

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY FORTY

Praying with Your Whole Heart

Romans 15:30–33

We say religious words, we've tried everything else, so we toss out a word hoping that somehow changes come. Ah, but prayer is meant to be prayer with our whole hearts.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PRAYER. We know it is important, but it often feels more like a burden than a privilege, like drudgery rather than an effective strategy for spiritual victory. We *want* to consider access to the Most High God as a sacred honor, not commonplace. We *desire* real change in our prayer lives, not just more facts about prayer to fill some mental space.

But where can we find models of prayer to inspire us? Perhaps the Christians in the early church can light our way. Let's join a first-century prayer meeting in Jerusalem to see how it's done.

Herod Agrippa I, the monarch ruling over Judea, after mistreating some who belonged to the church, “had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword” (Acts 12:2). When “Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter”—probably intending to put him to death too (12:3). Desperate, the Christians in Jerusalem huddled together and “prayed very earnestly” for Peter (12:5). That night, their prayers were answered!

God sent His angel and rescued Peter, who was chained between two soldiers and under the constant watch of four squads (12:6–12). After leaving the prison, Peter headed to the place where the believers were praying. When he knocked, a little girl named Rhoda saw him and ran to tell them.

Did they believe God rescued him since they were praying? Read their response: “*You're out of your mind!*” they said” (12:15, emphasis added). When the girl insisted, they decided, “It must be his angel” (12:15). Peter kept banging on the door until, finally, they let him in! Yes, they prayed, but they didn't really believe God would answer.

So, whether in the first century or in the twenty-first—all believers struggle with prayer. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll turn to some timeless truths that can help us not just go through the motions of prayer but pray with our whole heart.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

*O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge. (Psalm 62:8)*

Draw near to God. Unload your burdens, one by one. Release all your fears and anxieties into God's capable hand, recognizing that He is your source of protection and peace amid life's challenges.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

During his ministry, Paul suffered severe hardships. The Holy Spirit had foretold that chains and afflictions awaited him (*Acts 20:22–24; 21:3–4*). Yet, instead of giving up, Paul pressed forward, leaning on God's abounding grace and *by asking his brothers and sisters to pray*.

Paul requested the Ephesian believers to pray that he could “keep on speaking boldly for [God]” even while he was in prison (Ephesians 6:20). Similarly, he asked the Colossian believers to pray that:

God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned. (Colossians 4:3 NASB)

Paul asked the congregation in Thessalonica to pray “that the Lord's message [would] spread rapidly” and that Paul would “be rescued from wicked and evil people” (2 Thessalonians 3:1–2). Why was this seasoned missionary so heavily dependent on the prayers of others?

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Observation: Paul’s Urgent Appeal to Pray

Take the first step of our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, observation. To observe *Romans 15:30–33*, read it thoughtfully to find out what it says.¹ Let’s observe a few prayer principles that Paul emphasized.

Awareness of Need and Willingness to Get Involved—Romans 15:30

Look at Paul’s vulnerable tone and honesty in *Romans 15:30* as he implored the Roman believers to become aware and engaged. He knew his ministry’s success rode on the wings of others’ prayers. He used the same term as he did in *12:1*, “I urge you.” According to *15:22–23*, what was the deep desire behind Paul’s prayer request?

In *15:30*, Paul called the church to get involved. What did he urge them to do with him that was so vital?

Preciseness of Specific Requests—Romans 15:31–32

In *Romans 15:31–32*, note Paul’s preciseness. Summarize his three requests.

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Restfulness in God’s Will—Romans 15:32–33

As you glance over [Romans 15:32–33](#), what stands out to you concerning Paul’s desire and God’s sovereignty or will?

In summary, be aware of people’s needs. Be willing to get involved. Pray for specific requests. Rest in God’s will. Put your whole heart into your prayers and leave the results with God who “gives [you] his peace” (Romans 15:33).



Interpretation: Praying with Your Whole Heart

Now, take the step of interpretation by finding out what the passage means.¹ In [Romans 15:22–23, 30](#), we observed that Paul made the Roman believers aware of his needs. How would you explain the importance in your prayer life of knowing specific needs?

*You cannot pray if you’re not aware of a need, so make yourself aware of needs.
That means you’re engaged in life. You’re not removed. Your shades aren’t drawn.
Your door isn’t locked. You’re in touch with people. And when you say, “I will
pray,” you keep your word. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Paul urged his brothers and sisters to “join in my struggle” (Romans 15:30). It is an athletic term that describes any struggle or fight, especially under great strain or in the face of strong opposition. Look up the Greek verb *synagonizomai*, translated as “strive together with me” (15:30 NASB), at billmounce.com. How does this term help deepen your understanding of prayer?

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The word means agonize along with me. You're not just tossing up a name to heaven, you're identifying with the person you're praying for. You find out enough to know what he or she is going through. You feel with this person the ache, the void, the hurt, the need. What seems to be the impossibility, the emptiness, the pressure. And you take it on. You agonize with the other one who is in agony. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul asked the Roman believers to pray so that “by the will of God,” he would be able to come to them with a joyful heart in [Romans 15:32–33](#). Explore the article “[Sovereignty of God](#)” in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at [biblegateway.com](#). How would you explain Paul’s taking into consideration God’s will (and sovereignty) when he prayed? What does this mean for us believers?

Hey, relax, God’s at work. See, when you pray, your attitude changes. Your expectations fly out the window. It isn’t about you. Who cares about what you want? It’s about God. And we care about what He wants. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Priority and Importance of Prayer

The next step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, correlation, helps us understand what Scripture as a whole says about prayer.

The barren woman who bore many children, the prophet who saw a downpour after a three-and-a-half-year drought, or the king who had his life extended by 15 years—all testify that the earnest prayer of a righteous person avails much ([1 Samuel 1:1–20](#); [1 Kings 18:41–46](#); [Isaiah 38:1–8](#); and [James 5:16–18](#)). Which of these stories touch you the most and why?

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Compare *Matthew 26:37*; *Romans 15:30*; *Colossians 4:12–13*; and *2 Timothy 4:7*. How did Jesus, Paul, and Epaphras model what it means to agonize in prayer? Why does prayer involve struggle?

Without wanting to sound overly dramatic, there are times when in prayer we break the grip of the adversary. The grip of the adversary is wrapped around a victim. Our friend. The one we love. Our pastor. Our neighbor. The woman who's just learned she's a widow. The parents of the wayward kid. The enemy has come. And when we enter into that situation, we agonize with the one who's going through it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How do passages such as *Romans 15:30–33*; *Philippians 4:6–7*; *1 Timothy 2:1–2*; and *1 John 5:14* emphasize the priority and importance of prayer, showing that only in God's will can we find tranquility or refreshing rest?

Prayer will give you rest like nothing else. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Pray!

Helping us apply our passage, Pastor Chuck Swindoll reminds us that, based on Paul's example, *prayer deserves top priority*. Before any ministry effort, pray and ask others to pray. Why? Because *prayer is essential*. We can't do God's work without it. The result? *Prayer helps you experience tranquility*. You release all the outcomes to God and rest in His will.

In what current situations in your life is the Holy Spirit nudging you to lay in prayer at the Lord's feet so that you can experience peace? Why not release these situations to Him?

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You go to God, and you pray. And you say, “Lord, I’m Yours. You’re mine. I lay this before You. First of all, it’s Yours. It’s Your battle, Your struggle. It’s Your work. Your church.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Think of a missionary in another country, a single parent struggling with his or her prodigal adolescent, a friend going through some health problems, or a family member in need. Bring your specific requests to the Lord with thanksgiving that He has heard your pleas.

Oh, the oversized burdens that we sometimes carry, the sleepless nights that make us weary, and the many challenges we face that trouble our hearts because they exceed our human ability! Yet, the door to God’s throne room is always open to us, day and night, waiting for us to unload our hearts at the feet of the Almighty One.



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for granting me unlimited access to Your throne of grace, to lay down my burdens and exchange my fears for Your peace and tranquility! Help me trust You more and more, agonizing in prayer for things that are impossible for humans but simple for You to do. Help me pray with my whole heart. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2008, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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