



A Study of 1st & 2nd Timothy

1st Timothy 2:1-10 First Things First...Prayer...Part 2

I am reading from 1st Timothy chapter two, verses one through ten. If you're using one of the pew Bibles, the passage is located on page 991...1st Timothy 2:1-10.

This is what God's Word says:

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:1**...First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. ⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-- with good works.

Let's pray.

Father, we come to you this morning confessing to you our great need. Father we need and we desire that the Holy Spirit come now and take the things of Christ and make them real to our hearts...to come and take the written word and as its true author and therefore its infallible teacher to instruct us in the truth of your Son. Open the book we pray to see what you have accomplished on our behalf, in Christ, in whose name, we pray, Amen.

The letter we know as 1st Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul to his young protégé Timothy because of a dreadful rift in the church at Ephesus. That mattered to Paul because Ephesus was near and dear to his heart. That was true both because of its significance in the ancient world and because Paul had spent nearly three years there doing the work of an evangelist and teaching doctrine and godliness. During those nearly three years, Paul had, through the power of the Holy Spirit, established a strong, vibrant church there.

And the people in Ephesus loved Paul. That was especially true of the elders. Their affection for Paul is evident in Acts 20 where Paul called them to come down to Miletus and meet with him. Miletus was a seaport about fifty miles or so south of Ephesus. Anyway, the elders from Ephesus made their way down to Miletus at Paul's request and met with Paul there and their meeting together was extremely emotional. They talked and prayed and wept together. Now part of that emotion was tied up in the idea in Paul's that he had been told by the Spirit that he was going to be arrested in Jerusalem. Paul felt the need to warn them in advance about that and the way he did that was by telling them that he wasn't likely ever to see their faces again. You can imagine hearing those kinds of words

from the lips of the man who first taught them the gospel and brought them into a saving knowledge of Jesus. Still that wasn't the only reason their meeting stirred up their emotions. Their hearts were equally troubled, I think, by a warning that Paul gave them concerning the future of their church. You can see what I mean if you will look at Acts chapter 20 with me. Let's put in at verse 22.

ESV Acts 20:22...And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all,²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" ³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

You can see what I mean about his giving them a warning.

Now the sad thing is that Paul had it exactly right.

He was arrested.

He was imprisoned.

But even worse than those two things a number of the Ephesian elders turned out to be wolves in sheep's clothing. They turned out to be wolves in sheep's clothing while the rest the elders there seemingly turned out to be sheep in elder's clothing. And the end result was that the church at Ephesus was in danger of coming apart at the seams.

Paul's solution to the problem, since he was imprisoned in Rome and unable to tend to the matter himself, was to send his protégé, a young minister named Timothy, to set things right. Now in one sense, you need to realize just how outgunned Timothy was. But yet in another sense, Timothy had the full weight of Paul's apostolic authority behind him just as he had the truth of the gospel behind him.

Anyway, Paul wrote this first letter to Timothy both to encourage and bolster Timothy against these false teachers at Ephesus and to explain to those in Ephesus just how he saw things. I say that because there seems to be every indication in the letter that Paul expected his letter to Timothy to be read out loud to the congregation.

Now his letter to Timothy starts off with a charge to Timothy to stand up to the false teachers that were causing so much grief the church there in Ephesus. Paul

then explains something of just what these false teachers were up to. He explains that these false teachers were somehow subverting the teaching of the Old Testament and turning it into some sort of mystical, speculative philosophy. That is, they had turned the Old Testament into some sort of speculative entertainment instead of using it rightly as the law of God to drive men to despair of their sins and run to the cross. Paul wanted Timothy to stop all that nonsense and to preach the gospel...to guard the gospel so that it might not be despised or diminished or denigrated in any way.

Paul ends chapter one by contrasting the *faithlessness* of the false teachers in Ephesus with his own faithfulness to the gospel...a faithfulness that characterized everything about his ministry in spite of the fact that he had originally once been a great blasphemer and persecutor of the church. And thinking through God's kindness to him one more time in saving him and appointing him to proclaim the gospel causes Paul to break into a wonderful outburst of praise toward God. You can see that in 1st Timothy 1:17.

ESV 1 Timothy 1:17...To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

And then in chapter two, Paul begins to outline for Timothy just how to go about countering the false teachers in Ephesus. That's where we started and stopped last week.

Now the interesting thing about Paul's command to Timothy is that he tells him to start his defense against the false teachers with prayer.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:1**...First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Now I made the point last week that the **“all people”** there in verse one really has the connotation of **“all kinds of people.”** I said that both because of the utter impossibility of praying for every single person on earth and because of the fact that Paul turns right around after saying that prayer should be made for all people and gives a specific category of people as if to illustrate what he means by praying for all people.

I understand what he is saying to be something like this, **“I want you to pray for all kinds of people and just in case you don’t know what I mean by that pray for rulers and kings and people like that in order that we Christians may live orderly and peaceful lives as we go about the business of proclaiming Christ and his kingdom.”**

Now I wanted to make that point in verse one and two because the exact same idea comes up in verse four as Paul expands his thought to explain why Timothy and the Ephesians need to be praying for all kinds of people. You can see what I mean if you look at verse three.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:3**...This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Paul’s point is that praying for all kinds of people and for kings and rulers and the like is a good thing and is pleasing in the sight of God. And the reason it is a

good thing is because God wants all kinds of people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I spent some time last week explaining why that **“all kinds of people”** is the best way to understand the phrase **“all people”** so I don’t want to go back over it again but if you have questions about it I’ll be happy to address those at the end of our time. Suffice it to say that I think this phrase **“all people”** is used in much the same way the Apostle John uses the words **“the whole world”** in 1st John.

^{ESV} **1 John 2:2**...He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

In the context there, it seems fairly clear that John is talking about Jews and Gentiles. Jesus is the propitiation for the sins not just of the Jews but also of the Gentiles. His death was not just for us the Jews, but also for the whole world...the Gentiles.

Now why would Paul pay such close attention here in 1st Timothy to the idea that prayer should be offered for all kinds of people...even for those in authority and power? He does so because God wants all sorts of people to be saved...and honest, earnest prayer of behalf those people will make the Ephesians into the kind of people that he can use to make that happen.

Now that last idea is not explicitly stated in the text but I think it is implied just as is, I think, the selfish narcissistic self-adulation of the false teachers. Here’s what I mean. I think these false teachers in Ephesus were much more concerned about promoting themselves than they were about preaching the gospel. They

were the kind of people that focused on radical, self-promoting interpretations that set themselves apart rather than making the gospel the central focus of their ministry and preaching. They were innovators...cutting edge kind of people/

They were making the gospel about their unique ability as teachers rather than making the gospel about God's unique and only way to reconcile sinful mankind to himself.

And Paul tells Timothy that the solution to that sort of mindset is to have the same kind of mindset that God has...which means they are to seek the salvation of all kinds of men and women. And how are they do that? They are to do that through prayer...praying for all kinds of people and for all kinds of rulers and authorities that the culture might be blessed with a kind of lasting peace that promotes the proclamation of the gospel.

Now all that is implicit in what is said in verse three and four.

Still, Paul doesn't stop there. He doesn't leave the matter up to the reader's sensitivity to the finer nuances of what he is saying. He doesn't just hint at why he wants Timothy and the Ephesians to pray for all kinds of people and all kinds of secular authorities.

No, in verse five he adds a very concrete reason, and that reason is that there is only one God and only way to that God and that is through the one and only mediator to God, the man Christ Jesus.

Look at verse five.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:5**...For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Now I want you to think of the logic of what Paul is saying. He is saying that Timothy and the Ephesians ought to be about the business of praying for all kinds of people and for all kinds of rulers and the reason they ought to be about that is because there is only one way to God.

If there were all kinds of ways to God, it would be perfectly acceptable not to pray for all kinds of people. It would be perfectly acceptable because people would be free to seek God a number of different ways. Seeking God then would be a matter of taste, preference, and perhaps culture. But because there is only one way to God...because there is only one mediator between God and man...and because that one mediator gave himself as a ransom for all kinds of people...we should be engaged in prayer and not just any kind of prayer but genuine, earnest prayer for all kinds of people. And even beyond that we should be in prayer for all kinds of earthly rulers that we might have a peaceful world in which to proclaim the truth regarding that one and only way to God.

Now I want you to talk for a moment about that strange little phrase at the end of verse six...that little phrase that says, **“which is the testimony given at the proper time.”** But before I do that I think I might be remiss in my duties if I did speak for a moment about what the text means when it uses the word **“mediator.”** The word **“mediator”** is theological term used to describe a **“go between.”** In simplest terms, a **“mediator”** is someone or something in the middle of two things. In this particular case, of course, it is referring to the Lord Jesus. He is a **“go-between”** between God and man.

He stands in the middle between God and man.

That's what a mediator is. That's what a mediator does.

In one sense, an oven hot pad is a mediator between a freshly baked lasagna and a bare hand. The hot pad mediates the heat between heat between the lasagna and bare skin. If a person tried to remove a hot lasagna from an oven without a hot pad they would burn themselves terribly. The difference between the temperature of the lasagna and the maximum temperature a bare hand can stand is simply too great for a direct encounter. The encounter has to be indirect. It has to be mediated. The Lord Jesus is our great mediator standing between us and God. We are totally unequipped to bear any sort of direct contact with the Lord God Almighty. That is especially true because we are sinful...fallen in every aspect. But the Lord Jesus came into the world and took to himself a body becoming the God man in order to mediate the relationship between sinful man and a Holy God.

He represented man perfectly before God, and he represents God perfectly before man. He has mediated God's anger toward sinful man by bearing in his own body on the tree God's white hot wrath against sinful man and in doing so he has turned aside God's wrath...he has propitiated God's wrath...for all those that come to him by faith.

And here's the thing. He is the only mediator between God and man.

He is man to God, and God to man.

That is why as Christians we argue for the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. We don't do it out of disrespect to other religions. Rather we do so because God himself has declared that there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved.

That is why Peter argues in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost the way he does.

Look at Acts 4 with me for a moment.

^{ESV} **Acts 4:8**...Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "**Rulers of the people and elders,** ⁹ **if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,** ¹⁰ **let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by him this man is standing before you well.** ¹¹ **This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.** ¹² **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**"

And that is why Paul gets so frustrated with the Galatians in Galatians 1:6-7. The Galatians were turning to another gospel...and Paul is quite concerned that they understand there is no other gospel. Listen to how he puts it:

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:6-7**...I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

And it is the same thing in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The author of Hebrews is completely flummoxed that the Hebrews would ever even consider going back to Judaism. He is perplexed that they would want to go back there when the whole point of Judaism was pointing forward to the redemption that would one day occur in Christ Jesus. That's why he argues the way he does. Listen to how the author of Hebrews says the exact same thing Paul says here. He does so in Hebrews 2:1-3.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 2:1**...Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? His point is they won't escape. They won't escape because they have turned their back on the one and only mediator God has ever and will ever provide...the God man...the man Christ Jesus.

It's the same thing here. The reason Timothy and the Ephesians are not to be fiddling about with all kinds of speculative nonsense but are rather to be praying for all kinds of people everywhere and all kinds of leaders everywhere is because there is only one way to God...the man...the mediator Christ Jesus.

I love the way the Puritans put it, **"Jesus Christ alone is able to strike hands at both ends of the bargain."**

Now that brings finally to that little phrase, **"which is the testimony given at the proper time."** It is a phrase that is repeated later on in 1 Timothy 6:15.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 6:15**...I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time--

Here's what it means. It means at the proper time God sent Christ Jesus into the world to be his one true mediator and because that is true now is the proper time to take the message of Christ's redemptive work into the world. Later on, God will at the proper time universally reveal the truth of Christ's mediatorial work to everyone everywhere. He will do that when the Lord Jesus appears in glory at his return. But now at this moment in time Timothy and the Ephesians are to pray for all kinds of men, women, boys and girls to be saved and they are to do that knowing that Christ alone is the one true mediator between God and man.

Paul then sums up the significance of his own call to ministry in verse seven.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:7**...For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Paul was appointed by the Lord Jesus himself to be a preacher...one who proclaims or placards the truth of the gospel. He was an apostle...a sent one...a special envoy sent by Jesus himself. He was a teacher of faith and truth, not to the Jews especially, but to the Gentiles...to all those other kinds of people.

Now none of that description is particularly new to the Ephesians. What I mean by that is they would have already known all that about Paul. The strange part of verse seven is that little phrase in the middle, **"I am telling the truth, I am not lying."**

Why add that here?

I think the why is fairly obvious. He adds it here because the false teachers there in Ephesus were questioning both his authority and his message. You can just imagine the sort of things they were saying, **“Well that Paul...he likes to make a big deal of his calling and apostleship. He likes to do that, but really he’s awfully simplistic. Really he is just not very deep at all. He just doesn’t seem to appreciate the complex beauty of the Old Testament. But don’t despair. You’re in luck. I am here to teach you the deep, the really deep interesting stuff that will set you apart from all the other lug nuts out there. What you need, what you really need is me.”**

To that sort of argument Paul is countering, **“What men really need is Jesus. He is the one mediator between God and man and I am his herald. I have been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles...and Timothy you are to help me guard that trust there in Ephesus from those who would try subvert it or try to cover it over with worldly wisdom. And to do that we need to get the focus of attention off of that bunch of narcissistic prima donnas there in Ephesus and onto a lost and dying world, and the way to do that is by praying for all kinds of people and all for all kinds of rulers in authority. Let us pray for their salvation and the kind of peace and order that will allow us to preach the gospel without hindrance.”**

You can see quite readily that that is Paul’s intention if you will look for just a moment at verse eight.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:8**...I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-- with good works.

You can see what I mean. Paul's point is that the Ephesians are not to be so consumed with themselves. The men are to pray lifting up holy hands...hands committed to peace and truth. They are not to be fighting or quarrelling over those things that promote their own interests or strengthen their own standing and position in the church but rather are to be unified in prayer for the advance of gospel. In the same way, the women are not to be dressed in such a way that they become the primary focus of attention in the church.

I want to stop right because I want to pick back up next week at verse eight but let me end out time with this. When I think about this whole notion of a preacher or teacher wanting to be the focus of attention I can't help but think of the story of one American minister who visited England at the turn of the twentieth century. One Sunday morning, he visited the chapel of a very famous preacher in London...a man well known for his education and polish. He listened to the man's eloquent style and his marvelous vocabulary and when the service was over, he milled about the congregation noting the comments of the many parishioners as they left the service. He summarized the gist of their comments as being something like this, "**My, what a wonderful preacher we have.**"

Later that night, this same minister went to hear Charles Spurgeon preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He listened to Spurgeon's passionate proclamation of the gospel and to Spurgeon's simplicity. But he also noted as the congregation

left the service that their response was a bit different than the response of the congregation he had observed that morning. When pressed by his friends later on as to just what the difference was, he stated that Spurgeon's parishioners did not say **"My what a wonderful preacher we have"** but rather exclaimed to a man, woman, and child, **"My, what a wonderful Savior we have."**

Let that be our prayer here at Grace as we attempt to relate to each other and as we pray. Let it be the desire of our heart that none of us ever become so enamored with ourselves that we get in the way of or cloud the message of the Lord Jesus...the one true mediator between God and man. Let do that by keeping our hearts in the trim through prayer.

Let's pray.