

9. God Saves Through the Truth

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr
Thursday, 24 January 2008

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. -- 1 Samuel 12:23

The Schaeffers never expected to convert anyone by prayer alone or truth alone. They prayed for unbelievers, but always so they or someone else could teach the truth to them in ways they would accept. The Holy Spirit uses the truth of God and Christians as the means for saving sinners; so, God teaches us to pray for the Holy Spirit to do His work in His way in us and others. And when we open our lives to the Holy Spirit's leading, He teaches us who to pray for, and how to pray for and share the truth with them.

We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to show us what specific truths the other person needs to hear to be saved or have their questions answered. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to give us the right spirit as we share the truth. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth, holiness, and love of Jesus through us in a way that will influence unbelievers to bow before Him and give Him their lives. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to empower all new believers to live daily according to the truths of the Bible and overcome sin and temptations. In answer to prayer, God will often reveal to us the exact needs of others, so we can pray precisely for those needs and not just for needs in general.

The prophet Samuel considered it a sin if he failed to pray for those in his care or if he failed to teach them the good and right way. God placed this same obligation upon Francis and Edith Schaeffer, and they accepted this responsibility. And then the Holy Spirit sometimes gave them foresight or knowledge into the needs of others that seems almost prophetic. Sometimes they would pray out loud for people, and the Holy Spirit would move them to pray specifically about their unspoken needs. We will never have great power in prayer until we take upon ourselves this same obligation that God has revealed to every Christian through the prophet Samuel. Certainly, if we are filled with the Spirit, we will have the same attitude and sense of responsibility for others that he had.

Many have been prayed for and not converted, because some Christians have not shared the truth of God with them or prayed for God to give them the opportunity to do so. Others have not been saved because even though the truth has been taught, Christians have not prayed for the right truth to share at the right time in the right spirit, and for the Holy Spirit (who understands the working of each person's mind) to apply the truth in the way that will lead to salvation. The right truths taught in the wrong way or in the wrong spirit or without love or without sufficient prayer can harden the sinner's heart and make it more difficult later to lead them to the Savior. The Schaeffers helped many gospel-hardened sinners come to the Savior by praying for the Holy Spirit to work all the right elements together as they shared the truth with them.

As much as they loved others, the Schaeffers knew they needed to please God more than man; so they did not try to please people by withholding Biblical truths that some might consider unpleasant. As they spoke about the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ, and said that He was the only way to the Father, the Holy Spirit revealed a supernatural joy and love that attracted some instead of repelling them. The Holy Spirit made an authentic difference in the Schaeffers' lives through His truth and their prayers, and this influenced some to turn from atheism and other religions to Jesus Christ. If they had not spent much time in prayer and Bible study, some would never have asked questions in their home and seriously considered the Bible's answers.

The Schaeffer family prayed that everything they did would show forth the glory and holiness of God. They prayed that their everyday decisions and behavior would demonstrate the reality of God's involvement in our world. When they began their work in Switzerland, they could have taken what some believe is the only kind approach and not spoken the truth about the only way to heaven--by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. They could have lied, by not telling the whole truth about Jesus' teachings about himself, or they could have cut out of their message those things in the Bible that they knew would displease the unbelieving sinner. However, the Schaeffers strove for complete honesty and opposed the methods and teaching of a liberal theology that tried to accommodate itself to every person and religion. Instead, they prayed that God would help them speak the truth in the most kind and loving way they could. When a Jew, Hindu, or Moslem asked them about Christianity, they could have tried to be tolerant and said nice things about these religions, but instead they spoke the truth with love and showed concern for the person.

The Schaeffer family knew that much prayer would be needed for the Holy Spirit's leading and power, if they were to show forth the love of God for sinners through their lives and words as they spoke to non-Christians. As Fran preached or answered questions, Edith and the girls prayed for the Holy Spirit to make Fran and his words effective in the

conversion of sinners. They considered their prayers a real part of this work. Their faithfulness in both prayer and speaking the truth boldly in love enabled God to use them more effectively than many others, and makes them an example for us.

We need to remember that speaking the truth is the kindest thing we can do, so we need to pray that God will help us do so kindly. When we speak the truth about Jesus, we are speaking about the One who died for sinners with a broken heart of love for them. When we speak the truth about Jesus, we are teaching people how they too can have eternal life--the greatest gift that God can give through us. But if we speak with an unkind spirit as we teach about a way that seems to many so unkind, Satan may blind them to the very kindness of God which can lead to salvation. Only much prayer for the Holy Spirit to help us be kind and bold at the same time will make our witnessing effective for many.

After some of the girls who visited Fran and Edith were led to the Savior, they took on the same loving concern for the lost that they saw in the Schaeffer family. When Mr. Exhenry came to the Savior, he wanted his whole family to hear the good news and he tried to make them interested in Jesus Christ. The Schaeffers' witnessing led believers to be remade in the image of Christ, and to their consciously choosing to take on the Christ-like spirit and characteristics they saw modeled for them in the Schaeffer family. Our tasks and their possible consequences are awesome to contemplate, and when we see the enormity of our responsibilities, we are driven to praying for others and to teaching as many as possible the good and right way through our words and actions. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, as I think about the answers to prayer that the Schaeffer family received, help me to praise you and marvel at your love. But keep me from walking away from my reading about prayer and not practicing prayer as I ought. I do pray for your Holy Spirit to place your burden for the lost on my heart, and to teach me how I can reach them with the talents that you have given me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

© Copyright L. G. Parkhurst, Jr. Revised Edition 2008
Write For Permission To Reprint Any Parts Or Chapters
Use the Contact Us address or e-mail address form on tihs website.