

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

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Today I want to talk a little bit about prayer.

Obviously a key topic for any believer ... along with Bible study (careful ... thoughtful ... Bible reading) and fasting.

We all should be praying. A minister years ago gave his opinion:

- “So-and-so stopped praying ... and left the Church”.
- “The Holy Spirit is renewed only during prayer?”

I assume most of us pray ... but a risk is we often pray just about ourselves? Allow only a few minutes (if that!) to pray for others?

So ... this is a reminder of the importance of praying for others — the prayer of intercession.

It is okay to pray about ourselves ... needs ... experiences — but not exclusively ... we shouldn't be selfish.

You might think about praying for family ... friends ... Church (evangelists ... teachers) ... communities ... our nations.

We'll have a look at what the Bible says ... but one big difference in prayer of intercession — God's involvement can be limited by other people's free will. God won't overrule!

So when you or I are praying or interceding for others ... we won't always know what the outcome might be. We can believe that God will intervene ... but the final outcome depends on the person.

Genesis 18:16-33

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

17 **And the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,**

18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

20 And the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, **but Abraham still stood before the Lord.**

23 And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

24 **Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it?**

25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"**

26 So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord:

28 **Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?"**

So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it."

29 **And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?"**

So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty."

30 **Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?"**

So He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

31 **And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?"**

So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty."

32 **Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?"**

And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten."

33 So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Abraham “prayed”. He interceded for the city 6 times! He had a personal interest — he knows his nephew Lot lives in Sodom! A little bit of a selfish motivation here?

There is a hint here of how powerful intercessory prayer can be. If there had been just 10 righteous as Abraham had asked — God would have spared the city!

Also — perhaps God was looking to see if Abraham would intercede for other people?

James 5:16-18

16 Confess your trespasses to one another (*acknowledge your weaknesses*), and **pray for one another**, that you may be healed. **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.** (*If you are in Christ ... you are*)

17 **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.**

18 **And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.**

James 5:16 TPT

16 ... **tremendous power is released through the passionate, heartfelt prayer of a godly believer!**

Elijah was just like us ... you and me! He was not someone super special.

We shouldn't underestimate the power of prayer — “what's the point of praying for ... xyz person”. Because it does make a difference.

God might well need our partnership in prayer. He may not do it all on His own?

1 Kings 18:1-2

1 And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.”

2 **So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria.**

1 Kings 18:36-40

36 And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “**Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.**

37 **Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.**”

38 **Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.**

39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “**The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!**”

40 And Elijah said to them, “**Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!**” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

Elijah defeats the prophets of Baal.

1 Kings 18:41-45

41 Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.”

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. **And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees,**
43 **and said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.”**

So he went up and looked, and said, “There is nothing.” **And seven times he said, “Go again.”**

44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, “There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” **So he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’”**

45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel.

Elijah prayed 7 times ... interceding on behalf of the nation ... on behalf of the people.

Why would God want Elijah to pray at all? God could stop and start the rain Himself. He is Sovereign? But ... He wants man to be engaged — to share partnership. We would be junior partners ... but **God might well wait for our prayers of intercession before taking action?**

And if we don't pray ...

Exodus 32:1-10

1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, **"Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."**

2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

4 **And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.**

Then they said, **"This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"**

5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord."

6 **Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (Euphemism for "orgy")**

7 **And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.**

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. **They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"**

9 And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!

10 **Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.**”

God was genuinely perturbed by how quickly these people had turned astray. Thankfully ... Moses interceded for them.

Exodus 32:11-14

11 **Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God**, and said: “Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? **Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.**

13 **Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants**, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, **I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.**’ ”

14 **So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.**

Moses intercedes with an effective fervent prayer. Moses was not selfish.

Similarly ...another time ... Moses interceded for them at Kadesh Barnea when the 10 spies brought back a bad report.

Almost certainly God is looking for intercessors such as Moses.

Isaiah 59:9-15

9 **Therefore justice is far from us,
Nor does righteousness overtake us;**
We look for light, but there is darkness!
For brightness, but we walk in blackness!
10 **We grope for the wall like the blind,**
And we grope as if we had no eyes;
We stumble at noonday as at twilight;
We are as dead men in desolate places.
11 We all growl like bears,

And moan sadly like doves;
We look for justice, but there is none;
For salvation, but it is far from us. (*Almost like our society today*)

**12 For our transgressions are multiplied before You,
And our sins testify against us;
For our transgressions are with us,
And as for our iniquities, we know them:**

**13 In transgressing and lying against the Lord,
And departing from our God,**

Speaking oppression and revolt,
Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

14 Justice is turned back,
And righteousness stands afar off;

**For truth is fallen in the street,
And equity cannot enter.**

15 **So truth fails,**
And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. (*A great description of today*)

**Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him
That there was no justice.**

Isaiah 59:16

16 **He saw that there was no man,
And wondered that there was no intercessor;** (*“wondered” — other translations: astonished ... appalled ... shocked*)

Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.

God was appalled at the absence of someone from the people to appeal to Him. God will do it Himself if He has too ... but prefers our involvement!

Isaiah 59:17-20

17 **For He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak.**

18 **According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay,
Fury to His adversaries,
Recompense to His enemies;
The coastlands He will fully repay.**

19 **So shall they fear**

**The name of the Lord from the west,
And His glory from the rising of the sun;**

When the enemy comes in like a flood,
The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

20 **“The Redeemer will come to Zion,**

And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,”

Says the Lord.

Maybe we don't feel that prayer for others does much good ... but the Apostle Paul certainly valued it.

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.

Pray for us (Paul and Timothy). For the Gospel (but surely that is God's will anyway?? Paul was hand-selected!).

Paul believed their prayer — intercession — would make a difference. That God would respond.

God is looking for intercessors.

Paul was in prison. He needed favour with the local government. Then he would need material support.

He got it! He was released and went on to preach the Gospel for another 6-7 years.

Colossians 4:10-13

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

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.

Other translations of Verse 12:

- “wrestling in prayer”
- “struggling on your behalf”

It sounds like Epaphras is putting out some effort!! Just 2 minutes a day?

Wrestling with God? Wrestling with the unseen realm and partnering with God?

Paul knew the importance of other people’s prayers for him. Not just a religious platitude.

Romans 15:28-32

28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 **Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,**

31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

Paul wanted help! In the spirit realm. Protection ... deliverance ... favour.

He didn’t just pray “on his own”. All of the brethren share in the responsibility ... Paul’s the Frontman ... **but expects others to share the burden.**

If they’re interested ...

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

1 Finally, brethren, **pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,**

2 **and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.**

Pray for us — Paul ... Silvanus ... Timothy.

You get the impression that Paul wants prayer. Even though he's doing the Work of God ... he doesn't take it for granted that he can "soldier on" on his own. He needs spiritual support. There is opposition.

We sometimes hear it's the brethren's duty to "pay and pray" ... though the real emphasis is often on the "pay" part?! Not to Paul. He wanted the brethren's prayers.

Ephesians 6:10-17

10 **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

11 **Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

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;**

We need the armour because we are in combat (we are not hermits in a cave somewhere).

Ephesians 6:18-20

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.

Praying always — for Paul and others.

Ephesians 6:18 New Century Version (NCV)

18 ... **all kinds of prayers** ...

Prayer of Faith ... Prayer of Commitment ... Prayer of Praise ... Prayer of Thanksgiving — and the Prayer of Intercession.

It seems evident that Paul fully believed and counted on the fact that the prayers of the brethren would make a difference.

Showed Partnership ... but also no doubt that God was pleased to see intercessors.

We should be careful not to neglect praying for others. Paul himself was careful to pray for others.

Ephesians 1:15-18

15 **Therefore I also**, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

16 **do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:**

17 **that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,**

18 **the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,**

Paul doesn't cease to give thanks in his prayers. Specifically for revelation.

Was this just a platitude? Wouldn't God just give them spiritual enlightenment anyway?

We all need to ask ... to acknowledge our Source ... to be thankful. It is not automatic.

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.**

“I bow my knees” — Paul is praying for the saints. He didn’t just think of himself in prayer — me ... me ... me.

So. Is there anybody whom you could pray for? Family members ... Church members ... Gospel Worker? Does anybody “out there” need help? Be alert!

Do we need help? Would we like someone to bring us before God in prayer? The answer is probably “Yes”.

Acts 12:3-5

3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

5 **Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.**

Constant prayer for Peter. For protection? For deliverance? James had just been beheaded. Peter might be next. Why pray? God wants us to intercede.

Acts 12:8-12

8 Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.”

9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

11 **And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.”**

12 **So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.**

Many brethren were praying for Peter’s deliverance. Interceding for him.

Acts 12:13-17

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer.

14 When she recognised Peter’s voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.

15 But they said to her, “You are beside yourself!” Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, “It is his angel.”

16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.” And he departed and went to another place.

Looking for opportunities to pray for others — especially brethren — is important. Paul virtually commands it!

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.**

Exhort — or urge ... or beseech. Prayers for all men.

So ... should we pray for everybody ... President ... Prime Minister ... Opposition Leaders ... Politicians generally ... Governors ... Mayors? Pray they'll be converted? Guide with wisdom even though they are pro abortion and LGBTQ — and very wicked people?

There are caveats!! Also God tells us there are some people we are definitely not to pray for. Who are they?

I'll cover that next week!