

The Need for Prayer – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs the church through Timothy to seek the humility of prayer
2. aim – to cause us to pray for and lead godly and submissive lives as we seek the salvation of all
3. passage – 1 Timothy 2:1-15

b. outline

1. The Need for Prayer in Godly Living (1 Timothy 2:1-3)
2. The Need for Prayer in Evangelism (1 Timothy 2:4-7)
3. The Need for Prayer in Submissiveness (1 Timothy 2:8-15)

c. opening

1. my **opening comments** re: a) Bryan's preaching, b) the trip to Playa Azul, c) 1 Timothy as a letter
2. the **indicative-imperative** structure of the letter
 - a. Paul begins this letter with an indicative statement (**i.e.** a fundamental truth; **chap. 1**), which he then *implements* as a series of imperatives (**i.e.** as instructions to Timothy; **chaps. 2-6**)
 - b. **the indicative: the church of Jesus Christ is defined by the boundaries of its doctrinal truth**
 1. the church *ceases* to be the church when it embraces something "other" than apostolic truth
 2. the charge to Timothy was to confront those in the church teaching heterodox beliefs – those who had "*wandered away*" from sound apostolic doctrine and were guilty of leading many away from the true faith, using "*endless speculations*" as a means of exercising power over others
 - c. **(now) the imperatives:** those things that Paul would have Timothy to *do as the means to combat these false teachings* and to reestablish a sound footing in both *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*
 1. **question:** imagine a young seminarian being sent to his first church – what would be the first thing(s) that he would do as he takes leadership there, *especially* as he comes to discover the rather "stunted" nature of this particular church, in both doctrine and practice?
 - a. **i.e.** he would strive to "make his mark," exercise his authority, and establish functions and programs that he believes will "grow" the church up from where it is now
 2. **question:** what would be *Paul's* advice to *Timothy* as to the first actions to be taken against the dysfunction present in the church at Ephesus? (**read 1 Timothy 2:1-3**)
 - a. **note** "*first of all, then*" = a clear indication that Paul is now giving a list of imperatives

I. The Need for Prayer in Godly Living (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Content

a. an imperative to pray (v. 1)

1. Paul's first imperative to the church (through Timothy): **pray!**
2. Paul uses a number of *synonyms* for prayer as his imperative:
 - a. "*supplications*" = petitions; pleas; requests; the act of appealing to God for something personal
 1. in the "Lord's Prayer" (or Disciple's Prayer) of **Matthew 6**, Jesus includes a number of supplications in his model prayer (**e.g.** "*your will be done on earth*", "*give us ... our daily bread*", "*forgive us our debts*", "*lead us not into temptation*", "*deliver us from evil*")
 2. Paul *probably* includes this *first* in the list because:
 - a. he knows that our natural condition is such that we are needy creatures
 - b. he knows that what Timothy will need *most* is the power of God to work (not just him)
 - c. he knows that what *the church* will need is the Spirit of God moving in specific ways
 3. **for us:** in the structure of prayer that we offer on Wednesday evenings, we push supplications (and intercessions) to the end, because we believe a proper attitude of worship *must* precede whatever requests we make of God (**i.e.** to ask in worship and gratitude; **see below**)
 - b. "*prayers*" = either a place for prayer or the substance of prayer (an accusative noun)
 1. **i.e.** a generic word for the *substance* of what one speaks to God in the *act* of prayer
 - a. the verb form of the word appears **x85** in the N.T.; the noun (as here) appears **x36**
 2. **IOW:** general conversations with God regarding all manner of things

- c. “*intercessions*” = requests on behalf of another; prayers of concern for others
 - 1. to intercede is to intervene *before God* on behalf of another – a form of *supplication* for others
 - a. **i.e.** to put yourself “in between” God and someone’s issue or need
 - b. **e.g.** as Christ *intercedes* between us and the Father (re: mediates his wrath against our sin)
 - c. **e.g.** the term *Paraclete* (**i.e.** the Spirit) means both comforter and intercessor
 - d. “*thanksgivings*” = expressions of gratitude; words of gratefulness; lit. the giving of thanks
 - 1. “*eucharistia*” (Eucharist) – the Lord’s Supper as a rite of gratitude before God for the *completed* work of Christ on our behalf; not a “continuing sacrifice” (as in Romanism), but a finished work
 - 2. **LOW:** the **attitude** that should characterize every true follower of Christ, and from which all prayer should ultimately come
 - a. **i.e.** all supplication and intercession (askings) should flow from an attitude of gratitude
 - b. (**again**) why we put praise and thanksgiving *first* in our public times of prayer
3. **Paul uses a number of synonyms for prayer as his imperative that the church should employ every kind of prayer at its disposal – the church should be characterized by prayer**
- a. **e.g.** the inclusion of prayer after *literally every element* of the worship gatherings at **Casa Vida**
 - b. **note:** the entire chapter flows from this imperative to pray, and Paul will give the church a number of instructions built from this premise (**see v. 8**)
- b. an imperative to pray for those in positions of power (v. 2a)**
- 1. **question:** for *whom* would you assume Paul would command the church to pray?
 - a. notice that Paul does not suggest that Timothy, et. al. pray *only for those in the church*
 - 1. **i.e.** but, isn’t that where the false teachers are – in the church, leading believers astray?
 - b. rather, Paul does command that Timothy, et. al. pray *for all people, particularly, secular authorities*
 - 2. “*for all people*” = simply put, this is an imperative to the church to become a *praying church*, but ...
 - 3. Paul adds “*for kings and all who are in high positions*” because he has a *specific* idea in mind here – pray for those who have **influence** over the church **from the outside**
 - a. **e.g. kings and their magistrates** can enforce laws that produce serious problems for the church
 - 1. **remember:** at the time of this letter, the church was under tremendous opposition and persecution from secular authorities and non-Christian (**e.g.** Jewish) religious authorities
 - b. **e.g. secular cultures and their elites** can inculcate systems of thought that invade the church
 - 1. **remember:** at the time of this letter, the church was under the direct (and indirect) influences of Greek, gnostic and other secular worldviews in the surrounding cultures
 - c. **e.g. religious trends and their enablers** can subtly influence the church to modify its core beliefs
 - 1. **remember:** at the time of this letter, many were infiltrating the church with subtle forms of belief contrary to the apostolic message (**see chapter 1**)
3. **Paul commands the church to pray for everyone who has any kind of influence over the life of the church – any kind of force (internal or external) that comes to bear against its life**
- c. an imperative to pray for a peaceful and quiet life (v. 2b)**
- 1. **question:** for *what* would you assume Paul desires to be the outcome of this prayer?
 - a. notice that Paul does not suggest that the best outcome is *an orthodox church*
 - 1. **i.e.** but, isn’t that what his charge to Timothy was – to root out the heterodox teachers?
 - b. rather, Paul does suggest that the best outcome is *a particular kind of Christian life*
 - 2. “*that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life*” = simply put, this is a desire that the church be “left alone” by outside forces (**see above**) so that it can go about its business without interference, but ...
 - 3. Paul adds “*godly and dignified*” because he has a *specific* hope in mind here – that the church would be left to **pursue godliness and dignity** as it carries out its *mission* in the world
 - a. **i.e.** the true Christian life of obedience to God, commitment to Christ, and the leading of the Spirit
 - b. **i.e.** not free to “do whatever is popular,” but free to pursue the abundant life of Christ (**John 10:10**)
 - 1. **note:** the fullest definition of “*godliness*” and “*dignity*” will be fleshed out starting in **v. 8**
 - 2. **note:** the *immediate* ramifications of this freedom will be continued into **v. 4**
4. **Paul is convinced that the prayer life of the church will grant freedom from the tyrannies of external forces so that the people of the church can truly live and work as Christ intends**

d. an imperative to pray as is pleasing to God (v. 3)

1. **(obviously)** such a thing is “*good and pleasing in the sight of God*”
 - a. **i.e.** to supplicate and intercede before God for the freedom to live fully committed and obedient lives *must be* (by definition) the very thing that God would *desire* for his people
 - b. **a healthy New Testament church must have a vibrant personal, pastoral, and public prayer life in order to be a worthwhile instrument in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ**
 1. **question:** why do so *few* “successful” churches have such a commitment to prayer – or, why doesn’t the typical young seminarian start his ministry by committing his church to prayer?
 2. is it possible that the “success” of the church today is only an *illusion* because its priorities are misplaced and its people are distracted?
 - a. **e.g.** according to Lifeway Research (via Ligonier Ministries), October 2018, **78%** of those with “evangelical beliefs” agree that “Jesus was the first and greatest being created by God the Father” (**i.e.** the Arian heresy condemned at Nicea in 325AD, now espoused by the Watchtower Society of the Jehovah Witnesses)
 3. **the lack of focus by the church on the kind of prayer espoused by Paul here leaves the church vulnerable to every kind of outside influence – thus, without a vibrant prayer life, the church will become “distracted” and its people will be easy prey for false teaching**
 - a. **IOW:** to combat the false teachings in the church at Ephesus, Paul instructs his young protégé to lead the people back to that which will keep them focused on what is true!