



Ministry in the Will of God Part 5

March 22, 2026 Romans 15:22-33

(Video of the sermon only is now available on YouTube)

Romans Chapter 15:22-33. Another look at this portion of scripture. Another look at a passage of the word of God, where Almighty God, through the apostle Paul, is teaching and instructing us the characteristics that would typify ministry, and indeed life, existing in the center of the will of God. And therefore, there are principles and character qualities that you need to see in your life and mine if you wanna be assured that you're in a place of maximum blessing, that you're in a place where Almighty God can shower blessings upon you, i.e. you're in the perfect center of the will of God. And so if you don't see those character qualities, one of the things you would say is, "Why not?" And you would want to develop those in your life more and more and more, and we've been looking at those. Excuse me. And as we've been looking at them, we've been sort of cataloging them through verses 22 through 33.

We started out by saying the very first one, obviously, was you wanna be ministering, living your life with a precision, with a focus, given the gifts and the talents, spiritually and natural talents and opportunities and experiences and so forth in the situation where God has sovereignly placed you to use those for His glorious purposes, doing however you sense His good pleasure in what He's called you to do. That was Paul saying, I've been called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and that was the calling on his life. And so by application, we make that application, I should say, to our lives. Secondly, as you do that, you're constantly aware of and trusting in what? The providence of God. You're not responsible for the circumstances. You're not a manufacturer when it comes to the spiritual realm. You and I are distributors of God's truth, of God's grace, of God's mercy, of God's love and so forth, recognizing that God is sovereign. Third, it doesn't mean that you don't plan. You plan long-term and short-term goals and dreams and visions to carry out that passion that's on your heart. But while you're doing that, fourthly, we've seen, it doesn't mean you ignore, quite the contrary, you must deal with the things that God has made a priority in your life short-term right now. Fifthly, we saw there's a prosperity that comes. He says there at the end of verse 29 in Romans 15, I need to open the scriptures myself, there in verse 29, he says that I will come to you and I know that when I do come to you, I will absolutely be totally, totally blessed in Christ. How can he possibly say I have the fullness of the blessing of Christ? Because he's lived in obedience to the word of God and he's seen that that has come true. And we talked about what that meant, true riches, eternal riches, eternal rewards for being obedient to the word of God and so forth. An inner peace, an inner comfort, an assurance that comes only when you know you're in the center of the will of God. And we explained all of that.



And now today, we come to yet a, what would it be? I think a sixth one on our list. It's found in verse 30 and 31. Let's pick it up at verse 29, ***And I know***, Paul says, ***that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ***. Now though, he says, ***Now I urge you, brethren...***, you saints who are at Rome who are receiving this letter from me, I urge you, brethren, brothers and sisters in Christ, the believers, I urge you, brethren, what, Paul? ***...by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me that, here it comes, I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea***. Stop right there, that I might be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea.

What's he talking about there; those who are disobedient in Judea? Actually, when he says I, it's an interesting word, *rhyomai* (G4506), it means to be rescued, it means to be rescued out of a dangerous, life-threatening situation. He says, I want you to pray for my rescue from a life-threatening situation; that I'll be delivered from that. And then he says ***from those who are disobedient in Judea***, what is that referring to? That is a reference, that's a euphemism for those who are outside of the family of God. He's talking about non-believers, in particular in this context, remember, he's gathered this offering from primarily Gentiles for over a year now. Even though he wants to go to Rome, he's going 1,000 miles shortly in the other direction back to Jerusalem where he'd been persecuted before and he knows that persecution is going to come again because he's bringing these Gentiles with him and he's going there to support the church back in Jerusalem. And so he's saying, look, I want you to pray because I know persecution's coming.

What's the point? Persecution, obviously, was not uncommon to Paul. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. Just listen, 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. ***For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively beyond our strength so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a peril of death and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope, He will yet deliver us*** and so forth. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. Let me read that real quick. Again, ***we are afflicted in every way but not crushed; Paul says, perplexed but not despairing; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus***.

What's the point? The point is this, if you are going to live in the center of God's will, if you are going to be focused in your life, if you are gonna be trusting in the providence of God, if you are gonna be moving out in righteousness and so on and so forth, expect persecution. In some level or some form, you can expect persecution. ***All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus*** might? No, ***will be persecuted***. That's 2 Timothy 3:12. Let me say it again. ***all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus***, that should be everybody in this building, ***will be persecuted***. 1 Peter 4:14-19. Let me read that one for you. 1 Peter 4:14-19. ***If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an***



evil doer, or as a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, we'll talk about what that means in a minute, let him not feel ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of Christ? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right. No matter what the persecution, no matter what the suffering might be, continue persevering in doing what is right.

This meant a lot to me even very recently, but it's been a lot to me over the past several months. I had a phone conversation with a dear friend just a couple of Friday afternoons ago who was just encouraging me in the Lord to the fact that with all of the attacks and all of the criticism and the things that come upon you in the ministry, be encouraged. As long as you're convinced in your heart of hearts that you're in the will of God, as long as you're convinced that you're not in sin in what you're doing and being criticized for, then you know what? You gotta be doing a lot of things right. And so it should not discourage you, it must encourage you.

But the thing I wanted to underscore rapidly is that a lot of people describe, well, you know, I'm just suffering for righteousness sake. I'm suffering as a Christian. No, you're not. You're suffering because you're an overbearing twit. You're suffering because you're a meddlesome, you're sticking your nose in people's business in which it doesn't belong. You're suffering because you're arrogant. You're suffering because you're basically not obeying the will of God, or if you are obedient to the word of God and the letter of the law, you're not doing it with the right heart attitude. It's not just the actions, act righteously. It's the attitude, the fruit of the spirit is what? Love, joy, peace, long suffering, that's patience. Gentleness, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, that's a humility, that's a power under control. What's it say in Ephesians 4? I think it's **32, 22, 28**, I can't remember, but at the end of Ephesians four, right along in there, he says what? **Be what? Kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another** as much as Christ Jesus, **just as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you.** That's the attitude that comes that we are to have.

So doing the right thing with the right attitude, action fruit with attitude, attitude fruit. If that's your situation and you're being criticized, cut down, dissed, rejected, harmed, fired from your job, whatever it might be, if that's what's going on, you are being persecuted for righteousness sake and an Almighty God on the authority of His word will not allow you to come up short. I have no idea what everybody in this room, or for the most part, there's a few I know, what most of you in this room might be suffering for righteousness sake at the present time, but I want you to be encouraged by the fact Paul knew full-tilt what suffering for the Lord was. And by the way, he knew going back to Jerusalem, he was gonna get it. Why? He was the guy who was walking around persecuting these people of the way. He's the guy that had direct orders from the Jewish leaders to go kill and arrest all these



Christians and stamp out this heresy. He becomes a literal spiritual Benedict Arnold to the Jewish leadership. He's now one of them. The first thing he does. You go to Acts 9 sometime and you read about his conversion and as soon as he gets converted and baptized, what's the first thing he does? He goes into the synagogue and starts preaching Christ. You wanna have a problem? Walk into a synagogue and start preaching Christ. And so he says, look, I would ask you to pray that I be delivered from these individuals.

So persecution is something to expect to one level, to one degree or another. As a matter of fact, if you're never getting criticized, if you're never getting called out, if you're never getting put down, if you're never suffering anything in your life for righteousness sake, you know what I'd do? I'd ask myself, am I living a righteous life? Am I looking, Father, to walk through every door of opportunity to live as well as to speak for the cause of Christ that You've given me? Because something is really wrong if somewhere along the line, you don't expect or receive some sort of pushback.

Okay, now, let me give you a seventh one. If you're ministering in the will of God and if you're really doing it, you need to be doing it for the right purpose. The right purpose. Well, where does Paul give us that? It's a real great passage of scripture here, or verse of scripture, here in Romans 15, specifically verse 30, and I really want to unpack this one for you. In Romans 15:30, he says, ***Now I urge you, brethren, get this, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers...*** The word "by" there is very unique in this regard. It's the preposition *dia, d-i-a (G1223)*, in the Greek. It can be translated: by or by means of. But get this, it can also be translated: on the ground of, on the reason of, by reason of, on account of. And so what he's saying, ***I urge you, brethren,*** he's asking them to join with him in prayer that certain things would happen. That's what he's asking them. But he says, not by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Holy Spirit, but he says, on account of, by reason of, for the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and on account of, not the love of the Holy Spirit for you, which is a given, but on account of your love for the Holy Spirit. That's what he's saying. For the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the sake of your love for the Holy Spirit of God. You know what he's talking about? He's talking about the glory of God. He says, why do we preach? Why do we teach? Why do we serve? Why do we give? Why are we involved in any ministry? Why do we try to live in righteousness? Why do we try to do "good deeds" that He's foreordained for us to walk in them? Why do we do our work? What's it all? It's all about the glory of God. And there it is for you right there. Do it on account of, on the ground of, for the basis of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's why you do it. But I love the, by the way, that's the very first tenet of the Westminster Confession of Faith. What's the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. By the way, don't miss the Trinity in this verse. Verse 30, ***I urge you now, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit,*** capital S, Holy Spirit, ***to strive together with me in your prayers to God,*** meaning the Father, ***for me.*** There's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit right there.



The glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point of everything you and I should ever do. 1 Corinthians 9:22-23. What does Paul say? I'll read it for you. He says, I am free from all men, but I become a servant. That's that passage where he says, to the, I become a slave to the slave. I become a free to the free. I become a Gentile to a Gentile and a Jew to the Jew, et cetera, et cetera. ***I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.*** And he says, I do this for the gospel's sake, the good news sake. What? The gospel. What is the, it gives glory to Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:5, ***For we do not preach ourselves, but we preach Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your bond slaves.*** Why? ***for Jesus' sake***, he says. 2 Corinthians 4:11, ***For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*** The bottom line is very simple. In your service, whatever it is, do you do it for the glory of God? Or do you do it for the praise of men? Do you do it for the glory of God? Or do you do it for some other self-gratification of some sort? Do you do it for the glory of God? That is the best motive we will ever have. And so he says, I want you to pray that I have success because I'm doing it for the glory of God.

Now, what was he doing that he was asking prayers for, for the glory of God? Well, ultimately go to Rome, but short term, what? I got this money and I got a few Gentiles. I picked up Gentile believers along the way and I'm going back to Jerusalem. That was my short term priority. How in the world is that gonna give glory to Jesus Christ? First of all, Christ will be glorified, why? Because Christ desires Jew and Gentile to be what? One. The wall of partition is broken down. There's now no more Jew or Gentile. We're all one in Christ. That will give glory to Christ, that unity. Second thing, I got a bunch of Gentiles giving money to help a bunch of impoverished Jews back in Jerusalem. First of all, like I said last week, the Jews were trying to figure out, new Jewish believers who just, they were struggling with the fact that Gentiles could even be a part of this thing to begin with, though they had to overcome that. This is gonna help do that. But what's the other thing? The world of non-believers, Jew and Gentile alike, are looking on and they see a bunch of Gentiles coming with this Jew, Paul, back to all these impoverished Jews and giving them money to help them out and what's it say in the word of God? They'll know you're Christians by your love. It's a classic, massive demonstration of the love for one another within the body of Christ on a somewhat world stage in the early years of the church that would give tremendous glory to God. Then Paul later writes in 1 Corinthians 10:31, ***whatever you do, whether you eat or you drink, whatever you do, that's everything, do it all to the glory of God.*** That is the supreme motive.

I love the way our friend Spurgeon puts it. He said this, he's quoting 2 Timothy 4:18. He's expounding on that passage of scripture. And at the end of 2 Timothy 4:18, Paul says, to whom, meaning Christ, to Him be glory forever. Spurgeon says this: *This should be the single desire of the Christian. I take it that he should not have 20 wishes, but only one. He may desire to see his family brought up well, but only that to God may be the glory forever. He may wish for prosperity in business, but only as it may help him to promote this, to whom be glory forever. He may desire, Spurgeon says, to attain more gifts and more graces, more*



opportunities, in other words, to minister. *But, he says, it should only be that "To Him," Christ, "may be glory forever." This one thing, Spurgeon says, I know, Christian, you're not acting as you ought to do when you are moved by any other motive than the one motive of your Lord's glory.* That is exactly what Paul is saying right here, on account of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the way, that next phrase, on account of your love for the Holy Spirit, that's the only place that phrase ever occurs anywhere in the word of God, underscoring your love for God by saying, your love for the Holy Spirit. Once again, underscoring one God, three persons in that one God; Father, Son, and Spirit. That should be what motivates us. That should be what compels us. That should indeed be our supreme purpose in life. That's why you're taking your next breath, is to give glory to Almighty God.

Now, we talk about all these things, focus, precision, focus, if you will, trusting in providence, prioritizing, making plans, expecting spiritual fruit and prosperity to flow from it, knowing that you're going to be attacked, there's gonna be certain persecution, knowing that you're doing it all for the absolute primary purpose of the glory of Almighty God. But all of that is undergirded, supported, and is absolutely never gonna happen unless there's an eight character quality that's a part of it all. And I've alluded to it four or five times as we're going through the passage, and I even skipped over one of the verses in getting to these points, but I wanna go back to it, and it is, without question, the need for prayer; the fact that everything and all of it needs to be a matter of prayer. What's he say in verse 29? ***I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now I urge you, brethren, on account of, by reason of, on the ground of, for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by, and for the glory of, and for your love of the Holy Spirit, strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,...*** And then he goes on and asks them to pray for certain things that we're gonna talk about. But I want you to see at the end of verse 30, he says, ***strive together with me*** - that means he's praying, but he's asking them to pray as well - ***in your prayers to God for me***. Now there's a word there. He says, strive together. The word strive is ordinarily, it's *agōnizomai*. You can hear the word agony in there, *agōnizomai*. That's not this word. That's, this word is *agōnizomai* intensified. It has a preposition *syn* in front of it. It's *synagōnizomai* (G4865). And basically what he's saying, intensely strive together with me, intensely struggle together with me. He realizes that any and all ministry, any and all things, anything you're gonna do in your life for the glory of God, literally has to be the product of, bathed in, perfected by, enabled by the power of God working through you, which only comes about through prayer. It only comes about through prayer. And that's why I said at the outset when I led us in our time of corporate prayer, God has been impressing on my heart, especially the last couple of weeks, the anemic-ness of my own prayer life and how I want to be better and better disciplined and more ordered in relying more on prayer and communing with Almighty God. This word *agōnizomai*, it implies there's a battle. There's a fight, there's a struggle going on. And indeed there is, there truly is. It's a powerful word. In John 18:36, it's a passage of scripture where Pilate challenges Christ and maybe reading portions of this if you're doing your Easter reading and devotional reading. And he says, are you a king? You know, and he talks about his kingdom.



And Jesus says, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would, *synagōnizomai*, would fight, for me. The word translated struggle or strive together with me in prayer, that word strive in your New American Standard there in John 18:36 is translated fight or fighting.

Prayer, beloved, is a battle. It is a battle. Isaiah 64:7 says, ***And there is no one who calls on Thy name, O Lord, who arouses himself to take hold of Thee.*** I love that. Prayer is a war against the forces of evil. And we are to arouse ourselves to take hold of Almighty God, if you will, in prayer. Colossians 2:1, Paul calls prayer “a great struggle”, a great battle. You know, Galatians 3, excuse me, Genesis 32:24-30 is a passage of scripture that's always fascinated me, and I've always wondered about in many ways. It's the account where Jacob wrestles all night with the angel of the Lord, which is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, if you will. And ultimately, and then it's commented on, by the way, in Hosea chapter 12:4, and it's underscored as meant wrestling with God in prayer and not letting go of God. And it really talks about a persevering and a persistence in prayer, but it underscores the idea that it's a struggle.

Now I wanted Charles Lockhart in our corporate reading to read, yeah, to read Luke 11 and Luke 18. And I wanted to do that for a specific reason, because those are two passages, two parables, if you will, that the Lord gives that underscore perseverance in prayer. Perseverance in prayer. In Luke 11, let's just take a look real quick. At Luke 11, again, he talks about the Lord's prayer and then he gets to verse five and he said to them, the Lord's prayer, which is incorrectly titled, it should be the apostle's prayer because he's telling them how to pray. But in any event, verse five, he says to them, suppose one of you shall have a friend, shall go to him at midnight, shall say to him, friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey and I have nothing to set before him. And so, and he goes on and he says, look, the guy says, look, I'm locked up, I'm in bed, we're already asleep, but the guy keeps knocking. It isn't because of their friendship, because of the guy's perseverance, he gets up and gives him the bread, okay? Now, the same way in Luke 18, you got a widow seeking justice from an unrighteous judge. The unrighteous judge goes, good grief, I don't fear God or any of these things, but because this widow is gonna wear me out, I'm gonna get up and, or not get up, but I'm going to honor her request and grant her the justice that she's seeking. Now, the point you need to get on both those parables is that they're not a comparison, they're a contrast, because Jesus is making a contrast. He says, if evil judges and if fallen depraved men, because of your persistence, will honor your request, what do you think your heavenly Father, who is perfect goodness, perfect righteousness in control of everything, don't you think He's not gonna give you a scorpion if you ask for an egg or, you know, and so on and so forth? So the bottom line is, it's not a comparison, it's a contrast. The point he wants to bring out is not that God begrudgingly answers prayer, quite the contrary. As a loving heavenly Father, He wants to always do what's best for His child, and if you're asking in accordance with the will of God, He's gonna be quick to answer that request, but he's trying to show the importance, the need, if you will, for persevering prayer, for continuing and not stopping in prayer.



This whole idea of persevering prayer, I was thinking of one example, you got a rusty combination lock, and you work with the combination on that lock, it doesn't turn, it doesn't open. You do the combination on the lock, force it, turn, it doesn't open. You do it five or six times, it doesn't open. Finally, on the seventh time, bingo, the lock opened. Now, from our perspective, that seventh time was the one that did it. Actually, all of them had to be tried, you had to keep doing until it got open. The point is, you get no answer, you don't see a breakthrough immediately, it might feel pointless, God is still at work in your prayers. Maybe a better analogy would be the farmer example. He plows up the field, and he harrows the field and so forth, and then he plants the seed, and then he waits for rain, and he's praying for rain and waiting for rain, and the rain eventually comes, and he's still not seeing anything, and weeds sprout up, and he knocks out a few weeds, and something else happens, and he keeps animals away. Finally, he doesn't see a thing, and all of a sudden, what? There's a breakthrough, and things start coming through. Even though you're persevering in prayer, you're praying about the same thing over and over and over again for days, weeks, months, years, don't think that God isn't working. Almighty God doesn't command you to do something that's ridiculous. He doesn't command you and me to do something that's fruitless. He doesn't command you and me to do something that isn't for our good and for his glory in any context. So he says, and now you say, well, why, why would it delay? Why would you have this perseverance? Maybe He's building the joy of anticipation. Maybe He's working out things in your own life, I don't know, but the thing that I think we're victimized of, and I think it affected me in my own prayer life, I think it affects you, and as a church, I wanna call us back more than ever to be a people of prayer. We need to be a people of prayer more than ever, and in your individual lives, I hope you start today being that more than ever.

One of the things that works against it is the culture in which we live in. We live in the microwave culture. Throw it in, hit a button, 30 seconds, it's hot, we're good to go. Some of you are starting to get hungry. And we live in that fast food culture, so to speak, and we need to think more, when it comes to prayer, in a crock pot reality; a slow cooker kind of reality. Modern technology is wonderful blessings, but you know, it's instant coffee, get an entire breakfast, just throw it in a blender, mix it all up, you got the protein, you got everything you need, no problem. No cooking, just get out the door. Local diners are replaced by fast food restaurants. We don't roll up the car windows anymore. We hit a button and just go up electronically. We don't crack a vent for air, we flip on the AC. Nobody anymore that I know of anywhere stops their car, gets out, walks into a little square booth, takes out coins, puts them in, takes a receiver, rotary dials, a phone, or even push button, a bunch of numbers, that doesn't happen. You stick your head in your pocket, you punch a name, and there you go. Everything is fast and quick. We don't, you know, pop in an eight-track or even pop in a cassette or a floppy disk anymore. It's hey, take it out of your pocket, hit a picture. You get audio, you get visual, you get whatever you want in a second from around the other side of the world. These are wonderful conveniences, but can I tell you something? Everybody's talking about AI is on us and so forth. Prayer slows us down. Genuine biblical prayer can't



be done through any other way than the human heart communing with Almighty God directly from the heart. There's one thing that AI definitely is not going to replace. It's the personal intimacy and the communion of Almighty God with His individual elect children. Prayer is one thing that AI will not replace. Our God is a personal God. He desires an intimacy with His children. He desires an intimate love relationship. His providential care and guiding, He is involved in every detail of your life. That's why it says pray in a sense without ceasing. Yes, there's times of straight, intense, daily, I hope, times of prayer with a Bible open on your lap or desk where you're communing directly with God, but as you go throughout your day, He wants to be communing with you as well. And so it's low heat, a crock pot. It's a long time. It's deep transformation. You can't rush it without ruining it. And yet God has a purpose in it.

You know, you think about, I've probably been in more hospital waiting rooms in the last two years than I have been in the previous 75 years of my life. And we go into a hospital waiting room, what do you do? You sign in, your name gets put on the list, you wait for the doctor to see you or Teri. Now, it takes some time. You don't just get up after 30 minutes and go, well, he must've forgot me, I'm leaving. No, you wait, why? Because it's part of the system, part of the procedure. Well, guess what? Our great physician has His own procedure. Prayer is the waiting room of the great physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's times when He asks you and me to wait and in that waiting, be persistence in your prayers. Your prayers are never ignored. Never ignored. Hebrews 7:25, ***Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost***, Christ, God in the person of Christ is able to save them to the uttermost, he goes on, ***that come to God through him, seeing He, Christ, ever lives to make intercession for them.*** You say, well, golly, I've been praying for years for this and I haven't seen an answer to my prayer yet. Guess what? Jesus Christ, God Himself, is at the throne in the throne room of the Father right now before the throne of grace, praying for you and me without ceasing. He's been praying for you from an earthly standpoint for ever since the world began and before. Now, if He's persistent in those prayers and feels the need somehow to bring about His sovereign purposes by God Himself in the second person of the Trinity in prayer for you, how in the world will you and I give up and get fatigued because we don't see some answer to our prayer in a period of time? I wanna encourage all of us.

By the way, you say, well, you can never lose your salvation. Do you know why you, if you're a genuine believer, can never lose your salvation? Because of Hebrews 7:25, because He ever lives to make intercession for us. That's why He says He's able to save us to the uttermost. If the Lord Jesus Christ took you off of His mind and heart for *snap* that long, you and I'd be lost forever. We'd be toast, we'd be done. And that's what he's talking about here. [James] 5:16, the effectual, ***the effective***, the energetic, fervent it means, the effectual fervent ***prayer of a righteous man avails much.***

The waiting room of God, persistent prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. Please get this. Persevering in prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It's laying a hold of His willingness. By the way, greatest example of all, you're a little bummed out, you gave up



because you quit praying, it's sort of like the miner. You know, he strikes the rock a thousand times, the thousand and one time the boulder breaks open and there's the gold. Well, which strike broke the rock? The first one or the thousand and one? They all did, okay? But the point is, wouldn't you hate it if you hit a rock a thousand times looking for gold and quit realizing that thousand and one, you'd have had a fortune. You'd have had the heavens gates open in terms of wealth, if you will.

The classic example to me is the Lord Jesus Christ. Good Friday, Brian mentioned, a week from this coming Friday. We revisit an aspect of the passion of our Lord. We're gonna read accounts of His travail in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prays not once, not twice, but three times. Let me tell you something, that's a whole long time when you're Almighty God, three times. And what's He say? Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me. But after that third time, what's He say? Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done. May say that every time, but after the third time is when His spirit is fortified, His spirit is steeled, and in His humanness, His will is perfectly aligned spiritually with that of the Father. And He comes and he awakens the disciples who've fallen asleep and says, let us arise and go forth. Judas and the chief priests are coming to the garden right then. He doesn't wait for them. He's so fortified by His season in prayer, His persevering and prevailing prayer. By the way, God in human form, Jesus the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, what's it say at the start? He goes out into the, He's led into the wilderness by Satan, but He fasts 40 days and 40 nights. He spends 40 days and 40 nights in fervent prayer just to be ready for the temptations of the evil one. The point of all that, and especially that example of Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane is that persistence is not changing God's mind. It's aligning our hearts with God's will. I think persistence and persevering and praying over and over and over and over again until you get an answer one way or the other clearly from Almighty God to your petitions, whether it's the salvation of a loved one, whether it's a particular ministry opportunity, whether it's an open door to go somewhere, a closed door to go somewhere, whether it's a future life partner, whether it's your present life partner, whether it's praying for a child, whether it's praying for sickness or illness or a debilitating disease, or whatever it might be, I think God, allowing us to persist in prayer for that event, that thing, that person. Number one, I think it's evidence of genuine faith. Secondly, I think it builds a greater submission to the sovereign lordship of Christ in your life, and it shows a humble dependence on Almighty God. Not a demand. And in the end, ultimately, I believe such prevailing prayer changes the person praying, not the sovereign will of God.

Well, there's a whole lot more that I hope to add to this. I'm gonna have Brian come up, if it is Brian who's gonna lead us in a closing hymn, but next week, we will celebrate the Lord's table. I'm tipping Don Nelson off right now that I have received a little video clip from one of our missionaries, John Cutts in Papua New Guinea that I'll get to you to show next week for us. Our time around the Lord's table, because there's usually two offerings, a lot going on, will be more abbreviated, but there's some principles from God's word on this very point that I wanna try to tie down before we celebrate the Lord's table. However, if you take nothing away from this, I hope you take away at least what God laid on my heart so



powerfully in the last few days in working on this. We need to be, your preaching elder needs to be, all of us need to be more disciplined, more committed to true biblical prayer, what that means and what that looks like. And I don't know if I'm gonna do it in the next few weeks or if I'll wait till we get done with the book of Romans and maybe do a special two or three sessions or whatever, sermons I should say on prayer. But either way, I wanna encourage all of us on this new year and in all the years to come to literally experience more of the blessings of God in our lives and in our ministries because we know we're in the perfect center of the will of God. And just like everything else, the preaching of the word of God to yourself in your private time as well as over a pulpit is the engine that drives the church, but prayer is its fuel.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time. We even end this time communing in prayer with You. Take the truths from what on the surface looked like rambling statements by Paul in his future plans to go to Rome and turned out to be a treasure trove of deep truths for us to seize upon and to learn from in our own lives and ministries. We thank You for it all. Bless it to us, Father, as only You know how to do. We ask it again in Christ's matchless name. Amen and amen.