

**Intro:** Prayer.

Tonight, after a several week break, we want to return to our series, "Learning to Pray More Biblically." We began this series a couple of months ago with these reasons in mind.

1. Prayer is a fundamental, a basic for Christian living.
2. We have a tendency to go "flat" in our prayer lives.
3. The Bible has much to say about prayer.

Our aim is simply to learn to pray more biblically. Our approach has been to explore a sampling of NT prayers. We've looked at Paul's prayers as recorded in Romans 1, Philippians 1, and II Thessalonians 1. Tonight, our text is not so much the record of an actual prayer as it is instruction on prayer.

Q: Do you ever struggle to know how to pray for our country? Often, I read the paper and hear the news' reports of the rapid moral decay in our land, and I know I should pray. And I do. Yet I struggle to know what to say. Can you relate?

And then I think about how we should pray as a church. Should we pray corporately as a church for our nation? Certainly. But how? And for what? How do we pray for government officials who happen to operate by a different value system than we do? God's Word answers those questions. Where?

Let's turn to I Timothy 2.

**Proposition: Tonight as we study I Timothy 2:1-2, God's Word is going to address 3 important issues for us relating to public prayer in the church.**

- I. The Importance of Public Prayer (1)
  - A. For All Men
  - B. For Government Leaders
- II. The Intent of Public Prayer (2)
  - A. For Ourselves (2)
  - B. For Others (3-7)
- III. The Ingredients that must accompany Public Prayer (8)
  - A. Proper Relationship with God
  - B. Proper Relationships with Others

**I. The Importance of Public Prayer (1)**

Vv 1-2 "I exhort therefore..."

I Timothy is known as a "pastoral" epistle. Paul wrote this letter to his spiritual son and ministry aid, Timothy. Paul's time on earth was nearing and end. Soon he would be gone. He would pass the baton to the next generation of church leaders.

Paul had been a church planter. He traveled throughout the Roman Empire evangelizing and starting churches. As the years passed, questions started arising as to the form and function of these churches.

Q: How should a church operate?

Key Verse of I Timothy--3:15 "that thou mayest know how thou ought to..."

I Timothy is kind of like a "church life manual," almost like a policy handbook. In it, Paul clarifies for Timothy, so he in turn can clarify for the church, how a church should operate.

Q: What does it take to have a successful church? (as God defines success)

1. A successful church is a Teaching Church (ch 1).

In ch 1, Paul says, "Timothy, make sure the Message of the church is pure." I agree with Howard Hendricks, "The church that ceases to educate ceases to exist." It's our task to teach.

But not just any message will do. In 1:3-11, Paul exhorts Timothy to make sure the church deals with heretics. Keep the message pure.

2. A successful church is a Praying Church (ch 2).

"I exhort, therefore, that first of all"--What's Paul mean by "first of all"? He doesn't have in mind "first" in terms of order (or he'd have put in in ch 1), but "first" in terms of importance. "Timothy, make sure the message of the church is pure. And Timothy, make sure the prayers of the church are preeminent.

Both are critical. A successful church is a teaching church. It's also a praying church. Leave out either teaching or praying and the church gets out of balance.

So Paul says, "I exhort, I urge you Timothy. Make sure the church prays. Prayer is the chief matter, Timothy. Don't minimize the importance of prayer."

Illust: In the last issue of Leadership Journal, there's a feature article interviewing Jim Cymbala. For the past 20 years, he has pastored the Brooklyn Tabernacle, an inner-city church on Flatbush, Ave. in New York.

When Jim came to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, the church had 2 people attending the midweek prayer meeting. Now over a thousand people come out each Tuesday evening to pray and wait upon God. A team of members pray from 2:00 PM until 6:00 AM every day of the week.

Quote: Cymbala (69) "When I came to Brooklyn Tabernacle..."

There's a church that has a handle on the importance of prayer!

Q: For whom should we pray as a church?

A. For All Men

V 1 "supplications...for all men."

Real prayer is marked by liberality. Paul says, "Prayer should be made for ALL men." If we want to be big in prayer, we've got to have a big heart. Selfishness and prayer don't mix.

What kind of prayers should we offer? Well notice that there are different kinds of prayer. Paul lists 4. The first 3 are practically synonymous. But each carries a slightly different shade of meaning.

"supplications"--the word actually is not a religious word exclusively. It simply means 'request.' It can be translated either as a request made of another person, or of God. Underlying this word is an utter sense of need. We don't make requests until we first sense we have a what? A need.

Maybe there's a reason our prayer lives are deficient. We don't think about our need enough. Or we look in the wrong places for help for our needs.

"prayers"--the first word can be addressed to either God or man, but this word is never used of anything other than our approach to God (Barclay). It connotes a sense of reverence and worship. That is, prayer is more than merely ticking off our requests to God. Prayer is the expression of our worship to God.

"intercessions"--petitions; It comes from a word that has the idea of an interview (BKC). Barclay says it holds a special meaning of entering into a king's presence and submitting a petition to him.

Now notice the fourth word. It indicates that we need balance in prayer.

"giving of thanks"--Prayer is not intended to be all asking. At the heart of it is thanksgiving. We thank God for Who He is and what He's done.

So we ought to pray for all men. Next, Paul becomes more specific.

#### B. For Government Leaders

V 2 "For kings, and for all that are in authority"

The word "kings" is plural. It actually means "sovereigns." In the Bible, the term is used of Pharaoh, David, Herod, Herod Antipas, Herod Agrippa II, and Melchizedek. In extra-biblical greek, the term is used of the Roman Emperor.

That seems to be who Peter has in mind in I Pt 2:13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the KING, as supreme, or unto governors..."

Paul also says to pray for "all them that are in authority."

Think about that. We should pray for our president, our vice president, our senators, and our congressman. We should also pray for our township trustees and policemen, and for anyone else that's in authority over us.

Paul's instruction is pretty amazing when you consider WHO the government officials were in his day. The year was 64 AD. Who was the Roman Emperor? Nero. Do you remember what happened that year? That was the same year that Nero framed the Christians in Rome as arsonists. Remember what happened? Nero (most feel) committed the insane act of setting Rome on fire. And then he blamed it on the Christians.

So Paul said, "Pray for him." What did he tell the Christians to pray for a crook like Nero? "Pray that God will bump him off." Right? Wrong.

Listen. Nero was a godless man. Yet the believers were supposed to pray for him. Wiersbe is right, "Even when we cannot respect men or women in authority, we must respect their offices and pray for them." (215)

Q: What should we pray for our civil leaders?

Tran: Having considered the Importance of Prayer...

## **II. The Intent of Public Prayer (2)**

Actually Paul doesn't specify what to pray for civil leaders. But he does reveal what our hope should be as we pray. In other words, he tells us what our intent should be as we bring our political leaders before the throne of grace.

Q: What should be our intent? He mentions a twofold purpose...

### A. For Ourselves (2)

V 2 "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life..."

Look carefully at this request. What is it that Paul says we should expect of God as we pray for our leaders? It's certainly not a life of ease.

"a quiet life"--tranquil

"a peaceable life"--undisturbed

What's our goal? Lives marked by "godliness and honesty." The NASB says "godliness and dignity." The word "honesty" points to a high standard of morality.

Here's our intent. We should pray for our leaders so that they will make decisions that will enable us to live the kind of lives that are consistent with God's character and God's standards.

That's what we should pray for our gov't leaders. We should also be praying specifically for something else. For their salvation. Look at the verses the follow...

### B. For Others (3-7)

Vv 3-7 "...who will have all men to be saved..."

Let's camp on that for a moment. It seems like lots of Christians are saying, "We need to pray for America. Our country is deteriorating. We're losing our freedoms. We need to pray."

That's a good prayer. But it's a prayer that can be marked by wrong motive. If the reason we're praying that prayer is that we're afraid that we're going to lose our high standard of living, or that our kids won't enjoy the same luxuries we've enjoyed, we're off target. Those aren't kingdom values. Never forget that we are pilgrims and sojourners.

Paul doesn't say, "Pray that the government will be supportive so we can do our own thing, and enjoy a comfortable life." Rather, "Pray that gov't officials will cooperate so our aim to spread the gospel won't be hindered."

Paul's desire was not the easy life. His desire was to be able to maximize his time and energies for the advance of the gospel of Christ. It should be no different for us.

Illust: In about the year AD 90, Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the church at Corinth. The savagery of Emperor Domitian was still fresh in the minds. Here's what Clement prayed (Barclay, 60)...

Challenge: Pray that God will save civil authorities. Don't lose heart! It can happen! Illust: Phil 1:13 Several in the Emperor's palace were saved!

Tran: There's one other area Paul addresses. The Importance, the Intent, and...

### **III. The Ingredients that must accompany Public Prayer (8)**

V 8 "I will that men pray everywhere..."

The word "men" is not the typical, generic word we often find. It lit. means "males." Paul says, "Timothy, when the church gathers, it's the men who are to lead in prayer."

Paul wanted everyone to pray (1). Yet in the public assembly of the church, he specified that "males" were to lead the congregation in prayer.

What were the women to do? He answers that in the next section: V 9 "Women adorn themselves in modest apparel." V 11 "Let the women learn in silence."

It's not our focus tonight to debate the roles of men and women in the church. But what I want you to see is this. Men, it's our God-given responsibility to lead the way when it comes to prayer in the church.

There are 2 key ingredients that must accompany public prayer...

#### A. Proper Relationship with God

V 8 "lifting up holy hands"

Posture is important when it comes to prayer. It's not the only factor, but it is vital. The common way for a Jew to pray was to pray standing, with hands outstretched, and palms upward. In the Bible you'll find a variety of postures: Standing, hands spread out, bowing the head, the lifting of the eyes heavenward, kneeling, falling down on one's face.

Note: The posture we use (folding our hands and closing our eyes) really has little (if any?) biblical support.

But the real emphasis is not on the posture of the body, but the posture of the heart. "Holy hands." Clean hands is symbolic of a blameless life (Ps 24:4).

If we want to experience power in our prayers, we need to be holy.

#### B. Proper Relationships with Others

V 8 "without wrath (=anger) and doubting (=disputing)"

Listen. If I'm in open dispute with my brother, my prayers will be short-circuited. Effective praying necessitates that I be right with God, and with others.

### **Conclusion:**

Successful churches are praying churches. We need to be praying as individuals. We also need to be praying collectively as a church.

It's sad to see how prayer has lost its importance in many churches. I read of one pastor who said (Wiersbe, 214), "If I announce a banquet, people will come out of the woodwork to attend. But if I announce a prayer meeting, I'm lucky if the ushers show up!"

Discuss: What are some ways we can implement the importance of prayer as a church?

### **Next Sunday evening:**

Many churches have their prayer emphasis on Wednesday evening. Although we have a prayer time on Wednesday, the majority of our church members are involved in service at that time (Awana, WOL, nursery, Little Lambs).

Quote: Cymbala (73) "That's why I often recommend...shouldn't start a prayer meeting..."

Next Sunday evening, we're going to do something different. Our aim is to give as many as possible the opportunity to participate in corporate prayer. Here's what we'll do:

- have a brief devotional on the theme of prayer
- hand out prayer sheets Sunday evening
- divide up into small groups (deacon care groups?), and spread out around the church facility for prayer time

### Next Week's Study: "Things We're Commanded to Pray for in the Bible"

- \*For God to send out Missionaries to those who need the gospel (Mt 9:38)
- \*For the Peace of Jerusalem (Ps )
- \*For our Government Leaders, for their salvation, for a good environment to spread the gospel (I Tim 2:2)
- \*For boldness for fellow Christians in proclaiming the gospel (Eph 6:19)
- \*For God's Name to be honored, God's Kingdom to come, God's will to be done (Mt 6:9)
- \*For our needs to be met, such as daily provisions, forgiveness, and spiritual protection (Mt 6:9)