
Praying for Peace

Romans 15:30-33

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Introduction We have been thinking together about prayer in the New Testament. Our aim is to shape and spur our praying. We want to be a praying people. Not just for itself, but rather in the way the Bible is.

We opened by looking how Jesus laid the foundations for our praying in Matthew 6. The trajectory for our praying was set as Jesus gives us God's agenda for praying. We should be praying for God's concerns.

Pastor Dan picked up the series from 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 in helping us to pray with thanksgiving for people in our lives. Then he traversed Romans for us showing us the kind of praying Paul wanted of the people of God there. From Romans 15:1-6 we saw how we are to pray for unity when we are very diverse people. In Romans 15:7-13 we were shown how to pray in hope in the midst of welcoming one another in love. In Romans 16:25-27, we see how we are to pray for the gospel, that God would be pleased to give the obedience of faith to all the nations.

We hope, not only to shape and spur your praying, but to make it practical and concrete. So we long for you to be praying for requests like these:

Father, I give thanks for all the people in my life, especially for _____ that they will receive Your grace and thus glorify you.

Father, please help me to be one with _____ so that our differences in _____ may be an opportunity to love and serve one another.

Father, the God of hope, please fill _____ with joy and peace in believing so that they would, by the Spirit, abound in hope.

Father, may the true gospel revealed to the apostles and preached to us, go throughout the world so that all people groups may obey You by faith.

This is the way we ought to pray. We pray these things because we know the God we are praying to. Our confidence is grounded in His character and our motivation is fueled by His promises.

This brings us to this text this evening. May God be pleased to teach us why and how to pray for peace for one another.

The Plea for Prayer

(v.30-32)

Our lives and ministries must be shaped by clear, Biblically informed purpose statements, careful and flexible planning that relies on partnerships in prayer. This reliance on prayer keeps programs and processes from becoming mere technique. Paul must make plans, form partnerships and do ministry in a strategic way. But he is earnest in his plea for them to join in prayer for him. What Paul is appealing for here will be grounded in the simple request he will make in verse 33.

Its Heart Motivation

(v.30)

They *STRIVE* together in a partnership (v.30). Paul appeals for their partnership in the struggle of ministry through prayer. They may not be together now, but they can still be involved in the work now.

The motivation is grounded *IN GODWARD REASONS*. He appeals by the Lordship of Jesus and the love of the Spirit. Since we are brothers, this appeal is expected to have weight and force. This should cause us to sit up and take notice. The rule of Jesus and the relationship by the Spirit is supposed to move us. But does it? When you hear an appeal to you as Christians, an appeal grounded on the persons of the Trinity, does that stir you to say, "What do you want me to do" with a poise to do it? Sadly, often not. We even in simple ministry appeals here at the Chapel, often find you unmoved by appeals based on our brotherly relationship and our heavenly ruler.

The motivation is a challenge *IN A SHARED STRUGGLE*. There is a call here to prayer in our common struggle. His appeal resonates to them because the struggle by both is alike. They should be moved a sort of call to team work, a sense of esprit-de-corps. This is a great appeal. "Pray with me", Paul says, "because of God and to be a part of the team."

Its Ministry Direction

(v.31)

They pray for his *SAFETY AND SERVICE* (v.31). The partnership in prayer then identifies the real needs to be prayed over. The prayer is personal and practical without being a narrative of the particulars.

In personal safety, he wants them to pray for protection from unbelievers. Paul sees unbelievers as a real threat to his apostolic ministry. He uses the term to be delivered from, probably referring to his imprisonments and trials at their hands. We have so little experience of this that this petition simply does not ring true. But there are pioneer ministries in countries all over the world for whom we can pray like this. Pray that God will deliver them from unbelievers.

With effective service, he wants them to pray that his ministry will be received. He is headed up to Jerusalem. He is going to follow up on the gift gathered from the Gentile churches to assist the church at Jerusalem in their time of need. But he is very concerned that his ministry in a largely Jewish church there would be accepted. He, the apostle to the Gentiles, seeks prayer that his ministry will be effective everywhere, even among the Jews. This we can and ought to pray, not

just for ministry leaders, but for each person here who is serving Jesus. Pray that their ministry will be received.

Its Humble Expectation

(v.32)

Their prayer brings a mutual *SERVING* (v.32). Finally, relying on prayer means that we value serving others to the degree that being with people in ministry energizes and refreshes us.

He expects to be able to come to them *IN GOD'S WILL*. Paul is emphatic that everywhere and in every way he is subject to the will of God. He plans as best he can. He prays with his aims in mind. But, he is not trying to find the perfect will of God. He is moving forward in subjection to the providential will of God. So, all praying and all partnering submits to the Lord. While our desires may be strong and our prayers may be fervent, we are not bending God to our will. We must bend to His.

He expects to be able to be *WITH GOD'S PEOPLE*. He longs to come with them for reciprocal benefit. Their praying and partnering simply is the spill over from the great mutual joy and the spiritual refreshment of a weary servant of God. So his appeal to prayer, for partners to wrestle with him and for him comes to people his heart is entwined with. Beloved, he does not speak like this to the church at Galatia or at Corinth. It is the weight of those ministry challenges that makes the Romans so refreshing.

The Petition for Peace

(v.33)

In appealing for their working together and coming together, Paul is seeking oneness in peace. He has appealed to them to pray for him and his situation. Now he makes the simple request that makes up this sentence.

Rooted in the Person of God

What a simple but stunning phrase this is: "the God of peace." I would like for us to meditate on that together for a moment.

In His Essence

God in His inner being is an unchanging and ineffable calm. He is never stressed. His heart is never in turmoil. He never is anxious or in a quandary. He is never in an inner frenzy. His great inner being, His great essence, is ever at serene rest. Unlike us, God's peace fills Him with calm. God is the God of peace in Himself.

Among the Trinity

God among His persons is always at peace. There is never any disharmony among them nor differences that bring conflict. The God of peace is at peace with Himself. Never are the Father, Son nor Spirit in disharmony or disagreement. Never are there thoughts in discord. Ever and always there is a great sweet sense of unity, peace and harmony among the persons of the Godhead. God is the God of peace with Himself.

With His People

God has wrought peace with His people. He has made peace through the cross. Where His holiness and our sin were in conflict and thus caused us to be the enemies of God, He has made peace between us. Peace has come because the cross has satisfied and settled the wrath of God. His anger against sinners has been turned to peace with His people. Peace has come because the cross has reconciled and brought us back to God. We were estranged and distant from God. Now, by propitiation and reconciliation, God is at peace with us and we with Him. God is the God of peace with His people.

For His People

God has brought peace to His people. He has ministered peace to us. What a great thing that the inner calm of God, the harmony among His persons and the sweet peace between us and God is also given to be shared among His people. We can have His peace in us and among us. So God is the God of the peace He gives to His people and shares among His people.

Requesting the Presence of God

Now, may this God thought about in this way, be with them. This is the essence of his petition. May the God of peace be with you. May God be with you.

Does this mean that it is possible for God not to be with us? Is this a denial of the omnipresence of God? No, in the most basic sense, God is omnipresent and therefore is everywhere at all times. He is our ultimate environment. He is ever and always with us. Further, He has promised His church that He will be with us till the end of the age even though He is absent, being in heaven in His glorified body. So He is with us in the Spirit as we carry out the mission of the kingdom and the King.

So, what is being requested here? I sometimes hear people say, "Don't pray that God would be with someone. He always is." Well, what is Paul doing here? Doesn't he just say, "May God be with you?" Well, no, he says, "May the God of peace be with you." I think there is a very great difference. He is not praying for God Himself to come where He is not now. The answer to this prayer is not the arrival of the presence of God. The answer to this prayer is the experience and the expression of the peace of God. The prayer is saying, "May God be with you in His character as peace so that you genuinely know the peace of God."

This was needed at Rome. One of Paul's great concerns was that all the believers at Rome welcome one another in spite of all their differences and their diversity. With Jew and Gentile, formerly religious and formerly pagan, all coming together into the covenant community at Rome, they will need the presence of the God of peace so that they will be at peace with each other.

This is a very appropriate prayer for us here at the Chapel. We are a diverse lot in many ways. We are tackling some large and stressful projects may bring a lack of inner calm, disharmony among ourselves, conflict as we don't get what we want and a lack of peace. Brothers and sisters, God has been pleased to give us peace.

But we must not presume upon the past graces that brought peace. We must in faith believe and pray that God will be among us in a way that we experience the peace of God.

So the very presence of God among His people brings who He is to them and what He does for them. In other words, since it is being asked that the God *of peace* be with us, then that very quality will be ours when this prayer is answered. This means that when we pray that the God of peace is with us, then we are expecting the following. We are asking for each quality of God's peace to be ours. These are parallel to what it means for God to be the God of peace.

For Inner Calm

When the God of peace is with us then we will have a deep sense of inner calm and peace.

So we can pray for people who are in turmoil and distress that God will be with them in a way that they will experience peace. We can pray that God will calm them by His presence with them.

For Relational Harmony

When the God of peace is with us then we will be at peace with one another.

So, we can pray for people who are struggling in relationships at church, in the home, at work or school. We can pray that God will help them to be at peace. We can pray that God will so move in each life so as to bring about peace in their relationships.

For Vertical Reconciliation

When the God of peace is with us then we will be reconciled and at peace with a holy God.

We can pray for people to be reconciled to God. We are ministers of the reconciliation and we have the message of reconciliation. We also can pray that God will so move into unbelievers hearts and lives so that they will come to be at peace with God.

For Personal Ministry

When the God of peace is with us then we will minister peace to others.

We pray that we will be effective in bringing peace and calm to others. We can pray that God will so use us an instrument of His grace and peace so that when we listen to people and talk with people, peace is the effect. That does not mean that we are trying to simply pacify people. Sometimes, the only way to bring peace is to start with counsel, correction or even confrontation. Peace is something we should want and desire. But having peace and being at peace can also become a heart idol and we will sin to get that peace or sin when we don't. Let us then pray for ourselves and for others that God will be with us in a way so that in a multitude of means, peace is ministered.

As we close, let me remind of some lessons and give you some of petitions that you can pray in your praying. **Lessons**

Here are the lessons:

- When the God of peace is with us then we will have a deep sense of inner calm and peace.
- When the God of peace is with us then we will be at peace with one another.
- When the God of peace is with us then we will be reconciled and at peace with a holy God.
- When the God of peace is with us then we will minister peace to others.

And finally, three prayers to incorporate into your praying.

Father, be with _____ as their peace in the midst of (situation) _____. May they experience Your peace as You are present with them until you are pleased to work out Your will.

Father, be with _____ and _____ as they need your peace in their relationships. Help them to know how to experience and express Your peace so that they are at peace with one another and thus, bring You glory.

Father, give the grace of saving life to _____ so that they will be at peace with You and You will be the God of peace in them.

May we, in all our praying, be moved to pray by the Bible's truths and motivations and to pray like this, "May the God of peace be with you."