

## No Proxies

Most of us are familiar with the word proxy. A proxy is someone authorized to act on our behalf for a specific purpose. Perhaps we are unable to attend a meeting so we ask a person to act as our proxy to vote on items in a manner that is in line with our desires. Proxies may allow us to express our voice and desires even when we cannot be at the function.

We may understand the idea of proxy when we consider a legal document known as a power of attorney. This gives to an individual the right and power to sign documents and engage in transactions in our place. Some have these instruments to protect their wishes when they are medically unable to speak or act for themselves.

Proxies have a tremendous power and responsibility. Giving this power to another is not something that should be done without careful consideration. Granting the power to someone to serve as your proxy should be carefully considered and limited in scope and time.

Are there times when we should not give the power of proxy to someone? From a legal perspective, that question may best be addressed by a competent attorney who can determine the answer based on careful consideration of all pertinent facts. From a spiritual perspective, let's see what we may learn of proxies from the Bible.

For our consideration, we will begin in Romans the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter. In the first five verses, Paul laments over the fact that his fellow countrymen and family failed to accept Jesus as the Christ. **I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish (Lit. pray) that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ (I.E. the Messiah) according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 9:1-5 NASB)**

As I read through these few verses, I see Paul in great anguish. Paul is here offering to become a proxy for those who refuse to see the Christ, the Messiah in Jesus. Paul is ready to give up his own salvation if he could save his kinsmen. That is not possible.

In reality, I have met with many people who have the same grief as Paul. They see their spouse, children, grand children and siblings lost without Jesus. They cry, they pray, and they would gladly trade places. However, salvation is a personal thing and God does not allow proxies.

If we look to the prophets of God, we may remember they came to warn Israel of the coming exile and loss of their kingdom because of their sins. Some may have complained that they were being punished for their parent's sins and not their own. Well, turn with me, if you will to the book of Ezekiel the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter. We will begin with verse 19.

**“Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity?’ When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live. The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.**

**“But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. Do I have any pleasure in the death of**

**the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live? (Ezekiel 18:19-23 NASB)**

There are two major points to note in this passage. The first one is found in verse 20. In fact, for today’s message, this is all we needed to read. Let’s read it again.

**The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. (Ezekiel 18:20 NASB)**

The second point is that God is not sitting in heaven waiting for an excuse to punish us. In fact, we just read that He would rather we turn from our sins and He will not remember our transgressions.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:24, **“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. (Matthew 16:24 NASB)**

Again, the implication is that an individual must be responsible for their own cross and for following Jesus. No where in scripture do we find that another person may take the cross for someone else.

As Peter shared the gospel message of salvation with Cornelius, the door opened for all people to come and receive salvation. Peter expressed that it is an individual response to the gospel. It is no longer a community response it is individual.

**Opening his mouth, Peter said:**

**“I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. (Acts 10:34-35 NASB)**

Since we come to the conclusion that people cannot be saved by proxy, what are we to do about those whom we love. Paul certainly expressed his desire for salvation on his kinsmen. We certainly want our loved ones to be saved. What are we to do?

First of all, we must share the gospel with them. When we read the passage from Matthew about making disciples, there is nothing in there that forces us to skip over our loved ones and share the good news with strangers. Listen and see if you find a clause that excludes our family and friends.

**And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20 NASB)**

Not only should we share the gospel with our loved ones, we should share it with everyone we meet. The early Christians fled from Jerusalem because of intense persecution. Notice Luke records in Acts what they did as they left Jerusalem.

**Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. (Acts 8:4 NASB)**

I didn’t read that they formed a committee to hire missionaries to spread the word. It was personal for them and they acted individually to share what they knew about the saving grace of God as revealed in Jesus.

This morning we are concerned about our family and friends. We’ve shared the gospel message and they no longer want to hear it. What do we do? I share a quote from Charles Spurgeon.

***“If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must***

*be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.”*

If we have warned them, have we prayed for them? Christians are called to pray. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we are told to pray constantly. Yet, so many Christians admit their prayer life is lacking. Those we hold dear that have not believed on Jesus should be in our prayers on a daily basis. In his letter to Timothy, Paul clearly tells us that we are to pray for all people. In his call for prayer, Paul underscores the fact that Jesus wants everyone to be saved.

**First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NASB)**

The prayers we offer may take many paths. Perhaps we pray for someone else to say the right words to find the right approach to persuade the lost to come to Jesus. Jesus even suggested a similar prayer in Luke 10:2 when he said: **And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. (Luke 10:2 NASB)**

On a more personal basis, we should never cease to pray for the individual. God hears us. **The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are *open* to their cry. (Psalm 34:15 NASB)**

James reminds us in his letter, that the prayers of a righteous person are effective.

**Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (James 5:16 NASB)**

We began this morning looking at Paul’s lament over his countrymen and their rejection of Jesus. Paul was powerless to save them. He could not become their proxy and trade his soul for theirs. When we think about people whom we hold dear and many of them have not come to Jesus, we may feel like Paul and would trade our soul to save them. Yet, just like Paul, we cannot be a proxy for them.

We can share the gospel message. We can pray (and I mean continually). At some point, we must hand it to God. Their salvation may become a reality long after our efforts. A seed may have been planted that germinates.

Use the tools given to us by God; but realize it is God and not us that produce the results.