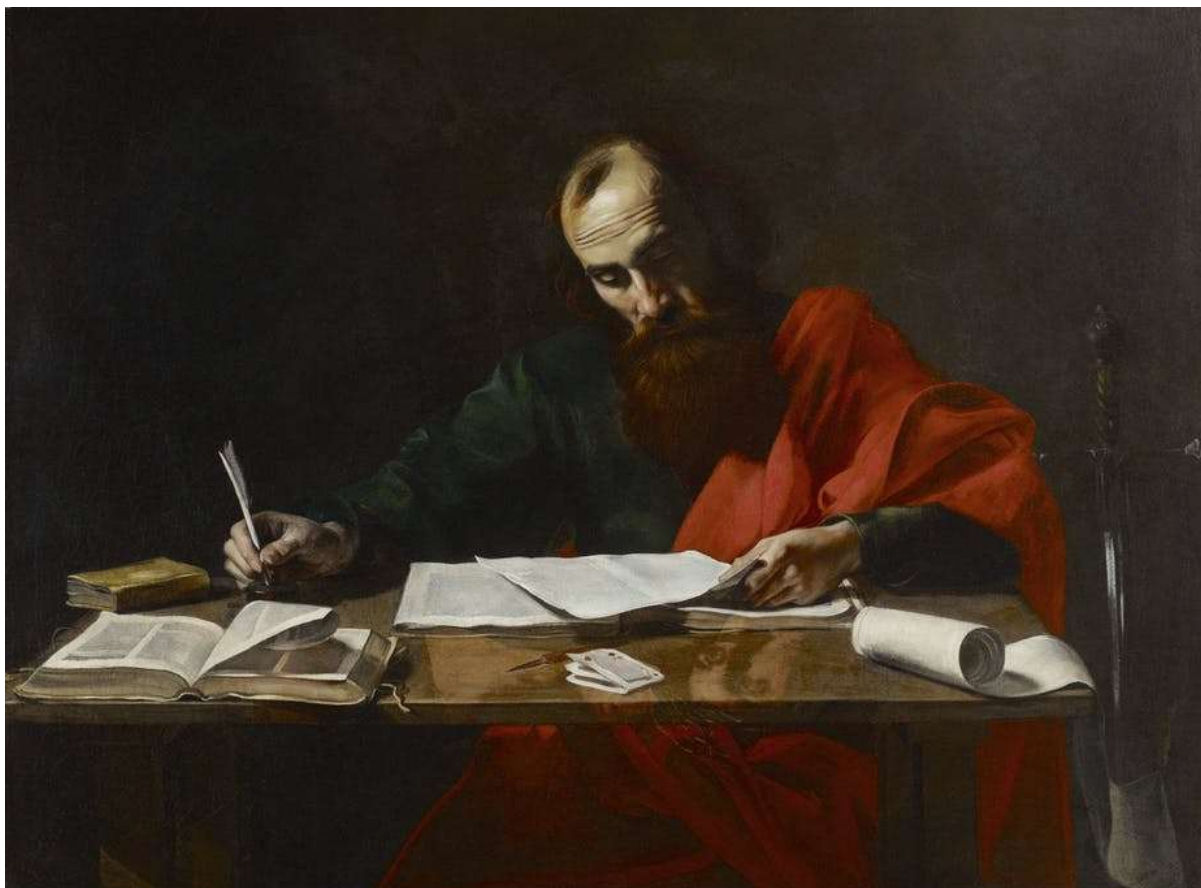


In his own words – Romans 15: 22 – 33



St Paul's Letter to the Romans was written as Paul was preparing for his return journey to Jerusalem, and these verses in the penultimate chapter of the letter give us an insight into what was going on in Paul's mind at the time. He tells us about a collection from the European churches that he and his companions would be carrying with them to Jerusalem. There had been a famine in the Middle East, leaving many in poverty. Much employment in the city was centred on the Temple, so Christians there may have found it hard to find jobs.

Christian charity has been part of the work of the Church from its earliest years, and is still important today. Tearfund's prayer diary over the last few days has featured projects in Pakistan, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. All of these countries have been affected adversely by the coronavirus pandemic, although we don't often hear about that in the news. Restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus have created new challenges for the aid agencies. Perhaps you could consider making an additional donation at this time to a charity like Tearfund, Christian Aid or All We Can. In spite of the problems we face in our own country, we are still greatly privileged in contrast with many other lands.

Paul writes of his hope to visit the church in Rome in the near future, and then to travel on to Spain, extending his missionary work further westward into Europe. In fact it was to be some years before he reached Rome, and then it would be as a prisoner. Whether he ever got to Spain we do not know, but it seems unlikely.

I have heard it said that if you want to make God laugh, you should tell Him your plans. I know what that means, but I dislike the saying, as it makes it sound as if God finds our misfortunes amusing. I don't believe He does. On the contrary, I think He shares our sadness and pain when disappointments come to us, and our hopes are dashed. What He can do, however, is enable us to work through times of difficulty and distress, to come out of them stronger, and to find new opportunities for service. As we read on in the Acts of the Apostles we discover how St Paul was able to use even imprisonment, danger and adversity to God's glory.

A Prayer:

God, give me strength to run this race,
God, give me power to do the right,
And courage lasting through the fight;
God, give me strength to see your face,
And heart to stand till evil cease,
And, at the last, O God, your peace. AMEN

(Author unknown)

- Rev John Barnett

Image: Saint Paul Writing His Epistles. Probably Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632).