

## **PRAYING FOR OTHERS PART 2**

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I spoke last week about the importance of prayer. Not just for ourselves — but others.

The prayer for others is called: **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

It seems that God wants us to intercede? To act as His partners.

We saw Abraham intercede for the city of Sodom — for other people. And Moses on at least two occasions.

God is open to intercession from people like me and people like you.

Elijah ... was just like us. An effective fervent prayer of a righteous man/woman availeth much.

Paul was keen to receive support in prayer so he could preach effectively. In turn ... he prayed for others. He knew they needed his prayers

Not just a platitude. Things happen in the spiritual realm!

But remember. The actual outcome depends very much on the other person — God won't overrule their will.

You and I can start by being more alert for others. And may ourselves desire prayer.

In the past there were the old “prayer lists” at Church.

Let's have a quick resumé:

**Colossians 4:2-4**

2 **Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;**

3 **meanwhile praying also for us**, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

### **Colossians 4:12-13**

12 **Epaphras**, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, **always labouring fervently for you in prayers**, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him witness that **he has a great zeal for you**, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

Eppy labours in prayer for you.

### **Ephesians 6:13-20**

13 **Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

14 **Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

15 and **having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

16 **above all, taking the shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 **And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;**

18 **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

19 **and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,**

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

The armour is for battle. Pray for Paul to preach boldly ... to do God's work. Paul wanted prayer. It is God's will too?

And Paul set an example. In turn ... he prayed for others.

### **Colossians 1:9-10**

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, **do not cease to pray for you**, and **to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**

10 **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

Paul prayed continually for revelation for other people.

Paul was not wasting his time. Not some meaningless platitude. He knows they need revelation to succeed! So much deception in Colosse. So many bad influences.

### **1 Timothy 2:1-2**

**1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,**  
**2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. *(This is for us)***

Public assemblies. Encourage ... urge. For all men? People that can effect our lives.

Do we pray for Presidents ... Prime Ministers ... Civil Leaders. For what purpose — general wisdom as leaders?

Not really. Prayer is for brethren ... that we can live God's way without undue harassment.

Some laws out there can intrude: Compulsory work on the Sabbaths ... some countries insist that children go to school on Saturday mornings ... compulsory "indoctrination" of young children about LGBTQ+ ... historically — restrictions on public meetings.

Some "Christians" have found their businesses threatened — for example: baking a cake congratulating same-sex partners.

Ideally ... we want authorities to leave us alone!

Paul's not saying pray for "all men" generally ... God has a plan and this isn't the time when all can be converted. The big harvest of souls is yet future.

Yet the firstfruits ... those called now ... would benefit from a reasonable amount of freedom. So pray for those in authority who can influence our lives.

Pray also for our enemies!

### **Matthew 5:43-45**

43 “You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

44 But I say to you, **love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Pray for your enemies! Not pray that their house will burn down or their car gets stolen!

Pray they’ll see the truth? About you? Pray their punishment be delayed ... room to repent?

Pray that someone else may cross their path ... help them to see the truth ... or at least tolerate it?

Praying sincerely for those we have difficulty with also keeps us spiritually healthy — avoids hostility and bitterness.

However ... remember — prayer for others always has limitations. People have their own wills.

### **1 Corinthians 7:12-14**

12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: **If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.**

13 **And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.**

14 **For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband;** otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

Mixed marriage of a converted and an unconverted partner.

I assume that the converted person will be praying fervently for their partner!! A desire for their spouse to be reconciled to God!

Praying that God would open their mind? Create helpful circumstances?

Will it work? Sometimes. Look around the Church ... there are a fair number of wives who followed their husbands into the Truth (and vice versa).

But ... it doesn't always happen.

### **1 Corinthians 7:15-16**

15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

16 **For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?** *(You don't. You may save your unconverted spouse)*

The key lesson we have to remember with intercession is the other person's will.

Praying for ourselves is different.

### **Matthew 21:18-22**

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry.

19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?"

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, "**Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done.**

22 **And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.**" *(This is the prayer of faith)*

We can and should believe we receive. But with others ... we have no guarantees.

Everyone has free choice ... to respond to God's intervention or ignore.

We don't stop praying. The desired outcome might be years away? George Mueller prayed for conversion of 5 of his friends ... and kept going for 52 years for the last one (who got converted just after Mr Mueller's funeral!).

But ... there are no guarantees. Did Paul always get what he prayed for in other people's lives? Not always!

### **Galatians 1:6-9**

**6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,**

7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

**8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

The Galatians were in eternal danger!

Paul would have prayed fervently ... zealously ... frequently. Their eternal lives were at stake! He prayed that their eyes might be opened ... that more effective teachers arrive ... and that troublemakers go elsewhere.

God would have responded to Paul's prayer ... created opportunities ... but they have the power to choose.

And it seems that they turned away from the truth. Probably lost for eternity?

### **2 Timothy 1:13-15**

**13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

**15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.**

All of Asia have left Paul!

No doubt Paul would have prayed ... diligently ... constantly — so that these people could come back to the Truth.

God doesn't want any to perish ... He would have responded to Paul's prayer. But!

We can pray for brethren who might be in spiritual danger. God will respond. There may be a good outcome ... BUT ... no guarantees.

God generally works through people ... so our prayers may be for an effective teacher ... to reach people.

### **Matthew 9:35-38**

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then He said to His disciples, "**The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few.**

38 **Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest."**

Pray for labourers!

God doesn't just drop truth out of the sky. He uses people. So pray for someone effective — a phone call ... a letter or article — that can reach someone. Then — the decision is theirs.

### **Ephesians 3:14-19**

14 **For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**

17 **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**

18 **may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—**

19 **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

God would have responded ... He would have done His part.

It was good for Paul to intercede.

But the outcome? Let's have a look at that group a few years later ... about 35 or 40 years or so — from Jesus. Was everything still healthy and well there with this group?

### **Revelation 2:1, 4-5**

1 **“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,**

‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

4 **Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**

5 **Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.**

Ephesus needed to repent — or lose out.

Paul had prayed for them ... for revelation. Did they receive it? Maybe. It looks like they didn't hold fast?

Perhaps this was the next generation?

Would they acknowledge Jesus' rebuke?

So ... some prayers of intercession for people who may be in danger — who have left the Truth ... out on their own — or in “suspect” groups.

But we can't predict the outcome.

### **1 John 5:14-15**

14 **Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

15 **And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

This is the prayer of faith ... for ourselves.

What about praying for others?

### **1 John 5:16-17**

16 **If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life (*add life to the one who is praying*) for those**

who commit sin not leading to death. **There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.**

17 **All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.**

Many sins don't lead to death. We can intercede for someone ... ask God to provide opportunities ... mercy ... grace ... perhaps someone who can help.

God doesn't forgive them upon our request. They need to repent ... but God will create suitable opportunities. It may include chastisement.

**For some — don't pray.** If they've blasphemed against the Holy Spirit ... the unpardonable sin ... if willfully going contrary to God —leave them! It would be a waste of time! Like Ananias and Sapphira. Like Solomon — who tried to destroy God's prophets!

There is an Old Testament precedent for that.

#### **Jeremiah 7:8-10**

8 **"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.**

9 **Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,**

10 **and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'?**

#### **Jeremiah 7:14-16**

14 **therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.**

15 **And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren—the whole posterity of Ephraim.**

16 **"Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me;** for I will not hear you.

Don't pray or intercede.

It's too late. The opportunity is over.

Not all sin is the same. Some are more serious ... there are greater sins.

Generally ... we can and should pray for others ... especially brethren ... Gospel workers ... for God's favour and blessings.

We can pray for those in spiritual danger ... though we can't guarantee the outcome.

Don't pray for those who are "sinning unto death". That will include some former Church members.

It may not always be easy to tell. The difference (depends on how well we know them)?

It is probably better to err on the side of safety — give them the benefit of the doubt ... but there certainly seem to be some predatory and heretical ministers out there ... causing spiritual harm to Church members.

I suspect they're too far gone?

So — definitely pray for others. God looks for it. Do pray for others in the household of God. It can and will — hopefully ... make a big difference.