

Road Trip Devotion - Romans 15:16-19

by Jake Christian, Adult Ministries Pastor

"I am a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so that I might present you as an acceptable offering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit. So I have reason to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God. Yet I dare not boast about anything except what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them." (Romans 15:16-19; NLT)

It is difficult not to become overwhelmed by the amount of brokenness I see in the world around me. There is so much suffering and despair, so much injustice, so many broken families. People die of preventable hunger and disease in Africa. Natural disasters cause untold suffering in New Orleans and Haiti. Political and religious prisoners are tortured and forgotten by wayward governments around the world. War and genocide cause untold devastation, suffering and death in places as diverse as the Sudan and the Middle East. Unborn children die because their parents don't want them. Marriages that should be a source of strength and encouragement instead end in divorce. And we all seem to have a surprisingly endless capacity for prejudice and hatred towards other people simply because they are different from us. Since the Fall (Genesis 3), both the world and the people who live within it have been damaged by sin, and we still see the many effects of our sin today - everywhere we look.

I am tempted to be overwhelmed by these things because I want to do something about them - all of them. I hate that such injustice, pain and brokenness exists. I suspect most of us do. But I feel powerless to effect real change on any one of these issues - let alone all of them. And then it becomes easy to give in to the temptation to be overwhelmed - to simply say, "There is nothing I can do" and to go on living my life as if these injustices don't exist.

But this passage gives me hope. It makes me think that maybe, just maybe, I can have an effect. Why? Because it makes me realize that while I can do little to effect change in the face of such evil and injustice, God can do a lot. In fact, the Bible tells us that one day God will set the world right and eradicate *all* injustice and evil from the world. And while I long for that day to come quickly, I realize that until that day comes, God wants to work *through me*. This is what Paul speaks of in these verses - that God is working through him to accomplish his will. Paul, by himself, would never have been able to accomplish all that he did. But he made himself available to God - and God can do amazing things through his willing followers.

And God wants to work through you as well. What is it that you care deeply about? What injustice do you care deeply about? Who in your life does God want to reach through you? God wants to use you to share his love and compassion with a deeply hurting world - are you willing to make yourself available to him? What does God want to do through *your* life?