

## Prayer and Evangelism

*1 Tim 2:1 (C) I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- 2 (C) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, 4 (C) who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 (C) 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. 7 (C) And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle--I am telling the truth, I am not lying--and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. 8 (C) I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

We've had a successful few weeks as we have been reaching out into our community. At this point it is good to take stock of what we are doing as it is easy to lose sight of what it is all about.

They call this prayer in 2 Timothy the intercessor's prayer. It's not just for those who are in the ministry of intercession. It's for all of us. Most importantly as we are in a period of evangelism it helps us understand how people come to Christ and what our role is beyond the obvious of taking the gospel to them.

The problem is that we often read verses 1 and 2 in isolation

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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 it is maintaining our comfort zone.

But first of all note that it says all this request, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving be made for 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 with verse 3-6 which most people separate.

*1 Tim 2:1 (C) I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- 2 (C) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 **This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, 4 (C) who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** 5 (C) 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*

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.

➡ 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:

**REQUESTS (Supplications)** a seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty to God or to man

**PRAYERS** prayers addressed to God - public prayers

**INTERCESSIONS** conference or conversation

**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.

We haven't done that sometimes in past years. 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 mourned their hardness of heart. We mourned our loss of congregations. We mourned decline. Yet we were planted in the middle of a harvest field ripe to harvest and we 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 when that happens, with the end being verse 3 - that all men be saved - what happens. 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 has 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 Residencia 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, 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.

What was the difference between there and here. 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. 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.

Part of my vision for what I believe the Lord wants to do in Swaffham and this part of Norfolk is to recognise that it is the kingdom of God that needs to be extended here. Just by ourselves we are not going to cause much of an impact but with the rest of the people of God things could be different.

This isn't ecumenism. The Ecumenical Movement was there to produce Church unity. To find compromise between different church systems, to respect certain things and ignore others whether the Bible said it or not. That isn't what happened 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.

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.*

Writers like Ed Silvano, Luis Palau's brother in law has called this prayer evangelism. He defines it in this way.

*Prayer Evangelism is not a program, but a process that reflects a lifestyle in which the Church of the city is mobilised through prayer to be the spiritual gatekeepers in the heavenly places over the city. It establishes the kingdom of God in the city, and thereby facilitates an atmosphere of godliness where the lost have the opportunity to be saved, and where the unsaved become aware of God's existence and power, and begin to fear Him*

What is here seems to be a challenge - that we are called to make intercession, not 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 Norfolk? So often in the past we have been disappointed. I was looking at a booklet on this subject the other day 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.*

*Exodus 32:9 9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." 11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. 13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" 14 Then the LORD relented 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 Swaffham. 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. Did you know that there are over 8000 promises in scripture. Pray them.

**Do we want to see real change in Swaffham. In Norfolk? Then it needs to start in the presence of God. It needs to start with people having a burden for the lost. Not a burden for church tradition. Not a burden for theological purity. Not a burden to preserve old buildings. But a desire to see men and women come to Christ. We need a realisation that it start with praying for them and for our society - that godliness and holiness will characterise this society and that men will see God at work and come to Him.**

**It's not a pipe-dream. It's happening. It's just not happening here.**

**It's time it did.**

**Please pray for the following**

- that we will find evangelicals of like mind**
- that they will desire to pray**
- that the real church will become visible in Norfolk**
- that we will see a move of the Spirit the like of which has never happened before - to the glory of God!**

**Prayer**



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