

(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; – One of the most serious things we can ask of one another is prayer. What we are asking our brethren to do is go before God on our behalf. This request is not to be taken lightly. Paul qualifies it with ***"for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit."*** He takes great care to ask brethren, those who believe in the same God, who have the one true Mediator, Christ the Lord our Righteousness, those who are washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness and who have been born again by the Holy Spirit as revealed by their faith and love, to pray for and with him. It is God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit who bears witness with our spirits that Christ has already satisfied all the conditions of our salvation and that we are children of God. This incites us to pray unto God our Father. This love has not been shed abroad in the hearts of unbelievers. Therefore, to ask an unbeliever to pray for us is to ask him to entreat on our behalf unto a false god upon false grounds. It is to speak peace to him and encourage him in active idolatry. So, Paul desires their prayers ***"for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake,"*** as that which is pleasing to our Lord and grounded upon His finished work (***Heb. 4:14-16***). He desires their prayers ***"for the love of the Spirit,"*** i.e., from the motive of sincere love that believers have for Christ and for one another.

This also shows that Paul knew that prayer was an instrumental means for our use by which God accomplishes His sovereign purpose and blesses us through Christ. People tend to think of prayer as a means of changing God's mind or getting Him to do something for us. Prayer does not change God's mind. It is seeking the mind and will of God - ***"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"*** (***Matt. 6:10***). Believers are to prayer as an act of worship, an expression of total dependence upon God and an evidence of humility before God and faith in Christ.

(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; – Many Jews in Judea rejected the Gospel and were ready to accuse and attack Paul when he returned. Paul being aware of the possible dangers (***Acts 20:22-24***), he asks these brethren to pray for his safety so that he could complete the mission the Lord had give him. Paul knew that God's will would be done, but he also knew that it was God's will for him to express his faith in Christ by seeking to pray and seeking his brethren to pray for him. Paul was well aware of the ***"offence of the cross"*** (***Gal. 5:11; cf., John 3:19-20; 16:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:18***), and man's natural hatred of the truth of God's grace in Christ. He also knew that God would bring His elect people to know the glories of Christ and salvation based on His blood and righteousness in spite of all opposition (***2 Tim. 2:8-10***). Paul's prayer was answered in that he was delivered from death in Jerusalem but not from imprisonment.

Paul also requested prayer that the believing Jews in Jerusalem would accept the gifts from their Gentile brethren. He knew that even among Jewish believers, especially those in Jerusalem, there were still many prejudices against Gentiles. He thought that the Jewish believers might have some reservations about taking money and gifts from Gentile believers. These Jewish believers had to be taught the sinfulness of such prejudices against Gentiles, and they had to be convinced by the Holy Spirit of this truth so as to see that in Christ Jesus ***"there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian,***

bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11). These are some of the grave clothes that have to be removed from believers as we grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ.

(15:32) - THAT I MAY COME UNTO YOU WITH JOY BY THE WILL OF GOD, AND MAY WITH YOU BE REFRESHED. - Paul asked them to pray also that God would provide a way, according to His will, for him to come to Rome and experience firsthand the “***joy***” and refreshing of their fellowship. He looked beyond the possible danger of going to Jerusalem and toward the joy of his meeting with Christians at Rome. Paul's desire was to go to Rome and share in that joy that they would experience when both weak and strong believers bowed to God's testimony and rejoiced in the fellowship of God's grace in Christ Jesus. It is a time of joy when believers come together in love, neither judging one another based on false evidences, nor personal convictions, preferences, nor prejudices, but seeking each other's happiness and growth in the grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

(15:33) - NOW THE GOD OF PEACE BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN - Paul reminds them of the certainty of their salvation in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His shed blood and righteousness imputed. This is true peace with God as God Himself is the “***God of peace.***” God is now and always will be the God of peace towards His children in Christ. This is encouragement for God's people that only comes by HIS grace and HIS Word of truth. This peace with God we have and enjoy through the Lord Jesus Christ is the both the foundation and motivation for our peace with one another, Jew and Gentile, as members of ONE body, ONE family, under ONE Lord, by ONE Spirit, and in ONE truth, the Gospel of peace through Christ (***Eph. 2:11-14; Php. 4:7.***)