

Loving Your Neighbor, What Does That Look Like?

Mark 12:29-31

29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments *is*: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

30 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment.

31 "And the second, like *it*, *is* this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

In the Old Testament commands we find many examples of how one could love his neighbor. The law laid down specific commands concerning lending money, returning wandering livestock, changing field borders, hospitality to a stranger etc.

But I think that the true beginning of all of that is in the idea of prayer for one another.

God answers prayer in two ways. He works on the things we are praying about and He works on us. As we convey to God our prayers, He makes them more real to us and gives us more of a heart for the things which we seek after. But God also responds to our prayers. He has chosen to work in answer to His children's prayers.

Can you imagine something more exciting than God waiting on us to pray so that He will accomplish His work in peoples lives and in this world. Now God also puts it in our heart to pray for certain people at certain times. God prompts us to pray for the things He is going to do, but that does not remove from us the responsibility to pray for those whom we should pray for.

This nation of ours needs prayer. Our communities need prayer. Our neighbors need us to be praying for them. The other church members need our prayers as we need theirs.

The Bible is filled with examples of people praying for other people. Jesus though is the best example. In John 17 Jesus prays for His disciples. He knows that His work here is almost finished.

1 ¶ Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

6 ¶ "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 "Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8

"For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. 9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. 10 "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

11 ¶ "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as *We are*. 12 "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

17 ¶ "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

20 ¶ "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as *We are one*: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

24 ¶ "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 "O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

But Moses also prayed on behalf of the people of God.

Ex 32:9-14

9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" 14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. NKJV

Aaron's outfit exemplified his priesthood on behalf of the people

Ex 28:11-12

12 And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders as a memorial. NKJV

But do you not see that now you are the priests of God.

1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. NKJV

Samuel said it would be a sin if he did not continue to pray for God's people.

1 Sam 12:23-25

23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king." NKJV

Paul tells us that this is one of our major roles in the Christian life.

Eph 6:18

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — NKJV

Notice that Paul tells Timothy that he must pray for others as well as the saints.

1 Tim 2:1-2

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. NKJV

James tells us we are to pray for one another.

James 5:15-18

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. NKJV

We will not know until heaven the effectualness of our prayers.

James 5:16-18

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1 John 5:16-17

16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death. NKJV