



## Prayer & Evangelism

1 Tim 2:1-7

Someone once called 1 Timothy 2:1-7 the intercessors charter as it is a direct command by Paul to Timothy and to Churches to pray hard for just about everyone. Often we can read verses 1 and 2 in isolation and point to how we must intercede for our nation:

*2:1 (C) First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; 2 (C) for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence toward God and with proper conduct.*

And we look at it and say - well in our prayer meetings we must pray for everybody and that includes our leaders because then we can live our lives in all godliness and holiness. And we tend to stress that we live lives in all godliness and holiness but there is a danger that it becomes a charter for comfy Christians.

But actually as we go down the verses we find that God wants everyone to be saved. **EVERYONE!** That's a huge canvas.

But is that all to the end that we live peaceful lives in our comfort zone. Let's read it again with verse 3-6 which most people separate.

*3 (C) This is good and it pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth. 5 (C) For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and human beings together, the man Christ Jesus, 6 (C) who gave himself to redeem the whole human race. That was the proof at the right time that God wants everyone to be saved,*

He wants all men to be saved. That's why we pray for everybody. Salvation is on our minds. And that's the important link between intercession and evangelism. We intercede for everyone because God wants all men to be saved. We pray for kings and those in authority because their decisions allow us to live lives in godliness and holiness allows the gospel to go forward. In fact as we shall see, godliness in a nation, city or region is conducive the witness of the gospel.

So God wants us to have a prayer burden for the lost. We need to make requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving

There are four things here:

**PETITIONS** (Supplications) - Asking God for things on behalf of others

**PRAYERS** public prayers

**INTERCESSIONS** conference or conversation with God

**THANKSGIVING** - just that.

Interesting balance don't you think. We take opportunity to speak to God on behalf of someone else and we plead on their behalf, we do it in public and we have a discussion with God about it. And we give thanks.

This passage encourages us to think and pray about the lost in a different way. They are so important that we plead before God for them. We make it a matter of public prayer. We seek God's will for them but most of all we thank God for them and what work He is doing in their lives.

How often do we plead with God on behalf of the lost? At home maybe – but as part of our life as a church. The suggestion here is that prayers are given on a corporate basis.

So we've prayed for our churches, we've prayed for our people. We've prayed for the lost - but how

enthusiastically. How thankful have we been? God has placed us amongst people who have need of salvation. We've mourned their hardness of heart. We've mourned our loss of congregations. We mourned decline. Yet we were planted in the middle of a harvest field ripe to harvest and we've complained how difficult the harvest was!

I believe that we need to cry out to God for the lost. To cry out for the lost in authority. To plead with God for their salvation. And I also believe that it is the foundation principle if we want to reap where we have sown and bring in God's harvest.

*I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; 2 (C) for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence toward God and with proper conduct. 3 (C) This is good and it pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.*

And when serious prayer happens it pleases God and then things happen. In 1992, Pastors in the city of Resistencia in Argentina were burdened to start to intercede for their town. They came together in unity to pray for the city. They prayed for those in authority and took the unprecedented step of collectively meeting the Mayor and praying for him (much to his bemusement). They later had a mission which had an astounding influence on the city. It was reckoned by the end of the mission 15-20% of the city had accepted Christ - a high proportion in a predominately Catholic country.

The other effect at Resistencia was that the Christians prayed that they may lead lives in godliness and holiness. The crime rate fell and positive changes occurred in the corrupt local government. This made a big impact on the attitude of people to the preaching of the gospel when the mission came.

It started not with a mission planning team, or an international evangelist, but with a desire for Pastors and then churches to intercede for all men. It's since been repeated in a number of places world-wide. The Transformations videos are a product of some of this. That said, if you go back to many of the historic revivals, exactly the same pattern emerges time and again.

What was the difference between there then and here now? The difference is that as a church, a local congregation that we plan evangelism to build up our particular expression of the body of Christ and to fill our church building. There, Pastors and churches got together with the aim of keeping the words of 2 Timothy and praying for what they had in common - the city of Resistencia and the Lord's command to spread the gospel and build His Kingdom.

Part of my vision for what I believe the Lord wants to do in Felixstowe is to recognise that it is the kingdom of God that needs to be extended here. Yes, we need to pray as a church that we will reap a harvest, but we also need to realise that the spiritual climate of the town needs to be changed too.

I know that there are already moves in that direction here in Felixstowe and I may have arrived at an opportune time to encourage us to take advantage of it and build on the links that are already in place. In Resistencia, they got together to implement this scripture. To intercede for all men - to pray for their city and to pray for men's salvation - and then do something about it according to how the Holy Spirit was moving.

This is a significant thing. Because there is only one thing that connects God to men *5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time.*

What is here seems to be a challenge - that we are called to make intercession, not just for our church but for our town, region and country to change the spiritual climate to allow the gospel to go forward more effectively. In places where this has been tried, all churches benefit from those who are prepared to pray in unity for the city - for lives of godliness and holiness to reflect Christ and attract men to Him.

Can it happen in here? So often in the past we have been disappointed.

*Did you hear about the atheist who was complaining about dial-a-prayer. He finally got the telephone company to give him equal time. Now they've got dial-a-prayer for atheist. You call a number and*

**nobody answers.**

Not so with Christian prayer! But it is easy to be discouraged in prayer. We've prayed and prayed and nothing has happened. Why not try praying promises? I was looking at a booklet on this subject once and it said this:

***When Moses prayed, God Answered. Why was his prayer so effective? We learn from Moses that when praying, he reminded God of what God had said rather than express his own thoughts and feelings.***

***9 I know how stubborn these people are. 10 Now, don't try to stop me. I am angry with them, and I am going to destroy them. Then I will make you and your descendants into a great nation." 11 But Moses pleaded with the LORD his God and said, "LORD, why should you be so angry with your people, whom you rescued from Egypt with great might and power? 12 Why should the Egyptians be able to say that you led your people out of Egypt, planning to kill them in the mountains and destroy them completely? Stop being angry; change your mind and do not bring this disaster on your people. 13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Remember the solemn promise you made to them to give them as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and to give their descendants all that land you promised would be their possession forever." 14 So the LORD changed his mind and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.***

Take these verses in 2 Timothy and pray into them. God desires men to be saved - so what about Felixstowe? Lord, Your desire is that all in Felixstowe be save. Please save them Lord!

Here's another promise as we go forward in evangelism:

***Isaiah 55:10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it***

God's word never comes back void. It's a promise. Ask God to know why His words are going out for here and pray they they fulfil His purposes – particularly where it involves salvation! Did you know that there are over 8000 promises in scripture. Pray them.

Do we want to see real change in Felixstowe? Then it needs to start in the presence of God. It needs to start with our church – the people of god here - having a real burden for the lost. Not a burden for filling the church building. Not a burden for extending the Church's influence Not a burden to preserve what we have built in 200 years. But a desire to see men and women come to Christ. To see His Kingdom built in our community. We need a realisation that it start with praying for them and for our society – seeing change in ourselves – praying that godliness and holiness will characterise this society and that men will see God at work and come to Him.

***Prayer is not so much the means whereby God's will is bent to man's desires, as it is that whereby man's will is bent to God's desires. The real end of prayer is not so much to get this or that single desire granted, as to put human life into full and joyful conformity with the will of God.. Charles Brent (1862-1929)***

It's not a pipe-dream. It's happening. It's just not happening here. It's time it did.

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