

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"Unanswered Prayer"
Romans 1:9-13

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul's letter to the Romans is essentially a logical treatise on the subject of righteousness through faith apart from works based on the finished work of Christ at calvary.

2. But there are personal notices in the book. One of these is the notation of his prayers for the Roman believers (vv. 8-10). There is more. Consider:-

1. PAUL'S UNANSWERED PRAYER vv. 9, 10, 13.

a. Stated v. 13.

It is clear that Paul did not want the Romans to be ignorant of his intentions. The verb "purpose" is only found here, 3:25, and Eph. 1:9. It must not be diminated. Paul had well laid plans which did not come to fruition. He was hindered in his proposal.

b. Explained

God's promises for prayer are only addressed to believers (cf. Psa. 50:16). Paul, moreover, noted his plans were subject to the "will of God" (v. 10). This is entirely biblical (1 John 5:14, 15). Hence, prayer that is within God's will must be answered. John 14:14 is understood to ask something which is consistent with the holiness of His being and the righteousness of His purposes. This is in perfect harmony with Matt. 18:19 where the Greek for "agree" means to sing the same tune, in the same key, at the same time (a spiritual symphony, harmony). Further, God's sovereignty is not maligned in prayer. Rather, prayer is learning to play the same tune that God's eternal plan calls for and to do what is in harmony with that plan. By so much, prayer brings one to joy in harmony with God and His plans.

c. Applied

Paul prayed, his plans were blocked, but he was not living contrary to God's will. The purpose of his prayer was good (vv. 11-13). Years passed and Paul went to Rome--by a perilous journey in chains, but at peace. He was submitted to the will of God and relaxed.

2. PAUL'S UNUSUAL SERVICE v. 9.

a. Recorded

"Serve" is everywhere in the N.T. used in the sense of the highest worship of God. To serve God is

to worship Him and vice versa, but it is done by Paul in His "spirit."

b. Explained

Man's make-up is three-fold: Body (world consciousness through the five senses), soul (self or ego-consciousness), and spirit (God-consciousness). See 1 Thess. 5:23. When Adam sinned, the whole of this knowledge became distorted and confused. The body still functions after a fashion. The soul manifests all that makes for charm and personality--to a point. The spirit is fallen and rebellious (Rom. 8:7). The mind is part of the spirit (1 Cor. 2:11). The centrality of the life of man is vested in the soul. Into this soul, the spiritual being of man has fallen so that unregenerate man's knowledge of God is false and misleading (1 Cor. 2:14).

c. Applied

At the new birth, God puts into the believer a new spirit. This spirit is from above (born from above, John 3:3). Immediately, there is a struggle between the old soul (flesh) and the new spirit. They are opposites. It is the old "I" (soul) which is crucified and the new "I" (spirit) which is Christ living in us (Gal. 2:20). At the resurrection, our salvation will be complete. The present body is soulish (natural) but the new body will be fully dominated by the new spirit (1 Cor. 15:44). Our bodies will not be ethereal and diaphanous, but like our Lord's which was fully dominated by the spirit.

3. PAUL'S UNQUESTIONED FAITH v. 12.

a. Noted

The main characteristic of love is unselfishness. The interests of the Beloved are paramount. Paul loved the Romans. He lists three concerns for them: 1) Impartation of a spiritual gift towards establishment. 2) Comfort through mutual faith. 3) Obtain fruit among Romans.

b. Explained

The spiritual "gift" he wanted to impart was the gift of faith, knowledge, holiness, and virtue. To get these truths would establish the church (cf. 1:2 with 16:25). The only way to do this is through the Word (1 Pet. 2:2; John 17:17) and this is not personal sharing, but the impartation of spiritual truth by proclamation. The comfort of mutual faith indicates that Paul anticipated being refreshed by the Romans as he gave truth to them. Through all of this, fruit would come among the Roman Gentiles.