

Striving and Resting

Opening text: **Romans 15:29-32**

*²⁹ But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. ³⁰ Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in prayers to God** for me, ³¹ that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.*

Introduction: Paul believed so much in the power of churches praying that he asked the Romans to join him in prayer: *strive with me in prayers to God*. In his letters to the Corinthians (2Co.1:11), the Ephesians (Eph. 6:18,19), the Colossians (Col.4:3) and the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:25, 2 Thess. 3:1) he also asked them all to pray. Paul believed the power of praying churches.

a) “*Strive together with me*” ...

He used the word ‘*strive*’ in connection with prayer. In fact, there are several passages in the NT where this word was used. For instance, Paul used it in

Acts 24:16 - *This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

b) “*That you strive together with me in prayers to God*”

The Greek word translated into the English language as *strive* is a compound word that indicates

a corporate effort to fight with intense prayer, likened to a struggle.

The Amplified Bible uses the expression: “*wrestling in prayer*”.

c) This word was also used by Paul in **Colossians 4:12**:

Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

The Amplified Bible (AMPC) says:

Epaphras, who is one of yourselves, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. He is always striving for you earnestly in his prayers, pleading that you may as persons of ripe character and clear conviction stand firm and mature in spiritual growth, convinced and fully assured in everything willed by God.

1. There is a place for intense, wrestling prayer; to strive corporately in prayers to God.

a) Prayer should never be passive

James 5:16-17 AMPC: *¹⁶ Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray also for one another, that you may be healed and restored to a spiritual tone of mind and heart. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available dynamic in its working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have [with feelings, affections, and a constitution like ours]; and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell on the earth for three years and six months.*

b) Anything we do for God should carry that same intensity

Colossians 1:29 – *To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

There's that word again: *striving*. Paul laboured with intensity, as in a wrestling match, striving. All of this was not to attain his own salvation. We are not saved by works but by faith, through grace. However, he used the grace of God to serve even more:

1 Corinthians 15:10 - *¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*

Since this grace is available to us, we pray with greater intensity and we labour more abundantly. We put aside what we can achieve in our own strength and we take hold of His enabling power.

Colossians 1:29 AMPC - *²⁹ For this I labour unto weariness, striving with all the superhuman energy which He so mightily enkindles and works within me.*

So, this is not about striving according to our natural ability or in the flesh, but according to the ability of God, the grace of God, the 'energy which He so mightily enkindles and works' in us and through us!

When we pray and labour in partnership with the ability of God then our prayers avail much and achieve miraculous results.

2. The place of rest

The title of this message is '*striving and resting*'. They sound like words you would never put together in the same sentence, but they are both sides of the same coin. There is a place of intense praying and serving and there is also a place of rest in God.

Romans 15:30-32 AMPC - *³⁰ I appeal to you I entreat you, brethren, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love given by the Spirit, to unite with me in earnest wrestling in prayer to God in my behalf. ³¹ Pray that I may be delivered (rescued) from the unbelievers in Judea and that my mission of relief to Jerusalem may be acceptable and graciously received by the saints (God's people there), ³² So that by God's will I may subsequently come to you with joy (with a happy heart) and be refreshed by the interval of rest in your company.*

Wrestling and *rest* appear in the same passage. There are seasons of intense praying and labouring but never at the exclusion of the rest that comes from God, the refreshing that comes from His presence.

God said to Moses: *My presence will go with you and I will give you rest* (Exodus 33:14)

- We may be fighting on the outside but resting and peaceful on the inside,
- We may be fighting on the outside, but His rest means also the absence of fear and anxiety on the inside

Rest comes from the presence of God and it comes because we trust. We trust Jesus. We trust the finished work of the cross:

- We trust in the power of the blood of Jesus
- We believe that Jesus disarmed principalities and powers and triumph over them on the cross. The devil is defeated!
- We believe that by His stripes we are healed
- We believe and stand on all that Jesus already accomplished for us

What peace that brings, what rest for our soul!

On that note, let us celebrate now the power of Communion