

Series: Romans
Title: Striving Together
Text: Rom 15: 30-33
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Romans 15: 30: Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me; 31: That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; 32: That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

One of the greatest privileges a believer has is to approach God's throne of grace. The price to give us that admission is amazing. Christ is the new and living way into the holiest of holies. This new way has been consecrated for us by his blood by him laying down his life for his people. Our risen Redeemer is our High Priest with God. He has washed us in his blood, washed us in regeneration—made us righteous and holy—so now we are accepted in the holiest of holies into God's presence in prayer. Amazing!

How precious, and how comforting, for a believer to know that his brethren pray for him. Paul knew he would face many dangers at Jerusalem and in his travels to Rome. Paul says, "*I beseech you, brethren*"—he entreats them strongly. "*He beseeches them as brethren*" chosen by the same Father, quickened by the same Spirit, redeemed by the same Savior. Brethren one unbreakable bond.

Proposition: By the Spirit of God believers strive together in prayer for the glory of Christ and the good of his church.

Subject: Striving Together

Divisions: 1) Our chief motive 2) The manner 3) The essence of our requests

THE MOTIVE OF PRAYER

Romans 15: 30: Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit...

The chief motive in prayer is "*for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit.*"

The preeminent motive in prayer is "*for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.*" Paul was Christ's servant. It was Christ's Gospel that he preached. He wanted Christ glorified. Christ receives the glory for sending the gospel. Christ is the message we preach. He entered covenant for his people. He redeemed his people. Christ gives boldness to preach. Paul often asked for boldness to preach Christ crucified as he ought to preach. We declare Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. We declare Christ is the Righteousness of every believer and the Holiness of those in whom he dwells. We declare it is Christ reigning and ruling on his throne above.

Paul wanted to see Christ glorified in calling out his lost sheep through Paul's preaching. Christ is our Life. He sends forth the Holy Spirit to regenerate dead sinners. Christ grants repentance and faith—a sinner cannot generate it. Christ calls out his lost sheep through the gospel and receives all the glory.

Therefore, Christ is our chief motive in prayer because we owe Christ everything. God the Father loves his people with an everlasting love because he loves us in Christ the Beloved. We were dead in sins, ignorant of spiritual things. We could not and would not receive them. But now, Christ is our Wisdom to know whom we have believed. By him we know he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day. Our redemption from the curse of the law is Christ our Redeemer. Christ is the constraint of our hearts

Christ's yoke of faith and love is so much lighter and so much stronger than the law. Every joy and every comfort are in Christ. It is Christ the Word, Christ the Life, that makes the written word life and comfort to us. Even our access to the throne of grace into God's holy presence is due to Christ our High Priest and his

precious blood that has washed us and made us accepted. So our prayer is not only in Christ's name, it is preeminently for Christ's sake.

2 Thessalonians 3:1: Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

United with that motive is "*for the love of the Spirit.*" One, this means for the Spirit of God who is love and who loves us. God is love: God the Father is love, God the Son is love, God the Holy Spirit is love. In love the Holy Spirit gave us the holy scriptures—"Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In love the Spirit regenerated us and made us worship in spirit and in truth—"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." In love the Spirit convinced us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. In love the Spirit of God is the earnest and pledge of our heavenly inheritance who sealed us—"grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." In love he is the Spirit of adoption by whom we pray unto God as our Father.

Romans 8:15...ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit of God gives true prayer. From the first hour it is the Spirit who gives us life to cry, "Abba, Father." The Lord told Ananias that he had called Paul by saying, "Behold he prayeth." From the first hour that the Spirit quickens and calls a sinner until the last we are found casting all our care upon God. It is due to the love of the Spirit of God toward undeserving, helpless sinners like us.

Two, "*for the love of the Spirit*" means the love he sheds abroad in our heart manifesting the love of God toward us whereby we love Christ and love one another. Brethren are one by the same Holy Spirit of God. Scripture teaches that believers in Christ are bound together in an unbreakable bond of holy love called "the family of God." We are of the same household of faith; members one of another. We are one with God the Father, one with God the Son, one with God the Holy Spirit and one with one another. The love of the Spirit has made us one body, one with Christ.

Ephesians 4: 1: I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2: With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3: Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4: *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

By the Spirit dwelling in us "*charity never faileth!*" The love God imparts into a believer's new nature is more than natural affection. It is the supernatural love of the Spirit. God-given love is how we have true love for Christ and true love for one another—"the fruit of the Spirit is love."

Why do you suppose at unexpected times, one of your brethren comes to mind and you are moved to pray for them? The love of the Spirit constrains us with true love for one another. Paul is saying to them, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies" pray for me (Php 2: 1)

THE MANNER OF PRAYER

Romans 15: 30: Now I beseech you, brethren,...that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

"Strive together" means "agonize as companions", "agonize together" with me in your prayers to God for me. The word "strive" is the same as when Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Luke 22: 44: And being in an agony [striving] he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45: And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,...

In the Garden, our Lord agonized in prayer—"with strong crying and tears." The first Adam was made sin a garden; perhaps this is where the last Adam began to bear the sin of his people. He knew no sin. But he

was touched with the feeling of our sinful infirmities—"the spirit is will but the flesh is weak." It was such a burden. He sweat as it were great drops of blood. So the Father sent an angel to strengthen him. But while he agonized earnestly in prayer his apostles slept for sorrow. They could not watch and pray with him for one hour. He must tread the winepress alone.

But our Substitute suffered alone so that his people do not have to suffer alone. Christ purchased his people and the covenant promise to send forth the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. He sends the Holy Spirit to turn us to him in prayer in time of need. He causes our brethren to turn to him and agonize with us in prayer by making us suffer together. And "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities because we know not what to pray for as we ought."

Brethren, this word "*strive together*" "agonize together" is what the Spirit makes us do by making us put ourselves in the shoes of our suffering brethren. He makes us empathize and pity a brother who suffers. That brother is one with you and you feel their suffering. When a brother is under a heavy load it hurts like when one member in your physical body suffers.

1 Corinthians 12: 24...God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26: And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;

Notice, Paul was not present. They were not together in a prayer meeting. Still the Spirit of God makes each of us, no matter how far apart—"strive together"—agonize together for our suffering brethren. Prayer, especially "striving together", is of the Spirit of God. So many preachers hold Jacob up as mighty in prayer. They say he strove with Christ and wrestled Christ until Christ gave Jacob the blessing. No, Christ saw Jacob prevailed not because Jacob was wrestling in his own strength. So Christ touched the hollow of his thigh. Then the only thing Jacob could do was cry and beg the Lord Jesus for mercy—that is how scripture says Jacob prevailed with Christ.

Hosea 12:4: Yea, he had power [with] the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him:...

THE ESSENCE OF PRAYER

Romans 15: 31: That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; 32: That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

The essence of prayer is submission to God. Paul asked for three specific things here—"let your requests be made known to God." When I pray for you I try to be specific: I call you by name and ask specific requests according to your needs. But in each request Paul submitted to God—that "*I "may" "by the will of God."*" The word "can" speaks of ability, the word "may" asks permission. Paul knows that he is under the authority of Christ Jesus the Lord. Therefore he asks that he "*may by the will of God*" do these things.

From eternity God already purposed and predestinated each and everything thing he does. Why then do we pray?

Ezekiel 36: 36...I the LORD have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*. 37: Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Prayer is dependence upon God. Prayer is trusting God to do what is right and best according to his will. True prayer is from a spirit of submission to God. True prayer is not a believer persuading God to do our will but true prayer is God turning the believer to surrender to God's will.

1 John 5: 14: And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

It was God's will to do everything Paul and his brethren prayed for. But not in the way they expected or wanted. God did it his way. And his way is the right way. The purpose of prayer is to keep his saints ever acknowledging that we depend upon God for every gift of his grace and every step in providence.

Amen!