

**April 9, 2015**

## **The Willing and Submissive Spirit**

Romans 1:10b (NASB), ***“making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”***

We have been slowly making our way through Romans 1 and we have seen in Romans 1:8-15 that Paul is giving us some marks of true spiritual service. We have established that tragically many “Christians” do not have the true marks of true spiritual service. Instead their service is very superficial in nature and that is often evidenced in how they treat other people. But there are some things, some characteristics or some marks of true, humble, spiritual service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we are making our way through this passage we have seen that the first mark of true spiritual service is that of a thankful spirit. The second mark then is that of having a concerned spirit and today we come to the third mark which is having a willing and submissive heart.

Paul not only prayed for the spiritual growth and well-being of the church in Rome but was eager to be used by God as an instrument to help answer that prayer according to His divine will. The church has always been full of people who are quick to criticize, but seems short of those who are willing to be used by God to solve the problems they are concerned about.

John MacArthur shares the story about a man who approached him one Sunday after a worship service and suggested that the church spend \$25,000 on a telephone answering service that would give a gospel message to everyone who called. This man wanted this for the primary purpose of reaching an unbelieving neighbor of his. MacArthur suggested to him, “Why don’t you just go over and tell him the gospel yourself?”

In most people’s minds it is much easier and more attractive to our fallen nature, to pray for others to be used by the Lord than to pray that God use us. Paul was like Isaiah who in Isaiah 6:8 said, “Here am I. Send me.” We are of course to pray for others who are in the Lord’s service which is a very vital part of Christian fellowship, but one of the true measures of our concern for the Lord’s work is our willingness to be used by Him.

Paul had been ***“making request”*** to God for some time that he would be able to visit Rome and minister to the brothers and sisters there. He hoped evidently to be able to visit them very soon as he writes, ***“perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”***

Paul writes that his eagerness to serve the Lord was ***“by the will of God.”*** Paul did not serve and we are not to serve based on our own desires or our own needs or insights but rather based upon God’s ***“will.”***

In Acts 21:11-14 it says of Paul, ***“When the prophet Agabus dramatically predicted the danger that awaited Paul in Jerusalem, the apostle’s friends begged him not to go. But Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to***

***be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' Upon hearing those words, Luke and the others also submitted to God's sovereignty, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"***

The sovereign plan of God is heading towards us every single day just as He has planned it before the "foundation of the world." There are many who fight against this and who are ultimately cast into the outer darkness because God will not have in fellowship with Him for eternity those who resist Him. God cannot and will not tolerate this. God's plan is set forth in the Bible very clearly. My task then as a Christ follower is to learn it and submit to it and to seek to live in obedience with all that is in His Word. If I do that I will find myself in harmony with God, His Word, and His plans. If instead I choose to set myself against His plans, or disagree with them there will be no peace in my life. Prayer then is learning to submit to the eternal plan that God calls us to and to that which agrees with and is in harmony with the will of God.

The ever more popular plan of demanding things from God and then expecting Him to meet those needs and demands is heretical and perverse. This is just a vain attempt to twist God's perfect and holy will to fit one's own imperfect and sinful will. Paul always sought the advancement of the kingdom of God, not his own agenda and we are to do nothing less.

Friends the self-styled messiahs all seem to live only for themselves and their needs. They come up with elaborate schemes to "win the world for Christ." They think big but their plans seldom show any evidence of being limited by God. Often from a human viewpoint God's plans can seem small and insignificant. Jesus' ministry did not focus on converting the great leaders of His day or on evangelizing the great cities. Instead Jesus choose twelve very average men as His apostles and most of His teaching took place in largely insignificant places. Jesus did not raise massive amounts of money or attempt to use the influence of great men to His advantage. His entire purpose was to do His Father's will in His Father's way and in His Father's time. That is the highest goal for us as well.

Friends are we willing to submit fully to God and His will and plan for our lives? Or would we just rather pray that God will send someone else? My prayer is that we will all submit to God fully no matter the consequences.