

XIII. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Evangelistic Praying”

Romans 10:1

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

March 11, 2018 • Morning Sermon

We will be looking in Romans 10 for this study plus a couple of other passages as well. Romans 10:1 says [1] *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I want to start by giving you one question and two historical events. What is it that this Gospel landscape, life-changing, culture changing movement we called the Great Awakening from 1735 to 1765, the Second Great Awakening which began in 1785 and carried on intermittingly until 1880 (almost 100 years), the New York City world changing revival in 1858 and the Charleston, South Carolina 1858 revival that was translated to all kinds of seaport cities around the world, all have in common with the Gospel Awakening in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2? The Gospel Awakening in Jerusalem probably translated into around 6,000 coming to Christ in one day at Pentecost and then it says that every day after that people were being added to Christ and to the church. So think about what all these five events have in common.

Now I want to give you two historical events. One is old enough to be history now. The year was 1970. There was a young man who was converted in a little Presbyterian Church and the next thing that happened was the young man became the youth director. So I became a youth director at this church. Then after I put my wife through college I went back to college at East Carolina in Greenville, South Carolina, what I call the Athens of the East. It is an amazing place. It is the home of Hardees Hamburgers, Pepsi Cola and the tobacco capital of the world. Here I could not find a good Presbyterian church anywhere so we went to a Baptist church and then I was asked to be the youth director so my response was ‘Is it okay if I start a Presbyterian youth group at this Baptist church?’ The Baptist pastor said ‘Absolutely, as long as I can baptize them by immersion you bring them in.’

So we put our partnership together which was wonderful and one day 11 women came to have a meeting with the pastor and myself. Their children were involved in the youth ministry and they were encouraged. They loved their pastor and his preaching and they loved Trinity Baptist Church on Memorial Drive in Greenville, South Carolina, but all 11 wives had unbelieving husbands who never came to church. They said to us ‘What should we do?’ At that time I was not all that experienced but I was smart enough to be quiet and listen to what the pastor would say. I will tell you what he said at the end of the study.

Now I have another historical event to tell you about. My wife and I have recently been watching the show “The Crown” which is about the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth II and the events that helped shape the 20th century and the other show someone recommended we watch is “Victoria” about the life of Queen Victoria. It is well done but I want to tell you about an event in the life of Victoria that they probably will not show on this program but it's a document historical fact.

Queen Victoria was regular in worship and she loved to go to St. Paul's Cathedral in London and I have been there and stood right where this event has happened. The Rector at St. Paul's preached a sermon on security of salvation for all eternity. She listened to the sermon in rapt attention and then she left to meet with the Royal Chaplain. Victoria said to him "Can someone be absolutely sure in this life that they have eternal life and eternal safety?" The Royal Chaplain answered "I don't know." The reason we know about this event is that someone got a hold of it and published it in a weekly paper called "The Record of the Crown." It contained news about the crown. A man by the name of John Townsend read it and was moved in his heart to respond to the Queen. So what did he do and what did he do first? I will get around to answering this toward the end of the study but I'd like to go back to the question I first asked.

So what did all those awakenings/revival events have in common? Readily you would probably say that they both talked to the people about the Gospel and personal evangelism was involved and you would be right. But here is something that is abundantly clear and that is the genesis of every one of those movements was prayer. For the Great Awakening there were five men who met three times every week at Christ's Church College at Oxford University for prayer. It was John Wesley, Charles Wesley, George Whitfield and others who were added were Ronald Senick, Howell Harris and Daniel Rowlands. There was the genesis of a world shaking movement in Europe and in North America that took place from those prayer meetings at Christ's Church College.

The Second Great Awakening started with five students praying under a haystack at William's College. The New York City revival started with a businessman named Lamphere who got together six other businessmen at a Dutch Reformed Church and began to pray. Before long, even weeks later, thousands were coming to hear the Gospel. In Charleston, South Carolina in 1858 at an African American church named Mount Zion Presbyterian Church began to have prayer meetings at the encouragement of their pastor. Before long, the building was overflowing, and it was quite the sight to see the African American congregation sitting on the main floor of the sanctuary, while the Whites were coming into the balcony but yet all began to melt together around the Gospel and it was an amazing Gospel movement. But it all began with seven straight weeks of persistent prayer.

At Pentecost, it was 3,000 just counting the men with people getting saved every day after, so where did that start? Acts 2 started in Acts 1 with 120 believers in prayer in the Upper Room, for power to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. This is where we have come to in our opening series this year. Our ministry theme and focus this year has been the lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. I have tried to unfold for you thus far that evangelism, verballing sharing the Gospel, with people is a lifestyle. Then discipleship is a lifestyle where life on life is discipleship and we've seen this in various texts of Scripture, not the least of which we saw this in Luke 15 when we looked at the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. We looked at passages that showed us that the church has to stay on mission.

There are many things we need to do but we have a singular mission which is to go and make disciples of all the nations. That singular mission is carried out by a singular message which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that is the foundation, formation and motivation of the Christian life from which we teach the whole counsel of God. Being on mission and on message means you have to be on ministry through worship, evangelism and discipleship. We have to embrace those ministry means that God has ordained us and that's why we are here.

There are many blessed consequences of doing that in terms of cultural transformation and issues of justice, mercy and all those things being addressed out of the consistency of the

Gospel being lived, but the reason Jesus Christ put us here is for us to go, make disciples and preach the Gospel to all the nations. He tells us this five different times in the Gospels. When the Gospel has gone to all the nations and all of God's people have been brought in then comes the end. This is what we are called to do and you can't change the mission because if you change the mission you will change the message. We are to stay on mission, on message and in ministry.

The last study in this particular series is this one on evangelistic praying. It is not the last sermon because it is the least of the sermons but it's the last one because it's the most important one. It is the genesis. This is what starts a revival, an awakening, a reformation. I loved what Sandy Wilson said about our church here at Briarwood during our recent mission's conference. He said 'Keep it up Briarwood and don't just keep it up but step it up.' So I want to build on what he said but saying keep it up, step it up and step out when you step it up. Yet if I understand what we are looking at in this study, we keep it up, step it up and step it out by first kneeling down. I know that we have not because we ask not and when we do ask we ask wrongly (James 4:3). I knew that this is absolutely crucial.

I'll borrow from Martin Luther King when he said 'I have a dream' for I do have a dream. I have a dream that the church I have the privilege to pastor and be a part of will be an evangelizing church, a singing church but also a praying church. Romans 10:1 is Paul's commentary on his prayer life, but it was the fact of his praying that gave comfort to the man that was to go in the name of the Lord through him and his name was Ananias. Ananias was skeptical about going to meet with Paul who had been known as Saul because of the fact he was a religious terrorist and it had been going around that he was coming to Damascus to kill some more.

Acts 9:10–12 says [10] *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."* [11] *And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul (the persecutor), **for behold, he is praying**, [12] and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."* There is the foundational mark for we can't worship, evangelize, disciple, or fellowship without prayer. It is foundational to everything.

On my search of the Scriptures for evangelistic praying I found nine unambiguous clear texts this subject. Seven of them focused on the evangelists and only two of the nine focused on those being evangelized. I picked those two for this study. The seven texts say things like 'Lord, give me boldness to preach...' or 'pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will send out workers in the harvest...' The harvest Owner is Jesus. The Lord of the harvest is the Holy Spirit. We are going to focus on the two that deal with those being evangelized.

One of those two is in I Timothy 2:1–4 which says [1] *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for **all people**, [2] **for kings and all who are in high positions**, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. [3] *This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, [4] **who desires all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* So if our God is an evangelistic God then we ought to have evangelistic prayers. This ought to permeate us. In other words, lifestyle evangelism is lifestyle evangelistic praying.*

What does this look like? Let's look now at that second text which is Romans 10:1 that again says [1] *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.* Usually whenever Paul uses the word 'brothers' it is a high emotion moment for him and this is

one of those times. There is a 'them' and a 'they' in this verse. One thing we know is that the 'them' are on Paul's heart. Secondly, Paul is praying they will be saved which is an evangelistic prayer for those being evangelized. I think there is a lesson behind the they and the them.

To show you this we're going to look at briefly Paul's conversion by grace and then his call by grace. Let's look at Acts 9. Here Paul who is Saul is a certified, governmental, religious terrorist against Christians. Acts 9:1-8 says [1] *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. [3] Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. [4] And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" [5] And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. [6] But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." [7] The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. [8] Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. [9] And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

By the way, when did Saul ever persecute Jesus? Here is what you are learning here. Whatever you do to Christ's Church, Jesus takes it personally. There is a reason He calls it the body of Christ. Matthew 25:35-40 says [35] *For I (Christ) was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' [37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' [40] And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'* So when Saul is persecuting the church he is persecuting Jesus. Jesus is fully identified in union with His people.

So in this Acts 9 passage we see Paul get converted by God's grace and in his conversion he is about to be called to a ministry by God. Notice that Jesus didn't say to Paul 'How would you like to serve Me the rest of your life?' No, He had a plan for him and He was going to instruct Paul as to what that was called to do. So we have seen his conversion so let's look at his call of grace to serve Jesus.

Acts 9:10-16 says [10] *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." [11] And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying (that's how He comforted him), [12] and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him (Paul is about to be commissioned) so that he might regain his sight." (His conversion is about to not only give him spiritual sight but restore his physical sight.) [13] But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. [14] And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." [15] But the Lord said to him, "Go, for **he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.** [16] For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."*

Here is Paul's call. One is he was chosen as an instrument to carry His Name. Two, is he was chosen to suffer for His name's sake as he carries the Name. Now when Paul carries the

name of Christ, Jesus gives him three focused targets. The first target is to the Gentiles, to all the nations. His second target is to kings, those in leadership. Thirdly, is the children of Israel. So Paul was called to suffer as he carried the name of Christ to the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. You don't have to go very deep into the book of Acts or the Epistles to find out what happens to Paul.

When Paul went to the Gentiles he got an amazing, lavish response. When he went to a city he would go the synagogue first, the Jews and would reason with them that this was the Christ, then they would run him out of the synagogue and persecute him in the city. Then he would go to the Gentiles at Mars Hill, the marketplace and wherever he could find them and bring to them the Gospel as he called them to faith and repentance. His response was lavished from the Gentiles but minimal from the Jews. He received persecution from the Jews and would later say that it was at the hands of the Jews that you would see these marks/lashes on me, put in prison, stoned, run out of one town and tracked down to the next (II Corinthians 11). He bore the marks of his suffering and the Jews maximize my suffering with minimal response to the Gospel.

What was Paul's response to the Jews response, to his response to fulfill his call to take the Gospel to them? It was minimal exception to the Gospel and maximum persecution. Paul was just simply responding to the call to go to the Jews and then their response was to persecute him with very few coming to Christ. One thing Paul didn't do was to get angry. He didn't develop a heart of animosity. Here is what Paul did. Let's look at Romans 9.

Romans 9:1–3 says [1] *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—* [2] *that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.* [3] *For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

No wonder Paul does personal evangelism for here's a man that's willing to lose his own salvation if it could secure the salvation of his brothers according to the flesh. He is not angry with the children of Israel for on the contrary, his heart is breaking for them. If that is what it takes to save them then he was willing to be accursed. I got so convicted reading that I almost shut the door. There was no animosity but only anguish and a willingness to be accursed if that's what it would take for them to come to Christ. Then we see what he says in Romans 10.

Again, Romans 10:1 says [1] *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.* The 'them' and the 'they' are those who have rejected the Gospel from the children of Israel. There is no animosity, no anger but here Paul has a commitment to intercessory prayer from the heart that they would be saved.

So here is my takeaway. Here are the five marks of effective evangelistic prayer. One is that it is a passionate prayer. It is from the heart. It is from someone who is willing to be accursed that those whom I'm praying for will be saved. Al Baker calls it the intolerable burden for those headed to a Christ-less eternity. Is there any passion in our prayers?

Secondly, that leads to persistent prayer. This isn't a matter of the fact they don't get their best life now for the fact is they don't have life at all, no life in Christ and headed for a Christ-less eternity. Lord, what price do you want me to pay in suffering for them to be evangelized? Then let me pay it. Lord, how can I go to my knees and pray that You would will be at work in their life?

Thirdly, it is focused prayer. It is specific prayer for those to be saved. Save the Jews, save the Gentiles but save the children of Israel and kings. Paul went to Jews, Gentiles, kings like Agrippa, Festus and Felix and even people from Caesar's household were saved and the children of Israel whose least response was from them to the point he was willing to lose his own

salvation so that they would be saved. He knew he needed the Lord's help because he knew he couldn't convert them.

Fourthly, it is trusting prayer. God, You're sovereign. You will save Your people, Jew and Gentile, from all the nations of the world. I trust Your sovereign hand. God, You have not only the sovereign right but the sovereign ability. The people I'm sharing the Gospel with are dead. We need the power of the Gospel and of prayer because what is happening is that spiritually dead people are coming up out of the grave of sin to salvation in Jesus Christ. Only Christ can convert. I'm convinced that if I think I can lead people to Christ out of my own ability and they can come to Christ out their own ability then why pray? So if I'm not praying then deep down I think I can do it and they can come. You and I will not pray until we're convinced a sovereign God can only convert. When we're convinced of that we'll go to them for Him by His power but we will go to Him for them and trust Him for He alone can save.

One of the greatest examples of this is Charles Spurgeon. There was over 40,000 documented professions of faith in Christ at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in Spurgeon's 30 plus years of ministry there and he said the answer is the boiler room. The boiler was where hundreds of believers who would come to one service to worship and then go to the basement (boiler room) to pray for the next worship service that God would bring the power of the Gospel to people. That's why I thank God for all the small prayer meetings and even now those who are praying for us during this service. Every time I look at the steps leading up to the Metropolitan Tabernacle which are still there from his day I remember what his wife said about them. She said 'Every Sunday when we (she and Spurgeon) would climb those steps we would say 'I believe in the Holy Spirit for this is God's work.'" Spurgeon would call upon the Lord to do it.

Fifthly, it is personal prayer. Is there anyone you know of by name you can bring to an upcoming evangelistic event or have we allowed Satan in the name of fellowship to segregate us from the lost? Can you think of one, five or ten that are in your incubator of prayer that God would bring them from death unto life? You are talking to God for them and you're talking to them about Him. This is causing me to look at my life and where is the intercessory prayer in my life for this lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. I am convinced that Christ's Apostles *prayed* and evangelized! I need to pray and evangelize. I need a heart's desire and a heart prayer for them to be saved as a lifestyle.

Now back to the 11 women who come to meet with the pastor and me. They thank us for what we are doing in their families and in their children but our husbands won't even come, they say. As I sat quietly, the pastor said to them 'Why don't we start to get together and start praying for them?' Three months later I left East Carolina to go to Covenant College but before I left I had the privilege to participate in those prayer meetings and I saw nine of those husbands come to Christ. You have not because you ask not.

Now back to Queen Victoria and wanting to know the assurance of salvation. John Townsend knew. The first thing Townsend did after reading this article in the Crown Record was to get some people together to pray for him because he was going to write a letter to the Queen. He also asked them to pray for the Queen. The following is the letter he wrote to Queen Victoria.

"To her Gracious Majesty, our beloved Queen Victoria, from one of her most humble subjects:

With trembling hands, but heartfelt love, and because I know that we can be absolutely sure now of our eternal life in the Home that Jesus went to prepare, may I ask your Most Gracious

Majesty to read the following passages of Scripture: John 3:16; Romans 10:9,10; I John 5:13 (which says [13] *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*)?

These passages prove that there is full assurance of salvation by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ for those who believe and accept His finished work.

I sign myself, your servant for Jesus' sake,

John Townsend"

Townsend went back to his prayer meeting to thank them for praying and continued to ask them to pray for the Queen so they continued to pray for her. In about two weeks, a modest envelop showed up and it said the following;

"To John Townsend:

Your letter of recent date I received and in reply would state that I have carefully and prayerfully read the portions of Scripture referred to. I believe in the finished work of Christ for me and trust by God's grace to meet you in that Home of which He said, "I go to prepare a place for you."

(signed) Victoria Guelph"

I'm thankful for the letter and her response but I'm thankful for the prayer meeting that took place.

I also think there is reason why seven out of the nine evangelistic prayers in the Bible are for the evangelists. It is that we would bold and we would speak but there are two for those being evangelized that they might be saved.

Much has been publicized and printed about the recent home going of Billy Graham and the impact he made in this world but I can't help but think of John Pollock's initial biography on Billy Graham. Because of the intertwining of his family and mine I did a radio spot on his life and received many emails and letters of people telling me how they became a Christian through Billy's ministry. As all this happened it struck my heart of how God used Billy in all that social media and what may happen when people get to heaven and thank him for what he did but when Billy was asked in that initial biography why God was blessing him with many coming to Christ. He said 'there is a lady in Pittsburg who gets my schedule. The week before the Crusade she goes to the city and walks through it praying for God to bring something.' Then the week of the Crusade she is in the hotel room praying for God to bless the preaching and the following week she stays to walk the city praying for the follow-up by the churches in the area.

Billy didn't point out Bev Shea, Cliff Barrows, the song 'Just As I Am' or the invitation given at the end of each Crusade but he pointed to the woman who prayed for him, his schedule and the Crusades. So there probably will be a lot of people in heaven coming to say 'Billy, thank you' but I think Billy went to a lady in Pittsburg and said to her 'Thank you for praying.' Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for Your Word and that there is that glorious prayer that we can pray even now – O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. My dear friend, it says in Romans 10:13 that those who call upon the Lord shall be saved and there are those who have called upon the Lord that you might call upon the Lord. If you want to make that decision to follow Him you can call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd love to talk and pray with you but you can go

directly to Him and say ‘Jesus, I’m a sinner and I call upon You.’ If you would like prayer for your prayer life to call upon Him for people to come to the Lord you can also call us here at Briarwood and we’d love to pray with you about that. Will we call upon the Lord for those who need to call upon Him and will we build that lifestyle of a heart’s desire to pray for their salvation? O God, do your work and it is your work. How great is our God, for I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

OBSERVATIONS ON AN EVANGELISTIC PRAYER

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

Five Marks of Effective Evangelistic Prayer

1. Passionate
2. Persistent
3. Focused
4. Trusting
5. Personal