

## I'LL GO WHERE YOU WANT ME TO GO

Romans 15:20-24

By Raymond White

The popular hymn says, "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go, Dear Lord." That may be as extreme as going on a mission to the African interior or simply going home after work rather than out bowling with the boys.

The apostle Paul was quite willing to go wherever God wanted him to go and had definite ideas about where that might be. He was surprised, however, at the itinerary that God had chosen for him.

Paul did not plan to serve a mission in Rome, much less die there. He had something else in mind, a mission to a far more distant place. But then God pulled him us short and said basically, "No, Paul, I have something else for you to do. Something much more important."

***Romans 15:22** I have been hindered from coming to you [saints in Rome] **:23** But now having no place in these parts and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; **:24** Wherefore I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward to you.*

So the mission that Paul had in mind was not to Rome but to Spain. Rome was just a stop on the way where Paul expected to get help from friends.

But why Spain? Why not Rome? Because —

***Romans 15:20** I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.*

Paul had been immensely successful in Greece and Asia Minor (Turkey). He therefore believed that his particular gifts were best suited for areas where Christ was still unknown. Good reasoning. He didn't mind tracting and expected no referrals. Therefore, since Rome already had a thriving church, Paul reasoned that his proper field of labor was the end of the earth: Spain.

But Paul never made it to Spain. He tried, but God had other plans for him: chains, prison, shipwreck, more prison, and finally a headman's ax in Rome. Rome was as far as Paul ever got.

Why on earth, we might wonder, would God pull him away from a potentially successful mission in Spain simply to die a martyr's death in Rome? How could that be so important in God's grand scheme of things? Because, along the way, Paul wrote 12 epistles (13 if you count Hebrews), which became a major part of our New Testament. And writing those letters turned out to be far more important to all future generations than anything he could have accomplished in Spain.

There is a point in all this. Have a plan, of course. And do your best to execute your plan. But if God changes your plan, let him. Just follow and see where he leads you. And maybe, at the end, you'll look back and see that his plan was the better.