

Wrestling in Prayer (Part 4)

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Colossians 4:12

12 *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

As we continue our series on Wrestling in Prayer, I want us to consider one of the most important types of prayer that we can be engaging in. It is a specific form of intercessory prayer - praying for the lost. Are you wrestling in prayer for the lost?

Epaphras did. Paul said that he prayed... *that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

There are two things in that phrase that tell me that Epaphras wrestled in prayer for the lost. First of all, he prayed for the will of God. The scripture tells us that it is the will of God that everyone would repent and be saved

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Likewise, the phrase... *mature and fully assured*, suggests that Epaphras was interceding for the lost, because you cannot become mature and fully assured unless you have first been saved. He wrestled in prayer for their salvation and their continued walk and maturity in that salvation.

When we wrestle in prayer for the lost, we are faithfully fulfilling the first part of the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 6:9-10

9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

When we wrestle in prayer for the lost, we seek to bridge the gap between the will of God and man's free will to choose. God does not force us to be saved, he offers it to us as a free gift that must be received through repentance of our sins and faith in the atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ.

So how can we wrestle in prayer for the lost?

I want you to think of praying for the lost like a two-sided coin. Both sides are a part of the same coin. Both sides make up the entirety of the value of the coin. But each side of the coin has a different picture, a different focus, if you will.

Each side of our coin today has the same value, and each side has the same three points, but with a slightly different focus. So, in order to answer our question about praying for the Lost, I want to use two different parables.

The first one is found in Luke chapter 10

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. **31** A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. **32** So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Believe it or not praying for the lost begins by praying for those who already believe.

Pray that the EYES of those who already believe will be OPENED TO SEE to see those who are still lost

In John Chapter 4 we read of Jesus desire for the lost as he insists they make a special trip through Samaria, and as we find out, all for the purpose of brining a message of hope and salvation to a Samaritan woman whom he would meet at a well. At the end of his conversation with the woman, his disciples returned and even though they were surprised to find him talking with a woman no one thought to ask him. Why he was talking with her. Instead, they focused on food and urged him to eat.

Hurt by their lack of understanding Jesus replied...

John 4:32-35

32 ...“I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. **35** Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Jesus said we need to pray for eyes to see the harvest that is waiting and about to be lost!

Oh that we would wrestle in prayer until we have eyes to see the lost. There are many who have been attacked by the thief who came to steal, kill, and destroy. They are left wounded and dying and in desperate need. But will we SEE them. The disciples couldn't even see that this woman needed the life-giving words that Jesus had for her. And there are many in the world today who are in need of the good news of Jesus love; but we must SEE them.

Interestingly enough, in the parable of The Good Samaritan all three of the men SAW the man who was hurt and dying.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he **saw** the man, he passed by on the other side. **32** So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and **saw** him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he **saw** him, he took pity on him. **(The NASB says "he felt compassion")**

All three men SAW him but only one was moved with compassion

Pray that the HEARTS of those who believe will be MOVED WITH COMPASSION at the condition of the lost

Over and over the New Testament tells us that when Jesus saw people in need he was MOVED WITH COMPASSION. Nothing will happen until we begin to feel something for those who are lost. I am angry that the Priest didn't feel anything for the man. I am appalled that the Levite didn't feel anything. This Samaritan man was in trouble. He had been beaten, robbed, left to die.

And I am appalled that as believers we often don't feel anything for the millions of people who are dying and entering an eternity in Hell.

Matthew 9:13 (NASB)

13 Now go and learn what this means: **'I desire compassion**, rather than sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

It is what happens next in the parable that shows us the third thing we need to pray for.

33 ...and when he saw him, he took pity on him. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

His compassion moved him to DO something

Pray that our RESPONSE to the need would be one of ACTION

It's one thing to see the need, it's important to feel something; but we must DO something.

Paul's cry in Romans echoes this truth

Romans 10:13-15

13 ... "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." **14** How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? **15** And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

That's why Jesus told us to pray for workers

Matthew 9:35-38

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. **36** When **he saw the crowds, he had compassion** on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37** Then he said to his disciples, **“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38** Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

That's why we emphasize and support Missions in this church

Now let's flip the coin over and talk about the other side of wrestling in prayer for the lost. To do so let's revisit Jesus Parable about the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11-24

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ **20** So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a

feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Our wrestling in prayer for the lost must not only be focused on those who will reach the lost but the lost themselves.

Pray that their EYES would be OPENED to their true condition

16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!’

Pray that their HEARTS would be CONVICTED of the TRUTH of their sin, their eternity, and their need to repent

18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, **I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son;** make me like one of your hired servants.’

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

Pray that they would RESPOND by putting their FAITH in God's love, Forgiveness and Power to give them a new life.

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Salvation is a free gift of God, but we must make the choice to receive it by faith

Ephesians 2:8

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

John 1:12

12 Yet to all who did **receive** him, to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

Let’s go back to Romans chapter 10 for just a minute. Verse 13 says that everyone who **calls** on the name of the Lord will be saved verses 9 and 10 tell us what it means to call

Romans 10:9-10

9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

So, we pray that they will willingly RESPOND