

In View of God's Mercy: Join Me in My Struggle

04.10.2022

Today – will be

One of the weirdest sermons I have ever preached

The title is “Join Me in My Struggle”

Go ahead and get out your Bible

We'll be in Romans 15

Page 777

That's a great page number

Romans 15 – page 777

We'll be there in a minute

We are ending this series

7 weeks through the back half of the book of Romans

We are ending it today

With one of the weirdest sermons I've ever preached

It's weird

Not because I'm doing cartwheels or something

That *would be* a struggle

It's weird

Because of the content

There's one key verse

That the whole message is built around

We won't get to it until later in the message

But this one verse

Where the Apostle Paul is commanding the people

He exhorts them

And the command he gives

I would never give

Not that I don't believe in it

And it's in the Bible

So that means I'm wrong

But I would never give it

Because it just feels... extra

It just feels... off to me

But it's in context

It's not just the centerpiece of the message

It's the centerpiece of this whole section of Scripture

So, the command he gives

Is clear

And it has Biblical authority

I would just never do it

That's not true

I AM going to do it today

I AM going to exhort you to follow his command

So, I can't say I would never do it

But I can say – I never have

And that's on me

We'll get there in a minute

Some of you are nervous

So, let me take the edge off

By talking about one of my favorite topics

Church signs

I hate church signs

Hate 'em

There are so many people

Who will not step foot inside the walls of a church

So many

And churches have an opportunity

To speak to them

Without them coming to you

The messages they send

Are sometimes these tacky, judgmental

Horrible statements

Now I know what some of you are thinking

And you're right

I know

We are in no position to judge {Pic}

We're working on it

Sometimes

Church signs are pretty harmless

I mean, they're tacky

But in the big scheme of things

They're pretty harmless

But other times

Other times

These messages are calloused

And hateful

And promote division

The church has to do better

This will probably surprise some of you

But some of the most common elements on church signs

Are among my least favorite

For instance

This sign came from downtown Nashville

Doesn't jump out at you

But if you zoom in

You can see a little better

The pastor at this church

Is "very reverend"

Don't just revere me

At the same level you revere others

I'm very reverend

In fact, I looked at their website

They have a big staff

Some of them are called reverend

And then this guy – I blocked out his name

The dean and rector

This guy is very reverend

Then on their website

The denominational guy who is over this church and other churches
Is called the “Right reverend”

So are the other reverends

Wrong?

If revering you is wrong

I don’t wanna be right?

But that made me think

Of the title that works for me

If you gotta put reverend in my name

Let’s go with that {“Wrong reverend”}

Actually – when I was looking at these

I saw one church that named their pastor

“High holy reverend”

Now that’s got a nice ring to it

But again, I always kinda feel like WellSpring

Is the Island of Misfit Toys version on these things

So instead of high holy reverend

The team came up with this one for me {“Poor pitiful reverend”}

Paul calls himself a wretch

So that's about right, huh?

I have always had a real problem with pastors

Putting themselves up on a pedestal

I remember

Years ago

Being part of a community prayer service

Here in Spring Hill

And the pastors all got together

To plan it out

It was really cool

Someone would lead a section

Or read a verse

Or something

And then we'd give everyone a chance

To pray about that topic

And then the next section, etc.

But as we were in our planning meetings

They all wanted to have us praying

Up on stage

Now these are good guys

I'm not dogging anybody

But they really felt it was important

That everyone could see us

And I was like this annoying little yippy dog

Barking at the mail carrier

Saying, "I don't think this is about us..."

"I don't think what people need..."

"...Is to see me"

Please do not revere me

All of that gives you context

For the passage we're going to explore today

Romans 15

Starting in verse 14

Read Romans 15:14

Now remember from last week

They were fighting with each other

Over disputable issues

And so Paul says

You may not be convinced

That everyone else is full of goodness

But I am

Paul

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

Under the inspiration of God Himself

Is seeing people the way that God sees them

And he says

With God's eyes

I am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

God sees more in you

Then you see in you

Paul is saying to the Roman church

I believe in you

God believes in you

And I am saying to you, WellSpring

God & I agree

We believe in you

Look at these verses:

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT) - A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

So, you have an aspect of God's Spirit

An expression of the Living God
Inside of you

When you become a Christian

And together

All of us make up the church

Which the Bible compares to a body

1 Corinthians 12:13a, 18b - For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body... (and) God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.

So that means God has a plan for you

If God has called you here

From down the street

Or from the west coast

If God has called you here

He's got a plan for you

That's bigger than your job

Bigger than the housing market

He's got a plan for you

And God believes in you

I believe in you

And in His ability to work through you

To change the world

Ephesians 3:20 - Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine

How many of you have heard this verse before?

How many know what comes next?

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine

according to His power that is at work within us

God has exceedingly, abundantly great power

And He distributes it onto the world

Thru us – His church

And He wants to be sure that we know

No matter how much we think He can do

We've underestimated

He's more

Some of us aren't sure we believe all this

He's more than you think

Some of us are prayer warriors who have tremendous faith

He's more than you think too

And He distributes it onto the world

Thru us – His church

Look back in Romans 15

Read Romans 15:14

Read Romans 15:15-16

So, Paul is saying

I have confidence in you

I believe in you

You have been gifted by God

Who can do more than you can even imagine

And God has given me the role

Of “proclaiming the Gospel of God”

Of “being a minister of the Gospel”

Of “boldly reminding you of God’s grace”

And I want you to notice

That the two roles – yours and mine

Aren’t listed as better or worse

More or less important

Paul’s got a spiritual job to do

The Roman Church has a spiritual job to do

God empowers both

God gets the glory

He gets the credit

And now we get to one of the things

That I would never say

Read Romans 15:17

Paul is saying he glories

Literally – brags

About what God is doing through him

He *does* qualify it

Read Romans 15:18-19

He only brags about

The power of the Spirit of God

His job is to fully proclaim the Gospel

But God's power is what makes it happen

Read Romans 15:20a

Paul is placing an emphasis

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

An emphasis on reaching people with the Gospel

This is not about building big churches

Although they did that

Because so many people came to faith

This is about the Gospel

About boldly proclaiming the Good News of Jesus

To a world that so desperately needs it

So, then Paul tells how he is going to Jerusalem

And then to Rome

On the way to Spain

You can read that later

Skip down to verse 30

This is the key verse of the whole deal

Read Romans 15:30

You know how a pendulum works, right?

It's high on one side

And then it swings down

And goes past the middle

All the way to the other side

People react to one side

And over-compensate, all the way to the other

The pendulum never swings from one side

To the middle

So, a few generations ago

Pastors were really respected

And there was a real divide between clergy

And laity

(And you had to use that voice)

And then people said, wait a minute

We need Christian doctors and Christian plumbers and Christian accountants

So, you can serve God

Whether He calls you to be a pastor or not

And that's true

100%

But you combine the swinging pendulum effect

With some of the church scandals over the last 30 years

And you find yourself in a spot

Where pastor is among the least trusted profession

They're sometimes poorly paid

Disrespected

And seen as hired hands of the church

Because the people don't have time to do ministry

They have real jobs

So, they hire the pastor to do it

But here you have Paul

An apostle

Talking to a really talented, gifted

Group enabled with the Holy Spirit's Power

Saying I have a different role from you

And I need you to honor it

By joining me in my struggle

And praying

Regularly

For me

You may understand

Or you may not

How lucky WellSpring is to have the staff we have

Dedicated

Hard working

Men & women

Who have sold out for the Gospel

They're not in it for the money

They could make more doing something else

They're not in it for the perks

They give lots of long hours

They're not in it for the fame & notoriety

Well... that's not true...

The fame and notoriety is pretty appealing

And Paul would challenge us

To join in the struggle
By praying for those who serve and lead you
By praying – regularly – for those who boldly proclaim the Gospel
Are they better than you? No
Are they more important? No
But is their role unique?
It is
And it requires
Deserves, really
The whole church's support
In prayer

The church made a correction
Over the last few decades
To eliminate the divide between
Pastors and the people
And that was good
But Paul here is saying
Please pray for us
Especially
As we devote ourselves
Fully
To boldly proclaiming the Gospel

This would have been Paul and Silas, Timothy and Luke, Aquila and Priscilla

Paul had a team

Men & women who traveled with him

And he was saying

Pray with us as we fulfill the mission God has given to us

Paul was preparing to leave

On his 3rd missionary journey

He had seen God work before

And he was certain God was going to work again

And with that

He was certain that they would be opposed

So he needed their prayers

When I think back over nearly 20 years of WellSpring's history

I am reminded of 3 separate seasons of time

Before we launched

We felt major pushback

Spiritually

I don't know how to describe it

If you've never experienced it

But I remember saying

I feel like our names are on whiteboards

In dark places

We hadn't done anything

But there was a sense that God was going to do something great

And we felt it

Fast forward ten years

We were on the verge of opening our first building

God had worked in us

And through us

To build a great church

About 300 of us

Met each week at SHES

And God had used us to help a lot of people

We had no sense of what was coming

But we felt like we were following

What He had asked of us

To build the building

And once again

You could just feel

The spiritual pushback

That our enemy knew

That what was coming

Was more than what had been

And there was pushback

I don't know how to explain it

If you've never felt it

Fast forward to today

We are in our third

Clearly defined season

Of spiritual pushback

Each time before

What God did on the back side of that time

Was significantly more than what He had done before

And I believe

That is coming

Again

We went from no church

To a small church

Pushback

We went from a medium church in a school

To a larger church in a building

Pushback

And now we're a larger church

In a newly remodeled space

Coming off an unprecedented pandemic

And I can tell you I've had more sleepless nights

And more anxious days

Than at any other time in my life

Not because anything's wrong

My marriage is good

My kids are good

The church is good

The church's finances are good

Zillow tells me my house is making more than I am

Everything's good

It's pushback

Spiritual pushback

For what God is about to do

And I need you to pray

Specifically, for me

Specifically, for our staff

Specifically, for our elders and finance team and LifeGroup leaders

“Join me in my struggle”

By praying to God

For me

For us

That the Gospel would be boldly proclaimed

Can I ask you to pray for three specific items?

Pray for the series starting Sunday

If you’re trying to figure out if this is for real or not

This series would be great for you

If you have friends in your life who aren’t sure if faith is real or not

Invite them

This series would be great for them

I believe that Jesus

Is hidden in plain sight

And next week

We’re going to celebrate His resurrection

And honor Him

And point to Him as the answer to life’s struggle

Hidden in plain sight

Please join me in my struggle by praying for that series

Pray for WellSpring

Pray for me

For our church staff

For our elder team

And finance team

Pray for our LifeGroup leaders

For those on our impact team

Pray for our students

And our children

And those who work with them

Please join me in my struggle by praying for WellSpring

3rd – will you find ways to

Pray together

If you go back a few years

I had a long stretch where I worked out

At a local CrossFit gym

Regularly

3x / week

Then I quit that gym

But immediately started working out

With a friend of mine

Regularly

3x / week

Hardly ever missed

Then he moved out of state

And I worked out by myself

Regularly

3x / week

Then less regularly

Maybe once or twice a week

Fast forward to today

I'm more consistent than ever

My weights are stationary

And so am I

What changed?

Together

Find ways to pray together

The last few months

Our elder team has been praying together 5 mornings a week

Our staff has been praying together 5 mornings a week

Our LifeGroup is praying together every week

We have a prayer team praying together every Sunday morning

It's like the old proverb

If you're going to go fast – go alone

If you're going to go far – go together

Join me in my struggle by praying together