

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Evangelistic Praying, Part 1

1 Timothy 2:1

54-11

This morning we return to our study of 1 Timothy and we find ourselves at the beginning of chapter 2...1 Timothy chapter 2.

As we begin to focus on verses 1 through 8 which will be our theme for this Lord's day and next, it will take us two Sundays to really examine the intent of this text, I want to begin by just giving a personal word of testimony, if I might.

As I was studying through this week in this passage and this happens to me all of the time, but it seems specifically this week that the Holy Spirit laid a weight of conviction on my own heart in regard to this passage, more than others that I can think of recently. But as I was studying, I was really convicted in my own heart of my personal failure to fulfill what the Word of God says here. The text basically calls us to pray for the lost, as we shall see when we look at it. And I was reminded of how little I do that very thing. And I suppose because of that, I was exercised in my spirit to spend perhaps an unusual amount of time in this text, sort of wrestling between interpretation and conviction, thinking about what the text meant and then thinking about how in my own life and in the life of the church and even in the life of my own family we could begin to apply these things in a way we had not done in the past. And it's took me, because of that, a rather long time. In fact, yesterday I spent the entire day locked up in my study, laboring over the text and what I would share with you on this Lord's day and next. And I really couldn't let go of it.

My wife, Patricia, said it's very unusual for you to do that. And she really kind of queried me about why that was happening...was I slowing down in my mental processes in my latter years...or what exactly was going on. But I tried to share with her that there are times when you get into a passage of Scripture and you can't let it go maybe for the reason that it doesn't yield its real fruit to you until there's a sort of a breakthrough. There are other times when you study a passage and it doesn't let you go, it holds you there because you're captive to its convicting truth. And I think...I think that's where I was. I don't know that I really thought that through until I was thinking about it just this morning in the first service, that I found my own heart captive to the passage and my own sense of conviction rising that this is something that I desperately needed to hear. And if I did not really find in my own life a commitment to obedience in this regard, I could well be sure that those I had taught for these number of years might be a little on the short end of this as well. And so I was greatly encouraged in my spirit to share with you today and next time what I believe the Spirit of God is saying in this regard in relationship to evangelistic praying.

I don't know that I can put any blame on this but I remember some years ago being given a book written a very reputable Christian writer. It was a book dealing with the matter of prayer. And in that book he tried to point out the fact that there is nothing in the Word of God calling us to pray for the lost. In fact, it was a thesis of the book that the only prayer related to evangelism was a prayer given

by our Lord Jesus to us when He said, "Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers into His harvest" and that what we're to do is not pray for the lost, but pray for the laborers to reach the lost.

Furthermore the thesis of the book was to go ahead and evangelize and that was what we were called to do. And there are myriad of Scriptures that impel us in that area. And I suppose in a sense that that trustworthy writer sort of settled that issue in my heart that maybe praying for the lost wasn't of great consequence. Obviously all of us pray for the lost that we know around us, or people who carry a great part of our heart because of love or relationship. But I guess I just sort of set that aside. And it's easy to do that because fervent evangelistic prayer is indeed an exercise of spiritual commitment that takes time and great energy and is rather easily set aside, especially if there's a way in which you can justify that. And so I confess to the Lord and to you that I have not perhaps in my own life been as faithful as I should have been to this matter of evangelistic prayer and the Spirit of God is speaking to my own heart about this. I felt compelled even this morning at our table as our little family gathered for breakfast to read the passage to all of us and then to spend some time in prayer for those that are without the Savior...trying to immediately put into practice the intent of what the Apostle says to Timothy here.

Obviously prayer for the lost, no matter what we might believe about it in terms of its biblical teaching, is a part of our lives. It goes without saying in the Christian community that when we have someone dear to us who does not know Christ, it is the most natural thing to pray for their conversion. And it's really not that to which I speak, nor that to which the text speaks. The issue in the text is not so much a command for us to pray to God about people we love that they might be saved, but to understand the scope of evangelistic praying...to understand the intent of the heart of God and the universality of gospel provision that compels us to pray on a far wider scale than we perhaps have understood.

Every week we receive on the registration cards hundreds of names of people to pray for, people that you suggest to us who do not know Christ and you want us to pray. And on Wednesday often a sheet comes out with nothing but names on it, in one whole section just names of people that you're concerned that would be saved. And you know and I know and we all know that salvation is a sovereign work of God and we must go to God and ask Him to save, for that's His prerogative.

And I also realize that monthly we receive a prayer calendar and part of that, some of the days of the month are involved in praying for nations and peoples and mission fields who do not know Christ. I know in our radio ministry, we receive bags of letters every day encouraging us to pray for people who are without the Lord.

Because of this it's essential for us to understand what the Bible teaches about such prayer. Is it legitimate? Is it necessary? Can we really pray for a person's salvation? For the salvation of a city? Of a state? Of a nation? Of a tribe? Can we pray on those kinds of broad terms and does that have any significance in the mind of God? Does that in any way lend itself to the salvation work of God?

If indeed God answers the prayer that we pray for someone's salvation, then we must be committed to doing that. But what does the Bible say? Well, let's go back in our thinking, back to the first set of books in the Scripture, the Pentateuch, the books of Moses, and we find in the book that we call Numbers chapter 11 verses 1 and 2 and also in chapter 14 verse 3, you don't need to look it up, in those two places in Numbers, Moses prayed. And he prayed for the unbelieving complaining

unthankful Israelites. And his prayer was basically for God not to consume them in fiery judgment.

In fact, in chapter 14 of Numbers and verse 19, he cried out to God with these words, "Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy." And here is Moses the prophet of God, the statesman of God, the man of God who is given the responsibility of leadership among the people Israel and the passion of his heart is to cry out to God for the salvation of that nation. This is evangelistic praying.

In 1 Samuel, I would draw your attention to that text. You might turn to chapter 12. I share with you the testimony of Samuel in chapter 12 and verse 23. And Samuel says on behalf of his people, "Moreover, as for me God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. But I will teach you the good and the right way, only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things He hath done for you but if you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed both you and your king."

Now Samuel goes one step beyond what we saw in the Mosaic text to say it is not only a matter of importance to pray for you, it is a sin not to pray for you. God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you that you would fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart. And if you don't do that, you'll be consumed in your wickedness. That is an evangelistic prayer...that is a prayer for the conversion of unredeemed people in the nation Israel.

In Jeremiah's prophecy, in two places, we find a most interesting insight into this. It comes in a reverse manner. In Jeremiah chapter 7 and verse 13, verse 12 talks about the wickedness of the people. And now, says God, the Word of the Lord coming to Jeremiah according to verse 1, in verse 13 God says, "Because you have done all these works and I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking but you heard not. And I called you but you answered not." In other words, because of your obstinate wickedness, "therefore will I do unto this house which is called by My name in which you trust and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers as I have done to Shiloh. I will cast you out of My sight as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."

Notice what he says to the prophet Jeremiah. "Therefore do not pray for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me for I will not hear thee."

Now the point that I want you to notice is that it was part and parcel of the life of the prophet to be crying out to God on behalf of his people. And you know that from reading the testimony of Jeremiah. You know how he weeped bitter tears for the salvation of unredeemed Israel. You know how he cried out to God that they would be brought to faith in the true God and would come away from disobedience and wickedness. But they have been so long in their sin that God tells the prophet to stop praying and stop crying out to Him.

Notice in chapter 14 and verse 10, "Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander. They have not restrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them. He will not remember their iniquity and punish their sins. Then said the Lord unto me, Stop or do not pray for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry. When they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword and the famine and the pestilence. Then said I, Ah, Lord God, stop praying for the people." Jeremiah was a man given to pray for his people and only God could stop him.

The Psalmist in Psalm 25:22 cried out to God these words, "Redeem Israel, O God." Now in all of these instances you have illustrations of men praying for the salvation of a whole people, of a nation. Samuel in 1 Samuel 7 and verse 5 called all of the sinning people of Israel to gather at a place called Mizpah. And he called them all to turn to the Lord with all their hearts. He was crying out for their salvation. It was to be a great evangelistic meeting. And he said to them if you will turn to the Lord with all your heart..quote: "I will pray for you." In other words, I will pray that God will be merciful and forgive your sin.

Hezekiah, the king, knowing the wickedness of the hearts of his people saw them all coming into Jerusalem, gathering for the Passover. And he realized that they were all there to do their religious duty. In 2 Chronicles chapter 30, the text says as he looked at the people, he noted that they had not quote "cleansed" themselves. They were an impure and wicked people, carrying out an external and hypocritical religious ritual. But their hearts were not right. And so, Hezekiah turned to God and he prayed for them these words, "The good Lord pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God." And here is a king praying for the salvation of his people.

I'm reminded also of the prayer of Daniel in that great ninth chapter, particularly verses 17 to 19 where Daniel prays evangelistically. "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant and his supplications and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Thine ear and hear. Open Thine eyes and behold our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name, for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses but for Thy great mercies." Then this, "O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hearken and do, defer not for Thine own sake. O my God, for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name." And he calls out for God to forgive his sinful people and restore them and their city and their worship.

And then in the New Testament we find the testimony of Stephen. Stephen prayed what amounts to an evangelistic prayer in Acts chapter 7 and verse 59 and 60. Stephen was being crushed under the stones of those who were stoning him to death for what they saw as blasphemy. In truth it was the gospel of Christ. They were stoning him to death. And as he was stoned...being stoned to death he asked that the Lord Jesus would receive him and then he prayed this marvelous prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Lord, don't hold them responsible for this sin." Which is to say, "O God, be merciful to these sinners." Which is a prayer of evangelism. He prayed for their forgiveness, their salvation at the gracious and merciful provision of God.

I'm reminded also of the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 who talks about sorrow and great heaviness of heart. And the heaviness of heart and the sorrow comes because he says, "I could almost wish myself accursed for the sake of the salvation of my kinsmen, the Jewish people, the Israelites." And then in chapter 10 verse 1, he says, "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved."

Paul prayed for the nation Israel. Stephen prayed for the salvation of those who killed him. Daniel prayed for the salvation of his people. Hezekiah prayed for the salvation of his wicked and unfaithful people. Samuel did and Moses did. And this is not an uncommon thing. And those are only samples of such evangelistic praying.

I believe the Bible does teach that we are to pray for the lost. I believe it comes clear in the text before us. Let's read verses 1 through 8, you follow carefully as I read and listen to what the Spirit of God says.

I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all that are in authority that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and dignity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time. For this I am ordained a preacher and an Apostle, I speak the truth in Christ and lie not, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and sincerity. I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension.

Now Paul is instructing Timothy in these eight verses regarding the matter of praying for the lost. That is clearly the intent of the passage. But this is just one part of the whole letter, and we must set it in context. Remember this, Paul has completed his third missionary journey by the end of the book of Acts. He is put in prison in Rome. After an imprisonment period in Rome, he is then released. Upon his release he goes to Ephesus. There he meets Timothy. There, I believe, Paul dealt with Hymenaeus and Alexander, putting them out of the church because they were heretical and apostate leaders. Paul then left Ephesus after doing that, but he left Timothy in Ephesus and said I want you to set the rest of the things that need to be said in order in order.

So, Timothy has remained at Ephesus. Paul has gone on west. Being gone just a brief time, Paul writes a letter back to Timothy. That letter is 1 Timothy, and in this letter instructs Timothy as to the specific matters which he must give himself to in the church. Many things were wrong in the church at Ephesus. And there was much work to be done.

In chapter 3 verse 15, Timothy is reminded maybe of his central responsibility, to teach the people how they ought to behave in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. He is to set that church right for its own sake and for the sake of its testimony to the rest of the churches and to the world as well.

So, Timothy then is left in Ephesus. He has served the Apostle Paul well...perhaps as long as 15 years. He knows his heart. Paul knows that he knows that and yet Paul writes this letter to him just to affirm and strengthen his hand and as well to give to the people in the church a word from Paul in order that they might be encouraged that Timothy acts not on his own but under the authority of this great Apostle.

Now in our study of chapter 1 we noted there were many things wrong in the church. I only remind you of some of them. False philosophies were rampant in the church. There were religious views that contradicted the true gospel of salvation so that the basis of the Christian faith, the saving grace of God in Christ was being muddied up and people were not teaching true salvation. There was a misuse of the law by people who thought themselves to be teachers of the law but had no idea what the intent of the law was. There was a tolerance of sin. There was a lack of holiness. There was hypocrisy. There was involvement with demonic error and seducing spirits. There was a denial of the truth about who Christ Himself really was. There was apostasy and the rejection of God's Word. There was the abuse of the role of women. There was sin and corruption among the elders and pastors. There was unsound teaching and heresy. There was perverted worship. There was

materialism, a desire for money and earthly gain. There was worldliness, pride, intellectualism and a general discontent with the will of God. Now that's a church in trouble...every way you look at it.

And Timothy is left there to get that church in line with God's will and God's purpose. As we looked at chapter 1 verse 18, we were reminded that Timothy had a command which was committed to him. He had a command and he had a commission. And he had a responsibility to do what Paul had set him there to do. And now as he comes into chapter 2, he begins to outline in specifics the things that Timothy must give himself to. And the first instruction has to do with the matter of praying for the lost world. That's where Paul begins. That's why in verse 1 it says, "First of all..." We're now beginning what is a manual for the order of the church and it begins with this matter of evangelistic prayer.

Now let me say, because I think you have to understand this, that this particular verse 1 through 8 section has a polemic character. That is to say it is a treatment of a problem. It is against an abuse in the church. There is something wrong and this is intended to set it right. And we can know rather readily what is wrong by simply looking at what he says about what is right.

Let me point out the three main thoughts in those eight verses that we just read. Thought number one comes in verse 1, that we're to pray for all men. Thought number two comes in verse 4, that's because God wants all men to be...what?...saved. So point one is pray for the salvation of all men. Point two, because God wants all men to be saved. And the third major point comes in verse 8, and when you do pray, there are some conditions to make your prayer acceptable, one is holy hands...that is to say godly behavior. And the other is a heart that knows no anger and dissension...and that's talking about your inside motivation. So we have the idea here then that we're to pray for all men because God wants all men to be saved, and those men who do the praying are to be those whose lives are marked by godliness and holiness and virtue.

The church then is called to the task of praying for the lost on a wide scale. And that is the main idea. Now when we note the polemic character of this, we can then conclude this, that that church was not doing these things. One, the church at Ephesus apparently did not commit itself to pray for all men. Two, they were not committed to the truth that God wanted all men saved. And three, when they did pray, they were lifting up soiled hands and they were praying out of angry and dissenting hearts.

That's not too hard to understand. If we read through the epistle and if we examine it as we have in the past for the errors that are here, we will be reminded that there were Jews apparently in the church at Ephesus who were claiming that only law-keeping Jews or those who were sort of proselytes to the keeping of the law could be accepted by God. There was a Judaizing element and that's apparent in chapter 1 from verse 7 through 11. There were those who were advocating law keeping as the means of salvation. And that was an exclusiveness that said salvation isn't for everybody, it's for those who come within the framework of maintaining the Jewish law.

Also, we note that in this Ephesian assembly there was the Gentile exclusivism that grew out of that old philosophy that later became known as gnosticism which philosophy said salvation only belongs to the elite initiated exclusive people who have reached a level of knowledge, who have tuned in to the various mediators and sub-gods and eons and angelic beings that line up between man and God. So the Jewish people would be saying salvation's only for those who keep the Jewish law. And the Gentiles might be saying salvation's only for those who are in the know, who are the gnostics, the ones who know, it's from the Greek verb to know, who are in the know, that elite group of people who have ascended to another level in some mystical experience with spirits which they believed to be

good spirits which Paul points out to be demons.

So, there was an exclusivism that had come to be in the church at Ephesus. Because of this, there was severe error in the doctrine of salvation which becomes the final note of the whole epistle where he closes out in verse 21 of chapter 6 by saying they have erred concerning the faith. The greatest error was an error in the matter of the extent of salvation. One group saying it's only for those Jews who are in the know in terms of the Jewish law. The other, it's only for that one small group of people who are in the know in terms of mystical understanding. Everybody else is left out.

And I believe that this section attacks the narrowness of that thinking. It attacks the narrowness of that perspective. The intent of the Apostle is to say stop that and realize that God wants all men to be saved. In fact, he repeats that in chapter 4 verse 10, that God is the Savior of all men especially those that believe. The sum of these heresies would be a teaching then that not all men were subjects of salvation, nor were they objects of God's saving work. And Paul endeavors to counteract this idea of exclusiveness by showing the need to pray for all men to be saved, since the gospel is universal in its scope.

Think of it. And this is a Jew, Paul, and he knows well the history of his own Jewish people. And one of the things that stands out like a spotlight in the darkness of Jewish history is the fact that those people failed to recognize the universality of their mission. Is that not so? The Jews lived under the illusion that God had saved them for their own sake and not for the sake of the world. They thought themselves to be a cul-de-sac rather than a thoroughfare, a bucket rather than a channel. Their view of themselves was that God saved us and we have now become the apple of His eye, we are His very favorite people and don't let anybody else from the Gentile world horn in on our exclusivity.

So much did this become their mentality that the classic illustration of Jonah speaks to the issue with great clarity. Here is Jonah called by God to go to Nineveh and preach to Gentiles. Jonah in his mind is saying, the last thing I could possibly tolerate would be a Gentile coming into favor with God. I can't handle it. So instead of going to Nineveh, he goes the opposite direction. He runs from it.

You say, "He was afraid of the Ninevites." No he wasn't. You say, "He didn't feel adequate for evangelism." No, that wasn't it either. The reason he didn't go was he didn't want Gentiles horn in on the singular exclusive blessing of God that the people of Israel felt they enjoyed. Well, the Lord rerouted him, as you know, and finally got him back there. The fish vomited him up on the shore, he went back to Nineveh, he preached to Nineveh. And a terrible, terrible thing happened, the entire city repented. And then Jonah went out and asked God to kill him because he really was frustrated. Now his worst fears had come to pass. People had been saved. Now how's that for a misguided prophet?

But that is reflective of the exclusivity of much of the thinking of Israel. And the sad truth of redemptive history is that when Israel failed to be the channel by which God could reach the world, God saw that channel blocked up by sin and selfishness and wickedness and God then cut a new channel which is the redeemed community from all peoples we know as the church. And the goal of the church is no different than the goal of Israel, and that is to reach the world. And Paul can see already beginning to form in this Ephesian congregation the mentality that destroyed the ability of the nation Israel to fulfill their divine calling. They were developing this exclusivity that says salvation is for us, for no more, bar the door. We're the elite.

And so, the instruction comes then regarding a far-reaching need for evangelistic prayer that is worldwide. Now look how he begins in verse 1. "I exhort...I exhort." He could have commanded. But there's something a little deeper than the command perhaps, there's a certain urgency, the certain begging and beseeching and urging that comes in this word that has a passion to it. A command bears authority. A beseeching or an exhorting bears passion. A command comes from a king. An exhortation comes from the passionate heart of one who loves, one who cares. And in this regard for evangelism for the whole world, Paul does not come as the authority with a command, he comes as the passionate Apostle with an urging and a beseeching and a begging. And he knows also that prayer is not best forced by a command but prompted by a conviction from the heart.

The word "therefore" indicates that he's tying it in with what has come before. I think it takes us back to verse 18, "Because you have a charge, because you have a commission, because all of this has been confirmed in the church through the prophets as we saw, because all of this is set on your shoulders, therefore, Timothy, get at it." And here's what I urge you, and then he uses this phrase "first of all." Here's what I urge you first of all. And you might ask the question I asked, why is this first? I'll tell you why, what is the primary objective of the church? What are we in the world for? Listen, if the primary objective of the church is fellowship, where would we be? In heaven cause we'd have perfect fellowship there and none of you could mess it up. If the primary objective of the church was knowledge of the Word of God, we might as well go to heaven, we'll have perfect knowledge there and I won't be able to mess it up with anything that I might say that isn't quite accurate.

No, see, the purpose of the church in the world today is to reach the lost. And so the priority begins at that point. And they're never going to be able to reach the lost world if they have some kind of theology that says that the gospel doesn't apply to anybody outside our little group. So first of all, where everything begins is with an understanding of the scope of the gospel. That's the first subject I want to deal with.

And then he goes on in verse 9 to deal with women in the church. And then in verse 3 chapter...chapter 3 verse 1, I mean, he starts to deal with the leadership of the church and he flows on through the issues from there. But the first thing he wants to talk about is you've got to get straight this matter of the gospel and its extent and this issue of evangelistic praying. When you come together you've got to realize that God wants all men to be saved and you are called to pray for all men and to do that kind of praying with holy hands and a pure heart.

Now for this morning I want us to look at the first two of the five elements of evangelistic praying that flow out of this marvelous text. The first one is the nature of evangelistic praying...the nature of it. What is its...its inherent character? What is...what is the character of evangelistic praying? What is its richness? How do we define it and understand it?

Well, you'll notice in verse 1 that after his opening exhorting and his statement about first of all, he gives four words, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. Those four words really in a sense are synonyms. At least the first three are very synonymous. And though they could be used interchangeably, and any of them could be translated "prayer," there must be a reason why he gives us four terms. And I really don't want to undermine that reason by just saying, "Well, there are four synonyms here and that's all, so we won't bother with them." I think the very fact that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to put four terms down intends for us to take a look at those four terms and while not making great differences in their meaning, see the shade of variation that brought together gives the richness to this whole concept of prayer. So though they are in many ways synonyms and could

yield themselves to a commonness, at that point. At the same time, they have shades of meaning and coloration of intent that I think must be examined and when examined yield a rich understanding of the matter of prayer.

First of all is the word "supplications." A word that we find familiar in the Scripture. The word *deesis*. It comes from a verb root that means to lack..l-a-c-k, to lack, to be deprived, to be without something. Because of that kind of orientation of the word, it kind of communicates the idea that this matter of prayer rises from a general sense of need. In other words, in perceiving a lack, in being without something that is desperately needed, you go to get the supply that you lack. And I believe that that's a fitting way to perceive evangelistic praying. Evangelistic praying springs from a sense of need.

We understand, don't we, that those without Christ, need Christ. Do we understand that? Do we understand that the world that does not know the Savior, that has not had forgiveness of sin is in dire disastrous straits headed for an eternity without God in hell? Do we understand that need? Does that need to be articulated to us anymore? I think not. So we understand that a supplication is in reference to a need. And when we look at a lost world, we can with any kind of penetrating gaze at all, any kind of understanding of Scripture, realize the gravity of that need.

There is also inherent in this word the implication of going to someone who has the resources to supply that need. In fact, in early uses of this word, it was linked to taking a sort of a palm branch or a leaf into a monarch and that was a symbol of humility and respect and an offering of peace when you came to ask for something from him that he could supply to meet your need. So it carries the idea not only of the sense of need, but of going to one who has the resource to supply that need...a very rich and beautiful term.

The idea then is this, beloved, if we are to come to understand the nature of evangelistic praying, we begin by realizing the great need of the lost in the world. Richard

Baxter, that marvelous pastor of the seventeenth century, wrote this and I think it will speak to your heart the way it did to mine. He said:

O, if you have the hearts of Christians, let them yearn toward your poor ignorant ungodly neighbors. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell. Many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost forever. Have you hearts of rock that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the Word of God and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned as long as you are saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace. Dost thou live close by them...or meet them in the streets...or labor with them...or travel with them...or sit and talk with them and say nothing to them of their souls or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell?

So says Richard Baxter in very convicting words. Evangelistic praying begins with a great sense of the urgency based on need.

Secondly, he uses the word "prayers," *proseuche*, that is a general word for prayer. Interestingly

enough, unlike the word supplication, this word is used in the Scripture only in reference to God. This prayer is only directed at God. And therefore it seems to carry the notion of sacredness. You're not just going to anybody who can meet a need, you're going to God. It carries the element of worship and reference with it. And it adds another dimension to an understanding of evangelistic praying and that is this dimension, that when you pray for a lost soul, you are praying for that soul to come to salvation, not only because of their great need, but because also God's great glory, right? You're praying that this person would be redeemed in order that God might be honored and God might be exalted and God might be glorified and He might be lifted up and praise might come to His holy blessed name for all things that we pray in John 14 are that the Father may be glorified in the Son, Jesus said.

So what is the nature of evangelistic praying? It is the prayer that rises out of a great sense of the need of man and a great understanding of the glory of God. We pray for salvation because of man's need. We pray for salvation because God is so worthy of praise and glory and adoration and honor that it is a crime against His holy nature that any creature should exist and not give Him what He is due.

There's a third and very rich word, "intercessions," enteuxis used only here and one other time in chapter 4 and verse 5 suggests that you're going to pray on behalf of someone else. But there's a great depth in this word that I want you to capture. The verb form means to fall in with a person. It means to become intimately involved with someone, to draw near to someone, to converse with familiarity. It's to get involved with someone. So that the idea of intercession is not the idea of a cold sort of legal advocate. It's not the idea of hiring some attorney to come in and advocate for you.

I think when we think of the Lord Jesus as our advocate at heaven's court, we think He puts on some royal robe and some powdered wig, some legal robe, I should say, and some powdered wig and becomes the courtroom advocate on our behalf. I don't think that's the intention of this word.

When we think of the Holy Spirit as Romans 8:26 says, interceding for us in the sense that He communes with God about our need, we think of Him also in an advocacy role, more of the legal concept.

But the word doesn't carry that. This word, by the way, is used both in Hebrews 7:25 and in Romans 8:26 and in both cases the richness of the word is this, that it is God...or rather it is Christ, in Hebrews 7:25, it is the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:26, interceding for us in this way, they literally fall in with us into our needs. They literally become near to us as to converse with familiarity. They become involved in our struggle. It is a word not only of advocacy but a word of empathy, and a word of sympathy and a word of compassion and a word of involvement so that when Romans 8:26 the Holy Spirit is interceding for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, we understand that that intercession is not a cold legal advocacy, but it is an intimate communing with the living God out of a feeling of our own need. And so it is with the intercession of Christ. What a rich...what a rich concept.

And so, in our praying we are not merely standing in an indifferent way coldly advocating the salvation of some for whom we have very little compassion, but by God's Spirit having fallen into the depth of their own anxiety and pain and feeling with sympathy that situation, we cry out to God with familiarity for those for whom we have great feelings.

So what are we saying? The nature of evangelistic praying then is that it is praying in a great personal compassion and involvement with the person who is in a dire situation. So evangelistic praying means we understand the great need. We understand the glory of God. And we get involved with sympathy and compassion in the problem of the lost.

And I really...I'm really convinced, beloved, that the missing elements in our prayers and the reason we don't pray the way we ought to pray is because we don't have these things in our hearts. We don't live with a great stark shaking shocking realization of the need of man and the desperateness of lostness. Nor do we live with a comprehensive grandiose and all-consuming desire to see God glorified and magnified in the salvation of souls, nor do we find it easy to get out of ourselves and deep into the anxiety and need and problems of other people for whom we could pray to the saving of their souls.

A fourth word he uses is "giving of thanks," eucharistias, giving of thanks. That's a part of all praying. And in our evangelistic praying we have to be willing to do that whatever the answer might be. Part of our evangelistic praying is to thank God for the privilege of reaching those people. We shouldn't have any racial barriers, we shouldn't believe that anybody is outside the provision of God in any way, shape, or form. We ought to thank God that the gospel could be extended to all. And also, I think, this thanksgiving implies that whatever God does in response, whatever the answer to that prayer, we ought to be thankful to God. In everything give thanks, 1 Thessalonians 5, this is the will of God concerning you.

By the way, thanksgiving is the only element of prayer that will continue forever. Everything else will fall after we've entered His presence. For there we'll only thank Him forever and ever. So this...that only eternal element of prayer must be a part of those prayers we offer even here.

So in evangelistic praying, I pray because men have need. I pray because God deserves glory. I pray because deep in my heart I feel the anxiety of a lost soul. And I pray with a thankful heart. Whatever God does, I give Him thanks. That's the nature of evangelistic prayer.

Now I want to add one other point for this morning and that's the scope of evangelistic prayer...the scope of it. And this really is the focal point of the text. And we'll get into it in great depth next time...the scope of it.

At the end of verse 1, this supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks kind of praying is to be made for all men. Now that is the scope of it. It is to be made for all men. It is unlimited. Our prayers which are usually selfish and confined to our own personal interest and our own personal needs, once in a while we'll extend to some unsaved loved one or family member or friend and we might pray for that person, the point being made here is that our prayer is to be for all men. It is to be universal in its intent and scope. There is no place for exclusivity. There is no special group. There is no elite. There are no certain initiates who alone can come to salvation. We are called to pray for the whole of unredeemed men, for all men. Verse 4 supports this because God wants all men to be saved. Verse 6, because Christ gave Himself a ransom for all men. Since Christ is giving Himself a ransom for all men and God wants all men saved, then we need to pray for all men. That's the heart of the text...for all men.

Why? Why all men? Because in Acts 17:30 it says, "God commands all men everywhere to repent."

Now that's not...that's not leaving anybody out. All men on the face of the earth are commanded to repent. It's the same "all men" here. There are no limitations on this. There's no exclusivity here. That's completely foreign to the intent of the context. Pray for all men. Why? Because all men are commanded everywhere to repent. And we must pray that they will and that they'll embrace the gospel that Titus 2:11 says has appeared to all men offering salvation.

I read you when we started our service this morning Acts 3:26 and in that text Peter speaking to the Jew says, "Unto you first God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you," and what was the intent in Jesus' coming? The intent was "To turn away every one of you from his iniquities." Nobody was left out. There's no exclusivity in that. There are no limits on that. The intent of the gospel given to Israel was to turn every Israelite from his iniquities. I mean, why else would Jesus say, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to...what?...every creature...every creature?" Because every creature has been commanded to repent. All men are savable in that sense and all men are to be prayed for. This should be a constant part of the life of the church, praying for the lost.

Paul identifies one special group of people within this larger category of all men for whom the church is to pray in verse 2. "For kings and for all that are in authority." He isolates them from all the possible groups of people within the "all men" that he could have mentioned, perhaps because the tendency on the part of the church was not to pray for them. They were abusive sometimes. They could generate hate and animosity and bitterness.

On the other hand, sometimes leaders and kings and rulers are sort of larger than life and the church feels very little responsibility to pray for them. They don't know them. They're sort of out there somewhere in a different environment. But certainly because of the tremendous role they play in the life of the church in its ability to lead, as he says in verse 2, a quiet and tranquil life, wherein godliness and dignity can be made manifest, we ought to pray for them. How the church functions in any government is dependent on that government. And how much freedom the church has is dependent on how much freedom that government gives. And so he says because of the authority they have, we ought to pray for them.

There may have been a tendency even in this church if we can see a polemic in this, there may have been even a tendency here for them to speak evil of their authorities. After all, the king or the...the word *basileus* here means emperor, the emperor who was emperor at this time was none other than a man named Nero. And we could well understand the church not being too excited about praying for him...a wicked, vile, wretched, perverted man who became a persecutor of the faith. But pulling that category out of the "all men," he says, "Pray for them." Here is a sample group that you must pray for. "Pray for them and for all that are in authority," not just some of them, all of them. Pray for all kings and all rulers and all governors and all magistrates and tetrarchs and proconsuls and procurators and town clerks and governors and mayors and senators and congressmen and everybody in any generation. Pray for all of them.

What are we praying? What are we praying? Well, for years the church has sort of said we'll pray they'll be wise and we pray they'll do right. That isn't the point of the text. Pray for their...what?...their salvation. That's the point. It's God who wants all men to be saved, to come to the knowledge of the truth so that His truth can be operative in society. Whether they're good or bad, beneficent or cruel, peaceful or warlike, pray for them. And the context here is talking about their salvation. Pray for the salvation of all leaders. He's not talking about kinds of leaders, he's talking about all leaders. And he's saying pray for all of them. And that's why he must be saying pray for all men. That's why you

can't put any limits on this.

It interests me, too, by the way, that he doesn't say pray for their removal from office. He doesn't say pray that God will get rid of all the leaders who disagree with you. And he certainly doesn't say replace them all with Christians. He says pray that God will save them. Why have we lost that? Believers, we're to be loyal to government. Romans 13, we're to be loyal to the government because it's ordained of God. First Peter 2:17, we're to be so loyal to the government, honor the king and do what is right before all other leaders and respect them so that there's nothing they can say against us. We are to be the model of loyalty.

And here we are as evangelical Christians so often attacking our leaders. I mean, the text of Scripture says pray for their salvation. How wonderful it would be if the church took all of the energy it expends in political maneuvering and all of the energy it spends and all of its lobbying methodology and put all of that energy into praying for the salvation of its leaders. Can you imagine what an impact it would be on the leaders of our nation if they knew that the church of Jesus Christ from one end of this nation to the other was on its knees day in and day out praying for their salvation? What a testimony. Not only a testimony, but what a way to activate the power of God. You see, I guess somewhere down the line we lose touch with the fact that the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly. We don't fight with carnal weapons. But our weapons are spiritual weapons like prayer which are mighty and will pull down the strongholds of Satan, 2 Corinthians 10 says. Why does the church insist on emasculating itself and falling into the use of carnal weapons? The answer to changing a nation is prayer.

Tertullian wrote, Carthaginian theologian living about 160 to 230 in the early centuries of the church, he wrote this, "The Christian is the enemy of no man, least of all the emperor, for we know that since he has been appointed by God it is necessary that we should love him and reverence him and honor him and desire his safety, therefore we sacrifice for the safety of the emperor." And Theophilus(?) of Antioch wrote, "The honor that I will give the emperor is all the greater because I will not worship him, but I will pray for him. I will worship no one but the true and real God for I know that the emperor was appointed by Him. Those give real honor to the emperor who are well disposed to him, who obey him and who pray for him."

Such practice can be seen in the writings of the second and third century church. When they met together, they prayed for the salvation of their leaders. What a movement of God would come across this country if we spent our energy and our effort praying for the salvation of these. But instead of that, we find ourselves speaking evil of leaders with whom we disagree and trying to create Christian power groups to replace them. And we become the enemy. And in many ways, I think, we pollute for them the water of life. The church is always to function in spiritual duty and spiritual discipline, never by worldly means.

So, we pray and we pray for the salvation of people. You say, "Does God answer that?" Could it be...could it be that in the death of Stephen in Acts chapter 7 as he was beneath the bloody stones, his life being crushed out and he prayed for the salvation of those who threw those stones, could it be that the salvation of one standing there among those killers was a result of his prayer? That one's name was Saul. Could it be that the salvation of Saul was the answer to the simple and heartfelt prayer of Stephen? Could it be that in Acts 16 where you find Paul and Silas in jail and in stocks and it says that they were there in jail and they were singing and praying, could it be that they were praying for the salvation of the one in authority over them, namely the Philippian jailer? And could it

be that God in marvelous providential means brought an earthquake, shook the place, did what He did and as a result, that very night only a few hours after the Philippian jailer and his whole household were redeemed and baptized, could it be that that was in answer to the prayer of Paul and Silas?

In Acts 26, Paul is giving a testimony to Agrippa. And Agrippa, he says, I know you believe the prophets, I know that. I know you believe. And Agrippa says, verse 27, "Are you...verse 28...are you persuading me to be a Christian? And Paul said, I would to God that not only you but all that hear me this day were both almost and all together as I am, except in these chains." I want all of you to be saved. O I would to God. You want to know the heart of Paul. He didn't just pray for the salvation of Israel, Romans 10:1, here he's praying for the salvation of everybody he's preaching to. This is probably an insight into what he was doing in his heart every time he preached to anybody. Evangelistic praying is part and parcel of the life of the Apostle. "O I would to God, not only you but everybody else..." He certainly didn't have some theology that limited the extent of his prayers. No, evangelistic praying is a priority for the church.

And its nature is very simple. It is risen in the heart out of a deep sense of the need of the lost. Do you understand that? You understand what it is to be lost and damned to hell? It rises also out of an understanding of the glory of God and His worthiness to be praised. Like Henry Martine who when seeing the pagans worship in India said, "I cannot endure existence if Jesus is to be so dishonored." It cries for glory to God. It also rises out of a deep felt sympathy and empathy where I get so involved in the lostness of being lost that I feel the pain myself and cry out to God on their behalf. And it also has an element of thanks that whatever God does is within His sovereign wisdom. And that's the nature of it. And the extent of it is all men, even those people who rule over you that you may think are sort of in another atmosphere, out of touch with reality and of little concern to you or that you may be threatened by, for they hold in many ways your life in their hands. I don't think this happens unless it comes from the heart.

There was a little deaf and dumb girl in Sunday school. She had never heard a word and she had never spoken a word. But the teacher wrote on a piece of paper, they were having a little lesson, the teacher wrote: what is prayer? And she took her little pencil and wrote: "Prayer is the wish of the heart."

That is prayer, whether it finds the lips or not, prayer is the wish of the heart. Is the wish of your heart that all men would be saved? If it is, then that wish will rise to God. Let's pray.

Gracious, Father, we come again with thankful hearts to this hour because we love the worship and we meet with you and are blessed. But we confess as well we come with conviction to this moment because we have failed and I have failed to pray for a lost world as I ought to pray. And I ask, O God, that You would fill my own heart with great sense of the need of the lost with a consuming desire for Your glory, with a heart of compassion and sympathy that I might find the wish of my heart expressed continually that all men might be saved, leaving the results in Your sovereignty with You. That's not ours to determine. For us is to pray. Help us, O Lord, in our fellowship here and in the church around the world to see that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual and to pray for cities and states and nations for leaders and for all of them to be saved. Make that the cry of our hearts. May we as a church know what Paul wanted Timothy to convey to the church at Ephesus that, first of all, we must have a passion for the salvation of the whole wide world. If that is limited, either by some aberrant theology or by some cold indifference, the church cannot be the reflection either of the will

of God or the work of Christ in the world, for it is God's will that all would be saved and it is Christ who gave Himself a ransom for all. May we be a church that desires to reach all men. And, O God, may that come into practice with the individuals that we meet as well.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, I believe that we need to pray for the lost around the world in our services. I believe you need to do that in your fellowship groups on the Lord's day every week. I believe we need to pray for the lost in our Flocks, our Bible studies, our fellowships in the home, our daily devotions, our family times. I believe that if God is going to work through us in great evangelism around the world, we need to begin to pray and we need to pray habitually and continually for those without Christ. Those we know, those we don't know, individuals and whole peoples, for this is the will of God and this reflects the proper response to the ransoming work of Christ.

Just in this moment, can you covenant in your heart asking God to strengthen you to take up this ministry of prayer? Will you do that? In this moment? Make that commitment to God.

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