



LIFE AS MISSION
Prayer for the Mission
Week 7

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Sabo Cortez and Covenant Grace Church.

Prayer for our service

Introduction:

As we begin our 7th week in our series “Life as Mission” in which we’ve been examining the premise that once you’re a Christian life is

a mission trip, we're going to jump right in from 0 to 60 as our subject today is prayer for the mission.

The Apostle Paul writes through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Colossians 4:2-4

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery

**of Christ, on account of which I am in prison
— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I
ought to speak.**

This section of Scripture clearly links prayer and evangelism. Here's one way to think about prayer and the evangelism, which I will mention a couple times today. Think of the gospel as a meal. The world suffers from spiritual anorexia. People are starving themselves as they strain to control their own lives, to cover their guilt. We are hoping they will take this meal (the gospel) we're offering,

a meal that will save their lives and remove their guilt. The Holy Spirit is the fire that prepares the meal (the gospel). Prayer is the match that starts the fire.

I say all that, because...

“Too many church members do not connect prayer with evangelism. Many members are pretty good at praying for those who have physical needs. But many are woefully lacking in praying for those who have the greatest

need: a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” (Thom Rainer)

God wants every unsaved person prayed for.
Who are you praying for?

Scriptural Focus (the central idea of the sermon): “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people...”

Colossians was by way of introduction. Our Scripture this morning is 1 Timothy 2:1-6, which begins:

1 Timothy 2:1

2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,

1. God urges us to pray for all people.

The question is why? The context of the verse will tell us why God urges us to pray for all people as we will see very soon. But the emphasis begins with praying for all people, including...

1 Timothy 2:2-4

² for kings and all who are in high positions,

In other words, leadership, the leadership of our country. And here's the reason why we should pray for our country's leadership...

that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

There you have it. God urges us to pray for all people, because He desires all people to be

saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now, let's be clear — our prayers don't save anyone. But in His good providence, God has decided to use our prayers as part of the way in which He brings people to a knowledge of the truth. That's amazing when you think about it — that God has so ordained things that we participate in His bringing people to faith in Christ.

Again, if the gospel is the meal God wants people to partake of, the power of the Holy Spirit is the fire that prepares the meal for people. What is prayer then? Prayer is the match that starts the fire. Prayer is the two sticks being rubbed together to start a spark that we might evangelize in the forest of life. (This analogy is getting out of hand.)

1 Timothy 2:2

² for kings and all who are in high positions,

God wants us to pray for the leadership of our nation, because the leadership of a country is directly tied to either freedom of religion or oppression of religious thought and speech. We are currently in a troubling time where people refer to “freedom of religion” with scare quotes.

Ed Stetzer has pointed out that — In 2009, the mantra was “How is my gay marriage going to hurt you? We just want marriage equality.” Ten years later, they’re saying, “We want the tax exempt status of the churches, charities, and

colleges revoked if they fail to affirm the new orthodoxy of same sex marriage.”

In the early church “Roman authorities weren’t content to leave Christians alone to pray in peace, but actually tried to force them to violate their beliefs.”

Welcome to the First Century!

We better begin praying for all those who are in high positions...

**that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life,
godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is
good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our
Savior,**

Having a culture that is free of turmoil and war is good, because natural wars can hinder us from being focused on the spiritual war going on in the heavenlies. Natural problems, those urgent issues, often distract us from the true problems and issues facing people's lives — their standing before their Creator. In this sense...

2. Prayer for our country's leadership prepares the way for the gospel.

This is why the next verse again reminds us why we're praying for our leadership:

1 Timothy 2:4

⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Prayer is like a force that pulls back the sheet of blindness that prevents people from seeing the truth of the gospel. It's like people are living in a room where the windows to reality are blocked by demonic shades. Prayer pulls back those shades.

2 Corinthians 4:4

⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep

them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Now, the pulling back of these shades is a fight. It's a struggle, but when the shades are pulled back, suddenly people can see out the windows. And looking, they see reality, the way life really is, for the first time. They may have heard that Christ died for their sins and rose from the dead for their justification, but now they see it — that it's true and it's meaningful to them, because they also see

the reality of their own state before God, that they're guilty and need a Savior.

3. Prayer for people paves the way for the gospel in their lives.

God desires people to be saved. And because God desires people to be saved He desires that every unsaved person should be prayed for. **Who are you praying for?**

Now, if you're like me, you might be saying, "Yeah, but... if God desires people to be saved why are there such large swaths of people in spiritual darkness?" Every day I get a reminder to pray for a different unreached people group where there are upwards of 500,000 to 2,000,000 unreached people in one region. Why so many? Why aren't they being reached?

I can pass it off with glib theology. "Oh, well, it's not God's will to save them."

First of all, Scripture teaches that God is sovereign over everyone's salvation, but that doesn't give me any right anywhere to say it's not God's will to reach any person. That's just horrible and subpar Christian thinking.

But others will say, "See, that's why I believe God wants to save everybody." Okay, but everyone is not saved. Are you telling me God can't save them? Are you telling me that a human being's will can override God's will and God intends that? Again, it is subpar biblical

thinking to place God's will at the mercy of any human being.

Now, why do I contend that is subpar Christian thinking? Because it doesn't agree with the totality of Scripture. Yes, there are verses that emphasize the responsibility of people to repent and believe. But there are also far too many verses that stress no mere human being can prevent God's will from being accomplished.

Again, if God desires all people to be saved why are there such large swaths of people in spiritual darkness?

Rather than reason away our duty with “it’s God’s will” or “it’s because they simply refuse”, both subpar mindsets, how about asking this — how many of us are praying for these people? Someone? Anyone?

If God uses prayer, which He does, how about lack of prayer as a reason? You can blame it on God’s will or you can blame the sinner’s

refusal to repent, but what about our lack of prayer? How many of us go there when confronting this issue?

Now, I think blaming it on lack of prayer alone is also subpar thinking. However, the point is simply this — we are called to pray for the lost. The same way that God desires all to be saved and all are called to repent and believe, we are called to pray for all people. **So, who are you praying for?** Because it better be somebody. Now, why do I say that?

1 Timothy 2:5

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

4. We pray for people because Jesus Christ is the only hope for any human being's eternal salvation.

In the end, learning about prayer does us no good if we do not pray. People must be prayed for and we must be the ones praying for them.

In so many words, Andrew Murray said that Jesus is a gifted and patience teacher willing to teach us. He said, “It is Jesus, praying Himself, who teaches to pray.”

Romans 8:34

34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

“He knows what prayer is. He learned it amid the trials and tears of His earthly life. In heaven it is still His beloved work: His life there is prayer. Nothing delights Him more than to find those whom He can take with Him into the Father's presence, whom He can clothe with power to pray down God's blessing on those around them, whom He can

train to be His fellow-workers in the intercession by which the kingdom is to be revealed on earth.” (Andrew Murray. *Lord, Teach Us To Pray*)

It's a wonderful picture to know that Jesus is attending to our prayers, to bring us into God's throne room where He can clothe us with power so that our prayers can fall upon those we are praying for with God's blessing and God's answer.

But prayer is something we must give ourselves to.

1 Timothy 2:6

⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Christ gave Himself so that people could be saved.

5. We pray and God answers in His timing.

“If there’s one thing I’ve learned about prayer, it’s that it’s easy to quit. Talking to an invisible God about things we can rarely measure sets us up for diminished enthusiasm. And this is especially true when it comes to praying for unsaved people to come to faith. I find it encouraging that Paul told the Colossians, “Epaphras ... is always wrestling in prayer for you” (Col. 4:12). Wrestling! Now there’s an image that captures the realities of intercession.” (Randy Newman, *Unlikely*

Converts: Improbable Stories of Faith and What They Teach Us About Evangelism)

So, we end as we began:

Colossians 4:2

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

GOSPEL REMINDER: Jesus brings you into the presence of God when you pray based upon His work, not yours.

GREAT COMMISSION ACTION STEP: Discuss some of your own ideas for a Great Commission Action Step. Maybe you've doing something or you're thinking about doing something. Either way, come up with this week's GC Action Step together.