

Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

- 4) God places His blessing on witnessing.
 - a) (Proverbs 11:30) "*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*"
 - b) (Daniel 12:3) "*And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*"

b. Prayer ignites the power for witnessing.

- 1) I vividly remember a time when my Dad was removing a huge tree stump from our field. He drilled small holes in the earth under the stump. He then lowered sticks of dynamite into the holes. After ordering my brother and I to run far away, he lit the fuse and ran. Moments later, the fire touched the dynamite, a thunderous explosion took place and the huge stump flew into the air. The dynamite could do nothing until ignited by the fire.
- 2) When we share the Gospel with an unbeliever, that Gospel is powerful, but often God uses our prayers to ignite it. We must never underestimate the power of sincere prayer for the lost.

Conclusion: After this study, I have revised my prayer for the lost. I believe we CAN see loved ones, friends and others turn to Christ if we begin praying effectively. It is unlikely that simply listening to this sermon will help you sufficiently. To gain the most from this, you will need to download the notes, study them carefully, and then ask God to show you how to pray more effectively for unbelievers. Could it be that my prayers or yours could make the difference between heaven and hell for one of our children, a loved one, a friend, or a neighbour?

Will you take the challenge to dig deeper? Will you ask God to transform your prayer life? Will you begin praying fervently for unbelievers? Will you seek a friend to pray with you for your lost loved ones and friends? Will you then ask God to give you opportunities to share the Gospel with those for whom you pray? Will you stand in the gap for lost souls? **This is the very heart of missions!**

Song: Teach Me to Pray – 346

Praying for Unbelievers

15 May 2022 AM&PM – 1 Timothy 2:1-4 – Missions – Scott Childs

Introduction: Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4. How many of you have an unbelieving loved one or friend that you want to see come to Christ? ___ I do too. In this text, God urges believers to pray for all men because it is His will that all men *be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth*. If you are a Christian, God is exhorting **YOU** to pray for the salvation of unbelievers you know.

Recently I read a booklet called "*Praying Effectively for the Lost*" by Lee E. Thomas. I have benefitted greatly from reading the booklet. It has prompted me to dig into this topic more thoroughly.

We desire that our loved ones and friends might trust Christ for salvation. We might even pray occasionally for their salvation. However, if you are like me, you generally do not pray very **specifically** or **passionately** for their salvation. My goal today is to change that.

I want to share with you some of what I have learned as I dug into the topic of praying for unbelievers. I hope that the things I share will make your praying more effective. I will only get through half of this sermon this morning. The other half I will preach tonight. I urge you to come this evening to hear the second half.

Transition: Now, let me show you some of the things God wants us to remember if we are to pray effectively for unbelievers.

To pray effectively for the lost, we must remember that ...

1. The devil actively opposes their salvation.

a. I believe that we often overlook this fact.

- 1) I have known for years that Satan opposes the salvation of unbelievers, but I do not think I grasp the extent of his opposition until I began to study for this sermon.
- 2) Satan's opposition began in the Garden of Eden. He lied and deceived Eve, and she offered the forbidden fruit to Adam. By this act, Satan led the human race into sin. He has made it his ambition to rob God of His glory by keeping humans from living in harmony with God. He knows that Christ paid for man's sin and offers forgiveness and eternal life to all who will believe. Satan

uses every trick in his power to keep unbelievers from receiving Christ's salvation.

- 3) As we pray for unbelievers, we must keep this in mind. Praying against the devil and his deeds must be a significant part of our prayers for their souls.

b. Consider with me some of the ways that the devil opposes the salvation of unbelievers.

- 1) He snatches the Gospel from their heart like birds snatching planted grain. Jesus said, (Mark 4:15) "*And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*" (cf., Mt 13:4, 19; Lu 8:12). **Satan snatches away the Word. He does not let them even consider the Gospel truth.**
- 2) He uses power, signs, and lying wonders to deceive. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) "*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish...*" **Satan is a master deceiver. He uses his demonic power to trick unbelievers.**
- 3) He deceives the whole world. (Revelation 12:9) "*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: ...*" (cf., Re 20:3) **He deceives your loved ones and friends as well as millions in PNG, Africa, and the world.**
- 4) He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. (John 12:40) "*He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*" **It is no wonder they won't listen!**
- 5) Satan, the god of this world, has blinded their minds. (2 Corinthians 4:4) "*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*" **Their minds cannot grasp truth.** Perhaps you can remember how blind you were before you trusted Christ and how He opened your eyes.
- 6) Unbelievers sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. (Luke 1:79) "*To give light to them that sit in darkness and*

them." **God is able to save the hardest sinner.**

d. We must ask the Holy Spirit to convict the lost.

- 1) Jesus said to His disciples, (John 16:7-11) "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*"
- 2) With this assurance, we can ask the Holy Spirit with confidence that might convict our lost loved one.
 - a) Ask Him to convict them of sin.
 - b) Ask Him to convict them of the need of Christ's righteousness.
 - c) Ask Him to convict them that judgment is coming.

e. Pray with others for your lost friend

- 1) The Lord told us that there is special power in praying in unity with a friend. (Matthew 18:19) "*Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*"
- 2) It is good for the congregation to pray in harmony for a particular unbeliever's salvation.
- 3) God honours praying with your spouse or with a friend. There is power in **unified** prayer.

To pray effectively for the lost, we must remember that ...

4. We must accompany witnessing with our praying for unbelievers.

a. Prayer is not an exemption from witnessing.

- 1) We cannot choose to pray instead of witnessing. We must pray in addition to witnessing.
- 2) The Lord has commissioned us to witness. (Mark 16:15) "*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*"
- 3) The Holy Spirit gives us power to witness. (Acts 1:8) "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in*

loved not their lives unto the death."

- 2) Pray in the **name of Jesus** against Satan. (Luke 10:17) *"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."* The name of Jesus is powerful when we are doing His work. He is mightier than all the demons. (1 Peter 3:22) *"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."*
- 3) Depend on the **Word of God** as you pray for your lost friends. The Word of God is our sword (Eph 6:17). Quote scriptures as you pray for the lost. Scripture is alive and powerful. (Hebrews 4:12) *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

c. **We must plead the promises of God as we pray.**

The 19th century Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon said, *"Mere prayer sayers, who do not pray at all, forget to argue with God; but those who would prevail bring forth their reasons and their strong arguments and they debate the question with the Lord... Oh, brethren, let us learn thus to plead the precepts, the promises, and whatever else may serve our turn; but let us always have something to plead."*

- 1) Plead the passion of God. (Luke 19:10) *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (2 Peter 3:9) *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* **Saving is God's passion!**
- 2) Plead the promises of God. (John 1:12) *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"* (Romans 10:13) *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* **These are promises.**
- 3) Plead the power of God. (Hebrews 7:25) *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for*

in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." **Satan is the god of the dark underworld.**

Unbelievers sit in that darkness with no eternal hope.

- 7) Their understanding is darkened. They are ignorant and blind. (Ephesians 4:18) *"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"* **Their thoughts are darkened by humanism and evolution. They are ignorant and blinded.**
- 8) Satan's power of darkness holds them. (Colossians 1:13) *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"* **They are not just held back by their own stubbornness. The mighty power of Satan as a grip on them. Only God can break that grip.**
- 9) Satan has shut their eyes. They live in darkness. They are under the power of Satan. (Acts 26:18) *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."* (cf., Eph 5:8; 1Pe 2:9; Heb 2:14-15) **This verse is key to understanding the fight.**
- 10) Unbelievers walk according to the prince of the power of the air. (Ephesians 2:2) *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"* **Satan is that prince.**

c. **It is no wonder that unbelievers are uninterested in the Gospel!**

- 1) Satan is actively working to keep your loved one blind, in the dark, deceived and under his power. That is his goal. He wants to take them to hell with him.
- 2) God has allowed Satan to reign temporarily as god of this world. As believers, we have no human power to defeat Satan. We cannot open spiritually blind eyes. We cannot turn them from darkness to God's light, but we **CAN** pray. We **must pray** against the devil. **If we have clean hearts and a burden for the lost, we can make a difference. Yes, it will take time and effort, but their eternity hangs on it.**

To pray effectively for the lost, we must remember that ...

2. Praying for unbelievers is part of our duty.

a. That is what God exhorted us to do (1Ti 2:1-4).

- 1) Paul said that "*first of all*" we are to pray for unbelievers. We are to intercede for them. It is to be a priority.
- 2) God does command us to share the Gospel, *but first of all, we must pray*. God longs for all men to be saved. He does not want anyone to go to hell. (2 Peter 3:9) "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*"
- 3) We can pray with confidence, knowing that the Lord loves every unbeliever and provided salvation for all who will believe. (John 3:16) "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

b. I believe that prayer for the lost was part of Paul's commission.

- 1) In Acts 26:18, Paul reviews the commission God gave to him. God told him "*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*" *How could he do these supernatural things?*
- 2) We know that Paul preached the **Gospel**, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16).
- 3) We also know that he was a man of **prayer**. His epistles mention prayer over 45 times.
 - a) (Romans 10:1) "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*"
 - b) (Acts 16:25) "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*" That night, God saved the jailer and his family.
 - c) I believe that prayer was a significant part of Paul's success in accomplishing the task God gave to him.
- 4) You and I can see our loved ones, friends and others trust Christ if we will pray earnestly that God will bind and defeat Satan. Pray that God may open their hearts. End AM.

To pray effectively for the lost, we must remember that ...

3. Unbelievers need specific prayer.

It is easy for us to fall into the habit of praying in generalities.

"*Lord, please save Uncle Jim and Aunt Sally, and my neighbours.*"

However, there is much more involved in praying for the lost than just asking God to save them.

a. We need to ask God to bind Satan's influence.

- 1) When Jesus was accused of Satanic power in casting out devils, notice how he responded. (Mark 3:26-27) "*And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.*" Since Satan is hindering unbelievers, I believe it is right for us to pray that God will bind the devil so that he cannot hinder the salvation of the one for whom we are praying. Pray specifically, "*God, please bind Satan so that he cannot hinder the Gospel in Uncle Jim's life.*"
- 2) Our prayers ought to be like *scarecrows* that keep Satan and his demonic birds from snatching up the seed of the Gospel. [Describe]
- 3) We must pray against Satan's deception. He uses lies and evolution to deceive. He uses morality to deceive. He even uses religion to deceive. *Pray specifically.*
- 4) Ask God to open the eyes of the lost loved one, to turn him from darkness to light and from Satan's power to God. Only God can do this, but He wants us to ask Him to do this. In God's sovereign wisdom, He has chosen to wait for us to do our part before He will do His part.
- 5) When Paul said, "*I am pure from the blood of all men for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,*" he believed that God would hold him accountable for doing his part (cf., Ac 20:26-27). *That is a sobering and frightful thought.*

b. We must claim the power of the Lord as we pray.

- 1) Claim the **blood of Christ** as you pray for the lost. (Revelation 12:11) "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they*