

1 Timothy 2:1-4

THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Intro: For the most part, churches are busy places. There is much work that we are about most of the time. Much of what we do is visible. We build buildings. We place signs near the road proclaiming our existence. We hold evangelistic meetings. We have services ■ several times a week. We have a men's prayer meeting every Monday evening. We have a TV program. We have an organized outreach ministry. We have an active youth group, and an active women's ministry. There is much we do that is visible, or physical in nature.

These verses deal with that part of our work that is spiritual in nature. We have gotten pretty good at doing the physical, but I am concerned, as are these verses, about the real spiritual work of the church. The primary emphasis of these verses is evangelistic. Paul teaches us that God's desire for His people is that we be a people of prayer. He wants us to be involved in the hard, spiritual work of reaching people for the glory of God.

As we consider the ungodliness of our modern world and the powerlessness of the modern church, it is clear that God's people need to be involved in a ministry of prayer. When we consider the escalation of sin, immorality and anti-God thought in our world, it is clear that God's people need to pray. Even when we just stop to consider all the pain, suffering, disease and heartache around us, it is clear that those who know God should be involved in a consistent, personal and corporate ministry of prayer.

especially verse 1

The passage before us has something to say about the issue of intercessory prayer. **As I mentioned earlier, this primary emphasis here is on prayer for the lost, but the *elements* taught here apply to all sorts of intercessory prayer.** I want to talk to you about ***The Ministry Of Intercession***. I want you to see with me the *elements* that are involved in Paul shares about ***The Ministry Of Intercessory Prayer***.

I. V. 1- **THE COMMAND TO INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

Paul uses the word “***exhort***”. This word conveys the idea of “***encouragement***.” It is the same word that is translated “***Comforter***,” and it speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit of God comes alongside of us to offer “***aid, comfort and encouragement***.” In this passage, Paul comes alongside Timothy to encourage him, and the people to whom he preaches, to carry out the important ministry of prayer. **The tense in which this word is used lets us know that what follows is not a suggestion, but a command.** **The command is for God’s people to be engaged in the work of prayer.** We are to be a praying people!

• **God invites us to come to Him in prayer:**

Luke 18:1, “***And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.***”

Eph. 6:18, “***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.***”

Phil. 4:6, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Col. 4:2, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”

1 Thes. 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.”

• God has promised to hear us and to answer us:

Jer. 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Isa 65:24, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

• He has promised to move in power in response to the prayer of faith spoken by His people.

James 5:16, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

John 14:13-14, “¹³ And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

Matt. 21:22, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

1 John 5:14-15, ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*
¹⁵ *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”*

Matt. 7:7-11

How can we not avail ourselves of the resource of prayer? How can we fail to call on the name of the One Who has promised to answer in power and glory when we call on Him in faith? The command is clear! The command is to pray!

I. The Command of Intercessory Prayer

II. V. 1 THE CHALLENGE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Paul tells us that we are to pray ***“first of all”***. The idea here is that prayer is to be the top priority of the church. It is not just to be the filler, thrown in between songs, or as something to take up a few minutes of time. Prayer is the life’s breath of the church! It is the absolute non-negotiable for the church.

Billy Graham said, ***“The three secrets to successful ministry are: prayer, prayer and more prayer.”*** If we will be all that God wants us to be, then we will be a people who places a great emphasis on prayer! Let us determine that we will pray ***“first of all”***.

We are to be a people marked by worship. We are to be involved in the vocal, verbal, visible worship and praise of the Lord. We are to be a people marked by evangelism. We are are to be actively involved in telling a lost world about Jesus, and in living lives that point people to the difference Christ has made in us. We are to be

a people of the Book. The Word of God is to be the centerpiece of our public worship, and of our private devotions. But, above all, first of all, we are to be a people of prayer. We must acknowledge that our worship, our evangelism, our preaching, our devotional work, our public and private services, will all be anemic and empty unless they are bathed in prayer. Above all we do, before all we do, we are to be a people who prays!

James Duncan, preaching with great unction and power, was asked what was the secret of such powerful preaching. “*The secret*,” he said, was “*thirteen hours of consecutive prayer*.” When asked the secret of his spiritual power, Charles Spurgeon said: “*Knee work! Knee work!*”

John Livingston of Shotts, on two different occasions, preached with such power that in each service 500 were converted. Both sermons were preceded by a night of prayer.

Charles Finney, after spending a day in the woods in prayer and fasting, preached that night in a phenomenally irreligious congregation. The sermon was accompanied by such divine power that the whole congregation, except one man, fell prostrate upon the floor, and voiced their agony under conviction of sin, in such loud outcries that the preacher was forced to stop.

Of “Uncle” John Vassar, A traveling evangelist who sold Bibles for The Tract Society. It was said, “*He absolutely prayed day and night -- prayed about everything, prayed for almost everything, prayed with almost everybody he met. He prayed when he went out and when he came in. He prayed before every religious service, and then prayed all the way through it.*” His pastor said, “*I have occupied the same room with him night after night, and*

rarely went to sleep without hearing him in prayer, or awoke without finding him in prayer.”

see. Preacher Kincaid

We must be a people marked by, saturated in, and empowered by prayer.

I. The Command To Intercessory Prayer

II. The Challenge Of Intercessory Prayer

III. V. 1 THE CONTENT OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER


As Paul continues his call to prayer, he uses four words to describe those essentials that should be the content of our prayers. These four words refer to prayer's reach and potential.

1. **Supplications** - This word speaks of “**need, want, privation.**”

It is the idea of “**being without.**” It refers to prayers focused on special needs. In supplication, we are aware of a need in our ives, or in the lives of others, and bring that burden before the Lord. When we have needs in our own lives, and when we see needs in the lives of others, we are to be moved by these needs and we are to bring them to the throne of grace. III. Heb. 4:16, “**Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**”

2. **Prayers** - This word calls to mind those times we set aside to come into the Lord's presence to worship Him and spend time at His feet. In the New Testament, this word is always used in connection to God. It reminds us that God hears and answers prayer, and that He is glorified in so doing.

All "In Jesus' Name" means asking for only what He would ask for.



This also reminds us that prayer is always to be offered according to the will of God. We are to seek that which glorifies Him, and not just what satisfies our desires. God will never do anything apart from His will, and He will never do anything that does not bring Him glory. That is the essence of what James tells his readers about the problem of unanswered prayers. James 4:2-3, *"² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."*

By the way, every believer must have that time when we go before the Lord, without distraction, without hurry and we just spend time loving Him. Public prayer is no substitute for personal, private worship!

3. **Intercessions** - This word means, *"to fall in with others."* This speaks of bold praying on behalf of others. Jesus is our intercessor, 1 Tim. 2:5. He stands in the gap between us and the Father and boldly prays for us, Heb. 7:25.

We are to carry out the same ministry on behalf of others. The main idea in these verses is that of making intercession for those who do not know the Lord. We are to stand in the gap for them, praying for God to convict them and save them by His grace! We are also to pray for our fellow believers.

This word contains the ideas of “**empathy, sympathy, compassion and involvement.**” That is, we do not just see the needs of those around us, but we take action to meet those needs. We get involved in their circumstance, because their circumstance moves us to action.

III. This was the kind of heart that beat within the breast of the Savior. III. **Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Mark 1:41; 6:34.** It should be that kind of heart for others that beats within us! III. **Gal. 6:2,** “***Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.***”

One of the greatest visual examples of intercession is found in **Ex. 17:8-13.** While Joshua and the army of Israel fought the Amalekites in the valley below, Moses help up his hands in intercession all day long. When he grew weary from that exertion, Aaron and Hur came alongside Moses to hold up his hands until the battle was won. That is the same ministry God wants us to perform on behalf of our fellow believers, and on behalf of a lost and dying world.


The ministry of intercession allows you go where none can stop you and accomplish what none can hinder. As J. Sidlow Baxter said, “***...Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers.***”

Who needs the power of your intercession today? For whom can you stand in the gap? Whose hands can you hold up? Whose name can you call out in prayer?

If we genuinely love others, we will stand in the gap for them and pray. Ill. *“³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,”* John 13:34-35. A heart that loves is a heart that intercedes!

William Law said, *“There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as prayer for him.”*

4. **Giving of Thanks** - No prayer is complete until we spend some of that time thanking God. We are to thank Him for that which He has already done, such as salvation, blessings, answered prayers, etc. We should thank Him for the fact that He is hearing us as we pray. We should thank Him for those things that He is yet to do! You see, as we pray, we are to pray in faith, believing that the things we are asking God to do are already done, even though we can't see them at the present time. That is the very essence of faith, Heb. 11:1.

 Have you ever stopped to think that this is the only element of prayer that will survive in Heaven? We will no longer be involved in supplications, prayers and intercessions when we get to Heaven. There will be no more lost people that need to

be saved. There will be no more burdens, problems, pains, sicknesses or deaths. None of the needs that motivate us to pray for ourselves and others will exist. But, as long as eternity rolls, there will be the giving of thanks before the Lord. Praise and worship are the business of Heaven. When we take the time to thank God for Who He is, what HE has done, what He will do, and for all things, *we are engaged in the Work of Heaven*

- I. **The Command To Intercessory Prayer**
- II. **The Challenge Of Intercessory Prayer**
- III. **The Content Of Intercessory Prayer**

IV. V. 1 **THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

This refers to the scope of our praying. For whom are we to pray? Paul makes it clear that we are to pray for “**all men**”. There is no one in the world who should be beyond the prayers of God’s people!

- We should pray for our family.
- We should pray for our friends.
- We should pray for our fellow believers.
- We should pray for the lost.
- We should pray for preachers, missionaries and those who teach the Word.
- We should pray for Deacons and others who serve in the local church.
- We should pray for all people, at all times, in all places, for all needs. No one is off limits when it comes to prayer.

Some people may not listen to you when you want to share the Gospel with them, but they cannot stop your prayers! This world laughs at our worship and mocks our faith, but it is powerless to stop our prayers. Prayer is our weapon. Prayer is our support. Prayer is our lifeline. Prayer is our greatest ministry.

III. It is interesting to note that Paul specifically mentions prayer for those who are in places of authority, vv 2-4. As we pray for our family, friends and neighbors, let us not forget to pray for our leaders. They need the wisdom of God to be able to carry out their offices.

When Paul wrote these words, a man named Nero was the Emperor of Rome. He was a wicked man who even had his own mother and brothers executed to secure his throne. He took Christians, dipped their bodies in wax and set them on fire, using the light to light his dinner parties.

There is a message in this for the church! Even when we do not agree with the policies of the people who lead us, we should still pray for them. Regardless of how wicked they may be, their work should be bathed in the prayers of God's saints. I firmly believe that God intervenes in the affairs of men. He can overrule a wicked leader. He can impress a wicked leader to make godly decisions! We need to pray for those in power, especially right now. There are many serious and far reaching decisions that must be made by the leaders of our country. Let us make supplication and intercession for them at the throne of grace!

The result of this type of intercession will be a peaceful life for the church, v. 2, which will result in the Gospel being more freely preached. As the Gospel is preached, souls will be saved to the glory of God, v. 4.

Conc: I ask you again, who needs your prayers today? Are you engaged in a consistent, daily ministry of intercession before God for the needs of others.

Paul tells us a bout one of the greatest intercessors of the early church. His name was Epaphras, and Paul said this about him: ***“¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis,” Col. 4:12-13.***

Of Epaphras, F.B. Meyer said this, ***“This is a very beautiful epitaph on a good man's life. Amid all the crowding interests of Epaphras's visit to Rome, his heart was with his friends. He strove for them in prayer. It was no passing thought that he voiced; no light breathing of desire; no formal mention of their names. It seemed as though he were a wrestler, whose muscles strained as he agonized for the prize. He labored.***

We shall never know, till we stand in the clear light of heaven, how much has been wrought in the world by prayer. Here, at least, there is mention of a man's labors. Probably the work on the results of which we are inclined to pride ourselves is due less

to us than we suppose, and more to unrecognized fellow laborers. Let us be careful to mingle much intercession with all our prayers, especially on behalf of Christian workers, that they may realize we are actually working and laboring beside them.”

The ministry of intercession is a ministry given to every believer. Let's involve ourselves with this ministry. There is no better time to begin than now.