

Intro:

We've been working our way through 1 Timothy by fits and starts. Our last message in the book was three weeks ago, when we finished chapter 1.

Who remembers what the major theme of chapter 1 was?

Dealing with false teachers and other problematic people in the church

To whom did this duty fall, primarily?

The job of dealing with error falls primarily on the pastor – it is a central factor in the shepherding role.

Now we are going to turn to chapter two. The first thing we are confronted with in chapter 2 is a duty that is urged upon the people of the church. It is possible that this duty — this ministry — is urged primarily on the men of the church, but it certainly is one that the women can and should play a strong role in as well.

If you haven't read ahead, does anyone want to guess what the first duty of church people is?

The first priority for all the people of the church is prayer.

That statement is true enough as far as it goes, but we are going to find that the kind of prayer we are talking about is very specific. I don't want to give the type of prayer away just yet, so I am going to only give you a partial proposition... one with a blank in it.

Let's read the passage.

1 Tim 2.1-8 (text basically 1 and 2, but we will touch on some of the rest of this also.

Proposition: The first priority for the people of the church is _____ prayer.

That is the first time I have ever given you a partial proposition!

I. The priority of _____ prayer

A. The new subject: prayer

1. The previous chapter dealt with correcting error

a. Instructing men what not to do (3-7)

b. Rebuking men by lawful use of the law (8-11)

c. Fighting the good fight to the point of expulsion of blasphemers (18-20)

2. The tone and subject changes in these verses
 - a. Clearly prayer is a major theme
 - b. Prayer specifically mentioned in v. 1-2
 - c. Prayer returned to in the summary statement of v. 8

B. The connection with chapter 1

Connected in two ways...

1. By 'therefore' – it is a consequence of the ministerial responsibility to deal with error
2. By 'I exhort'
 - a. Compare 1.3 – an exhortation to 'you', Timothy
 - b. Here a general exhortation for all
 - 1) Note, I said earlier possibly this is focused more on the men
 - 2) See the transition in v. 9 – 'In like manner also, that women...'
 - 3) But our section is general enough that we certainly can include the women with the men in the exhortation

Paul is moving on from the chapter 1 instructions.

- His first concern was the 'prime directive' for the minister: deal with error.
- His second concern is the prime directive for the local church: prayer

C. The church-wide priority

1. 'Prime directive' comes from 'first of all'

"The words *first of all* relate not to primacy of time but primacy of importance."¹

2. Prayer is a prominent activity of the early church (Ac 2.42, 3.1, 6.4, 12.5)
3. Prayer is perhaps the *neglected* activity of the modern church

¹ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 69.

- a. Bible study is easier?
- b. Lives are too prosperous?
- c. Hearts are too hard?

II. The activity of _____ prayer

A. Comprehensive description of the prayer itself

One commentary said there are seven words in the NT for prayer.

- Four are used here
- Minimal distinctions between first three terms, but their use demand some attention

1. Supplications (or 'requests', 'entreaties')

- a. A word that inherently reflects a sense of need
- b. Need impels a certain urgency
- c. Need implies a lack of self-sufficiency – the heart of prayer

You won't pray if you think you can do it yourself

2. Prayers (general word for prayer)

- a. Exclusively religious word
- b. Only God can answer such requests

How often do we fail in our weakness because we simply won't 'take it to the Lord in prayer'?

3. Intercessions (or 'petitions')

- a. Original meaning of verb form: 'to meet' or 'to fall in' with someone
- b. Secondary meaning: 'to hold an intimate conversation with a person'
- c. Finally, a special meaning: 'to enter into the king's presence and submit a petition'

Prayer is asking the king for what we can't do ourselves – and we have the right to do so.

- We have peace with God
- We have access to the standing
- We enter boldly

At least... we ought to!

4. Thanksgivings

a. One fellow said, 'we tend to just bring our complaints to God'

b. Thanksgiving is a unique aspect of these petitions

1) Not just praise (although it is praise)

2) But confidence in God's ability and desire to answer also

B. Broad directive concerning the focus of prayer: On behalf of all men

1. This is a *service*, a *ministry*, on behalf of others

2. Our purpose is to serve, not to be fed

Often you will hear (or may have said), I just don't get fed at that church.

- We do need feeding, but it isn't primary
- If God's objective was to primarily perfect the saints, provide fullness of fellowship, give comprehensive knowledge of the word, he would have taken you to heaven.
- God didn't do that.

3. So we have a function to perform while we are in this word, and the priority function of church people is this one: prayer

a. It is the one that all Christians can do

b. It is one that all other men need

C. Specific emphasis to intensify the focus of prayer

1. For kings and those who are in authority

a. Remember that Nero was the emperor when Paul wrote this

b. The testimony of the early Christians was that they prayed for the peace and success of their rulers, especially the emperor

2. The purpose: so that we may pursue godliness in quietness

I plan to expand on this later; I think the question, 'what is godliness' is important. But for this message, let us not the specific focus of these prayers and the purpose for making kings and rulers a special mention in the prayer list.

Now let's fill in the blank. I gave you this proposition at the beginning:

Prop: The first priority for the people of the church is _____ prayer.

Prop: The first priority for the people of the church is *evangelistic* prayer.

III. The object of *evangelistic* prayer

A. Let's look at our context

1. Our prayers are good and acceptable in the sight of God (3)
2. Because God will have all men to be saved (4)
3. For there is one God and one mediator – all men have to answer to them (5)
4. The mediator gave himself a ransom for all (remember the 'all men' of v 1) (6)
5. The apostle is ordained to this ministry of salvationism – gospel preaching (7)
6. Therefore we wills (desires) all men to pray... pray about what?
The souls of other men (8)

B. Let's look back at our text

1. What would happen if the king got saved?
 - a. We would have a tranquil and quiet life – freedom from persecution
 - b. We would be able to have perfect freedom to pursue godliness and honesty

"The salvation of a king is of itself of no more importance than that of a peasant or a slave; but the welfare of thousands may depend on him, and hence he should be made a special subject of prayer."²

² Albert Barnes, "1 Timothy" in *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 129.

- Our prime minister is a member of an evangelical church – but I don't know if he is a Christian. Wouldn't it be great if he was?
- How about our governor general?
- How about our premier?
- How about our mayor?

Who else is praying for these people and their salvation?
Why shouldn't we? Wouldn't it be great if they got saved?

2. What about the 'all men' around us?

- a. We can't pray for everyone
- b. We can pray for some, the ones we know

Requests – matters of urgent need

Prayers – asking God to do what we can't do ourselves

Petitions – entering boldly into the throne room of the king to ask on the behalf of his enemies their salvation

Thanksgiving – the faith to know and believe that God can save all and is willing to save those who believe

Conclusion:

When you think about *evangelistic* praying as your 'first of all' ministry of most importance, it will revolutionize your life as a Christian.

We are much too occupied with ourselves.

Let's start praying in earnest for others – for their salvation

- Especially rulers and authorities
- And those of 'all men' whom we have direct contact with

Let's pray *evangelistically*!