

The Scope & Benefits of Evangelistic Praying

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[0:00] Well, fellas, I've got a confession to make to you.

! I wondered, well, do we start over in 1 Timothy 1, verse 1, and of course that's not very practical. So I wanted to do a quick review, just kind of a bullet point, and then we're going to have a brief lesson and move on from there. A couple of things to remember, though.

So Paul wrote this book to his son in the faith, a young man by the name of Timothy. Now, by inspiration of the Spirit of God, the contents have application to every believer in every age, but it was written to a young man that Paul was preparing for a life in ministry.

And with that in mind, I wanted to quickly review some things that Paul has already taught his young protege. He started out telling him that saving faith comes from God.

[1:33] It originates with God. The hallmark of a true believer is a life pattern of obedience. He didn't say an unbroken pattern, because we live in unredeemed flesh, but a life pattern.

It's a direction of our life. A faithful person will have a servant heart and a servant attitude.

True believers know and cling to sound doctrine. As believers, we must have the courage of our convictions. Paul told young Timothy that there are many false teachers out there, and they're doing battle against the Lord and against his church.

It's interesting that Paul said that. John came along and said, in the last days, there will really be an increase in false teachers. It is the goal of false teachers to lead many astray.

False teachers are primarily motivated by laws and rules and regulations. We call it legalism and not grace. That the true God is a God of grace.

[2:58] And that obedience to God involves praying for the lost, which is where we're at right now.

So we're going to pick it up tonight as we look briefly at the scope of evangelistic praying. And I spent a good deal of the holidays reading.

I was sick. There was nothing else to do. And I read a lot. And I came across a couple of quotes on prayer that I want to share with you.

The first by a theologian named Adam Clark. Second by Samuel Chadwick. Both these guys are long gone, along with the Lord. The first quote by Adam Clark is this.

He who has the spirit of prayer has the highest interest in the court of heaven. And the only way to retain it is to keep in constant employment.

[4:03] Apostasy begins in the closet. No man ever backslid from the life and power of Christianity who continued constant and fervent in prayer.

He who prays without ceasing is likely to rejoice evermore. And then Chadwick said this. Satan dreads nothing but prayer.

The church that lost its Christ was full of good works. Activities are multiplied that meditation may be ousted.

And organizations are increased that prayer may have no chance. Souls may be lost in good works as surely as in evil ways. The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying.

He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religions. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.

[5:07] Pretty powerful. Pretty powerful. So, what should be the scope of our evangelistic praying?

Paul was very clear on this. Very succinct and very clear. In 1 Timothy chapter 2, second part of verse 1 and end of verse 2, he says this. Prayers should be made on behalf of all men.

Well, that's pretty broad, isn't it? For kings and all who are in authority. We've got three groups there.

For all men, kings and those that are in authority. Very interesting that he would say that. How often do we confine our prayers to personal needs?

You know, this is what I need today to get through the day, Lord. When we do expand our prayers, how often do we include only our immediate circle? Perhaps family.

[6:16] Perhaps we throw in some friends. Paul says we are to pray on behalf of all men. When we pray for the souls of lost men, we are praying consistent with the heart of God.

The Lord never delights in the death of a lost man. He takes no delight in that. We shouldn't either. God has commanded all men to repent.

And we should pray for such repentance in the lives of all men. And Paul uses interesting language in this verse. He speaks in terms of praying for the king.

And those in positions of authority. Now, in ancient times, even to today, many today, rulers were often tyrannical and very far from God.

Very far from God. Many rulers hate God's people. Throughout the ages, many of God's people were indifferent to those in authority, viewing them as antagonistic to God and to his church.

[7:35] But God comes along, inspiration of Scripture, and says we're to pray for them. We're to pray for them. Now, I'm going to go a little bit from teaching into meddling.

I wonder how many of us here consistently pray for the president. You know, for President Obama. Now, I'm not going to ask for a show of hands.

I'm going to let everybody off the hook. And let me just tell you, I don't near as much as I should.

Not near as much as I should. God would say I believe that's a sin because he has placed leaders in those positions to fulfill his sovereign purposes.

He's given them authority and responsibilities. When Paul wrote commanding prayer for the king, he's speaking of a guy named Nero.

I mean, this is the worst, most hateful guy that ever ruled hated Christians.

[8:44] He's the great persecutor of Christians. Set Rome on fire and blamed the Christians. Thousands died and were executed because they got blamed for Rome burning.

But listen to what the second century theologian Tertullian said. Without ceasing for all our emperors, we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged, for security to the empire, for protection to the imperial house, for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, and the world at rest, whatever as man or Caesar an emperor would wish.

And that was from one of the great theologians of his day, calling for prayer for Caesar, one of the Caesars that was in power at the time. And that's a powerful statement coming from one of God's saints who was mightily used in the early days of the church.

The early church prayed for Christless rulers. And we have plenty of those in our day. We should do the same.

We need to be praying for these men who don't know Christ. They do not know him. Now, what about are there benefits that result from evangelistic praying?

[10:12] And Paul thought so. He said in the second part of verse 2, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

He wants you to pray for all men, for the king, for those in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life, a life of godliness and dignity.

Paul was convinced that prayers offered for those in authority would create conditions favorable to the church and her evangelistic efforts.

I think he was absolutely convinced of that. When we are praying for our leaders, we're living peaceable lives.

And all of us are to be peacemakers, right? I mean, you go back to the Beatitudes. Blessed are the peacemakers. They will be called the sons of God. We are to be submissive even to pagan governments.

[11:23] The only time we can disobey the governing authorities is when they require us to violate a clear command of God found in the Scriptures.

And if they command that, then we must disobey, but we must also be prepared to suffer the consequences for our actions. And Caesar will exact a cost for such disobedience.

He will. We see it often at VOM where it comes to, it's a Peter and John decision. You know, they said to the Sanhedrin, who do we obey?

Do we obey you or God? You know, we must obey God. We don't obey man when he's asking us to violate a clear command of God. I think it should be clear, though.

It's got to be clearly stated that this is a violation of, you know, name a chapter and verse, and I can't do that and then be willing to pay the penalty for such disobedience.

[12:29] When the unsaved see the church interceding, even for the enemies of the church, people can be drawn to the grace and compassion of Christ.

When they see that, they can conclude, you know, Jesus is really who he says he is. These guys really do love each other and love God with a demonstrable love.

They even love their enemies. Christ said we're to love our enemies. And they see that lived out and are drawn to Christ. First, no church should pose a threat to society.

Now, having said that, I saw persecution firsthand in China and a lot of other places. Shane has others of you have. I was actually over there.

I smuggled in some Bibles. And then the group I was with, with Phillips, we were going to be meeting with the president of China and his cabinet and did.

[13:36] And I so wanted to say, you guys don't seem to understand that when you have a true believer, truly committed to God's word, that's the best citizen in your country.

As long as you don't ask him or her to do something that violates Scripture, they're going to live at peace. Even under a tyrannical government, they will be at peace.

Just don't cross the line and require them or demand of them something that violates the word of God. China, of course, saw him only as enemies of the state and still do.

Interesting, in China, there's more believers now than there are members of the Communist Party. Sweeping revival there. Now, the church is to be uncompromising in its commitment to the truth.

But the church is not to be an agitator or a disruptor of society and life in any country. But I do want to say that the church, if it's being the church, may well be the irritant to that society.

[14:50] We can be the sand in the oyster where a pearl is growing. When we're salt and light to an ungodly society, we can become very irritating to the government that's in control.

I think the true church today is irritating to our present government. We see this played out often.

But when you're an irritant, because you live by the standards of sound doctrine, it is certainly not the same as being an enemy of the state.

You're in essence the best citizen that they have. Because you're following what God has said, the prescription He's given us, we're to be at peace and live tranquil lives, but we're to stand up for the commands of Christ and the Word of God.

Paul even came along and told the Thessalonians they were to lead quiet lives. Well, that's interesting.

He said, attend to your own business. And then he said, work with your hands. I don't know why he threw that in there. I can lead a quiet life sometimes, try to attend to my own business.

[16:09] I can't work with my hands. Mike knows that. He always loves it when I've tried to repair my plumbing problems. Before he gets there, it usually triples the cost. So I should be able to do two of those three.

Now, we are commanded to hate the evil world systems that are around us. John said, do not love the world.

And I always believe, I need to add this, and I really believe, I don't think he's talking about mountains and streams and snow and all that. He's talking about world systems that have been taken captive by the real enemy who is Satan.

You know, Satan one time offered the kingdoms of the world to Christ if he would bow down and worship Him. And I think Satan's offer was legitimate. I think he had control of those systems by the permissive will of the Father.

God allows that for a period of time. But those systems have been held captive, taken captive by Satan, and that's our mission field.

[17:21] Those that are in captivity, trapped in world systems, in world religions, and they abound, of course, all these are controlled by the enemy, by Satan.

That's our very mission field. Instead of expressing dislike or even hatred toward those systems, we need to be sharing Christ with them.

This is probably the hallmark of VOM. We go in and prepare people in those countries. You see the map up there and back there. We prepare those people to be evangelistic.

We're not really an evangelistic organization per se. We don't have missionaries on the field that are taking in tracts and witnessing and doing it. We're preparing the persecuted church to be able to

do that.

Now, I did say something that bored me one time. That was a big discussion several years ago, and I said, guys, look, if we ask them to lead someone to Christ when we're overseas, God will forgive us.

[18:25] You know, they were real worried we were becoming an evangelistic. I said, God will forgive you if you lead someone to Christ when you're over there, so don't worry about it. But the people that are held captive by Satan, those are the very ones that we should be praying for.

I mean, look at these maps. Guys, and get a hold of the VOM stuff and the calendars and all that. They're free. And commit to pray for the persecuted.

They're stretched all over the world, some 55 or 57 countries now. So how do we pursue a tranquil and quiet life?

Paul says we do so by seeking a life that is godly and dignified. Very interesting word. Godliness is reverence toward God.

It's our respect, our reverence, our worship toward the true God. As believers, we live to glorify God. We glorify Him in His majesty, in His holiness, in His love.

[19:31] We can do a whole host of things there. Now, and it was interesting, I had a discussion with Ed Gordon today on this very topic. But some in the church believe or have been taught that when a person is saved, that's when your problems go away.

That's when your problems go away. Actually, I would suggest that when a person is saved, that's when problems will probably increase. They will probably increase.

It's certainly going to upset Satan and his demons. He doesn't want some new witness leading family and friends to his newfound faith. So problems don't go away.

And Jesus never promised they'd go away. He did promise He'd be with us through the problems, but He never once said they're all going to go away. He never said that.

Paul said, anyone who desires to live godly, to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[20:44] Boy, that is strong. And you know, sometimes I wonder if there's not, almost a disconnect in the United States with that. I was listening to R.C. Sproul one time, and Dr. Sproul asked a question.

He said, why are not more American Christians being thrown into jail or prison for their faith? Are we doing something wrong compared to our brothers and sisters in China and the Ukraine and other places where some of you guys have been, and certainly Shane's been a lot of places?

Are we doing something wrong? I can't answer that. We have had titanic freedoms in America. I see those slipping away at a rather fast pace.

but if your desire to live godly, if your goal is to be godly in Christ Jesus, you will be persecuted.

And I've said before, if it hasn't happened to yet be more godly, it will come. It will come. The Christian life is a life of warfare.

[21:54] It's described by Paul himself many, many times as a race, as a boxing match, and as a war. And he employed that war language. You know, we've studied Ephesians chapter 6, the armor of God.

And he uses war terminology. And our life is a life of warfare waged against the world, against the devil, but you've got to throw in a third thing there, guys, don't forget, an unredeemed flesh.

We battle every day in that arena. Every single day. And we've got to be on guard. So if you and I will commit to becoming evangelistic prayer warriors, then I promise you this, you can anticipate attacks and persecution.

So let it come. Let it come. That's proof that you're trying to live godly in Christ Jesus. Let 2014 be such a year. Now, I promise you we're going to be brief.

I'm going to close and we're going to venture out into the dark, into the cold. Going to make our way home. But before we do, I want to leave you with the words of the great Baptist missionary to China, Hudson Taylor.

[23:16] a young man had been called to the foreign field. He had not been in the habit of preaching, but he knew one thing, how to prevail with God.

And going one day to a friend, he said, I don't see how God can use me on the field, the mission field. I have no talent. His friend said, my brother, God wants men on the field who can pray.

Well, mark that thought down. God wants men who can pray. I almost want to apologize in advance for this, but I'm just quoting Hudson Taylor.

There are too many preachers now, and too few prayer warriors. Well, the young man went to the mission field. In his own room in the early dawn, a voice was heard weeping and pleading for souls. the people with whom he was serving would hear him before dawn in his room, on his knees, weeping and pleading for souls.

[24 : 34] All through the day, the shut door and the hush that prevailed made you feel like walking softly for a soul was wrestling with God.

Yet to this home, hungry souls would flock drawn by some irresistible force. And Taylor goes on, ah, the mystery was unlocked.

In the secret chamber, lost souls were pleaded for and claimed. The Holy Ghost knew just where they were and sent them along.

Thank you.