

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 15:22-33

"The Jerusalem Offering and the Pauline Doctrine of Giving" TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] We are studying in the Epistle to the Romans, and if you have your New Testaments or Bibles with you, turn with me to Romans chapter 15 and we want to look at verse 22 through verse 33 for the Scripture reading of today. The apostle writes,

"For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there by you, if first I may be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints who are at Jerusalem. (That certain contribution is literally a certain fellowship. The gift of money being a means by which the people in Macedonia and Achaia might have a relationship of fellowship with the saints in Jerusalem who were poor, incidentally, not simply for economic reasons but probably also from persecution. And being persecuted by those in Jerusalem because of their Christian testimony they were unable to make the kind of living that they had been making before they became Christians.) It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in material things, carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, (that means I've brought them in possession of the money that I'm taking to them for the Christians in Greece,) I will come by you into Spain, (and he means I will pass through your midst on the way to Spain and I expect you to give me some help, to that end.) And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 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; 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; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

It's interesting that in this 15th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the apostle uses several titles of God gathered here together. In the 5th verse he has spoken of God as the God of patience and the God of consolation. In the 13th verse he has written now the God of hope. And here it is the God of peace. Of course he is the God of each of these things.

The subject for this morning as we come near the conclusion of our exposition of our Epistle to the Romans is "The Jerusalem Offering and the Pauline Doctrine of Giving." There are at least three reasons why the passage that is before us has some importance. In the first place it throws a bit of light on the true nature of Christian

fellowship. It's probably true to say that this is one of the topics among Christians constantly mentioned which is not very well understood. When we speak of Christian fellowship we are inclined to think simply of Christians who get together and have a bit of time together discussing the affairs of the day.

In the Bible Christian fellowship is something a bit different. I don't deny that it is possible for Christians to have fellowship who gather together and discuss among other things some of the affairs of the day. But in the Bible Christian fellowship is fellowship in the things of Jesus Christ. In fact in the earliest definition of what it means in the 2nd chapter of the Book of Acts Luke the historian gives a rather specific meaning to Christian fellowship. He speaks of the church in Jerusalem, the first church of the church age and he says that after they had come into existence through the coming of the Holy Spirit they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship. And then in a construction which indicates that the following words are an explanation of fellowship, a definition of it, he says in breaking of bread and in prayers.

So the early church continued in the apostle's doctrine and in fellowship. The fellowship of the breaking of bread and prayers, the Christian fellowship is the Christian fellowship of the Lord's table and the prayers and the gathering around the Lord Jesus Christ and the centering of our thoughts upon him suggested by that. Christian fellowship is fellowship in the things of Christ.

Now the apostle speaks here in verse 22 through verse 24 of some of his plans. And in the 24th verse he says near the end of that verse, "And to be brought on my way there by you, if first I may be somewhat filled with your company." And then in verse 32, explaining this, he says, "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

In the 1st chapter of the epistle he says that he desires to come to Rome in order that he might communicate some spiritual gift to them. From this we gather that Paul's concept of Christian fellowship was the gathering of the saints together and the discussion of the things that have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, things that will build us up in our faith.

Now this passage, I think, throws a bit of light then on the true nature of Christian fellowship. It throws, also, a bit of light on the doctrine of Christian giving. Its not a passage in which that doctrine is set forth in detail, that's found in passages like 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. But here we do have a very important point, and that important point is simply this; the Apostle Paul never appealed for funds for himself. He did not hesitate to be the intermediary for the dispensing of funds from one group to another group of believers, but he never appealed for funds for himself. That's the important principle set forth here and in other places in Paul's writings which our modern day evangelical church has almost totally forgotten.

And then thirdly, by the way I guess I should say anyone, anything in the New Testament that has to do with money is important because money is important. This past week in the *Wall Street Journal* there was an article entitled "The Trouble With Money" written by a man whose articles I always read because to my mind he writes very well, very succinctly, and also with a great deal of insight. The trouble with money, everyone is interested in money. Well, money is important for economics, it's important for the well-being of the United States of America, and it is also important in the local church,

and important in our Christian life. This passage throws some light on that. And it throws light on the Christian doctrine of prayer.

Now when we think of the Apostle Paul we think of a man who was a strong believer in the doctrine of predestination, and election, and divine foreknowledge, and foreordination, and divine calling. No one speaks of these things more than the Apostle Paul except, possibly, the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet at the same time the apostle was a fervent believer in the efficacy of human prayer.

Now in his mind he saw no conflict between divine foreordination and the determination that all things happen according to the counsel of his will and at the same time this earnest admonition to pray. Any understanding of these doctrines that does not square with the doctrine of prayer, earnest prayer, real prayer, would be something the apostle would not be sympathetic with. And so we have here a passage that throws important light on the doctrine of prayer, particularly so far as the answers to prayer are concerned.

Now we know the Bible says that God always answers our prayers. But sometimes we forget that the Bible never tells us that he answers our prayers as we wish them to be answered. He always hears our prayers and he answers them. But his answers are his answers and not our answers. We find that illustrated when we compare this passage and Paul's earnest prayer that he might be delivered from the unbelievers in Jerusalem and that his ministry might be acceptable to the saints when we compare with it what actually happened as recorded in the Book of the Acts. It's very important for us.

So we have a passage important for Christian fellowship, for money. I like John Wesley's statement, "When I have any money I get rid of it as quickly as possible, lest it find a way into my heart." Mr. Wesley was a remarkable illustration of that and Christian doctrine of prayer.

Now Paul has been explaining his relationship to the Roman Christians. Remember this, the apostle did not found the church at Rome, it had been founded by others. And so consequently he did not regard it as one of his churches. He therefore felt that if he stayed in Rome a lengthy period of time he would be building on other people's foundations and that is something he did not normally feel led to do. So he felt, "I want to visit Rome, I want to see the believers there, I want to have some time with them, but I want to pass on to Spain. I want to go to the west in order that I might labor in untouched land." But he wanted to go through Rome and have fellowship with them and so he's speaking of his plans. Why he did not come before and why he hopes to come after he carries out his task of going to Jerusalem to deliver that gift from the Greeks to the poor in Jerusalem.

Someone looking at this passage has called this a model of Paul's farsighted missionary strategy. And looking at it from the human standpoint if sought to discover within it some kind of strategy that the apostle originated, the apostle did not consider this something of human origination. In fact, he says he would, "Not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought through me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed." In other words, "I don't want to speak about anything except the things that Christ has done through me."

If there is any farsighted missionary strategy here it's not Paul's, it's the Lord's. And the ultimate aim of everything is the glorification of Paul's master. And that's what Paul wants to do. He wants to glorify his master. But he's a human being like you and I

are human beings, and so he had plans and he speaks of his plans. He wanted to come to Rome. So he speaks of these plans beginning with the 22nd verse through the 24th verse. It's a very interesting picture, I think, of a practical ministry, he planned. As one of the commentators said, "He did not consider himself to be on automatic pilot, he did plan." He made his plans.

But his plans were flexible. They were changeable as the will of God changed and developed in his experience. He was persistent, he had wanted to come to Rome for a lengthy period of time and he kept after it and ultimately he will get there, but not as he anticipated of course. And furthermore he did not think it was wrong to appeal to others to help him in prayer for the things that he felt he wanted to do.

He also kept his commitments. He had earlier in his ministry made a commitment that he would preach the gospel among the Gentiles and Peter would go to the circumcision. But he also said that while he would go to the Gentiles he would not fail to remember the poor and this was something important to him and here he is keeping his commitment by carrying the money back from the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia back to the poor in Jerusalem. And he did it in trust. He felt that he would come in the fullness of the blessing of Jesus Christ. That was his confidence, that God uphold him no matter what his experiences might be.

Now he said, "I would have come to you much earlier but I was hindered." In one of the other epistles of the apostle he speaks of being hindered by Satan and in the earlier part of this epistle in the 1st chapter he says also that he was, "Hindered from coming." He doesn't tell us why but the implication is in the light of his statement, "I've preached the gospel now all the way from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum." If you look on the map that's a rather lengthy space, fourteen hundred miles to be exact.

Just a few days ago we passed over that part of the country, went up over Asia Minor, and then headed over Bulgaria, Romania, across the Austrian Alps. Something like the apostle's ministry, from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Fourteen hundred miles and having completed that Paul says, "I'm now coming to you, I was hindered." Hindered by what? Well hindered by this commission that God had given him.

So wherefore since, "I have been much hindered from coming to you now having no more place in these parts, I've done my duty. I haven't preached to every individual but I've planted the gospel over this whole territory by the Holy Spirit's direction and by the working of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel had been settled down in those places and the apostle felt in the will of God his ministry was over in that area. No more opportunity there, its exhausted. And so he longs to see the Romans but have the Romans a means for going on to Spain.

Now we'd like to know, did the apostle ever reach Spain? Well the Bible doesn't really tell us. There are some indications that perhaps he was freed from a second Roman imprisonment and managed to get to Spain but we have no indication of that with certainty. We just have to leave that up in the air. Perhaps he did in one sense, we will point out later on he did.

Now he says in verse 24, "Whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way there by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company." So he didn't want to spend a long time in Rome, but after all Rome was the chief city of the Roman Empire. Many of the Christians whom he had known in other places had now drifted to Rome, one of the great

centers of population, so he wanted to be there. He wanted to have some spiritual ministry there, he wanted a kind of spiritual fill-up, a refreshment as he says later on. He wanted to have Christian fellowship there, Christian fellowship. What do we think of when we think of Christian fellowship? Well the apostle thought of fellowship in Christ, the things of Christ.

I have a friend, he's a preacher of the gospel, a missionary. He's one of my favorite friends. He's one of my favorite friends, I've known him ever since he was in college through theological seminary. Now he's spent a number of years in a very difficult place, sought to preach the gospel to Muslim people. He's a man of great Christian faith for a young man, and great Christian courage. And I really love him in the Lord. I especially appreciate the fact that he will stand up and be counted for his belief even though it may be unpopular. He's recently returned to the United States for a time and is in the Midwest and we talk over the phone every now and then. And he started attending a local assembly in a town in the Midwest and some of the elders of the assembly have become acquainted with him and perhaps are a little suspicious of him because there are some young people in the congregation who listen to tapes from Believers Chapel. And the doctrine of Believers Chapel is not always acceptable in all points to the elders, evidently. And so they've been—the young man came to my friend knowing that he had been in the area of Dallas, they said, "Do you know that fellow down there?" and he said yes he did. And so the elders approached my friend and said they'd like to come and visit him. And so he said, "Fine, look forward to it." He called me and told me that they were going to come to see him. And I was looking forward to a report of it.

So afterwards he called and gave me a report. He said the elders did come and they came to discuss biblical doctrine with him and they brought a ringer along with them. This man was not one of the elders but he was a ringer. He was a graduate student at a Bible college in the Midwest who was majoring in New Testament Greek and evidently thought he was quite skilled. They didn't understand this man was a graduate of theological seminary and had also majored in New Testament as well. But they had a discussion of doctrine and so they discussed Eschatology, they discussed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and they discussed the doctrine of the church. And evidently my friend satisfied them generally and what he said concerning those things and when they finished their little discussion with him he said, "Now I'd like to ask you a few questions." That's just like my friend, that's one reason I like him [Laughter]. He doesn't care what people think so long as they're honest and forthright.

So he said, "I didn't want them to leave without them knowing exactly what I believe. They brought it up and so now they must face it." So he said, "I think we ought to begin with total depravity because that's where we ought to begin in biblical doctrine it seems to me." And so he asked them what they thought about total depravity. Well he didn't explain to me all that they said he simply said he was amazed at how little understanding they had of the theological doctrine of total depravity. Did not understand at all that total depravity included human inability to respond to the word of God apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now the ringer who was with them, the young man who was the ringer, he suspected that my friend was a believer in the doctrine of definite atonement. And so he kept inserting comments to turn the discussion over to something that he thought might

be unpopular with the elders. And finally this young man cited 1 John 2:2. Incidentally for some of you interested in an exposition of 1 John 2:2 and a treatment of it I suggest you read the paper that Sam Storms has written on it, an excellent paper on 1 John 2:2 and the question of definite atonement. But anyway my friend heard the ringer say, "Christ died for our sins, he was the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," and sought to draw him out.

He said the ringer thought that I, incidentally in my notes I have the ringer in quote, you understand [Laughter], the ringer thought that by just citing that text that of course would prove that the intent of our Lord in coming was to offer a propitiation for the sins of every single individual in the world without exception. My friend said, "What is propitiation?" And then he went on to say, "If the world is propitiated as we believers are as you seem to say then how can universal redemption avoid universal salvation? We might put it this way, on what legal grounds does the Father inflict further punishment for our sins than that which Jesus Christ has already suffered."

Well the young ringer was not too well instructed in theology and so he replied, "Well we must believe." "Ah," my friend said, "is not unbelief a sin?" Shades of John Owen's famous conundrum. And he went on to say, "And if unbelief is a sin then he paid for it too otherwise he didn't die for all sin, just some sin." Well the ringer dropped the matter in defeat. Finally my friend turned to the elders and said after a discussion of faith as a gift of God, "From whom does our salvation really come? From ourselves or from God's grace?" And the elders having been pushed into a corner a bit at this point said, one of them, "We shouldn't ask such questions, that makes for problems and divisions. They are only theoretical questions." And then my friend, I love him [Laughter], he said, "Let me refer you to Paul the apostle. He asked the Corinthians, 'Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou hast not received? Who maketh thee to differ, what have you that you have not received?'"

Why, that theoretical question is the very question the apostle asks. Who has made us to differ? Who has distinguished the faithful from the unfaithful? It is God. It is God who has given us the trust in Jesus Christ that saves. Now that's what I call Christian fellowship [Laughter]. And I want to say that when those elders left and the ringer too and when my friend left they had had the experience of Christian fellowship. That's what Christian fellowship is, the discussion of the things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ. That's Christian fellowship. Sometimes we get our nose bloodied a little bit but we learn. And sometimes we are successful in our discussion, we learn and we grow in the knowledge of Christ, that's Christian fellowship. The Jerusalem counsel was Christian fellowship. And there was disputation and arguing but the result is that finally Peter stands up and says, "It's by the grace of God that we are saved just as they." That's Christian fellowship, that's what we mean when we talk about Christian fellowship. That's what Paul wanted to have with the Romans he wanted, as he says in the first chapter, to communicate some spiritual gift to them and receive something from them as well. And I daresay we just had a bit of Christian fellowship enjoying the fellowship that my friend had with the elders. They left on good terms and they probably both were helped.

The apostle then speaks of the journey to Jerusalem. He says in verse 25, "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister to the saints." This was Paul's fifth visit to the city of Jerusalem so far as the Book of Acts is concerned. He thought it was important,

evidently, since he interrupted his evangelistic program in order to carry out this particular visit. I think that he not only thought it important because it would be the means of helping the physical condition of those poor Christians in Jerusalem but he wanted to give a visible representation, be a part of it, of the union that existed between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ. This was a visible representation of the nature of the church of Christ. Jew and Gentile in one body through the Holy Spirit.

Now he talks about this as a contribution or as a fellowship. It's a means by which the people in Macedonia and Achaia entered into a relationship with those believers in Jerusalem who were persecuted for their faith and unable to make the kind of money that they had been able to make before they were persecuted. Now Paul says they ought to do it, those people in Achaia. It was not only something they did willingly but they ought to do it because they were the beneficiaries of the spiritual blessing from Jerusalem and therefore they ought to support those Jerusalem saints materially. Paul in another place in 1 Corinthians says the same thing, we do have a responsibility to minister materially to those who minister to us spiritually. And Paul speaks of it as an obligation.

That raises the question of New Testament giving. Now we don't have time to talk about that, this is not really the chapter to speak of it in great detail. The apostle teaches, of course, a grace giving. We do not give by impulse, we do not give by pressure, we give not because someone has preached a sermon urging us to give, we do not give in order to gain the approval of men, we do not give because of some special occasion, we do not give because we receive letters with returned self-addressed envelopes, we do not give because we are appealed to by individuals to support their movement. The New Testament says we give out of gratitude, out of joy, we give as God the Holy Spirit leads and guides us.

Now it's often said, "Well Paul took up an offering." Ah, but as I mentioned previously the important point is that when Paul took up an offering it was not for Paul, it was [for] someone else. I would have no objection to someone desiring to help other Christians, to appeal that for gifts to other Christians. So far as I can tell there isn't anything necessarily wrong with that. Jesse Helms the Jerry Falwell's ministry, I don't want to say anything about either of those men but so far as the principle is concerned there's nothing necessarily wrong with that. On the other hand so far as I can tell any appeal for funds for the individual comes under the cloud and brings reproach on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I mentioned yesterday a young man speaking with me who is a graduate student, he's from a foreign country, and he told me in my conversation with him that some had told him that he ought to preach and he said, "But I'm a private person." He spoke very fluently and spoke English very well, gave me the impression he had his thoughts arranged very beautifully and might easily stand up and teach the word of God. But he said, "I'm a private person and I don't know whether I could do that, and furthermore I don't know whether I could raise fund." Well my eyes got big, I'm sure like this. Where did he get the idea that a preacher must have as one of his qualifications the ability to raise funds? And so I stopped him and I said, "Wait a minute, now Moses said that he couldn't be the mouthpiece of God because he couldn't speak and so God finally said all right I'll give you Aaron and let him be your mouthpiece and Moses lost the privilege of giving the messages, Aaron got the privilege. But I said, "Where in the world is there

any requirement that a Christian minister be able to raise funds in order to be a preacher?" And I said, "You listen to our radio broadcast, you know of course we don't appeal for funds." He said, "Yeah, that's one of the reasons I listen to it." We have a lot of people incidentally who write us and say we're so happy you don't appeal for funds because we think it's a reproach on the gospel of Christ to beg for money from the unsaved. It's very important, I think, to remember as far as the New Testament is concerned matching gifts, pledge systems, faith promise systems, every member canvases, all of these things, it seems to me, are means by which we neglect looking to the Lord and living by faith, as a congregation, as a work of God.

The New Testament method of giving is very plain, it is dedicated, it's voluntary giving, it's sacrificial giving, it's proportionate giving, fair to the rich, fair to the poor, we give a dime, we give a dollar, we give nothing, we give as God has prospered us, cheerful giving, private giving, not storehouse tithing, but house giving, we lay by ourselves. To whom do we give? The New Testament gives us directions, we support those in the family that should be supported so that they might not be on public support, we support needy saints, we support missionaries, we support those who have taught us, we give as God has given to us. We are not limited of the tithe, that's one out of one hundred possibilities, one, two, three, four, five, six, up to one hundred percent of our funds. We give like John Wesley who gave the first year he had thirty pounds for his income, he lived on twenty-eight and gave two pounds to the Lord. The next year he had sixty pounds, he lived on twenty-eight and gave thirty-two to the Lord. The next year he had ninety pounds, he lived on twenty-eight and gave sixty-two to the Lord. The next year one hundred and twenty, when Mr. Wesley died he had practically nothing. He had given away over thirty thousand pounds which was real money in those days. That's the kind of giving that God led some men to do. But you know we say these things over and over again and people just do not really get the message because so often we only hear what we really want to hear

I heard the story of a man who had an alcoholic character in his flock and one day he spoke to him, he said, "Jim, whiskey is your worst enemy." And Jim said, "Well preacher you told us in the pulpit only last Sunday to love our enemies." [Laughter] "So I did," said the preacher, "but I didn't even get close to telling you to swallow them." [Laughter] But we really don't hear but what we want to hear and over and over again I've tried to set forth through the years in Dallas these principles that are set forth in the Bible concerning giving and not too many have responded. Either my arguments are very weak or something else, and I don't think my arguments are weak.

But at any rate, the apostle here was very earnest in giving the gift, being the intermediary of the gift from the Macedonians and Achaians to the people in Jerusalem, but he never appealed for funds for himself. In fact he went out of the way to say that he supported himself. Now he said, "The Philippians gave me some gifts," he accepted gifts but he went out of his way to say he would not make himself burdensome to others. And in fact refused what was his by right, he said, in order he might obtain a reward.

Now in the final verses of the section the apostle speaks of prayer. He requests that they pray for him. He says, "Now I beseech you, brethren," in the 30th verse, that indicates that the apostle considered this a rather significant thing. "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit," that is the love that the Spirit has implanted in the hearts of believers for believers. "That ye strive," it's

a struggle prayer life. "Strive with me in your prayers to God," the whole Trinity involved, through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the love of the Spirit, we pray to God, he said. Prayer is mysterious in its working but mighty in its power, and the apostle believed in it. The apostle of predestination, the apostle of divine election, the apostle of sovereign grace, the apostle of divine calling, the apostle of foreordination, and foreknowledge is also the apostle of fervent prayer. In his mind prayer was the means to the accomplishment of the divine purposes. And he understood prayer therefore to be absolutely essential in the work of God.

When he says struggle he uses a term that was used of Jacob, struggling by the little stream Jabbok, and there struggling with the angel and striving and overcoming. Prayer is that kind of ministry. Now he prayed, he said in verse 31, "That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Jerusalem." Isn't that interesting? Here is the great apostle, the great apostle of prayer, telling us that he prayed, that he might be delivered from the disobedient in Jerusalem and that his ministry might be acceptable to the saints there. What kind of answer did he get? Do you know the story? Well when he got to Jerusalem he was in difficulty immediately. The saints went out and said look Paul, you have a reputation of being a person who's against the law and against the temple and that kind of thing and so you better take a vow. So Paul took a vow but he was seen in the temple area and immediately there was a rout and if it were not for the intervention of the Romans, from Antonia, the apostle might have lost his life in the city of Jerusalem. He prayed, "O God deliver me from the disobedient in Jerusalem," and the answer was, "No."

Now anyone who knows anything about answers knows that that's the kind of answer we sometimes get. If you've ever had any children and they come and say, "Daddy will you do so and so," how many times you fathers have you said, "No." Well if you haven't you ought to say it, and say it a dozen times or so. "No," that's a good answer. That's a good answer to children. Sometimes you will say, "Yes," and then in other times you will say, "No, but." That is, it's not yet the time. The answer's not a definite final, "No," but one that we might say simply, "Wait." "When can I drive the car? When can I drive the car, I'm fifteen, I'm fifteen and a half, I'm fifteen nine months, I'm fifteen ten months, it's just next month," and so on. Yes, no.

Well the apostle received that kind of answer, he prayed, "O pray with me that God will deliver me from the disobedient in the land of Judaea but the answer was, "No, Paul." But in confinement with the Romans who saved him from death the Lord appeared to him and said, "Paul, you've ministered to me in Jerusalem and I'm going to give you a ministry in Rome." What kind of ministry? Well the apostle went down to Caesarea, stayed two years in prison there, finally under the pressure of the times said, "I appeal to Caesar." They said, "Okay, you'll go to Caesar." So in confinement he left and went to the city of Rome, God answering his prayer in God's way. Yes he was delivered, and his ministry acceptable to the saints, yes his ministry is acceptable to the saints but he is delivered through imprisonment and his ministry is acceptable. He said, "Pray with me that I'll get to Spain too," and his ministry is such that not only has it come to Spain, but through the letters that he wrote in prison and through the ministry that he had his ministry is now not only gone to Spain but its gone over the whole four corners of the earth in God's way. God's way, not man's way. So pray with me, and God answered the great apostle's prayer.

Now I know that when he got to Rome it says in the Book of Acts that he dwelt two whole years there in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him. That's the fulfillment of the word that God gave to him when he was in confinement in Jerusalem. But far beyond the apostle's anticipation God gave him deliverance and acceptance. That's the way God does things. He answers our prayers. Sometimes with a no, sometimes with a yes, sometimes with a wait, but always mighty in power.

So let me close, time is up. This is a great section on Christian fellowship. Christian fellowship, that's not going to the ballgame together, not enjoying a banquet together, not having a bull session concerning politics, economics, sports or gossip, true fellowship is fellowship in Christ. True giving is giving out of gratitude and thanksgiving voluntarily as God directs and prayer is might in its working to the glory of God according to the plan of God.

If you are here and you've never believed in Jesus Christ, we invite you to come to him who offered the atoning sacrifice, receiving as a free gift the forgiveness of sins, worked out by the Lord Jesus Christ, available for those who feel themselves by the Holy Spirit to be sinners, come to Christ. Believe in him. Receive as a free gift the forgiveness of sins, and have the peace of God that passes all understanding because it's grounded in the blood that was shed.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee and praise Thee for these wonderful personal insights into the apostle's life and ministry. For the encouragement that we receive as we reflect upon the way in which Thou didst undergird him and use him for Thy glory. O God, use us in measure too. For those who are here without Christ, O God, bring them to him whom to know his life.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]