

The Nature of Evangelistic Praying

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[0:00] We have made it to 1 Timothy chapter 2.

! Pretty amazing because this is lesson 8 and I'm already in the second chapter. The words of Paul here, inspired words, inspired by the Spirit of God, are going to be particularly instructive, and perhaps I should say especially instructive for those of us living at our lives in the 21st century. That includes most everybody in this room. We're in the 21st century. Paul is going to speak to us tonight concerning evangelism, but specifically evangelistic praying.

And we're going to be talking about that the rest of December, which is only two times, tonight and another time. Here's what the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, had to say about praying evangelistically.

And he said this, and it was in a form of a warning. And if you've ever read Spurgeon, he did a lot of warnings. Mike, you've been to his church.

[1:43] I've been to London 20 times. I don't know why. I went to Wesley's church. Why didn't I go to Spurgeon's church? Listen to Spurgeon. One more thing. The soul winner must master the art of prayer.

Boy, listen to those words, guys. You want to be a soul winner? Master the art of prayer. You cannot bring souls to God if you go not to God yourself.

You must get your battle axe 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, you shall there be about what you say somewhat of the same power which in him thrilled the hearts and awoke the consciences of men.

[3:01] 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.

I love the way he does that. And take things easy in the matter or in the matters of God's kingdom. There are some of you, I bless you, 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.

Well, I am telling you, Spurgeon looked down the corridor of time to our time, to our century.

Because I have actually had people tell me, you know, I do not do this, I do not do that.

I give money to pay these guys to do that. I have had people tell me that. And you won't find that anywhere in Scripture. That is nowhere to be found.

[4:21] So what does Paul, now Spurgeon's words were beautiful, eloquent, but human words, not inspired. But what does Paul have to say about evangelistic praying, writing the words of the Holy Spirit?

1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 to 8. We won't cover near that much tonight. First of all then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony born at the proper time.

And for this, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I am telling the truth, I am not lying, as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension. Wow, Paul, saddled me with some really easy verses to explain tonight, you know.

[6:05] Now, I dare say that everyone in this room has friends or family members or both that are not saved.

And I imagine that we pray for them, but probably not as much as we should or as much as we would like to. And the issue at hand is not just praying for friends and family, although that's important, very important.

Paul is urging us, and I would even say commanding us by the power of the Spirit to pray on behalf of all men everywhere.

That's a generic term, means men and women, boys and girls. We're to pray for men and women we have never met and never will meet in this life.

We had Jim Merritt, later president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was a pup then, still in school, and he preached revival here. Don Pickerel is a good friend. Jim Merritt, and Jim told us in that meeting he was a product.

[7:27] He was a gospel preacher because his grandmother got calluses on her knees praying that God would raise up a minister in her family.

and she died five years before Jim was born. And he said, she is the reason that I'm in ministry today. God called me to ministry to honor her prayers.

We're to pray for men and women we've never even met. And that raises a couple of questions. What part do prayers play in God's salvation purpose and does God answer those prayers?

Now, both the Old and New Testaments have examples of believers praying for the lost. It's all through there. We find this in the writings of Moses, Samuel, and Jeremiah.

I'm sure there are others. In the New Testament, we have the example of Stephen in the midst of being martyred, crying out to God to forgive his executioners.

[8:37] Paul had a deep desire to see his countrymen saved, even to the point that he prayed and said, I would long to be cut off from eternal life so that my brothers in Israel might enjoy a relationship with God.

He cried out in Romans 10 that his heart's desire and prayer was that Israel would be saved. Now, there could be no question, and there should never be any question, that the Word of God encourages us to pray for the lost whether we know them or not.

Familiarity with them is not the issue. This is the thrust of our passage tonight. And remember, this is addressed, this letter is addressed to Timothy, Paul's young son in the faith, but they're dealing with the church at Ephesus.

Now, it wasn't bad as Corinth, but it wasn't that good either. Ephesus had a lot of problems. Remember, there were warnings about Ephesus, and then you get the revelation, and it's a disaster.

All those warnings came true. But this is addressed to the church at Ephesus, and it would appear that they had backed away from the priority of praying for the lost.

[10:07] And that's why Paul, being directed by the Holy Spirit, is nailing this issue, nailing this issue hard. They need to pray for the lost.

Most likely, their problem could be traced to two infections that were plaguing the church. The first plague or problem dealt with the Judaizers.

They taught that salvation was solely for Jews, or you could let in a Gentile if he became a proselyte.

In other words, if a Gentile became a Jew, then he could be saved, although he's going to live his life as a second-class citizen because he's not fully recognized as a Jew.

He's still a Gentile, but he is a proselyte. And such Gentiles, ironically, and we're studying this, as Oster knows, on Sunday morning, but these Gentiles were required to live under the Mosaic law.

[11:22] Well, how ridiculous is that? The Jews required them, the Gentiles, to live under the law that they, the Jews, could not keep.

They'd never kept it. It was impossible to keep. The demands of the Mosaic law were never kept. And yet now they're requiring Gentiles to keep all of the ceremonies and the dietary laws and the civil laws and all this.

It went beyond the Ten Commandments, although they put that on them too. But all these things in the Old Covenant, they said, no, you have to keep those, and then you can become a proselyte of Judaism.

There's a very sad example in the Old Testament of all of this in a man called Jonah. He was a prophet.

And we all know that Jonah was on the run. He was running away from God. Parenthetically, let me just ask the question, where do you go to hide from God?

[12 : 29] I've not found that place, you know, and you're not going to find it. But Jonah, in fact, said, I went down to the roots of the mountains under the ocean, and God was there. We learned two things there when he said that.

We learned God is everywhere, and two, that there were mountains in the ocean. Science tells you they discovered those 300 years ago. That was written thousands of years ago.

I mean, sort of like the round earth. He hung this sphere on nothing. Why did they say for a million years, you know, we believe in a flat earth? Not a million. 6,000 years. We believe in a flat earth.

Why? He said I hung this sphere on nothing. I threw that in for free. Jonah's on the run. Why? He was commanded by the Lord to go and preach repentance to the people living in Nineveh.

He doesn't want to. He runs away from that assignment. Now, let me just say to you, he had no fear of the Ninevites. He wasn't afraid of them.

[13 : 35] He fled because he did not want the blessing of salvation to come to Gentiles. That's who the Ninevites were.

They're Gentiles. And let me tell you one thing that will restrict your prayer life. And that's what I would call exclusivism. Well, I'm going to pray for him and him.

I'll pray for her. That guy, no way. No way will I ever do that. I did that once to one of my officers. He was profane. Every other word was the Lord's name in vain.

And I told the Lord, I'm not wasting my time. I didn't pray for him. I didn't witness with him. A couple of years went by and I just noticed there was a change in his life. And I got him aside. I said, Steve, what happened to you?

There's something different about you. He said, I met the Lord Jesus Christ. Boy, I mean, you talk about getting slain. Now, if the Charismatics want to know what slain in the Spirit is, that's it.

[14 : 36] Someone else had done what I should have done. And that was still very humbling to me that that happened. Problem one were the Judaizers.

Problem two in Ephesus came from the Gnostics. They saw themselves as the ascended learners of their day.

They were smarter than everybody else. They'd been put in a higher position than everybody else.

This was a form of religious elitism. They fought and believed that they had risen to a higher level of mystical knowledge that was withheld from the masses.

And let me tell you, not only will exclusivism, that's hard to say, Mike, restrict prayer, but elitism restricts prayers as well.

Now, both of these groups denied the universality of the gospel. The gospel is to be preached to the four corners of the earth.

[15 : 51] Because there aren't any four corners. Yeah, there are. North, south, east, west. It's to go out to every nation, tongue, race. Now, Paul destroys the arguments of both groups by calling on true believers to pray for all men because the scope of the gospel is universal.

It's universal. God is busy this very day calling out a people for himself from every nation.

He is still doing that. And I've told you before, in all the countries I've been in, so I'm 44, I always find believers. The gospel is so powerful, it'll find a way to penetrate.

And I found them in some odd places, but they are there. They are there. One of the examples is the Hmong tribe, H-M-O-N-G.

They've been believers since 400 A.D., and they don't know why. Obviously a missionary, and they've lost him to history, the name or the history of it. But they've known Christ.

[17 : 04] They go back in their history to 400 A.D. in Mongolia, right before they were persecuted and kicked out. God is still calling out people. Today, most of those are being called out from the Gentile nations.

Although Jews can and are still saved, but he's calling out especially Gentiles. Israel was under a command to do the same thing.

They had the Word of God. They're supposed to go and preach to the world. Sadly, Israel turned inward. They put up bars on their nation, and they said, we're going to keep people out, especially Gentiles, especially Samaritans who are half-breeds.

He said, we're not going to let them in. They're not part of the covenant blessing. Now, on the one hand, we should pray that the church does not turn inward and neglect the lost.

On the other hand, many in the church have actually done so, and you can trace that in periods of history for the last 2,000 years. And you can see those periods, and actually there were dark times in the history of the church, and I think those were the times when the church turned inward.

[18:23] They turned inward. This is one of the reasons I thank God for the Reformation. Well, coming out of that Reformation, I thank God for Reformers, and I thank God for Puritans, because they understood the need for the gospel to go forth.

They understood that. I thank the Lord that our pastor has led this church into global missions, the unpayable debt.

I said before, I think the church today has a three-fold purpose on earth. We're to worship, we're to go, and we're to remember.

I think that's the three-fold purpose of the church. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth. We are to go to the uttermost parts of the earth with the good news of Jesus Christ, and we're to remember those in prison as if we are in prison with them, which is the mantra of Voice of the Martyrs, Hebrews 13, 3.

We're to remember the persecuted so intensely, it's as if we're being persecuted. We're being persecuted. And brothers, there's persecution out there.

[19:37] We got a little note from VOM just over the weekend, a little black girl, I think in Nigeria, converted to Christianity from Islam. Her dad locked her in a room for like six years.

No food. Her brother, her dad would go to work, her brother would slip her food under the door and finally got reported to the authorities and they went and seized her and trying to nurse her back to health.

Horrible, horrible. And there's thousands of stories like that. Well, you may recall that Paul left the young Timothy in Ephesus.

Now here's Timothy, you know, 20, 22, I don't know. Now, and Paul, the great apostle Paul, he says, Timothy, I'm going to leave you here to straighten out the church. How'd you like that?

Oh, okay, Paul. And you say, you're leaving? You're not going to be here with me? No, I'm leaving. Straighten out this church and keep them on the correct path. That's what Paul told him.

[20:36] Now, that's not King James, but that's really what he meant. His first duty, though, was to make sure that the church understood the importance of missions and the role that prayer played in fulfilling the evangelistic mission of the church.

That's the first thing Paul tells him. Don't go until you pray. You've got to bathe it in prayer. If this church, or any church, but let's pick on our church, is going to carry out our God-ordained responsibilities concerning global missions, we must understand and we must appreciate the breadth of the gospel call.

And we're going to deal with that tonight and in the next time I'm here. But tonight I'm stealing this, the nature of evangelistic prayer. The nature of evangelistic prayer.

1 Timothy 2, verse 2, first part of verse 2. First of all then, I urge that entreaties, am I doing that right? Entreaties and prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving.

Now, I ended there with a comma. We'll complete that sentence in two Mondays from now. Entreaties is not a word we use much anymore.

[22:11] We just don't use it. It does, though, have an interesting background in the original language. It means to lack something, to be deprived, or to be without something.

Now, that sounds all very negative, and it should be. So what we're saying here is the kind of praying mentioned here originates from a sense of need.

That's really what Paul is saying. There's a great need here for these people to be saved. Pray because there's a great need. That's what Paul is getting across here.

When we have the knowledge that something is lacking, we go to God, and we plead that He will supply it.

Now, He may already have supplied it through what we have, and you don't have to pray about that. Just go and take care of the need. But we go to God, and we plead for supply.

[23:17] Now, we look at this country, and we look at the world, what do we see? We see a mass of lost people. A mass of lost people.

Lost humanity. They're everywhere. They surround me every day. Every day. There is an enormous need for them to be saved, and Paul is telling us that one fact should drive our prayers.

When you're on your knees, keep that in mind. I'm surrounded by a sea of lost people. Family, friends, enemies, people I don't even know. Surrounded by them.

And remember that the best mode for evangelistic praying is on our knees. This is intense, meaningful prayer.

This is not now I lay me down to sleep. I mean, nothing wrong with that. But this is intense. In the 17th century, there was an English Puritan by the name of Richard Baxter.

[24:29] I have several of his books. I try to read them. He's smarter than I am. Trust me. Here's what he wrote on the type of praying, the intense prayers that we're talking about.

And this is kind of in places old English. Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians, let them yearn toward your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbors.

Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell. Many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them.

And if they die unregenerate, they are lost forever. Have you hearts of rock that cannot pity men in such a case as this?

If you believe not the word of God and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourself? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others?

[25:44] Do you not care who is damned as long as you are saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace.

dost thou live close by them or meet them in the streets or labor with them fellow workers or travel with them or sit and talk with them and say nothing to them of their souls or the life to come?

If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? I read that and I said that's powerful.

That is Richard Baxter powerful. And quite frankly after reading that I wasn't sure I could go on after that. I thought maybe I'll just end it there. I mean that is powerful.

Paul uses here the most common word for prayer. Prayer let me tell you something that this was a revelation to me and if you hear nothing else hear this.

[27:06] Praying for the lost is an act of supreme worship before God. Boy, mark that thought down.

When you are praying for the lost you are engaged first of all and warfare but you are involved in a supreme act of worship before God.

Now before I came in tonight most of us said well yeah we worship we worship yesterday morning 1030 to noon and some of us came back Sunday night some will be back Wednesday night and we'll worship.

Guys we worship 24-7. When you wake up at 3 in the morning and the world seems awful messed up start worshipping start talking to God he's got VBE very big ears he'll hear you but praying for the lost is a supreme act of worship and I wonder you know how many of us never equated that type of praying with worship the truth is that the salvation of a sinner gives God glory of course it's worshipful even how do I say this even presenting the gospel gives God glory anything that we do that brings glory to God is worship dig those out of the scriptures they're nuggets of gold planted in the scriptures and do them

Paul also uses here the word petitions and that particular Greek word appears here it'll appear in chapter 4 when we get there about June or April or something and nowhere else in the New Testament in the original language the verb form speaks of both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit's intercession for us intercession for us Christ identifies our needs he knows he knows everything's going on right now in your head in your heart down to the subconscious I can't ever say that word he knows he identifies with our needs Christ is involved in our struggles he's been through all the things we have except without sin evangelistic praying is not something far off and detached because we understand the depths of a lost person's misery we can cry out to God for their salvation remember back everyone here used to be lost remember back you got lost friends lost family remember you were there tell them about that blessing that you got another element in evangelistic praying is thanksgiving we pray with gratitude for the opportunity to spread the gospel

thankful we just got through thanksgiving and

[30 : 37] Don preached on thanksgiving last Sunday week ago we have the opportunity to spread the gospel we have been given the high privilege of reaching the lost God didn't have to do it that way he could have put billboards!

He could have done all kinds of things he gives us the privilege of telling people about Jesus and when we do that some will respond in faith and genuine repentance now for years I labored under the assumption that if you witnessed somebody and they rejected then I failed and I realized that's not true our calling is to be obedient to the word if you're obedient preaching teaching witnessing then you fulfilled God's purpose for your life and it takes the spirit of God to move on that heart not us not us but some are going to respond in faith and genuine repentance when they do we are thankful and let me tell you something of all the things I've mentioned tonight petition and prayer all that stuff there's something interesting about thanksgiving the element of thanksgiving extends even into heaven for eternity we don't leave that here at the rapture of the church we will see people that may have had a hand in leading us to

Christ and I put it that way because some of you probably have you know if you write the name of the person led to Christ you may have one name in your Bible fly leaf there I had 25 names I got it in bits and pieces over about 10 years God didn't have a lot to work with I came kicking and screaming and I had listed 25 people that I sent the Bible rebound and they tore that page out and threw it away I'll never forget that either we're going to see people in heaven that had a hand in leading us to Christ and we may see people there and we will see people there whom we have led to Christ if in fact we've done that and we're going to all be thankful to God for extending his mercy to us he extends mercy and grace and we're going to all be thankful to him and I wonder and just ask your heart this how many of us and

I'm indicting myself not you how many of us actually pray that God will provide us opportunities to share his gospel Lord send some lost people my way you know Paul said I'm going to come see you so I can maybe have some fruit I'm going to come to your village that some might be saved I mean do we ever pray that you know Lord today give me the opportunity to witness I prayed!

I can remember praying that very strongly one time it was about 1979 I was an FBI agent I'm coming back from Tulsa it's 120 in the shade August Oklahoma atop one of the hills just on the edge of town out here and I'm coming in I came up from Moose Lodge and you start back down and I'm praying going up and I said Lord just please give me somebody that I can share the good news with I want a witness to somebody Diane got food on the table I top the hill and there's a guy walking toward Tulsa I just came from Tulsa and it's 120 degrees and he's limping because he has a handicapped leg and a big old knapsack and it was heavy and I said Lord not him I'm almost home and I don't know how far I got I guess about where food pyramid is now and the conviction was too great

[34 : 54] I did a U turn I said Lord please let him be going to Vera or Ramona and I pulled up and I said how you doing buddy he said oh good he said sure is hot I said yeah you need a ride he said yeah I really do I said where are you heading he said South Tulsa I said Lord why do you answer my most sincere prayers at the worst possible time and so I said hop in and I said you want me to stop do you need some water and he said I have actually got some water in my knapsack would you mind me reaching in I had my radio and everything I said no you are good and he pulled out a hot bottle of water and drank that pray that God will give you those opportunities when we have an opportunity to witness do we really understand just what a desperate condition the lost are in we don't know when they're leaving this life we don't have a clue all lost people are on the verge of entering a

Christless eternity that's true of all lost people they're on the verge even if it's 50 years from now they're still on the verge we have the opportunity to see God glorified by the salvation of souls we should all give thanks to God for the privilege of sharing the good news with the lost I'm sad to say that many are indifferent when it comes to spreading the gospel but I would say that it goes beyond indifference if we're not sharing the gospel then disobedience kicks in we're commanded to do that and people say well I don't want to say the Holy Spirit will help you he'll give you the words well do I learn a plan you know give your testimony give your testimony do you ever wake up in the middle of the night and wonder what's

Jesus doing right now at this particular moment what's the Lord doing I do that am I the only weird one in here surely there's other weird guys in here and it may sound weird to some of you but I do

that on occasion I don't do it every night but the scriptures tell us what the Lord is doing Hebrews 7 25 therefore he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them you want to know what Christ is doing right now he is before the father his father interceding for his own interceding for those whom God has given him the Lord Jesus intercedes for every believer the

Lord Jesus intercedes for everyone who's going to believe the Lord Jesus is sending messengers! to those folks among the among his people now everyone in this room that is a follower of Christ I trust it's all of us have been justified by the father and is on the road to sanctification because if you've been truly justified you're put on the road to sanctification of sanctification just what does that mean it means we are being recreated in the image of Christ and everyone travels at a different speed we are on a journey to be like Jesus and that trip will continue throughout this life and it will not become a finished work until we see him for when we see him we will be like him because we will see him as he is but we're on a journey and if you want to be like

Jesus be an intercessor because that's what he's doing right now he ever lives to make intercession for us pray for to be like Jesus pray for others pray for friends pray for family members pray for strangers you're driving down the road you see somebody I read a book one time called shooting arrow prayers shoot an arrow for that guy that that police officer that's got somebody pulled over that trooper pray for their safety their welfare pray for the lost pray for enemies we are never more like Jesus than when we are interceding for others for another person because he ever lives to make intercession