

**Text:** 1 Timothy 2:1-4

**Title:** Praying for the Lost

**Truth:** Christians ought to pray for the Lost to be saved as such prayers are pleasing before God.

**Date/Location:** December 4, 2022 PM Service at FBC

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## Introduction

Praying for the Lost is an important matter to God and therefore should be a high priority in our prayer life. It is such important matter that Paul addresses the matter in his first letter to Timothy. Evidently, the church in Ephesus was neglecting the task of praying for the Lost, perhaps out of a disconcern for the Lost or a failure to understand the heart of God.

The fact of the matter is if praying for the salvation of the Lost weren't a difficult task and a neglected one at times both then and now, Paul would have had no reason to so strongly urge the church to pray in this way. But he did, teaching us that we too must not take the lightly the task of praying for the Lost because it aligns with the heart of God.

C.H. Spurgeon wrote on the difficulty of praying for the Lost and admonishes us to bathe our evangelistic ministry in prayer. He writes,

“... *the soul-winner must be a master of the art of prayer* [italics original]. 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 armoury of sacred communication with Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

The exhortation for such praying is expounded upon in 1 Timothy 2:1-8 and is the first of a series of instructions on how the Christians should be conducting themselves. Paul goes on to address the conduct of women in the church, the qualifications for pastors and deacons, and tells Timothy in 3:14 that he has written these instructions to Timothy so

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<sup>1</sup>C.H. Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 246-247. All Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

that the church of Ephesus might know how to conduct itself in church life. And this evening we will give our attention to the first three verses in chapter two which address the topic of interceding in prayer for unbelievers.

## I. **Praying for the Lost is Encouraged (vv.1-2a)**

Paul begins in verse one with an earnest plead for the church to be praying for the Lost. Paul uses four words for prayer and then gives us the object of our prayers, telling us on whose behalf prayers are to be made. There is probably a slight nuance that Paul is making by using four different words, but it also may be for added emphasis that Paul gives us for different ways of praying.

- A) **Supplications** (Gr. δεήσεις): that which is asked with urgency based on presumed need.<sup>2</sup> [my notes] In 1 Timothy 2:1, the presumed need is forgiveness of sins and salvation of the Lost. The prayers themselves are not the remedy, we cannot pray, and their sins are removed. The catholic church practices prayers for those in purgatory, but these prayers are useless. We can pray for the living though, praying that their need for salvation be met through hearing and receiving of the Gospel.
- B) **Prayers** (Gr. προσευχάς): to speak to or to make requests of God. [my notes] This is the most general kind of word used for prayer. It is used of all types of prayers to God including general requests or specific petitions (see 1 Peter 3:7).
- C) **Intercessions** (Gr. ἐντεύξεις): to speak to someone on behalf of someone else (see Rom 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Tim 4:5). [my notes] This word is like Supplications but may emphasize more the relationship and character of the person who demonstrates a boldness of access to God who hears the prayer. Unless a sinner is

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<sup>2</sup>All definitions are from Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, Electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., United Bible Societies, 1996.

praying for God to forgive him, He does not have access to the throne room of grace (Jn 9:31). Who will be praying for them if Christians are not? Certainly, the world does not care about their souls. And until the hearts of the Lost are convicted by the Spirit of God, they will not be praying for their own salvation. The responsibility of praying for the salvation of unbelievers falls on the shoulders of the church.

- D) **Giving of Thanks** (Gr. εὐχαριστία): to express gratitude for benefits or blessings. [my notes] This final word is draws attention to the fact that all of our requests and petitions should be followed by expressions of thankfulness and gratitude to God.
- E) Such prayers should be made “**on behalf of all men.**” The breadth of our concern for the Lost should extend to all people because God is calling all men to repent (Acts 17:30). What may keep us from interceding on behalf of all men?

Application: There are some vilely wicked people that we may wrongfully desire not to have the opportunity to repent because of how wicked they have acted. We should not find ourselves in company with a person like Jonah, who did not want God’s to be merciful to the Ninevites. We may neglect to pray for others because we have lost hope that they will ever turn to the Lord. The co-worker who is an alcoholic, the sibling who is a Jehovah’s Witness, the parent who refuses to speak about religion, the child whom you’ve prayed for decades. Let me tell you, we ought to keep praying on behalf of all men.

- F) Such prayer should be made “**for kings and all who are in authority**” (v.2). Paul draws attention to the fact that those in leadership positions exercise authority in high places should be special objects of a prayer.

Prayer for our civil leaders has a very practical and significant purpose. Our civil leaders first and foremost need salvation just

like all other people. Furthermore, in positions of high power, people have the natural sinful tendency to use this power for personal gain and to endorse evil practices in society and even in government policies. We must be vigilantly praying that God would grant them wisdom and discernment in their positions of authority. We ought to pray for their humility and recognition that it is God who has ultimately placed them there (Rom 13:1).

## II. Praying for the Lost leads to peaceable living for believers (v.2b)

- A) Paul is a purpose clause, indicating why we are to pray for our leaders. We are to pray for our authorities and officials because so that, as a result, all people, including Christians, can lead a peaceful and quiet life. These prayers have a very pragmatic purpose, as our concern for the freedom to proclaim the Gospel and lead quiet and peaceable lives is affected by authorities.
- B) The quiet and peaceable life that Paul writes of shouldn't be interpreted as the Christians desire to lead a simple, quiet kind of life. The kind of life that consists of sitting on the back porch watching the sunset and drinking sweet tea while giving a friendly wave to your neighbors. Paul's main concern is for unthreatened freedom to share the Gospel, freedom from persecution or turmoil that might hinder Gospel impact, freedom from being silenced in the city squares or being thrown out of a city for preaching the Gospel and seeking to live a godly life.
- C) **A quiet and peaceable life is to be prayed for as a setting in which we can strive live in godliness and reverence.** Paul is not implying that we are dependent on the salvation of our leaders to live godly and reverent lives; however, their approval or disapproval of our faith and our conduct does have an affect on our ability to freely express our beliefs and character without consequence. It is not wrong to pray for a setting in which we can accomplish this goal. It is right to desire to be able to be able to

live as God has called us to do without fear of recourse, all the while understanding it is a privilege to suffer for the name of Christ (2 Tim 1:8; 3:12).

Consider the biblical example of Josiah, who brought a level of revival to the nation of Israel just by honoring the Word of God and following His commands. We should pray that God would appoint leaders who will honor the Word of God and follow His commands so that it has an affect on the law of our land and would allow us to more freely express our faith in Christ and bring other to Christ.

### III. Praying for the Lost is Morally Right (v.3)

- A) The antecedent of “this” is the reference to prayer for all people in verse one. Praying for all men to be saved is good and acceptable in the sight of God (1:3).
- B) Theologically, we understand that not all people will be saved, and that unless the Spirit of God does a regenerating work in them (i.e., efficacious call), they cannot be saved. But at the same time, God issues a general (or universal) call for all men to respond to the Gospel. We lack the omniscience of the heavenly Father and cannot discern in our finiteness who God has elected (John 17:6; Eph 1:4-5); therefore, we ought to indiscriminately pray for all men to be saved.
- C) The logic is that if God desires all men to be saved (v.3b), it must be good and acceptable to him that we pray to that end. In other words, it is morally right to pray for all men to be saved (Rom 9:3; 10:1). We ought to pray thoughtfully, making sure that what we pray for is consistent with what God’s moral will. **We can be assured that our prayers for the Lost is always good and pleasing in the eyes of God our Savior.**

#### IV. Praying for the Lost is Consistent with God's Desire (v.4)

- A) Praying for the Lost is consistent with God's desire (Ezek. 18:23, 32; John 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:11; **2 Pet. 3:9**). The fact that God desires all men to be saved yet he chose some from the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4-5) to be saved may seem to be a logical contradiction. How can God desire something but purpose that it not take place? This seeming contradiction has led some to argue that "all people" means all "kinds of people" (e.g., Jews and Greeks), but the GK text seems to be referring to humanity generally, not specific categories. Regardless, I do not think that such an argument is necessary to reconcile the apparent contradiction.
- B) I believe that it does not contradict the character of God to say that He has a genuine desire for the salvation of all and yet has purposed that not everyone be saved. On a human level, a distinction between desire and purpose can be illustrated in a limited way in day-to-day life.

Illustration: Parent likely have the *desire* to give their child everything they want or need, but responsibility and a higher *purpose* as a parent compels them not to do this.

Of course, this illustration is not perfect, but it does illustrate there can be a distinction between desire and purpose. In God's administration, His desires and purpose are in perfect alignment with His sovereign will.

Conclusion: The fact that God desires the salvation of all does not guarantee that all will be saved (because of His sovereign purpose)

- C) If God has a genuine desire that all people be saved, we ought to do a heart analysis to ensure that our desire is aligned with God's desire.

D) The “To be saved” and “come to a knowledge of Christ” emphasize the divine perspective and the human perspective. To be saved emphasizes the divine saving work that God desires to do in them. To “come to a knowledge of Christ” emphasizes the human perspective of those who are being called by God. They hear the Gospel and “come to a knowledge of Christ.” This knowledge encompasses both the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

## **Conclusion**

In obedience to God’s Word, our prayer life should consistently include praying for the Lost to be saved. Such prayers should especially be on behalf of those in authority, because their salvation has practical implications for Christians’ ability to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and reverence. We ought to pray for the Lost because we know that it is pleasing in the Savior’s sight because He desires that all people to be saved. We ought to pray indiscriminately because we do not know whom God’s elect are. When we look at the world around us, we ought to think in only one category: Lost. And when we pray for all men in this way, we can have confidence that God will answer these prayers according to His perfect will by sending someone to give them the Gospel. But be ready, His answer to your prayer may be you going and telling them the Good News.