

First Things First

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[0 : 00] So we just started a brand new series last Sunday. We're going to be working through the letter of 1 Timothy. And if you missed last week, then I would encourage you to go to our church website, davidsonscbc.org, and listen to that message this week.

All of the background to this letter, the historical context, who is Paul, who is Timothy, where are they, what's the occasion of this letter, what's the purpose of this letter, that's all the first half of last Sunday's message and the recordings on the website.

So if you missed it, I'd encourage you to take some time to listen to that this week because that's going to be the foundation for what we're going to be hearing from this letter from now until Christmas.

So last Sunday, we looked at Paul's introduction and the first instructions that Paul gives to Timothy in verses 3 to 8. This morning, we're going to skip over verses 9 to 20.

We'll come back to those in a couple weeks. And we're going to jump right into chapter 2. And we're going to be looking at the first eight verses there in chapter 2. I'm going to read them, and then we'll jump into things here.

[1 : 12] Paul says, I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

This is good and pleases God, our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

This has now been witnessed to at the proper time, and for this purpose, I was appointed a herald and an apostle. I'm telling the truth. I'm not lying. And a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. And once again, I just want to remind us briefly of Paul's purpose in writing this letter.

Just a few verses ahead in chapter 3, he says that he has written this letter. I'm writing you these instructions so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

[2 : 48] So Paul is writing on behalf of Christ to give instruction to the church about how they should live their lives as followers of Jesus. There's a kind of living that goes with our faith in Jesus.

In fact, it actually flows out of our faith in Jesus. And so that's what Paul's doing here in chapter 2, verses 1 to 15. He's giving these instructions about how we should live as members of God's household.

I'm going to start by summarizing these verses, and then we'll look at them a little more closely. So we can break this section up into three parts.

The first verse there, I'm calling it the prime directive for everyone in the church. If you're a Star Trek fan, you'll appreciate that. The prime instruction, the main mandate for everyone in the church. Then in verses 2 to 7, there is what I'm going to call the gospel rabbit trail. And then in the latter part, verses 8 to 15, specific instructions for men and specific instructions for women.

[3 : 57] But we're only going to get as far as verse 8 today in the instructions for men. So Paul's prime directive is this. Pray, pray, pray, and give thanks for all people.

He says, I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people.

Even though Paul has already given some instructions earlier in this letter to Timothy, he highlights this particular instruction as being of first importance.

He says, I urge then, first of all. So as Paul reflects on his recent visit to that church there in Ephesus, and what the Christians there in the church need to do, this is at the top of the list. First of all the other things, pray. Prayer. What is prayer? I think we kind of all know what prayer is. [5 : 05] Very simply, it's talking to God. It's speaking to the unseen, living God. And Paul gives us some different words to describe prayer here.

The first word, petitions, has to do with asking God to meet our urgent needs. The second word, prayers, is just a general word, but also means kind of to ask God for things. The third word, intercession, means to ask God for something on behalf of someone else. And the fourth word, thanksgiving, means what it sounds like. Not asking God for things, but saying thank you to God for things that he has given to us. And then finally, at the end of the sentence, is who we're to ask or give thanks for? He says, for all people. On behalf of all people. So this is mainly all about asking God to meet the needs of other people.

[6 : 12] Asking him to grant things for other people. Asking to act on behalf of other people. And giving thanks in relation to other people. This is what Christ longs for the Christians in Ephesus to do.

First of all the other things. And you know, when we look at these various words, there's a lot of similarities. There's some overlap in their meaning. And so in some ways, it's just like he's saying it three times over. Petitions, prayers, intercessions. Pray, pray, pray. Pray. I want to hear all kinds of prayers for all people. Jesus is saying. And give thanks too. Do you hear the urgency of this instruction? How are we doing as a church when it comes to prayer for others?

Well, we have two things that we do that are focused entirely on prayer. The first is we have a prayer meeting on the first Tuesday of every month here at the church at 7. And this usually lasts about an hour.

[7 : 25] And for the part where we're praying, it's almost entirely focused on praying for others. Some of you have never been to this prayer meeting or are very, very infrequently come.

And I want to ask you, if that's you, why? Do you believe that Jesus would have us meet together and ask him for things on behalf of others? And that he will do these things when we pray, when we ask him for things. This is what he wanted to see, first of all, in the church at Ephesus.

And really, once a month is not that often. And for just an hour is not that long. And so I want to encourage you. Come out to that prayer meeting that we have.

When I first came here six years ago, we had maybe two or three women, sometimes weekly, on and off, gathering just in the morning to do some prayer. And then it kind of fell by the wayside as some people moved and things changed.

[8 : 34] And lately, we've been blessed to see sometimes as many as seven to ten people out at these prayer meetings. And so that's a real encouragement. And so I just want to encourage you. Let's keep on with this.

Let's press into this. This is our opportunity. To gather and to pray. And that's what the Lord is really looking for here in the church of Ephesus.

And I think in all of our churches. The second thing we do is what we just did. Sunday mornings, almost every Sunday, we just take time during the service to pray. And I'm so thankful that all of you feel so free to just share what's on your heart.

And what you know of for needs that we can pray for. Let's keep doing that. And let's know why. So those are the corporate moments that we have dedicated to prayer.

But what are some of the other ways that we can ensure that we're giving prayer the time that Christ thinks it should have in our lives? I was reading a book this summer called What Church Can Be by Matthew Cruz.

[9 : 39] And he offered this very practical, simple idea. And I'm sure probably most of you have heard it before. It's nothing new or revolutionary. He said, start and surround everything in prayer.

We often say grace before the meal. We give thanks to God for the food. But what if we did that all through the day when we start anything?

When we start everything? Start it with a quick prayer and give thanks at the end for God's supply. God's help that he gave us the strength to do that thing.

I'm thinking about cutting the grass. Lord, please give me the strength and the energy to cut the grass again. And help me think about the things that are beneficial to your kingdom as I do it. And then thank him for his provision when the job is done. For you students, pray and ask God to help you with that assignment that you're looking at on your desk.

[10:41] And you, for whatever reason, I don't want to do this. Or test. And then thank the Lord when he provides and helps you through it.

In Matt Cruz's book, he says, referring to his church, he says, we often pause, sometimes multiple times in a meeting or conversation, and sometimes even mid-sentence to pray.

He says, the Father is never more than a word away. I thought that was really good. So how is your prayer life doing right now?

Do you have time set aside each day to pray? To talk to the God who created the heavens and the earth? To share your heart with him?

And also to ask for his intervention in your life and in the lives of others? Do you know that he wants you to talk to him and to ask him for things?

[11:44] All kinds of things. And especially things for other people. That's another thing we see here. For all people. It's easy to spend my prayer time on me.

And on how I feel. And what I need. And we shouldn't stop that. The Lord tells us to do that. But let's not miss out on praying for others. Thinking of others who really need help. Today.

And this week. So this is Paul's instruction. The first of all, top of the list instruction to Timothy. For the church there in Ephesus. And to us today.

It's pray. Pray. Pray. And give thanks for all people. What will you do differently in response to these words of Christ?

May the Lord give us all eyes to see just how dependent we are on him. And how much we need his grace. Now as Paul continues on here.

[12:44] He goes down a bit of a rabbit trail. And this is not a bad thing. Sometimes rabbit trails are a good thing. In this case. Christ speaks through this rabbit trail in verses 2 to 7.

And we're going to move pretty quickly through this section. And I've called it a gospel rabbit trail. Because Paul loves the gospel. And he often gets off of what he was saying to the gospel.

He wants to tell us the good news of Jesus again. And so we're going to hear that here in these first couple verses. So it all starts with him telling us a little bit more about who we should be praying for. Of these all people. And he tells us in verse 2. So don't forget to pray for the people in government says Paul.

And if we apply these words to us today. We're talking prime ministers. Presidents. Members of parliament. Town council.

[13:54] Judges. Then Paul goes a little further down the rabbit trail. What's the goal? Why should we not forget to pray for them? Well the goal is that we may live peaceful and quiet lives.

Devoted to God. In all godliness. Devoted to God. And in all holiness. Meaning without compromise. That's the goal.

And sometimes governments and whoever is in charge can get in the way and hinder that. And so we should pray for favor with the government. So that we can be unhindered. Just live out our faith in Jesus as his church.

Without any opposition. And who knows maybe sometimes in answer to our prayers. God would even use the government to make laws or policies that would protect our freedom to gather. Or protect us from some of those opponents that rise up. A little further down the trail. This is good and pleasing to God.

[14:58] Says Paul. So when we're able to live out our lives peacefully and quietly. Fully devoted to God. Without compromise.

God sees that as good. He's pleased by that. Don't pray for persecution. To purify the church. Pray that we'd be able to live out our faith.

Without hindrance. This is good and it pleases God. From there Paul brings in this truth.

He says God is our savior. And in verse 4. He wants all people to be saved. And to come to a knowledge of the truth. So he's a saving God.

And he wants all people to be saved. And how will that come about? Well there's kind of two implications that rise out of this section here.

[15:56] And we're not going to spend a lot of time on these. But just know that they're here. The first one. I mean he's told us already. Pray for all people. And then now in verse 4. God wants all people to be saved.

So there's this implication. If that's what God wants. And we're to ask God to do things. We can and we should pray for anyone to be saved.

Who do you know? That's lost. That doesn't know Christ. Pray for their salvation. And the second thing that kind of arises here.

And if you really kind of look at the flow. Of what he's saying here. Pray for the leaders. Pray for those in government. So that we can be unhindered. And live out our faith. Because God is a God who desires all people to be saved.

There's an implication here. It's that people come to a saving knowledge of the truth. Through our public witness. If we're persecuted. If we're forced underground as a church.

[17:03] The gospel is hidden. From the people around us. So this is a reason to pray for favor. With those in government. So that we can just continue shining the light in the darkness.

Like that city on a hill. That Jesus talked about. And then from here. Paul ends up going straight into the good news.

About Jesus. The gospel. He's been talking about how God is our savior. How he wants all people to be saved. And it's like at this point. It's coming. He wants all people to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Well what is that truth that saves us? And he lays it out for us. The truth that we need to know. To be saved in verses 5 and 6.

And this is how he says it. For there is one God.

[18:06] And one mediator. Between God and mankind. The man. Christ Jesus. Amen. So there's one go between.

There's only one. Who stands in the gap between. God. And us. Human beings. So we have. A holy God.

A just God. A righteous God. A good God. And then we have. Us. Human beings. A sinful humanity. A rebellious humanity.

Guilty. Punishment deserving. Humanity. But the good news. Paul says. Is that we have a mediator. Somebody who stands in the gap. Between God.

And us. We have. The man. Christ Jesus. King Jesus. And according to Paul.

[19:04] He is one of us. The other scriptures. They tell us about Jesus. That he is from heaven. That he is God. We know that. But Paul says.

He is. The man. He is also human. He is one of us. The human being. Born of Mary. The son of David. And what did this mediator do?

The man. Christ Jesus. Who gave himself. As a ransom. For all people. Paul uses metaphorical language here. He paid the cost.

Required. To set us free. From that guilt. From our sin. That's what happened. When Jesus suffered. And died. At the cross.

He suffered and died. Not for his own sins. He had none. But for ours. So that we could be forgiven. So that we could be restored to God. His death.

[20:02] Was the ransom price. Paid. To free us. To restore us. To our maker. To the God who loves us. So much. I love this little rabbit trail.

Paul loves the good news of Jesus so much. That he just steps completely away. From giving instruction. And talking about prayer. I got to tell you about this good news of Jesus. All the instructions.

The prayer. That's important. But this good news. Is supreme. Do you know. That Jesus loves you. That he gave his life as a ransom for you.

Because God wants all people to be saved. He wants you to be saved. Jesus is the only way.

He's the one mediator. Between God and man. And there is no other. Have you called out to him? Have you believed in him? Have you received his gracious and free gift. Of salvation?

[21:03] If you haven't. I urge you. Do it today. Do it today. Do it. Paul then goes on in the last part of verse 6.

In the first part of verse 7. To describe how this ransom paid by Jesus at the cross was witnessed. There were people who saw this. This is what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are about. They tell

the story of what they saw.

And Paul tells us that he himself was also chosen to be an apostle. To be a preacher. Someone who would proclaim that good news about Jesus. To the non-Jewish peoples.

The Gentiles. And now that Paul has gone on this gospel rabbit trail. This beautiful gospel rabbit trail. Right to the end. He comes back to where he was before all this.

With verse 8. Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray. Lifting up holy hands. Without anger or disputing.

[22 : 01] So there's a sense in which Paul's just kind of coming back to the instruction. Back to the subject of prayer. But there's also a sense in which he's going forward.

Now he's going to focus on some specifics for men. And specifics for women. And he's going to add in some other things too. Some other instructions. But what surprises me every single time I read this passage.

Is that the first thing that he tells the men to do. Is to pray. The same thing that he just told the whole church to do. He just said that back up in verse 1.

Pray, pray, pray. All these kinds of prayers. Why does he feel the need to say it again? Specifically. To the men.

And it's not just that the men in Ephesus were lacking in prayer. He says, I want the men everywhere to pray.

[23 : 02] Lifting up holy hands. Sometimes maybe we men have thick skulls. Or we do hear it.

But then we just let it go out the other ear. We forget it. Maybe we weren't in our listening box.

When Paul said it the first three times. Back up in verse 1.

And so he tells us a fourth time. In light of all this that I've been saying. Men, listen. I want you to pray. Is it that we men tend to flounder.

And struggle with prayer. More often than the women. Or is it that Christ wants us men to take the lead. When it comes to prayer. To lead our families.

And our church into prayer. Maybe both. And there's not really any wiggle room here. I mean. I want the men everywhere to pray.

[24 : 03] So men. Let me ask you a question. Is Davidson, Saskatchewan included in everywhere? Is Crake included in everywhere?

Is out on wherever you live on an acreage. Or farm included in everywhere? Yes. So then is Jesus Christ.

Through the Apostle Paul. Speaking to you. And to me here. I want you to pray. If you're a man and a follower of Jesus. He's saying it to you.

God wants us men. To make our speaking to him. A priority. He wants us men. To make our relationship with him.

A priority. Why else would he single us out like this? And tell us a fourth time. Too many men. Even in the church.

[25 : 09] Are apathetic. Just don't care. Just along for the ride. Are too busy with work. Too busy with hobbies. Too busy with sports. To be spending time in prayer.

We need to come to our senses men. And we need to hear these words of Jesus to us. I want the men everywhere to pray. Paul then gives us two more instructions.

To go along with that instruction to pray. He addresses two problems. That we as men tend to have. Perhaps a little more than women.

He says I want the men. To pray. Lifting up holy hands. Without anger. Or disputing. Without anger or disputing.

Let's talk about these two things. For just a couple minutes. We are to be without anger. And the reason is because anger.

[26 : 14] Is a sin. Now. Yeah. There is a thing. Is righteous anger. That is such a thing. But in the Bible. God tells us that most of our anger. Is not of that sort.

It's of the unrighteous. Sort. The sinful sort. Let me ask you a question. Are you angry. At anyone. In this church.

Outside this church. From the past. Are you harboring resentment. Towards someone. Are you hanging on to a grievance.

Or an offense. These things. Are a problem. They don't fit with the faith.

That we have in Jesus Christ. They fit with the flesh. They fit with that sinful nature. Listen again. To what Jesus. And Paul. And James. Had to say about anger.

[27 : 17] In other moments. Jesus said it like this. He said. You have heard that it was said. To the people long ago. You shall not murder. And anyone who murders. Will be subject to judgment.

But I tell you. That anyone who is angry. With a brother or sister. Will be subject to judgment. James said it like this.

He said. Everyone should be quick to listen. Slow to speak. And slow to become angry. Because man's anger. Does not produce the righteousness.

That God desires. Therefore. He said. Get rid of all. Moral. Filth. And the evil. That is so. Prevalent. So that's again. The tendency. Yes. We can get angry. But more often than not. It doesn't produce the righteousness. That God desires. It's not that righteous. Anger. In fact.

[28 : 16] He goes so far. As to say. In the next breath. It's moral filth. It's evil. Get rid of it. Finally. Paul to the Ephesians.

In his letter to the Ephesians. Says this. Get rid. Of all. Bitterness. Rage. And anger. So men. We need to pray.

And we need to do so. Without anger. How are you doing with anger? Do you need to ask the Lord for help with this?

And anger is sometimes one of those things that we learn to manage. We learn to refrain from letting it leak out. At church. At work.

But usually it comes out at home. With our family. How are you doing? Do you need to ask your spouse or children.

[29 : 16] How you're doing with this? Do you need to ask forgiveness to them? And apologize for moments this past week? Without anger.

The second thing he says is I want the men everywhere to pray. Lifting up holy hands without anger. Without disputing. This is an interesting one.

There's an implication here. Men. We need to come together. To pray. Why would he tell us not to dispute.

When we pray. If he really just intends for us to pray. All by ourselves at home. I want you to pray. Without disputing. We need to come together.

Men. And pray. And we need to do so without disputing. Without arguing. Without fighting. And let's be honest. Sometimes the flesh does get the better of us.

[30 : 20] And we. Give in to that temptation. We say things. We do things. We offend someone. We get into an argument. We fight. But what will we do.

Afterwards. What will we do with that tension. Now there between that person and us. That broken relationship.

Will we be real men. And take action. And take action. And humble ourselves. Before that brother. Or sister.

And admit what we did. Or said that was wrong. And on the other side of things. Will we forgive. Will we truly forgive. And let go. Of that thing that was said. Or done to us. Or will we do that ungodly thing. And let the dispute just linger.

[31 : 18] Beneath the surface. For who knows how long. Hold on to that grievance. Forever. Forever. But he never apologized to me.

Why should I forgive him? Why should I let that go? Listen to what Paul says in his letter to the Colossians. He says. Therefore as God's chosen people.

Holy and dearly loved. Clothe yourselves. With compassion. Kindness. Humility. Gentleness. And patience.

Bear with each other. And forgive one another. If any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive. As the Lord forgave you. So we're to bear with one another men.

And we are to forgive one another. Do you have a grievance against someone? And the Lord forgave you. Of all your sins. Would you now withhold the same.

[32 : 23] From your brother. Or your sister. Look at what the Lord did. To get you off the hook. For all your sins. Would you now keep your brother. Your sister.

On the hook. For the things that they did. Or said to you. We may not have disputes every day. But have we resolved the disputes.

That we've had. In the past. Have we truly. Humbled ourselves. Acknowledged our sin. To others.

And have we truly forgiven. From our hearts. How many times should I forgive my brother. If he sins against me. Said Peter. To Jesus.

On one occasion. Up to seven. Jesus answered. I tell you. Not seven times. But 77 times. Beyond what you can even really keep track of.

[33 : 24] In the course of a relationship. Keep going. Keep forgiving. On another occasion. Freely you have received. Freely give.

I'm going to stop here today. We're going to save. Everything that follows. Paul's instructions. To the women. For next Sunday. Let's just quickly recap. A little bit here.

What's the big thing. That Paul wants us to do. As a church. Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray. And he reminds us.

Of the precious gospel. Of what Jesus did. For us. Our mediator. Who paid our ransom. With his life. And then to us men. In case we still didn't get it.

Pray. Without anger. And without disputing. Resolve those disputes. Those fights.

[34 : 21] Those arguments. Come together. And pray. So men. It's time to lead by example. If you haven't been already. I encourage you.

Come to our monthly prayer meetings. Come out to lead. On the second and fourth Tuesdays. Of the month. Where we'll spend some time. Praying. Together. As men. I don't know. Maybe the Lord will do something. In our hearts.

Maybe we'll end up doing. Some kind of a weekly thing. Before work starts. Gather for a. For a half an hour. Even. Or something. Somewhere. As a group of men. And pray.

What might God do. In our hearts. What might he do. In the hearts of our families. The hearts of our church. The hearts of the people. In this community.

If we pray. Pray. Pray. And give thanks. Well. As Nate. Said it. Very well. We can only find out.

[35 : 16] By doing it. Father in heaven. Thank you for your word. And we confess.

Our shortcomings. And our failures. To you right now. Lord. None of us. Has been. Awesome at this. It's a hard thing. We're surrounded. By a world. That pulls our attention.

Away from you. In so many different ways. And sometimes. We lose sight of you. Even though you are. God.

We lose sight of your love. We lose sight of your power. We lose sight of your. Eagerness to act. And intervene in our lives. So I pray Lord.

That you would put these words. Deep in our hearts. And that. Especially for us men. We would respond. We would change. We would open our hearts to you. Full throttle.

[36 : 18] We ask for the glory of Christ. Amen.