

## “Should We Pray for Terrorists?”

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In the news this week is an article reporting that there was an angry response to someone who put in a request to pray for the soul of Osama bin Laden at a Catholic church in West Palm Beach, FL. The church responded that they have not ever refused a prayer request from a parishioner to be placed in its bulletin. A local news channel interviewed several people who shared their anger over the fact that anyone would dare pray for someone who is so evil and has killed so many. I am not surprised that this stirs up the deepest of emotions, but I am surprised that a supposed “Christian” would allow their emotion to ultimately and finally triumph over obedience to the Lord’s commands.

Interestingly, I think we absolutely should not pray for Osama bin Laden, but for a different reason; he is dead. Neither the Bible, Jesus, nor the Apostles ever encouraged prayer for a dead person’s soul. In fact, we are told in Hebrews 9:27, “it is appointed for man to die once and then the judgment” (see also Luke 16:19-31 where those who died were sent immediately to their final place).

Nevertheless, should we pray for other terrorists? If you take the Bible seriously and seek to obey Jesus, then the answer is an unambiguous “yes”. Jesus teaches us that He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). Granted, we don’t necessarily have to like our enemies nor do we approve of their actions, but avoiding praying for them is not an option. This is one of the foundations of authentic Biblical Christianity. Nobody alive today is beyond the reach of God’s restorative love. Jesus modeled this type of love in that even while He was hanging on the cross, He prayed that the Father would forgive the exact people doing this dastardly deed (Luke 23:34).

This truth should be such an encouragement to each of us. Has Satan convinced you that you are beyond God’s reach? Is he whispering in your ear that God could never forgive you because you are just too far gone? Don’t believe it! Paul the apostle, who consented to the murder of Christians, was forgiven and wrote this, “This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ - and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). There is always hope in this life if you are willing to repent of those sins and put your faith and trust in Jesus! Have a blessed week!

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