

Session 3

August 7, 2022

PRAY FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR

1 Timothy 2:1-8

The aging and much-experienced Paul wrote the *pastoral epistles* (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) to instruct those coming up in ministry about the organization, leadership qualifications, functions, and conduct of the local church. Of these, 1 Timothy stands out as the most comprehensive. By this time, Paul had probably known Timothy for nearly ten years. He had adopted him as “his true son in the faith” (1:1) and had mentored him in the spiritual disciplines required of a pastor. Here, Paul instructs young Timothy in the essential discipline of intercessory prayer. Three key aspects stand out.

Evangelistic prayer (vv. 1-4). In the preceding, introductory chapter, Paul mentioned both the honor and struggle that accompanies ministry. It’s noteworthy then, that he begins this instructional section with an exhortation to pray (v. 1). First, he mentions various *aspects* of prayer. *Petitions* are entreaties, what we would call “prayer requests.” The word for *prayers* is related to *oratories*, and likely refers to public prayer. *Intercessions* is the same word as *interview*. It connotes a discussion with God. *Thanksgivings* is the word *eucharist* (sometimes applied to the Lord’s Supper), and connotes intimate, heartfelt gratitude. Second, Paul mentions *objects* of prayer (v. 2): kings and rulers who make the rules and enforce them. Next, he states the *content* of these prayers: that believers might remain unmolested; able to live quiet, godly yet influential lives. Finally, Paul mentions the *ultimate goal* of these prayers (vv. 3-4): that God might be pleased, working through His followers’ lives to bring others to salvation through the truth of His gospel. For reflection: *It’s an ongoing debate, but what do you think verse 4 means? If God wants everyone saved, then why aren’t they?*

Honest prayer (vv. 5-6). These verses explain why praying for all people is so important. God’s redemptive plan is just that: not *a* plan of salvation, but *the* plan of salvation! Characteristically, the apostle pauses to emphasize the enormity of the gospel message. First, the gospel is *unique*. There is one—and only one—God; and one (and only one) mediator between God and man (v. 5). The title *Christ Jesus* (literally the *Anointed One* and *Savior*) highlights His deity, while the explanation *Himself human*, highlights His humanity. Hence, He is uniquely qualified to mediate between the two. Second, the Gospel is *effective*. Christ’s death was *voluntary*; He gave Himself (see John 10:18). His death was *sacrificial* (see 1 Pet. 2:24), and His death was *timely* (see Gal. 4:4-5). This is the only true gospel, and to compromise it in any way is to dangerously present a false gospel (see Gal. 1:8-9). For reflection: *To tell half the truth is to tell a whole lie. What are some ways the gospel message might be watered down to make it seem more acceptable? What are the possible consequences when that happens?*

Worshipful prayer (vv. 7-8). It was for the sake of this gospel, then, that Paul was appointed a proclaimer of the truth (*herald*) and one sent out (*apostle*). Notice Paul’s *appointment*. The word for “appointed” is often rendered *ordained*. The connotation as well as the verb construction indicate this was God’s own doing, not Paul’s. Along with his appointment, notice his *audience*: the Gentiles. Paul certainly engaged the Jews, but his primary field of service was among the Gentile peoples. Third, notice his *message*: he was appointed to instruct the Gentiles in both faith

(*how* to believe) and truth (*what* to believe). Finally, notice his *objective*: that all believers from all places would pray together in an attitude of worship, without the hindrances of anger or argument. For reflection: *As a Jew, why do you think Paul emphasized to Timothy his work among the Gentiles? Why do you think Paul connected prayer with worship? Is that a valid connection? Why?*