



The Doctrine of Prayer

For Whom Should We Pray?

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This lesson will focus on whom we should be praying for apart from ourselves.
- B. It is understood that we ought to be praying for ourselves, for our physical and spiritual needs.
- C. But if our prayers are only ever for our own selves then our time in prayer is truly self-focused and very much lacking.
- D. Prayer is the means by which we request Almighty God to take action and if we are truly Christ-like then we should desire for God to take action in the lives of others by praying for them.
- E. Praying for others is a way to care for others and a way to help others.

II. PRAY FOR OUR BRETHREN

- A. The example of the Apostle Paul's prayers.
 - 1. Prayer is an excellent way to help our brethren according to the scriptures: "Ye also **helping together by prayer** for us," (2 Corinthians 1:11a)
 - 2. In fact, prayer is called a labour: "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always **labouring fervently for you in prayers,**" (Colossians 4:12a)
 - 3. So, praying one for another is a precious labour that yields great help to those in need because it involves God and requests him to make a difference for them.
 - 4. Throughout the epistles, we see Paul telling his audience that he is praying for them.
 - a. To the Romans – "that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Romans 1:9)
 - b. To the Corinthians – "I thank my God always on your behalf" (1 Corinthians 1:4)
 - c. To the Ephesians – "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:16)



- d. To the Philippians – “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy” (Philippians 1:4)
 - e. To the Colossians – “Praying always for you” (Colossians 1:3)
 - f. To the Thessalonians – “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2)
 - g. To Timothy – “that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day” (2 Timothy 1:3)
 - h. To Philemon – “making mention of thee always in my prayers” (Philemon 1:4)
5. Either Paul was just being polite (and a liar) or he spent a great deal of time in prayer for others.
 6. Paul understood that through prayer he was able to get a hold of God and thereby impact people’s lives.
 7. His love and care for the brethren was expressed throughout his epistles and his act of praying for them was an extension of this love and care.
- B. Pray for those serving.
1. Paul gave an admonition to the Thessalonian believers, “Brethren, pray for us.” (1 Thessalonians 5:25)
 2. His instruction was for the church there to be praying for Paul and those that were serving with him in ministry.
 3. It was of great importance for Paul to have faithful brethren praying for them.
 4. Paul was relying on the brethren to be praying about several things for him.
 - a. From the Romans – “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;” (Romans 15:30)
 - (1) “That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea” (Romans 15:31)
 - (2) “that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;” (Romans 15:31)
 - (3) “That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God” (Romans 15:32)
 - (4) “and may with you be refreshed” (Romans 15:32)



- b. From the Ephesians – “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me,” (Ephesians 6:18-19a)
 - (1) “that utterance may be given unto me,” (Ephesians 6:19)
 - (2) “that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,” (Ephesians 6:19)
 - c. From the Philippians – “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” (Philippians 1:19)
 - d. From the Colossians – “Withal praying also for us,” (Colossians 4:3)
 - (1) “that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,” (Colossians 4:3)
 - (2) “That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” (Colossians 4:4)
 - e. From the Thessalonians – “Finally, brethren, pray for us,” (2 Thessalonians 3:1a)
 - (1) “that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified,” (2 Thessalonians 3:1)
 - (2) “And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men:” (2 Thessalonians 3:2)
 - f. From Philemon – “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.” (Philemon 22)
 - g. From the Hebrews – “Pray for us:” (Hebrews 13:18a)
 - (1) “for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” (Hebrews 13:18)
 - (2) “But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” (Hebrews 13:19)
- 5. As we have seen, the minister was faithful to be praying for the brethren and he in turn was desiring their prayers for him to be a help to him.
 - 6. Prayer is one of the most important means by which we can help our pastor, missionary, or those labouring in the ministration of the gospel.
 - 7. We know how great a man of God Paul was and yet he was constantly requesting prayer. Maybe, it was because of the prayers of the saints that Paul’s ministry was so effective!
 - 8. Take time every day to pray for your pastor, missionaries, and others serving.



C. Pray for our brethren.

1. Prayer is an often unmentioned, but critical, aspect of the armour of God outlined in Ephesians six.
2. We know of the need to have our loins girt about with truth (Ephesians 6:14), and to have on the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6:14), and our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15), and the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16), and finally the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).
3. But consider that verse 17 ends with a colon and not a period which means that verse 18 is also an aspect of the armour of God.
4. What is identified in Ephesians 6:18 is the need for prayer and the need for prayer and supplication for all saints.
5. If we are going to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10), then we are going to need to be faithfully praying and praying for our brethren.
6. Without prayer for ourselves and our brethren, our armour is incomplete and we are at great risk of suffering loss spiritually.

III. PRAY FOR THE LOST

- A. A second people group that we have example to pray for is the lost.
- B. In Romans 10:1 Paul told the Roman believers a matter that he was fervently praying about: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, **that they might be saved.**”
- C. Israel, as a whole, had rejected Jesus Christ and were lost and part of Paul’s work to bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus was praying for their salvation.
- D. Paul does not record a specific prayer of his for Israel but there are several aspects we can request of God when praying for someone’s salvation.
 1. Pray that God would draw them unto him (John 6:44, John 12:32).
 2. Pray that God would convict them of their sin (Acts 24:25).
 3. Pray that God would show them their hopelessness and need for a Saviour (Acts 16:25-30).
 4. Pray that God would put someone in their path that would tell them about Jesus and show them the scriptures (Acts 8:26-35).
 5. Pray that God would break them of their pride (Psalm 49:6-7)



- E. We have a responsibility to be a witness to the lost and part of that responsibility includes praying for their salvation.

IV. PRAY FOR OUR ENEMIES

A. Pray for our enemies good.

1. The Lord Jesus gave commandment to pray for our enemies.
2. In Matthew 5:44 he said, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”.
3. It would be easy and natural for us to assume that this means we are to pray that God would destroy them but according to the context, that is not the case.
4. Jesus poses a rhetorical question related to praying for them which despitefully use you in verse 46. He said “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”
5. The context is clear that Jesus is commanding us to love our enemies and pray for their good, not their destruction.
6. Even though they are persecuting us and despitefully using us, we are to love them and pray for them.
7. This goes against everything in our flesh but praying for our enemies is part of being the children of God. In fact, verse 44 ends in semi-colon and the thought continues in verse 45 where Jesus says, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...”.
8. An example of this can be found in Psalm 35.
 - a. David is praying to the Lord and telling him about his enemies and what they were doing to him. Of his enemies, he says they:
 - (1) “strive with me” (Psalm 35:1)
 - (2) “persecute me” (Psalm 35:3)
 - (3) “seek after my soul” and “devise my hurt” (Psalm 35:4)
 - (4) “without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit” (Psalm 35:7)
 - (5) “rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul” (Psalm 35:12)
 - b. In the face of all this opposition and hateful attacks, David said, “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.” (Psalm 35:13)



- c. David's love for his enemy is confirmed in verse 14 when he says, "I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother."
- d. Our first response to those that oppose us, in our service to the Lord, ought to be to pray for them and to love them.

B. Pray for our enemies' destruction.

1. There seems to be an appropriate time to switch from praying for our enemies' good to praying for their destruction.
2. Psalm 35 is also a good example of this aspect.
 - a. As previously stated, David had enemies that were striving against him and rewarding him with evil.
 - b. His initial response to them and their opposition was prayer and fasting for their good (Psalm 35:13) based on the past tense utilized.
 - c. However, these enemies continued in their opposition against David and it came to the point where David shifted to praying for their destruction.
 - d. At the time of the writing, David was praying God to "fight against them that fight against me." (Psalm 35:1)
 - e. In fact, he goes so far as to pray that God would "Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall." (Psalm 35:8)
 - f. These enemies were a vexation to David but ultimately, they were fighting against him as he served the Lord.
 - g. David had a righteous cause that they were opposing as stated in Psalm 35:27, "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause..."
3. There may come times where enemies are persistent and hinder the work that we are trying to do for the Lord.
4. Only after we have consistently prayed for their good and after their opposition continues, should we pray for the Lord to bring destruction upon them.
5. An extremely important point needs to be made which is that our example is to let God handle our enemies and not us ourselves.
6. David's example is that he took it to the Lord. Now, he made specific requests to the Lord for how he should deal with the enemies but he left it in the Lord's hands. So should we.



V. PRAY FOR AUTHORITY FIGURES

A. The command to pray for those in authority given.

1. In 1 Timothy 2:1-2 we find a clear command to pray. Paul says, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority...”.
2. This passage identifies four specific types of communications to be made to God:
 - a. Supplications – This would be an earnest pleading.
 - b. Prayers – This would be more general and often include requests.
 - c. Intercessions – This is seeking God on another’s behalf.
 - d. Giving of thanks – This is thanking God.
3. There are three groups identified for which to communicate with God for:
 - a. All men – This would pertain to those living around us like our neighbors and those in our town, city, state, and country.
 - b. Kings – This would pertain to our government leaders.
 - c. All that are in authority – This would pertain to officials such as police officers and judges.

B. The purpose of praying for those in authority given.

1. The second half of 1 Timothy 2:2 states the desired outcome of these communications unto God as, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.:
2. In other words, we are to be making supplication, prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving for the identified people so that we will be able to live for God according to the scriptures in peace and quiet without contention.
3. Now, these Bible verses are not telling us what to pray but that we are to be praying for those in authority so that they will fulfill their duties in a way that will enable Christians to live for God without hindrance.
4. A ruler, or authority figure, has a duty to uphold righteous law and punish evildoers (consider Romans 13:1-7).
5. We should seek God that he would help those in authority to be upright, just, and uncorrupted so that they will uphold righteous law.