

**What God's People Want (1):  
The Witness of God and the Will of God**



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**Romans 1:9–11a**

<sup>9</sup>For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, <sup>10</sup>making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. <sup>11</sup>For I long to see you

**Main idea:** God's people prioritize what He witnesses, over what men see; and, they interact with God's will in their hearts and lives.

**Introduction:** As the apostle continues to introduce his letter, in which he will be proclaiming a sovereign God, he gives the Romans an example of how to interact with a sovereign God.

**1. Prioritizing the Witness of God, v9**

- a. It is not what man sees, but what God sees, that matters (cf. 2:28–29; 14:7–8, 11). So live to be witnessed by God.
  - i. Let all service be service first with the spirit (v9). Offer yourself to God (cf. Rom 12:1).
  - ii. The great “Hearer” of the gospel is God. The gospel is the gospel of His Son (v9). The great reason to preach it, even beyond the good that will come to sinners, is the glory that comes to the Son!
- b. It is not what man hears, but what God hears. Paul wrote the Romans once (that we have), and at best just occasionally. But he made mention of them in his prayers “without ceasing” and “always” (v9).

**2. Finding a Way in the Will of God, v10–11a**

- a. God's will is determined, but we engage with it freely.
- b. We make requests, under God's will (v10a). The believer has been commanded to pray and knows God as the Answerer of prayer. Response to our requests is one of the ways that He has decided to act, in order to glorify Himself as God and Father.
- c. We are active, under God's will (v10b). The language is of getting along well or having it go well with us. We are free creatures; we endeavor to do things, and it goes either well or poorly with us. (In the area of righteousness, it can only ever go poorly apart from God's free grace; the freedom of God saves us from our bondage to choosing sin freely)
- d. We are to long for things, under God's will (v11a). So long as it comes with a submissive heart, it is not wrong to desire good things—defining good, of course, as the Scripture does. The word here is a strong one: longing, yearning. When we love Christ and His people strongly, His will is for us to strongly desire to be useful to their souls.

**Conclusion:** The Lord, He is God! Let us live for His eye, speak for His ear, and operate under His will. The sovereignty of God is not an abstract theological idea to be speculated and argued about, but a truth, a reality by which to live our lives.

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)**

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Romans chapter 1 verses 9 through 15. These are God's words.

For God is my witness. Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that without ceasing. I make mention of you always in my prayers making requests if by some means. Now at last, I may find a way in the will of God to come to you for.

I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established. That is that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you. And me. Now, I do not want you to be unaware brethren. That I often planned to come to you, but was hindered.

Until now that I might have some fruit among you also just as among the other Gentiles, I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also,

Amen. Thus ends this reading of the word of God.

When the apostle introduced himself, he gave an example in himself of several of the things that he was going to be teaching later on in the letter And then in last week's passage when the apostle identified those to whom he was writing He again, identified them using many of the themes that he was going to address in the letter.

So here, when he gives these preliminary words expressing to them his desire concerning them and his desire, especially to come to them and minister to them and be encouraged together with them. As he does this, it might not surprise you that he is introducing themes. That we're going to see again later in the letter.

It is extremely well-written. This should encourage you. Young aspiring students to pay attention to things when your mother, or your father or whomever is teaching you at the time is teaching you things like literary composition, The Holy Spirit, carrying the apostle Paul used, good literary composition. As part of how he would bring us the message of the book of Romans.

He's introducing themes that he's going to expand upon later in the letter. So now in these seven verses that are before us this evening, as he is describing what he wants concerning. Then he is again an example to us and he doesn't say that he's being an example, but as we go into the letter and find those themes that he strikes in two weeks, ago's, passage And last week's passage, and this week's passage, we'll find that again.

He is giving himself as an example, namely this evening and these seven verses. The apostle is giving himself as an example of what believers want. What should Believers want? What should we desire? Well, we should want in the first place to prioritize. The witness of God to care more about what God sees and what God thinks of what he sees.

Then what man sees and what man thinks of what he sees. And so in the first place, we'll see in verse 9, that believers ought to want to prioritize the witness of God. And as we prepare to hear that first point, you can be asking yourself this question. Do I care more about what God sees and what God thinks of what he sees.

Then what man sees and what man thinks of me In the second place, we'll find out that he wants to and this is actually a culmination of several expressions of his desire in. In verse 10, he wants to find a way in the will of God. He wants to engage and interact with God.

Whose will rules and overrules his life. And so he he wants to prioritize the witness of God. He wants to engage in or interact with the will of God. And then in verses 12 through 15, we'll find that he wants to participate in the work of God First. Then he prioritizes the witness of God and he says, for God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son.

Now, I ask you this. Do you think that the apostle Paul thought that the Roman church thought that he was a liar? Do you think that he was using the words? God is my witness to try and tell them you know, you might not really believe what I usually say.

But now I'm going to say something that I want you to really believe and I'll say, God is my witness, Of course not, We are to let our yes yes and our no be no. And by faithful consistent telling of the truth, not need such phrases to try to get the people to believe us.

More than usual. Now, there's nothing wrong with taking an oath, or taking a valve before God, that's actually a proper form of worship, taking God, to be the witness of a promise that you make, whether it's a promise that you make to, man, or a promise that you make to God.

But here, as He says, God is my witness. He is not only honoring God as the one who knows all of our minds and all of our hearts. You know, children has been a while since I sang you. The little song that was sung to me and I was taught to sing when I was a little boy and I mean a very little boy, littleer than any of the ones I see.

Yes. Even you miss all of that and was be careful. Little lies. What you see. Be careful, little lies. What you see for the Father up above is looking down in love, So be careful little eyes. What you see and we had verses like be careful little mind what you think and be careful little heart.

What you feel? Just driving it into my two-year-old. Heart. That God is my witness God, is your witness dear children, and children of many more years. God is our witness. It is not what man sees, but what God sees that ultimately matters And these are going to be themes in the letter and chapter two, when he is talking about the danger of superficial religion, that is only for the eyes of man.

He says, in verse 28 for, is he not a Jew? Who is one for he? Sorry, for he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew. Who is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, not in the letter, who's praise is not from men.

But from God, Do you want your praise to be from God? Is that he whom you want to? Please. God is my witness and then later in chapter 14 and verses 7 and 8 and 11 When he's talking and he's talking about a real theological distinction, those who are weak and those who are strong and, and those who are weak are still sticking to rules that belonged to a time when the sons of Aaron were the priests.

But now we're in the time when one who is not from the tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah, the son of David Jesus Christ, our Lord, he is the priest. And those rules that some of the Romans were keeping are gone and yet, one of the things that the apostle is going to use when we get to chapter, 14 is reminding us for whose eyes are weak.

Brother obeys, a form of theology that isn't as well developed, But it's still unto God. And so, in chapter 14, for none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For, if we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord.

Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. And then down in verse 11 for it is written. As I live as Yahweh, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue so confess to God. God is my witness. And so we must live to be witnessed. First of all by God We care about what men think it's not that we don't care at all.

We care because we have the name of God on us and we don't want to bear His name, lightly upon us. We don't want our good to be evil spoken of as the same apostle says in a different place. So we care what men think but we care what they think.

Because of the glory that God gets When we live well before them. So, we must first care about what God sees, and what God thinks. And that means we must first serve with our spirit for God as my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son.

Now Paul served in every way possible, there are many places where he gave lists reminders to those to whom and among whom he administered of all that he had done working with his hands. So that he wouldn't have to burden anyone crying with his, with his eyes, in tears, over them, He served of them, of course with his mouth as he prayed and he preached to them and he preached didn't want withhold.

Anything that was profitable in public. And from house to house, he definitely served God with his body reserves. God first with his spirit that in every one of those things when he uses hands to serve God, when he uses eyes to serve God, when he uses his mouth to serve God, He served God first and foremost in His Spirit, you know that man who is slandered so much because his name has been attached to a biblical doctrine that the flesh hates Calvin.

It really is slander, His personal motto. And those who knew him, knew those who knew him would affirm that it was a reality in his life was my heart. I offered to you Lord promptly and sincerely. Now I'm sure the motto is in Latin because it was Calvin but it's my heart.

I offer to you. Lord promptly and sincerely, You know why we need models? Like that because if we don't think about serving God in our spirit, like the apostle says, here we get very good at just going through the motions and we may be doing all the good things with our hands and with our eyes and with our mouths and yet, not constantly offering our heart to the Lord in all of those things promptly and sincerely.

It's one of the reasons children. Why some of your mothers may as they are. Requiring of you not just obedience but honoring, which we'll hear about in a few weeks and the Lord's day evening sermons, not just obedience, but honoring, they want to see your face. They want to see a smile.

They want to see a lacryty that wonderful word. That means promptness sincerity and zeal all at the same time because they want you to train in obeying from the heart. They want you to train and obeying them from the heart because they love you and they want the Lord to have your heart and they want to train you to obey God from the heart, don't they?

And let me tell you, if you grow up, not learning to obey from the heart. It's a lot of work for the spirit of God, by the grace of God. Using the means of God to overcome and correct. A lifetime of going through the motions start young if you will and start.

Now if you're not young or continue now, we hope by God's grace to serve God in the Spirit and then when you offer your spirit to God, when you serve God in your spirit then Romans 12:1 by the mercies of God, you offer your body, not just as a slave like chapter 6 said but as a living sacrifice Let's chapter 12 and verse 1.

We'll say, God is the great hearer of the gospel. God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son. The gospel is the gospel of God's son, which means that the first one for whom Paul preached. The gospel was not the Gentile Hearer that we hear about later in the passage the first one for whom God preached.

The gospel was whom It was for God because it was good news about God, the Son who from all eternity in whom from all eternity, the elect had been chosen and who in the fullness of time came and he lived and died and rose again. He loved his sheep and he laid down his life for them and he said, of all the things in his humanity that he had done.

Well, and Jesus did everything perfectly right? That's your hope as you hope in Jesus. That everywhere we have failed. He has not, He has obeyed perfectly, but for all of the perfect obedience of Jesus, this he said for this reason, my father loves me. He's gonna pick one thing that his father loves that he's done because I lay down my life for the sheep.

That was the great one act of obedience that the second half of chapter 5 is going to talk about. And that was the greatest act of all of the obedience that the Lord Jesus offered. That's why you have to be careful. When you say the passive obedience of Jesus Christ, when you talk about the wrath of God falling upon him, it's true.

There's passive obedience at the cross. He had to endure what, our sin deserved and wipe out all of the wrath of God against us propitiate, the wrath of God, so that there is only favor from God left for us. But there is also active obedience at the cross. At the same time, he laid down his life for us.

And when we preach the gospel of the Son, the Son is glorified. And the Father is glorified in the Son, and the Spirit, who has sustained all things, including the sinless, humanity of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And who caused the words to be written down, that were fulfilled in the sons, sacrifice at the cross, and in his resurrection, from the dead, and his ascension into heaven.

And his enthronement that triune God is glorified in the preaching of the gospel and the Triune God is glorified in the believing of the gospel. And then secondarily men are saved, which is a wonderful thing. It's not a small thing men are made in the image of God. His loved them from before time began, men are saved as a great thing.

How great a thing then is it that God would be glorified if men being saved as a secondary thing to the glory of God for God, as my witness, whom I serve with my spirit and the gospel of His Son glorifying. God glorifying. God is the first great reason for someone who prioritizes the witness of God, God's witnessing us.

And the second way in the second place, he uses this language of interacting with the will of God or as we have it in the outline finding away in the will of God and that of course is right out of verse 10.

Well, we missed the second part of the first point, prioritizing the witness of God. Not only, who sees what but who hears? What without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. Now Paul wrote the Romans once that we have in Holy Scripture and at best and most he wrote them just occasionally but he had the Romans as his audience every once in a while but he had God.

As his audience all the time, he says that he made mention of them in his prayers without ceasing and always see to it that you really want to tell God about this. You know how you've got something you really want to tell your brother, your sister, You really want to tell your mom or your dad, or your husband, or your wife or perhaps, even as you're thinking about

telling them, you've got the words rolling over and over in your head so that you can get it, just right?

Care more about having God as your witness in. What He hears from you get into the habit of not being able to wait to tell God about this. And the best thought about that is you never have to wait until God about this, He's always there. He's always awake.

He's always giving you his full attention. And when you want to get things just right for man, it's okay to want to get things just right for God too. You can tell him, it doesn't have to be perfect. Just like with mom and dad, it doesn't have to be perfect.

But as you talk to God, more and more and as you think about him being your witness, as He hears you, it's good to practice the craft of speaking well unto God. Now in the second place, finding a way in the will of God, It's no secret to those who are students of the Bible at all.

That Romans treats very much of the sovereignty of God and predestination and election. These wonderful doctrines that tell us that we have a God who was loving and powerful His loving. There's nothing that forces him or manipulates him to save. Anybody He does it just because he wants to just because he is the loving merciful saving sort of God, and these powerful.

There's nothing that a man can think or do that. Can stop that. Love even sinning against him. Even deserving hell. God himself will atone for that sin and endure. That hell to accomplish the purpose of that love. So God is sovereign and we all know it and those who resist it are just playing mind games to rebel against something in God.

That is right and good because there is something wicked and them they want to have some control. They want to sit and judgment over God. Perhaps to say well a God who's like that wouldn't be fair? Well, they know in their hearts that God is like that. So what are they really saying?

And they just, you know, save a few words and then just say God's not fair, except for their afraid because, you know, you can't say such things about God. Well, God being sovereign, God ruling us. Although it is a wonderful doctrine and a good doctrine. And one to, which we should come with submissiveness, to to ask not, is this true since it's?

So obviously, true. But perhaps, because our minds are are not. Our minds are weak. We're creatures. After all, and we're weakened further by our sinfulness, it's okay to ask. How does this work? Because the Bible tells us a lot about how it works. And then when the Bible stops telling us, we stop asking, we just bow our heads and worship and we say God is wiser than I am.

There's no shame in coming to the end of what you understand from the Bible and confessing God is wiser than I am. Well, here are some of the ways that it works the apostle obviously is recognizing that the will of God rules and overrules his life. And yet he makes requests verse 10 Making requests if by some means and so on.

So we make requests under God's will. The believer has been commanded to pray. Haven't you and don't you know that God is an answerer of prayer and does it glorify Him to be the answer of prayer and to be seen as the answer of prayer and don't you love to know that he listens to you?

If your daddy, always always did everything without consulting, you without interacting with you, and he did everything that was good for you. He might be a daddy who did many good things, but he wouldn't be like your father in heaven, but your daddy's not like that. Is he He asks you things He invites you to make your preferences known and sometimes the overrules

them because you didn't ask well enough And then he's really being like our Father in heaven.

Isn't he drove my? Well, drove certain people crazy that my children when they would ask my children, what they wanted, they would look at me or they would say one or two things that they wanted and they would say, but you should really ask dad. Do you know why?

Because I was in the habit of letting them express what they wanted and then intentionally giving them something better so that they would learn both. Daddy likes to hear my requests and daddy will always give me either what I asked or something better. Isn't that a wonderful relationship that God has created with his children that he listens to our voices on earth?

And he listens to our hearts, both of them. He can hear our hearts, You can see our thoughts and so we can make our requests known Tim that way but he tells us to use voice too And he says, he hears our cry and he listens to our voice.

You dirt creature, compress, nitrogen, and oxygen in a few trace gases from your lungs across your vocal cords, over your tongue and hopefully using what teeth you still have. And the shaping of your mouth. You make words in this crazy language called English that if the Hebrew speakers are the Greek speakers ever had to study it.

They would have been much more frustrated than modern day. Seminary students. But you make noises So earthy and low and creaturely you dirt made air breathing noise makers and the living. God who has not a body immortal invisible eternal, he listens to the Christ of his children. So does he do everything according to His will absolutely.

Well, if God does everything if God already knows what he's going to do. Why pray, even if I hadn't done it in the stupid voice, Can you hear how stupid the question? Sounds after rehearsing a little bit of the glory of God and the goodness of God, in listening to and responding to his people's praying.

And so, of course, We make requests under God's will The fact that his will rules, doesn't keep us from making requests. It doesn't keep us from being active. He says if by some means now at last and you hear I've tried lots of ways and you hear in by some means and then and now at last you hear I've not just tried lots of ways but I've tried for a long time and he says, I may find a way and the verb there is something along the lines of I may get along well, or have it go.

Well, with me and they find a way in the will of God to come to you. You see, we are free creatures. We endeavor to do things, we try different things, We try for a long time and either it goes well with us. And we're able to do what we what we want or it doesn't go well with us.

Of course in the area of righteousness it never goes well with us apart from God's free grace. Why? Because we're free sinful creatures and we intentionally sin and do nothing but sin, It's not that we're not making real decisions. It's just we have a pretty mean 100% streak of making bad ones.

And yet it's the freedom of God that saves us from our bondage to sin which we keep on freely indulging. If man can manipulate God, then God is not free. And if God is not free, then God does not save. But God is free. Praise God. And so he can save us from slavery to our very real continually wicked choices apart from him.

And so the, the apostle makes it very plain here, how free he is. If by some means, now, at last, I may find a way in the will of God. Even with all of this activity of his, If God doesn't, will

it, it won't happen. Paul is definitely the author of his own actions and yet God's will determines what he is enabled to do.

And so even though God's will rules all things we still make requests, even though God's will rules all things, we are free and active, even though God's will rules all things, we are too long for them verse 11. For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift.

We are to long for things, as God's will under God's will. The fact that he's already determined what he is going to do, doesn't turn us into robots, that lack freedom, and it doesn't turn us into stones that lack desires. We are to have His Word shape, the desires of our hearts.

And in fact the more his word shapes, the desires of our heart, the stronger, we can let those desires. Be One of the reasons we're so afraid of strong desires is because we know our hearts. Don't we? And we don't trust that those strong desires are going to be very good ones And so it's good.

Practice isn't it to read your Bible in the morning and in the evening or have your family worship whenever your family has worship or come in the midweek meeting or on the Lord's day in, in the preaching and have the Bible opened to you, it's good practice to lift your hearts up to God, to desire, whatever it is that he's saying to do or saying to want, or saying to think or saying, or freedom from whatever sin.

He's forbidding or just desire, whatever, good thing it is that he's promising. So that we train ourselves to have strong desires from God. And His Word, The fact that his will rules and overrules. All things doesn't mean that we go through everything in love with shoulder shrubs. Hmm, we become I'm gonna get my neural chemicals wrong in my wife isn't here to nod to me, We become very low serotonin.

That's not Calvinism. That's not a biblical view of sovereignty, we long for things under God's will. Now, we must long for them with a submissive heart. Why? Because we know those things that are good, but we don't know what time it would be best for us to receive them and the, the best and necessary ways, both for our sin, to be put away.

And for all those whom God has gathering to himself to come to faith and for him to be glorified Our appetite for his glory, in our life is not yet such that we can with whole heart. Say for your sake. We are killed all day long. Praise God. Nothing separates us from his love, which is exactly the context in which the apostles is going to quote that later because his love for the glory of God shapes.

What he calls. Good. And so Christians are free to and indeed required to have strong desire. The word there is either earnestly desire, or longing, or yearning, something, something like that. We'll save then. For next, midweek meeting the, the believer wants to participate in the work of God. But for tonight, then what to believers?

Want the believers. Want God to see and God to hear, they won't God as their witness, and they want in the second place to engage. Well with the sovereign ruling and overruling will of God. What does that engaging? Well, look like. Well, it looks like making requests to him.

You pray, It looks like interacting with him. You're active, You make plans, you try things and yet you submit to His will, and it looks like longing for things, desiring things, not being discontented so that you end up covetous. But recognizing that the God is ruling and overruling all things.

He's decided he defines, what's good? And he's determined to give you what's good and he wants your heart to respond to that with its desires. Amen.