

# Disappointment with Prayer

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Date: 31 July 2022

Preacher: BK Smith

[ 0 : 00 ] All right, if you have your Bibles, which you should, you need to be in Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1.

Okay. All right, I got to ask you guys something. And you know this, for some of you who've been Christians for a while, you might be the first to stand up and say this is you, but who here has figured out the secret of prayer?

No, no, don't be modest, you know, put your hand up, stand up. If you have figured out the secret of prayer, make yourself known. It's kind of a tough one, right?

That's the oh boy factor. Thank you, save. It's the oh boy factor. I don't think anybody really has figured out how to pray the perfect prayer at the perfect time in the perfect way.

I think sometimes we know some people that we call prayer warriors, but we always sometimes when we're around people who sometimes who pray well, we start to think, man, they have got a perfect prayer.

[ 1 : 12 ] They're praying it at the perfect time and they're praying it the perfect way. How can I be like that? But we're Christians. We're meant to pray. So how should we be praying?

Has anyone actually figured it out? So this week I went on Google and I figured out, you know, what are the best books to teach us how to pray, right?

You know, there's got to be someone who offers us this wisdom. So I did come across the Amazon top list through Google. There was books on how to pray, how to pray powerfully.

There was books on when to pray. It's best to pray in the morning. And some books had it's best to pray at night. There was books on how to pray healing prayers, how to pray prayers of deliverance, how to listen to God when you pray.

Then, of course, there's books on how to pray for men, how to pray for women, how to pray for your children, how to pray for your adult children, how to pray for your mom, how to pray for your dad.

[ 2 : 12 ] My favorite was seven days of prayer for financial breakthrough, right? There's just no shortage. And if you're single, I came across a book called Prayers to Marry Without Delay, right?

They should have given me that one about 20 years before I got married at 46, right? So anyhow, there's no shortage. But one of the books that I did not find on Amazon or Google was how to be disappointed with prayer.

How to be disappointed with prayer. Like, how do we respond when we're praying in such a way that we believe that this is a God-centered prayer and it doesn't look the way it's supposed to happen for us, right?

How do we live when our prayers aren't answered with the way we want them to be? Or how do we live when our prayer life just doesn't seem to have the bring about the expectations that we have?

I believe we want to be efficient people, right? We want to have effective prayers. We don't want to waste our requests or energy on prayers that God won't answer.

[ 3 : 33 ] But if there was only some way we could figure out the perfect will of God to pray the right prayer. Well, this morning, I want to explore the idea of the unanswered prayer.

And what is to be our attitude toward the unanswered prayer? And how we are going to do this is we are going to look at the prayer life or more importantly, more specifically, we're going to look at a specific prayer that the apostle Paul prayed.

It's recorded for us in Scripture that God never answered. That God never answered. A specific prayer that Paul prayed that God did not answer in a way that Paul hoped he would.

So let's turn to our Bibles in Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1. And I want you to be opening your Scripture. I want you to see what Paul writes here.

And I'm going to begin. I'm going to read this very short passage. It's beginning in verse 8. This is Paul. He says, first, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

[ 4 : 58 ] For God is my witness who I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son that without season I mention you. Always in my prayers, asking that somehow, by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Now here's a couple of things that before we get into the details of the prayer, we need to understand something about the man who is writing this prayer that we get to share in.

[ 6 : 13 ] The fact of the matter is, Paul knew God, right? Paul has written more parts of the New Testament than anyone else outside of the gospels.

So it's safe to say, this man knew something about what God would want. And if anyone, and I mean anyone, knew the mind of God and was able to communicate it clearly, it was Paul.

In fact, as I said, he penned some of the most important and theologically rich books in the New Testament. And by knowing the mind of God, he was able to act according to that knowledge of the mind of God.

And if there was anyone who could act out the mind of God, it had to be Paul. This is a man who was intimately acquainted with God, that this is a man who Jesus personally presented himself to on the day as Paul, or Saul, if you remember, made his way to Damascus and ministered to Paul. So it's safe to say Paul knew God, right? Can I get an amen on that? He knew the mind of God. No one's going to argue that. Here's the second thing. Paul is a get it done kind of guy, right?

[ 7 : 32 ] You guys ever think about that? There are certain people when you have responsibilities, there's certain people you give them to. There's certain people you don't give them to. You know what I mean? I'm not trying to be mean, but you guys know what's true, right?

There's some people are just get it done kind of guys. Do you know who is the most, probably the most get it done kind of guy we know? Paul, right? If you want a church planted, who'd you call? Paul, right? You want a letter written to young pastors? Let's call Paul, right? You want letters written to new churches about all the richness and goodness of Christ? Let's call Paul, right? He was the guy that you called. You need someone to be encouraged? Get Paul in there. You need a young man to be disciple? Let's get Paul involved. The guy was what? No one wanted to go to preach to the Gentiles?

I know, let's call Paul, right? He was the guy who was willing to do anything that God called him to. In fact, before Paul was Paul, he was Saul as an unbeliever.

[ 8 : 33 ] He was still a motivated guy, right? You wanted someone to put Christians in jail? Just call Saul, right? You wanted someone to martyr Christians?

Just call Saul. You wanted someone to travel all across the Middle East to persecute Christians? Saul was your guy. This guy was a motivated, get it done kind of guy.

In fact, like I said, when no one was willing to go to the Gentiles, Paul was ready to go.

So there's two things that I really want us to get when we understand Paul. One, Paul knew the glories of Jesus Christ. He knew the mind of God because he had penned these letters.

And he was also this get it done kind of guy. So when we look at if anybody knew what the will of God for him to do in that moment, it had to be Paul.

[ 9 : 32 ] So let's look again at the text. Let's check out verses 9 and 10 again. Paul writes, Here we find Paul writing this incredible letter to the church of Rome.

And in his introduction, Paul tells us a few things about them. If you notice in verse 8, Paul thanks God for their faith, which has been proclaimed to the world.

So the group of Christians that had gathered in Rome had demonstrated this rich and deep faith of Jesus Christ that was being communicated elsewhere. Verse 9 and 10 tells us that Paul prayed for them unceasingly.

If you notice in verse 10 and 11, it says Paul wants to see them. In fact, in verse 11, he says, I long to see you.

Why? He says so we can mutually encourage each other's faith. Anybody want that? Anybody need that at times, right?

[ 10 : 58 ] We need a brother or sister in the Lord to come beside us and to mutually encourage us in the faith. And here he says, Not only that, I want to preach the gospel to the Romans.

Right? Rome is the center of the Roman empire that rules the world. So of all the places that Paul would like to go, this is it. This is a great prayer.

In fact, it's an amazing prayer. And you would think that this is the type of prayer that must be the kind of prayer that God ordains.

That this is the type of God-led prayer that God must allow. So I could argue if there was a prayer that God would want to answer, this would be the prayer.

It would be a prayer that encourages Christian fellowship. It would be a prayer that encourages mutual encouragement of the saints. It's a prayer for the furthering of the gospel to one of the most renowned cities of the world.

[ 12 : 04 ] And it was going to be a gospel to a group of people who frankly really needed to hear the gospel. But notice in verse 10.

Paul qualifies it with asking that somehow by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

Few observations. One, Paul is all about what God wants. Amen? There's someone who wants what God wants. It's Paul. And isn't that the same with us?

When we put a prayer in, we kind of throw in by God's will, right? We always want to make sure it's got God's will. And sometimes we say that term almost to cover up for what could be future disappointment, right?

You know, if I can only win that 70 million mega jackpot lottery, right? God's will, right? You know, or, but we play real praise. If only someone would come to know the Lord or if I can only really get that promotion or whatever it is.

[ 13 : 17 ] And you guys know, your minds know what you pray. We kind of throw in this term by God's will and we're really hoping it's God's will. Sometimes we're even known to say it begrudgingly at times.

It's the catch all of hope or to catch, as I said, the disappointment of our request. Well, it was God's will that my prayer wasn't answered, we say.

What a holy response that is, isn't it? And sometimes we're honest with ourselves. We're disappointed. We think that prayer that would honestly uplift the Lord or seek to further his testimony should be answered.

But I want you to see something in Paul's prayer. Paul really, really, really wanted to see these saints in Rome. Notice verse 10 again.

He says, now at last succeed in coming to you. Verse 11, he says, I long to see you. Verse 13, I have often intended.

[ 14 : 35 ] And what's interesting, when we look at that word intended, it's such a polite word. But when Paul says, I intended, he actually says that he purposed, he planned, he designed to come to you.

Here's the question. Who here would like to go to Hawaii? Come on, don't be ashamed. Who would like to go to Hawaii verification, right? Do you know what the difference between you and someone who purposed to go to Hawaii?

The person who purposed to go to Hawaii has already bought his ticket. Right? He's already made the reservations at the hotel. Everything in his life, he's organized.

He's got his best aloha type shirt. He's ready to go to Hawaii. He's different than someone who just says, I want to go see you. Do you understand the distinction between the two people?

I believe Paul is that guy who's already got the plans. He knows when he wants to go. He knows how he's going to go. And he cannot wait.

[ 15 : 36 ] That he's already put the wheels in motion to go to Rome, to be with the saints, to do these things that he wants to do. In fact, Romans 15, 23 says that he has an earnest desire to be with them in Rome.

So Paul is not giving them a polite thought. Right? You guys remember last week, my friend Gary, I hadn't seen him in a while. You know, at the end, you know, we saw each other off.

I dropped him off at the ferry. He was going to see his sister. And the question is, you know, hey, I hope to see you in Greece. Yeah, I'd love to go to Greece, but I don't know what's going to fit in my plans right yet.

Or, you know, but it's not something that you offer. Hey, I'll see you tomorrow. Or as much as we had a really great time, you want to say I'll see you soon? We don't know.

I haven't made those plans. But it's polite to say that, right? Hey, I can't wait for you to come back to Squamish. Church loved here and you preach. You can come and preach again, right? Is that, right?

[16:40] You know, we're just putting out those polite kind of statements. I don't believe this is what Paul is doing. I believe that just isn't a normal type of salutation in his letter.

This is Paul pouring out his heart on a scroll that he really, really longs to be with these people. That he definitely wants to be encouraged by them and he wants to be there with them.

So that's the first observation. And you see the situation we are observing here in Romans 1. That Paul is communicating the deepest longings of his heart to a people he loves.

You want to know something? I might be jumping ahead to the story, but you guys who know your Bibles, it didn't quite go down the way Paul intended it to.

Right? It said, in fact, Romans 15 tells us that Paul had a plan to stop off in Rome, do these amazing things, and he was going to go to Spain and bring the gospel to the Spaniards.

[17:56] It never happened. Church history tells us that Paul never made it to Spain. In fact, by the time he went to Rome, he was actually a prisoner of the emperor and was put in prison.

I don't think that's what Paul anticipated when he said, I can't wait to see you. You visiting me in jail. You see, do all the amazing things that he wanted to accomplish, and then he wanted to head out to Spain to bring the gospel to another unreached people group.

And I think we have to admit, if there was a holy plan, Paul's plan was it. But he never made it. There is no doubt that Paul wanted to do all these things.

I'm sure he prayed, he planned, he prepared. But he also tells us quite clearly, somehow by God's will. You see, Paul doesn't qualify his statement by, not if time permits, not if I have the money, or not if my health holds up.

He's saying these words with a complete 100% intention to go. But Paul knows that if it's God's will that he is to accomplish all that is on his heart, the time will be there, the money will be there, the health will be there.

[19:31] Does that surprise you? Sometimes we worry about, right, we pray, and then we wonder about how it's going to come up, or how it's going to work out, when the reality is the confidence is, if it's God's will, it's going to work out, amen?

And I'm not saying this now as a coverage for disappointment. It's an understanding that our desire, we know are biblical and true, and that God wants to accomplish these things, therefore I don't need to worry about the little things.

God's going to get that done, right? It's like if God really wants me to go to Greece and visit my friend Gary and mutually encourage him, it's going to happen. I have to start preparing for it, but it's got to happen.

It's going to happen. So that's the first observation. The second observation I think we need to make from Paul's prayer, not only does Paul want to do what God wants, but Paul also knows that any plan that he has needs to be blessed by God.

You get that? Any plan that he has needs to be blessed by God. All right, let's continue. Looking at verse 10. Take a look at verse 10. He says, Always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

[20:57] Notice where the power of succession or succeeding is. It's not coming from the strength or the money or the timing or the planning that he does.

The strength of the plan is found in God's will. Here Paul knows that his success in accomplishing these wonderful things, the mutual encouragement, the building of these saints, the sharing the gospel with the Romans and then to Spain are all good things.

But Paul knows will only succeed if God is a part of it. Paul's intense desire, Paul's solid and sound plan, which appears to be so great and so wonderful, are not the reasons why Paul will experience

success.

Success will only happen if it is God's will. You can be honest.

Has anybody forced a prayer or forced an answer to a prayer? And what I mean by that is you had a will that you thought it was so good, it had to be by God that you forced it to happen.

[ 22 : 18 ] I've known people who've sold their homes and moved to different places all to experience disaster. I've seen people leave one job, go to another, thinking it was going to be fantastic and it was a disaster.

When I was at seminary, it was really interesting. Many men show up that believe they are meant to be there only to drop out of the first semester. Even though they believe that God was calling to that, some got overextended with money, overextended with their spouse.

And what I mean was they were called but their wife wasn't ready, right? There's more than enough stories of people who go part of the way, but for some reason that plan falls apart.

And when you ask them, did they plan it accordingly, they answer, well, I thought I could get by with faith, right? God loves me. It's a good plan.

It must work. Rather than knowing or praying if God truly blessed that plan. One of my best friends, when I grew up, he got married.

[ 23 : 35 ] He found a home that was much like the one he grew up in. Back then, you know, a home for \$250,000 would be what a cottage in, I don't know, Caribou Lake or something up there, right?

\$250,000 wouldn't get you much. But when I was young, \$250,000 was a lot of money. It turned out they had to both work full time. They ended up having to take on side hustles just to keep that house afloat.

What happens, of course, you have two kids still working it. Are they spending time together? No, no, no. Divorce, crush family all over.

Was that God's will to happen? No, I don't believe it was. I believe that was their will that they wanted, that they thought they could accomplish as 20-year-olds, and it ended into so far what seems to be a lifetime of disaster.

Why? Because they pushed the boundaries of what they thought God wanted for them because this house was so much like the house we grew up with. You see, Paul, as a slave to Jesus Christ, will not move until it is clear to him that it is God's will that he should do it.

[ 24 : 50 ] Paul knows even if the plan, the desire, the intensity all seem perfect, he's not going to move. But let me share with you what is so amazing with Paul.

He still doesn't not share his desire to be with them, but he tells the Romans, he says, I really want to see you. In fact, I long to see you, but I'm waiting on God.

I'm submitting to God, and I'm submitting myself to God's blessing. So here we see Paul submitting himself and his proposals absolutely and utterly to the will of God.

What's amazing is we also know the stories of people who waited, right? I have a great friend of mine. He was young like me. He wanted to go to seminary. He enrolled. His wife resisted, resisted, resisted, and he realized, I got to pull out.

What was really encouraging, when I graduated, when I was 40 years old, he showed up. 20 years later than when he first showed up for his first year. And the Lord had finally moved in his wife's life that she was ready to take that journey with him, and now they're both pastoring in Seattle.

[ 26 : 10 ] But he waited 20 years for that to happen. Some of you women know it's the same thing. You're waiting 20, 30 years for your husband to come along to be able to do and experience the things that you want in the Lord.

You know if you push it, it brings division. But your desire is to wait and honor God with your life.

So, like Paul, you wait because you know that without God there is no blessing.

And the third observation that Paul has is Paul accepts the obstacles. Take a look at verse 13. He says, I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but this far have been prevented.

Another word that is used here for prevented is hindered, restrained. And what that means is something or someone was preventing Paul from doing what he wanted to do.

And Paul recognized that. It wasn't that his prayers weren't good enough or they weren't for the right things. It wasn't that his desires weren't good enough or they weren't for the right things. It wasn't that his motives weren't good enough or for the right things.

[ 27 : 25 ] But there was something else at work here. Obstacles. Let me share with you four obstacles to answered prayer.

The first obstacle that many people have to deal with is the works are not done where you are. The mean I say is that God still has a responsibility for you in that place, in that time that you have to meet.

I know many people who've got a strong desire when it comes to ministry. You know, they're ready. They're ready to tackle the mission field. But then they have to come to the realization that to go out in the mission field, it's not going to be good with the family situation.

So they wait and they wait for the kids to grow and are faithful in doing the things of God before they step out and do those things. It's like we talk about this here at church all the time.

A lot of people want to get ministries going in different areas of the city. But the first primary ministry that we have is what to our families? Amen? It's to one another. These are the things that we need to grow in and sustain before we're even able to be comfortable in reaching out to be effective.

[ 28 : 36 ] So here Paul is desiring to go to Rome and to Spain for the purpose of the gospel. But what's interesting, he tells us in Romans 15, 22, he says, This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

He says, So what Paul was essentially saying, I want to go to Rome, I want to go to Spain, but guess what?

There's a greater need in Jerusalem and that's where I'm going to go. And you know what happens in Jerusalem, right? He gets in a row with the Pharisees, they put him in shackles, and then they bring him to Rome that way.

But at that time, he knew his responsibility was to get the job done that God had for him. The work is done in Corinth where he's now serving, but he's seeking God out, his will, and God reveals to him that Jerusalem is the place that he needs to go.

Like I said, I meet a lot of wonderful Christians who want to go and do wonderful works for God elsewhere. But there's still a lot of work at home that needs to be done.

[ 30 : 02 ] You guys remember yesterday, last Sunday, my friend Gary was here. Gary is, he is a prototypical encourager for missions. You guys heard that, right? When you hear his message, you want to just drop everything in head out.

But there's a couple of qualifications that he gave for that. One of them is, you need to grow in the Lord. You need to be in the best place that you can possibly be spiritually to be able to head out overseas.

It's not just a willingness, but you have to have something to offer, right? And we have to take care of those things. We need to start in our homes, the places where God has us.

Sadly, too many people head out and think they're doing the things of God, but they end up wrecking the relationships that are primarily there for him. So Paul's work may have been done at Corinth.

Paul wanted to go to Europe, but God instead sends him to Jerusalem. So the first God-ordained obstacle that we often have is the reason why God doesn't bless those prayers is there's still work to be done where we are.

[ 31 : 13 ] The second obstacle that Paul encounters is what I simply call life's circumstances. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul was telling them, Hey, I wanted to do some things for you, but you know what?

I got sick. I got sick. In fact, verse 8 of 2 Corinthians 1, he says, For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia, for we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself, that they were so sick they thought they were going to die.

Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was made, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

You know what the Corinthian church accused Paul of being? Unreliable. That's what they said. You didn't show up. You're an unreliable apostle.

So he wrote back, unreliable. I was almost dead. Right? So Paul acknowledges that sometimes being in Corinth would have been a really good thing, but life happens.

[ 32 : 32 ] Anybody can answer or admit to that? Life happens. You had a plan. And all of a sudden, life happens. Sometimes it's an accident. Sometimes it's taking care of a parent.

A spouse is not able. You lose your job. Your family situation changes. There's a lot of things that you might want that are really good, and they sound so holy.

But for some reason or another, life comes in. You know what? That's okay. God understands that. In fact, sometimes he uses life situations to keep you in the situation where you are, rather than take you where you want to be. The third obstacle to many of our prayers being answered is found in 1 Thessalonians 2.18, and it's simply Satan.

Paul says that there is a spiritual war that is going on, and that when we try to accomplish those things of God, we have an enemy. His name is Satan, and he is fighting against us.

[ 33 : 44 ] The book of Job illustrates for us so many of the ways that Satan can come against the saint. Sometimes it is sickness. Sometimes it is injury.

Sometimes it's even loss of life. But probably, and most often, the biggest obstacle that we can experience, and that's the fourth obstacle, and I'll read this to you from Acts 16.

And this is Luke writing, and he's talking about Paul. And he said, they went through the region of Phrygia in Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

The fourth obstacle was God. God was purposely preventing Paul from preaching the word in Asia. And he says, and when they had come up to Mycenae, they attempted to go to Bithynia.

But the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So passing by Mycenae, they went down to Troas. And then finally, a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, come over to Macedonia and help us.

[ 34 : 57 ] And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. You see, Paul thought Phrygia and Galatia were the way to go.

Maybe even Bithynia would be a place to go. But God had already given Asia a big red light. And it was Macedonia where God wanted them. One of my close friends, and I don't think he would resent me saying this, but he would have been a bigot.

And he did not. He lived in Southern California. He was very anti-Spanish people, Mexicans and that type of thing. Then he finally becomes a Christian. God changes his heart.

He marries a Mexican woman. And his whole heart's desire is to go into Mexico and to plant a church and reach unreached people. And he gets stuck with a very debilitating disease where he has to be in the hospital almost on a weekly basis.

So he spends his whole life for years preparing the language, preparing theology, and he doesn't get to do what God calls him for.

[ 36 : 10 ] You know what he does now? He teaches in a seminary, the Spanish section, preparing Mexican and Central American, South American pastors with the gospel. And he's able to do that at home, preparing.

And now he's not just multiplied himself in one area of the world. He's now got literally hundreds of men that he's built into preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, right?

Not all plans work according to our will, but they work according to God's will, and they become so much greater than ourselves. Amen?

The thing is, he had the right idea, but not in the right place or the right way to go about doing it. But here's the question that we always struggle with, my friends.

How did Paul know that this was the Spirit? We don't always get a dream with a man from Macedonia telling us to come here, right?

[ 37 : 08 ] Anybody have that dream? Obviously not, because you're still in Squamish, right? But something must have happened in this spiritual realm.

Well, here's a few things that we know. We know that Paul was sensitive to the Spirit. He knew what he should be doing. But he wasn't quite sure where he should do it.

So how did he figure it out? Well, the fact of the matter is, if you were to use your concordance in your Bible and look up the will of God, the Bible actually teaches us what that will is.

And if you guys remember, we're going back almost five years. One of the first sermons I ever preached here at the church was how to know God's will. God actually spells it out in his word what his will is.

The first thing is, God's will it is that you be saved. You know that? God wants to see people come to an understanding of his truth. That is God's will.

[ 38 : 09 ] The second element of God's will, it is that you be Spirit-filled. And I'm not talking a charismatic experience, but the word fill is like a sail on a boat that is constantly filled with God's Holy Spirit.

That it is what drives you as you go on the ocean of life. You with me on that one? The third thing is that you are to be sanctified.

What that means is you are to live a holy life. It's like someone who comes and says, you know, I really feel like my friend. Hey, we need to buy this house.

But you know what? You would have indebted himself, which he did, to more than he could handle, which would have been that sin in that area. He should have waited, been patient, and build up to that. So when we're saved, we're Spirit-filled, we're sanctified.

The fourth element is God's will, is that we're to serve one another in God's church. Do you know that? The idea that someone can be a Christian outside of God's community of people is antithetical to the Bible.

[ 39 : 17 ] That you have been given a gift, and if you are squandering that gift by not using it in the church, you're disobeying God. You know that? You're disobeying God.

So the whole point is you are to be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, serve. And there's also another word that God says that is God's will, is that you will actually suffer. That you will suffer on account of the gospel, which Paul has done marvelously.

So when people say, I've had a perfect life, I've had no suffering, that's the first clue to me that this person might not be saved. Because God is going to bring challenges in their life.

Why? To grow their faith. What's interesting is that God does give us an understanding of things when we are living for him in such a way that we are reading our Bible, we're close, and we're doing the things that God has commanded us to us.

God also gave us minds to think. Some of you, when making a decision, you write out a little line and you write the pros, the cons. You count each total.

[ 40 : 24 ] Hey, I've got nine on this side, two on the other. This means I'm going to go with this decision. But if you've ever been there and you've ever done that, then all of a sudden you're like, I still don't feel right about this decision. Even though I've got like 20 things saying yes, and there's two things that are saying no, often I believe that is the work of the Spirit in your life saying, stop.

Wait. Slow down. There's still other things for you to do right here, right now. Everything might look perfect, but you will experience an uncertainty in your spirit about it.

I say when you're about to make a decision and you feel that there's this dread or unhappiness, I say don't do it. Don't act. Don't move. Wait.

The fact of the matter is Asia needed the gospel. Amen? Paul wanted to go to Asia with the gospel. The reality is sometimes you and I need an inner assurance that we need the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

And we get this by living the holy lives that he has called us to be and understanding the word of God as he's meant it to be in our lives. When we're doing these things, we will be given certainty.

[ 41 : 50 ] If you're uncertain, don't move. Keep praying. Keep making requests. And keep working to what God ultimately wants for you.

My encouragement is to not despair. To not be disappointed. To not be irritated. To not be annoyed with God.

God is not against you. He is for you. Amen? The reason we keep praying is so that our hearts can stay attuned to God's will.

And it's to make the timing right. So when we find ourselves getting to the place, my encouragement to you is to look to Paul. Keep the fire going.

If it is indeed a holy desire, continue to pursue that holy desire. And often there are other avenues that are there before you that you might never have noticed before.

[ 42 : 52 ] There's a warning though I have for you. I don't think God suffers complainers very much. If you find yourself more complaining about what God's doing than being joyful what God's doing, the problem is not with God, the problem is with you and your heart.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to always be anchored to God's will. See, the goal of this Christian life is to be entirely submitted to the will of God.

Not at just some little times, but always. The reality is going to Rome would have been a very good thing. Going to Spain would have been a really even greater thing, I think.

However, after his work in Jerusalem, Paul went there, got captured by the Jews, he pleaded Roman citizenship, and he got a paid trip to Rome in shackles.

However, from prison, Paul wrote letters that far outlived his life in his ministry. You know what? [ 43 : 59 ] The gospel did make it to Spain. Church history tells us that it was actually the Apostle James that was the one that God chose to take that word west to the Spaniards at that time.

The fact of the matter is, God doesn't always need us for the things that we think he needs us for. But that doesn't mean he's got a plan that's not going to bring about eternal consequences. Amen? Let's pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, I think most people understand that there's always been some element of our lives that didn't really go according to plan.

Even though we thought that plan was great, it was a plan that we thought was blessed by you. It was a plan that we thought would bring great glory to you.

But for some reason or another, and often not because of sin or not because of the plan not being good enough, it just didn't work out the way we intended it to.

[ 45 : 18 ] For those who continue to draw close to you in their lives, they can state quite plainly that God did mean it for good.

that God has indeed blessed them in ways that they could have never counted. For some, it appears that they're gifted with the curse of complaining.

And sadly, too often, they miss the beauty that is around them. Father, we truly believe, and as we're going to be learning next week, how sufficient you are, how you have given us everything in this world to live the type of life that you have called us to, that there is nothing in our lives that is somehow insufficient, that through you, we do indeed have sufficient victory, we have sufficient forgiveness, and we have sufficient salvation.

And because of those things, when we walk with you, we can know what your will is, and to pray according to those things and desire the things that you have called us to.

Father, it's interesting that the word in the New Testament that turned the world upside down is the word humility. Often we seek things based in our pride rather than in the humility that you have called us to.

[ 47 : 00 ] So, Father, for those that are still trying to figure out your way, that have a just and right plan, I pray that you reveal to them in your spirit what they are to do, and more importantly, when they are to do it.

I also pray that you'd give them a spirit that's tuned into your spirit so that they know when to go and when to stop. Father, never make us be blind to the situations that are around us.

Give us open eyes, understanding hearts, the lives that you have put into our world. It's one thing to be living in this most incredible, beautiful part of the country.

But there is so much damage here done by the lies of Satan. May we continue to pray, to hold to the truth, and look for those opportunities to bless you in all that we do.

And all of God's people said, Amen. Amen.