

WORKING TOWARD NO PLACE LEFT

We can learn much from Paul's ministry as recorded in the Bible. Through Paul's ministry, we see a case study for how the kingdom of God grows. Many of the principles of kingdom growth we have examined are prominent in the work of Paul.

Like Paul, we can work toward no place left for apostolic work in our regions.

Romans 15:17-24:

In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs



and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”

This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

Paul declares that “from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum” he “fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ”. Because of this, he no longer had “any room for work” in those regions. There was no place left. We can see the regions Paul described in the following map.



The regions from Jerusalem around to Illyricum included 25 million (2.5 crore) people. We know from Acts 13-20 that Paul's ministry in these areas lasted less than 15 years. How could Paul say there was no place left for work in these regions over such a short period of time?

Acts 20:1-4:

After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent

three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.

During these three months in Greece, Paul probably writes the letter Romans from Corinth (Acts 20:2-3, Romans 15:19-32, Romans 16:1-2, Romans 16:23, and 1 Corinthians 1:14). As Paul writes from Corinth, he declares that there is no place left and he asks for help from Rome to move on to Spain (Romans 15:23-24). We can see Corinth, Rome, and Spain noted on the following map.



Who is with Paul when he leaves Greece? From Acts 20:4 we know Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus were with Paul. Where were these people from?

- Sopater **Berea**
- Aristarchus **Thessalonica**
- Secundus **Thessalonica**
- Gaius **Derbe**
- Timothy **Lystra (Acts 16:1)**
- Tychicus **Asia**
- Trophimus **Asia**

These places are noted on the following map.



Where had Paul worked during his three journeys?
Paul had worked in four major regions. These regions were:

Galatia Acts 13-14
Acts 16:1-5
Acts 18:23

Asia Acts 19

Macedonia.....Acts 16:6-17:5
Acts 20:1-6

Achaia / GreeceActs 20:1-5

These regions are noted on the following map.



By what evidence did Paul declare that his work in these regions was completed? The men Paul was with from Galatia, Asia, and Macedonia. Paul was writing from Greece. Therefore, Paul knew leaders and churches existed capable of carrying on the work

from Jerusalem around to Illyricum. Paul worked hard to identify, instruct, and commission elders / overseers to lead in the regions he went to. Paul entrusted faithful men to do the work in these regions.

Now, were there important problems that arose in the churches? Yes. Sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1) and believing a false gospel (Galatians 1:6) were two problems. Paul knew challenges would come (Acts 20:28-32), but he was confident in God.

Paul considered there no place left for his work from Jerusalem around to Illyricum because the power of God had been displayed in the churches in these regions. The Gentiles of the churches in these regions were obedient, in word and deed (Romans 15:18, Romans 1:5).

Can God accomplish the same thing today? Yes! Is our God the same as in the days of Paul? Yes! Is it possible to see no place left in Bangalore and other target areas? Yes!



What did Paul do throughout his three journeys to pursue no place left? Throughout the book of Acts, we see Paul doing five things repeatedly. We can look at a clear example of this:

Acts 14:19-23:

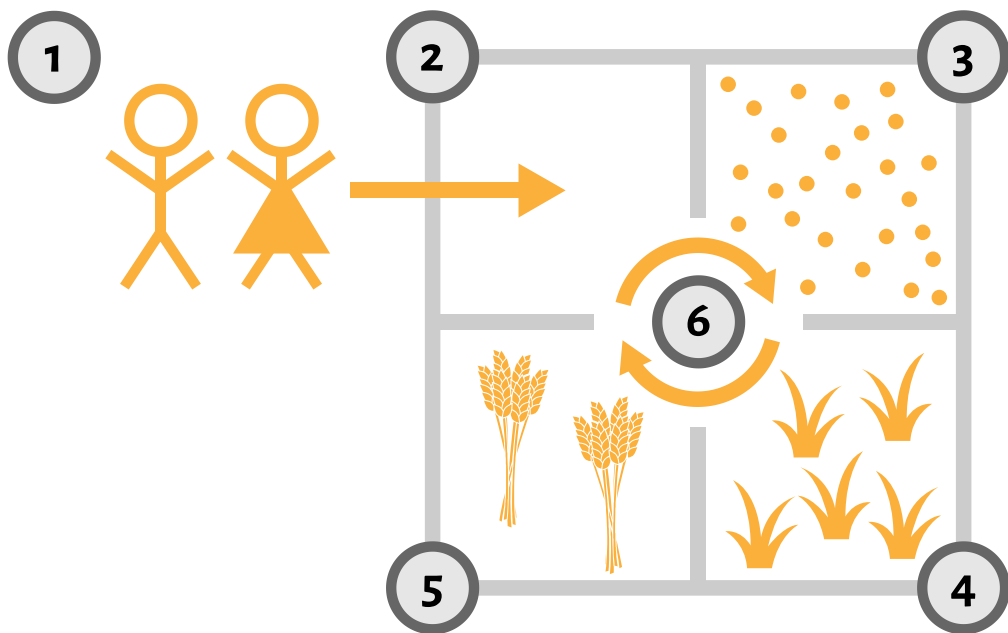
¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made

many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

What do we see Paul doing in this passage? Paul:

- 1 Enters new places** (v. 20)
- 2 Preaches the gospel** (v. 21)
- 3 Disciples followers of Jesus** (v. 22)
- 4 Forms churches** (v. 23)
- 5 Multiplies leaders** (v. 23)

These are the same parts of kingdom growth found in the teaching of Jesus (see *How the Kingdom of God grows*). To help remember how the kingdom of God grows, we can use the diagram on the following page.



- 1** Abiding in God
- 2** Entering Empty Fields
- 3** Proclaiming the Gospel
- 4** Discipleship
- 5** Forming Churches
- 6** Multiplying Leaders

As in the diagram, kingdom growth consists of several parts. These parts are abiding in God, entering empty fields of unbelievers, proclaiming the gospel, discipleship, forming churches, and multiplying leaders. This is a cycle, and each part is required for effective kingdom growth. We can use biblical, simple, reproducible tools for each of these parts to help us be effective in seeing God's kingdom grow. Following the same pattern from the teaching of Jesus and the ministry of Paul, we can see no place left in our regions.

For Kingdom Growth

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