

## Where Christ Is Not Named

Romans 15:17-22

Last words are very important. These final words of Paul give us an indication of what was really important to him. It seems clear that Paul had a *passion for people*. Or to put it in different words, *people are important* to Paul. In our text he speaks of his love for a specific group of people; those who live in environments where Christ is not named. How can I know if I have a love and a passion for those who have not come to faith in Christ?

### **I. I get really excited about people coming to faith in Christ (vs.17 -18).**

*"I glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God"* (v.17) refers to the previous verse *"the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable"* (v.16). Paul says, *"I dare not speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought"* (v.18). Paul was a tentmaker, a poet, a scholar, and a lawyer, but Christ was his great love.

*"I desire to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified"* (I Cor. 2:2).

### **II. I do not compartmentalize my life --- it's all about Christ (v.19).**

Paul traveled from Jerusalem to Asia Minor and west to Illyricum (map).

Some cities and peoples had heard the gospel (Rome had already been sent Peter), but others, including the people of Illyricum (modern day Serbia and Albania) had not. In all places Paul made it a point to *"fully preach the gospel of Jesus Christ"* (v.19). The relationship you have with Jesus Christ goes with you to all places and to all peoples.

### **III. I have friends who are not Christians but know I am one (v.20).**

*"I have strived to preach the gospel where Christ is not named"* (v.20), which means that Paul intentionally sought out people who were completely unfamiliar with the good news of a righteousness that comes from God through His Son Jesus Christ. He sought these people out "in order to proclaim" or "make known" Christ.

### **IV. I never dismiss a person as beyond the reach of Jesus Christ (v.21).**

Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:15 in this verse to point out that God is in the business of revealing Himself to people who have "not seen" and have "not heard." Why?

He is glorified through the changing of lives by the power of His grace. Never put a person beyond the all-powerful reach of a sovereign, gracious God. God saves.

### **V. I sometimes am inconvenienced for the cause of sharing Christ (v.22).**

Paul was delayed in coming to Rome (v.22) because he had given of his time and resources to reach the people of Serbia. How uncomfortable are you when it comes to reaching out to those without Christ? How much time and resources do you give? To many of you, the ability to share Christ with others requires some study of Christ.

*"Testimony is not a synonym for autobiography! When we are truly witnessing, we are not talking about ourselves but about Christ"* **John R.W. Stott.**