

# Be Eager to Preach the Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want you guys to open your copy of the Scriptures to the book of Romans. We are near the beginning of a series on Romans that I always assumed that I would put off and wait until I was wiser and more prepared to preach through this great book. And yet, here we are in Romans. No waiting. We're still in chapter 1 and this morning we're going to read verses 8-15. And so I want to ask you guys to stand with me this morning as we read God's Word together. The Apostle Paul writes, First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow, by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I'm under obligation, both the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Thank you for this word, Father.

Speak to us now, we ask in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. We live in a very sort of highly individualized society so that we even covet and highly value our individual rights and the rights of every individual to live and make decisions and go where he or she wants and do what he or she wants.

And there are certain parameters that we set for that. But on the whole, we still, as a culture, value, for the most part, the rights and powers of the individual to do things.

And yet, despite all of that, if you just look around at people, you will find that we're not as unique and individualistic as we would all like to think.

[ 2 : 26 ] In fact, one of the things that I've noticed about people is that those who most want to be seen as unique are the people who actually try the hardest to look like the unique group of people that they want to look like.

So yesterday, I was on the ferry on my way from Crystal Beach back to Galveston, heading home after our men's retreat. And I was by myself on the way home. Dylan rode with me on the way there.

But on the way back, I was by myself. He abandoned me and went with his brother. So I was on the ferry by myself. And I decided, you know, it's a little bit of a trip here.

There's nothing else to do. I'm just going to get out of the car. I'm just going to walk around and just see what kind of people are on this boat. I just want to see who's here. And you could always tell, you know, who belonged with which group of people.

You could, to a certain extent, almost pinpoint the cars that some people belonged to. So that even though it was, I don't know, probably 95, 96 degrees out there, nevertheless, there was still a group of people who were wearing all jeans and they all had various kinds of black t-shirts on.

[ 3 : 33 ] All of them. About five or six of them. All of them looked like in their late teens, early 20s. And I know they must have been burning up. And they probably all thought that they were unique and that they weren't wearing the beach attire that everybody else was wearing.

But they all looked like each other. They were all sort of grouped up. And they were all sort of standing together at the same area on the boat, looking at the same things and laughing about the same things. And then, you know, of course, there were other groups.

There were groups that were all wearing sort of their dresses. And then there were other groups that were wearing their beach attire. But everybody, you could kind of almost categorize folks who

were there on the boat. And so you could tell if they lived nearby or if they were on vacation. You could put people in their categories and in their groups. There were very few people on the ferry that day that you'd say, that guy, there's nobody else like him on the boat. He's unique. He's dressed in his own way and he's doing his own thing. Because we just tend to do that. We tend to lump together because God has created us in His image. And a part of being in God's image means that we are relational creatures.

[ 4 : 34 ] We are drawn and attracted to others. And so we group together. We huddle up. And one of the greatest blessings that God has given us in Christ is that He has not simply saved us and rescued us from our sins for us to then continue to wander alone in the world.

But He has called us to be a part of a body. He has called us to be united together in the church, in the body of Christ. And we can see here in this opening sort of thanksgiving that Paul gives in the book of Romans, Paul's great desire to establish a relationship with the Christians who were in Rome.

I mentioned last week that this was not a church. The church in Rome was not a church that the Apostle Paul himself had planted. He had not started this church. All of his other letters, with the exception of Colossians, all of his other letters were either written to churches or individuals. Churches that he had planted or individuals that he had personally discipled. Disciples. Romans and Colossians are the only books that Paul wrote that were written to churches that he did not start.

And so he has to establish a rapport with the Romans. He has to build up a relationship with them because he's planning to visit them. On his way to Spain, he wants to stop off in Rome and spend a good deal of time there with the Roman Christians.

[ 5 : 55 ] And as it turns out, he will travel to Rome and he will spend some time in Rome, but just not in the way that he thought. He's going to be shipped off to Rome as a prisoner.

He's going to spend time in Rome under house arrest. And he will get to know the Roman Christians as they serve and minister to him while he's under house arrest. But you can see here, before all that happens, that Paul has a great desire to establish a real strong relationship with them.

Notice what he says here in verse 9. God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow, by God's will, now at last I may succeed in coming to you.

And then he says down in verse 13, I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you. Paul wants to see them. He wants to get to know them. And so everything that Paul says here in this opening to the letter, especially in verses 8 through 15, are an expression of his desire to strengthen his bond with the Roman Christians.

So that I think that if we just think in terms of application, how can I take the words that Paul says here and draw out of them something practical for us to do?

[ 7 : 14 ] I think that we can see here in Paul's longing to build his relationship with the church in Rome, we can see instructions for how you and I can strengthen our bonds with one another here in the church.

How we can better serve one another, better help one another, and become a more Christ-honoring local church body. And so I want to ask a very simple question.

What can we glean out of this thanksgiving and prayer that will help you and I to be a healthier, to be a more Christ-honoring church?

How can we be a better church? And there's four things that I want us to draw out of this passage. I'll just list them all for you and then we'll begin to look at them. First of all, Paul begins by expressing his thanks and letting these Roman believers know that he constantly prays for them. And so one of the keys that we'll talk about in a few moments is prayer. We have got to constantly be praying for one another. And then he says in verse 11 that he longs to see them, that he may impart some spiritual gift to them.

[ 8 : 22 ] And then move down to verse 13, he wants to see them in order that he may reap a harvest among them. And then verse 15, he says that he's eager to preach the gospel to them. So four things.

He wants to pray for them. He wants to impart some spiritual gift to them. He wants to reap a harvest among them. And he wants to preach the gospel to them. Those are all things that we can

do with regard to one another.

Now we'll consider prayer last because I have some extra things I want to say about prayer. But I want us to look at these other three things in succession as they come in the letter. So take a look. Verse 11, I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. Paul wants to give them, to gift to them a spiritual gift.

Now that word gift can, it can have sort of a broad meaning. And it can just simply mean a free undeserved gift. In fact, it is built off the same root as the word grace.

[ 9 : 23 ] And of course, grace is God's unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor. And so the word gift here simply means a free gift. One that you don't earn. One that you don't deserve.

And many times throughout the New Testament, it has just sort of this broad meaning of a free gift by God's grace. And so you can just turn over a couple of pages in your Bible to chapter 6 and you'll see a well-known verse that uses this same word in that sort of broad sense to refer to God's gracious activity towards us, giving us free gifts.

Romans chapter 6, verse 23. Paul says that the wages of sin is death, but the, and here's the same word, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So here the gift, same word, here the gift is the grace of God that sets us free from the punishment that we deserve for our sins and gives to us freely, unearned, undeserved, eternal life.

Think about that for just a moment. That eternal life comes to us not by our own efforts, not by our own strivings, not by the list of things that we might compile that we have done so that we might somehow be worthy and deserving of eternal life.

[ 10 : 47 ] That's not how it works, Paul says. It's a free gift. It's undeserved. It's absolutely without cost to you. Christ Himself has paid the price for that gift.

It's simply free to all those who trust in Jesus. It's free. And many times that's all Paul means by this word. He simply means to highlight the gracious character of all that God gives to us.

But sometimes this word has a narrower sense, a narrower meaning. And we use the word gift in this way as well. Sometimes it refers to a special ability that someone has.

So we will say that someone is gifted at playing the piano. I mean, I marvel every week at the gifts that are present among those who play instruments up here and those who sing because I can't do that at all.

I mean, I'm absolutely terrible. I can't keep a beat to save my life, okay? I couldn't sit on this box. It looks simple. I mean, Mike, he just sits on a box and he just taps around, all right?

[ 11 : 51 ] That's what it looks like. That's not what it is. Because I can't do it. I couldn't keep a beat to save my life. If this church depended upon my ability to stay in rhythm, it would just be me, my wife, and my four kids, and that's it.

Everyone else would have already just been gone, okay? I can't do it. I can't carry a tune. I can't play an instrument. I can't do any of it. So I marvel at their gifts, at their abilities.

And many times in the New Testament, this word refers to that kind of a gift. And it still highlights God's grace because we receive those abilities from God through His grace.

And yet, they are special abilities that we have. And we can see this use of the word later on in the book of Romans. If you turn over to Romans chapter 12, you will see that Paul speaks of the grace given to him in verse 12.

He says in verse 3, By the grace given to me, I say to everyone, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has designed.

[ 12 : 57 ] For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we though many are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having gifts, there it is, there's the word.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace. So there's your connection with grace, not only by the word, but in the verse itself. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

Let us use them. If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, and so on. He lists these various gifts. So here, the word gift refers to a special ability that God grants by His grace to His people.

That's what He means by that. And I think that's probably the meaning that Paul intends in chapter 1. I think that Paul, when he says, I long to impart some spiritual gift, I think that he is referring in that more narrow sense of an ability.

Some special way in which you are able to serve the body of Christ and do things that apart from God's grace, you wouldn't be able to do it, but God supernaturally gives you the ability to do these things.

[14:09] Now, I think that that's Paul's intended meaning there because he couples with this word in Romans chapter 1, you notice the word spiritual. He adds that word to it.

And there is another place in Paul's writings where we see these same two words, spiritual and then grace gift or free gift in close proximity to each other.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians. I know I have you doing a lot of turning this morning. I apologize for that. But I want you to see this. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, which is a great chapter, dealing with these spiritual gifts.

And in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1, the version that I'm reading, the English Standard Version, begins by saying, now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

But actually the word there is simply the word spiritual. So we might translate this more literally. Now concerning spiritual things, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

[15:06] So we have the word spiritual that we see in Romans chapter 1. But then in verse 4, we have the same word gifts that we have in Romans chapter 1. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And the reason why most translations in verse 1 render it spiritual gifts is because they understand the spiritual things of verse 1 are the various gifts of verse 4.

So when Paul couples these terms together, spiritual and free gift, he means here in Romans 12, the abilities that God sovereignly grants to His people through the power of His Holy Spirit.

So in Romans chapter 1, when Paul says, I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, he means, I long to impart to you some special ability.

Now that doesn't solve the entire question of what he means by this. Because Paul may mean one of two things. He may mean on the one hand, that he longs through his authority as an apostle to lay hands on the Roman Christians and grant to them by his authority certain spiritual gifts.

[16:24] In fact, he speaks to Timothy this way. He speaks to Timothy and tells him to exercise the gift that he has through the laying on of my hands, Paul says. So Paul as an apostle was able to impart spiritual gifts to his disciple Timothy by laying on hands and praying for him.

So his meaning here might be, I want to come to you, Roman church, so that I can come, like I have done with others, lay my hands on you and literally impart to you through the power of the Spirit and my authority as an apostle, I want to give to you spiritual gifts.

It's possible that he may mean that, but I don't think that's exactly what he means here. I think that when Paul says, I want to impart to you some spiritual gift, I think he means, I want to use the gifts that I have to strengthen and encourage you.

Now there's a reason why I think that, because he clarifies his meaning in verse 12. Notice verse 12 begins with, that is. So he's clarifying what he said in verse 11. I want to impart a spiritual gift to you. That is, here's what I mean. That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

[17:38] So Paul has in mind here, not some event in which he gives gifts to others, but he has in mind here, the regular practice of Christians using the gifts that he has, him using his gifts as an apostle and teacher and preacher, and the Christians in Rome using the variety of gifts that the Spirit has given to them, so that they might mutually encourage and strengthen one another.

That's what Paul has in mind. And all of us, as members of the body of Christ, if you are a follower of Jesus and you've trusted in Christ, so that His Spirit now dwells within you, all of us can believe and trust that He will give us gifts, that He will enable us to have the ability through various means to encourage and strengthen one another.

And the example that we ought to follow here of the Apostle Paul is that we ought to be eager and ready and looking for opportunities to use the gifts that God has given to us to better other people in the body of Christ.

It used to be, and in some churches it still is the case, but especially maybe about 10 years ago and even 15 and 20 years ago, there was this trend within a lot of churches of taking these gift inventory and gift survey type tests.

Anybody ever taken one of those? You guys? Yeah, a few of you? Okay. I think I've done two or three of them, all right, throughout the years. And the idea was you answer all these questions and really they're very much modeled on sort of psychological testing.

[ 19 : 12 ] Have you ever done any tests to determine your psychological health or your intellectual aptitude? They're very sort of similar in that regard. And you would take this test, you would answer a bunch of questions, and then at the end of the test it would show you what your spiritual gifts were.

That was the idea behind it. And what was pushing that sort of thing was this desire, almost this obsession for a while, for everybody in the church to discover what their gift was.

So that they could say, this is my gift, this is what I do, and this is how I'm going to serve in the body of Christ. Now there were a couple of dangers with that. Number one is we were using a sort of man-centered, man-created means to discover gifts that are supernaturally given by the Spirit.

You would not, you would not be able, had you known me as a kid and as a teenager, you would not have been able to identify by my personality and by the kinds of answers that at that time I would have given to those sorts of tests, you would have never pegged me for a preacher.

You would not. I mean, I did start preaching at age 16, but that came as just sort of a sudden thing out of the blue, and I myself was even shocked that I could do that and that God would call me to do that because as a kid, in general, I was pretty quiet, and I, for the most part, kept to myself, played with my toys in my room.

[ 20 : 39 ] I wasn't always out front, wasn't always trying to get the attention, wasn't the one who wanted to lead everybody, that wasn't my personality in the least bit. And none of those gift inventories would have pegged me for a preacher.

So you cannot use those kinds of means to discover the supernatural working of God. But I think even more problematic with that approach was the fact that it caused people to become so concerned with identifying their spiritual gift that until they identified their spiritual gift, they didn't do anything in the church.

I mean, I don't know what my gift is. Someday I'm going to get around to taking that gift inventory or I'm going to go to that class on spiritual gifts and then I'll be equipped and ready and I'll know what God wants me to do in the church.

That's not the pattern that we find at all in the Apostle Paul's ministry in his life or in the kind of life that he encourages others to have within the body of Christ. You don't focus upon the gift that God is going to give you.

You focus upon the reason that he gives those gifts. And Paul makes it very clear here in Romans chapter 1. He says it in two ways. He wants to strengthen them and he wants mutual encouragement to result from the use of gifts.

[ 21 : 53 ] So that what we need to be concerned with is not figuring out our spiritual gifts. What we need to be focused upon within the body of Christ is finding ways to strengthen one another and encourage one another.

And in the course of strengthening others and encouraging others, you will find yourselves using the gifts that God has given you by His Spirit. You may never name that gift.

I mean, after all, the list of gifts in the New Testament are not exhaustive. God is free and able to give to people gifts that He has not listed here by name in the New Testament so that you may not ever be able to name and put out a list, here are my spiritual gifts.

And the Lord is not concerned that you be able to do that. He never gives us a command, identify your gifts. But over and over, He tells us to encourage one another, build one another up, edify one another.

Over and over, we are commanded to serve one another. And the focus ought to be the focus of the Apostle Paul. Using whatever gifts He has given us, whether we know what they are or not, using all of those gifts and aiming at the good of others within the body of Christ.

[ 23 : 04 ] This will change the way that we think about our engagement in the church. We will no longer be concerned about what someone else is doing or about whether or not I'll get a chance to do this kind of ministry.

Our concern will be, how can I strengthen my brother or sister? How can I encourage them when they need encouragement? This can change your marriage.

If both you and your spouse are believers and you begin to aim at the mutual encouragement and strengthening of one another, this will change the way that you view them and think about them. No longer are they there to meet your needs. You're there to serve and encourage them in whatever way you need to. This will change us as a church if we will embrace this approach of the Apostle Paul to serving other believers.

But that's not the only desire that he expresses here. He says something very similar down a couple other verses. He says that he wants to come to them in verse 13, in order that he may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

[ 24 : 13 ] Now literally what Paul says here is that he wants to have some fruit. So the King James Version is a little bit better translation on this verse. He desires to come to them so that he might have some fruit among them.

He wants gain among them. He wants to get something among them. And the thing that he wants to get is fruit. He wants to see fruit bearing. He wants to see good things coming out of other believers' lives because of his impact upon their lives.

He wants that fruit. He recognizes that among all the other nations, among the other Gentiles, in the other cities to where he has gone, he has seen great fruit abound where he has gone.

And he says, I want to come to you too. I want to come to Rome. And I want to serve and I want to strengthen and I want to encourage, but I also, I want some fruit among you. And it sounds to us almost selfish.

It sounds to us almost as if the Apostle Paul is in ministry for the stroking of his own ego. I want to get some fruit among you guys. I've gotten it everywhere else. Now I want to see something happen here because of what I do.

[ 25 : 27 ] I think that's to misunderstand the heart of the Apostle. He speaks about harvesting and fruit in 1 Corinthians as well where the people there were fussing and fighting with one another.

Some saying, well, I follow Apollos. And some were saying, well, I'm a follower of Paul. And other people were saying, I'm with Peter. And they were arguing over who was the best leader and which faction they belonged to in the church.

Paul's reply to that was, I came to Corinth. I planted some seeds. Apollos came behind me. He poured some water. He did some ministry there too. But at the end of the day, God caused the growth.

That's Paul's view on the bearing of fruit in the body of Christ. Oh, people do things. Preachers preach. Teachers teach. People serve.

People open their homes and use gifts of hospitality. People work with the children and do all sorts of things. Musicians play and singers sing. People do things in the church. But at the end of the day, God gives the growth.

[ 26 : 35 ] And because God gives the growth, God gets all the glory. So that when the Apostle Paul says, I want to come and I want to have some fruit among you, what he's saying is, I want to see it again.

I want to see God work through me to cause something to grow, to cause spiritual fruit to abound among you. And we ought to have that kind of mindset.

We ought to think to ourselves, it's not enough to just have the average sort of humdrum of daily life and church just kind of gets slotted into our daily life and we're kind of going along and we do church and we go on Sundays and occasionally we'll go to something else, an extra Bible study.

And that's a part of our lives, but that's it. We ought to be thinking differently about our involvement in the body of Christ. We ought to look at it as a field in which we get to work and we get to see fruit come from the work of our hands.

Nate and I planted a little bitty garden in our backyard this year. I mean, it's really small. It's like, I don't know, from here over to about here and then about three or four feet wide.

[ 27 : 38 ] It's really, really small. We planted a couple tomato plants, a couple jalapeno plants. My focus is clearly upon salsa. We put some, let's see, some other peppers. I don't know, bell peppers and I can't remember, cayenne peppers.

Thank you Nate, cayenne peppers. And then just for fun, just in case we, so we could say we planted something for Allie, we planted two little strawberry plants. Although the squirrels have eaten all the strawberries so far. It's pretty sad.

But, last week, we had about three ripe tomatoes and a ripe jalapeno. And we picked those things and we made some salsa.

Now, it wasn't quite enough we'd go buy a few tomatoes and some cilantro at the store, but we made salsa with the fruit that we had grown. Now, I make salsa all the, I made salsa last night. Sat in bed, ate salsa late at night. You know, I'll eat it all day long every day. That can be my meal. I don't even need the tacos. I just need salsa and chips and I'm good to go. But, the sweetest salsa I've had is the stuff I made from the fruit of our little bitty garden.

[ 28 : 43 ] It just was so, it tasted better to me. Why? Because I had, I had done something. I didn't make plants grow. I didn't do that at all. I mean, I've planted gardens before. Honestly, this is my fourth, my fourth attempt to grow tomatoes and it's the first time I've actually had tomatoes that I could use for anything.

I'm a terrible gardener. I have no illusions about the fact thinking, I grew those, I made them grow, I did everything I needed to do and I made my food. I have no illusions about that. I know that somehow, miraculously, God works and causes things to grow.

God produces fruit, but on the other hand, I can also legitimately say, I got some fruit. I have fruit from my garden. And it means something more.

It means something when you've done something and God has worked through you to produce fruit. And we ought to have a mindset within the church of saying, I want some fruit in the church. I want to be able to see at the end of the day or at the end of the week or the month or the year, I want to be able to look and see people have come to Christ, people have been baptized, children have been discipled, things have happened within the church and I had a part in that.

[ 29 : 57 ] I've got some fruit there. All glory goes to God because He did the real work, but I have a share in it. If we begin to think like that, it will transform the way in which we engage in the church.

No longer sort of judging the church or deciding whether or not we like a church based on what everybody else is doing. It's simply saying, I get to be a part.

I get to do something there. I get to be involved. I get to be a means by which God pours out His grace into His people. We ought to long have fruit.

Go to long for something else and this will be one of the primary means by which we obtain any fruit or by which we strengthen or encourage one another. It's the last thing that Paul says in this paragraph in verse 15.

He has said in verse 14 that he's a debtor to people. He's a debtor to Greeks. He's a debtor to barbarians. He's wise, foolish. And this is why he feels like he's in debt to them. He says, because he is eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

[ 31 : 07 ] Now, we sort of breeze past this verse very easily and think to ourselves, well, of course Paul's eager to preach the gospel. That's what he does. I mean, he's an apostle. He's a missionary. I mean, he says that he loves to go places where no one else is built.

He likes to go into a town where no Christian's ever been there and he preaches the gospel. That's what Paul does. But this is not primarily about evangelism here. This is not primarily about going out to the lost and preaching the gospel so that they might be saved.

Who does Paul want to preach to in this verse? I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Well, who are the ones in Rome to whom he's speaking? Look up at verse 7. This letter is addressed to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.

In verse 8, he began this paragraph by giving thanks to God because the faith of the Roman Christians is proclaimed throughout the world. He wants to preach the gospel to fellow believers in the church at Rome.

That's what he wants to do because the gospel is not merely the means by which God rescues us from our sins. It is also the means by which he works all good things in our lives.

[ 32 : 20 ] You want to have greater victory over practical sin in your life? Meditate upon the gospel. You want to be able to encourage somebody in the midst of their struggles?

Remind them of the gospel. We say all the time that we want to be a gospel-centered church. And by that, I don't simply mean that we want to be evangelistic.

That is true. We want to be evangelists. We want to share the gospel with the lost. But I mean far more than that when I say we want to be gospel-centered. I want the remedy for the problems in our marriages to be primarily the gospel.

I want the encouragement that helps you to wake up and go about your day and work hard at your job to be the gospel. I want the thing that motivates and energizes the way that you parent your children to be the gospel.

It should energize, motivate, and enable all that we do. And if we want to be a healthy church, if we want to encourage and strengthen one another, if we want to see fruit rising up in the midst of us, we have to be willing to preach the gospel to each other.

[ 33 : 28 ] I want you to preach the gospel to me. I want you to preach the gospel to one another. I want us at all times to have a gospel focus. Is there a problem going on?

What does the gospel have to say about that? Are you struggling in this area? What is the good news of Christ crucified for our sins and risen for eternal life? What does that have to say to the problem that I'm really wrestling with here?

I want the gospel to be the solution to every problem that we have. The whole gospel. A multifaceted message that embraces the entire plan of redemption and comes and speaks to us in our moments of need and doubt and frustration and discouragement.

We ought to be people who preach the gospel to other Christians. Other Christians in this room. And then beneath and behind even that lies prayer.

Really, this entire paragraph is uttered by Paul as a prayer to God on behalf of these Roman Christians. Verse 8, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in the whole world.

[ 34 : 46 ] For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers.

And everything that Paul expresses that he wants to do is a prayer because he's asking somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. And everything else that follows is Paul's desire expressed in the form of a prayer.

Paul is praying all these things. He's asking God to enable him to do these things. And God will answer this prayer not in the way that He expects of course. Paul certainly didn't expect to arrive at Rome in chains.

But he arrived in Rome and he did the ministry that he wanted to do. God got him there and God will do great things among us in unexpected ways if we start with prayer.

We did our men's retreat this weekend. Eight of us took off went down to Crystal Beach. We weren't roughing it at all. We had a nice beach house air conditioning.

[ 35 : 54 ] There's even a hot tub on the balcony but Eli was the only one girly enough to get into it. He's not here so I can say that. Y'all don't tell him I said that. He's bigger than me. But it was nice.

Andy came and taught us and our focus for the weekend was on prayer. It was on prayer. Because if there is anything that will bring about the working of God's power among us that will cause us to be able to have and use spiritual gifts within the body to encourage and strengthen one another to obtain fruit within the body of Christ and then motivate us and empower us to preach the gospel to one another and even to others outside.

If there's anything that will bring the power of God to bear so that we might do those things it is prayer. No church prays enough. No Christian prays enough.

That's true. So I'm not going to harp on you about not praying enough. But I do want to share with you one thing that Andy shared with us over the weekend that really I think kind of hit us all.

We started off the first Bible study asking why do we pray? Why should it? If God is a sovereign God then why do we pray? And he gave a wonderful answer to that. We had other answers. We were like well we're prideful well we're disobedient and all those were true answers to the next question of why don't we pray?

[ 37 : 24 ] That was the significant question. Why do we pray? And then why don't we pray? And the answer that he gave us gave to that question was was more helpful than almost anything else that I heard over the weekend.

And his answer you can see hinted at in the book of Romans. You can see it for instance in chapter 5 if you turn over there. Why don't we pray? Romans chapter 5 verse 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

If we understand and see ourselves as having formerly been enemies of God and now having been reconciled to God a way made for us to obtain access to him through the death of his Son why

would we not pray?

Turn over one more verse I want to share with you that helps us to see this answer to this question. Why don't we pray? Hebrews chapter 10 Hebrews chapter 10 speaks of Christ's sacrifice on the cross better than all the Old Testament sacrifices once for all sacrifice and in verses 19 and 20 the writer of Hebrews says therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places just pause there we could reword this to say since we have the confidence to enter into the presence of God God or we could even stretch it and say since we have the confidence to dare to speak to God in prayer that's really what this is about coming into God's presence no longer blocked out by the great curtain that separated the people from the presence of God and the holy of holies but now access granted he says since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way that he has opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh reconciliation entrance into the holy place coming into the presence of God were obtained for us by the blood and body of Jesus spilled out and broken upon the cross it costs a lot for you to be able to pray it costs a whole lot and the reason that we don't pray is because we don't value the price that was paid to enable us to pray shorten that and make it easy to remember we don't pray because we don't value the price that was paid that's why that's ultimately why we don't pray no amount of obstinance or disobedience would be able to overcome a clear knowledge and thanksgiving and valuing of the cost of what it takes to enable us to come into

God's presence and offer up our prayers no amount of disobedience would overcome the gratitude that would move you into God's presence if we would but meditate upon it and value the price that was paid it took the sacrifice of God's son so that he might become a mediator and a faithful high priest so that he might carry our prayers to his father it took a high high high price for you and I to even be able to offer up effective prayers to God the father and if we would but value the cost we would be a praying people still wouldn't pray as much as we ought individually or corporately oh but we would pray often and we would pray fervently and we would pray deeply and all the things that we long to see

[ 41 : 36 ] God do among us all the mutual encouragement and strengthening all the fruit bearing all the gospel proclamation that we long to see would happen because God answers the prayers of his people because those prayers were bought with the blood of his son let's pray for to to to to to to!