

Walking with the God of Peace

A 5-day devotional from Romans 15:22–33

Introduction — read before Monday. This week we are going to walk slowly through what the Holy Spirit did in our church on Sunday. Each day is short on purpose. Find five minutes. Read the passage out loud if you can. Let the prayer be your prayer. And let the question follow you into your afternoon. By Friday, the goal is not that you have studied a passage. The goal is that the God of peace has become more real to you than the things that are pulling at you.

MONDAY

Plans Held in an Open Hand

Read: Romans 15:22–24

Romans 15:22–24 — *“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...”*

Paul has plans. Real ones. Mappable, datable, fundable plans. He is in Corinth. He intends to go to Jerusalem, then Rome, then push west all the way to Spain, the very edge of the known world. He has wanted this “for many years.”

And for many years God has said, “Not yet.” He has been “often hindered.” In Acts 16, the Holy Spirit will not let him go into Asia. The Spirit of Jesus stops him at the border of Bithynia. So Paul keeps walking. He makes the best plan he can, and when God blocks him, he treats the block as God's redirection and turns west.

Many of us live with a low-grade anxiety that there is one secret blueprint for our lives, and if we miss the right job, the right city, the right person, we have ruined the whole thing. Paul does not live like that. He plans wisely. He moves. And he trusts that when God hinders, God is also guiding.

The will of God is not a tightrope. It is a path with a Father walking next to you.

Pray

Father, I bring you the plans I have made and the plans I am afraid to make. Teach me to hold them in an open hand. Where you have closed a door, give me eyes to see it as your guidance and not your absence. Where you are calling me to keep walking, give me the courage to take the next step. I trust that you are with me on the path, not just at the destination. In Jesus' name, amen.

Question to carry into your day

What is one decision I have been clinging to with closed fists? What would it look like, today, to hold it in an open hand without becoming passive?

T U E S D A Y

The Gospel Makes Us Couriers

Read: Romans 15:25–27

Romans 15:25–27 — “At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints... For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.”

Before Spain, Jerusalem. Before Rome, a detour.

Paul has spent years organizing an offering. Gentile churches across Greece and Asia Minor have been gathering money, and Paul is going to physically carry it. This is a multi-ethnic, multi-church, multi-year gift to poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem he has never met. He is carrying it into a city that wants him dead. And he frames the gift not as charity, but as debt.

Listen to his logic: “If the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.” Spiritual blessings flowed one way from Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Material blessings now flow back the other. The church, Paul is saying, is a transnational family bound by shared spiritual inheritance in Christ, and that binding shows up in shared material life.

This is what the gospel does. It does not just save your soul. It re-wires your wallet. It connects you to brothers and sisters you will never meet on this side of glory. It makes you a courier of what you received freely.

Where is the spiritual blessing of Christ flowing out of your life into material help for someone else? Not as guilt. As gratitude.

Pray

Lord Jesus, you became poor so that I, through your poverty, might become rich. I confess how easily I hold tightly to what you have given so freely. Make me a courier. Show me one person, one ministry, one need this week where I can let your spiritual blessing flow out as material help. And do not let me give grudgingly — give me the joy of being part of a family that owes one another. In your name, amen.

Question to carry into your day

Where is spiritual blessing flowing into me but not flowing out in tangible help to others? What is one specific way to change that this week?

W E D N E S D A Y

Prayer as Teamwork

Read: Romans 15:30–32

Romans 15:30 — *“I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf...”*

The apostle Paul, the man who wrote Romans 8 was caught up to the third heaven, is asking a church he has never met to pray for him. And the word he uses for “strive together” is athletic. It is the word for teammates straining together. The word used here literally means to agonize together with me.

Pause and feel that. Prayer is not a solo performance you offer up to a silent ceiling. Prayer is teamwork. And Paul is not embarrassed to ask for it.

Some of us are too proud to ask. We frame everything as a praise report after the fact, but we will not let anyone into our actual need on the front end. Paul would say: stop it. Let the body of Christ pray you through.

And notice the ground of his appeal: “by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit.” When we pray, the Son is already interceding for us at the Father's right hand (Rom. 8:34). The Spirit is already groaning within us with sighs too deep for words (Rom. 8:26). When you pray, you are not generating something. You are catching a wave that started in the Trinity.

So today, ask even if you are not sure of what you are asking for still ask.

Pray

Father, forgive me for the pride that wants to look composed instead of being prayed for. Thank you that the Son is interceding for me and the Spirit is praying within me even as I struggle to find words. Teach me to pray with my church and not just near them. And give me one brother or sister this week whose burden I will agonize for in prayer. In Jesus' name, amen.

Question to carry into your day

Who could I tell, today, what to pray for me specifically? And whose burden is the Lord asking me to carry in prayer this week?

THURSDAY

Praying Honest Fears

Read: Romans 15:31–32

Romans 15:31–32 — “...that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.”

Look at what Paul actually prays for. Three specific things:

- That he would survive the unbelievers in Jerusalem who want to kill him.
- That the believers in Jerusalem would actually accept his gift instead of refusing it.
- That his journey would end in joy and refreshment among friends in Rome.

Now look at what those three requests reveal about Paul. He is afraid of being killed by enemies. He is afraid of being rejected by friends. And he is longing for joy. That is an apostle's prayer list. That is a saint's prayer list. That is your prayer list, if you stripped away the polite language.

Many of us have learned to pray a sanitized version of our actual lives. We bring God the prayer we think a spiritual person would pray rather than the prayer that is actually clawing at our chest. Paul will not let us do that. The apostle prayed for safety from his enemies and acceptance from his friends and joy at the end of the road.

Did God answer? Yes, and not the way Paul wanted. Paul reached Rome, but in chains. He was delivered from the unbelievers, but only by being arrested. We do not even know if the Jerusalem gift was finally accepted. The “refreshing” visit to Rome turned into two years of house arrest.

And yet, from that house arrest came Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Four letters that have built up the church for two thousand years. God answered Paul's prayer. He just answered it into a bigger story than Paul was writing. Yours will be too.

Pray

Father, I have been praying the prayers I think you want to hear instead of the prayers actually in my chest. Today I bring you the real ones, my fear of _____, my longing for _____, my disappointment over _____. Hear me, and answer me however you will. Even if you say no to the small story I am writing, I trust that you are writing a bigger one. In Jesus' name, amen.

Question to carry into your day

What is one fear or longing I have not yet brought honestly to God? What would it cost me to name it out loud today?

FRIDAY

The God of Peace Is with You

Read: Romans 15:33; 16:20

Romans 15:33 — “May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

Romans 16:20 — “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

After everything, plans that might fail, a partnership that might be refused, prayers that might be answered in unexpected ways, fear that he might not survive Jerusalem; Paul ends with this: “May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

The peace of God is not the absence of trouble. It is the presence of God in the trouble. It is the wholeness God gives in the middle of the storm. It is what lets you lie down in the boat with Jesus and sleep.

And here is the part we easily miss. One chapter later, Paul uses the same title for God: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” The God of peace is not soft. He is the warrior-king whose victory is so total that he can speak peace into our trouble without lying. The peace he gives is not a lazy afternoon. It is the peace of a king who has won and who is reigning. It is the peace of being on the winning side of a war that is already decided.

Notice also: “With you all.” Not just the people in the front row. Not just the people whose lives look together. Not just the spiritually mature. With you. With your week. With your fear. With your plans that did not work out. With your weariness.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, hear the apostle's blessing land on you personally this morning. The God of peace is with you. Amen.

Pray

God of peace, be with me today. Be with me in the meeting I am dreading and the conversation I am avoiding and the diagnosis I am carrying. Be with me as the warrior-king who has already won. Be with me when I cannot feel you. Let your peace, the peace that surpasses understanding, guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus. And let me carry that peace into the lives of the people I will see today. Amen.

Question to carry into your weekend

Where in my life do I most need to hear that the God of peace is with me not as a vague feeling, but as the warrior-king who has already won? What would change this weekend if I took that seriously?

For Saturday and Sunday

Use the weekend to bring this week's reflections to worship. Re-read Romans 15:22–33 one more time on Saturday evening. Pray verse 33 over your household before bed. And then come on Sunday, ready for the next move of God's grace in his Word.

Romans 15:33 — *“May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”*