

Letters From My Father
Week 5
1 Timothy 2:1-7
“Pray For Who?”

Introduction

Dear friends, don't overlook this one fact: With The LORD one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The LORD does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. **2 Peter 3:8-9**

The Christian faith is a radical thing. Ours is a faith that commands us not only to love one another, but to love our enemies as well! That, my friends, does not come naturally, for we are only able to do this by the enabling of The Holy Spirit. As we go through this life, we are bound to have adversity, the reason being is that we have an adversary. His is the devil, and he has a host of able bodies ever in his employ. Some are willingly at work on his behalf (the demonic hosts), but many others are his unwitting victims. The latter are sons of men, who are so blinded by sin, that they do not even realize they have become the agents of Satan. And we must always be reminded that our God wants to save such as these.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his famous letter to the church at Ephesus (*Ephesians*), he was in prison. He had been incarcerated by the Romans for his faith in Christ. The Roman government had been cracking down heavily on Christians, because they considered them to be a dangerous sect of Judaism, prone to cause a rebellion. One of the main reasons for this hostility was because of all of the slanderous accusations that were continually being leveled upon the Church from the Jewish community itself. Devout Jews, like Paul himself had once been, were violently opposed to this new faith that was simply known in those days as “The Way”.

Saul (now Paul) had been a violent persecutor of the church, until he himself had an encounter with The Risen LORD. After which, he was never to be the same. He went from being the Church's worst enemy, to its greatest ambassador. Oh the power of Christ to change lives! And it wasn't very long before Paul went from being a persecutor to a prisoner. And more than a few of the churches that he had planted throughout the empire had received correspondence from their founding father's prison cell. In A.D. 62, Paul wrote the above mentioned letter to the church at Ephesus, and asked them to pray for him.

Pray at all times in The Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should. **Ephesians 6:18-20**

Now, fast forward a few years after Paul's release. He dispatched Timothy to Ephesus to get the church back on track as it had been infiltrated by false teachers. Once again Paul sent word for the church to be in fervent prayer. But this time, he instructed them to pray for those in government; the very same government that had wrongfully imprisoned *him*! This my friends is the Christian faith. It does not pray for retaliation, but rather, the salvation of its enemies. What a radical faith we are called to possess!

Today, we are living in a nation plagued by wickedness and idolatry. The enemies of God's people are becoming bolder and more powerful by the moment. And we see hatred and division all around us. So how are we, the true church of Christ, to respond in such times? The answer is simple: We respond with love. For you see, we have no insight into which of our enemies today may just be our brothers in Christ tomorrow. As Paul himself has declared, if God could save an enemy of the church such as he had been, then God can save anyone. So we are not called to retaliate, but rather, to pray. We are the people of *Intercession*, purchased with the blood of our *Intermediary*, so that we may *Instruct* others in “The Way.”

Intercession (vs. 1-2)

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. **1 Timothy 2:1-2**

After speaking of spiritual warfare in the first section of his letter, Paul turned his attention to the very calling of the church. We are to be a praying people. This is not optional. The word that Paul used in the Greek, translated “urge” in the CSB, is better understood as a *command*. Paul is instructing the church that they must be continually going about the business of prayer.

Prayer is not only a part of worship, it is a vital part. Every church service usually begins and ends with prayer, but also with a time of singing to praises to God. This time of worship is our opportunity to gather together and have fellowship with Christ as His body. What is “supposed” to occur is that first we pray to our Heavenly Father, and then we sing praises and songs of prayer directly to Him. When we do this, we are communicating with God in corporate worship. First, we speak and sing to God, and then, when The Word of God is opened and taught, God speaks back to us. This is the very purpose of gathering together in worship. And Prayer is the most powerful force at every Christian’s disposal, for it is by prayer that we can access the very throne of The Almighty and Everlasting God!

So Paul commanded the church of Ephesus to get back to the business of praying. And then, he went on to instruct them as to “how” they should pray. Petitions (*deesis* in the Greek) are the means by which we make our request to God for the things that we need. Christ has promised to meet our needs, if His kingdom is our first priority (**Matthew 6:33**).

Prayers (*proseuche*) are simply that, a general sense of speaking to God regarding anything. I am so grateful that we can go to God at any time about any thing. *The Bible* is clear that we have the ability, in Christ, to go before the throne of grace to obtain mercy (**Hebrews 4:16**). For our God cares deeply about the things that are troubling us. *If something is of sufficient importance to be of concern to you, then rest assured, it is also important to your Heavenly Father.*

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your cares on Him, because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Paul continued in his description of the prayers of the saints by saying that we are to make “intercession” (*enteuxis*). Intercession is the offering up of prayers on the behalf of others. Every Believer knows the importance of praying for others. Our focus often tends to be with intercession on behalf other *Believers*, but look closely at Paul’s instruction on the matter to the church at Ephesus. He commands them to make intercession for **everyone!** Now don’t miss out on this. Paul was commanding the Ephesians to pray for even the enemies of the church!

We’ll return to the “thanksgiving” part in a moment, but it is vital that we understand just who Paul was instructing the church (under the direction of The Holy Spirit) to pray for. So there would be no mistake, Paul listed under the heading of everyone: “***kings and all those who are in authority***”. The king or “emperor” of Rome at that particular time was none other than Nero. A quick historical search of this man would reveal that he was not only ruthless in every way, but he was also a madman. Nero despised the church and wanted to eradicate it from the face of the earth. And it was under Nero’s reign that Paul had been imprisoned in the first place! And here was Paul instructing the church at Ephesus to offer up intercessory prayers for Nero! Christianity is indeed a radical faith.

If Paul had been given the opportunity, he would have shared the gospel with Nero, with nothing but love in his heart. You see, to be filled with the Spirit of Christ is to want to see salvation come to the most wicked of this world. Remember Paul’s earlier declaration?

But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate His extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

1 Timothy 1:16

Paul truly believed that if Jesus could save him, then He could save anyone, even Nero! So he commanded the church to pray for those in authority, so they might turn to Christ and be saved. Imagine if the church today, worldwide, started praying for the leaders of our countries, rather than treating them with contempt. How much better off would we be, if our president were to repent of his wicked ways and turn to Christ? That would indeed be the best thing for all of us would it not? But you see, in order to earnestly make intercession for your enemy, you have to first love him enough to want to see him saved!

Paul went on to say that we should pray for those in leadership, so that we may live in tranquility and quiet. Both words that he used there actually represent different versions of peacefulness. The first refers to external peace. If our leaders were godly, then our surrounding circumstances would be far more tranquil. And secondly, external peace leads to internal peace. Christians are called to lead quiet lives of submission to authority. We are not to allow ourselves to get “all riled up”, for this is the opposite of loving. There is no such thing as civil disobedience in Christianity. We do not riot in the streets, when we do not get our way. We are to be a people of peace.

And finally, Paul reminded the church that they should always approach the throne of grace with an attitude of thanksgiving. No matter what is going on in the world around us we must never forget, that in Christ, we have everything. He saved us, although we did not deserve it, and He keeps us in the palm of His hand. We have nothing to fear, not even death itself, for even in death, He is with us (***Psalm 23***).

And finally, Paul says, that by praying for those in authority, we will not only have peace, but also, the ability to live a life of “godliness and dignity”. The first of these means that we will live in a manner that honors and respects God. And the second speaks of the kind of life that causes others to respect *us*. It is only by loving our enemies that we may please God, and it is also by this same love and moral purity that others will see something in us that is worthy of respect. No one will ever be won over to the cause of Christ by anger and disrespect, only love; the kind of love that prays for those who persecute us.

Intermediary (vs. 3-6)

This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, Who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time. ***1 Timothy 2:3-6***

Paul continued on to explain that it is good to pray for those who treat us with contempt, for this ***“pleases God our Savior, Who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*** So there you have it. God wants us to make intercession for lost people, because He loves them, and wants them to turn to Him for forgiveness. Hate will never encourage your enemies to consider Christ, but love will! And we must always remember, our enemy today, just might be our brother tomorrow! Where we see someone to be shunned, God sees someone in need of being reached.

For Christ came to this world to save the lost. Therefore, His purpose should be our purpose. Christ is the Intermediary between God and man. And He is able to be such, because He, being God, became as a man. I am reminded here of the words of Job as he felt that he was being unjustly punished by God with the terrible sufferings that he was forced to endure. He longed for someone who could serve as a “*daysman*” (KJV), an intermediary, as it were, to be able to take his hand and to grasp the hand of God all at once in an effort to bring them together.

For He (God) is not a man like me, that I can answer Him, that we can take each other to court. There is no mediator between us, to lay His hand on both of us. ***Job 9:32-33***

The good news is, that Christ Jesus is the Intermediary Who came to reconcile God and mankind. And He longs to see even the worst of us brought near to The Father by His atoning death on the cross. So then it is only fitting that we offer up intercession for those who are estranged from God. For we as His adopted children, having been reconciled to Him, should also desire others to be reconciled. For:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” **Matthew 5:9**

So the question for us today is simple. How badly do we wish for our enemies to be brought into peace through the mediator Christ Jesus?

Instruction (vs. 7)

For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. **1 Timothy 2:7**

Paul had been called by God to teach the Gentiles of Christ's love for them. No one will know of the saving grace of Jesus unless someone is sent to instruct them. This was Paul's calling. His deepest desire was for all the world to know Christ. He did not busy himself with deciding who was unworthy of the gospel. Rather, he wished to be able to share it with everyone. For he believed that if Christ could save him, then Christ could save anyone! So he intended to offer the instruction that he had received to anyone who would listen.

By simply reading the book of *Acts*, we know that Paul desperately wanted to stand before not only Caesar, but all those in authority in Rome, not so he could complain of how badly he had been treated by them, but to share the good news of the gospel message with each of them. What a heart for winning souls this man had! We too must possess this kind of compassion for the lost, if we are to be effective in making disciples.

I often think of the things that Paul witnessed in other Believers that might have had an impact upon him. I realize that he was taught by The Risen LORD Himself, but I still think that the testimony of other Believers had to have had an impact upon Paul. Consider for a moment the day that he had taken part in the stoning of Steven (**Acts 7**). Steven had just preached a fiery message calling the Jewish leaders to repent and believe in Christ, when Paul and the others decided to stone him for what they considered to be blasphemy. As Steven was dying, he knelt down and prayed for his murderers.

He knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “LORD, do not hold this sin against them!” And after saying this, he fell asleep. **Acts 7:60**

I cannot help but believe that this scene was played over and again in Paul's mind. And I think it not only caused a great deal of shame for him that he took part in such a horrible crime, but that it also served as a reminder to him that Christ's love and mercy reaches out to the very worst of humanity. That was the day that Paul saw The Living Christ pour out of a dying man. And he never forgot the image. Now, I cannot speak for everyone, but I long to be *that kind* of Christian. I want the people who hate us, to know of the love of Christ. Even the most wicked of them, who reside in Washington D.C, are in desperate need of saving. And God has required of us to pray for them.

So, when you see the hatred and division that is fueled by the media to stir up the uncontrollable passions within us, let us always remember that the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. And let us see in our enemies what God sees, people who desperately need saving. *So pray*. Pray for all mankind, not just the ones who agree with us. Pray earnestly, with intercession, that the lost of this world will turn to the only Intermediary. Christ Jesus is His Name, and He is the only way to God. And we must, as Paul, live to seek out the lost and offer them this instruction so that they may be saved. We are called to go about making disciples. And we cannot reach those whom we do not love first. Don't take part in the divisiveness that now defines this generation. But rather, offer to anyone who will listen, the cure which can only be found in The Savior Who loves them and longs to see all sinners saved by His mercy and grace.

Now let the praying people of God all say... TRUTH!!!