

## THE REASONS FOR EVANGELISTIC PRAYER

Why should we pray for the lost? Paul gives the answer in one of the most powerful and dramatic passages in all Scripture on the saving purpose of God:

**1 Timothy 2:3-7 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup>This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,  
<sup>4</sup>who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

**<sup>5</sup>For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,**

**<sup>6</sup>who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.**

**<sup>7</sup>For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**

### Morally Right

God defines prayer for the lost as the noble and spiritually proper thing to do, and our consciences agree. The lost suffer the agony of sin, shame, and meaninglessness in this life, and the eternal hell of unrelenting agony in the life to come. Knowing that, our most excellent task is to pray for their salvation.

Some might argue that Jesus said in [John 17:9](#), “**I do not ask on behalf of the world.**” But there Christ was praying as the great High Priest for God’s elect. Because He is sovereign, omniscient Deity, His prayer was specific in a way ours cannot be. He was praying exclusively for the salvation of those whom He loved and chose before the foundation of the world to be partakers of every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3–4).

**Ephesians 1:3-4 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup>Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,**

**<sup>4</sup>just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love**

“**The world**” was specifically excluded from the saving design of His prayer.

Our prayers, however, are not the prayers of a high priest; we pray as ambassadors of Christ, whose task it is to beseech men and women on His behalf to be reconciled to God ([2 Cor. 5:20](#)).

**2 Corinthians 5:20 (NASB)**

**<sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

We are therefore commanded to offer our “**entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings ... on behalf of all men**” ([1 Tim. 2:1](#)). Our earnest desire ought to be for the salvation of all sinners (cf. [Romans 9:3](#); [10:1](#)). We are not to try to limit evangelism to the elect.

[Romans 9:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

[Romans 10:1 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

There are **three reasons** we must not limit our evangelism.

**First**, we are commanded to preach to everyone in the world ([Matt. 28:19–20](#); [Mark 16:15](#); [Luke 24:46–47](#)).

[Matthew 28:19-20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

[Mark 16:15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

[Luke 24:46-47 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>46</sup> and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,

<sup>47</sup> and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

**Second**, God's decree of election is secret. We do not know who the elect are and have no way of knowing *until* they respond to the Gospel.

**Third**, the scope of God's evangelistic purposes is broader than election. “**Many are called, but few are chosen**” ([Matt. 22:14](#)).

Even Jesus' High Priestly Prayer *does* embrace the world in this important regard. Our Lord prayed for unity among the elect so that the truth of the Gospel would be made clear to the world: “**that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me ... that the world may know that Thou didst send Me**” ([John 17:21, 23](#)). God's call to all sinners is a bona fide and sincere invitation to salvation: “**‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’**” ([Ezek. 33:11](#))