

1 Timothy 2:1-10 — Praying and Living for the Honor of Jesus

February 19, 2017

Good morning. It is great to have you. I hope you brought an appetite. Like you, I am looking forward to the chili cook-off at lunch. Let's study God's Word and feed our soul before we feed our stomachs. We are studying the book of 1 Timothy,

Today, we are in 1 Timothy 2. One of the most important things to do when reading the Bible is to read chapters and verses in their context. What comes before a chapter is essential to read if we want to understand a chapter. That is especially true today in 1 Timothy 2. Since context is so important for our study, let me remind you what we learned in 1 Timothy 1.

In the first chapter of this book, we learned Timothy was the young pastor in the mega church of Ephesus. He had a challenge on his hands. He had elders-gone-wild. Some of the church elders were moving away from Jesus in their life and teaching. In the first chapter, Paul told Timothy to warn people not to take their eyes off Jesus. He said not to follow those nutty elders that wanted to move onto flashier or trendier things instead of Jesus. In 1 Timothy 1 we learned those errant elders were trying to turn the church into a religious book club to discuss the latest religious fads instead of Jesus.

Last week, in the second half of the first chapter, Paul told us another reason we cannot take our eyes off Jesus. Only Jesus changes lives. Jesus is the one who changed Paul's life and he is the only way our lives can change too. Nobody was born again by reading The Shack. Nobody developed into a mature Christian by reading Heaven is for Real. The only way lives change is from Jesus

and by focusing on following Jesus. If you walk away from Jesus, you don't just walk away from knowing God but you walk away from a changed life.

This morning, as we start the second chapter, Paul moved from the centrality of Jesus to the Christian life and the church, to the proper way to bring honor to Jesus in the public worship of the church. The first seven verses show us how we bring honor to Jesus through prayer. The last three verses show us how we can take honor from Jesus through our lifestyles. Let's jump in and look at the place and importance of prayer.

We can bring honor to Jesus through our prayers.

What kind of prayers should we pray?

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people... 1 Timothy 2:1 (ESV)

Paul said that the first thing we need to know about the church is that when we gather, the church is to be a place of prayer. He didn't suggest this. He urged this. The church is to be a place of prayer and our Christian lives are to be filled with prayer.

Paul then gave us four kinds of prayer.

Supplications (requests) — We should be praying for all kinds of needs for all kinds of people. It doesn't matter what those needs are, whenever we have the opportunity, we should pray for the needs of others, especially in the church.

Prayers — This is a general term for prayer. It carries the idea of reverence or worship to God. This is prayer that is worshipping and honoring God for who he is. We should be praying to God all the time in a general way and worshipping him as our savior in prayer.

Intercession — This is praying for other people's needs but getting emotionally involved as we pray for them. When someone has a crisis because a child has an accident and is sent to the hospital, we intercede in prayer for them. That is what the church does.

Thanksgiving — This is celebrating what God has done with a thankful heart. As Christians gathered in the church we don't just have constant requests to God but we have a grateful hearts thanking God.

I didn't give you the precise differences between these types of prayers because many of the differences are subtle. Many of these words overlap in meaning. Paul's point was not that we should pray four precisely different types of prayer but that we should pray all kinds of prayers. As Christians, especially as Christians at church, we are to be praying about everything all the time. It is what God created us to do.

We pray for people with broken arms, and we pray for people with broken hearts. We let ourselves feel the pain of others and come before God in prayer for them.

Who should we pray for?

...be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior... 1 Timothy 2:1b-3 (ESV)

Paul urged that all kinds of prayers be made for all people. This is a little different than the way we think. We typically focus our prayers for the needs of other believers in the church body. There is nothing wrong with praying for the needs of people in the church. Other parts of Scripture command us to be especially attentive in prayer for those needs. We just must not limit our prayers

to those needs. The problem in Ephesus was that the church became ingrown. They should be praying all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people. Christians should have a prayer life that is outwardly focused beyond themselves not just inwardly focused on themselves. The problem with the errant elders is all they cared about was their own little group. Their prayers were targeted about their own needs and wants, not for the needs of those around them and the salvation of those around them.

Now let me step back from Paul's message and show you the horns of a theological dilemma that many people become caught on in this chapter. It pertains to the way Paul used the word "all" in this chapter. When Paul said we are to pray for all people, does "all people" literally mean "all people"? If the word "all" was used literally it means the church should take the phone book each Sunday and start at the beginning of the alphabet in prayer. Could you picture a phone book prayer meeting? If Paul literally meant we should pray for all people, that is what would happen. What did Paul mean when he said pray for "all people"? A better translation would be to pray for all kinds of people, not all people in the universe.

Remember our elitist elders-gone-wild group. We know they were telling church members to be ingrown and to focus on themselves. They were to only pray for the needs of their friends and people like them. Paul said, "that isn't the church." The church that just prays for itself isn't the church that Jesus created. The church should have a vision to pray for the needs of people in the community and for the needs of the people in the nation. As Christians, we

should be praying for the needs of all kinds of people, even people different from us. In addition to praying for people's needs, we should also be praying for the salvation of all kinds of people.

As an example, Paul said the church should even pray for kings and all who are in positions of high authority. Those in positions of authority are about as far removed from our lives as we can get, but we are to pray for them.

As soon as I say this, some of you are in complete agreement. "You are right Pastor Kurt. Our president, Donald Trump, needs prayer. I don't like him one bit. I am going to pray he is hit by a meteor. I am going to pray he is impeached."

Wait a minute. That is not the kind of prayer it says Christians are to offer for their leaders. We are not to pray for their overthrowing. We are to pray they would wisely and successfully govern our nation and our cities so we can lead peaceful and quiet lives.

As Christians, we should be praying for our leaders. We should pray their leadership is wise and good. I know what some of you are thinking. You are thinking, "These verses that tell us to pray for our leaders were written at a different time in history. It instructed us to pray for leaders that were wise and good. Certainly they had a better leader than Donald Trump. If Donald Trump was ruling when Paul wrote these words to Timothy, Paul would have never written these words."

If that is what you think, let me take you back to the Roman world when Paul penned these words. Ruling Rome was a man named Nero. Paul instructed

the church to pray he would govern wisely and effectively so Christians would lead peaceful and quiet lives.

Let me tell you about Nero. He didn't like Christians. He threw our forefathers to the lions to watch them eaten alive by animals. Paul told his people to pray for him. Nero also took our forefathers and had them quartered by horses. That means he tied ropes to their limbs and tied the other end of the ropes to horses then the horses were sent racing in four different directions tearing off all four limbs leaving only a screaming head and a torso. Paul said his people were to pray for Nero's leadership. Nero also took our forefathers and rolled them in tar and wrapped them in cloth to serve as a wick. While they were still alive he put them on poles and lit them on fire so they would die a slow and agonizing death of being seared by the flames as their bodies were used as human torches to light his dinner parties. They were to pray for him. Nero also murdered his own mother, who brought him to power. He murdered his wife Octavia. He murdered another one of his wives named Poppaea. He murdered her and his unborn child in her womb by throwing her to the ground then kicking her and the child in her womb to death. That is the ruler our forefathers were to be subject to. That is the ruler they were to pray for so that he would govern wisely.

If you are a Christian, it doesn't matter if you like President Trump or not, the Christian response to his leadership is not that we are the first to protest against him but we are the first to pray that he would successfully lead our country. Remember the church is not an ingrown club that just cares about itself

but we are a church that prays all kinds of prayers for the needs of all kinds of people, even for people we like the least, like government leaders.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13:1 (ESV)

Why is President Trump in the White House? It is not because there is a problem with the popular vote compared to the electoral vote. The reason he is in the White House is because God put him there. We are to be subject to his leadership and to support him in his leadership as far as possible because God gave him to us to lead us.

How can we apply this? Some of you struggle with witnessing. It feels incredibly awkward to bring Jesus into a conversation. Right here Paul told us one of the best ways to witness. While it is often awkward to bring Jesus directly into a conversation, when someone in the office tells you they are facing a divorce or a health issue with their child, if you ask to pray with them, rarely will they refuse. As believers we are to take advantage of every opportunity to pray with people far from God in the name of Jesus. When we pray to Jesus, we introduce them to our savior.

Why do we take every opportunity to pray with people far from God?

God desires all kinds of people to be saved?

...who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
1 Timothy 2:4 (ESV)

Remember the background. We have church elders moving away from Christ and are moving away from praying for the needs in their community and the lost in their community. In these verses Paul told us why we pray for all kinds

of people. We pray for the needs and the salvation of people outside of our little Christian circle because God desires all people to be saved. God has a big heart and a big house. He wants everybody to know him, not just our friends.

If you were listening closely, this verse has a theological knot. Paul said, “who desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” This sounds like God’s will is for everyone become a Christian. If this verse says God’s will is for everyone to become a Christian, what about people who hear about Jesus but never trust in him? Is God’s will frustrated? Even more confusing is that the letter of 1 Timothy is not the first letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. Earlier in his life he wrote a letter to the Ephesians church that is in our Bible. It is called the book of Ephesians. In that letter Paul clearly said it is not God’s plan that everyone on the planet is saved.

...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...
Ephesians 1:4–5 (ESV)

If God wants everyone to be saved, why did Paul also say that only those God chose before the creation of the world will be saved? How do we put these two verses together?

The key to solving this riddle is to understand the way the word “all” is used in 1 Timothy 2. Just as Paul said we are to pray for all people — and by that he meant we are to pray for all kinds of people, even wicked rulers — in the same way Paul was saying that it is God’s desire that *all kinds* of people will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Remember, one of the problems of the false teachers is they were teaching that Jesus was just for a certain group of people. Jesus was for the insiders. Paul said that isn't true. Jesus is for all kinds of people. He desires all kinds of people to be saved.

In 1 Timothy 1, we saw that some of the nutty elders were teaching people to return to the Old Testament law. Most likely they were telling people that Jesus came only for the Jews. They didn't want anyone praying for a non-Jew. Paul said the opposite. In fact, Paul closed this section by saying he wasn't lying — God appointed him to be a preacher and teacher to the gentiles, that is everyone who isn't a Jew. Paul was emphatically saying God wants all kinds of people, even non-Jewish people, to have their needs prayed over by the church and to become part of the church.

The best illustration to show you that Jesus desires all kinds of people to be saved from all kinds of backgrounds but not all the people on the planet to be saved is to look at Revelation 5. The scene is the throne room of heaven. Jesus is at the center and everyone is worshiping him. Look at the worshiping crowd around him.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
Revelation 5:9–10 (ESV)

It doesn't say Jesus saved all people on the planet but it says he saved all kinds of people from every different language and people group.

One of the clear applications of this for us as the church is we need to ask ourselves if we have become like the church of Ephesus. Has CrossWinds become an exclusive club? Do we think that Jesus came just to save us or do we have a heart for the lost in the community around us? Do we pray for the needs of others in our community? Do we pray for the needs of those far from God in our city? Do we pray they would come to Jesus or do we not care enough about them to pray for them? If we are not praying for their needs and their salvation, the truth is we don't care about them. We are have become like the errant elders in Ephesus.

I will admit, it is easy to have a mindset that just prays for my own needs and doesn't intentionally go out of our way to pray for the needs of our community, president and nation. We must remember that God has a big plan, and he has a big house.

There is only one way to be saved.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 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. 1 Timothy 2:5-7 (ESV)

Now Paul gives us a little help with our postmodern mindset. All you people younger than 30 need to listen. Paul is about to make us uncomfortable. The reason we need to pray for the needs of our Muslim neighbors, the reason we pray for the needs of people in our schools who don't know Christ, the reason we pray with everyone God brings across our path is because there is only one way to know God.

Ephesus was a city dominated by the cult of Artemis. In addition, it was dominated by worship to many other gods. Since Ephesus was a port city, ships from around the world loaded and unloaded their cargo in the city. Since the city had so many people with religious beliefs from around the world, the city was filled with temples to the various deities of the ancient world. Archeologists found gods from Egypt, Rome and as far away as the orient in Ephesus. It seemed like any kind of worship you wanted was found in the city.

That is postmodernism. People think Hinduism, Buddhism, Oprah and Islam are ultimately the same. Choosing a religion is choosing one that fits you because people think they are all ultimately the same. Paul unashamedly said the reason we pray for all kinds of people, no matter how far they are from God and no matter what they worship is because there is only one God. All gods are not the same. In addition, there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There are not multiple answers to this question.

My friends, do you understand the honor and privilege we have this morning to be here? Everyone who doesn't know God through Jesus Christ will spend eternity in hell justly separated from God and his goodness. We are privileged beyond comprehension to have and know Jesus, the only way to know God. Do you feel the privilege of worship this morning?

The next question is, "If the only way to know God and worship God is through Jesus, what are the other religions of the world worshipping?" The Bible gives us that answer.

No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. 1 Corinthians 10:20 (ESV)

All other religions are worshipping demons, whether they realize it or not. Demons are the spiritual power behind Hinduism and Buddhism. Allah is not God. He is a powerful demon. This morning we are some of the privileged few on the planet to worship the true God of the universe through Jesus. I don't care how religious other people appear, unless they approach the true God of the universe through Jesus, they have no hope. That is why we go out of our way to pray for all kinds of people so we can introduce them to Jesus.

This text again lands us on the horns of a theological dilemma. Paul then tells us that Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all. Once again we have the problem of the word "all" in this passage. Does this mean that Jesus paid for the sins of everyone? I believe the word "all" should be understood just like it was intended to be understood in its previous two occurrences in this chapter. It doesn't mean God gave his life as a ransom for all people but that God gave his life as a ransom for all kinds of people. One of the reasons I am confident in this interpretation is because Paul was simply paraphrasing Mark 10:45. Look what this verse says.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45 (ESV)

Jesus gave his life to pay for the sins of many people. It doesn't say he gave his life to pay for the sins of all people on the planet. I realize this is tough theology. While these verses tell us Jesus gave his life as a ransom to pay for the sins of many people, not all people, that doesn't mean his death on the cross wasn't sufficient for all people. Christ's death on the cross is sufficient to pay for the sins of all people, but it is only those that God chose in eternity past which

will respond in faith when they hear the good news of Jesus. We don't know who those people are but we know they come from every different tribe, language, nation and people, so we pray for all kinds of people.

This is the pattern we see in the book of Acts.

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. Acts 13:48 (ESV)

If we stressed you with deep theology, let's take a break and have some fun. If we honor Jesus by an active, evangelistically-orientated prayer life, the rest, the next three verses tell us how we can bring dishonor to Jesus through our lifestyle.

We can take honor from Jesus by our lifestyle.

Paul had a few words for men on how they can steal honor from Jesus, then a few words for women in this area. Let's start with the guys.

Men can steal honor from Jesus by praying with dirty hands or an angry heart.

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling... 1 Timothy 2:8 (ESV)

Paul said that in every place men should be leading in prayer. Guys, we like to fix things. We don't like to pray about things. There is nothing wrong with being men of action but Paul said that as Christian men, we should also be men of prayer. Guys, if we are talking to someone in the hallway at church and he is in a tough time of life, take the initiative and pray for him. When someone at work tells you about a hard time he is facing, take the initiative and ask if you can pray for him.

The other key to praying is that as men we should lift up holy hands. What does this mean? It doesn't mean the only way to pray is to stand and have your hands in the air like you are in a bank hold up. In the Jewish synagogue one of the postures of men in prayer was standing with their hands raised. Just as we respond to worship by raising our hands as we sing, they responded in prayerful worship by raising their hands as they prayed. The important point is not the position of our hands when we pray but their purity. Men, look at your hands. Our hands are the tools for our work. Are your hands pure? For many of you, your hands were working on a track pad. What were those fingers clicking? For most men, their hands were on a phone touch screen; what were these hands helping you see? For some of the men in this room, their hands were touching a woman. Was she your wife? For other men, their hands were in business, were they taking advantage of people or serving others and doing them good for a fair profit?

Not the position but the purity of our hands will greatly affect the power of our prayers.

In addition the condition of our hearts will also affect our prayers. We are to avoid anger and quarreling. Why are men prone to anger? The problem with men is we have testosterone. When we have a lot of testosterone and a lot of pressure in the office, it is easy to fly off the handle, especially when people get under our skin. It is easy to be a man of anger at home or at church.

Paul told men to be leaders in the church when it comes to prayer but also to make sure our hands are clean and our hearts are pure because the condition

of our hands and our hearts will greatly influence the power of our prayers. For example, if you pray for a friend from work in a restaurant but after the prayer you immediately begin griping about your boss and then deny the waitress her tip, you just ruined your witness.

Where did Paul get this from? I think he got it from Psalm 24.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. Psalm 24:3–4 (ESV)

Women can steal honor from Jesus by the way they dress.

...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, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 1 Timothy 2:9–10 (ESV)

Paul told the women of Ephesus that when they came to church there needed to be adequate separation between their necklines and their hemlines. Let me give you a little historical background to help. In this culture, women traditionally stayed home. They had long hair but they only showed their hair at home. The beauty of their long hair was reserved for their husbands.

When women went into public they covered their hair and their bodies with loosely-fitting garments that made them look like stunt doubles for Casper the Friendly Ghost.

At this time in history, especially in the highly sophisticated cities, like Ephesus and Rome, a women's liberation movement was underway. Women were not interested in staying at home. Women were taking off their head coverings and letting their long hair be seen in public. Trust me, the men of the city loved seeing women with their long flowing hair. This was especially true in a

port city like Ephesus that was filled with a bunch of lonely sailors. In addition, the women loved the attention.

In a wealthy city, like Ephesus, women weren't just letting their long hair be seen in public but they were brushing and curling their hair. History tells us women would spend hours getting their hair put in fancy hair styles. They would even weave gold strands and jewels into their hair. This was costly but the wealthier women of the city did this to enhance their beauty.

In addition dresses were also coming on the scene. Instead of the loose-fitting sheets, women were wearing the skin-tight dresses that hugged their bodies and showed their shapes. If you want to picture this, think how women dress for the Red Carpet at the Oscars and you are close. The wealthy ladies were wearing drop-dead gorgeous, skin-tight dresses with deep cuts in all the right places. In addition, their hair is put in a fancy hairstyle.

The wealthier women walked around town are looking sizzling hot and getting all the attention. In addition, you need to realize only the wealthiest women could afford a dress. The cost of a dress was approximately 7,000 hours salary for a day laborer at minimum wage. That is working 3 1/2 years at Jimmy John's for one dress.

There was also another class of women that wore expensive seductive dresses besides the ultra-rich women. They were the high class prostitutes from the temple of Artemis. Remember Artemis was a fertility goddess and her temple was used as a bank. It had the money. The statue of the goddess Artemis in Ephesus shows her with curled hair wearing a fancy dress. The prostitutes who

attended her dressed like her. There was enormous cultural pressure for the women of the city to dress like Artemis and to keep up with the clothing styles of the rich and famous, which meant exposing and curling your hair plus wearing a skin-tight dress.

Here is the problem: When a woman showed up to church dressed like this, was anyone praying to Jesus? Absolutely not! All the men in the room were fighting lust. All the wives in the room wanted to kill the lady. A woman dressed like this got all the attention instead of Jesus. She was stealing the honor and attention meant for Jesus and taking it unto herself.

I think everyone can see the immediate application. This text is not saying all jewelry is wrong. It is not saying Christian women can only use bedhead as a hairstyle. This is not saying it is wrong to have a dress or to wear a dress. It is saying that when a woman moves from dressing fashionable to seductive and she notices all the men are staring at her, she has crossed the line and is stealing honor from Jesus. God is not pleased.

Conclusion

When it comes to our Christian lives and church lives, we want to bring honor to Jesus. We do that by being men and women praying all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people, especially for those far from God because there is only one way to know God.

In addition, we can steal honor from Jesus as men by living and praying with dirty hands and a dirty heart. Women can steal honor from Jesus by the way they dress.



Dr.  Kurt Trucksess is Evangelical Free
He enjoys reading, writing, and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)



ordained in the Church of America. His time with his family is spent preaching and