

ROMANS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Romans chapter 15 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the church in Rome. And what a journey this has been.

We have seen Paul speak of *CONDEMNATION*, showing us that the whole world is guilty before God. And he did this by looking at the unrighteous heathen who are condemned by creation in Romans 1:18-32. He then moved on to the self-righteous moralist who is condemned by his conscience in Romans 2:1-16. From there he shows how the super religious person is condemned before God by the commandments of God in Romans 2:17-29. And finally, he shows us how all are guilty before God in Romans 3:1-20.

Now if Paul ended this letter at this point, it would truly be a tragic letter. But Paul doesn't end this letter with the whole world condemned before God. You see, in Romans 3:21 through Romans 5:21 he speaks of *JUSTIFICATION* or how the righteousness of God has been revealed to us from Heaven apart from the works of the Law. And what an important section for now we can be cleansed from our sins; we can have our records wiped clean by the blood of Christ! But Paul does not end here with justification!

In Romans chapter 6 through Romans chapter 8 Paul deals with the subject of *SANCTIFICATION* or how God, by His Spirit is working on us down here so that we can fit in up there. He is working in our lives so that we may be separated from this world and He gives to us the power to live a life that is pleasing to God as we surrender our life to the Holy Spirit!

Then, in Romans chapter 9 through Romans chapter 11 Paul deals with another tough subject, *ELECTION* or that God has chosen us and yet we have a free will to choose Him and he does this by showing us the Jewish people and how God is not done with them yet!

And in Romans chapter 12 through Romans chapter 15, verse 13, a section we have just finished up, Paul is speaking of a tough subject, and that is the subject of **APPLICATION!** In other words, Paul lays it all out and is saying that now that you have the truths of God, now that you know what God has for you and what He desires of you, you need to walk according to the high calling by which you have been called. You need to apply these truths to your life and thus, it is where the rubber meets the road you might say!

And now, after all that, Paul is closing this great letter that he wrote to the church in Rome. And as he does, he shows his concern for his brethren in Rome and that was Paul, as we will see as we conclude our study of Romans next time. Paul had a great love for the brethren in Rome and thus, he concludes with a heart of concern and love for them!

Remember what I said last week about the rest of chapters 15 and 16 here in Romans. From Romans 15:14 through Romans 16:24 Paul gives his conclusion to this letter to the Romans.

And we will see that this section can be broken down as follows:

Romans 15:14-21 - Paul's ministry

Romans 15:22-33 - Paul's future plans for service

Romans 16:1-24 - we see Paul's personal greetings to the brethren in Rome as well as the greetings of others to the brethren in Rome.

And then we will see Paul's letter concluding with his closing benediction in Romans 16:25-27.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Romans chapter 15, beginning in verse 14 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

ROMANS 15**VERSES 14-16**

As you read this please understand that Paul is not saying that the Christians in Rome did not know these things, they did. Then why was Paul telling them again about what they needed to do?

Because Paul is reminding them to *be full of goodness*, to *be filled with knowledge*, to *admonish each other*.

Let's face it, we all forget things and we need to be reminded of them. And isn't it amazing the things we remember and the things we forget!

Think about it. You can hear a secular song that you haven't heard in forty years and all of a sudden you are singing the words to that song! Incredible!

But, when you try to remember a Bible verse, forget about it! We do need to be reminded and if you really think about it, I have been teaching you the Word of God for twenty-three years now, you have been reading the Word of God and studying the Word of God on your own, and yet, how often we forget what God has said and we need to be reminded! And for the most part, as I teach you the Word of God, I am just reminding you of what you already know. That is what Paul is doing here.

That is what Peter said when he wrote in II Peter 1:12-15, **“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”**

You see, Peter was going to keep reminding them of the things he already shared with them because we forget things so easily, especially when things don't go the way we want, when difficulties arise. We need to be reminded!

Folks, when you really think about it, it is not what you know but how well you know what you know – are you applying it to your life because God has touched you and you desire to live a life that is pleasing to Him?

Now I want to take a few minutes and talk a little about three things that Paul is reminding them to continue in.

The first thing that the church in Rome was doing well is that they were **“full of goodness.”** Paul is speaking of a high moral character. They hated evil and loved righteousness and their lives reflected this.

Think about the days we live in and how important that we don't get sucked into the world's ways, but we follow the ways of the Lord! That the goodness of God flows from our lives!

Not only that, but they were **“filled with knowledge.”** Paul is saying that the believers in Rome were doctrinally sound, and what a statement that is.

If you take in junk food all the time, an unhealthy diet, you are not going to be healthy!

The same is true with us, if we don't take in sound doctrine, healthy doctrine, the truths of God found in the Word of God, we are going to be unhealthy, spiritually speaking!

And we do see a problem with Christians today receiving sound doctrine, healthy doctrine and thus, it affects the way they live out their Christian faith.

You see, truth and virtue are inseparable and yet, since many are lacking this truth today, we see virtue or good values lacking. You will never act like a Christian unless you think properly, and you will not think properly unless you have sound doctrine, healthy doctrine in your life.

You may not think this is important but listen how pollster George Gallup has described America. He sees it as richly religious but ethically impoverished nation. He said the following and listen closely. And keep in mind that this is from 1992, and things have not gotten better. In fact, they are worse. This is what he had to say about the church in America,

Religious belief is remarkably high - certainly, the highest of any developed nation in the world. At the same time, American religious life is characterized by a series of gaps. First, an "ethics gap" exists between Americans' expressed beliefs and the state of the society they shape. While religion is highly popular in America, it is to a large extent superficial; it does not change peoples' lives to the degree one would expect from their level of professed faith. In ethical behavior, there is very little difference between the churched and the unchurched.

- "George Gallup Looks at Religion in America,"
an interview in *Ministry*,
Reformed Theological Seminary Journal,
Summer 1992, p. 10

This is a problem for us because it is a lack or gap between faith and knowledge. The solution is simple and yet how often do we negate the solution and run to the latest and greatest self-help books for the Christian life? Or the psychobabble that is going on out there, we take it as gospel truth and we discard the Word of God? That is dangerous, and it will affect our lives and not in a good way.

Instead of running there, may we run to the Bible, the Word of God and then not only read these things, but apply them to our lives. Let that knowledge we have, be seen in how we live out our lives.

And the last thing that Paul mentions is that we are able **“to admonish one another.”** Folk’s, like it or not, every believer is responsible to encourage and strengthen other believers with God’s Word and we are equipped to do so!

Remember what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

So we are equipped to admonish one another and we are equipped not because we have some kind of counseling degree, but because we have the Word of God.

Far too often people say that they are not qualified to help other Christians out, listen to their problems and thus, they must go to the professionals!

How sad that is, and it is wrong. We may not have a counseling degree as I have said, but we have God’s Word and He is the Wonderful Counselor, the great physician and if we minister God’s Word it will help them wherever they are at, whatever they are going through!

Also, Paul uses the word, “**able**” or “**competent**” to admonish one another and it is the Greek word, DUNAMAI, (doo'-nam-ahee) and is based on the word DUNAMIS or that dynamic power that is used of the Holy Spirit working in us. Thus, Paul is saying that this dynamic, this dynamite power is there so we can also admonish one another in the faith, encourage each other in the faith.

James Montgomery Boice says this regarding what Paul has just said. He wrote,

Do we love the Lord enough to talk about him naturally and often? Do we love others enough to bring spiritual truths into daily conversation? Do we care for Christians enough to point them in the right direction when we see that they are deviating from or falling short of it? And do we sometimes talk about difficult things, though kindly?

Once Donald Grey Barnhouse was sent an appraisal of a man who was under care of the church's session as a candidate for the ministry. It had been prepared by a mature Christian under whom the candidate had worked and was, as Barnhouse said, “a dissection of his spiritual anatomy.”

Barnhouse met with the candidate and started to review the appraisal with him. He had hardly gotten beyond the first paragraph of the four-page document before the young man reacted strongly. Barnhouse told him to jot down his disagreements while the letter was being read and they would discuss them, which they did. It was easy to see that he was deeply agitated and wounded. When Barnhouse finished, the man demanded, “Do you agree with this?”

Barnhouse did not reply to that question, but he said, “I do not know when I have ever read a paper that more clearly reveals a heart of love in the man who prepared it. If I were to write a title, I would call it, ‘How to Salvage John Jones for the Lord Jesus Christ.’”

- James Montgomery Boice, Romans Volume 4, p. 1851

Here's the thing. In Proverbs 27:17 we are told, "**As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.**"

It is so important to have people in your life that will keep you in line, that will sharpen your mind through conversation, and yes, there may be even sparks at times, but the end result, if received, is you will keep yourself sharp instead of being dull.

That does not mean we go around playing the Holy Spirit and exposing everyone's faults, at least the ones we think they have. The idea here is that we sharpen each other and thus, if done correctly, it will produce positive results in each of our lives!

I could spend hours going over these three points, but I think you get the idea of what God desires in our lives, that we are to live accordingly!

Now, in verse 16 Paul is speaking of the Gentile converts, those who were saved through his sharing the Gospel message, and they are an acceptable sacrifice unto God.

That not only goes for Paul, but all of us, as we share our faith, and someone comes to know the Lord, it is a sacrifice unto God, sweet-smelling.

Of this G. Campbell Morgan said, "What a radiant light this sheds on all our evangelistic and pastoral effort! Every soul won by the preaching of the gospel is not only brought into a place of safety and of blessing; he is an offering to God, a gift which gives Him satisfaction, the very offering He is seeking. Every soul carefully and patiently instructed in the things of Christ, and so made conformable to His likeness, is a soul in whom the Father takes pleasure. Thus we labor, not only for the saving of men, but for the satisfying of the heart of God. This is the most powerful motive."

And the picture here when he says that he is a "**minister**" is on priestly service. Paul looked on himself as a priest at the altar, offering up to God the Gentiles he had won to Christ.

They were a “*spiritual sacrifice*” to the glory of God (see 1 Peter 2:5). Even his preaching of the Gospel was a “priestly duty.”

This insight into ministry certainly adds dignity and responsibility to our service. It was important that the priests offer to God only that which was the best (see Mal. 1:6–14).

Murray put it like this, “When he defines his ministry as ministering the gospel of God the apostle uses a word occurring nowhere else in the New Testament which may properly be rendered ‘acting as a priest.’ So the ministry of the gospel is conceived of after the pattern of priestly offering.”

VERSES 17-19

Before his readers can come to the wrong conclusion and think that Paul is boasting in what he has done, he gives all the credit and glory to God who accomplished all these things through him.

What a great lesson for us, that no matter what great things we may accomplish, it is that God has done these things, enabled us to do the things we could never do on our own!

Morris put it like this, “Paul will glory only in what Christ has done through him. He is sure that Christ has done great things through him, and he is glad that he can draw attention to those things. But he is not trying to attract adulation. It is what Christ has done that is his theme.”

That is an important lesson for all of us to learn. It is not what we have done, but what the Lord has done, and He will use us until we take the glory from Him and place it on ourselves! Be careful.

Paul said in Galatians 6:14, “**But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**”

And in Colossians 1:18 he wrote, “**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**”

Did you see that? We boast in the Lord because in all things He must have the preeminence.

And think about it, apart from Him we can do nothing and yet, we try to boast in what we have done. That is just foolishness on our part. Again, be careful!

Now let me ask you this. What was the focus of Paul’s ministry?

Today you might get some strange answers from sending letters out to the community to see what kind of church people want, to social activities but not Paul, his focus was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel message!

There is a story of a little girl who went to church with her dad and behind the pastor was a cross with Jesus on it.

As this man stood at the podium, he was a big man, he completely blocked out Jesus. And this poor little girl could not see Him as he stood up there.

One Sunday one of his assistants filled in and he was a lot smaller.

During the service that week the little girl turned to her dad and said, “Daddy, where is the man who blocks out Jesus?”

Folks, keep the main thing the main thing, keep focused on Jesus and don’t distract people with other things, covering up Jesus! Don’t take the glory from Him!

Now, in verse 19 Paul says that, “**. . . so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.**”

The book of Acts doesn't tell us when Paul went to Illyricum, also known as Dalmatia in the Scriptures. But it corresponds to the former Eastern European country of Yugoslavia and he probably went there during one of his stays in Macedonia.

Also, keep in mind they didn't travel by plane or cars or trains, obviously, but went by foot usually and from Jerusalem to Illyricum it is some 1400 miles!

Not bad when you think about it. Today it is hard for people to drive 30 miles to church in a car!

VERSES 20-21

Paul was not interested in building upon another's work or foundation but to go and spread forth the Gospel message where people have not heard it yet.

To justify his actions, he quotes out of Isaiah 52:15 showing his obedience to the Scriptures in speaking the Gospel message in new areas.

Some wonder why I came to Manitowoc when there were plenty of churches in this town. That is a great question and my answer is very simple.

My heart's desire was to teach people the Word of God verse-by-verse and that is what I have done. There are many churches in Manitowoc, but how many have been teaching through the Bible, verse-by-verse from Genesis through the book of Revelation. So I don't see myself building upon another man's foundation.

Also, some see our radio station as a duplication of a Christian service. And some get frustrated at what we are doing. Some in the radio ministry are upset, especially with low-power stations like ours. Again, they see it as a duplication of a ministry.

I disagree.

When we applied for this station, many years ago, our desire was not to have a Christian radio station that played mostly music because there are those stations out there. Our desire was to put on this station teachers who could rightly divide the Word of truth and that is what we have done. Our station is mainly a teaching station and we are not duplicating what others are doing in the area.

VERSES 22-24

Here we see Paul speak of his future plans for service from verse 22 through verse 33 or the end of this chapter.

We also see Paul's desire to fellowship with the brethren in Rome and then head to Spain, which was the western limit of the Roman Empire.

That was to be a new frontier for Paul to go and share the Gospel message, but he also wanted the support, the prayers, the fellowship of the brethren in Rome before he went.

What hindered Paul from getting there to Rome? I don't believe it was satanic opposition but the work that he was involved in kept him from going.

It is not good not to finish something and then just leave it undone. Paul finished what he started and then moved on. He was faithful to the work that God had called him to and that is a great lesson for us to learn.

And as we have seen as we have gone through the book of Acts, Paul's plans did not turn out like he thought. And yet, he did make it to Rome, but he was under house arrest for two years, waiting to appeal his case to Caesar Nero.

Then, after two years he was released because there were no real charges against him.

But during his stay in Rome, under house arrest, this was in a sense a new frontier for him, and he would ultimately share the Gospel message with the leader of Rome, Caesar Nero!

Now Nero heard the truth and he rejected the truth and we can see that there was a turning point where Nero came down with an iron fist against Christians, he was like a mad man! He rejected the truth and tried to stamp it out, but like Paul tried to do, it just won't work, God won't let it!

And you can either surrender to the Lord or fight against Him and if you fight against the Lord, you will never win. Nero found that out!

Now, did Paul ever make it to Spain? I believe he did.

As I have said, he spent 2 years in Rome under house arrest and then he was released, there was no real legal case against him.

And according to the writings of Eusebius Paul did preach in Europe and Spain before he was re-arrested by Rome and placed in a dungeon awaiting his execution.

And in II Timothy Paul knew his life was coming to an end and he was encouraging Timothy to carry on the work and he spoke of his life, that it was drawing to a close. He tells us in II Timothy 4:6-8, **“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”**

Keep in mind that during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome he wrote this to the Philippians, **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”**

Philippians 1:21-26.

And Paul was released from prison for a period of time but now he has been re-arrested, and he knows his time is short, he knows he is going to be put to death for his faith in Christ this time!

And Paul is encouraging this young pastor to continue on in the work that God has called him to even though, for Paul, it was time to go home.

And I love the picture that Paul paints for us here. Paul saw his life ending like a drink offering to the Lord, (Numbers 15:1-10).

You see, first there was the burnt offering to the Lord, then the grain offering, and the last offering was the drink offering.

It is as Hiebert said, “His whole life has been presented to God as a living sacrifice; now his death, comparable to the pouring out of the wine as the last act of the sacrificial ceremony, will complete the sacrifice.”

And this word “**departure**,” ANALUSIS (an-al'-oo-sis) in the Greek, carries with it a few different ideas.

It speaks of the unloosing of a ship from its moors, as Paul is ready to set sail home to heaven.

It speaks of the unyoking of a weary team of animals after a hard day's work, and Paul has finished the work that God has called him to do, he is going to enter that rest.

It is the striking of a tent, taking it down so you can move on and Paul was going to leave this earthly tent for a mansion!

Paul knew he was going to die, and he is passing the mantle of ministry to Timothy, his son in the faith.

Again, encouragement is so important, and Paul uses his life as an example to Timothy. He fought the good fight, he finished the race, he kept the faith and he is waiting to receive his rewards for faithful service when the Lord returns, which tells me he expected the Lord to come soon.

Are you fighting the good fight, finishing the race, keeping the faith, awaiting the Lord's return?

Paul is encouraging you to do so and receive the rewards that you will one day present at the feet of Jesus for He is the One who has enabled all of us to do these things!

VERSES 25-29

Keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter towards the end of his third missionary journey. And before Paul went to Jerusalem he stopped in Corinth, where he wrote this letter to the Romans from, and he was bringing a collection of money from the Gentile churches to help the church in Jerusalem. Brethren that were hurting, having very hard times.

We are told of this collection in I Corinthians 16:1-4, **“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.”**

Also, in II Corinthians 8:1-4 we are told, **“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”**

You see, fellow believers, Jewish believers in Jerusalem were hurting, they were suffering because of their faith in Christ. They lost everything and sometimes even their own family disowned them, counted them as dead and would not have anything to do with them. Many even lost their jobs because of their faith!

So Paul collected this special offering from the Gentile churches in Greece for the suffering Jewish saints in Jerusalem.

Keep in mind that there was still some division between Jew and Gentile and this act, on the part of the Gentile believers, would show them the love of Christ. Not only that, but it was helpful to the Jews as they were hurting.

So this act of love that was seen in meeting their physical needs helped to unite Jews and Gentiles together. It brought them closer together!

Now, in Romans 15:27 it says, “**For it pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. . . .**” What is that about? Why are the Gentiles debtors to the Jews?

Because the Gentiles had received spiritual wealth from the Jews. They gave to the Gentiles, to you and me you might say, not only the Word of God but also, the Son of God! And now they are returning that debt you might say with material wealth.

We Christians ought to feel an obligation to Israel, and to pay that debt by praying for Israel, sharing the Gospel, and helping in a material way. Anti-Semitism has no place in the life of a dedicated Christian. And sadly, that is a growing trend amongst believers, their hatred of the Jews!

Also, we see that our giving is a sacrifice unto God, it is fruit that is born in our lives as we give not out of our abundance but out of our poverty as the Gentile churches did.

VERSES 30-32

Here is something that many struggle with from time-to-time. Does prayer really work? Is prayer important?

Paul thought so and he coveted the prayers of the believers in Rome to pray for his safety as he goes to Jerusalem. Why was he concerned. Remember that he was warned about what awaited him there in Jerusalem. He knew that “**chains and tribulations await me.**” Acts 20:23.

We see this played out for us in Acts 20:22-24, **“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**

Paul was not going to be moved from the course that was set before him, but he also was not going to go without a foundation of prayer being laid. Paul’s desire was to edify the believers in Jerusalem who were under intense persecution from their fellow Jews and that as he spoke to the unbelieving Jews, as he spoke to them of Jesus, they might receive Him! Also, that he would eventually come to Rome and that their meeting would be refreshing to all the believers there, including Paul himself.

Again, I don’t think many see prayer as important today. It truly is. When we were witnessing at that Windigo fest, we did not just go out there and witness.

Now you may be thinking, “But I thought God wanted you to go?” He did but it would be foolish to go without ***PRAYER!***

This was and is a spiritual battle we are facing and if we don’t lay down a foundation of prayer we are going to be in trouble. And here is this great man of God asking for prayer!

Now, that phrase **“strive together”** comes from the Greek word SUNAGONIZOMAI (soon-ag-o-nid’-zom-ahee) and it literally means to “agonize together.”

Like Paul, I covet your prayers to keep me strong in the faith, to protect me and my family, to give me the wisdom I need for the work I am doing, to help me hear the Lord as I prepare these studies, and-so-on.

And not only for me but also for the leaders of this church, those who are over ministries, it is vital!

The power of prayer in supporting pastors is important, especially as we are stepping forward with the message of Christ, a message the enemy does not want to go out! And, especially as the Lord's return gets closer, the battle will even be more intense!

Pastor Chuck Smith said, "Ministers need the prayers of their flocks. With Paul I urge you to strive in your prayers for your pastors. We need your prayers and we thank God for them. Pastors are sustained by the power of the Spirit through the support of their congregations." Absolutely!

And Spurgeon gives to us this insight. He wrote, "Does it astonish you that a man so rich in grace as Paul should be asking prayers of these unknown saints? It need not astonish you; for it is the rule with the truly great to think most highly of others. In proportion as a man grows in grace he feels his dependence upon God, and, in a certain sense, his dependence upon God's people."

We have prayer meetings here at the church every Saturday morning at 8:00 am. We have women's prayer meetings on the first and third Tuesday's of every month. We have a phone list where you can pray over the people in this church and you can pray for the people on one page at a time. And you can pray any time of the day or night because God is waiting to hear from you!

You see, prayer does work folks; God hears and honors our prayers as John tells us, **"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."** I John 5:14-15.

Now God doesn't always answer our prayers as we would like them to be answered or in our time, but it is always for our best. And I believe God does answer all of our prayers.

Sometimes it is ***YES!*** Sometimes it is ***NO!*** And sometimes it is ***NOT YET!***

God has a plan; He has a purpose as John Courson tells us with this true story.

"I once read an article in the paper about a woman in Alaska who tried to call her sister in Idaho, but she mistakenly dialed a house in Vermont because she dialed Vermont's 802 area code rather than Idaho's 208 area code. The woman in Vermont who answered the call was, at that moment, suffering a severe heart attack. As a result, the woman in Alaska heard only a gasping voice on the other end of the line, saying, "Help me. Help me. Please, God, help me." The woman in Alaska was able to work with telephone operators and emergency personnel to save the Vermont woman's life."

When you are praying do you really think you are dialing the wrong number, or you are getting a busy signal or God has caller ID and won't answer the phone? Of course not, God is always waiting to hear from us and we as believers need to strive together in prayer, agonize together in prayer, it is that important!

Now in these verses Paul makes four prayer requests you might say, four things he wants the believers in Rome to be praying about as he is going to Jerusalem.

The first is found in verse 31 of Romans chapter 15, "**that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe.**"

Paul knew that there were those who would oppose him, the Jews would, and the message of Christ that he was bringing, and they might oppose to the point where it could become violent!

In fact, Paul understood where they were coming from because that is where he was at before he got saved! Thus, protection, deliverance from those that would oppose him, so the Gospel message can go forward!

The second prayer request is also found in verse 31 of Romans chapter 15, **“that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.”**

Paul wants them to pray for the believers in Jerusalem, the Jewish brethren, that they may receive this gift, this offering from Paul and the Gentile churches.

Why would they not receive it?

Because there are times when people are offended when others help them. They don't like charity you might say and yet, there are times when they must humble themselves and receive it with thanksgiving and that is what Paul wants the believers in Rome to pray for those in Jerusalem, to receive this gift!

The third prayer request is found in verse 32 of Romans chapter 15, **“that I may come to you with joy by the will of God.”**

Now his prayer is for the believers in Rome that he would be able to come to them with joy over the work that was done in Jerusalem and in the will of God. Paul's desire was to be led by the Lord and that should be our desire. Thus, Paul wanted them to be praying that the will of God would be done here.

And lastly, the fourth prayer request by Paul is also found in verse 32 of Romans chapter 15, **“may be refreshed together with you.”**

Ministry work was tough, it was draining, it was difficult, Paul became fatigued at times and thus, he wants the believers in Rome to pray for him that he would be refreshed when they came together! ***THE POWER OF PRAYER!***

VERSE 33

What a great way to close, having the God of peace fill our lives. Remember what we are told in Isaiah 26:3-4 we are told, **“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, For in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength.”**

Isaiah tells us that to enjoy that kind of peace our mind must be **“stayed”** on the Lord!

The Hebrew word is CAMAK, (saw-mak’) and it carries with it the idea of “propping up or to lean upon or take hold of . . . bear up, establish, uphold, lay, lean, lie hard, put, rest self, set self, stand fast, stay (self), sustain.”

So, what sustains your mind? What do you lay your mind upon? What upholds your mind? What does your mind stand fast upon? What is your mind established upon? What does your mind lean upon? To have this perfect peace your mind cannot occasionally come to the Lord; it has to be stayed on Him. And now you know why Satan loves to get our minds on *anything* except the **LORD!**

It is as Solomon said in Proverbs 3:5-6, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”** The word **“lean”** carries with it the same idea of propping up or leaning upon the Lord, resting in Him!

Now the name **“YAH”** is a contraction of the word **YAHWEH**. What I find interesting here in verse 4 and it is connected to God is this word **“everlasting.”**

This word can be translated ***“Rock of Ages.”***

I like that. The Rock of Ages is our strength and if we rest upon this Rock, we will not be shaken, we will not be moved! Never forget that!

As I begin to close this evening let me share with you this prayer from a Confederate soldier that goes like this:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
 I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
 I asked for health, that I might do greater things,
 I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
 I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
 I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
 I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
 I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
 I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
 I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
 I got nothing that I asked for,
 But everything I had hoped for.
 Almost despite myself,
 My unspoken prayers were answered.
 I am among all men, most richly blessed.

- Source Unknown

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 7:7-11, “**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. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**”

The idea is, don't give up, keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking because God desires to give to you those things that will help you to grow, he is not going to hold back!

As we close, let me restate the words of Paul as he ended this chapter, “**Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.**”