

The Priority of Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Paul has offered some personal help to Timothy in the first chapter. He has done so in the form of positive and negative encouragements.

In this chapter he moves from personal instructions for Timothy personally to Timothy's pastoral work.

It is interesting and important because it is instructive to us that Paul's first words to Timothy about pastoral ministry are concerned with prayer. He

- Emphasizes its importance
- Defends its value
- Clarifies its practice

For Paul, prayer is the first and most important evangelistic tool.

There is a sense in which prayer isn't really even the focus of this passage but the means to Paul's point.

Why? Let's examine the passage.

1

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,

Paul's 'first' ensures that Timothy understands the priority of prayer. By saying that it is first, Paul relegates all other pastoral ministry to a secondary tier.

First = proto = first in succession, rank or honor; chief or principal

This does not mean that it is the 'first' thing to do as in numerical order but of the first priority.

Urge = parakaleo = to come alongside, to admonish or encourage

The word is a compound of παρά (near) and καλεω (to call) so it means literally "to call near."

John 14:6 - *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,*

Paul is helping Timothy by reminding him that the greatest help he can offer people is prayer

a) Supplications = deesis = need, indigence, privation,

b) Prayers = proseche = the general word for prayer addressed to God

c) Intercessions = enteusix = to convers with a cause

d) Thanksgivings = eucharistia = thankfulness

- Supplication is asking for something
- Prayers is a general word for communicating with God
- Intercessions is making requests for others
- Giving of thanks is gratitude for what God has already done

All kinds of prayers are to be offered for all kinds of people. It is easy to pray for those we love. We should also pray for others.

Paul is encouraging Timothy to take advantage of speaking with the Sovereign of the universe on behalf of others.

If prayer was a waste of time, Paul would not encourage Timothy to make it the first priority. Since the text is inspired by God, God is encouraging Timothy (and us) to understand its value and to make it a priority.

Ephesians 3:13-21 - So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

What is one key to staying strong-hearted?

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

To depend on God and not on others is one way to remain encouraged, particularly when it comes to evangelism

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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.*

For whom are we praying?

The “all’ of verse 1 probably means “all kinds,” according to verse 2.

‘all’ = pas = individually = each, every, any. Collectively = some of the types

Kings = basileus = king or leader

Early Christians were often accused of undermining the state because they claimed a higher Lord other than Caesar. Yet they would point out that they supported the state by being good citizens and by praying *for* the emperor, not *to* him.

“We pray for all the emperors, that God may grant them long life, a secure government, a prosperous family, vigorous troops, a faithful senate, an obedient people; that the whole world may be in peace; and that God may grant, both to Caesar and to every man, the accomplishment of their just desires.”

- Tertullian

High positions = hyperoche = pre-eminence, superiority, excellence

There is no one in such high authority that they don’t need salvation in Jesus.

Peaceful = eremos = outwardly tranquil

Quiet = hesychios = inwardly peaceful

At the time Paul wrote this, Christianity was not yet an illegal religion in the Roman Empire and it was still considered a branch of Judaism.

- This is for our comfort

Jeremiah 29:7 - But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

But it is not only for our comfort but so that we can carry out our purpose in the world as Christians.

1 Timothy 6:1 - Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

Godliness = eusebeia = reverence, respect, piety

Honesty = semnotes = a characteristic of a thing which entitles it to reverence or respect

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior

It is enough for the purpose to be a “good” and “pleasing,” life, but again, the purpose of doing so is not simply for the sake of doing so.

4

who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Apostle simply means that there is no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation. God wishes that the gospel should be proclaimed to all without exception. Paul intended to demonstrate that it is our duty to consider, not what kind of persons the authorities were at that time, but what God wished them to be.

5

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus,*

Many people think that God would be unfair or narrow minded to have only one way to salvation; but – To say that God is unfair for this, one would have to look at Jesus dying on the cross and say, “Thanks God; I appreciate the gesture, but that isn’t enough. You’re going to have to do a

little more than that, because that is only one way and if You are fair You will make several ways."

The God-man is the "*one [and only] mediator*" of the New Covenant "*between God and man (men),*"

- providing salvation man-ward and
- facilitating prayer God-ward.

In Paul's day,

- the Jews looked to Moses (Gal. 3:19) or angels (Heb. 2:5) as mediators,
- the Gnostics looked to intermediary deities (aeons).

In our own day,

- Roman Catholics and others look to dead "saints" for mediatorial benefits, and
- Buddhists look to their ancestors.

But the teaching of verse 5 is clear: the only "mediator" between the only God and people is Jesus Christ.

This is the great distinctive truth of Christianity. Christians are exclusive concerning Jesus as the only way to the Father.

Job 9:29-35 - I shall be condemned; why then do I labor in vain? ³⁰ If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands

with lye, ³¹ yet you will plunge me into a pit, and my own clothes will abhor me. ³² For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. ³³ There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both. ³⁴ Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. ³⁵ Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself.

6

*who gave himself as a ransom for all,
which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

There is enough in the work of Jesus on the cross to save everyone, even kings. This may have been disturbing to the church.

The ‘king’ was Nero at this time.

ransom = antilytron = what is given in exchange for another as a price

antilutron = *anti* (signifying substitution) and *lutron* (the word used for the ransom of a slave or prisoner).

The *antilutron* is a payment given instead of a slave or prisoner—that is, in substitution for him or her. The person holding the slave accepts the payment as a substitute.

Galatians 3:13 – *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*

The law held us captive in its condemnation, and no one but Christ could pay the price to release us from that bondage.

This word and this verse clearly set forth the idea that Jesus Christ died as the Substitute.

7

For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Preacher = keryx = Noun =

- a herald or messenger vested with public authority
Someone who conveyed.
- The official messengers of a king or magistrate who gave public summons.
- In the NT, God's ambassador; the herald of the divine word

2 Peter 2:5 - *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

Apostle = Apostolos = a delegate, messenger

Teacher = didaskalos = teacher

Paul uses preaching primarily to describe the initial delivery of the gospel message (see Rom. 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 1:8).

Teaching, on the other hand, refers to deepening others in Christian doctrine (see 1 Tim. 1:3; 3:2; 4:11).

Conclusion:

The world and the way it goes about its business promotes the idea that God does not exist or that we do not need God. In contrast, Paul and all of Scripture teach that we are absolutely dependent on God (John 15:5). The degree to which we believe that will be the degree to which we pray in all the circumstances of life.

