

Pray & Proclaim (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Our text will be 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 through 7.

! I start writing the sermon and sometimes I realize this is going to take two sermons.

So that's the case for us today. I'm going to read verses 1 through 7, but we're going to get through verse 2 and cover the rest next week, Lord willing.

If you're with me, would you stand as we honor the reading of God's Word together? 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 through 7.

1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 through 7.

[1 : 26] I am telling you the truth, I am not lying, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? I remember the first Bible I received as a kid.

It was gifted to me from a man named Gail Milhuff. And I've told you about that man before and how he holds a special place in my heart because he prayed for my family.

He prayed for my brother when he was sick in the hospital and invited my parents to church, which is the church that I grew up in. When Mr. Milhuff died, he gave me a Bible.

And that Bible had pictures in it. But they weren't cartoon illustrations like a lot of our children's Bibles are today.

[2 : 41] They were pictures, paintings of portraits. And they were very vivid in detail.

One of those portraits was in the book of Jonah. And it illustrated the moment where God hurled a powerful wind, a fierce storm upon the sea, which violently battered the boat that Jonah boarded as he was journeying to Tarshish.

In the picture, Jonah's ship is in the background, again, being battered by the wind and the waves. And in the foreground, just underneath the water's surface, a murky silhouette of a giant fish with a large yellow eye, loomed, poised to swallow Jonah once he was thrown into the depths of the sea. That portrait was both terrifying and mesmerizing. It captured both the power of God and conveyed the dreadful consequence of disobeying him.

Disobedience and revival are two key themes in the book of Jonah. Jonah was a prophet whom God commanded to go to the great city, the city of Nineveh, a place that was known for its wickedness, its cruelty, and to warn the inhabitants of that city that if they did not repent of their sins, they would face destruction.

[4 : 23] Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah books passage and a ship headed in the exact opposite direction from Nineveh. Why would he do that?

Well, Jonah didn't disobey God because he was afraid of what the wicked Ninevites might do to him. He disobeyed God because he was afraid what God would do for the people of Nineveh.

After Jonah is swallowed by the fish, he repents of his disobedience and he receives God's forgiveness. And the fish throws him up on the shores of Nineveh.

And Jonah then proclaims God's message throughout the city. And as a result of that, Jonah's worst fear is realized. They all, all the people of Nineveh sought God's forgiveness and received it. Jonah chapter three, verse 10 through chapter four, verse three record Jonah's displeasure and God speaking to him about that. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them and he did not do it.

[5 : 40] But it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and he said, oh Lord, is this not what I said when I was yet in my country?

That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster.

Therefore now, oh Lord, please take my life from me for it is better for me to die than to live. Jonah hated, Jonah vehemently hated the people of Nineveh.

He did not want God to save them. He wanted God to obliterate them. He would rather die than live in the reality that his enemies were no longer God's enemies.

God would later use a wind and a plant and a worm to teach Jonah that he is merciful and chooses to save people whom we think are too far gone or maybe too unworthy of receiving his grace and his love.

[6:51] Like Jonah, Christians today are commanded by God to go and to proclaim his message everywhere. We are Christ's ambassadors. We are the instruments through whom he appeals to unbelievers to turn from their sin and to be saved from its eternal consequences.

We are to be indiscriminating as we do this, regardless of a person's reputation, race, religion, rejection of God, or rage against the truths that we believe.

We are to pray for their salvation and proclaim the gospel to them in the hopes that they will be saved. We are to be like Jesus who told us in Matthew 5, 43 through 45, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. We are to obey Jesus and prioritize his mission that he gave to us, his church, after his resurrection.

And just before he ascended back to heaven in Matthew 28, verses 19 through 20, he made his mission for the church very clear. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[8:31] And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Paul is an example of how merciful and gracious God is. Paul, who wrote this letter to Timothy, was an enemy of Jesus prior to his salvation.

He hated his church. He sought the destruction of the church. But our Lord graciously saved him and transformed him and called him to be apostle to the Gentiles, who, by the way, Paul, as a Jew, hated before his salvation and before this call from God to go to these people that he once despised, whom he thought were unworthy to receive God's grace, mercy, and love.

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, a young pastor serving the church in Ephesus. And in chapter three, verses 14 through 15, he states his primary purpose for writing this letter to him.

He says, If you recall in chapter one, Paul encourages Timothy to confront strange teachers teaching strange things in the church.

The teachings that they were teaching contradicted the true gospel and led to misconduct in the household of God and a departure from the church's primary mission.

[10:08] Timothy was to wage the good warfare by preaching the truth of God's word and structuring the church according to God's word.

In chapter two, verses one through seven now, Paul gives the first of those principles for putting the church of God in order. And he gives the first one of these for the church in Ephesus.

And it's a principle that should continue to guide the church today. And that principle serves as our main idea. Our primary, and I'm speaking of the church of Jesus Christ, our primary mission, and for disciples of Jesus Christ, our primary mission is to seek the lost and pray for their salvation.

Our primary mission is to seek the lost and pray for their salvation. Christian, this mission should be important to you because it is important to the Lord who saved you.

If Jesus has saved you, he's commanded you to go and make disciples.

[11:17] He's commanded you to proclaim the gospel. He's called us, his church, to be the light of the world, a shining city on a hill that people living in darkness would behold the glory, the goodness, and the grace of Christ in us.

This means, as we've already seen from Scripture, that we are to go to all people, even those people. For Jonah, those people were the Ninevites.

They are those people whom we deem to be so deceitful, so deplorable, so disgraceful, so disgusting, that we would rather pray for God to destroy them than to save them.

Jesus calls us to go to all people, and he commands us to love our enemies, which includes praying for our enemies, to pray for those people in the hopes that they will become God's people for faith in

Jesus Christ.

In our text today, God's word reminds us that our primary mission is to seek the lost and pray for the salvation of all people, even those people, whomever those people may be to you.

[12:41] And so I hope that the Holy Spirit will use the words he's inspired to convict you and to convince you and to convict us and convince us all that our primary mission is to seek the lost.

And that begins by praying for their salvation. Maybe you're here this morning and you feel like you've been treated by Christians or by someone who claimed to be a Christian.

You may have been treated as if you were one of those people, whoever those people are. Perhaps you've been made to think that you are too far gone, that you are too sinful to receive God's grace. If that describes you, then friend, you're in the right place. We have prayed for you. I have prayed for you. We are glad that you are here.

God has brought you here this morning to hear his gospel because as we've read, it is his desire to save you.

[13:48] And while you live and while you have breath, you aren't too far gone. People might have made you feel that way. You might think that way about yourself. But God, as we've heard him already declaring his word, is merciful.

And his word is full of examples. This room is full of examples of people who weren't too far gone to receive his mercy, his grace, his forgiveness, his love through salvation in Jesus Christ, his son.

And I hope that today is the day of salvation for you. Church, our primary mission is to seek the lost and pray for their salvation. Our text this morning contains four principles and we'll get through two of those principles about praying for them as we seek to be used by the Lord to proclaim the gospel to them.

The first of those principles comes at the very beginning of verse one that we must prioritize prayer for the lost. We must prioritize as a church, as believers, prayer for the lost.

Paul begins his instruction here for the church to pray for the lost. and he begins by letting us know how much of a priority this should be for us.

[15:10] He says, first of all, first of all, this indicates that prayer for the lost was probably something the church in Ephesus was not prioritizing. The most likely cause of their deprioritization of prayer for the lost was due to two strands of false teaching that was prevalent in this church.

On the one hand, you had the Judaizers who taught that salvation was a result of God's grace plus human effort or works. They believed that God saves people based on their obedience to keeping his law.

But as Paul has already pointed out in chapter one, verses eight through 11, they used the law unlawfully. The law of God is like a diagnosis. It reveals the problem.

It reveals our sin. It is like the black backdrop on which the beauty of the gospel diamond shines. The law diagnoses our problem, which is sin.

The gospel provides the cure for our sin, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, came to live the sinless life that none of us could live, to die the death that all of us deserved, and who rose victoriously over the enemies that none of us could conquer.

[16:27] We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved by God. We are transformed with a new desire then to obey God.

The Judaizers in Ephesus were acting like Jonah, and they were excluding those people who did not observe their traditions and share their customs.

On the other hand, you had the intellectual religious elites, at least they thought they were, who believed in something later called Gnosticism. They believed that salvation was only for the elite, only for those who were able to ascend to the highest levels of secret knowledge, mystical knowledge.

They thought what a person needed for their salvation was to discover and examine the inner spark that they said was within themselves, and then they would be able to free themselves from their body and discover God on their own.

So you see, neither group would have been concerned about praying for the lost people because they believed that salvation was exclusive.

[17:43] And by that, I mean that it was either for those who adhered to Jewish customs and traditions or for those who had gone on this journey and had arrived at this secret, mystical knowledge and saved themselves.

Paul counters both of these false beliefs by stating that we must pray for all people. Salvation is exclusive in that a person is only saved by God through faith in Jesus Christ, his son, a point that Paul makes in verses 5 and 6.

But salvation is not exclusive in the sense that it is restricted to a specific ethnic group or intellectual group who have solved or discovered some kind of secret knowledge for themselves.

But if we aren't careful, these kinds of exclusive attitudes can take root in our churches. and in our hearts.

A long time ago, I was visiting with some pastors and we were sharing some of our ministry struggles. One pastor's church was located in a neighborhood that had changed a lot since that church had first started in that community.

[19 : 08] And he was sharing his struggle about how few children they had in the church and how few children they had signed up for VBS that year.

I had seen his church before. I had seen a lot of kids in the neighborhood surrounding the church.

And so I asked him, have you tried to reach out to your neighborhood?

I've seen a lot of kids around your church. Have you tried to reach out to them and see if they'd come to VBS? And he said, well, it's a pretty rough neighborhood and they are pretty rough kids.

They're not the kind of kids that we want. In other words, those kids, those people didn't match their profile of the kind of person that they wanted in their church or the kinds of people they believed God desired to save.

On another occasion, another pastor friend of mine had done a lot of outreach in his community and as a result of that, many of the people that they were reaching out to and sharing the gospel with started to show up to his church, which prompted one of his members to ask him one Sunday and seeing all of these visitors, she said to him, who are all these strangers and why are they in our church?

[20 : 42] If the church doesn't see its neighbors as its mission field and if its members act threatened by them when they show up in their building, the church has lost sight of Christ, his gospel, and his mission for us, which he commanded us to be about.

the church belongs to Jesus. It's his church and his expectation is that we seek to be about his mission.

The church in Ephesus lost sight of Jesus' mission, so Paul lists praying for the lost first of all in the Greek proton panton, first in sequence, first in order of significance.

The goal of the church, like Israel before it, is to reach the world with the saving truth of God. Israel failed to be faithful in that and the responsibility has passed on to the church today.

We are to be the light of Christ to the nations and that starts in our communities, it starts in our neighborhoods, it starts with all of us prioritizing, praying for the lost.

[21 : 56] Now I want you to think about something. First of all, how much have you prayed this past week? And if you could guesstimate and put an amount of time on it, how much time have you actually prayed this week?

And now I want you to think about how much of that time that you did pray did you spend praying for lost people? Now we are to pray about a lot of things.

We are to pray without ceasing. But I venture to guess that most of our prayers center on ourselves, on our needs, on our church members and their needs, but little time has been spent mentioning lost people by name and that needs to change.

Not that we stop praying for ourselves, not that we stop praying for each other, but that we add to our prayers, prayers for lost people and we do that regularly.

The one thing Christians will not do in heaven is evangelize. At that point in time, the mission will have been completed. Many of the things we currently do as a church, we will do in heaven.

[23 : 20] We will worship in heaven. We will have fellowship in heaven, but we won't evangelize in heaven because there won't be any need to do that. The primary function of the church on earth is to reach the lost.

Paul knew the Ephesians would never do this so long as they maintain their exclusive attitudes and so he calls them here first of all to prioritize prayer for all people.

And so should we. Praying for the lost changes our attitude towards the lost. It ignites a desire within our hearts to be used by God to proclaim the gospel to them in the hopes that they'll be saved.

So that's the first principle. We must prioritize praying for the lost. And now in the rest of verse 1 and verse 2, the second principle is that we must pray for all people. We must pray for all people. In the rest of verse 1, Paul says, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

[24 : 35] In the Greek, the word translated as supplication means to lack, be deprived, or to be without something. This is the kind of prayer that sees a need and pleads with God in prayer to supply what is needed.

In the case of an unbeliever, the need is the greatest need of all, salvation, which is something that only God can supply. As we look out and as we see how many people are lost in this world, as we consider how many people in this world have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ, I've heard it estimated that about 40% of the population, 3 billion people in this world have never heard the gospel.

Those numbers, those statistics should drive us to our knees in prayer for those people. But how often does that reality actually drive us to our knees in prayer?

Richard Baxter, a great reformed pastor from the 15th century, said this to his church when he realized the lack of zeal that they had for Christ's mission to reach the lost.

He said to them, have you hearts of rock that cannot pity men in such case as this? If you believe not the word of God and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves?

[26 : 08] If you do believe it, why do you not stir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace.

Do you live close by them or meet them on 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 you would help them.

And will you not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? Pretty convicting. We must servantly pray for all people because only God can supply what they most desperately need, salvation.

Along with these supplications, we are to offer, Paul says, prayers for all people. We are to pray prayers for all people, which sounds kind of confusing.

And this is why knowing the Greek helps. *Proskue* is a general word for prayer, but it carries the idea of prayers to God that are worshipful and reverential.

[27 : 27] Praying to God for the lost should be worshipful because the salvation of sinners gives him glory. We want people to be saved so that God will be praised, worshipped, and receive more glory.

In 2 Corinthians 4.15, Paul states that all his efforts to reach lost people is not for his glory, but for God's. He says, for it is all for your sake so that as grace extends to more and more people, it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.

We should pray for all people, but if the people we pray for are saved, we shouldn't say or think, my prayers have saved you. I was praying for you and I saved you through my prayers.

That would be wrong. That would be really wrong. We pray, we proclaim, but God is the one who saves. He is the one who receives all the glory. The Greek word translated as intercession is and it means to fall in with someone.

The verb form of the Greek word is used in the Old Testament to describe both Jesus and the Holy Spirit's intercession for us as believers. In Hebrews 7 25, it says, consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them, speaking of our Lord's work for us.

[28 : 58] Romans 8 26 says, likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

The idea here is identifying with someone's needs and interceding on their behalf for their well-being. this is the opposite of someone like a court-appointed defense attorney who's just assigned to some random person who he doesn't really know and he doesn't really care about and he's not really going to intercede on their behalf with a passionate whole heart.

This describes someone who gets involved because they genuinely care. They've seen someone's misery and they want that misery to come to an end.

In the case of an unbeliever, it's seeing how their sin has brought them misery. It's being aware of the eternal misery that awaits them in hell.

It also involves remembering our misery before God was gracious to save us and free us from sin. and so we seek to be used by the Lord to end their misery by interceding on their behalf, praying to God that they likewise would be set free from their sin and be saved by him.

[30 : 28] We also pray for the lost, Paul says, by offering thanksgiving. This means that we pray with a spirit of gratitude to God that he is merciful to save people at all. This is amazing.

We pray with thanksgiving that Jesus has made a way for sinners to be saved. And this is how we pray for lost people. Is this the way that you pray for lost people?

If you aren't praying for unbelievers to be saved, then friend, you need to examine your heart. If you are praying for lost people, but these elements are missing in your prayers for them, if you're just saying, you know, God, save John, and Timmy and Tommy and all these other people, just save them.

It's nice that you're at least listing their names, but Paul tells us how we should be praying for them with these attitudes. And if you're not doing it with these attitudes, then likewise, you need to examine your heart.

As a church, we need to examine ourselves here as well because we don't do this as often as we should. And the blame for that falls primarily on me as your pastor.

[31 : 45] And I've been convicted by this. And I'm going to make a change. And I hope that you will join me. Will you join me in that? Will you join me in praying for the lost?

Will you join me in wanting to see God glorified through their salvation? I hope you said yes. But now here's a harder question.

Will you join me in praying for lost people that you would rather not pray for? In the beginning of verse 2, Paul says that we should pray in this way for kings and all who are in authority.

So out of the universal group of all people, Paul specifically singles out those whom we are, I think, most tempted to neglect in prayer.

The king at this time was Nero, the emperor of Rome. Nero came to power about 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection.

[33 : 00] And during his reign, Christianity spread rapidly. 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament, we believe, were written during the reign of Nero.

Nero was a cruel and tyrannical leader. He murdered anyone whom he thought was a threat to his own power, including king, his wife, and his mom.

Pretty evil. He ordered their executions. In 64 AD, a great fire broke out in Rome that lasted for six days and did massive damage to 14 of its 17 districts.

Historians believe that Nero may have been the one responsible for setting the fire because he loved the arts and he loved architecture.

He wanted to put his artistic stamp on Rome, but the Senate would not approve his lavish expenditures or those that he proposed. And so many historians believe that Nero was responsible for setting the fire.

[34 : 16] It was his way to force the Roman Senate to approve the funds that he wanted to use to build what he wanted to build. Whatever the case may have been, it is certain that Nero deflected the focus for blame for this fire from himself to Christians, many of whom were tortured and were killed as a result.

The historian Tacitus described how Nero treated Christians. He said, covered with the skins of beasts, Christians were torn by dogs and perished or were nailed to crosses or were doomed to the flames and burnt to serve as nightly illumination when daylight had expired.

What Nero would do is he would host these parties in his garden at night and the light source that he used was Christians whom he impaled and lit on fire and they served as human torches.

We might think, yeah, I'll pray for someone like that. I'll pray for God to kill a person like that. But Paul didn't command Christians to pray for Nero to be removed from office or even to be punished. He commanded Christians here to pray for his well-being and for the well-being of all those who are in authority to pray for their salvation. He said that we may, in the rest of verse two, lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

[35 : 59] These Christians back during this time, they didn't enjoy the rights and the freedoms that Christians in America have today. They didn't get to vote.

They didn't have a say in the public square. They didn't have money to pay for people to lobby politicians. But they had something greater that we still have today. They could pray and so can we. And their prayers accomplished a lot. The key to changing a nation is the salvation of sinners.

And that calls for faithful, fervent prayer. prayer. It calls for us to pray for those who are in authority over us, whether we voted for them or not, whether we like them or not, whether we plan on voting for them again or not.

Because we trust that God is sovereign and he is working all things together according to his plan to accomplish, the greater good.

[37 : 15] Romans 13, 1-5, again Paul talks about how we should view those who are in authority over us. He says, let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad.

Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good and you will receive his approval for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid for he does not bear the sword in vain for he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Therefore one must be in subjection not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. And so for this reason, Christians, when we don't like something, we don't riot, we don't rob, we don't revolt, we pray.

We seek peaceful and quiet lives. We act godly and dignified in every way. This doesn't mean that we're passive doormats. This doesn't mean that we treat human authority as being greater than God.

[38 : 32] If what they want us to do would cause us to sin, then we say no. It means though that by our way of life we demonstrate that Christ rules in our heart.

No matter who's in authority, no matter what they're using their power to accomplish, we don't freak out because we know who is sovereign and who truly reigns and who reigns in our heart.

It means that we seek to be peacemakers by praying for the lost in hopes that they'll be saved. It means that we believe, we truly believe that God in some mysterious way, we'll get more into this next week, hears our prayers and answers our prayers and in some mysterious way uses our prayers to accomplish his will.

Kent Hughes shared a story about the power of prayer. to bring down the Berlin Wall. In May 1989, a small group of Christians, he said, gathered in St. Nicholas Church where the Reformation had been introduced exactly 450 years earlier.

They read the Sermon on the Mount and they prayed for peace. And they did that consistently. The group then expanded and they moved to a larger room in the church as more and more people were hearing about what they were doing and came and wanted to be a part of it.

[40 : 05] And finally, they began meeting in the church's nave, which began to fill up to the point where the church was full and it was people outside of the church gathering around the building and praying.

Alarmed by all of this, the communist authorities sent officials to attend. They threatened the gatherers temporarily, jailed some also. On prayer nights, they blocked the city's nearest Autobahn off-ramp.

Then on October 9th, 1989, again, some 2,000 individuals crowded in to pray for peace and another 10,000 gathered outside of the church and soon the Berlin Wall came down.

And so he says, coincidence? No, this was the kind of response of a caring, all-powerful God to the prayers of his people. Now, you might think, well, Pastor Mike, there's a lot of other things involved with that.

And you're not wrong. But God is sovereign. And you might also think, well, I don't know that we see things like that happening in Scripture very much. And if that's what you think, then you haven't read Scripture very much.

[41 : 14] Because God does this kind of stuff. He, according to his sovereign plan, uses the prayers of his people to do extraordinary things.

One of my favorite stories in Acts is of Peter's escape from prison in Acts chapter 12. If you've read that passage, you remember that he's in jail for preaching the gospel.

And he's asleep between two soldiers. That's how much they wanted to keep him secure and make sure that he does not get out. There were sentries also posted all over the jail.

And Peter's asleep and he gets like a nudge, I think maybe like a kick. And it's an angel. And the angel tells him, get up, get dressed, and get out of here, basically.

And Peter does all this, but he's thinking that he's dreaming, that he's having some kind of a vision until he comes to himself once he's outside of the prison. And then he goes to a house where Christians were gathered praying for him.

[42 : 18] In Acts chapter 12, verses 12 through 16, let's read that. When he realized this, Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy, she did not open the gate, but rather ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate.

And they said to her, yeah, right. We know we're praying for this, but you're out of your mind. But she kept insisting that this was so, and they kept saying, no, it's not him, it's his angel, it's somebody else.

But Peter continued to knock, and imagine he's, let me in. And when they opened, they saw him, and though they'd been praying for all this, they were amazed.

If God has saved you, you should believe that God answers prayers, and that prayer is not a waste of your time, it is one of the best uses of your time.

[43 : 28] Pray for the lost. Pray for their salvation. So what should we do with what we've heard? How should we adjust our lives according to what God has told us in his word today?

I think it's that we must plan to pray for the lost people and share the gospel with them. We must plan to pray for lost people and to share the gospel with them.

And so what I encourage you to do is to make a list. I'm sure that you know one person.

I hope you at least know one person in your life who's not saved. And start with five. Make a list and commit to praying for them every day in the ways that you've read.

Pray for our politicians. Pray for all the people who we would rather not pray for. And so here's a challenge. On top of this other challenge, I want you to be thinking about who is your Nero?

[44 : 47] Who is that person that if you prayed for and they showed up in church, your reaction wouldn't be praise God, but in your sinful flesh you might say, oh no, no, I have to go look for another church now.

Who is that person? Would you be angry if they came? Would you be happy if they left? Or would you rejoice?

And friend, I hope that we would rejoice. We have a mission and it's important. important. And we're to prioritize it.

And one of the ways that we make it a priority is that we commit to praying. And this is important to me because of that man that I mentioned at the beginning, Gail Milhoff.

He didn't know my parents, but he got to know them. He was just visiting a sick church member in the hospital and saw my father and my sister in the waiting room and he started talking to them.

[45 : 55] Found out that my brother was sick and was dying. And he said, I want to pray for you. I go to a church where we pray for people. Can I pray for you? Not only did he pray for them, he called my dad every single week. Asking how he was doing, asking how my brother was doing.

And after he passed away, invited my family to go to church. And as a result of his witness, his faithfulness to pray for lost people, I got to hear the gospel.

God saved me. And I hope, I hope that the Lord will convict you of this and convince you to pray for lost people in the hopes that God will save them.

Let's pray. Lord, I confess, I think we all would confess that so often in the church, Father, we prioritize different things.

And for each one of us, it's probably different from everyone else, what we think is most important for us to be doing. The Lord, we've read in your word as Paul is telling Timothy, a young pastor about how to keep the church in order or how to put it in order, that he lists, first of all, to pray for all people, especially those people that we wouldn't think to pray for, at least to pray for their salvation.

[47 : 36] And so, God, I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would change our hearts, that you would change our minds, that you would convict us of what we've heard in your word, and that we would change how we pray, that we would pray more, and that we would add to our prayers the prayers for those who are lost around us.

And God, I pray that as we pray for them, that you would open our eyes to see more opportunities to share the gospel with them. And Lord, we know that salvation is all of your doing. We know that you will save. We don't know whom you will save, but we know that you do save. And what we also know is that it's your desire to use us in that, in the sharing of the good news. And so, Father, I pray that we would all be diligent to pray for those who are around us who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And that, Lord, as a result of that, we pray that we as your church, as your people, would be obedient to proclaim your gospel in the hopes, Lord, that you will be gracious to save them and that you will be glorified in their salvation as you are glorified in our salvation.

Lord, we love you. Lord, we thank you for your grace and your mercy to save people like us and to give this eternal life in Jesus Christ, your Son, in whose name we pray.

[49 : 01] Amen.