

Encouragements for Prayer—Romans 15:30-33—1/18/2026

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As we prepare for our annual prayer retreats next weekend, we're going to ponder some encouragements for prayer this morning.

I want to energize our prayer lives as we begin such a crucial year the life of our church & in our state.

As of yesterday, our state has an attorney general who fantasized about murder & a governor that favors unlimited abortion—that's sickening.

Ministries like the Blue Ridge Women's Center feel the threat.

The curse of Isaiah 5:20 applies: *Woe to those who call evil good, & good evil; Who substitute darkness for light & light for darkness.*

It's the judgment of Romans 1:32 that ends saying, "*although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*"

We lament the lostness of our state leaders & our city council & other leaders in our nation & localities & others in our spheres of influence.

But the sadness & scariness of such sinfulness should drive us to seek the God who alone can save & change people.

And as we celebrated last Sunday in our parent-baby dedication, we as a church have been entrusted with so many precious young souls for whom we must be the intercessors who call down God's blessings.

God moves through the prayers of His people & He is glorified by answering the dependent cries of His children.

So ask—who will those praying people be who cry out to Him?

We cannot assume someone else will be the prayer warriors.

We must be committed to loving God & others by faithfully praying.

One of the best required classes in my seminary training was the class we had on prayer.

The best part was the requirement to spend an hour a day in prayer.

A large part of both the purpose and the grade for the class was to force busy seminary students to learn and practice the priority and value of spending time alone with God in prayer.

Look—does an hour a day sound like a long time of prayer for you?

As you look back at last week & ahead to this week, does it seem hard to total up an hour of prayer each day, even if it's 20 minutes each morning, 20 at midday & 20 each evening?

If so, why?—doesn't our prayer life reveal what we truly believe?

I know life can be busy & overwhelming & you can feel like your phone never stops vibrating with another kind of message.

But does any area of our lives not need God's blessing on it?

Is there any portion of a day or any category of responsibility or role in relationships that God does not care about?

I don't think so—we need God in every way and He cares about how we respond and relate in every situation.

So every segment of life provides an opportunity for prayer & I want to motivate you in prayer this morning.

I want to challenge you to deepen and expand your prayer life.

I want you to allow more time for prayer, whether that's moving from 10 minutes to 20 or from 30 minutes to an hour.

It's not that we gain merits with God by seconds ticked off a clock talking to Him, but we need undistracted and unrushed pursuit of God.

We need to prioritize and set goals to see progress as we act in faith that God hears and answers the prayers of His people.

And if you are already faithful to spend time in prayer regularly, let me encourage you to keep it up & deepen & strengthen your prayer life.

Consider how you might pray more biblically or what you may have let slide that could refresh your prayer life.

I want us to turn to Romans 15 this morning for some thoughts to energize our prayer lives by looking at Paul's prayer requests.

From Romans 15:30-33 I'm going to outline 6 encouragements for our prayer lives that can motivate us as praying people.

Let's start into these 6 encouragements to energize your prayer requests by reading the context in this rich letter of the Apostle Paul.

Turn to the end of Romans 15 and follow along as I read Romans 15:22-33—Romans 15:22-33. [READ]

This letter was a missionary support letter in some ways as Paul sought help from the Roman church when he hoped to come in route to Spain.

But his travels first needed to take him to Jerusalem to deliver a collection from Gentile churches that he had planted.

And since the Jerusalem church had mostly Jewish believers, this gift was an expression of unity between these formerly alienated groups.

So Paul put forth two basic requests for the Romans to pray.

Verse 31 has the 2 requests and verse 30 frames up those requests and then verse 32 gives a desired purpose or result of those requests.

After that, verse 33 is a benediction prayer for the Romans.

Read verses 30-33 again to see that flow & organization. [READ]

Again, verse 30 framed up the requests; verse 31 presented the requests; verse 32 described a purpose of the requests; and then verse 33 capped it off with a prayer from Paul for the Romans.

Paul stated how he wanted them to pray, then what he wanted them to pray, then why he wanted them to pray & finally he prayed for them.

With that context and reading of this section, I trust you get the sense of what's going on and being said here.

Now we can get into the details to glean applications for our prayers.

1st we can learn to inform our prayers with truth.

Application #1 is this—inform your prayers with truth.

Often when we ask for prayer or pray for others, we request prayer for protection or safety or other physical concerns.

And what we learn here from Paul's example is that those kinds of requests are not wrong or unimportant.

We can and should pray for such things.

But to energize those prayer requests, we need to frame them up with remembrance of the God we are talking to when we pray.

We need to recall who God is and why He would care about our request and how His character would enable us to pray it.

Think on what Paul does here with 2 prepositional phrases in verse 30 that saturate his requests with truth to motivate the Romans to pray.

Read verse 30 again to get this. [READ]

Paul urges them to pray as brothers and sisters in God's family governed by 2 truths—1 about Christ & the other about the Spirit.

So note that Paul was praying truth in relation to the Trinity.

The prayers are said to go to God the Father *by our Lord Jesus Christ* and *by the Holy Spirit* as the source of love in believers.

Specifically, Christ is mentioned as our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit is mentioned as the fountain of love in believers.

Those truths of Christ and the Spirit were motivators for prayer.

Paul wanted them energized that they could pray because Jesus was their common Lord & the Master with power to rule all.

And Jesus was the Christ who had fulfilled the promises of the OT & who cared for the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Gospel.

King Jesus cared about this & He had provided free access to God through His vicarious death & victorious resurrection.

That's some of the significance of remembering that it was "*by our Lord Jesus Christ*" that Paul urged them to pray.

Don't forget that majestic marvel of who Jesus is & how He gives the assurance of being welcomed in God's presence.

Feel the wonder of what it means to pray '*by our Lord Jesus Christ*'.

And Paul also urged them to pray '*by the love of the Spirit*.'

Just think—by the love that God's Spirit had put into their hearts when He showed His love in saving them, they could care about Paul and his travel to Jerusalem and the acceptance of the gift he was bringing.

And think how Jesus' Lordship & the Spirit's love relate to restraining unbelievers & giving receptive hearts to believers.

As Lord, Jesus could rule & restrain the disobedient.

And as the source of love, the Spirit could cleanse Jews from past animosity & create hearts of love for Gentile believers.

So those were not stock phrases that Paul included to sound spiritual.

Those were fuel to stoke the fires of confidence in prayer.

The way Paul framed up his call for prayer support could energize the Roman church to be eager to pray for these requests.

That's how meditating on and applying truth to our requests can develop confidence and faith as we pray.

Listen—when you pause to pray, think on the God you are praying to & why He hears & cares & tell Him what you believe about Him.

Express your thanksgiving & trust in His character & promises.

That's an example how to, #1, inform your prayers with truth.

Do you do that?

If you lack zeal & faith that prayer matters, ponder the God you pray to as He is in Christ & by the Spirit & ignite your prayers with truth.

Then **2ndly today—you can invest in prayer as a discipline**.

1, inform your prayers with truth; & 2, invest in prayer as a discipline.

To call them to pray in verse 30—look there—Paul urged them to strive together—that's a compound of the word for together & the word from which we get the word agonize.

Agonizing is *striving* in intense competition like wrestling & fighting the good fight as in 1st Timothy 6:12 & 2nd Timothy 4:7.

And similarly, in Colossians 1:29 and 4:12, Paul mentioned laboring earnestly in ministry and in prayer.

So here's the point—prayer is WORK that requires discipline.

It can be intense to frame requests biblically & pray seriously & stay focused & not get distracted.

It takes time & effort to cultivate a burden to pray fervently & to put prayer before other areas that seem more active.

Then it can take greater striving to keep that up day after day & year after year without tiring out or going through the motions.

You will not pray like this if you only pray when you feel like it.

Especially in our times, we are visual people—we live by sight & it's not natural to close our eyes and pray & live by faith.

So we must view prayer rightly—it is an act of faith and it is work.

Faithful praying will not just happen; and it will not be easy—you must plan it & schedule it & even pray for your prayer life.

Paul's exhortation to strive together in prayer reminds us of this 2nd application to invest in prayer as a discipline.

So #1—inform your prayers with truth; 2—invest in prayer as a discipline; and then #3—involve others in prayer as fellowship.

Application #3 today—involve others in prayer as fellowship.

To energize your praying, share your requests with others and pray with others—#3, involve others in prayer as fellowship.

As I mentioned that word strive has the prefix “*sun*” meaning “together with” as Paul urged the Romans to join him in prayer.

In public & private prayer, they could pray for him & with him.

And get this for missions praying—it didn't matter that many in Rome had not met Paul & did not know believers in the Jerusalem church.

They could still pray, especially when they saw this request as a statement of unity among Jewish and Gentile believers.

It was not that Paul could not pray alone for this, but he wanted to share the load and share the encouragement of God's answers.

Paul was not too good to ask for prayer or too highly exalted as the great Apostle to the Gentiles to ask others for help.

No. He knew that God hears the prayers of His people and that He uses joint prayer to unify His people.

By sharing this, Paul could have a report to share when he arrived in Rome to contribute to being refreshed with them.

Though we may be careful not to be self-focused & talk only about ourselves, we must also not be too proud to open up and share.

Being prayed for & praying for one another are important parts of sharing in the Christian life together.

And I thank God for how many of you live out this principle and how we are mutually encouraged as we see God answer.

That's what we want because it builds relationships and spreads the experience of God's work for His glory.

So that's point #3—involve others in prayer as fellowship.

Next, #4—Include specifics in your requests for prayer.

Application #4—Include specifics in your requests for prayer.

The 1st 3 points came from verse 30 & now we move into verse 31, which has the specific requests—read verse 31. [READ]

Note that the 1st request is for deliverance or preservation and protection from the unbelieving, disobedient Jews in Judea.

You can read Acts 21 later to see how the unbelieving Jews who had rejected Jesus persecuted Paul.

Anti-Christian Jews were the disobedient ones that Paul mentioned here that he wanted to be delivered from.

Since Paul had been a persecutor, he knew their violent intents.

So it's no wonder Paul was asking in verse 31 for the Roman church to pray for him to be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea.

The 2nd request is that Paul's deacon-like service of delivering this gift would be well-received by the saints in Jerusalem.

Paul wanted the gift from Gentile churches be received rightly by Jewish Christians who had been pressured to reject believing Gentiles.

We know that's a warranted concern because even the Apostle Peter had caved to such pressure to be separate from Gentile believers as Paul wrote about in Galatians 2.

Acts 21 records Paul's arrival in Jerusalem after this letter was written and how he was told of his teachings being misunderstood and twisted.

In Acts 21:20-22, Paul was told *how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, ... & they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*

Think of that twist—have you ever had that happen to you?

Paul did teach that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised, but his teaching of freedom from Moses' Law had been twisted.

He did not teach against the Law—he taught of its fulfillment in Christ and the completion of the ceremonial parts spiritually.

But what Paul taught was twisted & misunderstood in a way that riled up opposition even among believers in Jerusalem.

So it's no wonder Paul was asking for prayer that his service for Jerusalem to be acceptable to the saints.

These were two reasonable & very specific requests.

And we should note that these requests were not merely about Paul's comfort or safety as the main goal or about him being popular or liked.

The main goal was unity in the church and God's glory in the Gentile mission being proven as Gospel fruit by the Spirit.

Then read what verse 32 adds as Paul's longing personally. [READ]

He wanted these prayers answered to allow him to come to Rome & visit that church rejoicing in God's answers to prayer.

He wanted rest with them looking back on what God had done.

He wanted that joyful rest to prepare to send him to Spain.

So for application we note that Paul was specific in his requests.

He did not vaguely say, "Pray for God to bless the trip".

That would have been ok as we'll see in verse 33.

But where possible, we should be specific about what requests we believe God would be honored by answering.

Ask yourself—what temptations might we face & what opposition or concerns might arise & what details do we want accomplished?

As we ponder such things, we can think of specifics requests about delivering a gift or treating a medical problem or sharing the Gospel or counseling a fellow believer or parenting a child.

And such specifics can help us discern how God answers prayer also.

What God included in Luke writing Acts sheds light on Paul's collection & delivery of this gift to the Jerusalem church.

Before what I read earlier about Paul's teaching being twisted, we find that his prayer was answered because Acts 21:17 says the brethren received him gladly.

Then Acts 21:19-20 says this—*“And after he [Paul] had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it they began glorifying God.”*

So though they did warn Paul about wrong ideas of his teachings, they still received him gladly and tried to protect him and direct him in ways that he would be received well without misunderstandings.

So it seems the gift was accepted & prayers were answered.

And enough is said in Acts 21-28 to reveal that God did preserve Paul from those who were disobedient in Judea as he requested here.

You can read details of how God protected Paul from a riot when he went to the Temple & when Jews tried to kill him.

Even though Paul was arrested and imprisoned, he was protected from the disobedient in Judea who were trying to persecute him.

They did not succeed in killing him.

In a later plot to kill him, Paul's own nephew heard about it and had the courage to tell him and then go tell the authorities.

So God answered and even after Paul appealed to Caesar and endured a shipwreck on his passage to Rome, God finally brought Paul to fellowship with the Roman church.

And when he did, they came to meet him and Acts 28:15 says when he *“saw them, he thanked God and took courage.”*

Think of that—Paul *thanked God* and took courage because God had answered what he asked the Romans to pray.

I'm sure it happened like Paul had wanted, but God had answered.

Paul's specific requests had prepared him to see God's work so that he did come to them in joy as he said in verse 32.

To cultivate that same awareness of God's work & readiness to gladly thank Him, let's train ourselves to take time to pray specifically.

Point #4—include specifics in your requests for prayer.

Then application #5 leads us into the heart attitude we have as we submit the purposes we want to the ultimate purposes God wants.

Read verse 32 again. [READ]

Application #5—entrust your requests to God's plan.

As we seek to energize our prayer lives with Paul's words in verses 30-33 today, we've seen to (1) inform your prayers with truth; (2) invest in prayer as a discipline; (3) involve others in prayer as fellowship; & (4) include specifics in your requests.

Now **#5—entrust your requests to God’s plan.**

And if you are not a good speller, this is the only point where I did not find a word starting with I-N, so this starts with E-N.

Entrust—E-N-trust—your requests to God’s plan.

Having just heard how God answered these prayers, let’s be clear that Paul knew he would face persecution in Jerusalem.

That’s clear as you read through Paul’s history in Acts also.

But it was not clear how much he would go through before the joy and refreshing rest of the company of the Roman church.

And that’s where that little phrase in the middle of verse 32 is so crucial—he submitted his desired purpose to the will of God.

It’s like he said, “*Lord willing*”, or as James 4:15 puts it, “*if the Lord wills, we will*” come here or there and do this or that.

As in Romans 1:10, that phrase reflects submission to God’s sovereign plan over Paul’s life & his faith in God’s purposes as governing it all.

You might ask—wouldn’t it be good for Paul to rejoice in God’s answer to his prayers for this gift to be well-received?

Yes, of course it would and we could say that kind of joy and answered prayer are both agreeable to God’s commanded will.

But verse 32 is not talking about God’s commanded will.

Remember—Scripture talks about two wills of God—one is His commanded will, what He says should happen, like not murdering.

But Scripture also describes God’s planned will, what He says will happen that includes sin & things against His commands.

It’s that planned will—what we call God’s providence—that Paul was referring to in verse 32 when he submitted his request to God’s will.

And that’s the right heart submission to have in prayer.

We can boldly make specific requests to God and get others to do the same & conclude with a heart submitted to God’s sovereign goodness.

We ultimately bow the knee to God’s rule and yield our minds to trust that His plan is better than ours.

As verse 32 gives Paul’s purpose in his requests, we find an example what it looks like to entrust your requests to God’s plan.

That’s outline point #5 to make application of what we see in verses 30-33 to energize our prayer requests today.

Then lastly, #6 sums it up—invoke God’s blessings generally.

#6—invoke God’s blessings generally.

And invoke just means summon or call for or ask for.

Read Romans 15:33 to see Paul do that. [READ]

This is a benediction type prayer with no literal verb.

It’s a general call for God to be with all the Roman Christians.

That sounds basic and broad and at times it may sound like a prayer request that isn’t specific enough to say anything meaningful.

But it is here as a Scriptural example of a blessing sought generally for all these fellow Christians.

And it is made more specific by calling God the God of peace because of what that term peace means at this point in Romans.

Peace is first an objective reality that God provides for those who trust Christ as described in Romans 5:1.

Romans 5:1 says, “*having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

We are born at war against God & God against us because we inherit Adam’s sin & we sin in our attitudes, words & actions.

But God sent His Son Jesus to die to pay sin’s penalty so that those who trust Jesus can be forgiven.

By faith in Jesus, we have God’s wrath satisfied so that we are welcomed as His friends & are no longer His enemies.

That’s the Gospel—the Good News that the whole Bible is about.

So the Creator God and Sovereign Ruler is the God of peace.

He is at peace within Himself in the perfect relationships of the Trinity and He has made the way that we can have peace with Him.

He invented and initiated peace for us with Him.

And He plants the resulting feelings of peace into our hearts when we trust Christ and He spreads that peace through us with others.

So He is the God of objective & subjective peace, the God who accomplishes relational peace & gives emotional peace.

More broadly in biblical times, the Hebrew word *shalom* for peace is the sense of God’s broad, all-encompassing blessings over life.

That is probably also part of Paul’s wish for all these believers for the God of peace to be with them.

So verse 33 gives us an example to follow with our 6th application point to energize our prayers—#6—invoke God’s blessings generally.

God wants to bless His children because He is the perfectly loving heavenly Father of those who are in Christ.

And He tells us that He gives those blessings in answer to prayer.

So please pray—pray passionately, regularly, and eagerly.

Paul’s experience & all of Scripture teach that God answers prayer.

God answers the prayers of His people by restraining the sin of unbelievers & motivating love in believers and much more.

So pray—be a man or woman or boy or girl who trusts God & prays.

#1, inform your prayers with truth; #2, invest in prayer as a discipline; #3, involve others in prayer as fellowship; #4, include specifics in your requests; #5, entrust your purposes to God’s greater purposes; & 6, invoke God’s blessings generally.

And remember that all of this about prayer is founded upon and grounded in this God of peace revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Our ability to pray is rooted in a right relationship of peace with God through Jesus Christ.

So if you don’t have that, start there—ask God to forgive you for your sins as you turn away from those sins to follow Jesus instead and to trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Then with that forgiveness, you can have peace with God that leads us into prayer that is heard and answered by God’s grace.

Do not neglect time alone with this gracious God in prayer.

Give yourself to a renewal and deepening of your prayer life.

Ask God to do that in us now as we close in prayer.