

## The Ministry of the Church - Giving, Praying, Receiving

Rom 15:22-33<sup>22</sup> For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. <sup>23</sup> But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup> whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. <sup>25</sup> But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. <sup>26</sup> For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. <sup>29</sup> But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. <sup>30</sup> Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, <sup>31</sup> that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, <sup>32</sup> that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. <sup>33</sup> Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul is coming to the conclusion of his letter to the church at Rome. He is aware that there are yet some heavy responsibilities before him and that these will not be without real opposition yet he confident that there will still be great opportunities for him in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. As he has known trials and conflict in the whole of his ministry I am sure he is expecting a potential for perilous times in his future.

He is now on his way to Jerusalem with a mission of mercy to bring relief to the saints of God who are in need. A famine has ravaged the land and God's elect are suffering. Material comforts are not always afforded the saints in God's providence, but God's people do care for one another.

Now Paul knows that there are those in Jerusalem that hate him and His Redeemer, and so he is asking for his brothers and sisters in Rome to pray for him and his ministry. I want you to listen carefully as to how he makes this request, "*that you **strive together with me** in prayers to God for me.*" Did you hear that, "*strive together with me*"? Praying for the ministry of a servant of God is engaging in that ministry with that servant. Paul is fully aware that it will not be by his efforts that his ministry succeeds but it will be because God answered the prayers of the faithful in his behalf. Be mindful, dear ones, this church, or any work of God, will not increase in numbers and strength by what we do, but only by God working in and through us.

Two things we can learn from this passage; 1, The love that we as God's people should have for one another. And 2, The value and necessity of prayer for the workers laboring in God's vineyard, and the importance of prayer for the work of God.

- A. We see the love of God's people for God's people. *It **pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia** to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.*
  - 1. God had permitted a famine to affect the saint in Jerusalem.
  - 2. God had blessed the saint in Macedonia and Achaia; they had the means to give and they gave with joy.
  - 3. Jesus said by this all men will know you are my disciples. Why? Because you love one another.
- B. The importance and purpose of prayer in the Work of God. - *Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me*
  - 1. Paul is going to an area where the enemies of Christ abound.

2. Paul sees that prayer is necessary because the battle is real and the enemy is fierce.

*John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, **you know that it hated Me before it hated you**. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, **therefore the world hates you**."*

- a. Paul will need God's protecting hand, and thus he stands in need of the prayers of the saints.
3. Prayer is certainly proper for it is "for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, and because of the love of the Spirit" that he asks them to pray.
4. His request for prayer is three-fold. - *that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints*
  - a. So he asks that they pray that he might be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe
  - b. He request prayer that he might be received by the believers in Jerusalem
  - c. The third part of the prayer is that he might go to Rome - *that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you*
5. We can conclude then that prayer is necessary, otherwise why would Paul request prayer of the congregation in Rome?

6. We need to always be reminded that it is Christ Himself that instructs us to pray.

Matt 7:7-8 "**Ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

- a. God will answer prayer
- b. But God's way may not be quite what we asked - but it will be to His glory.

Conclusion:

Let us show kindness to one another that others may see Christ in us

Let us labor together in the ministry of Christ knowing that it is through prayer that God has ordained victory in His church.

Rejoice in all things knowing that even in trials "*the God of peace will be with us*". Amen.