

Romans 15:20-33—The Absolute Necessity Of Fervent Prayer For Effective Ministry

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Introduction

Romans 14:1 to 15:7 focused on the need for believers to have an attitude of acceptance and patience when it comes to preferences and minor doctrinal differences—strong and loving relationships are essential if we are going to experience unity in the church. Then in Romans 15:8 the focus changed to ministry, and how having a common vision or goal is also essential for unity in the church. We can have different roles, but still work together towards the same goal, just like happens in the armed forces.

In the armed forces, everybody demonstrates their submission to each other and to the higher rank by being *sub* to the *mission*—the mission or goal is more important than any individual. This unifying and *self-sacrificing* submission to the greater goal of winning the war is absolutely necessary for the army to have any chance of winning the war. The same is true in marriage, with the husband and wife fulfilling their different roles with their goal being to have a God honouring marriage. Also, the same must be true in the church, with each member of the body of Christ seeking first the advancement of the kingdom of God above their own wants, needs, desires, and preferences.

The prayer that Paul prayed for the church in Rome is very important: *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:13). We must always remember that what God desires of us is impossible to achieve on our own strength; for us to be submitted to each other and have the right attitude towards each other, we must first be submitted to God—it is only when we are yielded to God that we will experience the power of God flowing through us. Only when enabled by God will believers be able to esteem others as being better than themselves (see Philippians 2:3). Until we first yield or submit ourselves to God (we make ourselves *sub* to, or less important than, the *mission*), we will be, by default, controlled by our old sinful and selfish human nature. This week, we continue to look at ministry, both outside the church, and serving others inside the church.

Outline

1. In his role as a missionary (part of his role as an apostle), Paul focused on evangelising unreached people groups. (15:20-21)
2. Paul’s plan to visit the church in Rome (15:22-24)
3. The financial gift to the church in Jerusalem (15:25-29)
4. Paul’s urgent request for prayer (15:30-33)

Romans 15:20-33 NKJV

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, ²¹ but as it is written:

***“To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand.”***

For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴ whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷ It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸ Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. ²⁹ But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

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. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

1. In his role as a missionary, Paul focused on evangelising unreached people groups

Romans 15:20-21 NKJV

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, ²¹ but as it is written:

***"To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand."** [Isaiah 52:12]*

Like Paul, some people are called by God to be missionaries, or church planters. They go to where the gospel has never reached before, and do a pioneering work there. God spoke to Paul through Isaiah 52:12, showing him that he was called to break new ground and bring the good news of the Gospel to those who had never heard it before. This is a good example of how God can speak to us through Scripture. God has done that many times for my wife and I as we were seeking God's will and direction for our lives.

However, other people have a different calling. Once a church is established, God has equipped others to continue the work that someone else has started, and disciple those believers who are there. If you are not sure what your role in the kingdom of God is, then seek God and ask Him to reveal it to you. When He does, follow your calling, loving God by serving in the church with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

2. Paul's plan to visit the church in Rome

Romans 15:22-24 NKJV

For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴ whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

v 22 **For this reason:** The reason that Paul couldn't get to the church in Rome is simply that he was too busy reaching other unreached people groups. His missionary journeys stretched over 2,200 km. With so many people to share the gospel with, Paul was an incredibly busy man.

v 23 **But now no longer having a place in these parts:** After the many years of mission work in the eastern part of the Roman empire, Paul could say that I'm finished here, and now I can go somewhere else, to the western side, past Rome. Paul finished what he started before he moved on to new areas.

"The vast area of opportunity in other parts of the empire kept Paul from visiting Rome sooner. He was not hindered from going to Rome by satanic opposition or physical obstacles, but by the challenge of completing his work right where he was. He was so faithful in his evangelistic outreach that he was able to say that he had no more place to minister in those parts. This did not mean that Paul personally witnessed to every person in that area, but that he took the Gospel and left behind witnessing churches and Christians who would carry on the work. Paul finished one job before he started another one, a good example for our evangelistic ministry today." (Warren W. Wiersbe)

v 24 **Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while:** The church in Rome was already established, so all Paul wanted to do was use it as a base of operations for the western part of the empire, like he did with the church of Antioch previously for the eastern part, so he could evangelise the frontiers beyond Rome in Spain.

v 24 **For I hope to see you on my journey:** Paul had desires to go places, but things didn't always work out the way he thought they would. Instead of getting to Rome by his own accord, he would go there as a prisoner of Rome. Instead of reaching the eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire, the frontier that God would have Paul reach was the very heart of the empire itself, including Caesar Nero—"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³ **so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ**" (Philippians 1:12-13 NKJV).

Church tradition says that Paul was acquitted and released after waiting for two years for his trial, then he did actually go to Rome and minister to the western parts of the empire. However, this is not confirmed by Scripture. The book of Acts closes with Paul being under house arrest in Rome for two years waiting for his trial.

3. The financial gift to the church in Jerusalem

Romans 15:25-29 NKJV

But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. [Acts 20:1-3] ²⁷ It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their [the Jews] spiritual things, their [the gentiles] duty is also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸ Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. ²⁹ But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Romans 15:25-29 NLT

But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. ²⁶ For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least

they can do in return is to help them financially. ²⁸ As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. ²⁹ And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together.

v 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to [serve] minister to the saints [Jewish believers]. ²⁶ For it pleased those [gentile believers] from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain [financial] contribution for the poor among the saints [Jewish believers] who are in Jerusalem: This is referred to in Acts 20:1-3. 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9 record the collection from the gentile believers in Greece for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. There were two main reasons for this special gift/offering:

1. The Jewish believers in Jerusalem were suffering extreme poverty, most like due to a famine—*“Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹ Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. ³⁰ This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”* (Acts 11:28-30 NKJV).
2. Paul hoped it would unite the gentile and Jewish believers. The division was due to many of the Jewish believers being “Judaisers”, meaning that they, as the weak (legalistic, immature) brothers, wanting the stronger (mature, free) gentile believers to keep all the laws of Moses, including being circumcised. The giving of this monetary gift was a way for the stronger gentile believers to demonstrate their love and care for their weaker Jewish believers.

v 27 It pleased them [the gentile believers] indeed, and they are their [the Jews] debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their [the Jews] spiritual things, their [the gentiles] duty is also to minister to them in material things (NKJV).

v 27 They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially (NLT).

“Perhaps due to persecution or drought, the saints in Jerusalem were undergoing a season of poverty. Gentile believers, realising their indebtedness to the Jerusalem church for evangelising their region, collected an offering for the church in Jerusalem.” (Jon Courson)

“Paul looked on this offering as the paying of a debt. The Gentiles had received *spiritual* wealth from the Jews. They now returned *material* wealth, paying their debt. Paul considered himself a “debtor” to the whole world (Rom. 1:14). He also considered the Gentile Christians debtors to the Jews, for it was the Jews who gave to the Gentiles the Word of God and the Son of God. We Christians ought to feel an obligation to Israel, and to pay that debt by praying for Israel, sharing the Gospel, and helping in a material way. *Anti-Semitism has no place in the life of a dedicated Christian.*” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

This is also a great example for the church to follow today. When the church in one area is suffering, then other churches should be willing to give or help meet that need (of course they should also be praying for them). This gives great encouragement to those Christians who are suffering, knowing that other people actually care enough to help—this is the definition of compassion. Pity is feeling sorry for someone, but not doing anything for them. Compassion is not just feeling their pain, but also doing something to help.

VOM (Voice of the Martyrs) is one of the most effective organisations whose methods of actively helping Christians in need include: distributing bibles where Bibles cannot usually be found, helping those who have been displaced because of persecution, helping train up leaders for churches, Bible translation (again in difficult areas), and helping people pray effectively by providing their prayer guides. If you want your money to go to those believers who really need it, then give to VOM. Each week in our pre-church prayer meeting, we pray for one of the countries on their list where Christians are persecuted. The summary gives a brief but informative description of what life is like for believers in that country, and there are also specific prayer points.

v 28 **Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain:** Paul also referred to this financial offering to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem as **fruit**. This means that it wasn't an obligation, but rather something that God was doing in each person in the church—they wanted to give—and Paul just provided the opportunity. This happens when a church is submitted to God and the power of the Holy Spirit is producing the fruits of the Spirit in the members. This supernatural fruit is very evident in the Macedonian believers.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NLT

Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, *what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia.* ² They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But *they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.*

³ For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. ⁴ *They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.* ⁵ **They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.**

v 29 **But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ:** The gospel is good news, and not just to unbelievers. When Christians experience true fellowship, then they will be strengthened in their faith, further equipped for service, and will experience joy and peace as they enjoy fellowship with their common Saviour together.

4. Paul's urgent request for prayer

Romans 15:30-33 NKJV

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. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Why pray?

v 30 **Now I beg [request, implore, entreat, encourage] you:** *Paul understands fully that kingdom work is a spiritual battle first and foremost.* If we don't remember this, and we start to do things on our own strength, then we will either fail completely, or remain ineffective as we live life just going through the motions. Paul understands that he can't fulfill the ministry that God has given him, as the apostle or missionary to the gentiles, all by himself. He needs the prayers of the saints to give Him "prayer cover".

This is like the foot soldiers calling in the airforce when they come across an enemy that is unsafe to approach. The enemy gets bombed, and the infantry is able to penetrate deeper into the enemy's territory. *There is no such thing as a one man army.* The people in the front lines are dependent on the prayers of those who stay home and provide the financial and logistical support. Everyone is just as important as each other.

Satan's master strategy in the western world: lull Christians to sleep with a life of comfort and ease, and then take those comforts away when they seek to follow Christ, making the cost of following Christ seem too high

I feel that in our western culture, it's so easy to rest, and just do things on our own strength because life just seems so easy—we have everything we need, church is nice and friendly, we are happy, so let's not change anything. This is called being complacent. Satan loves it this way, when Christians choose not to fight against him, and instead ignore the battle going on around them and treat church and life like a social club. Their thoughts are centred around, "what feels good, what do I want, how do I fulfil my desires, and what will give me the most pleasure?" These Christians are like a sleeping man in a canoe as it floats towards Niagara falls—his destruction is near (physical, not eternal). A soldier asleep on the battlefield will end up dead sooner or later, it's inevitable. And as much as we would like to, we can't escape the battle, no matter how hard we try to ignore it. A line from a Casting Crowns song goes like this:

*"My world is breaking me,
Your love is shaping me,
and now the enemy is afraid of what You're making me".*

This is what the Christian life is all about and should be like—*"Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived"* (2 Timothy 3:12-13 NLT). As we obey God, as we grow in our faith, there will be spiritual opposition, which can take many forms. As we fight the good fight we will often suffer because of it, but this suffering is accomplishing God's good purpose of transforming us into His image. This makes us even more effective soldiers in God's army. Satan knows that as his influence over us decreases, he will lose more and more ground to us as we fight the good fight of faith. Satan has no power over the believer who is fully surrendered to God.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9 NKJV

But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. ⁹ For a great and effective door has opened to me, **and there are many adversaries.**

1 Corinthians 16:8-9 NLT

In the meantime, I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. ⁹ There is a wide-open door for a great work here, **although many oppose me.**

The main point here is that if we are not facing opposition, then we should probably be asking ourselves if we are fighting the battle, or just living for ourselves (and so will eventually end up as a casualty in the war). All throughout Scripture, where God moves, satan counters; satan always tries to oppose and disrupt God's plans. Satan is happy to leave the sleepy, dreamy, complacent believer alone; *satan doesn't want to stir him up, because that could wake him up.* Therefore, satan's strategy is to make life as easy as possible for the sleepy Christian, filling their lives with pleasurable things, often worldly but not always, which continue to distract him from the spiritual battle that is raging all around him. It's like a soldier is sitting at a street cafe, sipping a latte and enjoying a slice of triple choc brownie topped with cream, while bullets are wizzing past his head and his fellow soldiers are fighting for their lives next to him. Paul has already given us this pep talk:

Romans 13:11-14 NKJV

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

What does effective prayer look like?

v 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:** Effective prayer is:

1. Urgent (**Now I beg you, brethren**)
2. Done by the Lord's strength (**through the Lord Jesus Christ**)—we are powerless on our own
3. Motivated by the love for others which the Spirit produces in us (**through the love of the Spirit**)
4. Hard work (**that you strive [wrestle, agonise] together with me**)—*this is why we must be motivated by God's agape love for that person—the real test of whether or not you love someone is if you pray for for them like is described here.*
5. A team effort (**with me**)
6. Humble, because we must ask others for their help (**in prayers to God for me**)

Striving together—the secret to fervent effective prayer

Like when we play sport we sweat and finish the game exhausted, and like a soldier becomes exhausted after so many hours, weeks, months, or even years fighting the enemy, so should we feel spiritually and emotionally after agonising together with all the saints for God's people.

James 5:16b NKJV

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

James 5:16b NLT

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

James 5:16 AMP

The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].

v 30 **That you strive together with me in prayers to God for me:** “The words “strive together” in Romans 15:30 suggest an athlete giving his best in the contest. Perhaps the words “wrestling together” better express the idea. This same term is used of the praying of Epaphras in Colossians 4:12. This verse does not mean that we must fight with God to get what we need. Rather, it means our praying must not be a casual experience that has no heart or earnestness. We should put as much fervour into our praying as a wrestler does into his wrestling!” (Warren W. Wiersbe)

“The word translated “strive” is *sunagonizomai* (*syn-a-go-niz-om-ai*), from which we get our word “agonise.” In other words, Paul was asking for passionate, fervent prayer because he knew danger awaited him in Jerusalem. How did he know this? Because people in every city on his journey warned him, “You’re headed for real problems in Jerusalem” (see Acts 20:23; 21:4; 11).” (Jon Courson)

v 30 **Strive together with me:** “The idea is that Paul wants the Romans to partner with him in ministry through their prayers. The New English Bible translates this: *be my allies in the fight*. The New Living Bible translates the phrase like this: *join me in my struggle by praying to God for me*.

The ancient Greek word translated **strive together** is *sunagonizomai*—literally meaning, “agonise together.” To emphasise the importance and intensity, Paul repeats the word twice: *sunagonizomai sunagonizomai*.

This same root word for *agony* is used of Jesus’ anguished prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus asked His disciples to agonise with Him in prayer. They failed at that critical moment and left Jesus to struggle alone. We must not leave our ministers and leaders to struggle alone.” (David Guzik)

“It reminds us of Carey, who says, when he goes to India, ‘I will go down into the pit, but brother Fuller and the rest of you must hold the rope.’ Can we refuse the request? Would it not be treachery?” (Spurgeon)

“Ministers need the prayers of their flocks. With Paul I urge you to strive in your prayers for your pastors. We need your prayers and we thank God for them. Pastors are sustained by the power of the Spirit through the support of their congregations.” (Smith)

“Does it astonish you that a man so rich in grace as Paul should be asking prayers of these unknown saints? It need not astonish you; for it is the rule with the truly great to think most highly of others. In proportion as a man grows in grace he feels his dependence upon God, and, in a certain sense, his dependence upon God’s people.” (Spurgeon)

What were Paul’s specific prayer points?

v 32 **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.**

1. Deliverance from his enemies (**That I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe**)
2. That his ministry would be effective (**and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints**)
3. That he would know God’s will (**that I may come to you with joy by the will of God**)
4. That there would be mutual edification (**may be refreshed together with you**)

God doesn’t always answer our prayers the way we think He will (an application from Jon Courson)

Was Paul protected? So severe was the stoning he received at the hands of unbelieving Jews that his life was spared only when he was taken into protective custody by Lycinius, a Roman centurion (Acts 21).

Was he accepted by the believers? The believers themselves were the underlying reason for the stoning he received. Furthermore, they never thanked him for the offering he risked his life to deliver to them, nor does Scripture record any of them speaking with him or caring for him during the two years he was in protective custody.

Did he come to Rome with joy? He traveled to Rome as a prisoner of the Roman Empire. And so we wonder. It looks like the prayers of the Romans weren’t answered—or were they?

Was he protected? Yes. He didn't die. Bloodied? You bet—but he didn't die. Was he accepted by the believers? Oh, not initially—but eventually, for Peter himself instructed the believers to listen to what Paul had to say (2 Peter 3:15).

Did he make it to Rome? While he didn't travel in the way he intended, at least his trip was all-expenses paid!

Gang, like Paul, sometimes we say, "Pray for me. I'm going through this struggle, and here are three things I need to see happen...." And although we pray with fervency, sometimes initially it seems like just the opposite of what we hoped for happens. But wait. I have discovered that usually when I think prayers are not being answered, it's simply because I have not seen the unique and beautiful way God is working.

I once read an article in the paper about a woman in Alaska who tried to call her sister in Idaho, but she mistakenly dialed a house in Vermont because she dialed Vermont's 802 area code rather than Idaho's 208 area code. The woman in Vermont who answered the call was, at that moment, suffering a severe heart attack. As a result, the woman in Alaska heard only a gasping voice on the other end of the line, saying, "Help me. Help me. Please, God, help me." The woman in Alaska was able to work with telephone operators and emergency personnel to save the Vermont woman's life.

Sometimes, when I pray, I think all I get are busy signals or wrong numbers. But God is working in ways that, if I'll just hang in there, I'll see His hand—as evidenced in this familiar prayer by a Confederate soldier:

*I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things,
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for,
But everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself,
My unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all men, most richly blessed.*

That's the way of the Lord. In the middle of our own civil wars [battling what we want vs what God wants], we may not see God's hand. But on the other side, we'll say, "Lord, I got nothing I asked for—but everything I really wanted." The purpose and the power of prayer are not to get your way for your life, but to get the Lord's blessing on your life. The prayers Paul requested were truly answered in the best possible way, for lives were touched, folks were saved, and we're encouraged here today because people prayed.

Summary and conclusion

In the Kingdom of God there are two types of believers—immature and mature. The immature believer is asleep, ignorant of the spiritual battle raging around them as they focus on and live for their own pleasures, and will therefore end up as a casualty, a victim of satan as he roams about as a lion seeking whom he may devour.

Conversely, the mature believer is awake, and his life is characterised by fervent and agonising prayer for those whom God has given him an agape love for. This believer will be blessed and will experience victory in their life as they fight the good fight and make no provision for sin in their life.

Why is prayer difficult or agonising?

1. Because our flesh (sinful human nature) hates being in submission to God (pride)
2. Because our flesh hates being dependent on God (pride)
3. For our prayers to be heard by God, we have to be in fellowship with God, which necessarily means that we have first died to self—a painful yet absolutely necessary process that we must daily endure if we are going to experience victory—this is where we first learn to pray fervently, agonisingly.

Luke 9:23-24 NKJV

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Romans 13:11-14 NKJV

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

1 Peter 5:8-11 NKJV

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. ¹¹ To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.