

Title: The Power of Gospel-Powered Prayer

Text: Romans 15:30–33

- The Power of Gospel-Powered Partnership
- The Power of Gospel-Powered Prayer
- The Power of Gospel-Powered People
- The Power of Gospel-Powered Proclamation

I can accomplish NOTHING for God!

To accomplish anything of eternal value, God needs to accomplish it. In order for you and I to accomplish anything of eternal value, we must appeal to God.

This appeal, of course, takes place through the means of prayer.

When we pray, we tap into the power of an all-powerful God who can accomplish all He desires. Why wouldn't we want to leverage His power on our behalf?

Paul understood the power of prayer. There are at least 22 written prayers of Paul in the New Testament. He prayed for all of the churches he planted and all the people he partnered with over the years.

Paul understood the absolute necessity of prayer. The significance of tapping into the Holy Spirit!

Do you know what else he understood about prayer? The power of prayer for one another! Praying God's power into one another's lives.

In the passage we are studying this morning, Paul begs the church in Rome to pray for him. Not for just anything, but that he would be used in God's purpose and plan for His church!

Main Idea: The Power of Collaborative Prayer in Supporting God's Mission

Paul lays out his rationale for collaborative prayer in this passage. First, I want you to see...

1. The Appeal for Collaborative Prayer (vs. 30)

Romans 15:30 ESV

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,

Paul says, I appeal to you, brothers and sisters...

The sense of the word "appeal" is to exhort.

Paul is exhorting his brothers and sisters in Rome to do something that will change the trajectory of his ministry. He does not exhort them to give him money. As important as physical resources are, he needs something far greater.

Notice what the text says?

His appeal, his exhortation, doesn't come from him. Instead, his appeal is rooted in someone far greater than Paul.

Paul considers himself to be more sinful than all the rest.

1 Timothy 1:15 ESV

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Who is his appeal rooted in? He tells us.

The Lord Jesus Christ - Lord, the I AM that we see in the book of Exodus. Jesus is God, very God!

and

The Love of the Spirit - Not just the Holy Spirit, but the emphasis is on of His most precious qualities - His love. The Spirit of God is the conduit that not only transforms hearts but enables those hearts to love with a Christlike love.

1 John 4:19 ESV

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

So, by these two persons of the Godhead, Paul exhorts and appeals to the church at Rome to do something that will actually make a difference - pray!

Frankly, without prayer, whatever we get accomplished as a church is just hay and stubble that will burn up one day.

Churches can run without prayer. Whole denominations can run without prayer. The question is: Is what they're doing worth doing if they can do it without prayer? - Ben Patterson, *Deepening Your Conversation with God* (1991)

Paul uses a very interesting word to describe how the church of Rome should pray.

The Greek word is actually the whole phrase in verse 30 - "to strive together with"

συναγωνίασθαι = to strain together, to fight together.

Isn't that a cool picture in your mind?

Believers fighting alongside one another in the War Room of prayer!

This is how Paul describes his fellow worker in the faith...

Colossians 4:12 ESV

¹² 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.

I wonder how the apostle would describe my prayer life. How would he describe yours? Do we strive together with one another, with our elders? With our missionaries? Do we fight back the gates of Hell on our knees? Are we battling **with** one another?

Imagine what the Lord could do with us if we did?!

It takes humility to ask for prayer. Why? Because it is the humble person who recognizes how weak and insufficient they are.

It is the humble person who knows how much they need the power of God.

And when more people are praying for the same thing, it stands to reason that God's power will be unleashed in a more poignant way, thus giving God more glory! Paul knew this, and so he appealed to the group to pray!

I have two couches to move in my basement and I need help.

In the past, I would never ask for help. I took great pride in figuring things out for myself.

Then I got older, and I ripped my left bicep. Now I need to appeal for help.

I want you to consider the humility of Paul to ask for prayer.

Are you humble enough to ask for people to pray for you in the areas you are struggling? If not, why not?

How many years will you languish in your struggle by yourself? Ask God's people to tap into the ultimate power source, God.

Review - The Power of Collaborative Prayer in Supporting God's Mission

- The Appeal for Collaborative Prayer

2. The Substance of Collaborative Prayer (vs. 31-32)

In other words, what did Paul want from God?

Romans 15:31-32 ESV

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

As you can see from the text, there was trouble brewing in Judea.

In fact, **God** told him there would be trouble.

Acts 20:18-24 ESV

¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every

city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul was facing persecution because he was faithful in the proclamation of the gospel. This was no surprise to him because God had already, through the Holy Spirit, giving Paul a heads up that trouble was brewing for him.

But also, this was a promise from the Lord for anyone who gives their life for faithful service to Him - there would be trouble.

John 15:18–20 ESV

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

But we don't need to worry, as followers of Christ, do we?

John 16:33 CSB

³³ I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

Paul certainly was courageous! but he also was wise - he knew he needed the support of his friends as he faced persecution.

"Too often we see prayer as a time for comfort, reflection, or making requests to God. But here Paul urges believers to join in his struggle by means of prayer. Prayer is a weapon that all believers should use in interceding for others. Many of us know believers who live in difficult places in order to communicate the gospel. Supporting them financially is part of joining them in their struggle, but prayer is also a crucial way of supporting them. Missionaries strongly desire the prayers of those who have sent them. Do your prayers reflect that struggle on behalf of others?" NLTSB pg. 1973

The unbelievers in Jerusalem were definitely not for Paul. They were actively trying to kill him!

Paul was facing trouble, but he had another prayer request of the church at Rome.

He wanted the money gift he had collected for the church in Jerusalem from the gentile churches in Asia to be delivered without incident.

Today I can send my kids money through my phone, and they can do likewise. It's pretty amazing. Apple Pay, Venmo, even Facebook Messenger are all tools you can use to send money to someone.

Paul didn't have these tools. He didn't even have a postal service that I know of. So he was responsible to carry that money personally to its destination. He wanted prayer support for this endeavor so it would arrive safely.

But there was another reason for his prayer ask. He wanted the gift he was bringing to be accepted well. Why wouldn't it be? I mean, he is bringing them relief - why wouldn't they want that?

Well, if you remember from [Acts 10-15](#), the racial tension was real. Many of the New Testament letters deal with the racial tensions between Jew and Gentile.

What do we see happening in Jerusalem even today? War between Jew and Gentile. Paul didn't want that kind of tension to exist in the church.

*Paul wanted the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to receive the financial gift from the Gentiles with loving gratitude, recognizing it as a gesture of brotherly love and kindness. **The MacArthur Study Bible Chapter 15***

By the way, there should NEVER be racial tensions between believers in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:28 ESV

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The hopeful result for Paul was that he was looking for a little R&R. He longs to be refreshed by their company. He eventually was able to enjoy this desire. Even though in the future while in Rome, he was on house arrest, he was able to meet with the saints.

Acts 28:15 ESV

¹⁵ And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

Isn't it amazing that God answered the prayers that Paul and the Romans strove for?

He did deliver the money safely and it was accepted well with joy.

Acts 24:17 NLT

¹⁷ "After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem with money to aid my people and to offer sacrifices to God.

He didn't get killed - He was preserved. Arrested, but preserved nonetheless.

Acts 21:33-36 ESV

³³ Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. ³⁵ And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶ for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!"

He did get back to Rome, not in the way he hoped, I'm sure. But if you read the end of Acts, you will see that even though he was arrested because of his appeal to talk with Caesar personally, he received an all-expense paid trip to the land he longed for.

Acts 25:12 ESV

¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

Acts 27:1 ESV

¹ And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius.

show map

So, does God answer prayer? Maybe not in the way we imagine, but He ALWAYS answers prayer.

"Answers to prayer have to be on God's schedule, not ours. He hears us pray, and He answers according to His will in His own time." - David Jeremiah, *The Prayer Matrix* (2004)

As a point of application, I give you the lyrics of What a Friend We Have in Jesus...

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Paul's point in this passage is we should take it to the Lord in prayer for one another.

Review - The Power of Collaborative Prayer in Supporting God's Mission

- The Appeal for Collaborative Prayer
- The Substance of Collaborative Prayer

3. The Blessing of Peace from Collaborative Prayer (vs. 33)

Paul finishes this chapter and his teaching with these words.

Romans 15:33 ESV

³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

As Paul has appealed and exhorted his friends in Rome to pray for him, He ends this section, his entire teaching from this letter in this one phrase, which is a simple, beautiful prayer.

Paul prays for them!

Paul prays a profound and profoundly simple, specific prayer. That God, the God of ALL PEACE would be with them.

Why is this profound? Isn't this just a well wish from the great apostle?

No, it is not simply that. Think about this, he started this letter off with the same thoughts...

Romans 1:7 ESV

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as I said to you from a sermon from August of 2020 based on this verse...

There is no peace from God apart from the grace of God.

It is only by God's grace that you can have peace with God.

The peace that Paul is speaking of in Chapter 1 verse 7 is the cessation of war.

What war am I talking about?

There is an ongoing conflict between humanity and God.

Humanity has rebelled against God, hates God, and wants to destroy the God of the Bible at all costs.

That's why Paul, in [Romans 5](#) calls the unsaved people in the world enemies of God ([Romans 5:10](#))

But by the GRACE of God, we are no longer enemies! The war is over!

Our salvation requires our surrender!

And our surrender brings the peace of God through the Prince of Peace himself, Jesus Christ.

This is Paul's point in [Eph 2:11-14](#)

Ephesians 2:11-14 ESV

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

And because of this beautiful transaction that has occurred - the death of Jesus on the cross, his burial, his resurrection. God's wrath was satisfied because of the sacred work of Christ on our behalf. Amazing.

This means we are no longer enemies of God, but that we, if in Christ, are children of God - Wow!

What would give someone more peace than that one thought?

Think about it. As an unbeliever, your biggest, most horrific, and insurmountable problem is that God is your enemy, and He will punish you eternally for breaking His laws.

Christ fulfilled God's law for you, and by faith, you have become a child of God through Christ.

Your biggest problem is over, done, kaput, canceled. There is no other problem that you will EVER face in this life that is greater than that one! And that one is done! The courtroom is closed! You are free in Christ. Free indeed. If that doesn't give you peace, I do not know what will!

This is why Paul, in [Romans 15:13](#) says...

Romans 15:13 ESV

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

In verse 33, Paul finishes with a prayer that asks that the God of peace would be with them.

Christian - What are you worried about? What anxieties are weighing down your soul?

Is it your bank account or lack of one?

Is it your marriage troubles?

Is it you children who have turned their back on the Lord?

Is it your job?

Is it your other students at school who are mocking you for your fervent faith in Christ?

What is it that is taking away your peace?

We are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God. - Thomas Merton

Turn to Paul's prayer in verse 33 and pray for yourself.

Look at it again.

Romans 15:33 ESV

³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

If you are in Christ and Christ is in you, then the God of all Peace, who happens to be the Prince of Peace, will guide you, encourage you, and shepherd you through whatever you face.

How?

Philippians 4:4–7 ESV

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

“Christ is our Peace; if he is with us, peace is to us.” - Matthew Henry

How can you be assured of such peace?

1. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will NEVER know peace until you KNOW Christ!

2. Devour His Word! Read it. Study it. Pray it. Memorize it. Meditate on it.

These two things will bring you a peace that passes all understanding. They will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Where are you at with Jesus and his precious word?

Review - The Power of Collaborative Prayer in Supporting God’s Mission

- The Appeal for Collaborative Prayer
- The Substance of Collaborative Prayer
- The Blessing of Peace from Collaborative Prayer

Conclusion

Imagine if the apostle Paul challenged **us** to pray like he challenged the church at Rome. Would we rise to the occasion? Would we be the people of prayer he desired for them to be?

Would you go to war in prayer for the mission of God?

I hope we would I hope you do struggle in prayer for our missionaries as they represent us on the field.

I hope you do struggle in prayer for our Elders as they are called to shepherd and oversee this flock.

I hope you do struggle in prayer for our deacons as their purpose is to serve this congregation and help the elders.

I hope you struggle in prayer for me. I am in desperate need of prayer as I am charged with the vision and direction of this church. As I am charged with rightly dividing the Word of God.

And I hope you struggle in prayer for one another, that we would each hunger and thirst for righteousness.

God's mission is to spread His Gospel around the world and establish local churches that preach, teach, and make disciples who do the same.

And frankly, we will accomplish none of this. WE WILL NEVER ACCOMPLISH GOD'S MISSION APART FROM INTENTIONAL COLLABORATIVE PRAYER!

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. Reflecting on verse 30, how can we as a group better support each other's spiritual needs through collaborative prayer? What specific steps can we take to integrate this into our regular gatherings?
2. Based on verses 31-32, what do you think are the key components of effective collaborative prayer? How can we apply these principles in our next prayer session as a group?
3. Can you share a personal experience where you felt a sense of peace knowing someone prayed for you? How did this experience enhance your understanding of the power of prayer in a communal setting?
4. Who are you praying for daily?
5. Who are you engaging with weekly?
6. Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?