

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

### **Evangelistic Praying, Part 2**

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:2-4

Code: 54-12

Well, let's open our Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 2...1 Timothy chapter 2. We are looking at verses 1 through 8. The theme of these verses is evangelistic praying, praying for the lost, those who do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And because of the nature of this particular passage and because of the emphasis this month in our church on evangelism, I've been spending some of my time in spare moments reading books on evangelism. And this week I was reading an old book that my dad gave me, a book entitled *The Soul Winner*. It's a compilation of sermons of Charles Hadden Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of England. And I found one paragraph that struck my heart. He said this:

"One thing more, the soul winner must be a master of the art of prayer. You cannot bring souls to God if you do not go to God yourself. You must get your battle ax and your weapons of war from the armory of sacred communication with Christ. If you are much alone with Jesus, you will catch His Spirit. You will be fired with the flame that burned in His breast and consumed His life. You will weep with the tears that fell upon Jerusalem when He saw it perishing. And if you cannot speak so eloquently as He did, yet shall there be about what you say somewhat of the same power which in Him thrilled the hearts and awoke the consciences of men. My dear hearers, especially you members of the church, I am always so anxious lest any of you should begin to lie upon your oars and take things easy in the matters of God's Kingdom. There are some of you, I bless you and I bless God at the remembrance of you who are in season and out of season in earnest for winning souls. And you are the truly wise. But I fear there are others whose hands are slack, who are satisfied to let me preach but do not themselves preach, who take these seats and occupy these pews and hope the cause goes well but that is all they do," end quote.

Any true hearted pastor can identify with Spurgeon. Sadly the apathy of some in his church is the apathy of others in this church. And it always stifles aggressive witnessing and it always stifles evangelistic praying. And so it is good for us in these days to be reminded of the need to reach the lost. And a very basic and essential element of that is the matter of praying for them, not only for the sake of the communion with the Lord but for the sake of seeing God answer that prayer.

Someone said, "The church is dying from too much self control. There is plenty of light but there is very little heat." And apparently that was true of the church at Ephesus. Timothy had been assigned, as you know, to set things in order in that church, to make things right for they were very wrong. One of the things wrong in the Ephesian church was the fact that they had designed a new theology of Evangelism. And that theology said that only certain Jews who keep the law can ever be saved and only certain Gentiles who enter into the elite understanding of mystical secrets can ever attain salvation. The consequent teaching was that salvation isn't for everybody, that God did not intend everyone to be saved, that we need not concern ourselves with taking the gospel to the ends of the earth even though our Lord said that. They had developed a convenient exclusivistic doctrine of evangelism that said salvation was only for a few.

And Paul is deeply concerned about that and so as he begins to write to Timothy in chapter 2 about the matters that must be made right in the church, he begins with this matter of evangelistic praying, of understanding that God's desire is for all men to come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. So the first concern is that the church begin to pray for the lost. This is high priority in the church of Jesus Christ. It attacks the narrowness of the error of the Ephesian church, but it also acts as a strong exhortation to us today to the matter of praying for a lost world.

Now we're noting here five elements of evangelistic praying: its nature, scope, benefit, reason and attitude. Remember last week we talked about the nature of evangelistic praying. And we said it is described in the four words for prayer given in verse 1: supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks. Those four terms we saw last time sum up the character or definition or nature of evangelistic praying.

Supplications indicate that there is a need. Supplication rises from a need. So we pray for the lost because of their great need of salvation. The word "prayers" recognizes God's glory. And we pray for their salvation because of the glory it will give to God. Intercessions have to do with feeling deeply the condition of someone and pleading on their behalf. And so we intercede on their behalf because our heart is concerned with compassion about their lost condition. And finally, the word "thanksgiving" indicates that no matter what occurs, we give God thankful hearts and expressions of gratitude. So the nature of evangelistic praying.

Then we talked last time about the scope of it. And we noted at the end of verse 1 that it is to be made for all men. It is a comprehensive mandate given to the church to pray for all men. No limit is set on evangelistic praying. Chapter 4 verse 10, it says God is the Savior of all men specially of those that believe. And again we are reminded in that that we are to pray for all men.

Now specifically within the category of "all men," he identifies a group of people who might be people the church would fail to pray for...for the sake of persecution, or because of abuse or whatever it might be. So he pinpoints that we especially are to pray for kings and all that are in authority. We are to pray for the lost worldwide and among those for the leaders who very often because they're bigger than life escape our prayers or because we see them perhaps as not a part of the church or as somewhat antagonistic to the church or because we get caught up in the attitudes of our society toward leaders that are not liked or respected. We might fail to do that. And so just as a strong encouragement, out of all of the groups we could have identified he identifies leaders and says especially you are to pray for them. And the intent is not so much to pray for their wisdom in leadership but to pray for their salvation. We as a church then are to be involved as a priority in praying for the lost and most particularly those that are lost in positions of leadership, those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we come to the third element...the benefit of evangelistic praying. To the church there is great benefit in prayer for the lost. Notice what it says in verse 2, "In order that...as we pray for the lost and particularly leaders who do not know the Lord...it may lead us into a situation where we can live a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and moral earnestness would be a proper translation." In other words, as we give ourselves as a church to prayer for the lost and prayer for the salvation of our leaders, it will create a national condition favorable to the life of the church which will expedite our evangelistic efforts.

Now this is an often overlooked passage of Scripture and I want you to think through it very carefully. This is the Word of the living God. As the church prays for the lost, it goes without saying that the intention of that prayer is that the lost may be saved, but as a side effect when a church in a city or a state or a nation pours itself habitually into unceasing prayer for the lost, particularly the unsaved in its leadership, that people begins to see the church as a compassionate caring loving concerned group of people who are all about seeking their best interest and welfare. And thus the church poses no threat to that society but perhaps a welcome friend. And as those prayers for salvation are answered and more and more people may be saved including leaders, the favorable condition of the church is even increased.

Now he says when we pray this way we do so in order that we may lead a quiet and peaceable or tranquil life. The word "quiet" carries the idea of the absence of outside disturbance. The word "peaceable" carries the idea of the absence of inside disturbance or turbulence. So the church has a goal then, and I want you to note this very carefully, the church has a goal in society to so conduct its

life in prayer for the lost which involves love and compassion including all of the leaders that it creates by that attitude the absence of external, internal disturbances. To put it another way, the church is never to be the agitator of society by virtue of engulfing itself in those things which disrupt the national life. Conditions of peace, conditions of rest, the absence of strife and anxiety benefit the church in the task of evangelism.

Now I want to expand on this because I don't think this is a well understood thought. In 1 Thessalonians we have a similar word, chapter 4 verse 11, where Paul says that we are to study, that is to be diligent, to be quiet. We are not to be rabble rousers. If we are known for anything, we are known for our quiet demeanor. We do not make disturbances. We do not disrupt society as such, that is not our intent, that is not our overt effort. We are to be quiet, he says, do your own business, work with your own hands as we commanded you in order that you may walk honestly toward them that are outside, the unbelievers. They ought to see us as quiet diligent faithful people.

Second Thessalonians 3 also speaks to the same matter. We hear, he says in verse 11, that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all. They're indigent, they are unemployed, they don't do as they ought. They're busybodies. Command them and exhort them by the Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.

Now listen, beloved, the church Paul is saying is never to be the political agitator. It is never to be seen as the perceivable enemy to national security or national peace. That is not our role. We are to seek to make all the people around us whatever their viewpoint politically, whatever their viewpoint philosophically, we are to seek to make them friends by praying for them rather than enemies by hating them and rejecting them. And sometimes that's difficult because when we're raised in a very clearly defined Christian environment we tend not only to hate the evil system, but we tend to see all the people in it as our enemies. And so we grow bitter against those who deny the life that we believe is so right. The church even today, I'm sure, in the United States is seen by many as an agitating political force endeavoring to disrupt things in our country.

Now I want you to understand what the Scripture is saying in light of that. Christians are to be model citizens. That doesn't mean we're indifferent or apathetic or don't have an opinion. But we are to be model citizens in every way. We are to be a blessing and a benediction to every one around us. We are to pray for the salvation of every one. And if they know us, they should know the church not as a strong political lobby group, not as a powerful group with money moving through society for its own ends, they are to know us as quiet peaceloving people who are constantly committed to praying for the salvation of those who are outside. We are to submit to the authority over us and more than just

submit to it, we are to pray for the salvation of those very people. If we do that, if the church in this country was just banded together in spirit covenanting together to pray for the lost in our nation and to pray for our rulers and pray for our leaders and not engage in power kind of efforts and power kind of moves and power kind of politics to overturn things and eliminate people and get rid of people, but rather pray for their salvation, we would never be accused or even suspected of disloyalty. Nor would anybody miss the point of our existence. And we would be more likely to be allowed to worship and evangelize without fear or restriction and thus to live our lives in a quiet and tranquil way.

Now notice at the end of verse 2 he adds that the kind of life we live should be marked by all godliness and moral earnestness. "Godliness," that very familiar word, *eusebeia* used all through 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and even in Titus 1:1, the word "godliness" a very common word in the pastoral epistles, has the idea of an attitude of reverence. We ought to be people who are distinguished because our attitude of reverence marks us, reverence toward God, that we live for the majesty, the love, the holiness, the glory of our God. It ought to be that when someone says the word "Christian," all they think of is holiness, godliness. They think of people whose hearts are turned to the living God.

And secondly he says, not only godliness but...he uses the word *semnotes*, it's an unusual word. It's used another time in 1 Timothy and then in Titus chapter 2 verse 7. The basic translation of "moral earnestness" says it for me. It's the idea that we not only have right attitude, that's godliness, but right behavior. When that attitude comes out in our living there's a certain moral earnestness in the way we live. There's a certain commitment to morality. You might say that, if we were free with our translation, he would be saying we should do the praying for the lost that can lead to a quiet and tranquil life in all holy motives and holy behavior. That's really what he's after. We are to so live with holy attitudes and holy deeds that we contribute to the peace and the quiet and the tranquility of our lives. We are not to disrupt. We are not to create scandal nationally. We are not as we remember from Matthew chapter 7 to start going around ripping the tares...or Matthew 13 rather...ripping the tares out of the ground and judging all the unbelievers. We are to love them and compassionately pray for them.

Now as I read that verse I thought to myself, "Well, what about...what about the fact that godliness always creates problems? What about the fact that our message is going to be rejected and that's going to eliminate a quiet and tranquil life in some ways?" That's true...that's true. In fact, in 2 Timothy, twice he tells us we can expect that. Paul even says in chapter 1 verse 8 that he's a prisoner because of his testimony. In chapter 3 verse 12 he says everybody that lives godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But the point is this, and I want you to get it, if we suffer persecution and if we bear the animosity of our society and if we are resented and if we are hated and if we are despised, let it be for our holy attitude and our holy behavior, not because we are a problem to our national society, not because we are disruptive, not because we appear the enemy of men. We should live so that we

are no threat to the peace and tranquility of our nation or our town, but that they perceive us as honorable, as dignified, as morally committed people, as trustworthy so that no one speaks evil against the Word of God and no one speaks evil against God Himself or the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, I thank God that Grace Church takes strong stands. We take very strong stands on things. And if we are rejected or rebuffed at all, it is because of the things that we believe. But our society arounds us...around us sees us as a friend. I am always encouraged by the response of the community, not only in this very vicinity of the valley but even around Los Angeles, to the life of the people in Grace Community Church. I'm always amazed that whenever the news media wants somebody to comment on a major issue that needs a religious spokesman, they'll call Grace Community Church because as one reporter said, "When we want a sane Christian comment, we come to Grace Community Church." The society does not see us as a threat.

I'm very grateful that when we went to the city a few weeks ago and asked for permission to lease from them all the land along the wash to put in the parking, they couldn't be happier to give that opportunity to us...which they did, because they see us as a friend to the community. I remember the year they gave us the plaque that hangs on the wall, The Valley Beautiful award for doing more than any other organization in the San Fernando Valley to beautify a region of the valley. I was even thankful that last Sunday morning in the Daily News there was a most interesting article about Grace Community Church and our link with Yoko Ono.

Now I don't know if you know about that, I did not know about that until I read that article. That was an amazing story. Her former husband and she had a child by the name of Kioko(?) and the father against the court order took the child, kidnapped the child and went into hiding and he's been there for 14 years. The child is now in her twenties, her name is Kioko. They came to Los Angeles to hide. We...I did not know this, nor did any of us until we read the paper...they came to Los Angeles to hide. They got involved in a cult down the street, The Church of the Living Word, run by John Robert Stephens whose daughter, by the way, has come to the Lord Jesus Christ and fellowships in our church. But nonetheless they got in this cult, deeply ingrained in this cult and then by the grace of God they were delivered out of that cult and when they wanted to come to true faith in Jesus Christ, this...the daughter of Yoko Ono and her husband...her father rather, came to Grace Church seeking help and money so they could escape the clutches of these people that had them. And the article went on to say how Grace Community Church not having any idea who these people were not only gave them spiritual counsel and so forth, but gave them the money they needed to escape and they have now become involved as bornagain Christians in the work of the Lord in another place. And several times it mentioned the church and always in a favorable light as a good Samaritan. That ought to be the way our church is known. That's the way our church should be known, as one who

steps in...it doesn't matter who people are but we're there to show the love of Christ and meet the need that is there.

And I was encouraged that the paper put that in in a favorable light. I am very grateful for that. But it ought to be so that if they do not like us and if they resent us, it is clearly because they reject our message, not because they see us as the enemy. You understand that? Jesus Himself was a friend of sinners, was He not? And so it ought to be that we are marked as those who pray for the lost and even our leaders, even the leaders of our city. And we may not agree with them, we may not agree with their life style, their morality or their decisions, the leaders of our state, the leaders of our nation. We may have all kinds of problems with that. But I cannot see that anything ultimately spiritual is to be gained by becoming the enemy of those with whom we disagree. If we are to disagree, let us disagree on the truth of God not on something other than that. And let us with all our hearts commit that if this nation is to be turned around for the sake of God, then let it be that we do it by our spiritual weapons, not carnal ones. And the spiritual weapons are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, spiritual weapons like praying for the lost and including the lost, those who lead us.

And this prayer brings about the conversion of lost people, the conversion of leaders. Gives the church a reputation of loyalty, honesty, integrity and dignity in the community. They become known as those people with holy attitudes and holy behavior and are not a threat to society but rather an encouragement to the goodness of society. That creates the peace and tranquility that allows evangelism to flourish, makes Christianity attractive and gives the gospel a hearing. And that's the side effect to evangelistic praying.

Now you say, "Well, wait a minute. Doesn't this contradict James 1? Doesn't James 1 say the trying of your faith has a perfecting work?" Yes, but there are all kinds of ways in which God can try us and test us and bring trouble and strengthen us without it having to come from the hostility of our society. You don't need to do it that way. If God wants to put you through the crucible of suffering, He has got a million options. You don't have to create one in the environment and neither do I and neither should the church. Trials come in many ways through many doors and God is not at a loss to find means to do that. And, beloved, from time to time it is true that those trials will be persecution. But if persecution comes, I say it again, let it come because of what we believe about the Word of God. As the Russian Christians have told me so many times, if we are persecuted in Russia, it will be for our faith not for our political, economic attitudes. And not for some animosity toward our people or even our leaders. Georgie Vins(?) told me that. Pray for them.

And even when persecution comes, you say, "What should we do then?" Well, listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 5. And it's pretty clear what we're to do. Verse 43, "You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." No, that's not the way. We've gotten into a little of that in the church but that's not the right way. "I say to you...what?...love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you...and here it comes...pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." Pray for their what? Pray for their salvation.

And we've all read the story of the martyrs many times in the past who on their knees being killed, their life being taken, were praying for the ones who were killing them and that is the testimony of Stephen, is not...is it not...who is beneath the stones crushing out his life and cries out, "Father, lay not this sin to their charge." Don't hold them responsible. Which is to say forgive them. It's the spirit of Jesus, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

So, the point is that whatever the chaos, whatever the conflict that may come, it should not be a result of the Christians becoming the enemies of the lost. It should be only for what we believe and what we live for. As far as the society around us, they ought to see us as their friends, as compassionate loving people who continually pray for their salvation. Next time instead of writing a letter to your congressman to tell him how awful he is, write a letter and tell him you're praying for him every day for his salvation. And then give him the gospel. Let him know what the church is really all about.

And if we are concerned to pray, I believe God will answer that prayer. And that's why I'm so concerned by those people who insist that this nation or any other nation could never be godly, the church can never flourish, God's work can never be done unless we attack everybody in the society we don't like. And people ask me that so often, "Why don't you preach on issues? Why don't you..." Look, I'll attack sin but beyond that I don't really want to alienate everybody in our society because I think they need Christ. And I don't want them throwing Him away when they reject me. So God says pray for them. And there's a side benefit, you'll create an environment in which you'll be able to flourish.

And I really think in a small way by God's grace this church has enjoyed that. It really has. I'm always amazed when I pick up a real estate section of the paper and see a house advertised for sale by a realtor and underneath it says, "near Grace Church." That's good. I'm glad for that.

So, the realization that we are to commit ourselves to this high priority of prayer is based upon a deep sense of the need of the lost, the severe lack of their souls in facing eternity without God, a reverent petition to God with that need based on His own glory, a compassionate sense of falling into the very



need itself so that we feel the lostness of the lost. We are to pray for them. And for all of them whether they're just the people or the leaders. And in so praying we shall see God save them and we shall see conditions rise from the love and compassion of the church toward the lost which will act as a benediction to the church and thus speed the gospel on its way.

That brings me fourthly, and I'm just going to introduce a portion of this fourth point, finish next time, but that brings me fourthly to the reason for evangelistic praying...the reason for it. And that is contained in verses 3 to 7. And this is one of THE most powerful statements of the saving purpose of God given anywhere in Scripture. I cannot rush through this. It is monumental stuff, just powerful dramatic truth about God's saving purpose. I do not want to get into a theological debate. I don't want to talk about systematic theology. I want only to let the text speak for itself. It is so powerful.

Why pray for the lost? Why pray for the souls of men? What is the purpose? Well, the answer comes in verses 3 to 7. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, man Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time. For this I am ordained to preacher and an apostle, I speak the truth in Christ and lie not, a teacher of the nations in faith and sincerity."

Now in that few verses is summed up the reason for the winning of the lost. This has to be one of the greatest evangelistic texts in all the Bible, one of the greatest statements on the mission of the church anywhere in holy Scripture.

Why do we pray for the lost? Point number one, and I'm going to give you several of them, some this week and some next. Point number one, it is morally right to do so. It is right. Look what it says in verse 3, "For this is good." The word "good," kalon basically means excellent, intrinsically morally good. This is good. It's just plain right. God sets it up as being right. Your moral conscience says it's right. I mean, you wouldn't argue that. If I said to you, "Should you pray for the lost?" I mean, everything in you that's right and true and good would say of course...of course, it's good to pray for the lost because it saves them from hell. It saves them from a meaningless life. It brings them into the place where they can glorify God. It allows them to have purpose in life and in eternity. It allows them to reach others. It's good. It's right. The word "this" points back to the praying for all men and for the leaders. This is good. It's right. It's excellent. Since the salvation of others would be the greatest benefit to them and the greatest benefit to the church, it's good, it's excellent.

Now somebody would say, "Well now wait a minute. Jesus said in John 17:9, 'I pray not for the world.' If it's so good why did He say that?" Let's find out. Let's look at John 17:9 and I thought of this and I brought it in because I didn't want anybody finding that verse and saying, "Wait, this confuses me." Why in John 17:9 does Jesus say to the Father in His high priestly prayer, "I pray for them...that is for the disciples, those who You have given to Me, My own disciples...I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine?" And somebody would say, "Well, Jesus didn't pray for the whole world. He says right here I don't pray for the world."

And you know something? That's right...in this particular case, He said I don't pray for the world. What did He mean by that? Well, that's the whole point. Does that mean God doesn't love the world? Well, in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," now the whole point of the verse is He gave His only begotten Son to fulfill His love. So God loves the whole world. First John 2:2 says He is the covering for our sin and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. So God loves the whole world, gave a Savior to the whole world, a covering for sin is offered to the whole world, why does He say I pray not for the world? And isn't Jesus' mission to go to the whole world? Didn't He say preach the gospel to every creature?

Yes.

Why in verse 9 does He say I pray not for the world? That's very simple. What He is saying here is I'm not praying for the world's success as the world. You understand that? The cosmos, the evil Satanic system...what He means is, I'm not praying that the world succeed. I'm praying for the disciples to succeed in winning the world, not for the world to succeed in stopping them. He can't pray for His own and pray for the world which is the enemy. As William Hendrickson said, "The salvation of the world lay precisely in its ceasing to be the world." He could not pray for the world as the world, it was set against Him. He's saying, I don't pray for the success of the world, I would never do that. I pray for the success of My people. He's praying for His disciples to be protected from the world. He even says, "Keep them from the evil one, from the one who rules the world system," in order that in their believing they may reach the world, verses 21 and 23.

So, it is good. Jesus prayed for the lost. Moses, David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Stephen, Paul, we saw them all last week, they all prayed for the lost. It's good.

Now the second thing, and I'm going to stop with this one, but I want you to listen so carefully, this is a powerful, powerful truth, we are to pray for the lost, one because it's good, it's right, it's morally excellent; two it is consistent with God's will. We are to pray for the lost because it is consistent with

God's will. Notice verse 3, "This is good and...here it comes...acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who will all...who will have...who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who wills all men to be saved. It is the will of God that men be saved. It's consistent with His will. The word "acceptable" which is also used in a similar phrase in chapter 5 verse 4 has the idea...it's a very rich word, it's not just to receive, dechomai, it's apodechomai, it means to applaud, it means to gladly receive, to accept with satisfaction, to heartily welcome. It's a very warm word. It is to say the Lord gladly anxiously eagerly with applause and satisfaction and joy receives this. This is what He wants, the salvation of the world. So praying for all the world is really gladly received by God. He applauds that kind of praying. He accepts it heartily because it is consistent with His character.

And what do you mean by that? Well, notice it in verse 3, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our creator," is that what it says? No, "God our...what?...Savior." It's consistent with who He is. It's consistent with His nature, with His character. Chapter 1 verse 1, "Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior." Chapter 4 verse 10, "God who is the Savior." First Thessalonians, Paul writes chapter 5 verse 9, "God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation." Titus 1:3, "But hath in due times manifested His Word through preaching which is committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior." Titus 2:10, again, "The doctrine of God our Savior." Titus 3:4, "The love and kindness of God our Savior." And then in that wonderful benediction that closes the little epistle of Jude, "To the only wise God our Savior."

You see, God is repeatedly spoken of as the Savior. That's essential to His nature. He is a Savior as He is a creator, and a sustainer. God our Savior. And that old theory that the God of the Old Testament is an ogre who judges men and the Christ of the New Testament is the Savior is just not so. It is God the Savior who sent Christ to do the work that would save, but the saving purpose is in the heart of God.

Someone might say, "Well, does the Old Testament teach that God is a Savior?" Yes. Listen just for one example to 2 Samuel 22 verse 3, "The God of my rock, in Him will I trust, He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower and my refuge, my Savior," 2 Samuel 22 and verse 3. And read Psalm 106 and remember Isaiah 43:3, "I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Savior." Verse 11, "Apart from Me there is no Savior." Listen, God in His deepest truest self desires to save men from their sins. And Mary when glorifying God in that beautiful magnificat cried out after learning of the wonder of God's creation in her in Luke 1:47 said, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior," and she reflected the deepest warmest sentiment of any Old Testament Jew, any true Jew, that cries out to God wanting to glorify His name by calling Him that name which above all names relates to sinners, God my Savior. God is a Savior.

So, when we go and pray for the lost, we are praying in a way that is welcomed and gladly received and applauded by God because He is first and foremost a Savior God. That's consistent with who He is. That's consistent with His will. And the fact that it's here in the text has a little bit of polemic to it also because in the Roman culture Caesar called himself soter that's the Greek word for Savior. And the cult of the Caesar embodied the idea that Caesar was the Savior. And within the Roman province, he was the great savior of men who provided peace and order, prosperity and protection. And what Paul is saying is over against the cult of Caesar the savior is God our Savior. They have their savior, we have God our Savior. That's His nature. And since He is God our Savior by nature verse 4 says, since He is God our Savior He will have all men to be saved. That figures. He is the Savior of all men. He's our Savior.

But that's not the end of it. He's not saying He's just the Savior of those of us who are already saved. No, no, He will have all men. You say, "You mean God wants all men to be saved?" That's right. He wants all men to be saved. The word "saved" means delivered, rescued from divine wrath and judgment. You say, "You mean God really wants all men to be saved?" That is His desire.

Let me show you that in the Old Testament. Turn to, first of all, Isaiah 45 and I'm going to just give you a very quick look at a few verses. Isaiah 45:22, just listen to this, this can't be missed, "Look unto Me..." well, back to verse 21, I just can't resist this, "Tell ye and bring them near, yea, let them take counsel together, who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from the time? Have not I the Lord...here it is...and there is no God else beside Me a just God and a...what? A Savior." There's none beside Me. As He is a Savior, look what He says, verse 22, "Look unto Me and be saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." The point is if anybody on the face of the earth is to be saved, there's only one God who can do it. So He must call to all the ends of the earth, for there is no other Savior.

Look at 49:6 of Isaiah. And he says to the people of Israel and really through the work of Messiah, "I will also give thee for a light to the nations that Thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth, thus saith the Lord, the redeemer." That's God's design.

The invitation then comes in chapter 55 verse 1, "To all the ends of the earth, ho...hey, everybody...every one that thirsts," who is that? How many people in the world thirst for salvation? How many people are thirsting for salvation? Everybody that doesn't have it. It's picturing someone without water, everybody without Christ without water, every one without salvation is without water so everybody's thirsty. All of you that are thirsty all over the world, "Come to the waters, even though you

have no money, come by and eat, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."  
Universal call.

Now look at Ezekiel chapter 18 and I want you to see again from the Old Testament the saving purpose of God is worldwide to the ends of the earth. In Ezekiel 18 verse 23, there's two questions asked here. They appear at first to be rhetorical questions. Later on he answers them. "Have I any pleasure...Ezekiel 18:23...have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God and not that he should return from his ways and live?" Do I have any pleasure that the wicked should die? Do I have any pleasure that they should not return and live? Look at the middle of verse 30, "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions so iniquity shall not be your ruin, cast away from you all your transgression by which you have transgressed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit for why will you die, O house of Israel?" You think that's My will? "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves and live and then a lamentation is taken up." God does not please Himself with the death and damnation of wicked people.

Look at the thirtythird chapter of Ezekiel. He cries out. Again in chapter 33 verse 10, "Therefore, O thou son of man, the word comes to Ezekiel, speak to the house of Israel and say this," here's God's word, "if our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" We're going to die. But verse 11, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live, turn ye, turn from your evil ways for why will you die, O house of Israel?" It's the same passionate cry.

There is no biblical theology that can teach that God is pleased with the damnation of the wicked. There is no theology that can teach that God does not will all men everywhere to be saved, for God in Acts 17 has called all men everywhere to repent. For God in John 3:16 has so loved the whole world, for God has told His apostles and prophets to take the message of salvation to the ends of the earth. And hell itself, the Bible says, was prepared for the devil and his angels, not even for men originally. No, God's desire is given right here. Look back at our text, 1 Timothy. Since God is a Savior, He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. That's another way of saying salvation. Salvation occurs when you come to the knowledge of the truth. The word "knowledge" here is epignosis, it means a deep full rich and complete knowledge and that is the knowledge of true salvation.

It is used four times in these pastoral epistles. In 2 Timothy 3:7 it talks about people who have a form of godliness but no reality who are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,

same word. And in Titus 1:1 comparing faith and knowledge, both elements of salvation, again he refers to the knowledge of the truth.

So, what he is saying here is it is God's will that all men be saved and salvation comes through the true deep knowledge of saving truth, the gospel, the work of Christ. And this may be an answer to some Jews who were saying God willed the damnation of heretics. There were Jews who believed that God willed the damnation of Gentiles in general. And then there was that gnostic pregnostic view that God must have willed the damnation of all the nonelite, the people who never attained mystical knowledge. And he takes issue with that. And he says, "Listen, God wills because He is by nature a Savior that all men would be saved through coming to the full knowledge of saving truth in Jesus Christ."

And I want to close by talking about the word "will" and I want you to listen carefully. What kind of will is this? Because somebody looks at this verse and says, "Oh, God will have all men to be saved. I'll tell you one thing, God gets what He wants, He's in charge. Therefore universalism is taught. That is that ultimately everybody will be saved because that's God's will, it says so right here."

Other people say, "No, no, no, no, the Bible could teach us hell and the Bible teaches that people are going to be there forever, so some people aren't going to go to heaven. Therefore when it says God will have all men to be saved, it doesn't mean all men, just means some men because after all, God's got to get what He wants and He can't save everybody because hell's there and some people are there. So He's got to save all the people that He wants to save, therefore He doesn't want to save all people. `All' doesn't mean all, it must means some."

I don't think you need to do either one of those things. I think what you have to understand is the word "will." The word is thelo. There are two basic words for "will," thelo, to will, thelo and boulomai. Thelo reflects the will of desire springing from feeling and inclination. Boulomai speaks of will coming from precise determination. It is not saying that God has willed in the boulomai sense that He has precisely determined the salvation of all men, and that is a sovereign given fact so everybody's going to be saved.

Make it real simple. Are there some things in your life which violate the will of God? Yes. But still we understand there is a will of God that moves inexorably along a track that is unalterable. That's the will of His precise sovereign predetermination. But the will of His heart desire, His moral will is violated all the time by people, even by you and me. Whenever I sin, it is not God's will. God does not will that I sin. Do I sin? Yes. So can I break God's will? Yes, I do it all the time, so do you and so does

the whole world. God wills and desires the salvation of all men from the moral viewpoint. That's why He commands all men everywhere to repent. Why else would God cry to Israel, "Why will you die? Why will you die?" It says you don't have to, doesn't it? Ho, everyone that thirsts, come and drink.

And men sin and they go to hell, not because it is God's express sovereign purpose for them. They go to hell because they denied God His will in their life. He calls them to repent. He calls them to be saved. If anyone goes to hell, they go there not because of the predetermined choice of God, but because of the rejection of Jesus Christ. That's what He's saying. He wants all men saved.

I believe in the sovereignty of God, I believe in election, I believe in predestination, beloved, I also believe that God wills men to be saved and by their choice they are not saved and that is their responsibility not God's. And if you ask me how those two things harmonize, I say I'll tell you our first day in heaven, I'll explain the whole thing. But I know this, God has a broken heart because He desires salvation from the ends of the earth, why else would Jesus weep over Jerusalem. "O how often I would, I willed to gather you together but you would not." He said that. You wouldn't do it. Why will you die? Why will you reject?

Well, praying for the lost, essentially. One, because it's right. Two, because it's consistent with the will of God. And so we are to make intercession for all men because God wills all men to be saved and because it's their highest good both now and forever. Let's pray.

Lord God, what a clear word You've given to us. Thank You even for the deep unresolved mysteries of sovereignty and human choice. Thank You that Your mind is so much greater than ours. But thank You, Father, for the clear word that we are to pray for the lost. And even among our leaders, that in being consumed with their good, being consumed with their salvation, having deep compassion, falling into their very lostness, sensing their deep soul's need they might see our love, they might see the holiness of our attitudes and acts that we might live that quiet and tranquil life that can speed the gospel on its way and make it attractive. Help us to do that, Lord, because it's right, because it's good and because it's who You are, You're a Savior and You want all men to be saved. And we grieve with you that so many reject. God, we pray for the lost, for the lost here this morning, for those without the Savior, those in our community, those in leadership all around the world. O Father, billions of people, save them and make the church be preoccupied with this ministry of intercessory prayer on behalf of the lost, the unsaved, those not rescued from eternal punishment. Save them, Lord, that You might be praised, that they might be blessed, that the church might be strengthened. And we'll thank You. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).