

“Lord Teach Us To Pray”

A Study in the Exposition of the Prayers of Paul: Romans 15:30-33¹ Two Week Study Guide

WEEK ONE

A Grafted Vine, Romans 15:1-13

The first half of Romans chapter fifteen serves to provide a contextual foundation for the remainder of the chapter. In these first thirteen verses, there initially is some carry over from chapter fourteen and then some contextual themes that carry over regarding the reality of that which was up until recently a mystery - a single believing body consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. However, while the nature of the Church was a mystery that had only been recently revealed, it was clear that the Lord had always demonstrated a heart for the nations as plainly laid out through the Old Testament references quoted from in this chapter.

Regarding the Old Testament, Paul makes six direct quotations in the chapter; five of the six emphasize God's inclusion of the Gentiles with the one apparent exception, Psalm 69:9:

Romans 15:3

“For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.” Psalm 69:9

Romans 15:9 (Jews/Gentiles)

“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing praises to your name.”

2 Samuel 22:50

“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.” Psalm 18:49

Romans 15:10 (Jews/Gentiles)

“Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land *and* His people.”

Deuteronomy 32:43 NASB

Romans 15:11 (Jews/Gentile)

“Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!” Psalm 117:1

Romans 15:12 (Jews/Gentiles)

“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.” Isaiah 11:10

Romans 15:21 (Jews/Gentiles)

“...so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.”

Isaiah 52:15

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School
ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

It is this very context of a Jew and Gentile Church that continues on through the second half of the chapter (Romans 15:16,18,20,21,24,26-27,28,31) as Paul was an Apostle to the Gentiles, he was writing to Gentiles, the Gentiles were sending a gift to their Jewish counterparts, and the Jews in turn would need to be receptive to a gift from the Gentiles.

Confidence in Maturity, Romans 15:14

Paul begins his transition with generously commending these Gentile believers - they are good, knowledgeable, and able to admonish/instruct one another. Having this skilled capacity to properly admonish or instruct one another was a reflection both of their maturity and of their affectionate care of one another.

Reflection and Application: Romans 15:1-13,14

If there were so many references throughout the Old Testament to The LORD's attention and care for the nations, then why do you suppose that there was such a struggle with the early church fully appreciating Jews and Gentiles in one body, the Church?

You can watch this struggle unfold through the early half of Acts and to a significant degree climax in Acts 15 when the matter is addressed in a formal capacity by the leadership of the Jerusalem Church (consisting of both Elders and Apostles).

How does this matter of God's great plan progressively being revealed to show that he has brought Jew and Gentile believers into one unique body, The Church, impact your thoughts, your worship, and your prayers?

Paul commends the Roman believers for their maturity and care of one another as demonstrated in their counseling, admonishing and instructing each other. How have you labored toward all goodness, all knowledge, and the ability to counsel/admonish/instruct one another for the greater care and service of the church?

Further, how might you apply what strengths, talents, gifting, and ability you have been able to develop and secure?

The Priestly Service of Apostleship to Gentiles, Romans 15:15-16

Having affirmed their mature standing, Paul expresses a direct contrast - it would appear to communicate an affirmation of strength and now a matter that needs further attention. This was not necessarily indicative of a deficiency on the Romans' part; it appears to be a redirect from affirming them in their mutual labor of love, faithfulness, and care amongst themselves to the work that Paul had been called to for others. Paul had a sweeping charge to be God's intercessory tool to the Gentiles for both gospel witness unto belief and their progress unto maturity and completeness in Christ (a path on which the Roman believers had demonstrated faithfulness as has been affirmed).

When Paul speaks of priestly service and his offering of the Gentile believers our modern Protestant Evangelical ears bristle a little as such language is not typically applied to our roles and service and this language has clearly been abused by others such as the Roman Catholic Church. However, Peter makes it clear that the Church now has a mediatorial role of declaring the excellencies of Christ to the unbelieving world (1 Peter 2:4-10). This does not mean that the unbeliever must access God through the Church, but that the Church is God's means of declaring his excellencies in this world – a function that Israel, under the Old Covenant, failed to execute with consistent faithfulness. With this in view Paul sees his mediatorial role as both a New Covenant believer and an Apostle in particular as one of priestly service, offering up a people redeemed by Christ.

John MacArthur states this service as follows, "As Paul ministered figuratively as a priest the gospel of God to the Gentiles, he did so in order that his offering of believing Gentiles to God, as it were, might become acceptable to Him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In faithful fulfillment of his unique apostolic calling, Paul's supreme offering to God was a multitude of Gentiles, who by virtue of the Holy Spirit's power had been sanctified and thus made acceptable for fellowship with the Father."²

Here it is also important to note that whereas the qualitative nature of the Old Covenant sacrifices were on account of their appearance, pedigree, and overall excellence – here Paul is identifying the acceptability of the Gentiles (their qualitative nature to be sacrifices offered to God) based on the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God and not themselves.

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 9-16; John MacArthur; Moody Press, 1994; (Hereafter: MacArthur), Pg.332

Reflection and Application: Romans 15:15-16

Paul viewed his ministry to the Gentiles as a priestly service. How might you exercise faithfulness in the service that Paul has called all believers to in Romans 12:1-2?

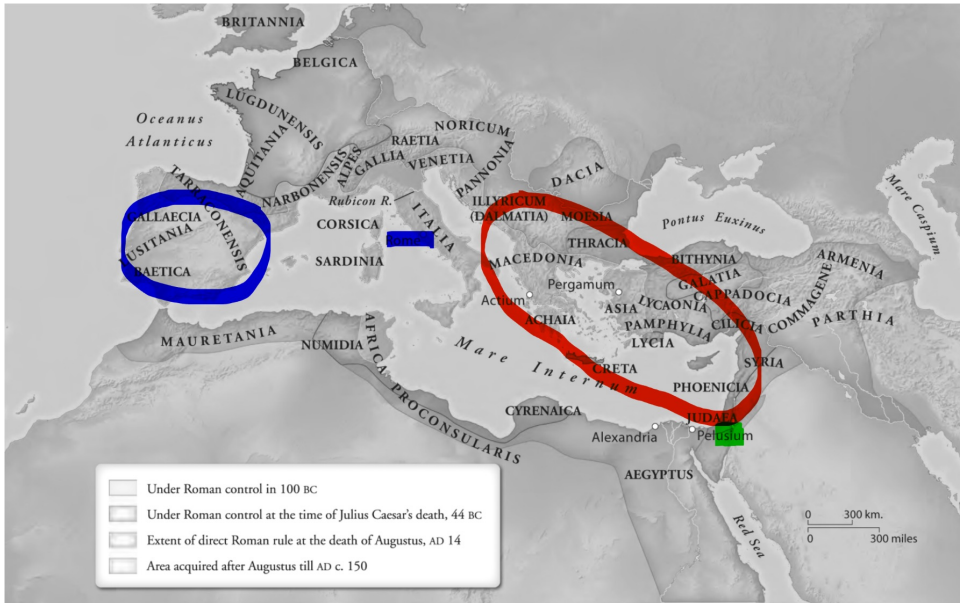
Paul's Missiology: Pioneering the Gospel to New Lands, Romans 15:17-21

Paul goes on to speak to the work that the Lord had been pleased to accomplish through him in the pioneering pastoral missionary work of advancing the gospel amongst the Gentiles - a successful work worthy of proud affirmation, not because of Paul's involvement, but because it was the very work of God that he was pleased to execute through Paul. A like expression is observed in Thessalonians, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy." 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

Paul expounded on his confident testimony of what the Lord had been pleased to accomplish through him as the Apostle to the Gentiles - the conversion and maturing of the Gentiles in the faith from Jerusalem to the beginnings of the uttermost parts of the earth in Illyricum (or the contemporary Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe). Further, this unique work was affirmed through the supernatural means that accompanied the expansion of the Church during the early Apostolic period – the power of signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God.

This vast expansion demonstrates Paul's passion in advancing the gospel - specifically his drive to preach the gospel where Christ has not already been named. He had a zeal for those who had never so much as heard of redemption in Christ. That was what compelled him to press on to the uttermost parts of the earth as far as he anticipated that he would be able to go in his natural life. Never having heard the gospel was to never again be said after Paul had been afforded the opportunity to travel, reach, and declare Christ.

Paul's Gospel Work and His Ambition for Future Service.



Historic Area of Gospel Advancement: Jerusalem to Illyricum. RED

Immediate Plans of Service: Jerusalem GREEN

Future Plans of Service: Rome and Spain. BLUE

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Signs and Wonders

Regarding “signs and wonders” – I have learned the great value of maps in the study of the Scriptures. They provide context, insight, and at the very least they help one secure their bearings for where something occurred (which often gives insight into a significant element of “why” too). In an even more consequential way one can profit from a biblical timeline that lays out the chapters of Redemptive History and the unfolding of God’s progressive plan and revelation. Signs and wonders did not accompany all persons throughout all time in the history of the Scriptures, but were usually present during times of unique services and functioned to authenticate the message as well as demonstrate God’s unique interruption of his established patterns in creation. The time of Jesus’ incarnate ministry and the establishing of the Church was an extraordinarily unique time and reflected the revealing of great mysteries by God (a consistently referenced term expressing the Church and its outworking in Redemptive History). Therefore, it is wholly consistent to anticipate that verifying signs and wonders would accompany both the ministry of the incarnate Son of God and the establishing of the Church. Further, it is wholly consistent to understand that once verified, such unique interruptions should no longer be expected as they have now been authoritatively affirmed and the standard by which all subsequent actions and words must be measured against has also been secured in a final standard of the closed Canon of the Scriptures. With this in view it would be expected as we consider the timeline of Redemptive History that the Apostle to the Gentiles would speak of the authenticating elements of his unique ministry.

³ Zondervan Atlas of the Bible; Carl G. Rasmussen; Zondervan, 2010 (original image in color), Pg.202

John MacArthur provides a helpful focus to the matter of signs and wonders stating, “But even in the days of the apostles, the most miraculous authentication of the gospel was not through physical signs and wonders. The greatest miracle of miracles has always been the regeneration of a human soul from sinner to saint, from being an enemy of God to being a child of God, of being transformed from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. The greatest divine affirmation of ministry has always been the spiritual transformation of souls. The truth of the gospel today is authenticated by God’s completed Word in the New Testament, but the power of the gospel is demonstrated in the lives that are transformed.”

Reflection and Application: Romans 15:17-21

Paul provides the heart of his missiology here (missiology: the study or discipline of one’s philosophy and practice of missions). Provide your thoughts and reflections on his particular missiology. Should this be everyone’s practice? What is the function of various missions’ efforts? Consider 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 as you work through this subject.

In view of the purpose and function of “signs and wonders” why or why not would they be applied today in common ministry or in pioneering missional work?

Paul’s Desire for Rome and Ambitions for Spain, Romans 15:22-24

It was in the greater context of his gospel pioneering work and zeal that Paul framed his present and anticipated relationship with the church in Rome. He had, as expressed in Romans 1:13, desired to come to them, but his continued gospel pioneering work had restricted him until this time. Now that his work in that region had been completed, his plan was to travel to Rome – to serve and be served while on his way to Spain. There was also a desire to see the Roman church partner and support this effort to advance the gospel to Spain as God’s means of supplying for his continued work was and is through the service and sacrifice of the local church.

Reflection and Application: Romans 15:22-24

Paul longed to come to Rome, but with a view to Spain. How might hospitality, refreshment, and care of someone in preparation for further service beyond your context impact your thoughts and actions regarding missions and ministry?

WEEK TWO

Unity Before Expansion: Service In Jerusalem Comes First, Romans 15:25-29

"Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" Acts 19:21

Why Jerusalem Was Necessary

Paul stated that before he will follow through on his plans to finally travel to Rome and on to Spain he would first be fulfilling his special envoy ministry to Jerusalem.

Paul was going to Jerusalem not to pioneer the gospel, but to deliver a relief package from distant churches to the church in Jerusalem.

I initially found it rather curious that Paul would ascribe this task to himself as it seems that it could have been readily entrusted to others while he continued his more traditional Apostolic work of his aforementioned priestly service of offering the Gentiles and their work to God (evangelism, church planting, teaching, preaching, and church strengthening). However, Robert Haldane highlights that it was this very fact, that this was a work that could have readily been accomplished by another, as well as Paul's very clear and ambitious focus (as he has both historically demonstrated and projects into the future with his plans), that this was seen to be a service of unique consequence. Haldane draws out that it was likely Paul's ambition to see that this special work of service to Jerusalem accomplish the greater goal of binding the Jews and Gentiles within the Church together in their mutual service and care to one another. Think on this... the Apostle Paul who has just affirmed his desire to see Christ preached where no man has ever preached Christ, who has just affirmed that he has exhausted his work in the areas that he has currently been able to serve, who has just affirmed that he will finally be able to come to the Roman church which he has longed to visit for an extended time, and who has just affirmed an ambitious plan to reach Spain... This same man will set these matters temporarily aside to bring a fiscal gift from the Gentile churches of Macedonia and Achaia to the fiscally struggling church of Jerusalem.⁴ There was clearly a unique value to this work for Paul to choose to set all other ambitions and matters of consequence aside. This is further punctuated when one recognizes that he was urged not to go to Jerusalem because of the inherent threats to him if he did go in any capacity as expressed in Acts 21 when Agabus spoke of Paul's imminent incarceration in Jerusalem.

⁴ Commentary on Romans; Robert Haldane; Kregel Publications, 1996; (Hereafter: Haldane), Pgs.633-634

“While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’”

Acts 21:10-14

The aid for the Jewish saints in Jerusalem was provided by the generous “grace giving” of the Gentile saints in Macedonia and Achaia. This appears to be the subject of the grace giving expressed in 2 Corinthians 8,9 – giving from impoverishment, giving generously, giving beyond their natural means, giving out of a love for the Lord and his church.

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Here Paul further advances the rationale for the Gentiles’ generous giving by rooting it in theological indebtedness as these Gentiles are spiritual debtors to these fiscally poor Jews. Immaterial fortunes were being paid back by material means and this was good. The Gentiles were (and are) clearly beneficiaries of the Jews’ covenant promises and blessings - as has always been the case throughout redemptive history with the unique element here being that this present relationship was a mystery until this time. The mystery being that the Jews and Gentiles have been knit into one body, the Church. Paul’s early treatment of this subject in Romans 9-11 (particularly chapter eleven) makes the matter quite plain.

Focus Still Fixed on Rome and Spain

Finally, with verse twenty-eight Paul brings the discussion full circle by articulating his plans following his fulfillment of this special service in Jerusalem – he would, Lord willing, travel to Rome, and then finally to Spain. In this context Paul expresses his anticipation of coming to the Romans - that he would join them in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

Reflection and Application: Romans 15:25-29

Paul placed such a high priority on the work of sending the special gift to the Jerusalem Church that he laid all other matters aside. Why was this so important to Paul and how might that impact how we prioritize not only ministry, but life within the context of the church as a whole? Give some examples of this in action.

A significant element of the ministry to Jerusalem was from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia generously giving, otherwise known as “grace giving.” Read over 2 Corinthians 8-9 and write out some principles they applied in their giving here. How might this impact your own understanding of being generous with your resources?

Paul’s Charge to Pray for Him and His Work, Romans 15:30-32

An Appeal For Prayer

Having established the relational context, explained the nature of his service to Christ and his Church, and the plans for ministry (immediate, intermediate with them, and then long term in Spain), Paul now appealed or exhorted for the Roman believers to pray for him.

Paul rooted his petition to the Romans in their common Redeemer and Lord, Jesus Christ, and by the common love that they have had applied to them through the Spirit of God. Through this means, he was drawing on the weightiest of appeals in calling them to participate in this labor of love for their Lord, for the Church, and for him as a fellow brother and an Apostle.

D.A. Carson sees this appeal being made in the strongest of manners and concludes, “For you must always remember that your prayers reflect your grasp of who Christ is, and how well you love.”⁵

A Call To Battle On Your Knees

It is important to note the intensity of language Paul used for prayer here - he was not just asking that the Romans be mindful of him in prayer, that they pray for him every so often, etc. he was requesting a laboring in prayer and specifically a laboring in prayer with him and for him regarding matters that are wholly consistent with the revealed plans and purposes of God. Strive together... “The word here employed signifies the strongest exertion, alluding to the struggle of wrestlers in the games.”⁶

In exhorting the Roman believers to join him in his struggle by prayer Paul had effectively recruited them into this special service mission to Jerusalem. They were not simply bystanders who may later receive a ministry report from Paul, but were co-laborers in the struggle through prayer, which was a consequential service to all involved.

⁵ A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Praying with Paul; D.A. Carson; Baker Academic, 2014; (Hereafter: Carson), Pg.187

⁶ Haldane, Pg.637

This striving or struggling was substantial work that Paul was calling these believers to join in with him. This was a weighty work that he was going into and he was doing the hard work and labor now before he applied himself in its more direct application – this was the labor, struggle, and toiling that was necessary to properly engage in the physical elements of traveling and providing monetary gifts from the Gentile churches to the Jewish churches. This service, as will be addressed in the following verses, was an extremely important service for Paul and his prayers and petitions for prayers from others reflected that too. He was not toiling in prayer over a mundane decision or fleeting circumstance, but was *agonizing in proportion to the matter at hand*. In other words, the value and weightiness and demands of the work were reflected in his prayers.

So, with this in view note the service that Paul testifies about for Epaphras of Colossae. “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.” Colossians 4:12-13

Like Paul, Epaphras was toiling in prayer in proportion to the matter being prayed for and in his case, it was that his fellow believers (his home church) would stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. Clearly seeing the beloved fully mature in Christ was no casual matter in emphasis, action, or prayer.

How To Pray For Paul

Paul then went on to lay out what exactly he wanted the Romans to pray with him and for him – first deliverance. Paul requested that they pray that he would be delivered from the unbelieving Jews in Judea which indicated that there was: 1) a genuine threat to his welfare by the unbelieving Jews, 2) that the Lord can work in the hearts of men and/or in the providential circumstances so as to keep Paul from such threats.

A similar appeal for deliverance was made in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, “Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.”

Later in 2 Timothy 3:10-11 Paul testifies to the Lord having delivered him from like matters before, “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.”

Robert Haldane draws out that Paul’s petition to be delivered from the unbelieving Jews demonstrates that there was no special merit in seeking godly suffering and there was also no shame in seeking that it might pass. Some believers have gotten out of balance in the opposite way of those who flee from hardship and themselves seem to all but proactively welcome suffering as though they are securing special merit.⁷ Paul was not pursuing suffering or hardship; he accepted it when it came, but he was seeking to advance the gospel’s reach to Spain.

⁷ Haldane, Pg.638

Haldane further draws out the importance of this service to Jerusalem as Paul was entering into it knowing full well of its potential dangers.⁸ This again speaks to the preeminent value that was placed on unity within the church as this was the very heart of this service. The Apostle to the Gentiles no doubt felt a greater burden when considering Jesus' clear desire for his church to have and maintain unity as he was introducing one of unity's greatest challenges. This was not on account of failure or disobedience, but a necessary growing pain and one that Paul wanted to see handled in a way that exalted Christ as the dividing wall of hostility had been broken down between Jew and Gentile.⁹

Sidebar: Spiritual Warfare and Prayer

Paul first references his desire to be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea which was a petition in the context of spiritual warfare. Paul was keenly aware that the matter was not a contest of opposing or resisting flesh and blood, but spiritual forces, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12 "In such a conflict, we must learn to deploy appropriate weapons. And among the chief of these is this kind of earnest, urgent, persistent prayer."¹⁰

Paul's second request for the Romans in their laboring with him in prayer was that his special service on behalf of the Gentile believers would be received as intended by the Jewish believers.

We see plainly here that Paul's prayer as a whole is genuinely pure in its concerns and ambitions. The concerns reflected show that he was persuaded that a work not disrupted by the unbelieving Jews will afford him more immediate opportunities in service (by contrast consider the aggressive conduct of the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica and the heartache, distance, and concern that created – genuinely hampering his ability to minister to those believers). The concerns also reflected his magnificent heart that Christ's Church maintain the unity that pleases God – the joyful embracing of a significant and sacrificial gift from the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers would go far in knitting these two groups together – bridging a potential chasm substantially greater than distance and assuaging the struggles that accompany growing pains. His ambitions also demonstrated that he genuinely loves and longs for the church in Rome and that he has a zealous heart to see the gospel pioneered to the furthest ends of the earth that he could take it.

Finally, Paul summarized the reason that he wanted a profitable ministry trip in Jerusalem - so that he could come to the church in Rome for the reasons that he had already laid out and with joy and refreshment.

⁸ Haldane, Pg.638

⁹ "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." Ephesians 2:13-16

¹⁰ Carson, Pg.190

Reflection and Application: Romans 15:30-32

In view of Paul's strong appeal D.A. Carson himself made a strong statement regarding one's willingness and discipline of prayer: "For you must always remember that your prayers reflect your grasp of who Christ is, and how well you love."¹¹ Take time to think about respond to this statement.

Paul calls on the Roman believers to agonize or struggle with him in prayer regarding his future service in Jerusalem and as stated above the intensity of the petition was in proportion to the need. When and why do you labor in prayer in such an intense and demanding manner? Is it in proportion to how God has esteemed or valued a matter or do you pray with greater zeal over a job promotion than a lost family member?

Building on the preceding, what should you expect of leaders within the church when it was Epaphras' commendation that he toiled in prayer for his home church that they would be made complete in Christ? How might you strengthen them in this service?

Paul requested prayer for deliverance and a successful ministry endeavor. In what way do these requests by the Apostle Paul impact how you could pray for others in various ministries/works?

¹¹ A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Praying with Paul; D.A. Carson; Baker Academic, 2014; (Hereafter: Carson), Pg.187

“When we pray for missionaries, church planters, pastors, and other spiritual leaders, there are many needs we should keep in mind. ...for instance, that Paul asks for prayer that he might speak the gospel boldly, as he should: that sort of prayer should constantly be on our lips, offered to God on behalf of those whose task is so constantly the heralding of the gospel to others.”¹² Consider how you might commit to putting this to action.

In view of the nature of spiritual warfare and the substantial role of prayer, consider the following: “It does not take long for the thoughtful observer to spot areas where Christian leaders are constantly in danger from outsiders and therefore need the prayers of God’s people in their defense.”¹³ What will be your response?

Benediction, Romans 15:33

Paul has laid out a thorough contextual foundation, articulated his personal missiology, and charged the Romans to join him in the hard work of struggling with him in prayer. He finished the chapter and this section with a concluding statement of blessing - that the God of peace be with them.

Paul’s Prayers Were Answered

Paul’s prayers were not all answered as he would have known to anticipate or hope and this was ultimately for his good and God’s glory.

Prayers Answered as Requested:

Paul’s service was acceptable to the Jewish believers.

Paul came to the Rome and was able to minister there in unique ways.

Prayers Answered in Unanticipated Ways:

Paul was ultimately “delivered” from the unbelieving Jews in that the Romans prevented them from killing Paul – though this led to incarceration by the Roman authorities.

Paul, as best as is known never made it to Spain, but his plainly articulated zeal expressed to the believers in Rome has set ablaze many a missionary’s desire to take up the mantle of pioneering gospel work to the furthest ends of the earth.

¹² Carson, Pg.194

¹³ Carson, Pg.195

To see the value of both “prayers answered as requested” and the value of “prayers answered in unanticipated ways” takes a mature faith and delight in God. Securing this maturity is usually a painful journey and of no small consequence in one’s sanctification. This struggle and occasional momentary grief is no loss – rather, loss is having such a horrifically small view of God that you genuinely believe that you will always petition what was and/or is best and that God should wholly comply as directed. Truthfully, that is not even a small view of God, but a big view of you and a morbid idolatry. Therefore, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” (1 John 5:21) and rejoice in the God who answers prayer in unanticipated ways.

Reflection and Application: Prayers Answered In Unanticipated Ways

How have you historically thought of “prayers answered in unanticipated ways”? What can you do to think about this subject in a more mature and God-honoring way?
