

3. Learning to Pray for Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to make their lives count for eternity. We saw that will happen as they learn to develop a pure heart, a good conscience and a genuine faith. One of the ways that we can make our lives count for eternity is to learn to pray for others. As a result, we want to provide our children with an example of how to pray for others so that they will also learn the importance of praying for others. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Paul had a great concern to spread the Gospel to people that had not yet heard of the salvation that Christ has provided. He realized that the first thing to do to make it possible to spread the Gospel was to pray. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 says, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” Here, we see that Paul encouraged various kinds of prayer. The word “supplications” speaks about prayer that is the result of a need. The following verses show that those who do not know Christ have a great need for salvation. We want to teach our children to continually pray for their relatives, friends and others that have not yet placed their faith in Christ for salvation and forgiveness of sins.

The word “prayers” speaks about prayer that is addressed to God. Here, we see that we want to help our children learn to really pray to God for other people. The word translated “intercessions” means *to come close to someone to speak to them about our concerns*. Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” The Holy Spirit speaks to the Father for us. In the same way, we want to speak to the Father for others, especially for those who have not yet placed their faith in Christ. Whenever we pray, we also need to give thanks to the Lord for the way that He is answering our prayers for others.

We are also told for whom to pray. First, we see that we are to pray for all people. This would include all Christians as well as those who have not yet placed their faith in Christ. Second, we are to pray for those who are in leadership. In addition to praying for kings and rulers of countries, we are to pray for all those who are in authority. All those in authority includes any person or government official that has leadership and exercises authority over other people. Every leader without Christ needs to learn what it means to place his or her faith in Christ. Leaders who place their faith in Christ also make it easier for us to live a quiet and peaceable life. A “quiet life” means *there are not conflicts around us*. A “peaceable life” means that *we do not have conflicts within our own life*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in 1 Peter 3:4 where we read, “Rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” In this verse, the word is translated “quiet” and speaks of a quiet inner spirit. We are also to pray with a spirit of godliness and reverence.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 goes on to say, “For 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.” Here, we see that it is good and acceptable to God for us to pray for all people, especially those who are in positions of leadership. The word that is translated “good” means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. Here, we see why it is important to pray for all those who are not yet Christians. These verses tell us that it is the desire of God for all people to be saved. As a result, we know that we are praying according to the will of God when we pray for the salvation of those who are not Christians. 1 John 5:14-15 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Since God desires all people to be saved, we know that He hears us when we pray for the salvation of others.

As a part of His desire for all people to be saved, God wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth. The word that is translated “knowledge” means *precise and correct knowledge*. Here, we see that it is the desire of God for every person to have a precise and correct knowledge of sin and its consequences and also know how to receive forgiveness of sin through repentance and faith in Christ. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 says, “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.” Here, we see the attitude that we are to have in order to help people come to a full understanding and knowledge of the truth. As we pray for others and have an attitude of humility as we share the Gospel with others, God will work in their lives. As a result, God will draw some to repentance and faith in Christ.

1 Timothy 2:5-7 goes on to say, “For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” When we have an attitude of pride, people will often reject the fact that Christ is the Mediator by whom they can come to God. They reject our message because of our attitude. In contrast, as we pray and have an attitude of humility, they will listen to our message. They will begin to understand that they must come to God through Christ. John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” God will work through our attitude of humility as people hear us explain the truth in love.

The word that is translated “Mediator” means *one that intervenes between two people in order to restore peace and friendship*. When Adam sinned, he experienced immediate spiritual death which is separation from God. God could not look at sin with favor and yet He still loved all people even though they had become sinners. As a result, God sent Christ to pay the penalty for sin. Hebrews 9:15 says, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” The first covenant was the law and showed that all people are guilty of sin. Christ came to pay the penalty for sin by His death to buy us back from the

penalty of sin. The penalty for sin has been paid and God is satisfied with that payment. He now invites all people to accept the payment of Christ for their sin. Those who repent and turn from their sin by coming to God through Christ receive forgiveness and are restored to a place of peace and friendship with God. Christ could be the Mediator because He is the God-man.

When Christ died, He paid the ransom for sin. The word that is translated “ransom” means *the price that is paid to redeem us from consequences of the curse of the law*. Redemption has three parts. First, Christ bought us back from the penalty of sin. Second, Christ removed us from further sale. Third, Christ set us free. Galatians 3:13-14 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Christ paid the ransom to set us free. When we come to Christ in repentance and faith, at that moment, we receive the Holy Spirit through faith.

Here, we see that Paul said he had been appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles. He repeated that same thought in 2 Timothy 1:11 where we read, “To which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” A preacher is a person that has been given authority to give and proclaim the official message of a king. Christ gave that same authority to all Christians when He said in Mark 16:15, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’” As a result, each Christian has been given authority to share the Gospel.

Paul was also chosen to be an apostle. Acts 1:21 says that an apostle was an official eyewitness of the resurrection. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:11-12, “I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” Paul was also a teacher of the Gentiles. Galatians 2:9 says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” Here, we see that the other apostles also recognized that Paul was a teacher of the Gentiles.

1 Timothy 2:8 says, “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” Here, we see that Paul again repeated the fact that he wanted the men to pray everywhere. We are to pray with our sins confessed so that we have holy hands. We are also to pray without anger toward others or doubts in our own hearts. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray everywhere for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to learn to pray for others.