

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

I TIM. 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2 For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5 For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

NOTES

Pray for Peace

Lesson Text: I Timothy 2:1-8

Related Scriptures: Psalms 28:1-9; 100:1-5; Romans 8:26-28;
Philippians 4:4-7; Hebrews 9:11-22

TIME: A.D. 62

PLACE: from Macedonia

GOLDEN TEXT—"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Timothy 2:8).

Lesson Exposition

The church at Ephesus was a deeply troubled church. Certain leaders had turned away from sound doctrine, exchanging it for controversies that engender foolish arguments and ultimately yield envy, strife, and perverse disputings (I Tim. 6:4-5).

THE CHURCH'S PRAYERS FOR LEADERS—I Tim. 2:1-3

Exhortation to public prayer (I Tim. 2:1). Before Paul discussed correct behavior in worship, Paul urged prayer for all people. He used a number of different words for prayer: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks.

Motivation to public prayer (I Tim. 2:2-3). Paul's exhortation to prayer was first for all people, specifically for government and community leaders.

Paul urged public prayer for kings. First in everyone's mind from Paul's day would have been Emperor Nero, who was likely the emperor when this letter was written. Although the atrocities of Nero's reign had not begun at the time Paul wrote this, Nero was still a pagan ruler. Our prayers are not limited to leaders we feel are godly.

Other authorities would have included the Asiarchs, who were wealthy, influential dignitaries in Ephesus. Paul had a relationship with some of them (cf. Acts 19:31).

Paul mentioned specifically two motivations for prayer on behalf of authorities: peaceable lives and God's pleasure. By praying for Roman authorities, the churches would show reverence for the state and good citizenship. An even more important motivator is that prayer for the community and for leaders pleases God.

CHRIST'S MEDIATION FOR HUMANKIND—I Tim. 2:4-6

God's desire (I Tim. 2:4). Having exhorted Timothy to pray for people in the community, Paul explained why this is so pleasing to God. It is because God is good to all people, not only those who already believe.

God desires all people to be saved. Some see this as a great mystery. If God wants something, how can it not come to pass? But we may desire ice cream but choose not to eat it because we want to lose weight *more* than we want the ice cream. God may desire something else even more.

Rather than puzzle over this mystery, we should emphasize the main point: God does not delight in condemning people; He delights in our salvation and works mightily toward that end.

God's mediator (I Tim. 2:5-6). A mediator stands between two opposing parties and works out a solution. Jesus is a mediator because we were God's enemies, children of His wrath (cf. Eph. 2:3). We were to be punished for rejecting God and choosing sinful ways, but God sent Another to take our punishment. God punished Jesus for our wrongdoing and for our faithlessness.

Paul called Jesus our Ransom. Jesus' death paid the debt owed to God so that we are forgiven and accepted in Him.

Jesus is the one and only Mediator. Many think that anyone sincere is saved. Yet God's way is exclusive (cf. John 14:6). Jesus is our Mediator and Ransom. God's message of forgiveness through faith in the death of the Messiah was the message Paul preached and that God calls all believers to preach with our godly lives and with our words.

This is why it pleases God when churches pray for the community. God does not want any person to be lost.

PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP TO GENTILES—I Tim. 2:7-8

The apostle's commission (I Tim. 2:7). Paul seems to defend his apostleship against fallen church leaders. With apostolic authority, Paul demands that each of the house churches worship in genuine, heartfelt prayer. Paul's command to pray is part of the task of the Great Commission.

The apostle's command (I Tim. 2:8). Paul wanted men to pray in all the churches. Some see Paul limiting public prayers to the men of the congregation, given the following verse where Paul addressed women. Paul gave the instruction to pray primarily to men and the instruction about modesty

primarily to women, but he almost certainly did not mean to say that women cannot pray in the congregation. Elsewhere Paul mentioned women praying in the congregation (cf. I Cor. 11:5). Instead of *limiting* prayer to men, Paul was specifically addressing men here.

The prayer is to be with lifted holy hands. Paul wanted these hands to be lifted in prayer by holy men, faithful to God. This was to be without wrath and doubting. Instead of fighting, Paul wanted to see men praying. Paul's command applies today. A spirit of prayer and concern will go a long way to heal divisions. When the church follows God's way, it will be blessed.

—Derek Leman

QUESTIONS

1. Who exactly was Paul commanding the churches to pray for?
2. Why was Paul's command to pray for authorities especially surprising for the early church?
3. Who were the Asiarchs, and what was Paul's relationship with them?
4. What two motivations did Paul give for the churches to pray for the community and its leaders?
5. How would prayers like this lead to peace for the churches?
6. How would prayers like this please God?
7. What is the most important point to be taken from I Timothy 2:4?
8. How is Jesus the Mediator and Ransom?
9. What did it mean to lift up holy hands?
10. How does praying for the community help a church?

—Derek Leman

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Prayer must be a priority; it is the most important thing we can do for others (I Tim. 2:1).
2. Do not complain about leaders. Hold them up in prayer (vs. 2).
3. If we want to be Christlike, we will cultivate an intense desire to see people come to salvation in Him (vss. 3-4).
4. We have a simple message: one God, one Savior, one sacrifice for all (vss. 5-6).
5. If the gospel is to have success in our time, we must undergird it with prayer (vss. 7-8).

—Kenneth A. Sponsler

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How many of us make giving thanks a part of our prayer for all people (I Tim. 2:1)? How can we give thanks for those we dislike on a consistent basis?
2. What should our attitude toward persecution be if our prayers for leaders are intended to secure a peaceful life (vs. 2)?
3. If God wills all men to be saved, why do so many remain lost (vs. 4)?
4. The gospel is simple, but how do we get people today to understand that they need a Mediator and a ransom for their sin (vss. 5-6)?
5. How do we pray “without wrath and doubting” (vs. 8)? What should we do if we find these elements creeping into our prayer life?
6. Does our physical posture in prayer matter? Why or why not (cf. Dan 6:10; II Sam. 7:18)?

—Kenneth A. Sponsler

Golden Text Illuminated

“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (I Timothy 2:8).

Paul turns to the issue of prayer in public worship. With strong language that bespeaks his apostolic authority, Paul says “I will;” or more directly, “It is my will . . .” This is not casual language. It is more befittingly spoken to people who are in direct violation of Paul’s will. Apparently, the Ephesians were praying with hands that were not holy, and their meetings degenerated into debate groups featuring divisive speculations about what might be best described as gobbledygook.

In his demand, Paul says that people are to meet “every where.” The underlying Greek might more descriptively mean, “in every place;” that is, at every house church where the Ephesian believers meet. This is reflected when Paul condemns the young widows as idlers, going from “house to house” (i.e., probably house churches), causing trouble and gossiping (5:13).

When Paul closed his letter, he assessed the fallen leaders as “proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth . . .” (6:3-4).

Paul seemed to correct that behavior when he urged them to pray for all people and to do so with holy hands, without anger and disputing. We should recall Jesus words, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17).

—James M. Leonard