

Paul is now in Corinth, writing his letter to the Romans. He is explaining the next phase in his journey, and why he will be delayed visiting Rome even yet. Before he begins his Spain journey, he is going to Jerusalem. Why? He has a stop to make. He is taking 'aid', a collection of money, to the needy Jewish saints in Jerusalem. That Paul is attending to this matter is no small thing. It is not just a quick drop off. This is a very 'specific' and intentional act. Paul is adding two thousand miles to his 'priority' list before he takes on his personal longing agenda of going to Rome. In fact, he will be headed eight hundred miles in the opposite direction of Rome first. However, 'need' has been registered in Jerusalem, and he cannot move on until this 'collection' has been delivered. Paul is concerned about this 'collection' for Jerusalem. He had organized the 'collection' by/from several Churches, and they had been "pleased to make some contribution for the poor saints of Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26). Paul writes about their generous giving to this cause.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

*Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come, And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.*

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*

So now getting the funds to Jerusalem is the next step, and completing this matter is a 'priority' for Paul. He cannot move on until he attends to this. Why is it such a 'priority'? We note two reasons 'why' this is a 'priority'.

1. This is a Gentile collection for Jewish saints, and therefore this is 'significant'. It is not just a token of 'need', but is a token of 'unity', a token of the 'plan of God'. This is Jews and Gentiles united. This is 'foreigners' helping Israel. This is 'saved Gentiles' now turning, not with a sword, but with 'aid' for the Jews in Jerusalem. This is the 'grafted in' Gentile working in unity with the Jew. This is how God designed it to be.

Romans 1:16

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Galatians 6:10

*So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

The Gentiles have made this collection for the 'believing Jews'. They are doing 'doing good' for all, especially for the 'saints', thus making this specific over general.

2, The 'Aid' is an Act of Service/a Means of Serving. Paul states that this is so. He seeks unity and prayer by the saints on his behalf as he moves forward with this 'collection' for the Jews.

Romans 15:31

*...that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints...*

'Giving' is not meant to be a 'duty'. 'Giving' is meant to be a 'pleasure'. One ought to be 'pleased' to give. 'Giving' is 'a priority of Gospel Ministry'. And so, this is the why of this 'collection'. But there also is a 'what' concerning this 'collection'. We read:

Romans 15:26

*For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.*

Paul refers to "the poor among the saints" of Jerusalem. He is not speaking of 'all the poor'. No. He is clarifying and speaking specifically of the poor among the 'saints' of Jerusalem, the 'brothers'. This 'care for the brothers' is 'Gospel priority'.

In a world where everyone is asking for aid, and people are giving to everything, this is not Gospel focus. It is misguided, and often results in neglect of one's own family and one's own church.

'Contribution' is a New Testament word for fellowship, the act or condition of sharing something in common. It is the 'common' sharing in participation and 'fellowship'.

Acts 2:44-45

*And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

'Collections' like these are the redistribution of God's blessings upon His people. The concept comes from the Greek word *koinonia*, the idea of 'sharing' what God gives to

you. Holding on to things and not sharing is forgetting the principles of sharing as given in Acts.

#### **IV. DIVINE DUTY WITH PERSONAL PLEASURE: (vv. 27-29)**

Romans 15:27-29

*For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*

Often we have habitual, and errant mindsets, thinking that 'I cannot be dutiful and joyful at the same time', but nothing in the New Testament supports such thinking. Being willing and joyful is an obligation and a duty, and we are bound to this duty. Paul states that doing our 'divine duty' is the cause of our joy; we are meant to carry it through with personal pleasure.

1 Corinthians 9:16

*For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.*

Philippians 1:18

*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.*

Completing our 'divine duty' combined with 'personal pleasure' brings us joy to serve. It equates with doing a service for God.

2 Corinthians 8:8-11

*I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.*

Be pleased to give your 'service' and to do your 'duty', just as Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to contribute to the Jerusalem saints. These Gentiles had gained spiritual blessing from the Jews (see Romans 9-11).

Romans 9:24-26

*...even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea,*

*"Those who were not my people I will call my people,  
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"*

*And in the very place where it was said to them,  
"You are not my people,  
there they will be called sons of the living God."*

The Gentiles owe the Jews for their spiritual blessings, which have also provided personal blessing. Spiritual giving is a 'service', but with proper theology we also gain proper 'practise'. The 'where and who' demonstrate that joy and duty need each other. Paul's ministry is in order. When he has finished delivering the 'collection' then he will leave for Spain, and will visit Rome along the way (Romans 15:28) Paul has right 'priorities' and his 'priorities' are in proper order, thus he gains proper 'blessings'. This is not to suggest that we will be free from hardships, but that we will know the fullness of blessing. Paul is assured of this fact. And Paul experiences this fact.

Romans 15:29

*I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*

And this is Paul on his way to his arrest in Jerusalem. The 'blessing' transcends the 'priorities'. GOD'S WORK COMES FIRST!

#### **V. YOUR WILL ALIGNED TO GOD'S WILL: (vv. 30-33)**

Romans 15:30-33

*I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf; that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

'By God's will I may come', Paul states. The purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will toward us, but to align and bend our will to God's will. Only God knows how man should walk, and only He directs our steps.

Jeremiah 10:23

*I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself;  
that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.*

Proverbs 16:9

*The heart of man plans his way,  
but the LORD establishes his steps.*

And this fact is confirmed also in the New Testament. Jesus, knowing His suffering to come states:

Matthew 26:39

*And going a little further he fell on his face and prayed saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*



1 John 5:14

*And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

Proper alignment by God's will, not ours; only by the will of God.

Romans 1:9-11

*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you...*

Romans 8:27

*And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Romans 12:1-2

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

This is 'theology reality'... It is to be God's will, not our own will. But 'practical reality' is not quite so simple. Our prayers must also be aligned to God's will. It is not easy, but it is possible, and it is prescribed for us to do. We do not necessarily understand God's answers to our prayers, but we trust God.

Romans 15:30

*I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf..*

We are to 'strive' in our prayers. It is prescribed: Align your will to God's will. God's answers to our prayers are His own will'.

Paul seeks answers for his own three prayers:

1. For deliverance in Judea.
2. For acceptance of the 'collected' offering.
3. For refreshment.

Romans 15:31-32

*...that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.*

Paul is indeed delivered, for he is not killed. However, while his prayer is answered, it does not mean he escapes hardship, for he will be locked up for two years.

Acts 28:17

*After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans."*

Acts 28:30

*He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him...*

Paul did go to Jerusalem and the 'collection' was accepted.

Acts 21:17

*When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly.*

Acts 24:17

*Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.*

Paul was successful in getting to Jerusalem, and in passing on the 'collection', but he did not seal the relationship between and among the believing Jew and Gentile, nor with the unbelieving Jews. There remained hostility and bumps in the relationship. Paul defends himself before Felix explaining how as a Christian he still remained a faithful Jew. And in letters to the Churches Paul presses the need and reality of unity among the believers, Jew and Gentile.

Acts 24:14-21

*But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia—they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: "It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day."*

Ephesians 2:11-22

*Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the 'covenants of promise', having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one*

*new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Colossians 1:24-29

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints, To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of the mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

Paul did get to Rome, but he arrived in chains and would be imprisoned. This was not Paul's desired will, but it was how God willed it to be. And the believer's will must always be aligned with God's will. Ultimately, however, Paul's prayer was answered while he was in prison. Paul prayed for peace for all the believers, and even while in prison, he himself finds peace, for still he is able to proclaim and advance the gospel, and still he is able to 'serve' God.

Romans 15:33

*May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

From prison he writes to the Church at Philippi and reflects on his prison experience as a positive matter, even in his suffering. God has willed it to be for good.

Philippians 1:1-18

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,*

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and be pure and blameless for the*

*day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.*

Paul rejoices with the Philippians because he 'holds them in his heart' and together they are 'partakers with him both in his imprisonment and in defending and confirming the gospel'. In prison or not, Paul is in 'the company of the saints'. He is not alone. His perspective is one of unity with his brothers, with his fellow believers, who also are serving Christ with him. He finds fellowship in this, and refreshment, and love.

We do not live alone when we are living in Christ. We are meant to live in unity, in love, and in the company of other saints. And we do need 'refreshment' at times. But fellowship and refreshment does not always require being face to face with the saints, for in the Body of Christ, there are always arms that hold us from day to day, in love, in prayer, and in mutual service. Thanks be to God for the love of the saints.