

Main Idea: 1 Timothy 2:1-4 gives us two reasons as to why prayer, and particularly, prayer for the lost, should be a top priority matter for us as a church and as individuals.

- I. We pray because of God's command (1-2).
 - A. The first question is *how*?
 1. It doesn't just happen.
 2. It involves variety.
 - B. The second question is *for whom*?
 1. We're to pray for all men.
 2. We're to pray for authority figures.
 - C. The third question is *for what*?
 1. We desire opportunity to live quiet lives.
 2. We desire opportunity to live godly lives.
- II. We pray because of God's character (3-4).
 - A. Remember who He is: *God our Savior* (3).
 1. Prayer is the right thing to do.
 2. Prayer pleases God.
 - B. Remember what He desires: *to save people* (4).
 1. Do God's desires affect the way I *pray*?
 2. Do God's desires affect the way I *live*?

The Bottom Line: The most important thing must remain the most important thing.

Current Series: “What Matters Most in the Church” 1 Timothy 2:1-8

August 29—1 Timothy 2:1-4

September 5—1 Timothy 2:5-8

What matters most when you have a government that sees you as a problem, a detriment to the good of society, that does not want you to exist?

What matters most when people in power are saying that “Christians” are promoting dangerous ideas and therefore should be silenced?

When matters most when ruling authorities mock what you value, and promote what you know is displeasing to the Lord?

What matters most when you and your brothers and sisters, whom you care about deeply, are hurting because people who occupy powerful positions are making it illegal to do things we believe we should do, as commanded by the Lord?

What matters most in the church when life is as I just described it? What ought a church to do in such circumstances? What matters *most*?

This is such a relevant question, isn't it? In fact, it's so relevant that what I have just described is the very situation that the first century church was facing. They were seen by society, and by the government officials who governed society, as a detriment, if not an outright danger that needed to be eliminated.

We are not the first followers of Jesus to wrestle with this question, what matters *most*? Indeed, this in part is the very reason the Holy Spirit directed the apostle Paul to write a letter to a first century church in the city of Ephesus, for their good, and for the good of other churches that would follow, like us.

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see earlier messages from this text preached at WBC in 2011 and 1998.

Today I want to begin a two week mini-series I'm calling, "*What Matters Most in the Church.*" Or if you want the longer title, "*What Matters Most (and is easy to neglect) in the Church.*" We're going to look specifically at the counsel Paul gave that church regarding what matters most in the church.

One of the greatest challenges to being a God-honoring church is *busy-ness*. Do you realize how much activity is associated with a church even our size? Quite frankly, it's easy to equate busy-ness with godliness. "Well, look at all we're doing for the Lord! Surely, God is pleased with us."

Without question, we do a lot of things as a church. We preach sermons, teach Sunday School lessons, have ministries for children, send money to missionaries, provide funeral meals for grieving families, and much more. But what is the *most* important thing we do, indeed so important that without it, all the rest becomes mere busy-ness?

I believe we find the answer in the passage before us. So let's read it, and immerse ourselves in it this week and next.

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Redemptive praying. This passage indicates that *prayer*, and particularly, *prayer for the lost*, and even more particularly, *prayer for our lost government officials*, must be a top priority for us as a church and as individuals.

Why would that be the case? I love how the Bible works. God doesn't just tell us what to do, but often explains why. He gives us reasons. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, He gives us two reasons why redemptive praying (praying for the lost) matters so much (and we might even say matters *most*) in the local church.

I. We pray because of God's command (1-2).

Listen to the NIV, "I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

Fix your gaze on those words "first of all." The context is critical. It's been quite a decade for Paul. He ministered in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, which was AD 53-57 (see Acts 19-20). Not long after that he was arrested in Jerusalem and eventually sent to Rome where he was incarcerated for at least two years AD 60-62 (see Acts 21-28).

While under house arrest in Rome he wrote the letter we call Ephesians, probably in AD 60. Eventually he appeared before Caesar and was acquitted and released. He apparently then began his fourth missionary journey, which took place from AD 63-65, and during this time he wrote a letter to his associate Titus, who was in Crete, and this first letter to Timothy, who was serving in Ephesus.

In AD 66 he will be arrested again, and sent to a dungeon in Rome. He will never leave that dungeon, but will write his last letter from there, 2 Timothy, around 66/67. He was then executed by Nero sometime in AD 67/68.²

Yes, this has been quite a decade for Paul. And he's not alone. These were perilous times for the followers of Jesus, who faced opposition from local authorities, like the Jewish Sanhedrin, and the magistrates in Ephesus, and from Rome itself.

This is vital to see. When Paul wrote this letter, he knew all about oppression and injustice and ill treatment from the hands of powerful and corrupt government officials. He'd just got out of prison, and would be back there shortly.

² See NIV Study Bible, p. 1833-34.

He wrote 1 Timothy to his spiritual son, Timothy, who was on pastoral assignment in Ephesus as his apostolic representative. He's essentially doing some local church trouble shooting, and his task is to help the established First Church of Ephesus, which has been in existence about a decade, to move to the next level of kingdom effectiveness.

For that to happen some key issues needed attention, which Paul will address in this letter. This includes dealing with some teachers with faulty doctrine (ch. 1), the roles of men and women in the church (ch. 2), guidelines for choosing church leaders (ch. 3), how to care for widows (ch. 5), and money issues (ch. 6). Those are important. If a church is to be effective, if it's to be a God-pleasing church, particularly in hostile times, it must address these issues.

But of greater importance than any issue is this. A church must engage in *redemptive praying*. "I exhort, therefore, that *first of all*," says Paul in 2:1. First, not in the sense of time, but of importance. "This is critical," says Paul. When the church is being attacked from the outside, what must it do? Retreat and hide? Perhaps. Fight back? Yes, but with what weapon? This one. This is what we must do, and do frequently, and consistently, and together.

Redemptive praying. Where did Paul get this notion? From Jesus Himself, who said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44)."

So we should pray because God commands us to pray. Indeed, *Jesus Himself* modelled obedience to this command. Hear Him on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34)."

The early church moved ahead on its knees. The *apostles* understood this. Remember Acts 6? When the church was expanding and the needs of caring for the widows became a concern, the apostles delegated this ministry to seven, Spirit-filled men, with this explanation, "We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention *to prayer* and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4)."

The early church was a praying church. It was birthed in a prayer meeting (Acts 1:14; 2:1), and devoted itself to continual prayer (Acts 2:42). When persecution came and powerful leaders said, "No more talking about Jesus!", the church responded to the crisis, how? By gathering the church together for a prayer meeting, and bringing this petition to the throne of God. "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness (Acts 4:29)."

So Paul isn't saying anything new. This call for redemptive praying fits the consistent model of Scripture. "I urge then, *first of all*," This raises three questions, each of which Paul answers in our text.

A. The first question is *how*? How are we to pray? Verse 1 tells us, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people." So when it comes to the *how* of prayer, we learn two lessons from verse 1.

1. It doesn't just happen. In our text, Paul describes prayer in a rather interesting way. He says we "make" it. The Greek verb actually means "to make" or "to do." "I urge...that prayers *be made* for everyone."

Friends, prayer doesn't just happen. We must be intentional. Prayer, and specifically redemptive praying, is something we must choose to do. Which implies there are other things we could do with our time that we must choose not to do so as to devote ourselves to prayer.

The sad reality is that some churches spend more time on their announcements than they do in prayer. I am convicted at this point. As a pastor, I need to give more attention to prayer. As a church, we need to give more attention to prayer. It doesn't just happen.

2. *It involves variety.* There are four different Greek nouns for prayer used here. Though related, the various terms help us to see that prayer should involve variety.

The first is "supplications" (in the ESV & AV; "requests" in the NIV). The term itself is not a religious word, but means "to lack or be without something." And isn't that why we pray? Because there are needs that we can't meet, but God can. So we ask Him.

The second term, translated "prayers," is a general word for prayer. Unlike the first word, in Scripture this one is used only in reference to God. This speaks of the vertical focus of our corporate worship. We gather to look up.

The third word, "intercessions," can be translated "petition." The only other place it appears in the Bible is in 4:5. Barclay suggests it contains the idea of entering into a king's presence and submitting a request to him. It's a word of advocacy, empathy, compassion, and involvement (see MacArthur). It reminds us that prayer is not meant to be the reciting of cold, lifeless verbiage to God. It's coming to a King who cares.

Someone has put it this way...

Thou art coming to a King; Large petitions with thee bring;

*For his grace and power are such, none can ever ask to much.*³

But prayer is more than just asking God for things. The fourth word is "thanksgivings". When we pray we are to express our gratitude to God for what He's done in the past, as well as for what He will do in the future.

That's *how* we should pray, with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings (and notice the plural, for we bring these to our Father again, and again, and again). As a church, realizing prayer doesn't just happen, we must devote ourselves to this kind of prayer.

B. The second question is *for whom?* Our passage specifies two objects.

1. *We're to pray for all men.* Verse 1 concludes, "Be made for all people." Or more literally, "in behalf of all men." MacArthur suggests that this is a call to prayer for the lost, that this entire section deals with evangelistic praying.

Apparently, there was an exclusive spirit in the Ephesian church to which Paul is here addressing. Notice his use of "all people" in this section: prayer is to be made for "all people" (1); God wants "all people" to be saved (4); Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom "for all" (6).

One of my heroes is the prophet Jeremiah. He's called the weeping prophet because he grieved so for his people. Did you realize that three times God told Jeremiah *not* to pray for his people? Why? They'd gone too far. So the Lord said, "Do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you [Jer. 7:16; and in 11:14 and 14:11]."

In the church at Ephesus, the problem was just the opposite. They weren't praying for the lost, or at least, not as they should. Why not? Because they'd picked up a self-focused, sort of ingrown perspective. Where did it come from? There were a couple of sources.⁴

One, there was a Judaizing element in the church. Judaizers were people who said to be a Christian you had to be a Jew, or if a Gentile, a Jewish proselyte and keep the law. They were very narrow-minded. Like Jonah, they didn't want to see God extend His kingdom blessings to non-Jews. If that's our attitude, we certainly won't make evangelistic praying much of a priority.

³ See Barclay

⁴ See MacArthur

A second source of the exclusivism was a form of intellectual elitism called Gnosticism. There were people in Ephesus who taught that salvation was only for people who attained high levels of spiritual knowledge. Again, if you believe that salvation is only for the spiritually elite, you're not going to have much motivation to pray for ordinary, lost people.

Don't miss this or we'll think Paul sounds like a universalist in a moment (in verse 6). He's not. He's simply responding to this dangerous, narrow-minded view of the gospel which sees it as being only for certain people. It's not. The gospel is for all men, red, yellow, black, and white, they are precious in His sight. For that reason, we're to pray for all men.

You might wonder, "How does Paul's emphasis on 'all men' in 1 Timothy 2 relate to the doctrine of election he teaches elsewhere, such as in Romans 8 and Ephesians 1?"

John MacArthur offers this helpful comment, "We are not to try to limit the gospel call or our evangelistic prayers to the elect only. After all, we have no means of knowing who are elect *until* they respond to the gospel call."⁵

Yes, our assignment is to give the gospel to all men, and pray for all men, knowing that God will save those He has chosen to save.

The 17th century English Puritan Richard Baxter wrote: "Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell; many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost forever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the Word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace....Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldest run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell?"

So does "all" mean "all"? Yes, we are to engage in redemptive praying for *all* people. Does that include the Taliban? Yes, and Isis. And the neighbors who trask our yards. And the people who post things we don't like on social media. We're to pray for "all men."

Lest we miss the point, Paul takes it a step further in verse 2..

2. *We're to pray for authority figures.* "For kings and all who are in high positions (NIV, "For kings and all those in authority").

J. Vernon McGee tells that many years ago a famous chaplain of the Senate was asked by a visitor, "Do you pray for the senators?" He replied, "No, I look at the senators, and then I pray for the country!"

But the truth is, we are to do both, right? We should pray for our country, but right here we are commanded to pray for our leaders, and not the prayer, "Dear Lord, I don't like that leader so please get rid of him".

Remember, when Paul gave this command, the man in power in Rome was Nero. Nero was not only a corrupt, immoral leader, but he authorized the brutal execution of Christians. Indeed, he will take Paul's own head in less than five years.

⁵ John MacArthur, p. 63

Yet Paul says we are to pray for whoever is in power, whether the leaders are corrupt or not. So whether they're our political party or not, whether we voted for them or not, they are God-ordained ministers in the civil arena (Rom. 13:4), and we're to pray for them.

But Paul takes it further. Not only are we to pray for "kings" (like Nero), but more than that, "for all that are in authority." Paul knew that the local officials often opened or closed the door to the gospel, humanly speaking. In Acts 13:6-7, Paul saw God open the door for the gospel in Cyprus by touching the heart of the proconsul Sergius Paulus. Later, according to Acts 16, the city magistrates in Philippi arrested Paul and Silas (20), and requested they leave the city (39). On still another occasion, according to Acts 19, while Paul was in Ephesus [where Timothy was now], a riot broke out, until the city clerk intervened (35).

Yes, Paul knew the influence that both high and low level government officials could have on the gospel. So he commanded the church, "Pray for them."

The truth is, even a corrupt government, if it really governs, is better than no government. Yes, much of politics is crooked, but it's better than anarchy. Civil government is a gift from God according to Romans 13:1-2. We ought to give thanks to God for it and pray for it.⁶

Tertullian, the late second and early third century theologian, wrote: "Without ceasing, for all our emperors we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Caesar, an emperor would wish. These things I cannot ask from any but the God from whom I know I shall obtain them..."

The second century apologist Theophilus of Antioch likewise stated, "I will rather honor the king [than your gods], not, indeed, worshipping him, but praying for him. But God, the living and true God, I worship, knowing that the king is made by Him."⁷

So we need to pray for our leaders. But that raises an important third question.

C. The third question is *for what?* And here's the answer, at the end of verse 2, "that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (NIV, "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness"). So this is to be our aim as we pray for our government officials. We pray in light of a twofold desire.

1. *We desire opportunity to live quiet lives.* And secondly...

2. *We desire opportunity to live godly lives.* Godly and dignified lives, says the ESV. Let's not misunderstand this. This isn't a prayer request for an easy life. It's a prayer request for an opportunistic life, a life in which we can maximize our use of time for the spread of the gospel. That's what *redemptive praying* means.

You say, "I don't see anything in verse 2 that would indicate *redemptive praying*. Where do you see that?"

I see it in verses 3-4. There's a connection between verses 1-2, and what follows in verses 3-4. Verses 1-2 say, "Pray, church! For all people, particularly for kings and people in authority. Pray that God will work through them so we can live peaceful, godly lives, like Jesus taught us to live." And why is that so important?

⁶I've read (Kelly, 61) that in Judaism sacrifice was regularly offered in the Temple and intercession made in the synagogues for the pagan civil powers. History verifies that the church as well took seriously its responsibility to respect and pray for the government.

⁷in MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, pp. 64-5.

Here's why. Verses 3-4, "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."⁸

See the flow? We pray for our leaders (1-2), asking God to grant us opportunity to live peaceful and godly lives. Why? So God our Savior can use us to accomplish what brings great delight to Himself (3-4), the salvation of lost people!

So this is what we're to pray for, when we gather as a church, and when we go to our prayer closets at home. This is the most important thing we do. We pray for God to receive what delights Him. We pray that He will grant us opportunity to live peaceful, godly lives, for conditions conducive to the spread of the gospel, so we can participate in what thrills His heart, the saving of the lost.

Beloved, right now there are believers in this world who don't have this. They can't meet to worship Christ in peace. They can't teach their children the Bible without the fear of arrest. They can't tell their neighbors about Jesus without paying a severe price for it. Pray for that, says Paul to Timothy, to the church at Ephesus, and to us.

Beloved, in the providence of God, we have this. We have freedom. We have opportunity to live godly lives in relative peace. The question is, are making the most of the reason for which God has given it to us?

Prior to being promoted to heaven, radio Bible teacher, J. Vernon McGee, offered this prediction, "I believe that we are actually going to see the persecution of Christians in this country in the future. I do not mean the persecution of church members--the liberal church is so compromised today that they will go along with whatever comes along. I am saying that genuine believers in Christ may encounter persecution. Paul was beginning to experience persecution himself, and he said the believers were to pray for the leaders who were responsible for it."⁹

Are we praying that God will save and use President Biden and Vice-president Harris for His redemptive purposes? Are we praying that for Senators Brown and Portman? For congressman Bill Johnson? For Governor Dewine? For our state officials? For our township trustees?

When the church gathers, we're to pray for these individuals, and for all men. We are to engage in redemptive praying. Why? Reason #1, because of God's command.

II. We pray because of God's character (3-4).

We just looked at verses 3-4, but let's go deeper. There are two realities about God that, if we remember them, will motivate us to pray.

A. Remember who He is: *God our Savior* (3). "This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior." *This* is good. What? The commandment to pray for the lost. Do you need motivation to pray? Here are two motivators.

1. *Prayer is the right thing to do.* "This is good." It's intrinsically right to do.

2. *Prayer pleases God.* It's "acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior."

Paul loves to refer to this attribute of God in the pastoral epistles. Our God is a *saving* God. The Father is depicted as God our Savior (in 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). Jesus is called "our Savior" in Titus 1:4, 2:13, 3:6, and in 2 Timothy 1:10. The Holy Spirit is the agent who vindicates Christ (1 Tim 3:16), who enables us to guard and proclaim this gospel message that brings about salvation (2 Tim 1:14).

⁸ NIV, "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

⁹ J. Vernon McGee, p. 37.

If we need something to prod us to pray for more fervently for unsaved people, here it is. Let's remember who God is. He is God our Savior. He saved us, and He intends now to work through us.

B. Remember what He desires: to save people (4). "Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (NIV, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth")." The two phrases go together. When people come to a knowledge of the truth (about Jesus and His payment on the cross), when they submit their lives to that truth, what happens? They are *saved*.

And this thrills the heart of God. That is what He desires. He wants all people to be saved.

Which raises some important questions. In what sense does God desire all people to be saved? What does Paul mean by "all people" here? Since everybody will not be saved, does God desire something He can't have, something He's not able to achieve?

In interpreting Scripture, a fundamental rule is this. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to put it so clearly, "You very rarely have to go outside of the Bible to explain anything in the Bible." Howard Hendricks elaborates, "The more you compare Scripture with Scripture, the more the meaning of the Bible becomes apparent. The parts take on meaning in light of the whole."¹⁰

Some people use this verse to teach universalism. They argue that if God desires the salvation of all people, then all people will be saved. But that doesn't fit with John 3:36 which clearly says that some people will perish.

Others suggest that "all people" means all classes of people, not every single person on the planet. That's a helpful distinction, because that's how Paul just used the term in verse 1 (trans. "everyone" in the NIV). There he's not telling us to pray for every person on the planet (or we'd never get off our knees), but is responding to the exclusive attitudes of the Judaizers and Gnostics.¹¹

Warren Wiersbe offers this perspective on the issue, "Jesus died on the cross that He might draw 'all men' to salvation (John 12:32). This does not mean all people without *exception*, for certainly the whole world is not going to be saved. It means all people without *distinction*—Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, religious and pagan."¹²

A proper understanding of what Paul means by "all people" is but one question. And whether you interpret that as "all people" or "all classes of people," there's another question to consider. What does the verb "desire"? What does Paul mean when he says that God "desires all people to be saved"?

This takes us into the matter of the will of God, and the Bible speaks of God's will in more than one way. Some verses speak of God's will of decree, which is His eternal purpose (as in Rom. 8:29-30). Other verses speak of God's will expressed as desire, as in our text. Theologians often make this distinction by referring to God's secret will and His revealed will.¹³

¹⁰Howard Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, p. 231.

¹¹Commentator J.N.D. Kelly says the reason Paul here emphasizes the universal scope of God's will to save was because he was taking issue with two destructive influences in Ephesus: one was "the Jewish belief that God willed the destruction of sinners and the salvation of the righteous alone;" and the second was the Gnostic theory that salvation belonged to the spiritual elite alone.

¹²Warren Wiersbe, p. 216.

¹³I am indebted to observations by John MacArthur here. *1 Timothy*, p. 70.

The truth is, God desires things that He does not decree. It was never His *desire* that sin exist, was it? Yet the existence of sin was something that God allowed in His eternal decree (Isa. 46:10).

Remember what Jesus desired when He lamented over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often I have longed to gather your children together...but you were not willing (Mt. 23:37)."

You say, "I can't fathom this. How do you reconcile God's decree and God's desires?" The answer is, we don't. We *can't* according to Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us."

The truth is, God does desire all people to be saved. It is their willful rejection of Him that sends them to hell. The doctrine of election does not cancel out man's responsibility, nor does it suggest that God is a disinterested tyrant. The God of the Bible is a saving God who truly desires all people to be saved, and He has decreed that a people chosen by His grace alone *will* be saved.

This leads us to ask a couple of questions.

1. *Do God's desires affect the way I pray?* That's the point of this passage, remember. When we're gripped by who God is (God our Savior) and what He desires (for all people to be saved), they we will engage in redemptive praying. We will ask Him to save our children and grandchildren, and neighbors, our classmates, and bosses, and the Taliban, too.

2. *Do God's desires affect the way I live?* Praying is just one way, perhaps the most important way, we engage in our mission. But there are other ways, including this one, the way we live. My friends, is it our passion, as it is God's, to see sinners saved? If it is, what's the evidence of it in our lives? Are we living godly, redemptive lives?

C. T. Studd used to repeat a little poem, "Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."

That was the passion of a great saint by the name of Toyohiko Kagawa. He went to Shinkawa to reach men and women for Christ, and deliberately chose to live in the filthiest and most depraved slums in the world to do so. Barclay describes the situation:

His neighbors were unregistered prostitutes, thieves who boasted of their power to outwit all the police in the city, and murderers who were not only proud of their murder record but always ready to add to their local prestige by committing another. All the people, whether sick, or feeble-minded or criminal, lived in conditions of abysmal misery, in streets slippery with filth, where rats crawled out of open sewers to die. The air was always filled with stench. An idiot girl who lived next door to Kagawa had vile pictures painted on her back to decoy lustful men to her den. Everywhere human bodies rotted with syphilis.

Why did Kagawa go to a place like that? Because he had a heart like his God's, a heart that desires the salvation of people, all types of people, even people in the most deplorable of conditions. How great is our desire to see lost people saved and reconciled to God?

So why should we engage in redemptive praying? Because of the command and character of the God who saved us. In God's eyes, prayer is the most important thing. What's the implication for us?

The Bottom Line: The most important thing must remain the most important thing.

If God has convicted you about the need for redemptive praying, here are some opportunities to consider.

1. Join us on Wednesday evenings as we pray for the mission of the church.
2. Men, we have a ministry called the "Pastor's Prayer Partners." Groups of men meet weekly for prayer for the ministry here. If you are interested, see Dan Edwards, coordinator.
3. Sign up for Operation World's daily email and pray for the nations.
4. In a few moments we'll pray a redemptive prayer right as a congregation for Afghanistan.

Closing Song: #363 "More Love to Thee"

Closing Prayer: A Prayer for Afghanistan, <https://prayercast.com>