

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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We Need To Pray! (Part 5)

I Timothy 2:1-2, 8

Last month we left off considering that we can and should pray for others. Let us think about how we should pray for others in more detail. In Romans 10:1, Paul says, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*” From this example and testimony of Paul, I think that we can say that we should pray for the Salvation of others. I know that there are some that disagree, but I believe this verse is talking about salvation from sin. Some interpret it in a political sense and say that Paul is desiring for the deliverance of Israel from the Roman empire. But I do not believe that Paul was interested in the political situation. In Romans 13, Paul would write about being in subjection to “*the higher powers.*” Based upon the rest of the book of Romans, Paul is desiring the spiritual salvation of his fellow Jews. May that be our desire as well.

I remember listening to a comment that a friend made about a preacher from many years ago. My friend had started listening to some tapes of this old preacher. During one message, this old preacher stated that he would give some money, I believe \$100, if anyone could prove from the Bible that Christians should pray for the conversion of sinners. I was amazed that anyone would state such a thing, but my mind immediately went to Romans 10:1. I asked my friend, “I wonder if anyone ever asked the preacher about Romans 10:1?” Apparently, no one had or he explained it away, because he said that he never had to give the money away. I do not know what he would have said about Romans 10:1, but if he said it did not apply to sinners, he was wrong.

The immediate context, yea, the entire book of Romans, is replete

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with the salvation message. As Paul was guided by the Holy Ghost to pen the words of Romans, his own heart came flowing through the pen and the Holy Ghost allowed Paul to state his greatest desire and prayer—to see Israel saved. Paul would say elsewhere that he was the apostle to the Gentiles, and he faced much opposition from his own people, the Jews, but he never lost the desire to see them saved. O what a lesson we can learn! We may be opposed, we may be attacked (but I remind you, never as severe Paul was), and we may feel that we are accomplishing little, but may we never lose the desire of wanting others to be saved.

The word desire in Romans 10:1 carries the idea of “good will or good pleasure.” It means desire because “a desire is usually directed toward something that causes satisfaction or favor.” Paul is stating that his greatest satisfaction would be for other Jews to be saved. If others were to examine our prayer life, I wonder what they would find to be our greatest satisfaction. Do we spend time praying for the conversion of sinners, or do we spend time praying for our own selfish desires? By the way, what is our greatest desire? What is our greatest satisfaction? It must not be the attainment of earthly things. May our desire, our satisfaction, be what Paul’s was—the salvation of sinners.

The word prayer in Romans 10:1 is the same word found in I Timothy 2:1. There it is translated supplications. That is why I spent some time during the introduction of this message talking about the words for prayer. Different words are used in I Timothy 2:1 to supply a distinction in the English language. But we do not have to focus on whether we are interceding, praying, or supplicating. All of that is involved in true, Biblical prayer. As we tried to express clearly in earlier thoughts, we must pray for ourselves—intercede. But we must also pray for others—supplicating. Do not focus on the words. Focus on the action—pray. Based upon Romans 10:1—pray for the salvation of souls.

Most of my life, I have heard people say, “We are not seeing

people saved like we used to.” Now I am hearing, “We are not seeing people saved like they used to,” because most of us have not seen many people saved. To be honest, I am not concerned with comparing ourselves with past generations. What I am concerned with is this—Are we doing what we should be doing to reach the lost? Are we praying for the convicting power of the Holy Ghost to be placed upon sinners? Do we really care if sinners are converted? If we wrote down our heart’s desire and our prayer for everyone to see, could we honestly say that we desire for sinners to be saved? Everyone of us wants to blame everyone else for the condition of our churches and society, but few really care about doing anything about it. We do not spend time in prayer. We do not pray for the conversion of sinners. We say that we do. But our prayers consist more of physical desires than spiritual desires. May we repent of our selfishness, and desire and pray like Paul—for sinners to be saved.

As we continue the thought of true spiritual desires in prayer, we can see that we should pray for others in relation to Service. Ephesians 6:18 says, “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*” Paul will continue in verses 19-20 and ask to be included in this prayer as he preaches the Gospel. But I want to focus on verse 18 right now. This verse comes at the conclusion of eight verses describing the armor of the believer. Paul tells us about each piece and what each is used for. But all of them are useless without prayer. In fact, if one is not praying, I doubt they will even put the armor on. That one thought tells me why so many believers are defeated. They are wearing no armor because they are not praying. This passage on the warfare of the believer is part of the passage on being filled with the Spirit. It all goes together—a Spirit-filled believer is a praying believer who has on the armor of God. Because he is Spirit-filled and praying and wearing the armor, he can fight off the attacks of Satan. Without being filled with the Spirit, without praying, and without wearing the armor, he will be defeated. There is no excuse for being a defeated believer. We are given everything—the Holy Ghost, prayer, the armor. If we

are defeated, it is not God’s fault. It is ours.

But let us focus especially on Ephesians 6:18. Paul uses four words for prayer in this one verse. That is how essential prayer is to the life of the believer. It is not something we do when we have time. Our physical life should revolve around our prayer life. It is after we pray that we should attempt anything. Prayer for the believer should be as essential as food. We do not neglect our meals. Neither should we neglect prayer.

The words praying and prayer come from the root word that is most often translated prayer in the New Testament. Both supplications come from the same word. It is translated prayer several times. As I mentioned in the introduction, it is only translated supplication when another word for prayer is found in the same verse, as it is here. Again, the emphasis is not on the words. It is on the action. We must pray!

But prayer is not the empty saying of words. It must be continual—always, and it must be Spiritual—in the Spirit. But notice who the emphasis is on as we finish the verse—for all saints. But what are we to focus on concerning our fellow believers? From the context of Ephesians, we must be concerned about our fellow believers and their service to Christ. As I have mentioned, this command for prayer is in the passage on being filled with the Spirit and immediately follows the verses about the warfare of the believer. So, we must be concerned that our fellow believers are filled with the Spirit and armed to fight with the devil. If we are following the leadership of the Spirit, as the verse says, we will be concerned with how our fellow believers are serving Christ.

I mentioned this thought earlier in talking about praying for sinners to be saved, but the same is true for believers. We often complain about believers being defeated. Preachers leave the ministry. Church members leave church. We want to complain about them, but have we done our duty in praying for them. Did we pray

for them to be filled with the Spirit and to put on the armor of God?
Did we pray for them in their service to Christ?

I will mention this later when we focus on whom we should pray for, but I will say it now and repeat it later. I have heard many complain about missionaries leaving the field and even pastors leaving the ministry. They are not totally blameless, but do you realize that it is your obligation to pray for missionaries? It is not enough to just give them an offering. It is the church's obligation to pray for them. That is what Ephesians 6:18 is saying—*“Praying...for all saints.”* Maybe if we spent more time praying instead of complaining, missionaries could get more accomplished.

We must pray for others in their service to Christ. It is so necessary that in one verse, Ephesians 6:18, Paul mentioned prayer four times. Do we pray for others in their service to Christ? Do we want others to pray for us as we labor for Christ? We will often mention physical needs because, to be honest, that is what is most important. But that was not the most important thing to Paul. He wanted the Ephesian believers to be focused on spiritual things. He wanted them to pray for each other as they served Christ. May we do the same. Pray for one another in our service to Christ.