

“Strive Together in Your Prayers”
(Romans 15:30-33)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Paul wanted to come to the Roman church.
 - a. He hadn't come, because there were still others who needed the Gospel.
 - b. But now the work was done; the Roman empire had been evangelized.
 - c. And so with no place for him to preach, he set his sights on Spain.
 - (i) Spain was yet to be reached.
 - (ii) Souls were perishing for lack of a Gospel witness.
 - (iii) So Paul hoped to go there to preach: many believe he actually did.
 - (iv) Rome was on the way, just off the western coast of Italy.
 - (v) So he hoped to stop there and see them.
 - d. By so doing, he would not only bless them, but they could bless him.
 - (i) He could build them up with his gifts; they him with theirs.
 - (ii) And they would be investing in God's kingdom.
 - (iii) The Lord would reward them on the final day for the work Paul was able to do because of their additional help.
2. But before he could come to them, he had something he needed to do.
 - a. He needed to deliver a gift to the saints in Jerusalem.
 - b. A gift given by the Gentile saints in Macedonia and Achaia.
 - c. They had shared in Israel's spiritual blessings through the Gospel.
 - d. So they were obligated to minister to their material needs.
 - e. This they did happily, because they had received of their blessing, they were a part of the same body, and because they loved them.
 - f. Paul loved them too, which is why he was willing to risk going.
 - g. But when he was finished, Paul intended to go to Rome.

B. Preview.

1. But Paul obviously had many enemies in Judea.
 - a. From the time Christ converted him, and he began to preach, men hated him.
 - b. The Jews wanted to kill him.
 - c. He tells us of some of his trials in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea,

dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure upon me *of* concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and *so* escaped his hands.”

- d. Paul was fighting a real battle against the kingdom of darkness.
 - (i) Satan had a vested interest in stopping him, so he moved the Jews against him.
 - (ii) The unconverted Jews hated him; their sinful hearts hated his message.
 - (iii) These things were conspiring against Paul.
2. How was Paul going to be able to get there, minister and come back in the middle of that battle?
- a. He needed prayer, and so he calls on the Romans to pray for him.
 - b. This morning, I want us to look at what Paul asks for specifically, as well as the motives he gives, to learn more about how we should pray for one another.
 - c. We'll see four things:
 - (i) Paul asks the Romans to pray for him.
 - (ii) That for which he asks them to pray.
 - (iii) The motives he gives to move them to prayer.
 - (iv) Finally, his prayer for them.

II. Sermon.

A. First, Paul asked the Romans to pray for him. “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (v. 30).

- 1. We saw last week that prayer is a means of grace.
 - a. It is how we ask Him for help.
 - b. It is asking with sufficient grounds to be heard: the merits of Christ.
- 2. It is a powerful offensive/defensive weapon.
 - a. It is able to destroy the strongholds of the enemy.
 - b. It is able to ward off the attacks of Satan.
 - c. It can't do this by itself.
 - d. But when we ask according to God's will, in the name of Christ, all the power of heaven is behind it. Who can resist God?

3. To go into a situation like this and not ask for help would be foolish.

B. Second, Paul had specific prayer requests: “That I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to

the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company” (vv. 31-32).

1. He asked that he might be delivered from the rebellious Jews (v. 31).
 - a. He was about to go to Jerusalem, into enemy territory.
 - b. There were many there who hated him because he served their enemy – the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (i) They were of their father the devil.
 - (ii) They were in his army, fighting his battles, though they thought they were serving God.
 - (iii) He was about to enter a spiritual battle ground.
 - c. You don’t want to go into battle without prayer – personal prayer, the prayers of the saints.
 - (i) Would you want to enter a battle without the support of weapons, armor, or others to fight with you?
 - (ii) Neither should you want to fight any spiritual battle without God’s help.
 - (iii) Prayer calls down the help of God.
 - (iv) It gives skill and accuracy to our offensive weaponry: the Word.
 - (v) It energizes the whole of our spiritual armor: faith, hope, assurance, love.
 - (vi) Prayer makes a difference, which is why the Lord calls us to pray.
2. He asked that his service for Jerusalem might prove acceptable to the saints (v. 31).
 - a. Paul was going to Jerusalem to bring the gift given by those from Macedonian and Achaia.
 - b. He wanted the gift to have its full blessing value.
 - c. He wanted his ministry to them to bear as much fruit as possible.
 - d. And so he asked for prayer.
 - (i) Without God’s help, our gifts won’t do any good.
 - (ii) We need to pray for ourselves and each other that we might bear the kind of fruit God’s wants from us.
 - (iii) We need to pray for the power of His Spirit to move us to service.
 - (iv) We need to pray He would make us effective in His service.
3. He asked for prayer that he might be able to come to them in joy by the will of God (v. 32).
 - a. He realized that apart from prayer, he might be captured, imprisoned, tortured, killed.
 - b. If he was, he wouldn’t be able to bear any more fruit on earth for Christ.
 - (i) If he was to die, that would mean gain for him.
 - (ii) But if he was to live, this would mean he could serve and honor his Lord and help the saints become what Christ wants them to become.
 - (iii) Paul was not selfish; he kept his eyes on glorifying the Lord and serving others while he lived.
 - (iv) He knew he would shortly be with his Lord.
 - c. Let’s pray that the Lord would also deliver us, give us more years of life.

- (i) Not merely to enjoy life in this world.
- (ii) But to bring glory to God.
- (iii) To live is Christ, to die is gain.

4. Finally, he asked that he might find refreshing rest in their fellowship (v. 32).
 - a. Again, he realized that he needed their ministry to him.
 - b. He needed to be refreshed; he needed their fellowship, their gifts to build him up.
 - (i) A Christian can only battle for so long without times of refreshment in the company of those who love and care for him.
 - (ii) This is the kind of environment we should be providing for one another here on the Lord's Day.
 - (iii) It's not just another battle arena, another place to argument and dispute; but a place to minister to one another's needs, to build each other up.
 - (iv) Let's pray the Lord will help us.

C. Third, what were the motives that Paul used to encourage their prayers? "Now I urge you, brethren, *by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (v. 30). The only two motives that matter:

1. By our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 30):
 - a. By their common Lord: they are not on two different sides, but the same side.
 - b. By their sovereign: who calls them to love and encourage one another.
 - c. By their Savior: who laid down His life to redeem them; love dictates, as well as our Lord, that we love one another.
 - d. We are to strive in our prayer for one another because we are on the same side, because Jesus calls us to, because He has given His life for us that we might.
2. And by the love of the Spirit (v. 30):
 - a. The love He puts in our hearts for each other.
 - b. The affection we have for one another.
 - c. This is how others will know we are Christians.
 - d. This is how we know we are Christians.
 - e. This love will move us to pray for each other.

D. Finally, Paul prays for them. "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

1. He prays for them so that they would prosper.
2. But he prays knowing that their prosperity will also turn to his.
 - a. Being one body, when one part of it benefits, we all benefit.
 - b. We should never be jealous or not desire the best for each other.
 - c. The more we build up others, the more we are built up, blessed with joy and peace, the greater blessing we will all be to one another and to all men.
 - d. Let's be encouraged by this to strive together in our prayers for each other, for God's blessing, that He might be glorified, that we might build one another up, that we might be built up, and that together we might build God's kingdom. Amen.