

Acts 18:1-17

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Date: 14 April 2024

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. We had, the original plan was to continue our verse-by-verse exposition in the book of Romans, but Nathan has a really bad pneumonia and tapped out.

! And to kind of add to that, I have been kind of groggy and struggling this morning, too. So when I saw the text, I was like, uh, you know, like, I don't have, I basically have one hour going into this today, so let's just see how it goes.

Um, but I remember going up in Norcross, and Norcross First Baptist, and a guy came and spoke, and he just said, um, I can't wait for you to hear the sermon this morning, and I hardly can't wait to hear it myself, and that's kind of how I feel at the moment.

But I'm trying to, I thought, if I had another week to kind of continue Romans 9, what would I have talked about? And I think I would have talked about this, but in short, it's answering the question that if God has a people out there, if he has a people that he has, um, predestined, called, and elected into salvation.

And a long time ago, when I was introduced to this, as someone who has a passion for the law, a passion for evangelism, my, the question was, then why evangelize?

[1 : 21] If God has the people out there, then why do we go out and share the gospel? Why do people go abroad to reach the nations? Why not just back off?

And so I began just searching the scriptures, and I was able to find so many reasons there, and that's what I would actually like to share with you today.

And, but my, my, my zeal, my passion for missions and evangelism goes back to probably when I was saved around 18, 19, probably, early, early college time.

And just, I, I just started hunting my friends down to kind of share the gospel. And, uh, the Lord saved one of my best friends named Dustin, and he had just a crazy life before we knew the Lord. And we just started just hunting people down to share Jesus with. Um, we actually started going through the yearbook to, like, say, oh yeah, he hadn't heard yet. Oh yeah, we need to go find this guy.

[2 : 27] And kind of a bull in a china closet in a lot of ways. We meant well, but didn't really know what we were doing. And, uh, I, I, uh, so that, but my focus during that time was, this is on my shoulders, and I have to do this.

And it's up to me to convince unbelievers that they're in error, that they need to know Christ. And, and if they fail to come to Christ, it might be my fault.

Uh, if I, if I don't have enough arguments, if I don't have enough persuasion. And so there's a lot that the doctrines of grace did for me when it came to understanding how it applies to evangelism. But, simply put, I'm going to just define evangelism for you. Define it. And, I think this is a biblical definition.

It says, evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade. Alright? Evangelism is a teaching, a proclaiming and explaining of the gospel message from God that leads to salvation with the aim or the hope to persuade, to convince, to convert.

[3 : 52] And, we're going to be in the book of Acts today. So, go ahead and open up to Acts 17. Acts 17, and then we're also just going to get, uh, our main text today will be in Acts 18.

But, just to show you where this definition can kind of come from. Acts 17, if you go to verse 2, I believe, yeah.

Acts 17, Paul, uh, is doing what he normally does, and he's going around, he goes to synagogues, he goes to the Jews first, typically, and then to the Gentiles following his mission.

Sorry, this is what happens when you have an hour of preparation. You're, like, second-guessing yourself. Hold on one second. Alright, we're good. Acts 17, verse 2.

It says, And Paul went in, and as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, This Jesus, who I proclaim to you, is the Christ.

[5 : 08] And some of them were persuaded, see that, and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women. So, you see this idea that it is explaining the Gospel.

It is reasoning with people from the Word of God that Jesus, in fact, is the Savior, with the goal, the aim, to persuade, to convince.

So, it's impossible to coerce somebody into being a Christian. It's impossible to trick somebody into being a Christian. They only can be persuaded by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, that's where we get our definition from. But, in our context today, I want you to jump down to chapter 18. And this is when Paul is in Corinth. And, we see a lot here about, I would say, why we evangelize.

And I think I grew up, I would say that some of my reasons for evangelizing, like, weren't always the best. And especially when you apply God's sovereignty in the role of evangelism.

[6 : 22] And, this is one of those texts, I think, contains at least four different motivations or drives for evangelism. If we believe in God's sovereignty.

So, I'm going to break it up for you. We're going to just do a quick run through of the story. Stop and explain a little bit. And then we're going to go to the end. And, kind of give some application for why we ought to share the gospel if we have those convictions that God is sovereign over salvation.

Alright? So, number one, scene one, is Paul's arrival and initial mission. Alright? Scene one is Paul's arrival and initial mission.

We see this in chapter 18. We'll go one through four. It says, After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. He found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

And he went to see them, and because he was one of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tent makers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

[7 : 43] So you see that repetition of him going to a new place, a new city, and he would go to the synagogue first because those were the Jews who, they at least had some context for what he was going to talk about.

The scriptures, the Messiah, so he always started there and he sought to persuade them. Now, Corinth, if you know your geography, is a little south of Athens, about 46 miles south of Athens. And it was, again, sort of a Roman colony. But, you know, I'll spare you all the long history lesson, but it was a big trade center, merchant center, and some of you are aware that there was a huge temple there, the Temple of Aphrodite.

So, sexual immorality was rampant and Corinth. And it was kind of known as like the sin city in one way of the Roman Empire.

It was a very dark, tempting place to be where all kind of sin was just celebrated out in the open with no shame at all. So, there was sin definitely in every Roman colony as we would be aware of, but like, even the Romans had this sense of Corinth is really bad.

[8 : 56] and so it was a very hot place to be. But, a critical point where the gospel, if Paul was able to plant a church there, could go all over the empire with the sailing, the merchants, and all the different commerce that came through.

So, yeah, but he says he met Aquila and Priscilla. There's actually an extra-biblical Roman source that actually says that, yeah, Claudius did expel all the Jews from Rome.

So, that goes along what we see here. And we see that in addition to support raising, Paul occasionally stops in a place and works, and he was a tent maker.

We kind of can forget that about Paul. We just think that people just send him all this money all the time. But there were times that he stayed where he was for a long time and made money on his own to support himself.

So, that's scene one. Paul's arrival and initial mission. Alright? This is scene two. Number two. The arrival of Silas and Timothy and then Jewish opposition.

[10:07] We'll see this in five and six. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

and when they opposed and reviled him, he shook off his garments and said to them, your blood be on your own heads. I am innocent.

From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. Alright, so let's stop there. a lot of people have this wrong idea of Paul that he was just like the lone ranger Christian.

He was always just out there on his own doing his thing. And I've seen other missionaries try to model that. Well, Paul was by himself. I'm like, yeah, but you're not Paul number one. Number two, Paul had the church wherever he went.

And he had other believers that tried to go and support him. So unless he was like providentially isolated by God, he had other people with him. So that's important to remember. And so you had Priscilla and Aquila.

[11:13] They came from Rome and they came together to encourage one another. And then you see he continued just going to the synagogue, reasoning with them, trying to testify that the Christ was Jesus.

And at some point they said, no, we're done. They reviled him. They attacked him. Tried to tear him down. All right?

So just imagine this. Paul had a very weak physical presence. I don't know if y'all are aware of that. If you read 1 Corinthians, you'll just kind of see.

He wasn't this big, strong, handsome-looking guy who could deliver a great speech. He was not probably very attractive to the eyes. He wasn't the most eloquent.

He says that. So he was in there trying to persuade them. And they basically said, you know, get out of here. And he responds very strongly.

[12:12] And he says, look at that, verse 6, your blood be on your own heads. I am innocent. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. Okay?

So, excuse me, we have this idea, right, that if God is sovereign in salvation, that that kind of frees man of his responsibility to go and to share the gospel.

Very clearly, right here, this is the same man who wrote Romans 9, by the way. He understands that there's some weight and responsibility on him to go and be that instrument to share the gospel. And he kind of gives us a recollection of a prophet, Ezekiel. If you want to, I'll save us some time, but write this down.

Ezekiel 33, 1 through 9. And this is the picture of the watchman on the wall. Okay? And, so back in ancient times, cities were fortified.

[13:18] They always were under threat of attack. And there would be guards or watchmen posted on the walls day and night. And, if they saw an enemy coming, they saw danger coming, it was their responsibility to blow the trumpet and to warn people, warn the city, that enemies were approaching.

Alright? And if he blew the trumpet and they ignored him, then, he says in Ezekiel, that their blood will be on their own heads. Right? And, but if the watchman fell asleep or was derelict in his duty and the enemy came, then their blood, the city's blood, will be on the watchman's head.

So, pretty, pretty serious stuff. Right? And, so what we see in Ezekiel was God was telling him, impending judgment is coming. I want you to warn the people that judgment is coming.

You are a watchman on the wall and if you fail to do this, then their blood will be on your head. And, and if they fail to listen to you and repent, then the blood will be on their head.

So, we see that imagery here of Paul going in and he's pleading with them. He's reasoning with them. You know what? And then he gets to that point and he goes, you know what?

[14:40] Blood be on your own head. I am free of my weightiness to that. Very, very much so. Responsibility of us to go and share is clearly seen here.

Right? So we get to first, or excuse me, I just threw this together in an hour. This isn't something I've had together before. or so. Scene three.

Number three. We see conversion and empowerment. Alright? Conversion and empowerment.

Verse seven. He left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justice, a worshiper of God.

His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord. together with all, with his entire household.

And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you and you are my people.

[15 : 51] And he stayed a year and six months teaching the word of God. Failed to do this with the title of today's message is there are many in this city who are my people.

That's the message here. And so what we're going to take from this that said was there was conversion and empowerment. So as soon as Paul is rejected from the synagogue, like we, you know, leave, he says, alright, blood be on your own heads.

He goes to the next, the house, the next door. And what's amazing is he converts namely the pastor of that synagogue converts to leader of that synagogue.

And just the irony of that. And so so then the guy's household is baptized and other Corinthians as well.

You just have to put yourself in the place of Paul. This has been a hard place so far, but in a vision one night God came to him and he encouraged him to stay there.

[16 : 57] Alright, don't leave, stay there. I have purpose for you being there. This is not by accident. Remain in Corinth. Alright, so so if you think about it now, that synagogue is without a leader.

So they have to find another leader because that leader just became a follower of Christ. So that leads us to seem four. This is persecution, compassion, and conversion.

Alright? Verse 12, but when Galio, who is proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, so this is like the Gentile Roman rulers, saying, this man is persuading people to worship God contrary to our law.

But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galio said to the Jews, if it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I have a reason to accept your complaint.

But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things. And he drove them from the tribunal.

[18 : 19] And they seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Galio paid no attention to any of this. Alright?

So, to paraphrase this story, so, if you want to think about it, like, the new pastor, the interim pastor of this synagogue, got all the Jews riled up and said, let's go get them.

Let's go get them punished. This kind of worked for Jesus. Let's see if this will work for Paul. And so, they dragged Paul to Galio, who was the Roman leader that was there, the proconsul.

And they said, hey, he's stirring up a bunch of trouble. He's causing people to worship God that's contrary to our laws. And this was actually pretty common. Like, Pilate actually did the same thing. He was like, this is just stuff that has to do with your own religion. As long as he's not breaking our law, we don't really care. Just like what a lot of their response was for a long time from the Gentile rulers.

[19 : 23] So they were like, just quit causing a fuss. And Paul was actually about to make his defense, and that proconsul cut him off and said, this is ridiculous. Like, just get out of here.

Like, I'm throwing out the charges. You know, please leave. Get out. And drove them out from the tribunal. Right? So Paul's just sort of like, so imagine Paul being outside this place.

Alright? So he's been acquitted, in essence. And he looks over and he sees the new pastor of this synagogue. I'm just paraphrasing. The new leader of the synagogue.

They turn on him and they beat him. That's pretty wild, right? So, don't ever do that to a new pastor in your church. Unless he's preaching heresy.

So then, I want you to think about Paul. Like, put yourself in Paul's mind. What would you be thinking at that moment? Like, serves you right.

[20 : 24] Mess with God's messenger, that's what happens. You could be vengeful about it. You could be spiteful. Like, yeah, you led an attack on me and boy did that backfire. Now instead of me getting beaten, you're getting beaten.

You could have that approach. I think my sinful flesh, if any of you know me, would probably be tempted to feel that way sometimes. But, what happens?

It doesn't really say right here in Acts, but, what I like to think was that Paul saw this man and was broken for him, was broken for Sosthenes, was moved by compassion to go and help him after being, you know, beaten and rejected by his own people.

That Paul said, hey, you know, come with me and began sharing the gospel with him. I can take a wild guess at that because if you look at, turn over to 1 Corinthians really quickly. 1 Corinthians chapter 1. So Paul is in Corinth in which eventually a church is planted. If you look at 1 Corinthians, the first letter he wrote to that church, look at verse 1.

[21 : 46] It says, Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sosthenes. Pretty cool.

Pretty sure this is the same guy, but that's why I think like Paul has moved to not mock this guy, but to show him compassion and to share the gospel with him.

And eventually he went from being a leader in the synagogue to being a leader in the church, which is why he was addressed right at the beginning of 1 Corinthians. So you can flip back over.

Alright, so there's a lot in all this stuff, but from this text, I'm going to try to give you four reasons that drive me personally to share the gospel as someone who believes in God's election, God's choosing, God's sovereignty over salvation.

And some of you, you know, we love reading good books, we love listening to good sermons, most people in this church. But isn't it special when you just sit down and dive into the word on a particular thing and you see so many things on your own without any kind of aid or help?

[23 : 12] This was this for me many years ago. I began just putting this together. So why evangelize? Reason number one, alright, is seen in verses 5 and 6.

This idea of rescuing them. If we remember Romans 9 verses 1 through 5 where Paul said that he wishes that he was accursed, his fellow Jews could be saved.

But if we are truly converted, if we truly have the Holy Spirit in us, that comes with new affections and new desires for God that we did not have before.

And one of those is, we can't just look around at the broken and lost world around us and unbelievers and just say, eh, no big deal. It weighs on us that we see their brokenness and their pain and their suffering around us with a life without God.

And God's people should desire to go and rescue them. Alright? The Scripture says in Proverbs 24 verse 11, rescue those who are being taken away to death.

[24 : 28] Hold back those who are stumbling towards slaughter. Jude 1, 22 and 23, have mercy on those who doubt and save others by snatching them from the fire.

That's command, right? And some of you may feel this for lost loved ones, may feel this for lost friends, and all that's in you is just pleading with them, right?

To come and be reconciled to God. But if we have no desire for others to be saved, that tells us something about the gospel that we claim to believe.

It exposes our conviction, alright? What we actually believe. We can't be quiet about it. So that's just one reason. This is a big one.

Point number two, why evangelize. It's a means to the greatest ends. Okay? It's a means to the greatest ends. Submissions and evangelism are commanded by God because He's chosen the preaching of the gospel to be the means to bring salvation to His people scattered abroad.

[25 : 49] This is His design. Alright? And where I'm going with this is that God's election ensures that our efforts and missions and evangelism are not just left to chance to coincidence that Christ's blood was not spilt needlessly.

It emboldens Christians knowing that God has a people out there that He is going to use that messenger, that evangelist, whoever it is, to reach them to bring them in.

Alright? Now we see this in our text in verses 9-11. Look at it again. That vision that Paul had. Do not be afraid, God said, but go on speaking. Do not be silent, for I am with you and no one will attack you to harm you.

For I have many in this city who are my people. And He stayed a year and six months teaching the word of God among them. Alright, big question. Is there a church in Corinth already?

Are we aware of a church in Corinth? Nope. Paul just arrived. He just got there. There is no church. There is no established church, no Christians. So why would God say, I have many in this city who are my people?

[27 : 11] Alright? And again, Paul was discouraged. Paul was frustrated. frustrated. And I know I can speak for the Andersons because I know Caleb very, very well.

It's a personal drive to know that God has a people in Southeast Asia that He's going to use them to reach. It's not just like, well, coincidence, I hope so.

It's not wishful thinking. It drives us to share the gospel. Now, let me give you some other verses that support this. In John 10, 16, Jesus says, I have other sheep that are not of this fold. He means Israel. Right? I must bring them in also, and they will listen to my voice, so there will be one flock with one shepherd. So meaning that there are a people scattered abroad that need to be brought in to the full number of God's flock.

John 11, 51 and 52, where Caiaphas prophesies about the death of Jesus. Now, it says, he did not say this on his own accord, but being the high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.

[28 : 31] Then John inserts this interpretation of that event. He says, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

Right? So meaning that God has a people out there, and this drove Paul. Like, he says in 2 Timothy 2, 10, Paul says, why does Paul go through all that he goes through?

Good question. Why is he beaten? Why is he forsaken? Why is he starved? Why does he lose everything for Jesus? And then he says it right here. He says, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation.

Some of you have heard this analogy, so oh well, if you've heard it before, I'm going to share it again. But when I was in college at North Georgia, my senior year, this was probably 2006, maybe, Wes Shonat and I were asked by a club on campus called the Gay Straight Alliance.

So it's like homosexuals and straight people who are trying to hang out and like get to understand each other, kind of club. It still exists today, it's under a different name, I just found out.

[29 : 57] But we were asked to come and share about what the Bible says about homosexuality. me and Wes were like, okay.

And so we got there on campus and this room was packed, I mean, there was a lot of people in this room. For those students who were here, it's in Newton Oaks, the classroom that has little decks that go up.

We're in the very back, we just got there late, we're in the very back. And so basically, you know, we're walking there pretty nervous. I do most of the talking, if y'all know Wes, like Wes, whatever Wes says is just like, you know, he doesn't say a lot, but when he does, it's just like he just nails it. So he was like picking up my messes as I went. But I want you to put your stuff in my position for a minute, right? I feel like you're walking into the lion's den, sort of.

And, but I prayed on the way there a lot, and even while I was there. But I want you to just imagine this. Imagine I pray and I think, do you, what's going to happen?

[31 : 11] Like, Lord, I'm nervous, like what's going to happen? How would it make you feel if God replied, I don't know. I'll be sure to do a good job of sharing the gospel.

Don't mess it up. Like, hopefully, me and Jesus and the Holy Spirit will keep our fingers crossed and hopefully somebody will listen to you and give their life to Jesus.

But I have no idea. I go, oh, it would be like a really scary prospect. But, thankfully, that's not how it is.

Right? Now, I'll give you the other scenario. God answers instead, hey, I know you're scared, I know you're nervous, people are going to make fun of you, people are going to mock you, but stick with it.

I'm going to be there and I'm going to help you. I'm going to use the words that come out of your mouth to save three people in that room. Like, if I knew that God was going to work, it would drive me to go.

[32 : 18] Does that make sense? It gives you confidence to go. It doesn't discourage you to go. This means that his mission, the blood of Christ, is not spilt by accident.

It's not wasted. He has a people that he's going to save. He said three times in John 17, those whom you have given me out of the world, he says that to the Father, my sheep hear my voice. Right? And so God was saying, I have many in this city who are my people. Go. Proclaim. Don't be afraid. I'm going to use what you say, the gospel coming out of your mouth, to bring them to faith. And that's why Paul says, I endure all things for the sake of the elect. Right? So that's a huge one. It's the means to the greatest end. God has ordained the ends, which is the salvation of souls. He's also ordained the way that is to happen. So we see there, you know, Romans 10, like, we must send people. This is what drives us to go. All right?

[33 : 26] Thirdly, that was the longest one. Thirdly, the proclamation of God's glory in the gospel. All right? If you look at verse 5, he says that Paul was bearing witness, he was testifying that Jesus was the Christ, the Christ was Jesus.

All right? And so the gospel is a heralding thing. You go and you proclaim the greatness and glory of God and salvation. You put his glory on display when you share the gospel.

You talk about his grace. You talk about redemption, the forgiveness we have because of what Christ has accomplished by the shedding of his blood. And God desires to save a people from every tribe, language, and nation.

And he will do it. It's not like we hope he will. He will. He has bought these people with his blood. So it is about proclaiming the greatness and glory of God in the gospel.

That God desires that praise from every nation, every group, every tongue, so that the children of God will one day come together and proclaim his glory in heaven.

[34 : 42] All right? I'll back that up. Psalm 67, 2 and 4. that your way may be known on the earth, your saving power among the nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity. And in the most well-known Revelation 7, right?

I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all the tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

That's the goal. We're bringing in these people from all the nations, to gather before the throne.

Livingston, a missionary into Africa, he wrote to his wife, I know that you wish as ardently as I that the whole earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.

That is our drive. And then the last apple, well, joy inexpressible. All right? God has given us the privilege of being his messengers, the privilege.

[35 : 59] John Newton said that he was shocked that not only God would save him, but then he would give him the privilege of being the messenger of the same gospel that saved him.

Like that is something that ought to try to accord with us. That we are messengers of that message that saved us. And that our hearts should be filled with such love and joy and gratitude for God and what he's done for us that it spills out onto other people who are around us.

If it's just simply a duty and a command, you'll quit. It'll get boring, it'll get old, it won't be worth it. But guess what? We talk about what we love.

Pretty simple. We spend our money on it, we spend our time on it, and we talk about what we love. We talk about sports. We talk about other hobbies.

And we talk about the stuff that is near and dear to us. It comes out of our mouth. We talk about the people that we love. Right? If you don't talk about the Lord, there's just something there.

[37 : 08] I'm not making any kind of hard line inference. But Jesus says, I'm the overflow of the heart. The mouth speaks. So what do you talk about? And if Christ is the love of our life, if he is all to us, we will talk about him.

And we'll talk about him indiscriminately around people. I love this in Jeremiah verse 20, I mean chapter 20 verse 9.

Jeremiah says, if I will say, it is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in, and indeed I cannot.

You feel that way? Or you think about James and Peter and John when they were dragged before the synagogue in Acts 4. And they say, stop talking about Jesus.

And they say, well, whether it's right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge. But for we cannot help to speak what we have seen and heard.

[38 : 12] They have to. They're compelled to speak about it. So it overflows from us. It completes our joy to talk about the one that we love. So those reasons, one of those reasons alone will be enough.

But I've given you four. Right? So God has a people that we ought to go and reach. And this isn't for just people who do full-time marriage like me, Nathan, Josh in the back.

Like, we are all meant to be heralds of the good news. We have different time. We have different capacities. But there's people that you're around that I will never see. Right? And we are meant to bear witness to them about the Son of God.

In what capacity God has given you to do that? To be faithful to that. Be prayerful. So in clothing, I want to just challenge us to think about how the Lord saved our soul.

I occasionally like to do this. Maybe reach out with somebody this week that was instrumental in bringing you to know the Lord. A parent, a friend, a loved one, a teacher, a coach, whoever it is. [39 : 18] And just thank them for being faithful to share with you. And I hope that this has been encouraging. I hope that this has given you a desire to go with confidence to go and fulfill God's mission.

He will do it. He's going to do it with or without you. Alright? So why not be faithful and be a partaker of that mission and experience the joy of that mission and have eternal reward with the Lord one day.

Let's pray together.