



Message Transcript

Prioritizing Prayer for the Lost

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Lord, we give you all the glory and honor for who you are. And Lord, we ask today that as your word is proclaimed, Lord, that you would do a work in our heart, that you would make your word clear and understandable through your spirit and that you would show us what we need to hear to better reflect your glory here on the earth. And Lord, for all you're going to do, we give you glory honor and praise. And now for all who are gathered, who desired to hear the word of the Lord, who will by faith, believe what God shows you and will put into practice the very things He says, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word Amen? Amen.

I had an exciting week this week because I had an opportunity to meet with a guy that disciplined me in college that I hadn't seen since I was in college. It's been about 25 or 30 years since we've spent time together. And he happened to be here at the church and was hearing about his life and what he was doing and I was telling him catching him up over the last 25, 30 years of what's happened with me. And at the time when I was in college, I went from having one foot in the world and one foot with Jesus to transitioning to really going all in with Jesus and he played a pretty significant role in that. So we talked a lot about different stories.

And I reminded him of the time that he invited me to come share the gospel with a guy on campus that was in a different fraternity. And I remember the feeling I had, even all those years ago where I'm saying yes, but I don't want to go because even at that time, it felt to me like it's a little presumptive just to go tell somebody that you're a Christian, that they're not in it. Can we really do this? And is this really the right thing? And by the way, we're probably going to get crushed by this guy and this is going to be

a huge embarrassment and all this stuff.

But I went with him and he sat down and he shared the gospel with this guy. And I just sat next to him and nodded my head. I didn't offer any insights or anything to it. And he just walked him through what was called The Four Spiritual Laws, which basically say God loves you, has a plan for your life." Number two, that you're a sinner and in need of Christ. Number three, Jesus died for you and rose from the dead. Number four, that you must trust Him. And he walked them through that.

And as he was walking him through that, we got to the end and the guy thanked us for our time and he asked if he wanted to trust Christ. He said, "No." And we got done and we left the fraternity and we're standing outside and I was watching him do that. I'm like, "I can do that." I'm like, "Do you have any more of those little booklets?" He said, "Yeah, I got a couple." So I took a couple and I called my friend who I knew was asking me spiritual questions and I set up a time to have lunch with him at the Illinois Student Union. So we went there and I walked them through the same thing that Andy had just walked the other guy through. And we got to the end and I said, "Do you want to trust Christ?" And he's like, "Yeah, what do I do? Mike, I don't know."

So we turn the page and then thank goodness there was a prayer there. And I'm like, "I think we prayed this prayer." And I'm like, "Why don't you read that?" So he prayed that. And then I prayed for him and he was a Christian and I started to watch him grow and I'm like, "That's easy. I could even do that." And so God birthed in my heart, just a fervency for the gospel because I started watching people's lives change.

And before my senior year, I was going to room with a friend of mine. We had been in the same fraternity, but we're living in an apartment off campus and I was really starting to walk with the Lord and rumor had it during the summer that he was not only doing drugs, but was going to start selling them and wanting to use our apartment as a potential place to sell drugs out of. And I knew that growing in the Lord that wasn't going to be helpful to me. And so I remember talking to Andy and I'm like, "What do I do?" He's like, "We should pray for him." I'm like, "Okay, that sounds like a good idea." And so he would come down to my apartment and we would pray every morning for a half an hour.

And just so you know, at the time, praying for three to five minutes for me seemed like a long time to pray. But we'd pray for a half an hour. We'd pray for everything that God was doing in his life and who he was meeting and pray protection over him and pray that somebody would lead him to Christ and that he had the opportunity to know Jesus. Well, sure enough, that fall, he came back and he started watching me at Bible studies in our apartment and started asking me one night, "So what do you believe?" So I'm like, "I know how to do this now." I'm like, "Hey, I got this little book. You want me to read it to you?" And he's like, "Dude, I know how to read myself." And so he took it from me. And he went back into his bedroom and a few days pass and nothing really happened.

And so finally, I asked him, I'm like, "Hey, did you ever read that booklet that I gave you? He said, "Yeah, sure did [inaudible 00:03:59]." He goes, "That was what I've been looking for my whole life." He goes, "I prayed that prayer in the back of the

book and trusted Jesus." And I said, "You're just telling me this now?" And so we hugged and God was doing great things. And God began to just to birth this idea in my heart that I can pray for people. And then I had the ability to share the gospel with people and people's lives can change.

And even when I got into ministry and didn't know what the heck I was doing, I just started praying because I knew that God would get ahold of people and that He would lead them to Himself if I was willing to share with them. Because I believe that God wants all of us to have that experience. And nothing quite grows your faith like being able to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Think about this. If today I told you I'm not preaching today, but there are several charter buses out there and we're going to have you all board them and we're going to take you to several undisclosed places in the city, far away from here. And once you shared the gospel with three different people, we will let you back on the bus and bring you back to brave. Otherwise, you're on your own. If that were the case, your prayer life would increase significantly and your desire to understand the gospel and how to share it would increase significantly.

Like if God really had that requirement in me, I might want to learn how to pray and how to do that. Well, let me tell you, you are Jesus Christ witnesses, and He wants you to know what the gospel is. He wants you to pray for other people and He wants that to be foundational in your life. If you ever want to know why that's so important, we're going to talk about the premise of prayer for the loss today, the prioritization of prayer for the loss. And if you've ever want to know how to do that or

how to grow in that, then I believe God has a word for you.

Would open up your Bible to 1 Timothy 2. We're going to look at verses one through eight. I'll read them. And then we'll ask an answer for questions regarding the priority of praying for the lost. Listen to the word. He says this. "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and Thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life and all godliness and dignity." This is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, for there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. For this, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I am telling the truth. I am not lying as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Therefore, I want men in every place to pray lifting up holy hands without wrath or dissension.

And here in those eight verses, we're really going to see the priority of prayer for the loss. Really it's evangelistic praying. And how do we do that? And I know these are two different disciplines in the church that often get lost. Some people feel like, well, I don't know that I have the gift of evangelism. So maybe I'm off the hook or I don't really enjoy praying, but I'm telling you this is primary and a priority for what every church needs to be. What you see in these eight verses if you're checking out a church or you moved to a new city and you're walking into a church or you're just doing a test to see, is this church really doing what God says?

We're going to take a look at four things this morning as we ask and answer four

questions that every church should be and every church should have. And the first question we're going to ask is, what's our priority? There's so many things we can be doing in a church from children's ministry to men's ministry, to women's ministry, to small groups, to all these different things that we can do. What's our priority? And the answer to that is this, it's the prayers of God's people for all people. That's the prayer.

Now, before I get started this morning, I should have said this earlier. There's a lot of different ways that we can understand the Bible. And sometimes the biblical writers use a structure and the structure I see in this text, it's called the Gaius, and which just means that really verses one and eight, versus two and seven, verses three and six and verses four and five really come together. And so the way that I'm going to teach this morning is a little different than walking through all eight verses right in order, which we could do and it's fine. I'm putting verses one and eight together. So those are going to be together. Then two and seven and three and six, then four and five and really four and five is the highlight of what all this passage is about, which is the gospel book ended by prayer. And that's where we're going here.

So just so you know, so the greatest priority in the church is the prayers of God's people for all people. Notice what Paul says. First of all, then. He's telling Timothy as we get started and as you're helping lead in this church, first of all, like priority number one, here's what it is. I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and Thanksgivings, be made on behalf of how many men?

All.

All. That means we're called to pray for everybody. Now, let me just be clear on this. I don't know what percentage of the population is saved. I don't know. The Lord knows those who are His. Here's what I do know from the Sermon on the Mount, there are far more people on the wide road on their way to hell than there are on the narrow road on their way to heaven.

So whatever percentage you want to say, whether you say 40% are Christian, or whether you say more like 10% are Christian, which is probably where I am, there's more people on their way to hell according to Jesus than there are on their way to heaven, which means we're not just called to pray for the saints, which is the Bible makes clear, we're called to pray for one another. Did you know that? We're called to pray for each other in our singleness and our marriages with our kids, with our jobs, with our homes, with our neighbors. We're called to pray for one another, but we're also called to pray for all men. That means we're called to pray for all people. That means all people everywhere.

Now, this should not come as a surprise to us because if you study the life of Jesus, what was He known for? He was known for prayer. Mark 1:35 says very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went to solitary places where there He prayed. Sometimes the disciples were looking for Him. We couldn't find you. He was praying. Even the first picture we get of Jesus after His birth narratives in the gospels is when His family was in Jerusalem and they were traveling back to Galilee. And on the way they realized Jesus wasn't with them. So Mary and Joseph had to turn around, go back to Jerusalem. And where did they find Jesus? They found Him in the

temple. And what did He say? "Did you not know that I needed to be in my Father's house?"

Jesus prayed His whole ministry. After he fed the 5,000, He went up on a mountain side. He prayed before He walked to them on water. When He selected His Apostles out of all the disciples He had and He selected 12, He stayed up all night long and prayer. You ever wonder why? Jesus is God. He had a hotline. How long does it take to download 12 names? 30 seconds. And then you got the names of all the disciples and then stayed up all night saying, "Oh my goodness, if these are the 12, I better start praying for them."

Even in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was praying to His Father, not just because He was going to endure physical torture and torment, but because all the sin of the world was going to be placed on Him and he'd be separated in His relationship with His Father. For the first time in eternity, He was praying to His Father, let this con=me pass if there's any other way, but not my will, but your will be done Dad. And even as He's on the cross, what was He doing? He was praying to His dad saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

If you study the life of Jesus, you know He had a heart to pray with His Father. So much so that out of all the things we have recorded in scripture, the only thing we have recorded of His disciples that they really want to know how to do was Lord teach us to pray. Prayer should be primary in every single church. A prayerless church is a church that is declaring their independence of Jesus Christ, wanting to get work done.

The most important meeting we have is our first Tuesday prayer meeting. You can say BRAVE Church's my home. You can come here. We're so glad you're here. If you're not here on first Tuesday, you really don't understand what we're about. We are a church that prays, our staff praise. When we'd meet for elders, we pray. We are a praying church. I would say all churches to some extent pray, but not all give intentionality to prayer. Prayer is our dependence upon the Lord for Him to get done what He wants to get done.

So first of all, He's talking about entreaties. He's talking about prayers petitions. Really what entreaties are when we're taking a look at the word entreaties, those are pleas or requests like God help with this. Prayer's a general word for prayer. Petitions are inner sessions. It's an all different kinds of prayer and Thanksgiving. Meaning we're thanking God for the people that we're praying for.

Now, why is this so important? Because what happens oftentimes, especially in Bible teaching churches that are strong on truth, the more you understand God's moral fences and what He wants, we begin to think of the world as us versus them. But what we have to realize is God wants us to pray for everybody. We're called to pray for the world. The people God brings in your life that annoy you, the people that aren't living for Christ that annoy you, God put them in your life so that you would pray for them.

When we talk about politicians here in a minute, when we talk about anybody else that's doing things. Let me just tell you something, non-Christians are supposed to live like non-Christians. Non-Christians don't have the same moral code that you have.

They can't act like you act. They can't do what you do. It's impossible to live the Christian life without Christ. If you don't have the Holy Spirit in your life, you can't do it. You can't tell a non-Christian don't swear. It's impossible for them. If they'd like to swear, they can't just stop. They don't have the power to stop. Does that make sense?

So here's what God tells us. He tells us pray for everybody on behalf of all men. Jump down to verse eight. As the bookends this passage, therefore I want them men in every place to pray. Okay. Let's just get real for a minute. What should church be known for? Praying men, men that pray, men that seek the face of God. How well are we doing as a culture? I don't know many places where men pray. I've been in ministry for four years. I was 28 years old before a group of men ever gathered around me, laid hands on me and prayed and I wept. I'd never experienced that. I grew up in church my whole life. That's an indictment.

Men should be leading the charge of praying for the world. That's our job, man. Did you know that means? That means praying for the church. That means praying for our spouses. That means praying for our families. That means praying for everybody. How are we to do it? Notice what it says here. Therefore, I want men in every place to pray. How? Lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension. It means men were called to pray without having animosity towards one another. We're to pray and not be in fights with one another. We're to pray because we want what Jesus wants in the church and in our families and in our communities. And how are we to pray? Lifting up holy hands.

Now, some may say, "Well, that's metaphoric. And that means we need to be

doing the work that God wants us to do and living holy," and that's totally true, but in the Old Testament, they pray about lifting up holy hands. Now, just as an example, if you are physically able this morning and you're a male, could you raise both hands above your head like this? Okay? I know some of you played sports. You might have a rotator cuff and I have to do one of these. I get it right.

Now, for some people, they come to church and here's what a lot of guys saying. Guys, I get it. It's not the hand raising type. I'm just not the hand-raising type. Now, let me tell you something. If a police officer pulls you over and you have broken the law and he said, "Hands up," you wouldn't respond. Well, I'm not saying that's not the hand raising type. I promise you. And some of you that aren't the hand type, I've seen you at concerts and sporting events and you are the hand raising type. It's just that insurance. Here's what happens. I know the church I grew up in. And if I would have done this in our church, every I and the whole church would have looked because I'd have been the only person raising my hands, and I would have felt like it was showy and I was drawing attention to myself.

You know what it means to raise holy hands? It's an act of surrender. He's Lord. I don't care about anything else, but you, just your will be done. And you've called me as a man to lead in the church and I just want to pray for the church. And I want to pray for the people in the church. I want your will to be done. And Lord, I give up. I don't care what anybody thinks about me. I only care about you. That's what it means.

And this is why it's primary in the church. Then not only men, but women and

boys and girls. What we're praying. If there's anything going on in the church, people would say, "I know that church prays. They're serious about prayer. They're serious about seeing the work of God." And oh, by the way, if you study revival in any increment and you want to know anything about revival, it always starts in prayer. You can't jump... Oftentimes we talk about Acts 2` and how fired up we are. They'll get the Holy Spirit came and tongues of fire rested on their heads and look at how awesome it was. People were getting saved by the thousands. Well, read, Acts 1. What were they doing? They were in the upper room for days on end doing what?

Praying.

Praying. Study any revival in the history of the church and you have a group of people desperate for God to move who are praying. Yeah, we love to read about the fruit of it, but the root of it. And the reason of it is that God's people pray. And I want to tell you something, when you pray, God moves. Well, He's sovereign. I don't think he's going to change His mind. He moves. Things change when you pray. Make no mistake about it. And that's why the prayers of God's people need to be primary. Prayers of God's people need to be primary.

I was thinking about this scripture. It just grabbed me this week when I was preparing. It's in mark chapter, I'm sorry, Matthew 21. It's also in the Gospel of Mark, but Matthew 21:12. When I was thinking about Jesus, there's one scene in the Bible that just doesn't seem to fit all the other caricatures we have of Jesus. Precious moments hasn't grabbed this one yet. Nobody seems to want to talk about this one, but this is one where Jesus in the temple, the most holy place, and He's so upset and

angry that He starts overturning the money changers, throwing tables around. In John's gospel says He made a cord of three strands and is whipping things around, driving people out of the temple and telling them to get out.

And when they're asking Him why so upset, He goes, "Get out of here. My father's house is to be called a house of prayer, but you've made it a den of robbers." What was He saying? He was saying in the temple what was going on instead of people having to grow their sacrifice, their little land that they had to bring and cart it into Jerusalem, offer it is. He say let's make it easier for the people. Will just grow the animals them here, and then they can just come bring us money and buy it, that way they don't have to take care and make it a real sacrifice for God. And oh, more than that, we can charge them a little extra. In that way we can profit on it.

So what was going on in the temple at the time was when religious people were profiting in the name of God to make worship and sacrifice easy for His people rather than for people who were lost to come seek the face of His dad. And it made Him so angry, He drove people out. Why? Because what's the house of God supposed to be? It's supposed to be a place for anybody, anywhere, at any time that wants to come and seek the face of God and be able to have a relationship with Him. Amen. That's what we're talking about. That's why it's a priority. It's not an additional thing. It's not the, well, maybe someday we'll look at this.

James 5:16. James says that the prayer of a righteous man can availeth much. Ephesians 6:18, at the end of putting on all the armor of God, tells him to pray in the

spirit for everything. And even in Acts 6:4, when the church started going, and we read about the church and like, "Man, I wish could have been back part of that church. It was awesome. There's no fights or anything." Yet until you get to Acts 6. And then we got a food distribution problem. And we got Greeks and we got Hebrew widows fighting with each other. And so you got all these women upset because they're not getting the right amount of foods. We've got a physical problem. We've got a racial problem. We've got all these problems in the church and the apostles say this, "That's a problem."

So appoint seven men filled with the spirit because we got to take care of that problem. But as for us, we're going to devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. What were they saying? It's a big deal. It's a problem. I get it. But there's no problem bigger than our prayers and proclaiming the word of God. Nothing's more important than that in the church. Make no mistake about it. And so oftentimes in church we use prayer as like an addendum. So we structure and strategize the next five to 10 years. We tell God what we're doing, where we're going. We do it individually in our families where we're going to live, what job we're going to have. And then we pray as if God just blessed my desires. That is not prayer.

Prayer is us being on our knees or our face or walking with our hands above or walking around telling God, "My life is your life. Our church is your church. You show us what you want. We'll realign our lives and our desires and our expectations with what you want and we'll do it your way." When a church does that, God moves in power. And I want to be part of a church where God moves in power. And I think He

is. But the prayers of God's people for all people. All people. Prayers of God's people for all people. And men, we're called to lead that charge.

Tuesday night, I don't know what you have going on, but it's not more important than what we have going on here. I promise you. Pray about it. Ask the Lord, "Hey Lord, I can leave my family to church and pray and seek your face or I can do this. What do you think is more important?" And just follow His lead. There may be a time you have something else more important, but I can't think of anything more important in our lives than seeking the face of the Lord. I just can't. And that's what He's saying here. Paul is telling his protegee, Timothy, make sure that prayer is the priority.

Second is this, who and what should we be praying for? Who should we be praying for? And what should we be praying for? And here's the answer. The passion for lost people and God appointed leaders who will answer that call. We want to pray for a passion for lost people and God appointed leaders who answered the call. Notice what He says, who are we to pray for? Verse two, for kings and all who are in authority. Stop. We don't have any kings in our culture, but you're not off the hook. Think about all those who are in authority. We have a president, a vice-president, a speaker of the house, senators, Congressmen, Congresswoman, governor, mayors, elected officials. What are we called to do? Pray for them.

Now, think about this. This is rhetorical. I won't have you raise your hand because probably nobody raised their hand anyway. Who spent more time praying for politicians than they didn't complaining about them this week? See, that's the question. It's okay to have truth. It's okay to stand on truth. It's okay to not waiver on truth. It's okay to

say we're not going to participate that. But for every time we say that we should be praying 10 times as much for that person and what should we be praying for? For them to come to Christ.

Yeah, I see things in our political system I don't like. In a few weeks, we're going to sit down and talk about the things going on in our culture that we need to engage as Christians. But first and foremost, prayers. You tell me what would happen if two thirds of our Senate, Congress, president, vice-president, governor, elected officials, two-thirds of all those people came to Christ were born again and said, "We're living for Jesus and we want everything about Jesus in our culture." Would that change anything?

Yeah.

See, we're fighting the wrong battle. We're fighting the wrong battle. The battle is not our battle. The battle is us firm on the truth, but praying our socks off that God would do a work in people that aren't living for Jesus. Amen. We're called to pray for them. Do you know the name of our governor? It's Governor Polis? Do you pray for him every day? Do you pray for your mayor? Do you even know his name or her name? Do you pray for the elected officials? Do you even know who's elected?

For most of us as Christians, we stand to the side and we don't even think about it because we assume, oh, it'll all work out. God's sovereign. It's not all working out because God's people aren't praying for the people that we need to be praying for. Amen. We should have a passion for lost people and here's what you can do. So I

didn't want to pray for them.

Let me tell you something about hell and heaven. There's a weight, they're eternal. This week for the thousands of people that died apart from Christ and went to hell, that's eternal. They're never going to experience God's mercy ever again. There's no person in this world you would wish that upon. And just in case you do, then here's how you need to pray for those people that you seemingly think you don't like. Here's I need to pray. Lord, I know that you died for, mention that person by name. Give me the same love for that person that you have and help me pray prayers for them the way you would want me to pray because you'll move from praying mean prayers like just let them die to Lord, save them and show mercy to them because they don't know you. That's what God's called us to do.

And I'm not just talking about politicians. Notice what it says. It says for kings and all who were in authority so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. That means we live peaceful, quiet lives in reverence and seriousness before the Lord. So what we're known for is truth. Sure, we're known for truth, but what we're known for is the way that we pray for people that aren't like us. What we're known for is our love for people that are not like us. What we're known for is the fact we're trying to engage people and care for them that aren't like us because there's a power in that.

He said, "Well, how was that done?" Study the life of Jesus. He never ever wavered on the truth one time. He was pejoratively called the friend of sinners. And my question is, who else was He going to hang out with? He didn't have any other choice.

Everybody was a sinner. And yet Jesus never wavered in the truth. Never wavered in the truth, but always loved those who were around Him, but didn't identify with their sin.

Religious people always want to look good on the outside. Did you know that that's true about religious people? That's why religious people will stand here and cheer when different people out there get saved like prostitutes and homosexuals and people that are on drugs. Oh, praise the Lord. They got saved, but you don't want to bring them in here and sit by them. You don't want to identify with them. See, that's not God's heart. God's heart would be that anybody, anywhere, anytime can come into our church. They can sit right down next to me, whether they smell really bad, whether they stink no matter what their sin is and they are totally welcome here to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen. That's what we're talking about.

And we develop that passion. That was Jesus' passion. Luke 19:10 said he came to seek and save the lost. And in Luke 10:2, He says the harvest is plentiful. You know what that means? In your generation, in Denver, Colorado? There's tons of unsaved people that you can pray for. We'll never run out. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseege the Lord and ask Him to send out workers into his harvest field. Not only should we as individuals be developing a heart for the loss and a passion for that. We should be praying that God raises up people that he sends out to them.

Now some of you were saying, "Good. Finally, we got a break here. I'll pray that God sends other people out to do that." That sounds really good. Hey no, no, no, no,

no. Acts 1 says you're His witness. And that God puts you in a sphere of influence with people that nobody else can ever get to so that you can live and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people that otherwise may never hear it. You're His witnesses. Yet we want to be a part of a church where God's raising up other pastors or evangelists or missionaries or apostles to go out or prophets. That's great.

Well, let's send them all out. But at the end of the day in your sphere of influence, will you pray that God develops a passion for the people that are lost in your lives so that he would do a work? Because here's what we begin to think. We read stories in the Bible of incredible stories of God bringing people to faith in Christ. But when we think about our own family, some of you are thinking about eight weeks from now when you're at Thanksgiving, that one female, that one male, that one family and we're like, "There's no way there. I don't even want to talk to them. I don't even believe I have to sit around the same Thanksgiving table and eat Turkey with them." I'm telling you God can save them and save them to the full.

That's what our God does. But it requires Christians being on their face and on their knees praying for God to move. And God give me opportunities and give me the words to share and show me how to do this because I'm not sure I know how to do this, but Lord, I'm open to doing that because I was once lost too and you brought somebody into my life that showed me the truth. And I want to be that conduit of grace for somebody else as well.

Think about the people that annoy you. Maybe it's a neighbor. Maybe it's just a friendship that's gone south. Maybe it's an employee or a coworker. It maybe a person

that cuts you off on I25 on the way here today. Maybe you said the first words out of your mouth being like, "Lord, get them." Maybe the first words out of your mouth is, "I don't know who that was, but Lord, I'm praying for them. And if they are a Christian, teach them to drive like one." Those kinds of things.

Because we're so quick to judge others and we forget from where God has brought us. Yes, we want to be a culture that aligns in the truth, but never forget. Here's the truth. The truth is, you are dead in your transgressions and sins and Jesus Christ is the one that made you alive. And it's only your identity in Him that matters. Never, ever forget that. Because sometimes in church circles, we begin to think that we're better than non-Christians. The only thing is different about us is that God has rescued us and saved us. He has His Holy Spirit in us. So of course, we're going to live different and holy. They don't have that. So by all means, pray that they can hear that and share the gospel with them so they can have the Holy Spirit in them too.

I believe in my whole heart when the Holy Spirit comes into a person, it makes them radically different. Think about the prayers in the Bible. For me, perhaps the most powerful evangelistic prayer ever prayed in the Bible was by Jesus when He was on the cross. What did He pray right before He died? Father, forgive them. Who's them? Every center that ever lived. Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. In other words, don't hold this against them because I want to be in relationship with them. We're here because of that prayer.

Or think about Stephen as he was getting stoned, what was his prayer? Lord do

not hold this sin against them. You know who would've heard that prayer? A young man by the name of Saul of Tarsus who was there holding the coats of the older men while they were pulling him. You think that meant something to him? Do you think the prayer of Stephen was effective in Paul's conversion and his discipleship subsequent to that? You bet it was. See, what were these men willing to do? They were willing to pray for the lost all the way to their death. Would you be willing to do that? No, no, no. I'm going to pray for the lost as long as they change their mind and America looks different, then I'll pray for them. Are you going to pray for them because you want them to know Jesus and you're willing to go to any length so they can know Jesus?

Because you get a group of people together said we love nothing, but God and hate nothing but sin and we love the lost and we'll do whatever God ask us. This thing would be done in a hurry. See, we're called to love the lost. We're called to pray for the lost. We're called to engage with the lost. We're called to hold fast on truth. No doubt about it. That's why when Jesus was brought that woman, that was the prostitute that was weeping on His feet and poured an alabaster jar perfume and what did religious people say? "If He knew who that woman was, He would never hang out with a woman like that." Did Jesus know who that woman was? He created that woman. Did he know what her sin was? He knows all things. What was Jesus saying? "Not only do I know her, I created her and I love her and she's showing me a great sign here of extravagant love. And I'm forgiving her sins because those who have been forgiven much love much."

See, when we get too big for our britches or we get religious and we think that

we're special spiritually because we walked with the Lord for a certain amount of time, we can't have a heart for the lost like God wants us to have. God wants us to develop a passion for the lost. What you should see in any church that's walking with God is an incredible passion for the loss and people that are being raised up to serve Him. Notice verse seven, Paul says, "For this, I was appointed." Well, for what? For praying and sharing the gospel. For this, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. "Are you sure Paul?" "Yeah, I'm telling the truth. I am not lying. As a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." Who are the Gentiles? The pagans.

Paul says, "My whole ministry is the people that don't know Jesus. That's why I don't care where God takes me." If it's in prison, then God's got somebody in prison I need to share with. If it's through the kings of the day, then God wants me to share with the king. If it's to my friends, then I'm sharing with my friends because here's what I know. People are either saved and they need to be edified and grown in Jesus or they're lost and they need to hear the gospel so they can be saved. That's it. That's my whole mission. That's the only reason I'm here.

Let me tell you this. It's the only reason you're here too. The only time you can share the gospel is in time and history because in heaven, there are no lost people. You're not going to pray for the lost in heaven. You're not going to share the gospel with the lost in heaven. It's a ministry we get to do now. And trust me, I get it. I get it. There's this fear that creeps up and here's why it creeps up. Because you're afraid of outcome. What if I share it wrong? What if I share it and they get mad at me? What if they start accusing me like who are you to share with me? We've known you for 20

years and you're not all that great. I know all the same fears. I'm just saying God's word never ever returns void. And God's put you in a sphere of influence so you can live the gospel and share the gospel with people that you never ever thought could hear the gospel.

If we brought everybody up here one by one today and say, Hey, where do you work? And what sphere of influence do you have? You'd be amazed at the scope that we cover in just this church alone. God's doing a great work through you. You don't have to reach the whole world, just maybe some of those right near you that they can see a living example and a testimony as to what it should look like. So in a church, what you should see, it's a place that's yeah, white, hot and worship and people love Jesus, but it should translate into many salvations.

Paul gave us his mission statement in Romans 15:20-21. It's really his apostolic mission. He says, "It's always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known so I would not be building on someone else's foundation." What was Paul saying? You can take as many people as you want from our church and take them to your church. And we're so excited that you get big because that's not even my mission. My mission is all the lost people out there that don't even have a church. I want to reach them with the gospel. I want to see them growing up in the faith and I believe God can save anybody. And God's called me to do that. May we be a church that's known for the truth, but may we also be a church that's known for our faith and our love for lost people, that when lost people come here, they know this I'm totally welcomed and I'm totally loved there, even though they believe different things than I

do. And we can do both. Jesus did both. The church is supposed to do both. Amen.

Amen.

So what makes prioritizing this prayer for the law so essential? Like why should this be foundational in church? Here's why. Because the payment made by Jesus Christ was made in order to redeem all people. Because the payment was made by Jesus Christ in order to redeem all people. Notice verse three, this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, why? Praying for the lost and winning the loss is good and acceptable. Now, I don't know about you, but when I read this, I think about when I was in kindergarten. Remember grades in kindergarten, you got like an O for outstanding and S for satisfactory or an N for needs improvement or something like that? When I read this, this is good and acceptable. It's like an S. God's cool with it if you want to pray and lead people to Christ, it's okay. That's not what it means. Good and acceptable here means beautiful and pleasing.

This warms God's heart when you pray for the lost and share the gospel with the lost. This is God's heart for all believers. Why? Ezekiel 18:23 says that God takes no delight in the death of the wicked. The most heinous person who has ever lived that has died when they died apart from Christ, there was no exalting or cheering in heaven. I believe there was weeping in heaven. There is nobody that God created that He created for hell. Matthew 25:46 says that hell was created for the devil and his angels. The gospel is for all people.

The truth is that Jesus died for all people. He wants all people to be saved,

especially those people that you think in your heart, there's no way they're getting saved. If you heard the things that they said about Jesus, if you've seen the way that they live, there's no way they're getting saved. That's what Paul would've said. It's what I would've said. But I've seen God save too many different kinds of people. And it fires me up every time He does.

Drop down to verse six. Why is it good and accepted? Why is this please God? Because it was He who gave Himself as a ransom for all. What's a ransom? It's a payment for a debt you couldn't pay. Now, sometimes we hear that and we think about like credit card debt. Maybe some of you have a couple \$1,000 of credit card debt, or maybe a little more and paying for the debt means somebody gave you their... They paid for it for you so you don't need to worry about it, but what if you spend some more?

See, what it means to be paid for and full. When Jesus said to tell a stye or paid in full, it's a done deal, it means this. Picture your debt more like, I don't know, \$50 billion to infinity is what you owe. And Jesus Christ's death on the cross said not only do I pay for all that, but if you ever need me to pay for any other sins, not only will I give you my money, I'll give you my checkbook and you can write the check yourself. I paid for it all. That's the gospel. That means you don't live in shame or guilt or all these other feelings. You've been totally redeemed and purchased by Christ. Now, notice this because don't miss this, who gave himself. What's Jesus talking about? He says, "I'm the one that paid it. Let people know I paid for it." He gave himself as a ransom for, what does it say in your Bible please in verse six? He gave Himself as a ransom for

how many?

All.

Say it really loud.

All.

Who did Jesus die for all?

All.

Listen, I'm just telling you on the authority of God's word, I'm being a Biblicist here, not a theologian. I'm telling you He died for everybody. Just because somebody hasn't come to Christ by turning from their sin and placing all their faith in Christ doesn't mean Jesus didn't die for them. He died for everybody according to His word. He paid the penalty for all sin. And the tragedy of the gospel is that if somebody sins been paid for, but they don't receive payment for it.

Like some of you have won things before where you get a free tank of gasoline for a year or a supply of Coca-Cola for a year. But even when you do that, they'll ask you to do this. You got to redeem it. You got to say your name. You got to say who you are. You got to give me credentials that you actually want this. Jesus Christ died for everybody on the planet. When you're sharing the gospel, you can be assured that the person you're sharing with, Jesus Christ Himself says, "I died for them and I love them." You can be assured of that. Now, whether they accept a gift or not, that's their call, but make no mistake about it. There's nobody going to heaven or nobody going to hell that would say to Jesus, "Well, you never picked me." He'd say this, "Not only did I

pick you, I died for you and gave you every opportunity to come to me." That's the gospel according to the word of God as a ransom for all the testimony given at the proper time. What was the testimony? It was His death in the cross. It was His death in the cross.

And we see all throughout the scriptures, how God has redeemed us. As Christians we know that we were bought with a price, therefore to we'd honor God with our body. But here's a couple of verses you can write down. How about Galatians 3:13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it as written cursed as everyone who hangs on a tree. Or Ephesians 1:7, in Him, we have, there's that word again, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace. And then I love how Peter says this in the second book that he writes, 2 Peter 3:9. Peter who was the closest to Christ during his earthly ministry says this. "The Lord is not slow about His promise to some count slowness, but is patient toward you not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance."

What does God say? "I don't want anybody to die in their sins. I want everybody to come through faith through repentance. I want everybody to come to me." God's desire is that the world would know Him. When you pray for the lost, pray knowing that God wants the person you're praying for to be a Christian. He wants them to be born again. He wants to fill them with His spirit. He wants to use them in you away. That's why we're called to pray for them. And I'm telling you if you'll pray this daring, bold prayer, Lord, give me a love for this person like you have for them and teach me

to love them the way you do, He will blow you away.

You'll think differently about people. It won't be about your attitudes. It won't be about your political persuasion. It won't be about your thoughts on education. It'll be about this. They're lost and they need Jesus and I'm praying for them and that's paramount in what I'm doing. Everything else is secondary or tertiary. The gospel's primary. Amen. God wants all people to be saved. There's nobody that you would meet that you could look at and be like, "It's clear God doesn't want you." Not one. See, how do you know that? Because the Bible says that there is no one good. No, not one. There is not one of us who came out of the womb seeking Jesus, wanting Jesus. All of us came out of the womb saying it's about me. It's about my life. It's about what I want. Get away from me. Let me do whatever I want. And yet God saved us.

So if that's true, which it is because the word of God is true, then what's the goal of all these prayers? Why pray all? What's the goal? Okay, Pastor Jeff, I get it. We're called to pray. We're called to love others. We're called to pray for having this passion and knowing that Jesus died, but what's the goal of all this? Here's the goal. The goal is the plan of salvation through the Godman, Jesus Christ. That's the goal. The goal is that people would know the plan of salvation through the Godman Jesus Christ. Many of you who are Christians take for grant that other people outside the church know what the plan of salvation is. They don't know it. They don't know it.

If you spend time with people and ask them, how do you think you're going to heaven? These are the kinds of answers usually get. "Well, I'm a pretty good person."

"Well, my good outweighs my bad." "Well, I try to keep the 10 commandments." "Well, I give money." "Well, my neighbors speak highly of me." "Well, I know I'm not as bad as that person." These are the kinds of things you hear all the time. That's not salvation. The testimony is, Christ in you, the hope of glory. You're dead and you're in need of Jesus. And when did that happen?

So what's the goal? The goal is that they would see the plan of salvation. Well, what's that? What's right there in our text today. Verse four and five. This Jesus, our savior who desires all men. There's that word again. It's all. It's not just some men. It's all men. And that's really men and women and boys and girls to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth for why? For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.

Well, how do I know that you're God's the way? Because He's one God and He's the one mediator between God and man. The only way to get to heaven is through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. The plan of salvation, the pathway of salvation, the direction of salvation is only through Jesus. If you know Jesus and have trusted in Him, you have life. If you don't know Him, I don't care how spiritual or good you are, you don't have a relationship with God, period. End of story. And none of you are born having a relationship with Jesus Christ, but God wants you to have a relationship with Him.

The reason we can be so honest with truth and tell people, "Hey, you're dead and your sin is killing you, and you and you will die. And when you die, you will go to hell and you will be separated from God. And there's nothing good about hell. It's a

place of outer darkness. It's a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Every good thing, comfort and rest and joy and hope, all that is gone. You'll have none and you'll have none of it for all eternity." The reason I can tell you that is because it's true, but I can also follow that up with saying this, but our God sent His Son Jesus to redeem you, to pay your ransom, to buy you back so that you could experience life with Him both now and forever, more forever and ever, amen. That's the gospel. And no matter who you are, you can have it. And that's what we need to tell people because sometimes the people that are furthest from the gospel are the people that God actually wants to save.

Think about all these scriptures, Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you've been saved through faith. It's not your own doing. It's a gift of God. So no one should boast." Or 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ died once for all the righteous, for the unrighteous to bring you to God." or 2 Corinthians 5:21 that we sang about today. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him, we might become the righteousness of God." or Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not on basis of our deeds, which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." God says anybody.

I remember after I was in college, my grandfather on my mom's side was in the hospital up in the Mayo Clinic. And my relationship with him growing up was somewhat cold in this. I didn't really know him very well. I just knew him as an older man because he is my grandpa, and I just didn't know much about him. I knew this when we went up to his house, things functioned a little bit differently. My grandfather was a functional

alcoholic, and my parents didn't drink.

And so every night I would watch him when I was up there getting arguments with my grandma and then eventually he would drink so much. He just sit in a chair and pass out. And then they'd have to carry him up to bed. And I was always as a little kid scared of that and never really wanted to be there by myself. My mom didn't want me to be there by myself. But even as I got older, I was more like, "Yeah I don't wanna be like that." And that's not what I want to be about. And we had some relationship, but it wasn't warm. It wasn't fuzzy. I never felt built up so on much by him.

And when he was in the hospital, he had Type 2 diabetes. He had been alcoholic for all these years. He had had his legs amputated and God put on my heart, "You need to go share the gospel with him." And I'm like, "I didn't really know how to do that. And I didn't really want to do that" because that involved me getting in a car and driving eight hours and going staying up someplace for two days. And I fought it for a while and it was so compelling on my heart like you got to do this. And so I called my Nana and I said, "I want to come see Papa and just spent some time with him." She's like, "Oh, he'll love that. That'd be great."

So I got in my car on the day and I drove eight hours up there. And the whole way I was praying like, "Lord, I don't know how to do this." My grandfather had been born in Nurnberg, full blooded Jew. Got out right before the fullness of the Holocaust. His parents met him a year later. Never saw the rest of his family. He ended up serving in the United States Military, earned a purple heart for doing counterintelligence during

World War II. Didn't know all about everything, but knew a little bit about him. So I'm like, "How is this grandson going to tell his grandfather about Jesus?"

So the whole way up, I was saying, "Lord, I don't know what to say. I don't even know how to say it, but like just make it so clear that I can't miss it. When it's the right time, just tell me, okay now, share it." And I was so nervous and I got there and my Nana was there and she said, "Well, you drove up here. I'll give you some time with your Papa." She was no longer out the room. And he looked up from laying in his bed. He said, "Well, you drove eight hours to get here. You have obviously have something to say. What do you want to tell me?" And I'm like, "That might be my sign." And I told him about what God had done in my life. And I told him what the gospel was. And I shared with him why I was concerned for his soul and what he needed to do. And I said, "Would you like to trust Christ?" And we prayed together on his bedside for him to receive Jesus. Amen.

I got home, I'm like, "Did that really happen?" I was so like, "I got to make sure that I do of this thing right." So I wrote him a letter on yellow tablet paper by hand. And by the time it arrived down to him a couple weeks later, my uncle had to read it to him because his cataracts couldn't read it. And my uncle read it to him and confirmed that he had felt. But I think it changed something in my uncle's heart as well. Here's my point. My point is that God can do things with people that you don't think he can do it with.

And let me just say this as a pastor because I need to say this so that you don't get the wrong idea. Sometimes when pastors tell you these stories for encouragement,

you get the wrong idea that pastor Jeff's made true on every opportunity he's ever had. And he's never missed an opportunity to share the gospel. And that's totally false. I've missed opportunities. I've had opportunities where I should have gone and shared and for a number of reasons I didn't. I wish I could have a do over in just like you have. This is not about being perfect. This is not about, "Hey, you got to do it right." This is just about listen. There are people that God wants you to share the gospel with in your life.

So here's my assignment, and this is not going to be graded by me, it's not checked by me, but would you be willing to write down the names two or three people on a piece of paper and pray for them on a regular basis until they come to Christ? Would you? And I'm just gonna encourage you to do that. Now, keep in mind this. Sometimes when we do this as Christians and we start focusing on those two or three people and we're like, "That's my people and I can't share the gospel with anybody else," and we miss all these other opportunities that are blown by our face. If you pray for people, you may not be the person God brings into their life to save them, but you may be the answer to somebody else's prayer that they've been praying.

Some of you that I've had the privilege of leading to Christ here at BRAVE Church, it wasn't just my prayers. It was your mom and dad's prayers or your grandma's prayers or your nephew's prayers or somebody else's prayer. I just had the privilege of sharing it with you when your heart was ready to receive it in good soil. It means could we pray for two or three people or five people or whatever it is and just pray for them every day saying God, to me, it looks impossible, but for you, all things

are possible. So I'm praying that you would do this work. God, would you save them? Would you bring people into their life? And God always uses those things. God will answer your prayers. And nothing spurs on a prayer life and nothing spurs on evangelism like prayer and evangelism.

The more you pray and the more you share, the more you'll want to pray and the more you'll want to share it. It won't be a have to, it'll be I get to. And I tell you these things because for me, I sat down with the young guys getting baptized at our service on November 7th and just walked him through the gospel in my office. Just to confirm, he was already a believer, but just to confirm that this 10-year-old boy really understood what we were talking about. And in his own words, he was able to tell me, "Yeah, that's what I believe." And I walked him through, where were you before? And what happened and where are you now? And he could give me a couple sentences for each one. And he knows that he knows that he's a believer now. And what his life used to be like.

So two things I would say in closing to you, number one is this, do you know that you have a relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ? If not, know this, I'm praying for you. I pray for as many of you as I know by name, as often as I think about you, but I also just pray for BRAVE Church in general that the people that God brings would get a chance to hear of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That you would know it's not about you being a good person or not about you trying to put on errors or pretend like you're all great, but the fact that Jesus Christ died for you on a cross to

pay for all your sins because you couldn't make your way to God. And that He rose from the dead three days later to validate that He's indeed God's one and only Son. He wants to give you life today.

And number two, if you have life and you have life in His name, who are the two or three people God's putting on your heart to pray for? Here's who I'd encourage you to pray for. The people that you have a tendency to talk bad about. The people that you're like, man, that person's no good. I don't like their politics. I don't like their attitude. I don't like their immorality. Those are probably the people God's saying, "Lord, give me a heart for them. You died for them." There's not a person we could bring up here today that Christ did not die for. Many we could bring up here to Christ died for that haven't trusted Christ, but nobody that Christ didn't die for Him. He would say, "I love every single one of them." He loves you. Do you have a relationship with Him?

I just want to close by praying today and just invite you to pray with me. Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And for those who are listening to my words today, if you've never trusted Jesus Christ, then here's how you can pray. Lord Jesus, I recognize I'm separated from you because of my sin, but I believe that your God who came and died on the cross for me and rose from the dead. And right now, I want to exchange my sin for your life. I want to turn for my sin and place all my faith in you. Come into my life, Lord Jesus. Be my Lord. Lord, I pray that prayer be filled to fresh with your Holy Spirit and you would do a work in their life. And now for us Lord, who already know you. For all of us who know you, even the

ones that just trusted you, they are put on our heart who the couple people are that we're going to be praying for.

Give us the love for them like you have for them. You love them enough to die for them. Lord, give us that kind of love. And then Lord, use us and keep our eyes open to sharing the gospel with more and more people in this area. Lord, there's hundreds of thousands of people right in our sphere of influence that don't know you, that are facing a crisis of eternity. Lord, do a work through us. Lord, call us to pray. Every great revival started with prayer. And then Lord, may we be a generation of the church and part of the collective church that sees another revival breakout in our nation and around the world where people are saved. Lord, we believe you can do it. We've seen what you've done before. We want to experience it in our lifetime. We give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise and all God's people said, amen. Can we give God some praise?