

**1st Timothy 2: 1-3; “The Prayers of the Gathered Church”, Sermon # 12 in the series
– “To Honor God in the Church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 13th, 2014, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In Chapter 1 of this epistle we have found the Apostle Paul charging Timothy; instructing him personally, to live up to all the truth of the word of God, and especially to protect and preserve all the truth of the glorious gospel. Paul sees the truth of the Word of God as a trust committed to him by Christ Himself, and he wants to make sure that Timothy understands the importance of that trust. And he would have him to charge other all those who were considered teachers, not to teach other doctrines; fables and genealogies, and wrong views of the law which would undermine the gospel and cause disputes which would not tend to godly edification. We have a “therefore” at the beginning of Chapter 2, and when we see a therefore we need to ask what it is there for. We are to look back and see the connection. Sound doctrine is never impractical. And there is a connection begin made here by Paul, between seeing the truth of sound doctrine and prayer; between seeing the truth of the gospel and understanding how Christ’s kingdom advances. It is because there is spiritual warfare going on, that our first duty in worship of the gathered Church is prayer. It is because the salvation of all kinds of people through the preaching of the word is opposed by wicked, ungodly, and erroneous men, that our first order of business in the worship of the church, is prayer. It is very interesting to note that when it comes to our duties in the local church, (which is what is being spoken of here in Chapter 2) that prayer is the first on the list. And so, the logical conclusion should be, that whenever you and I think of what must be done in this church, we must think of prayer first, as well. We must come to understand that it is not our determination but our realizing our dependence on God, and then turning to Him in prayer, on a regular basis, which will make all the difference in our living our Christian life to the glory of God. This afternoon we want to look at the components of prayer which are good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. We want to look at the “Who”, “What”, and “Why” of prayer so that we might indeed see sinners saved and God’s people being built up. And we also would like to see damning errors destroyed, so that Christ’s Church will be safe in the midst of the spiritual battle.

1st – The “Who” of prayer in the local church.

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” We are here exhorted and encouraged, here, to pray for all men. Paul is saying that when we pray, we should be able to think of praying in terms of the general inclusion in our thoughts, of all men everywhere. And we as Calvinists need not be afraid of violating any of the doctrines of grace by praying for ungodly or wicked men, as well as what seems to us to be the more “likely” candidates for salvation; or for God’s intervention in their lives. If there is no sort of person that cannot be preached to, then there is no sort of person who cannot be prayed for, unless they have committed the sin unto death. And the sin unto death is wilfully and deliberately ascribing to Christ the works of the devil, or when a person wilfully turns away from and turns against the doctrinal truth of the gospel; repudiating their own need of it after they has received it before, and supposedly believed in it. John, in 1st John 5: 16 says, “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and God will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.” “There is sin leading to death.” “I do not say that he should pray about that.” This is because the person that commits this sin is actually cutting himself off from the gospel, and all the gracious influences of God’s Spirit by blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we wonder if we should pray for great people and kings and people in the highest of earthly positions. The answer is “Yes”! It says in the book of Proverbs, Chapter 21, verse 1 Solomon says: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” You say: “If God is sovereign, then why would He have us pray?” The answer is, because prayer is part of the means of the outworking of God’s purpose. Men’s lives are not puppets on a string. We are real men with real needs. Kings are real men with real authority. And God is expecting real interaction between us and Him, about them, in prayer. Prayer is the God-ordained means of “making all of our wants and wishes known”. “Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from a world of care, and bids me at my Father’s throne, make all my wants and wishes known!” “In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief, and oft escaped the tempter’s snare, by thy return, sweet hour of prayer.” This ought to greatly encourage you dear saint of God. You are concerned with the sad state of our nation; the awful leadership, or lack of it, at the present hour. You are vexed with your own inability to change it, and you wonder how the moral decline, the rampant unbelief, and the floods of ungodliness can be addressed? How can these things change for the better, and if they do not change, if the darkness increases, and the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The answer is that we should pray. Luke 18: 1 – “And Jesus was telling them a parable that men ought always to pray, and not lose heart.” Are you losing heart, dear Christian? Now is the time to pray, and to learn to engage your heart in prayer during the times of corporate prayer in the church.

And then further, this text is intimating that you would remember and trust in the sovereign intervention and providence of Almighty God. You see this over in Psalm 11, if you will turn over there with me. “In the Lord I put my trust; how can you say to my soul, ‘Flee as a bird to your mountain?’” “For look!” “The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow on the strong, that they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart.” “If the foundation are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” “The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven; His eye behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.” “The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.” “Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup.” “For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance behold the upright.” Will you not take comfort in the fact, dear Christian, that Lord’s countenance beholds you, the upright one? And will you not take comfort in the fact that if you have sinned in some particular way that “all sins and blasphemes shall be forgiven men,” except the sin against the Holy Spirit? If you have not committed that sin, then any of your sins that you have committed, can be forgiven, and you be cleansed of them. Take heart, dear Christian, and learn to pray more fervently. This leads us to –

The 2nd Component of Prayer – The “What” of Prayer.

I mean this in the sense of asking what kind of prayer is to be offered up in the local church? Paul says: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.” Supplications, we are told, are to be offered up to God. To supplicate is to ask, but it is to ask in a particular way. It is to humbly and submissively ask. The word that it is derived from in the Latin (Supplicare) means to kneel down. The French “plicare” means – “to fold”. It shows us that we are not just to ask or to petition God, but we are to do it in humble reverence. The word, “prayers” which Paul mentions here, implies a composed address to God. It has some form, or order to it, and would include earnestness and an attitude of worship. It is good for us to understand that prayer in public worship is not just having a chat with God, or holding communion with Him. It is addressing Him in reverent and respectful tones, thinking of Him in your mind as the Divine Majesty. Praying to God is more significant than any formal or social approach to an earthly king. Definite and specific requests are looked for in any approach to an earthly king. How much more so with God. We do have boldness of

access into His presence through Jesus, but we must remember the privilege of approaching God our Savior, and what it cost our Lord Jesus to bring us near to Him. So prayer is therefore a joyful address, a thoughtful respectful address. And specifically it is as William Hendricksen in his commentary says: “It respects needs which are often present – for wisdom, greater consecration, and progress in the administration of justice”.

The word “intercessions” used by Paul here, in the Greek, means an interview, but the words mean to bring to God in prayer what we know someone else would want published. You are interceding; you are pleading on behalf of another’s situation or needs. Jesus Himself “ever lives to make intercession” on behalf of His people in a greater sense in relation to our sins and our good works; to mediate between us and God issues related to our acceptance with God. So when we pray we are interceding, bringing requests on behalf of another person in physical or spiritual need. There is only one Mediator between God and man, but as we pray we are interceding to make request for the needs of others, through Christ, to God. The words, “giving of thanks” have reference not only to all that God through Christ has done for us, but they also have reference to men, and God’s work in their hearts and lives. We give thanks to God for all of His people, and we give thanks that His power and grace and truth can change the hardest heart. We give thanks for the answers to our prayers as well as to show our gratitude.

Now Finally – The 3rd Component of prayer is “the Why” of prayer.

(This will only be the first reason under this question; I will save the rest for the next sermon.) It is that we as believers might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence, or dignity. The reason that kings and all who are in authority are mentioned here is because they do directly relate to the peace and prosperity of Christ’s church as regards their decisions to go to war, to their persecution or protection of Christians, and all people under their rule. And it is evident from the wording Paul gives here, that Christ’s Church does need measures of peace and tranquility in order to cultivate a godly and reverent life. Mention is made of this in Acts Chapter 9, verse 31. “So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were built up, or edified.” “And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit they were multiplied. This was after the persecution initiated by Saul and other men, against the church, had ended. It ended about the time of Paul’s conversion. It is not as though the church cannot grow in times of persecution, either in grace or numbers, but the life of godliness and reverence seems to be fostered most in times of peace. God and His people should pray for and greatly value peace and quiet; those times when godliness and reverence can be cultivated. Our warfare is spiritual and not carnal, and we need to pray that it will remain such.

In closing this sermon I want to remind you that your participation in prayer is important to this church and to the forward progress of the gospel, and God’s Word, and Christ’s kingdom. Even if you are not a person who will be audibly leading the people of God in prayer in our prayer service, yet it is very important that your heart is engaged with those who do. As a church of God’s dear people we are united by the Spirit of God. God Himself is the one who has added you to this church, and He would have you to participate in your spirit with all of us. This church, when we gather together is a house of prayer. We are the temple of the Lord, part of the greater temple of His universal church who are offering up spiritual sacrifices pleasing to Him. We are a local expression of Christ’s Church, the Church that He is building to the glory of God. I want you to turn back to 2nd Chronicles 7, verse 8. “At that time Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord; for there he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat.” “At that time Solomon kept the feast seven days,, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt.” “And on the eighth day they held a sacred assembly, for they observed

the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.” “On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the good that the Lord had done for David, for Solomon, and for His people Israel.” “Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king’s house; and Solomon successfully accomplished all that came into his heart to make in the house of the Lord and in his own house.” “Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: ‘I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.’” “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” “Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.” “For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.”

This was the gathered Old Testament Church of God. And Solomon was a type of Christ. The Lord blessed Solomon’s prayers, and God chose the house that He built to be a house of sacrifice. Even as Solomon successfully accomplished all that came into his heart to make in the house of the Lord, so the Lord Jesus Christ shall accomplish all that comes into His great heart in the building of His Church. But the promise of 2nd Chronicles 7: 14 refers to the people of God. “If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land. This is a promise not only for the Old Covenant people of God, it is also a promise for the New Covenant people of God in this nation and in all the nations of the world, for that is the difference between Old Testament and New. There is no longer one ethnic people of God, but there are people whom God has called from every tribe and nation and tongue and people, whom God has called to salvation and to serve Him. And the way that we can serve God in this church is to continue steadfastly in prayer. We, His chosen people are His house which He has set apart for Himself, that His name might be here with us forever, and His eyes and His heart are here with us perpetually. The promise given to the gathered people of God is true. If we will humble ourselves, pray and seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways, He will hear from heaven and forgive our sin and heal our land. This is indeed what we want. Tomorrow’s gathering for prayer at the State Capital will be a step in the right direction; a day of prayer and fasting and repentance; a time for this very thing that we are speaking of. Even if you cannot travel there tomorrow, will you not pray in secret and claim this verse, that God might heal our land, and bless our church, and all the Bible-believing churches in this land.