

PRAYING FOR THE LOST

1 Timothy 2:1-6

INTRODUCTION: Who do you know who is lost? As far as you know, this person would not go to heaven if they died right now, because they have never trusted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

If that person is not sitting next to you, just put their initials in your notes, especially if you have more than one.

Family member? Friend? Someone at work or school? A neighbor?

How about a government official that you are pretty sure does not have a personal relationship with Jesus? OK, I know you do not have enough space. Write small initials only for now.

I asked you to do this because our text this morning is from Paul's first letter to Timothy, his son in the ministry. After Paul was imprisoned in Rome, which was recorded at the end of the Book of Acts, Paul was released. The evidence suggests that Paul traveled both west and east from Rome in the ensuing years, west to Spain where he once again proclaimed the gospel and planted churches, and east where he visited congregations he helped begin. On this final journey through Macedonia, Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Finally, Paul was arrested again during the persecution under Nero and taken to Rome. This time he was kept in the depths of the prison, in chains, awaiting a certain execution. This is when he wrote 2 Timothy.

At the writing of this letter, Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Paul writes 1 Timothy to share important things with this younger pastor. One of the early subjects of his letter was about praying for the lost. Let's read it.

1 Timothy 2:1-6

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, ...

Paul begins with four synonyms for prayer that are easy for us to quickly pass over. He is not telling us to do four things but one thing. We are to pray for the lost, but each of the words he uses carry a different shade of meaning that describes how we should pray.

- **Supplications – comes from the word meaning “to lack something,” “to be in need of something.”** This kind of prayer may be our most common form of prayer, because when we realize we do not have something that we really need, do we not immediately find time to cry out to God?
 - When the rent or mortgage payment deadline is approaching, and you do not have the money, do you not pray?
 - When you are sick or a loved one is sick, and especially if the doctor does not know what to do, do you pray?
 - When the unimaginable circumstance happens in your life and you immediately get that pit in your belly that leaves you with a sick feeling, don't you find some way to get alone and bow your head and call out to God for rescue.
 - Those are prayers of supplication.
 - Now here is the question coming from the context of what the Holy Spirit is saying to Timothy through Paul and what the Holy Spirit is asking each of us right now.

Do you pray like that for the lost? Do you pray with a sense of need in your heart? Do you hurt inside because someone you love has not yet come to faith in Christ?

In the 1600's an English Puritan named **Richard Baxter** wrote these words which I have only edited to modernize the language.

Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians ... in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Alas, there is but a step between 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 stir yourself to help others? Do you not care who is damned, as long as you are saved?

Do you live close to 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, you would run and help them; and will you not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? (Cited in I. D. E. Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 92-93. Edited by MC.)

I exhort you to offer supplications for the lost!

The second word Paul uses is the general word in the New Testament for prayer.

- **Prayer** – But the important thing to note is that this word is **only used in reference to crying out to God**. We may make supplications or intercessions or say thank you to others, but we only pray to the One True and Living God.
 - And in the context of praying for the lost this reminds us that only God can grant what we ask for those who have not trusted Him. No mere mortal can accomplish what we ask on behalf of those who are perishing. Only God.

The third word is

- **Intercession** – This word for prayer is used only in this letter, but it comes from the verb used to describe the intercession of Christ for us and the Spirit's intercession for us. This word carries **the idea of identifying with us** and entering into the struggle with us **with empathy, compassion, and involvement**.
 - Paul's point is that our prayer for the lost should not be perfunctory, mundane, routine, or liturgical.
 - We are not public defenders just making the conventional plea to the judge because everybody is entitled to a defense.
 - No, we are the advocates, and the guilty standing before the bar of God's justice is our mother or sister or son or dearest friend.
 - This is not just another day in court and too bad if the defendant gets what he deserves. These are folks we care deeply about, and their hurt is our hurt. We see the deception that has enslaved them to sin, and while we know the fault is their own yet we pity them for being deceived and long, long for them to know the truth and be set free.

The final word is

- **Giving of thanks** – So, if we are praying for people who are lost and not yet saved, what are we giving thanks for?
 - First, that **Jesus has made a way of salvation through His death and resurrection**. If He had not done that, our prayer could not be answered.
 - Second, that **the gospel, the way of salvation, is simple and clear**.

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

 - Third, that in many cases, **we can share that gospel with the lost person for whom we are praying**.

Folks, the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through these words in 1 Timothy this morning saying, “First of all, I exhort you to pray for lost people, as you pray for the deepest needs in your own life, fervently, passionately; that you cry out to God on their behalf knowing that only God can grant your request; that you plea for them as if they were the dearest one in life to you about to be taken away from you to burn in flames forever; and that you make your heartfelt petition with gratitude that what you pray for really is possible and can be accomplished because of the grace and mercy of God.

Then Paul adds three specific admonitions to inform and guide our prayers for the lost.

I. PRAY FOR ALL TO BE SAVED.

Pray for those you know, but do not stop there. Use their names as a starting point. But pray for everybody on your block, pray for the people of Bay County, pray for your fellow citizens in the United States. Pray for people in other countries. Pray, the Holy Spirit says, for all.

- A. **Because this prayer is good in the sight of God.** God wants to hear you praying this prayer.
- B. **Because this prayer is welcomed by God.** The word acceptable means “heartily welcomed” and “gladly received.”
- C. **Because God wants all people to be saved.** The Scripture repeatedly affirms this truth.

Isaiah 45:22 “Look to Me, and be saved, **All you ends of the earth!** ...

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them: ‘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, turn from your evil ways!** For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

John 3:16 For **God so loved the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

2 Peter 3:9 **The Lord is** not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

Why pray for all?

D. Because God wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth.

People are held captive by deception. Pray that God will do whatever is necessary to remove the scales before their spiritual eyes and just see the truth. The truth will set them free. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life!

II. PRAY ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE IN AUTHORITY.

- A. I wonder if one reason is because most in authority are lost.
- B. Pray for kings (for presidents and all who are a part of the deep state.)
Don't just pray for their removal. Pray for their salvation. More difference could be made in government if people already in government got saved than replacing lost people with saved people. (I am not saying we should not try to do the latter as a faithful exercise of our citizenship, but we often forget the former.)
- C. The benefit of praying for those in authority to be saved is that when God makes that happen, our lives get better as a result of having saved people exercise their authority over us instead of lost people.

III. PRAY BECAUSE THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY OF SALVATION.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 5 For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, ...*

Lost men everywhere are walking multiple roads thinking, hoping, they lead to heaven.

Only one way leads to heaven – the way of Jesus, the way of the cross. “No one comes to the Father except through Me.”