

01.27.08 New Year's Topical Message #4 After I have been there, I must visit Rome also

- Rom 1:8-12, 15:22-24, 29; Act 19:21-22, 21:7-14, 26:16-23, 28:30-31 -

**** Beginning Remarks**

****Scripture Reading: <Rom 1:8-12, 15:22-24, 29>**

<Act 19:21-22, 21:7-14, 26:16-23, 28:30-31>

1. Why did Paul long to visit Rome?

1) <Mat 28:18-20; Act 1:8> Lord Jesus' promises to all his disciples → <Act 9:15, 26:16-20> Lord Jesus' promises and fulfillment as to individuals => <Rom 1:10, 15:28; Act 19:21, 20:22-24, 21:10-14> Paul longed to visit Rome.

- All saints at the end of this age should regard as their own life-mission "Lord Jesus' promises of world evangelization", seek therewith God's plan and good will in their own circumstances and life's network, and experience God's leading and accomplishing..

- Lord said, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch" <Luk 5:4>= Lord Christ valued "the work of the gospel in important cities": the 3000 disciples blessed during Pentecost = saints from 15 cities in the world / in the Acts led by the Lord himself, we can see that the Lord always valued "the work in big cities"(Jerusalem, Antioch, Macedonia, Ephesus and Rome).

2) Paul saw that at that time all roads of the big cities in the world lead to Rome and all roads of Rome lead to the whole world.

- Paul was a citizen of three kingdoms = of the kingdom of heaven, of the Hebrews and of Rome = He knew God's good will for him.

-In <Rom 16:1-27>, Paul mentioned 35 names in his greetings; those people were Christ's disciples from various places of the world..

- <Act 2:10> at Pentecost, among the travelers from Rome were Priscilla and Aquila <18:2>

* Rome was the political, economic, military, education, religious, and cultural center and a center of fame and fortune for socialites.

3) Most important is this: Paul possessed the gospel messages of Christ, which he had lived and experienced and with which he would impact the whole world.

- <Rom 1:11>"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong" <Rom 15:29> "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ" / <2Co 4:7> "we have this treasure in jars of clay"

- In Christ he received messages, life and power with which to regenerate, heal, and build up men, establish churches and bless all peoples.

- He was also well aware of the havoc Judaism, Christianity of an extreme kind and Christian heresy had wreaked and witnessed unhealthy states of faith such as mysticism, legalism, humanism, and praying for

blessings alone practiced even in some Christian fellowships because of their misunderstanding of the essence of the gospel of Christ <Galatians >.

4) In his mission work for the past 20 years Paul had seen clearly God's plan and schedule and gained many "connections" (networks).

- repentance in A.D. 34; taught for one year in Antioch in A.D. 40; sent off by the Antioch Church in A.D. 43; after 3 mission journeys, was brought to Rome in A.D. 60. ../ he said in <Rom 15:20-23>, "But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions..."

- Each time Paul came back from his mission journey, he must go back to Jerusalem and Antioch; he very much valued "the joining up of all the saints and their churches"/Paul specially valued "discipleship training" and often sent them off (see his Epistles).

5) His two-year work in Rome focused on "discipleship training", "writing epistles" and "acting as liaison among churches".

- In Rome Paul met "world-class disciples of his age", trained them and sent them off to strengthen the disciples he had gathered and the churches he had built, thereby influencing the whole world –"For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." <Act 28:30-31>/ prison epistles [Ephesians, Philipians, Colosians, and Philemon] were composed during this period. Paul asked the receiving churches to exchange them <Col 4:16>.

6) Paul knew all along: before "this vision from above" was fulfilled, he could not "die" and no one and nothing could close "the door God had opened and the way God was leading">

-Therefore, he always persevered regardless of the hardships, persecutions, misunderstandings, imprisonment, sickness, poverty, and risks of life he endured and never "was never disobedient to the vision from heaven" = those, having seen "the vision of their age and his Rome", are "the best big-hearted", have "the greatest authority, power and courage", possess "the most beautiful wisdom", and will meet "the most important people of their generation" and enjoy "the coveted connections". They'll fear no hardships but instead gain therein more beautiful testimonies and connections. There are many such witnesses in the history of the church.

2. The Rome of today that God has prepared for us = the U.S., China, overseas Chinese, and the internet

1) What's the so-called true faith? Faith is not blind faith, superstition or wild faith. Instead, faith is "we follow God, who is invisible, after having seen God's leading."

- It doesn't happen like this: Pastor says, "God has entrusted the whole world with us!" and saints respond with "Amen" without knowing thereafter how to begin.

* secret of seeing God's leading = restoring our identity → firmly believing in God's promises → testing and approving God's good will in our own circumstances → testing and approving God's leading and accomplishing in the past → in our today's schedule following God joyfully with all our hearts and all our strength → leaving tomorrow entirely with God

* the evangelization of the individual, family, region and the world should proceed at the same time

2) Test and approve: the 21st century Rome = the U.S., China, overseas Chinese and the internet

→ God is doing the work of “gathering his people and building his kingdom in the 21st century” (the only purpose of human history on earth <Mat 24:14>)

① the U.S.: multi-ethnicity, multi-culture, and multi-talents / the world’s political, economic, military, education, and cultural center and center of Christianity

② China: major player of the 21st century / population is 4 times that of the U.S. / the increasing influence of Chinese on the U.S. / center of power and influence is gradually shifting from the U.S. to China where, most importantly, true saints and churches (the major players of history) of today are being raised up.

③ Overseas Chinese: the modern day Diaspora(a people scattered)/ their power in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and countries in Southeast Asia; they are even found among the Americas, Europe, Australia, Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East / only Chinese churches continue to flourish particularly in the land of the gentiles (Buddhists and Muslims) / connections of the overseas Chinese with and their impact on mainland China

④ the internet: uniting the whole world; its infinite possibility for further development / the most important tool for the 21st Century evangelical ministry

3) Test and approve: all the conditions we have = certificates of three citizenships (the kingdom of heaven, the U.S., and China – the connections of the overseas Chinese)

→ Hasn’t God made me what I am today for this very purpose? (the only purpose for the saints to live in this world)

- overseas Chinese in the U.S. have the greatest influence on China and overseas Chinese elsewhere in the world / Chinese churches in the U.S. are made up of people who come from all over China / our church’s main prayer this year = joining up with the flesh of our flesh, i.e., our families, relatives and friends

4) Test and approve: the vision, promises, messages and evidence that Lord Christ has given our Christian Life Church of Washington DC

- Vision: restoration of Christ Emmanuel = proclaim the difference between “religion and gospel” = Emmanuel 24/7 and as to everything = “meeting God → communicating with God → walking with God”

- Challenge: “Is it true that he who is willing to hear my messages of the gospel of Christ, understands and therefore believes will be born again and able to communicate and walk with God?” Will what I have gained, i.e., “messages of Christ Emmanuel” and “messages, methods and testimonies as to disciples gathering and training and church planting”, have an impact on China’s house church and overseas Chinese churches?

5) What will happen

- We’ll be able to tell what will happen if we understand clearly the messages, life, and evidence God has given and is giving us.

- the accomplishing as in <Isa 43-60; Mat 28:18-20; Act 1:8> = many teachers, disciples and witnesses will be raised from among us → developing the “life’s network” of our members → the beginning of the short-term and long-term evangelical ministry (the Antioch church)→ “Christ’s Life Church” being planted everywhere → special ministries being developed (Children Sunday School, Youth, Young Professional,

Women, Serving God on the job / Music ministry, text ministry, internet ministry / ministry for training ministers, elders, and deacons / Christian ministries among politicians, economists, military personnel, intellectuals and athletes)→ raising up later generations who will be double-blessed

3. in today's schedule follow God with all our hearts and all our strength = this is what pleases the Lord the most

1) Examine ourselves for our schedules today

- Test and approve: all the conditions needed for “evangelization of our family, our region and our world” are already in our possessions, i.e., our current conditions (our gifts, connections, vision, and experience). Therefore, we should enjoy to the fullest what our church and our members have.

- Examine: the degree of connectedness of my church (members, intercession and evangelical ministries) with me, my family, my job and my relatives and friends

- Reconfirm: what is my schedule in terms of my equipping, experiencing, and serving (how well could I communicate and walk with God / preach the gospel, teaching others and evangelical missions)

2) Strive to join up well together, focus on equipping and serve faithfully

- joining up well together: with God → with self → with members → with family → with relatives and friends / the importance of prioritizing / beginning to intercede

- equipping: in terms of experiencing being filled with the H.S., communicating and walking with God / joining up well with others / blessings spouse, children, family, and relatives / preaching the gospel and evangelical missions

- serving: nothing is unimportant when it comes to the ministries of “a church striving for regional and world evangelization” / do our best and faithfully according to our gifts and blessed schedule (participation by 100% of our members in service)

3) Special prayer topic of the year = the schedule of this God-led church for this year

① ***our church's pastoral ministry:*** strengthen children, youth, college/young professionals, cell group and family ministries

② ***four major ministries:*** internet, text (including translations), printing and publication, tape/CD/DVD duplication/ selecting chair person and gathering members

③ ***teachers training:*** two consecutive sessions, ten meetings each: starting at 2:00pm, Saturday, 02-09-08
=> video taping needed

④ ***short-term evangelical missions and follow-up:*** China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia and follow up thereafter; networking via the internet

*****Concluding Remarks***

*****Prayer Topics of the Week (01.27.08) *****

1) All the conditions needed for family, regional, and world evangelization can be found in what we have now: *test and approve: how can God use my gifts, my job and my network? How well am I joined up with the members of my church (who are doing the work of world evangelization) in terms of my equipping, my life, and my service? Where am I with regards to my life and my equipping for service?*

2) How will God use me, my family, my church and my descendants? *Ref. Outline #2 (5) and gain the vision, the dream, the prayer topics for myself, my family and my descendants.*

3) How is the relationship between this year's "main prayer" God has given our church and my equipping and serving? *Diagnose first whether I have been faithful in the ministries I serve? Where do I need to improve in terms of "joining up well with others"? What's my goal for equipping this year? Where do I need to improve in the ministries of our church?*