

Title: “The Church’s First Priority”

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Question: What is the main priority of the church? It is worship! From worship flows everything else. As you know who God is and are enraptured in His beauty and glory, you worship, and from worship flows your service, love, preaching, and everything else.

Paul wants to make sure Timothy leads the church in the right priorities. So in chapter 2 he begins outlining both the priority for the church in their worship and how God wants to be worshipped.

This is a chapter where Paul speaks of order in the Church. The church is not an organization, it is an organism. But organisms require organization in order to survive. Your body is an organism, but when it is disorganized, when something isn’t working right, it becomes sick or dies. The same is true for churches. Some think that we should disregard organization, and just let the Spirit lead. But many a time those people don’t even know how to distinguish if it is the Spirit of God, a different spirit, or their flesh.

Not only that, it can then lead to disruption and disorder. The scriptures tell us our God is a God of order, and that we should do all things decently and in order. A church that is truly God’s house will have a healthy balance of organization, while being open to letting the Lord lead His home as He sees fit. It should be noted that if God is speaking through the preacher, He won’t interrupt Himself by having 2 prophets and a tongue speak at the same time!

So Paul writes these verses now as a sense of helping Timothy know what are the main priorities of a church and how it should be organized so that the Lord is the main focus of the meeting.

1. Worship in Prayer v1a

a. “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks...”

- b. The main idea is worship. The church leads in worship, most importantly worship in prayer.
- c. Yet, despite this being the main priority, it is often the most neglected. We are quick to go out and give tracks, come to a fellowship event, go evangelizing or want to jump into serving in a ministry, but very often slow to come to prayer meetings, or spend any significant time in prayer without getting distracted or start talking about other things. How often are we

willing to sit in the silence of prayer when no more requests are on the table and just let the Lord put new requests in your heart?

- d. Paul is emphasizing that worship through prayer is the first thing we should be about. It would
- e. Paul uses four words to describe prayer:
 - i. ***Supplication - divine entreaty, to bring request. It's simply asking.***
 - ii. ***Prayer - worshipful and general. It is a broad word speaking of communicating with God and worshiping God.***
 - iii. ***Intercessions - to draw near to a person and converse confidently with him. To bring others before the person.***
 - iv. ***Thanksgiving - act of expressing gratitude and appreciation.***
- f. These aren't four types of prayer, nor should we make a 4 step plan to prayer. These are characteristics of worship. Have you ever thought of worship songs as prayers? Because they are. That's why the old hymns feel so powerful many times. Because they are written not for entertainment but as prayers to the God they are sung to.
- g. When we pray, these are parts of our worship we should consider. Do I bring my request and those of others to God in faith? Do I give time to worship and thank Him for who He is and what He's done? When I ask Him, is it in faith for my needs and wanting to align with His heart, or is it my Amazon wish list?
- h. We have to reprioritize prayer in our lives, both publicly and privately.

2. The Object of Prayer v1b-2

- a. **"giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."**
- b. It's not just about remembering to pray though. What we pray for matters, and Paul makes clear God has some things in mind!
- c. We are to pray for all men, not some men. Even those who rule over us.
- d. No one is beyond our prayers, therefore we should pray for everyone. It is easy to pray for ourselves or people we like. But Paul exhorts the readers to pray from as high up as the emperor to the lowest slave.
- e. When was the last time you prayed for the current president or governor? Regardless of who it is? When was the last time you prayed over those who could be seen as your enemies?
- f. Do we pray believing no one is beyond our prayers? That prayer can truly change the heart of the king? It takes faith to pray, often more faith than taking action. Yet prayer often does way more than our actions ever could.

More good has likely come into the world because of faithful old ladies who spent hours praying than the loudest activist on the streets. It's not that we should never take action on some issues, but the first way we should take action is through prayer, and praying for changing hearts!

- g. Now, before you think Paul is super spiritual, he is actually super practical! Because what does he say following the call to pray for all those in authority? ***We pray that we may have a peaceful life so we are not hindered from worshipping and preaching the Gospel.***
- h. When we pray, it is with full intent that the Lord would work in their lives so that our lives would be at peace. This goes double for those in power! We should pray they get saved, but even more so, pray that God would hinder them from passing laws that would make it harder to live for Jesus, and help them pass laws that make it easier to do so!
- i. Look at the UK, where people who have been praying in a street corner near an abortion clinic can get arrested! Just praying silently, not even approaching or giving tracts.
- j. Paul is saying "pray for the rulers, that they may be in a state where they leave us alone to live for Jesus and live at peace".
- k. Pray for those who are coming against you, that you may end up in peace rather than conflict with them. We have enough difficulties in our lives as is. Paul is saying it is good to pray that people don't make it harder! But also so you don't lose witness, and it'll be easier for you to share Jesus with them.
- l. So the object of our prayers are ultimately people! We pray for ourselves, and others, no matter who they are.
- m. We pray for people to be saved, for our brothers and sisters to be strengthened in faith, for our leaders, be they our church leaders as they lead the church, or our national leaders as they make laws and lead the nation.

3. The Heart of Prayer v3-4

- a. **"3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."**
- b. Our prayers should ultimately align with God's heart! That is part of prayer in fact. Bringing us into alignment with His heart. As we pray, we often remind ourselves of who God is and what He has done, which fills us with faith to continue forward, praying for our needs and those of others.

- c. But it pleases God that we pray for all men because His heart is that all men would come to the knowledge of the truth! So we pray for all people because God wants all people to know Him!
- d. Now, this verse shows us that God has desires. His heart beats for the world, not an elect few. But we know that not all men will be saved. This shows that God has desires that won't necessarily be met. It neither takes away from Him, or diminishes Him. He is aware that though He wants all men to know Him, not all will choose to know Him.
- e. The same is true for us. We may have desires that will not be met or fulfilled in this life. Yet that does not take away or diminish us. Because we are made complete in Jesus. Remember that fact as you realize that God is fully complete while still having desires that can't be fully met.
- f. But the main idea is God wants no one to be beyond our prayers. But to know His heart, you must grow in knowing Him personally. Prayer is a great and wonderful privilege we've been given as believers. We get to talk to the God of the Universe directly and rest knowing He hears us. We get to let Him know all of our worries and concerns, bring to Him all of our requests and those we pray for, we get to let Him show us His heart, and transform our hearts to align with Him.
- g. Tonight, instead of discussion questions, let's put into practice and do a prayer meeting. Let's take the next 20-30 minutes for prayer in different ways. Let's start with prayer at our tables, then let's do corporate prayer together as the Lord leads in thanksgiving and worship. Let's have the faith to pray openly, and also the faith to wait in the silence.