

Sunday, May 22, 2022 pm

REACHING THE LOST AND PRAYER (2)

Last month, following our gospel meeting which addressed the subject of evangelism, I presented a lesson dealing with prayer and reaching the lost. We did not complete that lesson, so tonight we will present part 2 of this.

Understand that when it comes to prayer in general, there are so many things we can pray and we ought to be praying regularly. We know that scripture emphasizes the importance of continued prayer. And if prayer becomes routine in our lives, we will focus on various avenues. Certainly, we ought to be concerned about the lost, and we need to be praying for that. In our last lesson, we addressed the following: 1) That God's will be done in this (with a reminder that He is depending on us to do our part in that); 2) Praying for ourselves – that we be pleasing to Him so that we can be used by Him. Furthermore, we pray for wisdom, knowledge, boldness & courage, open doors, and focus specifically on individuals that we are trying to reach. In such prayers we need to believe that God can answer our prayers; 3) Praying for laborers. There are many who are striving to reach the lost, including some that we are supporting, or know. We should be praying for them and laborers wherever they are needed. Jesus specified that in Luke 10:2; 4) We also began addressing the importance of the church in reaching the lost. And that is where we are going to resume today.

Tonight, we continue to notice some other areas where we ought to be praying.

I. For the church to open and receptive

- a. When we understand what the church is (including the local church), we know it is a part of God's plan and intended for saints (Ephesians 3:10-11). A local congregation is designed to build up saints in that location, to do and support the work of reaching the lost.
- b. That we be pure and right in God's eyes –
 - i. Ephesians 5:25-27 – Jesus gave Himself for the church (which He purchased with His own blood – Acts 20:28, cf. Ephesians 1:22-23 – it is His body and He is head) that she might be pure, clean, sanctified, glorious and without spot or blemish. Our job is to strive and keep her that way.
 - ii. When we win souls to Christ and introduce them to the body of Christ, we want it to be His church. Not a body filled with error and corruption. Consider Matthew 23:13, 15 – they traveled land and sea to win them to their way and in the process made them twice as much sons of hell as themselves.
 - iii. With humility, we should continually be praying to God that we are striving to be the true church of Christ we read of in scripture.
- c. That we be genuine – God despises the hypocrite. The church at Sardis (Revelation 3:1) had a name that they were alive, but they were dead; The church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-17) was lukewarm; The church at Corinth was filled with all sorts of problems that needed to be worked through, etc. ***If we are to win souls, we need to be genuine*** – not going through the motions, etc. People need to see that we REALLY do care about each other and them – 1 Corinthians 12:25, cf. Philippians 2:20 – Timothy sincerely cared for their state.
- d. That we be loving and united toward one another – John 13:34-35 – just remember the world is watching. In our recent gospel meeting it was noted that when people visit they look for 2 things the most – that we are genuine and that we truly love each other. Ephesians 4:3, Hebrews 13:1 – Let brotherly love continue; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 – see that it increases more and more, etc.
- e. That we desire to grow – again, like Thessalonica, the word should flow from us – 1 Thessalonians 1:8, Revelation 3:8 – an open door that no one could shut; consider the example of Jerusalem as they continued to increase in the faith, yet they kept praying so that they could increase – Acts 4:29-31, etc.

- f. That we are open and willing to grow – we need to want to grow. A congregation needs to be receptive to the lost. And we need to understand that often when people come to the Lord, they have baggage. Are we willing to help them work through their struggles, ignorance and immaturity?

II. For the lost

- a. Romans 10:1 – this was Paul’s prayer. It is implied in the great commission – Mark 16:15-16.
- b. For proper attitudes toward the lost – a realization that they are lost and a willingness to do whatever we can to bring them to the Lord – consider Jude 22-23, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, etc.
- c. For God to open hearts – 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Paul requests prayers that the word of God may run swiftly and be glorified... NOTE: I again mention here prayers for specific individuals we are trying to reach – that they will open their hearts and be receptive to the truth.
- d. For those who are empty and searching for something meaningful – while in the minority, there are souls searching. Will we reach out to them?
- e. For those who have wandered away – James 5:19-20 – if one wanders, we are to strive to bring them back; 1 John 5:16-17 speaks of sin not leading to death (and sin leading to death). We pray for a brother sinning a sin not leading to death – I believe this is reference to one who is in need of returning and will respond. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 speaks of warning the unruly, upholding the weak, comfort the fainthearted, etc. Certainly prayer is a method including in this.

III. For our leaders and country

- a. For the freedom to continue to proclaim the gospel – we are blessed to still live in a country where we can openly profess our faith. While politically incorrect in many cases, we can publicly proclaim Jesus. But times are changing, and it is possible that in the near future we will lose some of these freedoms. Let us pray that we may continue to freely worship
- b. Also pray for other parts of the world that they will be granted freedom to worship God and follow Jesus.
- c. For our rulers to lead a quiet and peaceable life as Christians –
 - i. We are told to pray for them - 1 Timothy 2:1-2
 - ii. 2 Thess. 3:1-3 – that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified.
- d. For conditions to improve around us so that more will take an interest in turning to God – Proverbs 14:32 – righteousness exalts a nation...; 2 Chronicles 7:13-15 – if my people turn, I will heal their land...
- e. For courage to stand for right and keep seeking, if in the face of opposition – both personal and governmental (at any and all levels) – Acts 5:29. NOTE: I do not believe we are at this point yet – at least not totally, but conditions seem to be going that way. What will we do when the true gospel is outlawed?

IV. For proper attitudes

- a. Gratitude – for what has already been done, etc. As we pray asking God’s help and guidance, thank Him and believe. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Colossians 3:17 - do all in his name giving thanks...; Philippians 4:6 – in everything with prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God...
- b. Patience - let us pray for patience in dealing with others.
 - i. James 5:7-8 calls for us to be patient until the Lord comes. Be patient and establish your hearts...;
 - ii. Romans 12:12 – being patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.
 - iii. As you study and try to reach others, it often takes time – sometimes a lot of time. We need to be careful to not press too quickly (but not too slowly either). Prayer for patience and wisdom together.
- c. Endurance -that we do not give up - Galatians 6:9, Luke 18:1 – Jesus taught a parable about persistence. As we strive to reach the lost, it can be easy to become discouraged. But we must NOT give up. Pray for strength to endure.

- d. Humility– we have emphasized the importance of being humble (James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-6). In trying to reach others, we need a humble heart that will keep us from looking down upon them, thinking we are better than we are OR better than them (Romans 12:3). Humility to not be a “know it all” and to listen. Humility to continue giving glory to God and not ourselves.

These are some things we can pray for as we strive to reach the lost. The point is, do NOT try and go at it without God on your side. He has made the avenue of prayer available. He expects you to use it properly. Do you pray as you ought to for others? Think about it!