



Ministry in the Will of God Part 4

March 15, 2026 Romans 15:22-33

(There is now a “sermon only” video available on YouTube)

And you want to turn in response to that prayer, I trust, to Romans chapter 15. Romans chapter 15. We have been taking a look the last several weeks at verses 22 through 33 in this particular portion of God's Word. And as we have seen, it is really somewhat of a narrative, if you will, of the plans that Paul has on his heart, the things that the Apostle Paul wants to do. But it is loaded with key insights in what life and ministry in the will of God looks like. And we said week in and week out, the key that unlocking that is a little phrase that's found in verse 32, where he says, ***I long to come to you***, excuse me, verse, yeah, verse 32, ***by the will of God***, by the will of God. The whole life and ministry of the Apostle Paul was wrapped up in doing the will of God, just to bring to your remembrance again.

By the way, I see analogies before I do that, between Paul and David. It's striking sometimes, the analogy between the two. One of the reasons why David is described as a man after God's own heart is because he longed to do the will of God. Psalm 40:8, David says, ***I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yes, Thy law is within my heart***. That's actually a messianic statement. In Hebrews chapter 10:5-7, it says, ***Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,)(Messiah) to do thy will, O God***. Doing the will of God was on Paul's heart, it was on David's heart, it was on Jesus' heart. And I think, I know I have. Repeatedly, Paul is hitting the will of God, the will of God, the will of God. 1 Corinthians, ***an apostle by the will of God***. He starts out 2 Corinthians that way, Galatians that way, Ephesians that way, ***Paul, called to be an apostle by the will of God***. Colossians, he says it a couple of times. 2 Timothy, ***by the will of God***. He gets knocked down on the Damascus Road. It was the very second question out of his mouth, what would you have me do, O Lord? He gets deputized, if you will,



to go out as a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles. In Acts 13, along with Barnabas, and what's it say in Acts 22:14? Ananias comes and tells him, "**The God of our fathers has appointed you,**" Paul, "**to know His will, and to see the Righteous One** (referring to Christ) **and to hear an utterance from His mouth.**" Paul went anxiously, confidently, boldly, through what you and I would describe as hell on earth, repeatedly, because he knew he was in the very center of the will of God. And that is why this is absolutely so critical, because when you know you are in the center of the will of God, there are unbelievable spiritual blessings. There is a calmness. There is an assurance. There is an invincibility, if you will, that simply is supernatural, and it will affect every area of your life. Even this book, when Paul writes Romans, in Romans 1:10, what's he say? Quote, I want to come to you, and I will come to you **by the will of God.** The high point of spiritual commitment in the book of Romans, again, is Romans 12:1 and 2, and what's it say there in verse 2? **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may know and may prove what, what? What is that good, and acceptable, and perfect,** here it comes, **will of God.** It's the whole role of a Christian life is to know and to do the will of God.

On another occasion, Paul talks about the gift that the Macedonians gave out of their poverty. Remember I said he's going around collecting this financial gift, and he's got this priority of taking it back and giving it to the Jewish saints primarily, who are in poverty in Jerusalem. And he says in 2 Corinthians 8:5, this money had been given to him **by the will of God.** In Ephesians 6:6, he calls on Christians to do the will of God from the heart. In Ephesians 5:17, he prays for his own disciples in Colossians 1:9 as well, to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's will. He says his friend and fellow ministry mate Epaphras in the same epistle in Colossians 4:12, prayed continually for Christians to be perfect and complete in all the will of God. On and on and on. Paul, David, Jesus, Peter, 1 Peter 4:2, no longer live in the flesh to lust,



but live in the will of God. The apostle John, 1 John 2:17, talking about believers, ***he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.***

Believers are even described as those who do the will of God. So the question becomes, okay, what does that mean? And that is what Paul has been implicitly unpacking for us in this section of the book of Romans.

Now, I want to repeat something I said last week because I think I, from one response I got, I may have caused a little bit of confusion. There's three dimensions, like I said last week, to the will of God.

- There's the sovereign will of God. That's His, and that for the most part, not all, not completely, but for the most part, a lot of it at least, is revealed already in Scripture. That's the flow of history. That's the end result of mankind. That's where world history is going and so forth. That is unalterable, not changing, going to happen. It's the sovereign will of God.
- Now, there was a second aspect of the will of God that we refer to as the moral will of God, best expressed in the Decalogue. Don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal, don't commit adultery, don't have false gods before you, and so forth. That's also completely revealed in Scripture, but is not necessarily fulfilled because you and I sometimes violate the moral law of God.

So you got the sovereign will of God revealed for the most part in Scripture, and it's going to get perfectly done. You got the moral will of God, which is his moral character and his desires, but an individual believer's life may or may not get done. An individual non-believer's life may or may not get done.



- And then you've got the personal, perfect will of God for your individual life. And that, of course, is not revealed in Scripture. That's where all of the things that Paul is unpacking for us in this section of Romans come into play. That's where you strive to have a focus and have a precision and to sense the good pleasure of God in your life calling, in your ministry, in your vocational calling, whatever it might be, in your relationships, in your parenting, in your being married, in your being single, in your work, in your social activities, etc. The perfect will of God is played out in your life, but it's not written down anywhere. It will be carried out. How do I carry out? How do I discern it? That is some of the things that Paul is giving us these characteristics for.

That's what Paul is focusing on in this section of Romans 15. He's talking about how you discern you're in the center of God's will and how you get in the center of God's will. The characteristics of a life and ministry that is in the center of God's will. And that's why we've been unpacking.

Now, here's where I think I made a little bit of a mistake. You may or may not obey the word of God. And therefore, you may or may not follow certain things. But the sovereign will of God and His moral law intersects, through providence, with your personal will He has for your life. And while you make real decisions, they have real consequences. We're not marionettes on strings. We're not robots. However, that does not mean that God is not sovereignly in ultimate control of all of it; even every detail of your life and mine. Now, wait a minute. I make decisions. I need to pray. I can violate the moral law of God. I can commit sin. I can do things right. I can read my Bible, not read my Bible, get wisdom, not get wisdom, make "a mistake" from my perspective. And yet, God is still sovereignly in control. And not one thing is going to happen by accident. And yet, I'm not a marionette. I'm not a puppet. I do make real decisions.



My prayers really count. My decisions really count. My yeses count. My noes count. My does count. My do nots count. How in the world does that work? How could that possibly be? I want to be very clear with the answer. I don't have the slightest idea. That is clearly, however, what the Word of God teaches. And that's the point. Obey the Word of God. Go with the Word of God. He says you're to have a precision. You're to have a focus. Verse 22, he says we were hindered. When you do that, you're trusting we saw all this, in the providence of Almighty God. We saw that verses 23 and 24 of Romans 15, he had plans. The mere fact that you're focusing and you're doing and you're sensing and you're praying about what God gives you, what you think is God's good pleasure on your life, and the mere fact that you're going to trust in God's sovereign providential dealing in your life doesn't mean we don't plan. Let all things be done decently in good order. Remember, we went through all those verses. What king sits down, goes to battle, doesn't count the cost, yada, yada, yada. We went through all that. As a matter of fact, as we pointed out again last week, you're planning, having dreams, having goals, having desires. Having those is often used by God to let you see and be reassured that He's working in your life providentially because you see Him change certain things. You hear that phrase, every time God closes a door, He seems to open a window. What's that mean? It's talking about the providence of God, how He orchestrates circumstances from world events in the big stage to the world events at your kitchen table. He's orchestrating it all to direct you in doing the perfect will that He has for your life.

In doing so, in having those plans, we saw a fourth thing that God insists we do. He insists that we take care of the priorities that we have right now. Yes, you have goals. Yes, you have dreams. Yes, you're working hopefully towards a plan to give God glory and to do what He's called you to do in every venue of your life. But some things, because of the circumstances you orchestrated, the debt you got when you were in college, the family that He's blessed you



with or not, and so forth, you've got situations going on where the Word of God makes it clear you've got some priorities. And while you've got this plan, while you're striving to do these things, you may get "held up" in pursuing one aspect of it because you've got to deal with a priority. Where are you getting this, John? That's what I kept talking about when he says he gets this collection. He's been collecting for these poorer, primarily believers in Christ who are Jews, ethnically Jews, back in Jerusalem. He's been collecting this money and he wants to take this money back because remember we saw that passage in Galatians where he was originally ordained and they said to him, okay, you go out, you be the apostle to the Gentiles, but guess what? This thing that God's laid on your heart, he's laid on our hearts as well. So we're going to pray over you, Paul. We're going to put our hands on you. We're going to ordain you as an apostle to the Gentiles as the Lord has called you, but don't you forget the poor back in Jerusalem. So Paul says, I want to go to Spain. I want to go a thousand miles this way. Excuse me, this way. I want to go a thousand miles this way and I'm going to go through Rome and Italy on my way to get to Spain so that you people in Rome that I'm writing to can help me on my way to Spain. But, but, I'm going a thousand miles in the other direction first because I got to take this money back to these Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Why? Because it's a priority. Why is it such a priority? Because number one, God laid it on my heart and told me that I needed to do it. Number two, I care about the unity of the church. And you know what? The conversation I had with Lia Fusaro, ethnically Jewish, comes out of a Jewish background, had this very conversation this morning. She's talking about the struggles that she had early on and how Jim as a Gentile, as her husband early on, didn't really appreciate a lot of the struggles it was for a Jew to come to Christ, to believe in his own Messiah and the struggle. And so the Jews in Paul's day in Jerusalem are struggling the same way. Remember, they had problems going, oy vey, I don't even know if these Gentiles should be a part of this thing. You mean the



Gentile dogs, the goyim, are going to be a part of this thing? That was offensive to them. And so Paul is going to take this money, primarily from Gentiles, and he's going to take it to these Jews and say, look, salvation has come to the Gentiles. They're a part of this. And look at the love that they're showing back. And therefore, what? It breaks down that wall of partition. It causes for unity in the church. There's no more Jew or Gentile, bond slave or free, male or female, spiritually speaking. We're one in Christ. And here's an example of it. And so it meets their physical needs financially. It meets a spiritual need in unity of the church because he knows that the mothership, the church in Jerusalem, has got to be strong and unified to further in the way he wants to further it to the glory of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So we saw all of that going on. And you have, now, interestingly enough, last week after the service, a woman came up to me. I don't even know if she's here now, but she came up to me and she said, you have no idea how thankful I am for what you shared, this part I just shared, about making priorities, doing what you got to do now, even though you have future dreams. She says, I'm a teacher and I've got an age level of students and my work and that aspect of my vocation and my calling is coming to an end at the end of May. And she said, you know, there's a real tendency in my heart and my mind to be out there past May. And, but she says, after I heard what was shared from the Word of God today, I realized I got a priority now. I got a stewardship responsibility now. I can't worry about June 1. I have children that are relying upon me now and I need to finish strong now.

Now, let me just show you how I just said the providence of God, the sovereign will of God intersects with your individual will. That was a huge blessing to me when she said that. Why? Because, if you recall, I got out of sync with my notes. I even confessed it to you last week. I was way ahead of where I was going to be. I wasn't going to share that point till today. But she needed to hear it last week. So, in her personal will for her life, a sovereign God



orchestrated the preacher's message so that she would hear the Word of God when she was here, obviously, and had to hear it at a time when she needed to hear it. And it blessed me because I, well, there's a classic example of God overruling "my mistake" for His glorious purposes to get what He wanted to accomplish. And therefore, there are no mistakes with God.

Okay. So, you've got those points. And here's another one. Verse 29. This is where we stuck our toe in last week. Verse 29 of Romans 15. He says, and ***I know***, you believers in Rome, ***that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*** Let me give you the Politan translation of that. What he's really saying is this: I know I'm going to be blessed to the max whenever I get there. Now, how could he possibly say that? We said this last time. How can you be so sure, Paul, was my question? And the answer is simply this. Because he'd lived up to that point in time, basically, an obedient life. And he saw how God blesses an obedient life. An obedient spiritual life always will be in the place of God's maximum blessing.

One of the greatest things, maybe the primary biggest thing, I can ever do standing behind this pulpit expounding God's Word is to preach to my own soul and at the same time share it with all you, the requirement, the necessity, the joy, and the unbelievable blessing you will have by obeying the Word of God. Absolutely. The obedient life is ut bprosperous life. That's the "P" I wanted to use in our outline, our next "P", prosperity or prosperous. Not name it and claim it, not health, wealth, prosperity. We're talking about spiritual prosperity, the things that have eternal value, the things that last. And I gave you a bunch of scriptures on that, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 3:12-14, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and so forth. And again, not just in heaven, although that's the primary residence of where those future blessings will be, but as I said earlier, blessings in this life. Think about that. I don't know where I'm going to be. I don't know if I'm going to make it to Rome or not. I don't know if I'm going to make it to Spain



or not. I don't know where I'm going to be tomorrow, but I know one thing. I'm going to be blessed to the max no matter where I am. How could you possibly say that? Because I'm being obedient to the will of God. And it's just an unbelievable way to live. It's the key to an obedient life. And again, like I said, it's not positive or possibility thinking. It's not name it and claim it. It's obey the Word of God and watch Him bless you. James 1:22. ***But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...*** And for you who know to do good and don't do it to you, he says, ***it is sin.*** James 4:17.

I love this quote by Spurgeon on obedience. In case you're wondering, what part of the sermon is he camping on now? It's the joy and the blessing and the requirement and the encouragement to be obedient to the Word of God in every area of your life. Listen to Spurgeon: *It's a very shocking thing, but I've known the case of a man - I hope a Christian man - knowing that such-and-such a thing is the right thing to do, yet not attending to it, but saying that he was praying about it. He wanted it to be "brought home" to his conscience, so he said.* Spurgeon goes on, *all I can say about such conduct is that it is a kind of rebellion against God, a shameful piece of hypocrisy, pretending to honor God in one duty while you know you are neglecting another.* To pray about what God clearly demands is sinful hypocrisy. Just do it. Do what the Word of [God tells you]. You're going through a hard time right now. Maybe it's a financially hard time. Maybe it's a relationally hard time. Maybe it's in your marriage. Maybe it's some other aspect of the family. Maybe it's work. I don't know, but I know one thing: I don't care what it is, just obey the Word of God and watch Him bless your life.

I love one child's definition of an elevator: *I go into this little room and the upstairs comes down.* I thought about it. That's the perfect definition of an obedient Christian's life. We go into that little narrow way of obedience to the Word of God and the blessings of heaven come down. Paul knew that. He knew that. One commentator said this: *Prosperity in the spiritual*



sense is the mark of ministry in the will of God. Not necessarily larger crowds. Not necessarily greater popularity or reputation. It doesn't necessarily mean that the publisher is going to print your book. It doesn't necessarily mean that your church is going to double in the first six months or at any other time. It doesn't necessarily mean that people are going to crowd in to hear you. That they're going to raise your salary. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to become well known. It doesn't necessarily mean there are going to be a lot of folks saved. It doesn't necessarily mean you're going to build a great ministry long remembered. I'll tell you what it does mean, he says, it does mean that in the spiritual dimension between you and God, you will be blessed. That's what it's all about. Prosperity, true riches, spiritual riches. Paul's joy was never tied to his circumstance. It was never tied to the occasion. His joy was tied to his obedience. I love that. Absolutely love that.

Nobody says it as well as Charles Spurgeon. A couple more from the ministry, the pen, the mind of a wonderful man of God. Spurgeon on obedience says this. I hope this encourages your soul as much as it did mine. I shared this with Teri just this morning. Spurgeon says: *If we do as God commands and do not seem to succeed, it is no fault of ours. Failure itself is success as long as we don't fail to obey.* He goes on. *We can win "Well done, good and faithful servant."* It doesn't say, he says, *"Well done, good and successful servant"*, it says, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* He says, because it's not in our power to be a successful servant. Claire Kesto, that's our conversation walking in the door right here this morning, wherever you are. It's not in our power to be successful servants. And he says, *and we will not be held responsible for it.* The requirements of a steward is that he or she be found faithful. Again, to quote our friend Warren Wiersbe, we are not in the manufacturing business. We're distributors. We're distributors. Just be faithful. Obey the word of God. Give an answer for the truth that is within you.



One man put it this way: *Do what the Lord bids you, where he bids you, as he bids you, as long as he bids you, and do it at once. Again, selective obedience is not obedience. Selective obedience is merely convenience.* Nate Saint, one of the five missionaries who was killed by the Auca Indians, along with Jim Elliott and Roger Udarian and others, he had a great line. He said, I finally came, my life did not change, he says, until I came to grips with the idea that, *obedience is not a momentary option... it is a die-cast decision made beforehand.*

You know, when you make up your mind to obey the word of God, now, here, right now, before you ever walk out those doors, now, in your heart of hearts, you say, God, forgive me for the life I've lived to this point. I see massive areas of selective obedience to Your word instead of complete obedience to Your word. I want to be in the center of blessing. I want my life to be a testimony to Your glory. I want to be used by You. And right now, by your grace, enable me to make that commitment.

Aretta Loving, Teri. Aretta Loving was a Wycliffe missionary. She lived next door to a five-year-old boy named Jimmy. And Jimmy actually endeared himself to her because her name was Aretta, A-R-E-T-T-A is her first name. Aretta, last name Loving. And many people obviously would call her Aretta, or they'd call her Mrs. Loving. But Jimmy never did that. He just called her Loving, as if it was her first name. "Hi, Loving." And that just sort of endeared Jimmy to her. One day, she's washing the breakfast dishes in the kitchen sink, looks out the screen window on the back porch, in the back, in the sidewalk, and she sees Jimmy walking towards her. And he says, "I'm coming to see you, Loving!" She had just painted the rails on the steps leading up to the back porch. And she yells out to him, "No, Jimmy, use the front door. Don't come up the back steps. I just painted the rails." Jimmy yells back, "It's okay, Loving. I'll be careful." She goes, "No, Jimmy, don't. I appreciate that. But use the front door." And he's getting dangerously close to the rails and the steps. And he goes, "Oh, it's okay,



Loving. I'll be careful." And finally, in a moment of panic, knowing his tendency to mess everything up, as he's almost to the point of putting his feet on the first step, she goes, she yells out, "Stop, Jimmy! I don't want your carefulness. I want your obedience." With that, Jimmy said, "Okay, Loving." And he went around to the front door. Aretta Loving says, "As soon as those words came out of my mouth, 'I don't want your carefulness. I want your obedience.'" She said, "I immediately thought of the words in 1 Samuel 15:22-23, where Samuel says to Saul, to obey is better than sacrifice." What did David say at the end of Psalm 51? ***The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart...*** In other words, obedience, ***a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*** God doesn't want our carefulness. He wants our obedience.

Well, come on, John, what's the practical application of that? I'll tell you one. Bad company corrupts good morals. You got relationships in your life that you know you shouldn't have. And you know what you're saying? I'll be careful. God doesn't say be careful. God says, obey my word. And while I look over directly at the youth, I can look at the gray heads as well. It applies all across the board. God does not want our carefulness. He wants our obedience.

Francis Xavier, in a hymn, 17th century hymn, put it this way. It's called, *My God, I Love Thee*. You can obey Him for the reward. You can obey Him because He's going to punish you. You can just obey Him because you love him. He is entitled, *My God, I Love Thee*. He put it this way. *My God, I love thee, not because I hope for heaven thereby, nor yet because who love Thee not must burn eternally. Thou, O my Jesus, thou didst me upon the cross embrace. For me didst bear the nails and spear and manifold disgrace and griefs and torments numberless and sweat of agony and death itself and all for me who was thine enemy. Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ, should I not love thee well, not for the sake of winning heaven or of escaping hell, not with the hope of gaining ought, not seeking a reward, but as Thyself has loved me, O ever loving Lord.*



And then he concludes with this, *even so I love Thee and will love Thee and in thy praise will sing because thou art my loving God and my eternal King.*

Do you know that that is exactly why lordship is a critical part of the salvation experience? What's lordship mean? It means obedience to Christ. And what's the very first thing He says? Repent and believe. And if you're not obedient to the commands of Christ, you won't do that. And the start and the continuation and the finish of everything is just that. Obey, obey, obey.

Your life should have a precision. It should rest in the providence of Almighty God. It should definitely involve your plans and your desires and your dreams and your goals. It should make sure that you're focusing on the things that you have to make a priority now according to God's will for your life. And there's a prosperity that comes with it. A spiritual prosperity, riches and blessing that come because you are in the very center of the will of God. The simple fact of the matter is I love you people and I know you love Teri and myself and I want what's best for Teri and me and I want what's best for you. And you, unless you're out of your mind, you have to want what's best for you. And God says, I'll look, you get into the elevator of obedience to My will, obedience to My word. Don't say you love Me if you don't obey My commandments. But if you love Me, obey My commandments and I'll show you real love. I'll literally bring down a heaven-full of manifold blessings on your life. New car, new house, better job, great health. No, not necessarily. But the things that have eternal value, the things that forever and ever and ever and ever you will relish in, enjoy and praise God for His grace and mercy that He enabled you to do it; to see His truth and to obey it by His grace. Those things will be ours forever. For there is an inheritance reserved in heaven for you, even though now for a little while your life and mine might be distressed, might be cut upon by various trials, knowing that such trials and such perseverance are the proving and the



perfecting of your faith, are driving you through that narrow way of the will of God for your life, and therefore leading to the ultimate blessing.

As the Hone family comes to lead us in our last aspect of this hour and a half of worship, join me in a word of prayer. By God's will, we'll be privileged to pick up here on some additional points next week.

Father, thank You for this portion of Your sacred writ. Thank You for impressing upon our hearts this desire of Yours to want us to obey because You have this desire to want to bless us. Father, Your servant Paul knew that. He could sit there and write and say, whenever I do get to come to you, I know I will have the maximum blessing of Christ. Lord, we know that Your servant ultimately does get to Rome, but he doesn't get there the way he thought. Your sovereign providential dealing causes him to end up in Rome a few years later as a prisoner in chains. And that was a part of Your plan as well. And while he had plans and dreams and a desire to take Your gospel all the way to Spain, we, as far as we know, he never made it. That was not Your perfect plan for his life. Father, we trust in Your sovereign providence in each one of our lives. We pray, Father, that You will give us a wisdom, a discernment, a passion, a zeal, an enablement, a discerning grace to clearly know Your perfect will for our life moment by moment each day we walk this earthly walk, and to continue to intersect our life with Your sovereign providence directing us, directing us whithersoever You would have us go. Father, in that manner we know, at the end of our life, we'll be able to look back and say, You, Jesus, led me all the way for the glory of the Father and for the eternal blessing on my soul. We thank You for that truth, and we pray individually and corporately as a church, that prayer and request to You this hour in the matchless name of Yourself, in the person of Jesus, our Christ. And just as we did at the start, all of God's redeemed people joined in unison by saying, Amen and Amen.

