

Message #55

Romans 15:30-33

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was Pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for 38 years. He started in 1854 and he died in 1892. During that time under his ministry the Tabernacle was constructed. The original Tabernacle that he built burned down in 1898 just six years after he died and the only thing left was the portico and basement. The church was rebuilt. Then in 1941 in WWII a bomb hit and again the only thing left was the portico and the basement. It was rebuilt in 1957.

While Spurgeon was there one Sunday, four college students who were in London wanted to go and hear Spurgeon preach. While they were waiting for the doors to open a man greeted them and said he would like to give them a tour of the building. He said let me show you the heating plant of this church. So he took them down a stairway and when he got down to the basement he opened the door and on that Sunday there were 700 people praying for the service that day. He quietly shut the door and said, there is the power and fuel behind this ministry. The man giving them the tour and the man to say that to them was Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Spurgeon knew the value of people in the church praying for him and his ministry. He knew the Scriptures and he learned that idea from the word of God. That certainly is the point presented here by the Apostle Paul.

FOR ANY TRUE MINISTRY OF GOD TO BE IMPACTING AND EFFECTIVE, IT MUST HAVE BELIEVERS WHO PRAY FOR THE MINISTER AND PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY.

That is clearly what Paul teaches in this passage. Now there are ten different types of prayer that are used and described in the New Testament and most of them are used by Paul:

- 1) There is the prayer for salvation - Romans 10:13 - whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.
- 2) There is the prayer of entreaty (dehsiç) - I Tim. 2:1a - prayer out of great need.
- 3) There is the prayer of intercession (Entugcanw) - I Tim. 2:1b - specific to meet needs of another.
- 4) There is the prayer of thanksgiving (eucaristia) - I Tim. 2:1c - prayer to offer thanks to God.
- 5) There is the prayer of petition (aitew) - Phil. 4:6 - request or petition for something specific.
- 6) There is the prayer of confession (I John 1:9) - believer confesses sin for fellowship.
- 7) There is the prayer of destruction (I Tim. 1:20) - specific prayer for destruction of someone.
- 8) There is the prayer of exaltation (Jude 24-25) - prayer to exalt God.
- 9) There is the prayer of submission (Luke 22:42) - prayer that is willing to do God's will.
- 10) There is the prayer of reverent approach to God (proseucomai) - Rom. 15:30.

It is word number ten that Paul uses here. The word Paul uses for prayer (proseucomai). The main emphasis of this word is that of moving toward God in a very sacred and reverent way. So what the people do in this kind of prayer is that they gather together and very reverently bow their heads and hearts and pray for him.

There are six key observations we want to make here about prayer:

OBSERVATION #1 – Prayer is something Paul urges. **15:30a**

The verb “urge” (parakalew) is a word that means Paul is coming alongside the people and exhorting them and encouraging them to pray (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 340).

People need to be encouraged and challenged to pray. He is encouraging them to pray specifically for him. Here is the greatest Apostle on the face of the earth and he desires that people pray to God on his behalf. He encouraged people to do this.

OBSERVATION #2 – Prayer is something Paul urges for the brethren. **15:30b**

Prayer for God to bless a ministry is only acceptable if it is being prayed by those in the family of God. When God’s men and women pray, successful ministry is on the way.

Paul never encouraged unsaved people to pray for him. He wanted those praying for him who had believed in Jesus Christ.

OBSERVATION #3 – Prayer is that which Paul says connects to the Trinity. **15:30c**

Prayer is to God through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

Three names are given concerning Jesus Christ:

- 1) He is the Lord - which means He is God, the Sovereign Master over everything.
- 2) He is Jesus - which means He is the Savior.
- 3) He is Christ - which means He is the Jewish Messiah.

The Spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

God is a reference to God the Father.

Now both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit are in the genitive case. So the preposition “through” (dia) has as its object a genitive case Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit.

What this grammatically means is that the privilege and possibility of even talking to God the Father comes through these two members of the Trinity. To address God the Father, a believer must have the Spirit of God in him/her and the believer must go through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we are praying to God the Father through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through the love of the Spirit (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 101).

Now the specific love that the Spirit of God produces is a love that loves God and loves the word of God and loves the ministry enough to pray for it. It takes love to do that.

OBSERVATION #4 – Prayer is that which Paul says brethren need to strive. **15:30d**

The infinitive “to strive” is one that means to gather together as an assembly or unit to pray so one will actually share and help in the battle of the warfare (*Ibid.*, p. 424).

Those who are on the front lines of proclaiming the truth of God need the prayers of God’s people and when they pray they actually share in the victory of the warfare. That is what Paul is saying here.

OBSERVATION #5 – Prayer that Paul wants them to pray has a specific purpose. **15:31-32**

There are four specific requests that Paul wants these believers to pray about. We may assume that he believed their prayers were critical to these things happening:

Request #1 - That he would be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea - a prayer for safety in his ministry. **15:31a**

Paul believed that his safety and protection was due in part to the prayers of God’s people at church.

He traveled many miles and went to many places and he believed it was the prayers of God’s people that kept him safe.

Now the people specifically that Paul refers to here from whom he needed deliverance were disobedient people who lived in Judea. These were dangerous religious people.

These were Jews who rejected Jesus Christ and they rejected the Pauline gospel of grace.

Request #2 - That he would have an acceptable ministry to the saints in Jerusalem - a prayer for success in his ministry. **15:31b**

Paul was going back to the area from which he had begun his rampage against Christians. He asked these Romans to pray for him that when he got back there to Jerusalem, the saints will receive him and desire to be taught by him.

Request #3 - That he would be able to come to them in joy by the will of God - a prayer for God’s direct sovereignty in his ministry. **15:32a**

Now if they prayed for him and he went back to Jerusalem and ministered, he could then come to them with joy knowing this was the will of God.

Request #4 - That he would find refreshing rest in their company - a prayer for satisfaction in ministry. **15:32b**

Paul would come to Rome through the prayers of the people and would have a joyful, satisfying ministry.

OBSERVATION #6 – Prayer for God’s peace with them all. **15:33**

Paul asks them to pray for him and then he closes this section by praying for them. He prays that the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Having the peace of God is definitely connected to prayer.

Now one question we want to ask and answer is did the people gather together and pray? Did the challenge Paul gave them work?

Answer to Prayer Request #1 - Paul was delivered from unbelieving Jews. **Acts 21:31-37**

It was a very close call. The way he actually got to Rome was that he was beaten up and taken by Roman soldier to jail and it was the imprisonment that led to him going to Rome.

Answer to Prayer Request #2 - Paul did have an impacting ministry in Jerusalem.
Acts 21:40-23:22

Paul was well received by the saints and his ministry in Jerusalem was anything but dull.

Answer to Prayer Request #3 - Paul did get to Rome in an amazing display of God’s sovereignty. **Acts 28:11-16**

The sovereignty of God was amazing in Paul getting to Rome:

- 1) There was a plot to kill him so he went to a trial before Agrippa. Acts 26:28
- 2) At the trial Paul appealed to be sent to Rome, to Caesar. Acts 26:32
- 3) Paul was taken by a ship to Rome, and the ship got in a shipwreck. Acts 27:39-44
- 4) Paul was bitten by a deadly viper and shook it off as if it were nothing. Acts 28:46
- 5) When Paul gets to Rome, he goes as a prisoner. Acts 28:16

Paul said in Philippians 1:12-14, all of these circumstances had been used by God to make a tremendous impact on not only the lost world, but also the believers.

What we learn about prayer is significant here:

- 1) God does answer the specific prayers of His people.
- 2) God does not answer the specific prayers of His people the way people expect.
- 3) God does answer the specific prayers of His people the way He knows is best.

How does God answer our prayers? When we pray there are at least six ways God may answer our prayers:

Answer #1 - God may answer our prayers with an immediate yes. Acts 12:1-19

Prayer was made for Peter by the church and God answered an immediate yes.

Answer #2 - God may answer with a direct no. II Cor. 12:8-9

Paul asked three times that God would remove a thorn and God's answer was no. Actually the no answer was better because it meant that God had a better plan in store.

Answer #3 - God may answer with a wait. Rom. 1:10-13

Sometimes God will answer the prayer but it will not be an immediate answer, but a delayed answer. Paul wanted to go to Rome but had been prevented because God had other things He wanted him to do.

Answer #4 - God may answer work. **I Cor. 6:18**

Sometimes God says you don't need to be praying about this anymore, get to work and get it done. Flee immorality is not something for which we need to spend more time praying.

Answer #5 - God may answer keep praying and watch. Matt. 24:20-24

In other words, don't just pray and forget about it, pray and look for Me to answer.

Answer #6 - God may answer pray more. Luke 18:1-8; Rom. 15:32

Paul was absolutely convinced that in order for him to accomplish all of God's will, more prayer was needed specifically for him.

God has done some powerful things with this ministry. If you want to see where the power comes for this ministry, take a look at men and women who gather Wednesday night to pray. Take a look at that group of ladies on Thursday morning who reverently pray. Take a look in the Sanctuary when people sit down and bow their heads and pray or the pre-service prayer meeting. There is where the power comes. That is what Paul believed. That is what Spurgeon believed and that is what we believe.