**I Must Visit Rome Also**

Acts 19:1-41

Key verse Acts 19:21 “**21**After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.””

Good morning, today we will talk about Apostle Paul’s mission plan to visit Rome. Why did he eagerly want to go to Rome? Why? Did he want to see the shining glory of Roman emperor? Or did he enjoy the atmosphere of the highly civilized culture? No, the trip was not for any of these. We know that Paul’s plan to visit Rome was the extension of his mission life. He would go to Rome to strengthen the Christians there with the gospel of Jesus.

To Paul, the gospel is so precious because it is about the risen Jesus and God’s kingdom. Jesus saved Paul out of darkness and sins. With forgiveness from Jesus, Paul could possess the kingdom of God in his heart. Difficulties and persecutions did happen but eventually will end. After all, our faith and trust in God’s words remain and last. All things are under God’s control. The righteous will live by faith and by the help of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew this truth because he had met the eternal God and experienced the power of God in God’s ministry. In this difficult time of this pandemic, we pray that we could have the same hope and belief to trust in God, to accept His kingdom, to live by faith and to walk with the Holy Spirit continually. Amen.

**Part 1: Teaching about the Holy Spirit (1-7).**

Look at verses 1 and 2. “**1**While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples **2**and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”” Ephesus was a metropolitan city in the western part of the Roman Empire, known as Asia Minor, now known today as Turkey. Ephesus was a strategic city and the seat of Diana worship. Diana was a symbol of impurity and drew great numbers of people to its festivities.

In the city, Apostle Paul found the believers and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, only John's baptism." For some reason the people Paul met did not know the Holy Spirit. They knew only John’s baptism. So Paul taught them the baptism of Jesus because John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, but the baptism of Jesus is also the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:16). Paul explained to them the coming of Jesus Christ as the main point of John’s ministry. He proclaimed that Jesus died for our sins and rose again to give us eternal life in the kingdom of God. The Risen Jesus broke the bondage of sins and death through his death and resurrection. The Apostle Paul invited them to accept Jesus as their Lord and Christ. So they were baptized into the name of Jesus.

Look at verse 6. “**6**When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” They also spoke in tongues. This tongue-speaking meant that they spoke the secret things of God, forgetting all their profane language. They also prophesied. In the past, they were slaves of sinful desires. Now they could see the vision. They were filled with spiritual power and joy. They could speak about God and His marvelous work. They could see the coming of the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit drives out evil spirits and heals the sick.

We thank God for sending us the Holy Spirit who dwells within us when we repent and accept Jesus. We may be able to continuously pray and give ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Part 2: Teaching about the kingdom of God (8-22).**

Look at verse 8. “**8**Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.” Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly about the kingdom of God for three months.

The kingdom of God is where God reigns. God sent Jesus to this world as King and Messiah. Jesus restores God’s kingdom in this world and in the hearts of people. To accept the kingdom of God is to accept Jesus as our King. To those who accept him, Jesus is the Savior who drives out sin, death and the devil. Jesus rules us with peace, joy and the love of God. Jesus gives eternal life. Jesus gives us heaven as our eternal home.

We know that for a long time humans have tried to build the good kingdom in this world. Even many good people sacrificed their lives to build the good systems such as advanced capitalism and welfare systems. But we now find that any good systems cannot handle properly and perfectly the present difficulty. Many people suffer, being thrown into the panic and becoming fearful. At the same time, we hope that the present situation will end. New remedy medicines will be produced and sold in the market. New social adaptive systems will be invented for the old systems to be replaced. We might call this process ‘restoration’ or ‘reconstruction.’ But people would not be happy until God’s kingdom prevails. With the assurance of the kingdom of God in our hearts and in the future, we could be peaceful. It is because God is the Creator God and the Author of life and so the true restoration could be found in His kingdom.

Look at verses 9 and 10. “**9**But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. **10**This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” At first, people liked his teaching about the kingdom of God. But soon, they did not want to turn from the world to God. They did not want to obey God. They became obstinate. They refused to listen. Some Ephesians refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

There, Apostle Paul taught God’s words and planted the hope of the kingdom of God for two years. The result of his commitment was remarkable. All the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord (10). It was God’s work. God also did extraordinary miracles through Paul. Even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them (12). And the seven sons of Sceva were punished and humiliated by the evil spirits because the brothers did not seriously acknowledge the name of Jesus and his work.

Due to great works of God, people were seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many who believed in Jesus came out and openly confessed their evil deeds. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (20). When Paul saw God’s work, he was sure that Ephesus had been pioneered and it was time to move on.

What was Apostle Paul’s next plan? Look at verse 21. Verse 21 reads, “**21**After all, this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.””. He decided to go to Jerusalem, and then to Rome. Rome was the center of the world. Paul believed that God would conquer Rome with the gospel as he had done in Ephesus. Paul wanted to unite the Christian church and inspire it to march forward for the sake of world mission. Paul accepted that God’s kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven during his lifetime. This vision was the fruit of his lifetime obedience to the Holy Spirit. Practically Paul would help Roman Christians and strengthen them with the spiritual wisdom.

Now seemingly there is nothing we can do and it is natural to be in fearful of the situations. However, near us we have many people of God who helps others with the attitude of firmly holding onto the grace of God and His mission, overcoming these fears. To name a few, Pastor Paul Choi and Dr. Melissa help Bible students in Hong Kong and China through online bible study. Shep. Kit serves needy people. M. Luke encourages the missionaries in other countries. M. James helps his Bible student and prays for him, and so on. When we obey God’s leading and give our hearts to God’s work, God will lead us to see the greater vision for His kingdom.

**Part 3: Reaction to the work of God (23-41).**

As God’s work was visible and flourishing, the devil did not sit back. Satan used the men who did not know God to stir the city and God’s ministry. Particularly, Satan attacked God’s work through a selfish silversmith named Demetrius. Demetrius appealed to Ephesian craftsmen and citizens on the basis of their bank accounts, their pride, and sentimental attachment to their religion. He manipulated them into an emotional frenzy. So the people rushed as one man into the theater, shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

Most of the people did not even know why they were there. Here, Luke wants us to think about the real source of evil and chaos. It is the devil, working through Godless people, like Demetrius. And the devil’s agents cause troubles for many innocent people. However, in the midst of danger, Paul was not frightened. He wanted to address the crowd. Many coworkers begged him not to do so, but Paul was courageous.

The reason of Paul’s confidence was that he knew God is with him. Through the rule of law, God protected Paul and the gospel ministry. God used the city clerk to protect his servants. The city clerk was worried about the possibility of a riot. Roman emperor did not like any social disorder that would cause trouble to his government. If a riot ever occurred, the city's mayor was held responsible for it. So the city clerk appealed to the crowd on the basis of law. He reminded them that there was no reason for their gathering and that they were in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government. After speaking these words, he dismissed the assembly.

When I first heard of the coronavirus, I was caught with worries in health, finance, and practical life issues. I could not concentrate on my work and life properly. However, while I am preparing this message, I had a chance to think of what it means to us with Apostle Paul’s plan to visit Rome. Beneath his plan, I could see Apostle Paul’s thankfulness on Jesus’ salvation revealed by the Holy Spirit and the confidence in the work of God in his ministry.

With knowledge on God’s saving grace and confidence in His almighty power on my life, I could follow Jesus to continue my life of faith. And I believe that even when we might be on the unknown path to the future, but God will continuously protect us and be with us through the Holy Spirit. And the current temporal difficulty will end with God’s guidance and victory.

Through today’s passage, we learn that Apostle Paul wanted to go Rome with the thankfulness on Jesus’ grace and confidence in God’s power and His kingdom. God is powerful and gracious enough to protect His people until they finish their life of mission. So we should not fear anything other than God. When we highly honor the name of Jesus, God protects and is with His people in any circumstances. Amen.