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I Timothy 2:1-8 "Evangelistic Praying"
February 28, 2021

All right. Let's open our Bibles this morning to I Timothy Chapter 2 verse 1.

Paul went to Ephesus at the beginning of his third missionary journey about 53 or so A.D. Spent three years there planting the church. It was a huge success. God moved greatly. The idol makers in town were so angry that eventually a riot would chase him away from that town. But as he went back before he headed for Jerusalem and what would become imprisonment for several years, Paul stopped by this church again and met with the elders there in Acts Chapter 19, and warned them about the false teachers that were just ravaging the country; that they should be careful and stay diligent, and be careful to be ready to encounter and to counter those teachings that were coming.

Ten years later, as Paul was released from prison, Paul sent Timothy here. It was Timothy's first pastorate. He was maybe a young man about 40 years old or so. He was a very retiring kind of timid guy, not at all like Paul, who was very outspoken. But Paul said to him, go and fix the problem, because ten years later, the problem was already these false teachers had taken hold. Timothy was sent, a disciple of Paul that Paul had great confidence in, that God had used greatly, and he said, "You can do this, Timothy. Go and speak up for the Lord, and lead in the way that you know to lead."

And Paul sent Timothy. And he sends him this letter in the last letter he will send from prison before he dies, the II Timothy letter. But he sends Timothy this letter, and he says in Chapter 3 verses 14 and 15, if I don't get there anytime soon, this is how the church ought to live or behave. This is how the church should react and act. And it really becomes a letter, a pastoral epistle it is called, but it is written so that we as a church might know what God wants from us. What should be the priorities? What should we be doing as we meet together?

Paul encouraged them early on in Chapter 1 that no other doctrine should be taught and that the law really wasn't given to the righteous. The law of God was given to the lost, so that they could learn that they're lost. And Paul said if it's preached right, that's the result that it'll have. Beginning in verse 12 of the last chapter, Paul then uses himself as an example. We looked at it last week. That when the gospel is preached, lives are changed, and he said, "Look at me. Look what God did in my life. And he can certainly do it in the lives of those that you're going to minister to. Timothy," verse 18, 19, 20, "you've been charged with a trust. This is what God has given you to work with and to pursue. And put your foot down, man. Preach the gospel. Bring people back to that place where God can bless."

Well, on the heels of that we come this morning to these next eight verses in Chapter 2, which we have entitled "Evangelistic Prayer," because along with preaching, and then contending for the faith, and living the life that people can read, as Paul said his life could be read, good conscience, you should add to your arsenal as a Christian a life that prays for the lost, especially those around you, and how you should behave. This is kind of Church 101.

I read a story a few years ago of a dangerous sea coast where shipwrecks were often occurring, they built a life-saving kind of lighthouse. It was really just a hut with one boat and a couple of devoted fishermen who would watch constantly as people would make the turn around the very dangerous place. A lot of lives were saved. As people got saved, they were thankful, They wanted to help invest in this very life-saving station. And the station began to grow. Instead of emergency cots, they got two beds, and instead of having to sit out in a tent, they had a house built. And instead of volunteers, they hired some full-time help. The place became a very popular hangout. Put in a restaurant, a bed and breakfast, room service. You could buy a shirt with the lighthouse logo on it. In fact, if you go to their restaurant, there was a ceremonial boat that they had put in the middle that you could eat around. One night there was a large crash. 110 people drowned. But everyone inside was partying along, didn't see it coming. Those rescued found the place very ill prepared. Some complained and were told they could go away. They didn't like the way the life

station was being run, go start a life station of your own. And eventually it became a club for insiders as well, and so it went.

Unfortunately, so often the church does the same thing. We start off wanting to be a life-saving station, where the gospel of Jesus is preached to the lost, where we're able to shine into people's lives through their storms in life, but somewhere along the line we forget our mission and we become ingrown. And as we read last week, some people come and they shipwreck their faith, and the life-saving word of God is set aside, and the grace that changed Paul and us is no longer available.

Paul goes out of his way here to give Timothy some very specific instructions on how to live and pray that you never lose sight of the fact that the church exists for the sake of the Lord's glory and for the salvation of the world; that we don't become a country club who's lost their vision.

I think what we will read here will probably challenge what some of you believe the church should do. I hope if you're angry by the time we're done, you're not angry at me. I didn't write it. I'm just delivering the message. It's your tax bill, I'm just the post guy.

Five things that we should know about prayer, the nature of prayer, the scope of prayer, the benefit of prayer, the reasons why we should be praying like this and our attitude towards it.

Paul has just finished talking about how God's grace and the power of God's word saved him, changed him, brought him out of the pit. He then says in verse 1 of Chapter 2, "Therefore," as a result of everything that we studied last week, "I exhort first of all that supplication, and prayer, intercession, and the giving of thanks be made for all men."

From Paul's perspective as he writes to this young pastor that's in his first pastorate, high on the list of priorities for any church should be prayer. In fact, notice in verse 1 the words "all men." Prayer for the lost. This is certainly a call to pray for those who don't know the Lord. It is the spiritual duty of the church to take time and effort and get on their knees and cry out to God

for the lost.

John Stott, who was the actually he's a great commentator, but he was the pastor of All Saints Church in London for years, wrote about attending a prayer meeting in his own church. He said, "There were only a few people there. What I remember hearing was two ladies praying for their arthritis; a man, that he would have a good vacation; and a few people who asked God to bless their week." Stott wrote, "I went home so saddened that the church has reduced itself to worshipping a little village God of their own devices, while never stepping outside its doors to recognize there's a world around them that is lost. No picture that is greater than themselves, no task or faith or accomplishment."

Spurgeon preached that a soul winner must first be the master of the art of prayer. He said if you can hang around with Jesus for a little while, you also will be brought to your knees weeping with the same heart that He had when He wept over the city of Jerusalem in the fact that they weren't willing to listen to the salvation that He had brought. He said to the congregation that Sunday, "Some of you are instant in and out of season, earnestly looking for the souls of men, while others of you are slack at hand, satisfied that I'll preach, you'll occupy the pews, and hope that all goes well."

Nehemiah was moved by the Lord to begin to pray for a city that he had never seen, for a people that he had never visited, because they had been lying for years without a wall around it, but it was God's city. And Nehemiah began to pray, and what broke his heart eventually led him to be the answers to his prayers. But he prayed for something 800 miles away for months on end, because he was concerned.

F.B. Meyer, who is another Bible commentator, wrote about how, attending a conference with A.B. Simpson, who was The A.B. Simpson founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination. He said that he woke up on Saturday at the convention to find A.B. Simpson out on his patio in tears, clutching a globe. He said, "I can't sleep. The world needs Jesus."

The Bible is filled with examples of how the people of God are to pray for the lost around them. Moses, when he was having such a difficulty with the people he was

leading, said to them in Numbers, "I'm praying for your sins, that God might forgive you by His great mercy, that He might lead you in His ways."

Samuel, when he found the people wanting a different way, they didn't want God as their king, but they wanted a king like the world, said to the nation, "If you'll return to the Lord with all your heart and put away these foreign gods, I will pray for you. The Lord will be with you." When things started to go south, the people said to Samuel, "Will you pray for us?" And he said, "God forbid that I sin against the Lord and cease praying for you."

When God brought judgment to the nation of Israel, the Lord actually had to say to Jeremiah, the prophet, "Quit praying for them. I won't hear you anymore." It is just the habit and the practice of God's people to pray.

Stephen, the first martyr, executed for his faith, dies with a prayer of salvation and deliverance for his killers.

Paul writes to the Romans in Chapter 9, "I would wish myself to be accursed," to lose my salvation, "if my people, Israel, could be saved." That's a different attitude than you'll usually find amongst the church.

The church exists to be a witness to the world. If that's not what we do, then we might as well get saved and die. We had a baptism two weeks ago. We should have just held you down. "Go see Jesus. If you're not going to do anything, go ahead." We have a message of a saving knowledge of Christ. We're told to go into the highways and to the byways. Our marching orders are just like this prayer for the Ephesian church.

But here's the problem: In Ephesus, they'd lost their way. They'd gotten caught up in the debate of doctrines, the strife of false teachers and their false doctrines. And just like Israel, who God initially desired to just take the message of who He was to the world, the church now tends to find itself more interested in its own existence than be concerned, and neglect the sinners that are outside the walls.

Paul writes to Timothy because Timothy's a young guy, and says here's what the church should do. And certainly, we

don't want to get into this narrow kind of exclusiveness and miss out on what God would want us to do.

"I exhort you first of all," that supplication. The word "supplication" and by the way, a lot of these words are synonymous, but the Greek language is much deeper than English. It has a lot of different words. But the word "supplication" means to be without, or to be deprived of something. This prayer is motivated out of a sense of need, or maybe more clearly seeing the needs in others. Seeing man lost, we should then quickly be driven to go and pray for them.

Robert Baxter, who was a 17th Century Puritan, Puritan books are hard to read because they're usually, no matter how good you feel about yourself when you're done with a Puritan book, you feel terrible. However, he wrote this: "If you have the heart of Christ let it yearn in you, for your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbor. There is but one step between them and death and hell forever. 100 ways to die today. Has your heart become so hard that you cannot pity those in such a difficult state? If their house were on fire, would you run to the rescue? Well, how about this: Their souls are in danger of hell." It's the call of the church, yet so often it doesn't take long for us to reduce our spiritual lives to how God can bless me, take care of me, and ensure my needs are met.

Supplication. I see a need, and I see a lack, and so I pray because of what I see.

The word prayer, "proseuche" is the word in Greek, is a general word for prayer, but it literally means to seek God, and it is the most often used word for worship. It's just a call to bow down before the Lord. Prayer for the lost is ultimately a prayer for God's glory. If people get saved, guess what? They start to glorify the Lord. Their lives change. Things get different than they used to be.

Paul said to the Corinthians in Chapter 4, II Corinthians, "We're praying that the gospel of grace may be spread to many, and so because it is, then thanksgiving will be given to the glory of God." The word goes out, people start to worship the Lord.

The word "intercession" means to fall in line with somebody else, or to join forces, and it is usually just

that. By definition it means to stand in someone else's shoes, or to understand their plight, to feel their pain. Prayer that is driven by the fact that you see a drug addict's lifestyle, you consider a single mom's dilemma, you think about what it might be like to be stuck in a homeless shelter, and you begin to pray. You're moved by the very things that you understand.

Thanksgiving. Pray in thanksgiving that God has extended to man life and a privilege to be saved.

If we are the church the way God would want us to be, that should be a big part of your life, praying for these folks around you. Not that you shouldn't pray for your own needs, obviously for your family, all those things. There's plenty of evidence for those, but I think we do those pretty well. This is the part that we so often let go. And if we don't, then we miss the calling of God for the church. We should be seeing the desperate condition of the people that live around us. We want God to be glorified. It should be and notice at the end there, it should be made for all men. God wants all men to be saved. You know that; right?

Chapter 2 verse 4 here in a minute. "He takes no pleasure," Ezekiel says, "in the death of the wicked." Ezekiel 33, no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He tells us in Titus, "By the grace of God, for salvation has appeared to all men." God wants people to come. And if they will and they'll repent, then the Lord will take them. He'll take away your sins.

Praying for the salvation of others is absolutely in the will of God, because that's His will, that all men would be saved.

Well, let's apply that then, verse 2, the scope or the benefit of praying like this. "Pray for the king, for all of those in authority, That you may live a quiet and peaceable life with all godliness and reverence."

Paul immediately goes to I think the person that would have been the last person on anyone's list: Nero. Let's pray for Nero. Oh, really? This man who hated God, hated the people, made the church the target of his hatred. Kills tens and hundreds of thousands of people for their faith. Pray for him? I'll pray he dies. Gets hit by a truck oh, wait, there weren't any trucks. A chariot. Pray for that cruel, vicious blasphemer who

would eventually put Paul to death. Take his head off of his shoulders. Pray for this guy. Pray they would repent of their sins, that they would believe the gospel, that they would see Jesus and live.

By the way, Paul never prayed that anyone should be taken out of office. Just saying.

Believers are to live a different kind of life. Submissive to the government over them, Romans 13. I think if the church would spend as much time on praying for the lost as they spend on lobbying and political maneuvering, just would pour themselves into prayer, we could really make a difference in this nation. But the church has reduced itself to fighting like the world does. And yet Paul said to the Corinthians, "Our weapons are not carnal, but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." I think we've shortchanged ourselves. We should be praying for our leaders, our government, our overseers, that they would come to know the Lord. And if that isn't enough, then just do this, Paul says: Pray that you can get the benefit of it yourselves. You can end up living a very tranquil and peaceable life, because as you pray for those over you, the society that is created around you is favorable to the church.

What happens when you begin to pray for your leaders? Well, it'll remove any thought of rebellion from you, open criticism from you, resistance from you. Paul would write to Titus in Crete, "Remind the church, Titus, to subject themselves to the leaders and to authorities, to obey and to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of none of them. Be peaceable, be gentle, show humility. For we ourselves were also once foolish and disobedient and deceptive, and following lusts and pleasures, and living in malice and envy and hate. Look, we were those people, and then God saved us." You don't have to work hard pointing out the fact that they're living like that. You used to live like that, but now you're saved. Now go pray for them. Submit yourself to these pagan governments. Do good. Don't slander, don't contend. Be meek, considerate. Pray.

When the church begins to pray for the leaders rather than be known in the culture as critical, judgmental, and holier than thou, when we begin to pray we look a lot different. We look virtuous and compassionate. We don't

pose a threat. We may not agree with policies, but we're a welcome friend. We care about you and what you're doing, and we want you to know the Lord that we've met.

The gospel itself always brings difficulty to the believer, but the people of God and their behavior shouldn't add to it. We can't voice support for ungodly policies, but we can support ungodly leaders in prayer, that they would be saved. "But I'm not going to do that." All right. I'm just reading it to you. You do with it what you want.

The Lord said if we'll do that, we can lead a quiet peaceable life. We can pursue godliness and reverence. The word "quiet" is the absence of outside disturbance. The word "peaceable" speaks about an internal absence of strife, both inside and out. Prayer for the lost can bring God's blessing upon your life. We are not supposed to compromise the truth, but also, we're not called to agitate or to be disrupters in this national life. We have a God who's far stronger than the politics around us. He's more than able. And if the church believed that, we would pray that way.

Paul said to the Thessalonians when he wrote to them: "Brethren, we exhort you that you should walk and please the Lord as you know that you should." I think Christians ought to be known for their quiet demeanor, for their loyalty, for their prayerfulness, for their mercy. Look, I hate the world system as much as you do, but I don't think they're supposed to be personal enemies of mine, because Jesus died for them. And if He saved you, why shouldn't He save them?

The word "godliness" speaks of attitude. The word "reverence" speaks of behavior. Pray that we can, in our outlook and in our actions, live a life that would honor the Lord. Doesn't mean it's going to be easy sailing. You know, Jesus said, "In the world you're going to have tribulation." Paul will write to Timothy from almost his deathbed, II Timothy 3:12, "look, if you're going to live a godly life, you're going to suffer persecution." It's not going to be easy. But this is the way God has given us to go. Paul would be killed for his faith. But the difficulty should not be caused by our provocation. It should be the gospel. If the gospel brings persecution, I can't do much about it. But if I'm an idiot and don't represent the Lord's heart, I've done that to myself.

Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 5: "You've heard them say love your neighbor, hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemy, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." Pray. It's always that word. Keeps coming up. Because mercy and goodness reflect God's heart.

Pray for everyone. Sense their need. Be aware of their condition. You were there once. In particular, pray for those over you. Verse 3, "For this is good and this is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." He saved us. His desire is to save them.

By the way, the word "kalos," the word for good, means good through and through, or it's only it's not always used of the Lord. That's wrong. It is often used for the Lord to say that there's nothing wrong with God. You can't find a fault. It's just in every place He is right. Good through and through.

It is good in every way for the church to pray for the lost, that they could be delivered from the agony of sin, that they could be delivered from hell, that they could find peace with God and salvation, that their life would then turn and honor the Lord, and that your life could be peaceable as a result. The word is acceptable. This is acceptable in God's sight.

Intercession for the salvation of others would only be justified if you are sure that God wants everyone to be saved. Otherwise it would be an offense to the Lord to pray that at all, because who knows, maybe he doesn't want that guy, or that woman, or those people. But we do know that the Lord wants everyone saved, that His desire is that all would come to know Him. And knowing that, we can certainly pray. Lord save them, Lord touch them, Lord minister to them.

You can read in Isaiah Chapter 55 as there's that description of the heart of God, that he will say, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the water; and if you have no money, you can just come, and buy and eat without money and without price. Why would you spend your money for what isn't really bread, your wages for what will not satisfy? Listen to me, eat what is good, delight yourself in fatness. Incline your ear to me. Come and

your soul can live; and I'll make an everlasting covenant with you in mercies of David."

It's God's heart. Your worst enemy in the world God loves. The worst politician and there's plenty to choose from God loves, and He desires that they would be saved. And the church should be on their knees crying for God's work to continue. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but Psalms says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord are the death of His saints." Why would that be? Well, because the Lord would like you to be with Him. He looks forward to that day.

Verse 4, in case you weren't convinced, "God our Savior, who desires that all men be saved and that all men come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is only one God and only one Mediator between God and men, and the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all," not for some, "to be testified to in due time, for which also," Paul said, "I was appointed as a preacher and as an apostle I'm speaking the truth in Christ, not lying a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

There's only one God. One of the most fundamental teachings of the scriptures and not believed by a majority of the world is there's only one way to Heaven. Today the movement is certainly that there should be no exclusive religious truth, that the gods of all should be accepted and embraced, and that's not biblically correct. If that were true, then we wouldn't have any need for evangelism, but that isn't true. Acts Chapter 4 verse 12, "There's no other name given among men under heaven whereby someone could be saved." We have an exclusive message to preach. There's only one Mediator between God and man.

When Job was afflicted in his difficulty, Eliphaz, one of his counselors, advised him to get right with God. He said, "Well, just get right with God, man. Then your problems would be solved." And Job said, "I don't know how to do that. I don't know how to get right with God. What I need is a mediator." In Chapter 9 of Job he said, "He's not a man as I am that I might answer Him or go to court with Him. There is no mediator between us who could lay his hand on us both. Let me take my dread of him away, that He terrifies me. I don't know how to have a mediator."

Well, there is a Mediator. Jesus is the only way. You can't approach God through Mary or the saints or an angel or some kind of doctrine. That doesn't get you there.

Paul wrote in Hebrews Chapter 8 and again in verse 9 that Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant with man, that God brings man to himself through the blood of His Son.

And again I would point out to you the words "for all." He is the mediator for all. He gave His life as a ransom for all. Not just for some, not just for the elect, but for all.

The word "ransom" is an interesting word, because it means to buy back at a price that you personally pay for. You become the cost. You become the price. He paid the price.

You read in verse 6 that He is to be testified to in due time. Well, now's the time. Now's the time.

Paul ends up by saying in verse 8, "I desire therefore that men everywhere would lift up holy hands, without wrath and without doubting." Now, lifting up holy hands biblically was just kind of a common posture in prayer, but I think oftentimes in the New Testament that it is used, it speaks about hands that are held up from holy lives. In other words, prayer that comes from lives that God can hear. He says this: The church ought to be praying without anger, without doubt, loving the lost, confident in the Lord.

"Father, forgive them, they don't know what they do." That's what Jesus said. Jesus said that. Stephen prayed the same thing. When Saul stood around there and held the coats of those who stoned Stephen to death, a couple years later when the Lord confronted Paul, he said to him, "It's been hard for you to kick against the pricks of your conscience," or the goads, if you will. And I think that Stephen's death and his ultimate prayer for those that were killing him is answered in the salvation of Saul. The seed was planted in prayer. Last words out of his mouth, "God, don't lay this sin to their charge." And Paul had to live with that month after month, and finally it broke him.

Salvation and evangelism start with evangelistic prayer. If you've had little evangelistic success, maybe you

haven't been praying much, and maybe you can pray some more. The church will never accomplish God's work by barking and yelling and screaming and getting political action committees together. If you're waiting to see a politician in this pulpit, you are going to have to wait a long time. We gather to honor Jesus. He's the answer. Maybe you'll get the candidate you like, maybe you won't. It won't make any difference. We need Jesus in our life.

Pray. God has great works to do that can only be accomplished there.

Next week, rather than avoiding the issue, I'm going to talk to you about the role of women in the church. You might want to miss next week.