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Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: Pray for Me

Transcribed Message
March 10, 2024
Romans 15:30-33

Yogi Berra, not to be confused with Yogi Bear for those of you that are younger, was a Hall of Fame baseball catcher for the New York Yankees in the 50s and 60s. He was not only a great baseball player, obviously being in the Hall of Fame, but he was something of a character on the field and off, and on one occasion it was a tie game in the bottom of the ninth. Runners were on base. The batter comes up to the plate and you see it even still today on occasion. The batter steps in the box and made the sign of the cross, appealing to divine help in that strategic moment. He not only did that, but he reached out with the end of his bat, and you don't see this very much anymore, but he took the end of his bat, and he made the sign of the cross in the dirt at the front of the plate. Yogi Berra, who is also a Catholic, took his glove, reached out to brush the cross away, and looked up at the guy and said, "Why don't we let God just watch this one?" I don't know. Is that good theology for a baseball game? But I know it's bad theology for life. That's certainly not the way that we are to live our life. Prayer, as we all know because the Bible reminds us often, is an integral part of our walk with God. In these closing verses of this chapter verses 30 through 33, I want us to see this morning that God will not do for us apart from prayer what he has ordained to do only by prayer. Anytime you talk about prayer you step into the mystery of what that means and what that looks like.

Let's begin with just a simple introduction to these matters of prayer in the light of the apostle Paul. Being familiar as you are with the life of Paul, you know that Paul often prayed for others. DA Carson has written a wonderful book called *The Prayers of Paul*. He just goes through the different epistles, the letters of Paul that he wrote, and he just walks us through the prayers of Paul for these many people that he wrote to, just sharing his concern, his heart for them. You go back to the beginning of this letter, Romans 1:8 "First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith

is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son that without ceasing I mention you.” He starts off the letter to the church at Rome by reminding them I pray for you guys all the time. We haven't met. I don't know all of you personally but I'm praying for you. That is the pattern in Paul's life. Go over to Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 15. Ephesians has a couple of great prayers of Paul but in verse 15 he writes to the church at Ephesus: “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” That is the heart of Paul. It's nearly in all his epistles but he says something to them about his prayers for them. So, we know Paul prayed for others.

Here's the other thing that we want to see and that is that Paul often asked for other people to pray for him. Paul often asked other people to pray for him. Obviously, we see that here in this 30th verse but just look at Ephesians 6:18 – “praying at all times for all the saints and also for me”. He wanted the saints of Ephesus for whom he was praying to reciprocate and pray for him. Colossians 4:3 – “at the same time pray also for us that I may come to you, that I need to do the things that I'm wanting to do.” 1 Thessalonians 5:25 – “Brothers, pray for us.” 2 Thessalonians 3:1 – “Finally, brothers, pray for us”. It raises an interesting question, doesn't it? When you think about prayer, there are more than a few questions that come to mind when we think about prayer. But when we think about prayer and we think about just what we're talking about here, Paul prays for others and asks other people to pray for him. Is there greater efficacy, greater power, greater opportunity if many people are praying? Is God more likely to respond if you just pray by yourself or if you have a whole bunch of people praying with you? interesting question. We'll try to touch on that in a moment. If I forget to do that, your community group leaders no doubt will be able to answer that. But that's just a part of what we're looking at here: Paul prays for others, and he asked other people to pray for him.

Let's look at what this means to partner with God in prayer because that is what we're doing. We're partnering with God in prayer. Let's begin by noticing just simply the nature of prayer itself. The nature of prayer. Beginning at the 30th verse, Paul says “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 very first thing I want us to see is that there's a sense of urgency about this. There's a sense of urgency. This is a necessity in the mind of the apostle Paul. When he says in verse 30, I appeal to you, it's the same word that we have back in chapter 12 verse 1. Back in 12:1 when we made that big transition from the doctrinal section into the practical application of that, the very first thing Paul does in 12:1 is I beseech you, I appeal to you, I urge you. It's not too strong to say Paul is literally saying in 12:1 I beg you. Put these things into effect in your life. That was his prayer for them. He is speaking of the urgency of prayer. It is the same word here. It's the same sense of urgency that he has here. He wants them to understand that there is a sense of desperation that he has regarding them praying for him and him praying for them. He knows what's coming. He knows what's coming regarding the plans and he's going to share with them. If you just want a simple definition of prayer, it is simply enough to say prayer is really our declaration of dependence on God. It is conversation with God of course. It is talking with God. It is listening to the voice of the Spirit as we read his word, as we pray. But it's also ultimately simply a declaration of our dependency upon God. That's what we do when we pray. That's why we miss it when we don't give ourselves prayer. We're really aligning our hearts with God's heart. That's what we want to do when we pray.

Think about just what the Bible says about this matter of sanctification in our walk with God. How it is that we grow in our faith? We could list out different things, but we know that two of the crucial ones are reading God's word, getting God's word into our life, into our hearts, our minds. We read the word. We also know the Scriptures consistently talk about partnering that with prayer. When we talk about our quiet time, that's oftentimes what we're talking about. We're talking about the fact that there is a time that we set aside to hear from God, to read his word, and then to converse and join our hearts with his, aligning our hearts with his. That's what Paul wants out of these Roman believers.

Notice secondly, there is a sense of mystery as I said. Anytime I think you discuss and talk about prayer, there is a sense of mystery involved. Think about this. Paul is an apostle. He is the chief of all the apostles. There wasn't any apostle greater than Paul. He's the man that God used to take the gospel to the world. He is God's

man. He is an apostle. He is a writer of Scripture. The Holy Spirit of God is using Paul to give to us 13 books of the New Testament. I say there's a mystery involved here because he's asking the believers at Rome to pray for him. You would just think if there's anybody that doesn't need to be pleading with and urging people and asking people to pray for him, it would be a guy like Paul. The point of this spear of what God is doing in the 1st century is this man. And yet here he is. He's asking if they would pray for him.

We could probably ask the same question. Why do any of us need to pray? Why do we need to pray? Does prayer change things? Does prayer change the heart of God? Does prayer cause God to change his mind about something? While we think of Paul and the greatness of Paul, we can ask the same questions at times of ourselves. I would say the short answer is this. Understanding what we do about God and his work in the world and about his sovereignty and his providence, God ordains not only the end, he knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end. There isn't anything that he doesn't know. There isn't anything that ever surprises him. The Bible tells us clearly that God ordains the means and the end. He ordains the end, but he ordains the means to the end. He knows the end. He uses prayer in this mystery which we don't fully understand to help reach that ordained end. The Bible speaks of this, and it reminds us, James does, you don't have because you don't ask. What an amazing thing to say. God is in control of all things in our world. He knows the beginning and he knows the end and he knows everything in between. James says there are things you don't have because you don't even ask.

Paul in Acts 28, which is a part of this story that we're looking at this morning, was on the ship as a prisoner going to Rome. Remember that the Lord spoke to Paul and said you just need to tell everybody on the ship that there's going to be a wreck. This ship is going to run aground. It's going to be busted up, but here's the thing. Everybody is going to be saved. He said everybody's going to be saved if they stay on the ship. If they tried to jump off the ship, if they try to get in the lifeboat like the guys were trying to do and get away and save their lives, evidently that was not going to be the end that they were going to realize. God literally told Paul here's the end. Here's what is going to happen. Here's the means to that end. That's what prayer does. That's

what prayer is. It reminds us that God will not do for us what he has ordained to do apart from prayer. There are things that God in his mysterious work utilizes and uses in our lives and prayer is one of those.

Now look at this practical outworking of the Trinity in this 30th verse. You just see it again. We've highlighted this in the last few weeks as it has shown itself to us. I think it's neat to look at it again and just to be reminded that in prayer the Trinity is engaged in this. Paul speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ by the love of the Spirit. Pray with me in your prayers to God on my behalf. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He's underscoring, underlining, emphasizing the Lordship of Christ that he is in control of all things. He has all the power to do all that needs to be done.

It is by the love of the Spirit. Now we're not as sure as to what exactly that means. It could be the Spirit's love for us. It could be our love for the Spirit. It could be the Spirit working in us and encouraging us to love each other. Which do you want it to be? Let's take all of them. There isn't any reason why it can't be all of those. The Spirit loves us, and we love the Spirit. In return, the Spirit enables us and engages us to love each other.

Then the last one. The Father as God. You offer, you lift up these prayers to God. We pray as we understand the New Testament formula and as Jesus taught us. We pray to the Father. Our Father who art in heaven. That's what Jesus taught that we pray to the Father. We pray through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray through the Lord Jesus Christ because he is the mediator. He's the one by whom we have access to the Father. We pray by the Holy Spirit. We pray empowered by the Holy Spirit. We pray because the Holy Spirit is helping us to align our hearts with God, helping us to set aside our will for the will of God. There we have this Trinitarian formula once again in the book of Romans.

Now notice this fourth point. There is a sense of agony. There is a sense of agony in this prayer. Paul says that he wants them, he appeals to them that they would strive together with me in your prayers to God. That's what we want to look at. The Greek word here. *Sunagonizomai*. Look at that. *Sun* is the word "with". Do you see the English word hiding in there? It is the word "agony". There is a sense, Paul says, in

which we agonize in prayer. He's asking them to strive together with him in this sense of prayer.

What does that mean? It certainly must mean that there is a sense in which prayer is a struggle. You're entering a struggle when you pray. Paul uses this word. It is only used here in all the New Testament. It's the only time it is used. When Paul says would you join with me in striving together for these things, it reminds us that prayer is a struggle. I think it also says to us that there is a sense of encouragement. When I asked earlier on why do we ask other people to pray for us and with us, this is part of the answer right here. The more people that are praying with us, there is a greater sense obviously of appeal to the Father on behalf of whatever that need is, but there's also that many more people who are testifying to the Lordship of Christ, to the Fatherhood of God, praying in the Spirit. There will be that many more people who lift their voices in gratitude and thanks as God answers those prayers. But all of that just reminds us that we're entering into and we're encouraging each other when we pray with and for each other. In Colossians chapter 4 verse 12, this is what Paul said to the church at Colossae. Epaphras, who is one of you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers. It is the same root word, a little different word, but it's the same idea. Paul said, I just want you believers in Colossae to know that your brother Epaphras struggles with you in prayer. He strives with you as he prays for you.

Here's the question. What is the struggle? Who are we struggling with? What's the nature of the struggle? What's the struggle about? We surely can say that the struggle and the striving isn't with God. We're not struggling to get God to do something that he doesn't want God to do. We're not trying to bend the will of God to do our will. We already said in prayer we're trying to align our heart with his. We're making a declaration of our dependence on him, so he surely doesn't mean we're struggling and striving with God when we pray. He is a gracious, loving, heavenly Father, Jesus said, who loves to give good gifts to his children. So that is not the striving that is in view. What is it then? I think it could be several things. It certainly is a striving regarding the spiritual warfare that we engage in when we pray. We're involved in, Ephesians 6 says whether we like it or not, a spiritual battle every day of our lives as a follower of Christ. Our enemy hates us. He opposes us. He wants to destroy us. He seeks nothing but

harm for us. There is a spiritual battle going on all the time. When Paul says in Ephesians 6 and he goes through all the different pieces of armor and tells us to equip ourselves for this battle, how does he end it up in verses 18 and 19? By focusing on prayer. Praying is always in this way. So, he links it together.

When Paul says I want you to strive together with me, I want you to agonize with me about these things that I'm going to share with you. He is certainly saying to us we're entering a spiritual battle, a spiritual struggle. If you want to know what that looks like from the perspective of Scripture, just go to the book of Daniel. As Daniel prayed to God that God would do the very thing that he had promised, the fulfillment of the return of his people to Jerusalem, there was a spiritual conflict. The curtain was pulled back and Daniel got to see a glimpse of what was going on in the heavenly realm regarding the agonizing of prayer that he was doing as he prayed to God to accomplish and do his will.

Don't you think that it also could be a striving with our own weakness, with our own frailty, maybe with our own sense of complacency? Surely when we think of prayer, we're reminded that there is a struggle that we enter just based on our own human weaknesses. We were talking in our small group a few weeks ago and one of the guys said as we were talking about quiet times and reading our Bibles and praying how easy it is to be distracted. A hundred things come to your mind that you need to do at some point, and it always seems to come right at that moment. You remember things that you couldn't remember any time before. That's part of the struggle that we enter. Maybe even the struggle of unbelief. Lord, I believe; help me in my unbelief. We strive together with each other in prayer, Paul says.

Now look at the focus of prayer in verses 31 and 32. Paul is going to ask them to pray for him. He is going to ask them to pray for him in three ways. The first thing he asked them to pray about is his deliverance in the face of opposition. Look at the first part of verse 31. I'm just going to read the opening phrase of that 31st verse "that I may be delivered..." So, here's the request. Here is the pleading. Here's Paul urging and begging, saying please strive with me in prayer. For what, Paul? That I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. So back to Judea. That's where Paul in his mind is going. When he says back to Judea, that's just another way basically saying

Jerusalem. My plan is as we noted last week to go back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem has not been a safe place for the apostle Paul, but then again there really hasn't been any safe place for him. Everywhere this man went he was opposed. Everywhere this man went, he got beat up, imprisoned, flogged. He faced incredible things everywhere he went, so no place was safe.

In fact, I read a blog this past week called "Why the Exclusivity of the Gospel Causes Offense." That was Paul's life. he was the proclaimer of the gospel and everywhere he went he was opposed. Everywhere he went, it seemed like he was offending people. What was that? Well, this guy lifted up three reasons why that's true. He said first because when you preach the gospel, you're eliminating your own way. You're saying to somebody your way is not going to get you where you want to go in terms of an eternal destiny apart from Christ. Every other way is taken off of the table. That's offensive. People want to go their own way. They want to often go anyway but the gospel. He said secondly, it's offensive because it demands humility. It demands us to humble ourselves before God, to acknowledge that we've sinned, that we've fallen short, that we don't measure up, that we're not what we should be. And then he said thirdly it exposes the messenger to misunderstanding. Paul certainly experienced that. Who are you, Paul? Who are you to come here and tell us this is the only way? There are all kinds of ways that we can think of regarding the offense of the gospel.

The other thing that Paul mentions going back to Judea, he talked about the fact that there are likely to be attacks by the disobedient. That's when he speaks of the unbelievers, those who have disobeyed, those who have not responded to the gospel. Now the question is did God answer these prayers? He asked the church at Rome, would you please pray for me that when I go back to Judea that I would be rescued, that I would be delivered, that I would experience a safe return. We won't go back and read the whole account, but it's a fascinating part of the book of Acts. When you go to Acts 21, you get the answer to this question. Paul goes back to Jerusalem, and he is in the temple area and Luke tells us that there were of a group of Jews from Asia who recognized Paul when he had been there. They were always agitating against him. Sure enough, there's Paul. We don't like him. We don't like his message. We don't like his gospel. They agitate against him. They gang up on him to the point that their desire is to

kill him right there in the temple area. They're beating on him and somehow or other word gets to the commander of the Roman guard. What did he do? He comes immediately and he rescues Paul, and he saves his life. That prayer was answered. Paul said when I go back to Judea pray that the disobedient will not be able to do me harm. They came close to doing him harm.

Then, he was sitting in prison. Remember the next part of the story. The next part of the story is these guys continue their plot and they decide that they're going to find a way to still take Paul's life. what happens? Paul's nephew somehow hears that. Somehow. How would his nephew hear that? His nephew just happened to be in the right place at the right time to hear this conspiracy against Paul. The prayers are being answered. His nephew hears about it, takes it again to the captain of the guard, and 270 Roman soldiers take Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea to make sure he makes it there safely. It is an amazing story of God's work in the life of Paul, answering prayer and accomplishing what only he can do, ordaining the end but also ordaining the means to that end. Here were Christians praying for Paul 1300 miles away in Rome.

Notice the second thing he asked them to pray about. Pray, he says, in the rest of verse 31, pray for the acceptance of the believers. The acceptance of the believers. That I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. Paul, we understand that. These guys want to argue. They've always had that in mind. Then he says in the next part of that verse: "and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints." What an odd thing for Paul to ask them to pray about. Pray for the unbelievers that they won't harm me. Yeah, Paul, we get that. We'll pray for that. But now he's saying pray for those who are believers. Pray for them to accept me. Why would that be a necessary prayer?

I think first it's a necessary prayer because there was a lot of suspicion still about the apostle Paul. There were people who were still very suspicious, especially the church in Jerusalem, the epicenter of where all of this started and where everything went out from. How is it that Paul goes from the most feared man, the man who was a persecutor of the church, to the man who is now supposed to be trusted and welcomed? It was just a bridge too far for a lot of people. They were still suspicious of Paul. They still were not convinced. They weren't sure what was this guy's game. What was he up to? What did he want? They didn't trust him. They didn't trust his apostleship.

He came in a different way. He was born out of due time, he said. They didn't trust his message. He was subverting all the things that they held dear. They didn't trust his ministry. And by the way, why is he bringing money? Why is he bringing money to us? Is he trying to engender favor from us in a way that is going to come about by financial means? Is he trying to bribe us? I think back in this setting in Jerusalem, there is still a lot of suspicion about the apostle Paul.

The second part of this is that there are significant struggles over the ministry that Paul was doing among Gentiles. Now these two just go together but this second part really is worth highlighting. This is the struggle that we saw even in the book of Romans. Remember in chapter 14 when Paul opened up that 14th chapter, and he talks about these opinions and these differing ideas as to what people wanted to do with regard to things over which the Scriptures did not explicitly speak. What was the center of most of that? So much of that had to do with how it is that we're supposed to still understand the law of Moses with this New Covenant teaching. Remember it was diet, days, and drinking, and things that related to the law, and now freedom that we have in Christ. Paul was bringing this message. He was bringing this message of freedom and liberty in Christ. He was bringing a message that these, especially in the church in Jerusalem, were having a struggle finally realizing what it was that God intended for them regarding New Covenant living. Paul's prayer was really one of unity. Join my heart with theirs when I come. Pray that they'll do what I told you in Romans 15:7 welcome one another. Pray that they'll do that when I come to them.

Did God answer that prayer? When he came to Jerusalem and he brought the gift from the churches of Achaia and Macedonia, did God answer that prayer as he handed them over to the believers in Jerusalem who were in great need? The Bible doesn't specifically say a lot about that, but we know that prayer must have been answered because in Acts chapter 24 verse 17 Paul just makes this cursory comment, "and I brought gifts and I gave them to the believers in Jerusalem." I think if it had been rejected, if there had been some fallout, he surely would have said that. I think we can take it that yes, God answered that second part.

Now look at the third prayer that Paul wants them to pray for him on his behalf – that he would be refreshed in fellowship. Verse 32: "so that by God's will I may come to

you with joy and be refreshed in your company.” I want to come, Paul said, in joy. How could Paul come to them in joy? I think he gives a little sense when he says that he’s coming by God’s will “so that by God’s will, I may come to you.” I’m coming in the will of God. I’m coming knowing God’s good hand is upon me. I’m coming in hopes of experiencing this joyful fellowship with you. Just hearing what God is doing.

We’ve talked about this previously. The encouragement of hearing what God is doing in each other’s lives. That’s what Paul looked forward to as he looked ahead to the time that he would be coming to Rome. His safety in getting there obviously, but his acceptance when he was there in Jerusalem and then coming to them and sharing with them what God had done by way of answered prayer.

I think the second part of that is just realizing rest. He says, “so that by God’s will, I may come to you with joy as I share and as you share and be refreshed in your company.” I don’t see this as the rest of just coming and lying on the beach for a couple weeks. Sometimes you just have to do that, but as you look at what Paul talks about, I think he’s talking about the refreshment of fellowship, the refreshment of relating to each other. That’s what he said way back in the first chapter. In the 11th verse of the first chapter as we noted earlier, “for I long to see you that I may impart to use some spiritual gifts to strengthen you; that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, by yours and mine.” That’s what he wanted as he looked ahead, making the trip to Jerusalem and then on to Rome. He wanted to be able to come in joy because God had answered these prayers and he wanted to come and realize the refreshment that that fellowship brings.

The last thing. Verse 33. The affirmation and the amen. The affirmation and amen. “May the God of peace be with you all, amen.” We know that the God of peace is one of Paul’s favorite phrases. The God of peace. He uses it a lot. We know from the New Testament that there’s two kinds of peace. There’s the objective peace that is a result of our faith in Christ. It is a result of justification. It is Romans 5:1. “Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God.” No longer any enmity between us and God. We have peace with God. Romans 3: we’re at war with God. There’s hostility between us and God before Christ. But no, because of justification and faith in Christ now there is peace with God.

But there's another kind of peace. There's the peace of God. That is the subjective nature of peace. There's the subjective side and there's the objective side. The subjective side is Philippians 4. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passes understanding. That's the peace of God that is subjective. Paul speaks of the God of peace in both of those ways. We have peace with God through faith in Christ. We have the peace of God as we walk in fellowship with him.

Then from two ways of peace there's one hearty amen. One hearty amen. The Hebrew word for amen is simply to be firm. It is simply saying let it be so. Let this be true. When you shout out a hearty amen here as you often do, you're saying let it be so. You're saying let that be true, let that be firm, let that be the way forward. Then the Greek word is the word *amen*. It is just a transliteration. We have both of those expressions in both the Hebrew and Greek that is just an affirmation of what we want to see God doing in our lives. So we pray. We pray because the Bible tells us that God will not do apart from prayer what he has ordained to do by prayer. We step into this privilege together.

What do we take away? Let me just say three things instead of just one. Let me do three this morning. Prayer is a struggle. Don't be discouraged. That's exactly what Paul says. Paul acknowledges there is an agony. When we pray, we're entering the struggle. You are not alone. If you say when I go to pray, I just feel like I'm in a battle. I'm in a struggle. It's hard. That's right. That's what the Bible tells us. That's what Paul tells us. Don't be discouraged. Don't give up. Recognize that's true for all of us. I don't think we ever get to a point in our walk with God where prayer isn't that kind of a striving and a struggle. That's the nature of the spiritual conflict that we are in and the nature of our own fallenness.

But then notice secondly, prayer is to be specific. Ask. Don't throw out the vague generalities. Ask specific things. Ask God to do what only he can do in a circumstance, in a situation in somebody's life and heart that is specifically asking God to do what he alone can do. We get the privilege, and if you want to be on the church's prayer list contact the church office. I told Bonnie just recently because we've been having so many things to pray about as they come through, so many things happening in people's

lives in which they are calling out to God to do what only he can do. We get to pray for each other in that. We get to pray specifically for things where people have expressed needs.

Then thirdly, prayer is effective. Don't give up. Do so without ceasing. Keep asking Jesus said. Keep seeking. Keep knocking. Paul was a missionary. Look at the map of the world. This is the map of the world. Those little marks don't represent precisely where everybody is, but it gives you a sense. We've got obviously people who are serving in various ways in the United States. We have our Toluca sister church in Mexico. We have a work going on in Nicaragua. We are in places of Europe, in hard places in some instances in Europe, in Eastern Europe. We are throughout Asia. For a long time, our church had several people in China. We can only continue to pray that the church in China that has largely gone underground is strengthened and continues to hold forth the word of the gospel. All throughout India we have people. In Asia, Thailand, and then into Africa. That's what Paul is doing here. He is saying this is my plan, this is my hope, this is my dream, this is what I'm asking God to do, and we get to do that as well.

I'm reminded of this because tomorrow a couple that we support are flying out to go to Africa. They're going to Egypt first. They're going into an unsettled part of the world. But then they're leaving Egypt and are going into South Sudan. They've made numerous trips in the South Sudan. South Sudan is a difficult hard place to go. But that's what's happening in the life of one of our missionary couples tomorrow. We've got a work obviously in Ethiopia with Be There Ministries. All these different places that God has strategically allowed us to partner with believers who are taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. That's what we want to do. We want to pray for them. We want to pray for each other.

I want to pray for you, and I want to pray especially if you're here this morning and you've never believed and trusted and put your faith in Christ for salvation. My prayer would be that this would be the morning that God would give you understanding that Jesus the Son of God came to this earth, even as we sang this morning. He left the glory of heaven. He lived a perfect sinless life, died a terrible death on the cross, was raised again and ascended back to heaven. He did that for us. He did that for you. He

did that for me. All of us have sinned and fallen short. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life.

Let's pray. Father God, we pray that by your Spirit, by your grace, and by your mercy, you will enable and equip and strengthen the missionaries that we support all around the world. Father, thank you for the witness of the gospel in that way. Thank you for the privilege that we have as the church to pray for them, to encourage them, to support them. We pray that we would do that with specificity, that we would do that regularly, that we would do that faithfully. We pray that we would strive with them in the ministry of the gospel, and that we would do that for and with each other as we seek to touch this community and the places we live and work with the gospel. Father, we pray as well if there's anybody here this morning that has never put their faith and trust in Jesus as their Savior, that you would give them understanding, that you would open their heart, their mind, that they would put their trust in Jesus and in Jesus alone this morning for the gift of eternal life. we pray in Jesus's name, amen.