

<b>Series:</b> Romans	<b>Reference:</b> Romans 15:30-33	<b>Title:</b> The Butterfly Effect	<b>Date:</b> 2.19.17
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
The Butterfly Effect states that if a butterfly flaps it's wings in one part of the world, it can have catastrophic effects in another. It flaps its wings in Brazil, and a tornado in Texas rips through a town. Minute changes can have large consequences. What if that were true of our prayers? If we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit when he prompts us to pray, especially in a concerted unified way, what effects could that have across the world and throughout history?			

### **Color Changes in text indicate slide changes**

Last week we saw Paul was concerned about the kingdom of God among, not only Jews, but the Gentile nations more than he was for safety & life. He was more than an evangelist. He was a church planter. Which entailed all the hard work of developing vibrant bodies of Believers, forming them into a local church which shared it's identity under Christ with all other churches throughout the world in all their cultural expressions of faith.

That entailed a lot of work which today, in the Vineyard, we have an acronym for - IRTDM - Paul had to identify, recruit, train, deploy & monitor leadership to make sure these churches stayed on task with kingdom initiatives.

Some Christians downplay the Pauline voice as overly intense or extreme. But God spoke through Paul as Scripture, therefore when we read his words through the vehicle of the Pauline personality - we read God's word to us, and we must listen well. Much of Paul's writing in the New Testament was to counter people like Judaizers & Gnostics who sought to pervert the Gospel message with falsehood. We need our strong leaders just as we need our soft-spoken leaders.

Sometimes it's not what you hear from people or movements of people, but what you don't hear. And when things like the need for evangelization, or repentance from sin are negated in Christian work & conversation, or when sentimentality overrides theology it's equally if not more misleading. The Church needs Paul's voice today as it did then in order to uphold the integrity of the Gospel message.

We also saw last week that as churches develop & mature in their understanding of the true Gospel they organize with leadership & structure to be a blessing, and that one outcome of that is to be a giving body which blesses others around it.

This all left us asking ourselves...are we grateful for the leadership, and are we giving cheerfully? Since, if we stand in the way of leadership, or we're non-active in giving, we hamstring the work of the kingdom - since for some reason God has chosen to work through the Church.

*This week we end chapter 15 with a pleading from Paul...<sup>30</sup>I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle*

by praying to God for me. <sup>31</sup>Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there, <sup>32</sup>so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed. <sup>33</sup>The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

As we consider spiritual formation, one thing Romans has taught us is that we need to become self-aware of our role in community, the kingdom of God, the local church & its affect on the global church. We need to own the Gospel, our place in the Body of Christ, and adopt the outlook & attitude of The Willing Participant in kingdom life. That what I believe, think, how I act, and how & what I pray for, all matter. The decisions I make, and what I do with my money & time matter.

Maturity means we cease to be the baby bird always asking to be fed, and grow to venture from the nest to feed ourselves. We raise our kids in the hope of them growing up self-reliant. Scripture urges us to grow to the point of not always needing to be led, but to be active on the Word of God ourselves. You don't blame a child for not being able to feed itself, you feed it. But when adulthood comes, we look down on someone who refuses to take care of themselves. God's calling us through Paul to be self-feeders acting on God's lead in the Church's calling.

You may remember the scene in Jurassic Park where they're trapped in the car with the scientist played by Jeff Goldblum - let's watch that scene now, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-mpifTiPV4>).

*Chaos Theory* is characterized most clearly by what has become known as *The Butterfly Effect* as Jeff pointed out. *The Butterfly Effect* describes how a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state - so the thought is, a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas. For instance, in 1961, a scientist discovered an extremely minute difference in calculation had changed the whole outcome of his weather prediction.

These ideas effect how we view life. We realize it's difficult to predict outcomes. Video games like *Until Dawn* utilize *The Butterfly Effect* by altering the storyline later on whenever the player makes a decision earlier on in the game. Films like *Crash* exemplify *Chaos Theory* & *The Butterfly Effect* when one small decision in one area by a character in the beginning of the movie has caused something to happen to someone else by the end.

Usama Bin Laden had come up on the U.S. intelligence radar as far back as the late 80's. But no one thought he was significant enough to worry about. So no one pursued him. In *Narcos*, the TV show which uses the true events of Pablo Escobar as their story line - Pablo was one of the largest drug traffickers in the world. In the show, the two DEA agents assigned to help the Columbian government stop him, keep requesting the CIA for intelligence material to help them catch Escobar. However, the CIA was more concerned about the communists & continually refuse to give the DEA the information

they need. Pablo went on to grow an empire which killed thousands of people, and had become very difficult to track down due to his wealth, power & influence.

*The Butterfly Effect*, the idea that something so small as a butterfly flapping it's wings on one side of the world, can effect incredible outcomes on the other side of the planet.... Usama Bin Laden takes down the World Trade Centers. Pablo Escobar kills hundreds of police officers & blows up commercial airliners with innocent people aboard. But people thought them inconsequential in the beginning & would not utilize the resources to find them then. Small decisions influence great outcomes...

What if that's true in our spiritual lives? What if our prayers which may seem insignificant to us, actually change & move the course of history? Even if, in the flapping of our small prayer wings, we don't see the storm we've caused in another part of the world?

Paul needs to get to Rome, he faces possible harm on the way. He needs to deliver a financial blessing to Jerusalem from Macedonia, he needs to be refreshed by his brothers & sisters in Christ, and has many hurdles to get through to do so. And what does he rely on? The prayers of people in Rome. What if they said, "Sure, we'll pray for you," but never actually did? Never flapped their wings? Would it have made a difference? Can we predict the outcome?

You're at work. The guy in the cubicle next to you is unusually quiet. Your spiritual Spidey-Sense is activated. You ask what's wrong. He explains his wife's leaving him. You hear the Holy Spirit nudge you to share the gospel & pray over him, but your flesh tells you, "No, that's embarrassing, and inappropriate in the workplace." So you don't. What will be the outcome? You can't predict either way...but you've ignored an opportunity.

Our churches face spiritual attack, and are in need of resources to see the kingdom move forward. What if we hear the call, but are more concerned about our own personal desires & issues - who can predict the outcome of indifference? 16,591 people groups on the earth. 6,741 of them unreached. God calls us to be praying for & going to them with the Gospel. Matthew 24:14 says *this gospel of the kingdom must be preached as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come*. Jesus says, *'The harvest is plentiful, the workers are few'* (Mt 9 & Lk 10). Isaiah wrote, *My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations* (56:7). Which Jesus quoted again as he overturned the market tables in the Temple.

I had a team member in Indonesia who flat out refused to pray with the team. How she got to the mission field I don't know. And one day she reported that her Muslim neighbor had come to her with a dream. Jesus had told the young woman to talk to this woman in order to understand who He was...and she didn't answer the woman. Sometimes we're just blatantly in defiance of what God calls us to do even when it's laid on our doorstep.

What if we hear God's call a thousand times, glossing over such commands as the Great Commission in Mathew 28:18-20, without a response? What if the Romans didn't pray for Paul? Who can predict the outcome to those decisions?

Paul says, *join me in my struggle by praying to God for me*. Missionaries across the globe write their prayer letters, like Paul, urging us to pray for their work & the people groups they intend to reach. What will our simple decision be? Will this butterfly flap it's wings? Or sit idle?

Years ago, a missionary home on furlough, described to his church how he served at a small hospital in Africa. How every two weeks he'd travel by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. A journey of two days. On one of these journeys, he arrived in the city where he planned to go to a bank, purchase medicine & supplies, and then return to the hospital. Upon arrival two men were fighting, one had been seriously injured. He treated him for his injuries & talked to him about Jesus. He then traveled back, camping overnight in the jungle, arriving home two days later.

Two weeks later he repeated his journey. Upon arriving in the city, he was approached by the young man he'd treated. He told him that he had known he carried money & medicines. He said, 'Some friends and I followed you into the jungle, knowing you would camp overnight. We planned to kill you & take your money & drugs. But just as we were about to move into your camp, we saw that you were surrounded by 26 armed guards.' At this the missionary laughed & said he was certainly alone that night. But the man said, 'No sir, I was not the only person to see the guards. My five friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those guards that we were afraid & left you alone.'"

At this point in the sermon, one of the men in the church interrupted the missionary asking if he could tell him the exact day this happened. The missionary told him the date, and the man who interrupted said, "On the night of your incident in Africa, it was morning here and I was preparing to go play golf when I felt the urge to pray for you. In fact, the urging of the Lord was so strong, I called men in this church to meet with me here in the sanctuary to pray for you." He then asked all the men who met with him on that day to stand up. Twenty Six in all stood.... I have no way of verifying that story, but it's one of a million from the mission field which have been told of the effect of prayer on a person or group of people.

On a Saturday afternoon in August, 1806, five College students, gathered in a field to discuss the spiritual needs of Asia. When a thunderstorm arose they took shelter in the lee of a haystack & continued to pray. This gathering came to be known as the Haystack Prayer Meeting, and many believe it has launched the modern mission movement. Within a few years, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was formed & sent some of the first American Protestant missionaries to other lands. Before this, missions was largely nonexistent - I think we've seen more missionaries in the past 200 years sent out than all of the centuries before. The prayers

of 5 guys in a field changed the world. Five butterflies flapped their wings & a storm occurred which still rages today.

Jim Cymbala, a pastor in NYC, had a daughter who'd fallen into drug abuse & promiscuity. She was far gone. One night as he was speaking to his church, someone felt the Holy Spirit nudging them all to pray for his daughter - they heeded that leading. The next day his daughter showed up demanding to know who'd been praying for her, since she woke up from a dream from which she was snatched back from death. She was convinced people had been praying for her - and they had been the night before as she dreamt. His daughter now lives a happy well adjusted life as pastor's wife & mother. Someone listened to the Holy Spirit & flapped their wings in prayer.

A friend of mine was leading a short term missions trip of 30 people to Turkey. They found themselves stuck at the end with no ride to the airport from across the city. They prayed together. As they opened their eyes they walked for a while then stopped. A bus pulled up next to them. They were limited in language, but managed to somehow say they wanted to go to the airport. After boarding, the bus kept stopping & adding people. They weren't sure they'd communicated rightly, and were afraid they wouldn't make it to the airport. Until one guy got on who spoke English & told them the driver would take them after he dropped the others off - since they'd just happened to stop at a bus stop for airport employees. Someone flapped their wings & God provided.

Some believe there have been 4 great awakenings in the United States. The first being led by people like Johnathan Edwards & George Whitfield in 1740. The last, being around the 1960's & 70's - and if you talk to many evangelical pastors who were pastoring churches at that time, they'd say the 1970's was a golden time for church growth. That church growth doesn't really happen like that now - you could just basically open the door, wave & people would come in.

J Edwin Orr, a Christian historian, and others claim that none of these awakenings to the Gospel happened without consistent concerted unified prayer. And also that at each time, the results were profoundly beneficial to society - crime dropped, alcoholism dropped, drug abuse dropped, murder rates dropped, abortions dropped. Things just get better when the Kingdom of God reigns. Which is why I do not believe our battle on issues is fought through social media, or the voting booth, it's fought through concerted unified prayer & witness...

As Ephesians 6:12 says, *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* People are not the enemy, the spiritual hold on them is, and when the kingdom of God reigns, societies improve. You want to fight human trafficking, racism, poverty, misogyny, hatred, or injustice of any kind? Start to pray that people would come to Christ, that the kingdom of God would reign in this place. Flap your wings.

In 1932, J Edwin Orr himself, along with a friend, felt the urge to gather & pray for God to bring 24 workers to Belfast since it was in such need of God's kingdom peace. They set a time of 6 months to pray for those 24 workers. By the end of 6 months they'd gathered a prayer meeting with 24 people devoted to evangelizing Belfast!

Then, they felt they needed to believe God for more! So they added two more zeros & began to pray for another 6 months. At the end of that time, 2400 workers had gathered in Belfast in order to evangelize the city. It became known as the City of God at the time & society changed. It took a year, but it changed a city, and probably the world.

Dr. A.T. Pierson said, 'There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.' Butterflies flapping their wings & creating storms. Like 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, *"...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

What is concerted unified prayer? Well it goes beyond your personal quiet time prayer. It's when people hear a specific call from the Holy Spirit & intentionally gather together to pray for that one thing, and they don't give up until they see it happen. We also notice that what we're specifically called to pray for is intimately tied to Scripture - in other words, it's in line with the overall call to Scripture. It's just a more detailed & specific item under the umbrella of God's Word. For instance, there's a call to the Church to reach the nations, but maybe this church hears from the Holy Spirit about one particular people group on which we should put our concerted focus. Sure, God wants always to reach Belfast, but the Spirit led those men to first pray for 24, then 2400 people who would focus on doing just that at that time.

A fast-food culture expects fast answers to fast prayers. We need to listen to the Lord's leading & lean in with long term attitudes. I've been pursuing Wisdom this year. In that pursuit I feel we need to deepen & grow in a few areas; **they are worship, prayer & mission. When we worship well, our prayers are fueled by God's presence to drive us towards His mission of reaching those who've still not heard. A worshipful prayerful church is pursuing God's heart in mission for the world. So, Vinny's preaching on Worship next week. Rachel continues to build our prayer ministry over this church. She will be holding a prayer training soon. Let's support these leaders well by listening to them & engaging with the initiatives into which they seek to draw us.**

God chooses to partner with us. Which means we are effectual. We are needed. We are useful to the King. Our prayers make a difference, even as small as they are... Why don't we spend a few minutes listening for the Holy Spirits leading & praying what we hear out loud together, focusing on those three areas; worship, prayer & mission.

## Questions for CG Leaders

### 1. How is your worship life?

1. Are you inhibited or growing in worship?
2. What does private & corporate worship look like & do for you?
3. What does worship reveal to us about God & each other?
4. What would a Sunday morning look like if everyone came expectant to worship?
5. Have you been to a Prayer Training (there's one coming up soon!)

### 2. How's your individual prayer life?

1. Do we believe our prayers make a difference? If not, why?
2. Does a butterfly see the results of its flapping? What's that mean for our prayers?
3. Prayer is hard for some - does it help you to pray with others?

### 3. How's your Community Group prayer life?

1. Do you practice it weekly together?
2. Does your prayer time get crowded out by other things?
3. Do you practice listening to the Holy Spirit & praying through what you hear?

### 4. How's our corporate prayer life?

1. Six:Eight has wanted to grow in becoming a 'House of Prayer'...
  1. How can we build on this?
  2. How do we overcome the busyness or indifference which presides in our culture to be able to focus on concerted unified prayer together?
5. Can some of you share how God has answered prayer for you in the past year?
6. Using your concordance in the back of your Bibles look up verses on prayer and discuss what they mean to us.
  1. for instance: *2 Chronicles 7:14* "...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

### 7. Pray together

1. Look up the days *Unreached People Group* on Joshua Project & pray for that.
2. Pray for your *Community Partner*, listening for what the Holy Spirit would have you be focused on for them.
3. Pray for our church to grow in these areas of Worship, Prayer & Mission.
  1. For Vinny's sermon
  2. For Six:Eight to be marked by powerful worship & the presence of God
  3. For us to be a church living life on its knees
  4. For us to rely first & foremost on prayer instead of our own will & resources
  5. For us to be smitten with the heart of God for the nations - in evangelization and passion of Christ for all peoples.
  6. For direction in missions on where to place our focus as a church - we want to adopt a people group and are in discussion with a mission board for this.