

Prayer and the Sovereignty of God

Romans 15:30-33

In our text Paul is excited about his future visit to Rome and strongly urges the church to *“strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”* Paul prayed for four things:

- (1). He wanted to be delivered from those who persecuted believers in Judea (v. 31).
- (2). He wanted to be well received by the Christians in Jerusalem (“mostly Jews” v. 31).
- (3). He wanted to come to Rome “full of joy” (v. 32).
- (4). He wanted to leave Rome refreshed and ready to proceed to Spain (v.32).

All these requests of God seem *“good.”* These prayers appear to be for *“Christ’s sake”* and the *“love of the Spirit”* (v.30). Yet one could argue that none of his desires were met.

- (1). Paul was persecuted for the sake of the gospel and eventually lost his life.
- (2). The Jerusalem church constantly argued over Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles.
- (3). Paul eventually made it to Rome (maybe full of joy) but definitely as a prisoner.
- (4). Paul seems to have never made it to Spain. He died in Rome at the hands of Nero.

I. Our desires and God’s will don’t always match up.

Just like Paul, there are times in our lives when we are very burdened and get on our knees and pray for things to change; but God seems to not answer our prayers. We must be very clear about God’s Sovereignty: *“I the Lord change not”* (Mal. 8:6). *“There is no shadow of turning with thee. Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not; as Thou hast been thou forever shall be,”* **Great Is Thy Faithfulness.** Paul understood that unless it was *“God’s will”* (v.32), his desires would not be met.

II. There is great blessing when Christians wrestle with God in prayer.

Someone might ask, *“If God’s will never changes, why wrestle with Him in prayer?”* The Greek word which is translated *“strive”* (v.30) is literally the word *“agonize.”*

(A). It is the means through which God displays power.

All powerful movements of God in history have followed great prayer revivals. *“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”* (James 5:16).

(B). It is the means through which God delivers peace.

*“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 all understanding, **shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 4:6-7).

III. God always does that which is ultimately best for His Kingdom.

There is nothing wrong in praying for things you desire. Wrestle with God. Agonize in your prayer time over your burden and pour out your heart to God. But when you pray, *“In Jesus name”* you are saying, *“Thy will, O Christ, be done.”* When you throw your cares on Christ and believe that *“His will is always best,”* peace comes. Need an example? Look no further than our text. Paul came to Rome as a prisoner. *“All the things that have happened to me have occurred for the furtherance of the gospel. As a prisoner, Christ has been revealed in all the palace”* (Phil. 1:12-13).