



“A CALL TO PRAYER”

1 Timothy 2:3-7

(Part 2)

Theme: *Prayer tunes the heart of the believer to God's passion for the souls of lost sinners.*

Introduction: I am so unlike God that it takes a miracle for me to be able to have a relationship with Him. On my own I find there is no good thing in me, no laudable trait, no redeeming value, no eternal hope. Yet, because of Jesus and His purpose of bringing glory to God through the redemption of people like me ... and you, I am reconciled to God. Someone, somewhere, at some point cared enough about my sinful soul that they prayed for me and then shared with me the good news of redemption through Jesus Christ. By the grace of God my Savior, my heart was stirred by the Holy Spirit to faith in Christ Jesus. The very same concern that someone had for me, I now have for others. Our text today speaks to how God delights in saving souls. The Scriptures tells us that there is rejoicing among the angels of heaven when one soul repents. There is no Person with greater delight in that celebration than God Himself. For us to be apathetic or unphased by the peril of the lost around us distances us from the heart of God. The divinely provided remedy for such disparity with God's heart is prayer. Hence, in our text we are called to pray (Read text). To summarize what this text says we can say that ***“Prayer tunes the heart of the believer to God's passion for the souls of last sinners.”***

I. Prayer Aligns with God's Priorities – 2:3-4

II. Prayer Affirms God's Provision – 2:5-6

III. Prayer Animates God's Proclamation – 2:7



I. PRAYER ALIGNS WITH GOD'S PRIORITIES – 2:3-4

A. The Perspective of God – v. 3

1. As we move into verse 3 and following, Paul ties what he is saying back to the previous two verses by stating: ***“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ...”***
2. ***“This” [ΤΟΥΤΟ]*** – refers to the prayers being offered for all men – that is, all those with whom we have contact or influence.
3. For us to see prayer as our proper starting place¹ in seeing people reconciled to God.

¹ It is essential that we NOT conclude that prayer is all we are to do – it is the starting point in a series of activities which includes conduct, testimony, verbal presentations, etc

4. Such a priority aligns the believer with the priorities of God by bringing us into conformity with God perspective - “... *in the sight of God our Savior.*”
 - a) First, it is “good” [καλός] - bearing the quality of being useful or praiseworthy.
 - b) Second, it is “acceptable” [ἀπόδεκτος] - pleasing or welcome in the eyes of God
5. God declares that when the believer is praying for a person’s soul, with the pleading, prayers, praise, and petitions, from God’s perspective it is *useful and welcome.*
6. Thus, we are aligned with God’s priorities since He is “*our Savior.*”
7. We are never more aligned with God’s priorities than when we are praying for the salvation of the people around us.

B. The Pleasure of God - v. 4

1. This reality is underscored when God’s perspective is expanded for us by God’s Spirit through Paul’s writing - “... *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”
2. This statement has thrown Christians into theological conundrums for centuries as they seek to reconcile this with the reality that people are lost.
3. The question is: “How can God desire something that does not happen?”
4. Perhaps the key is in the word “*desires*” [θέλω] - possessing a range of meanings: wish to have, want, resolve, all of which cause us problems.
5. The term can also mean “take pleasure in” - which would provide a meaning that is consistent with the rest of Scripture - cp. *Luke 20:46; Colossians 2:18; Hebrews 10:8.*
6. If the term is understood in this sense, it would mean that God delights all men are saved and when they “*come to the knowledge of the truth.*” - cp. *Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11.*
7. In the context we would have to take “*all men*” to refer to the people for whom we are praying - we are praying for “*all men,*” and God takes pleasure in saving them and bringing them “*to the knowledge of the truth*” in response to our prayers!
8. The term “*knowledge*” [ἐπίγνωσις] - conveys a recognition “*of the truth*” resulting in is embrace - cp *2 Timothy 2:25; 3:7.*
9. This cannot mean several things:

a) *It cannot mean that anyone for whom we pray will, by virtue of the fact that we prayed for them, be saved.*

b) *Nor can it mean universalism – that God will save all men.*

10. But make no mistake, God takes pleasure in saving the very souls for which we pray, exalting us while on our knees with the privilege of participation in the glory of redemption as He responds according to His eternal purpose in saving souls.

II. PRAYER AFFIRMS GOD’S PROVISION – **2:5-6**

A. The Reception Gained through Christ – **v. 5**

1. The access to the participation in the pleasure God takes in answering our prayers for the salvation of sinners is provided through one avenue – *“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ...”*
2. The mediatorial work of Christ is essential to the ability of the believer to pray – cp. ***John 14:6***.
3. The exclusivity of the activity of prayer is provided here – perhaps stated so clearly to close the door to what is done in some errant faith systems where they pray to saints, or Mary, or to icons – *“there is one God”* to whom we pray.
4. Additionally, there are not multiple *“mediators”* [μεσίτης] – one who reconciles two parties to remove a disagreement or to reach a common goal.
5. Although the context would indicate the specific role of Jesus bringing the believer and God the Father into agreement on who ought to be saved through the prayers on behalf of lost souls.
6. However, in a general sense, we also see this refers to the reconciliation of each sinner to God – only Jesus can bring us near – ***2 Corinthians 5:18-20***.

B. The Redemption Gained through Christ – **v. 6**

1. The commitment of Jesus to bringing us into agreement with God is seen in the extent to which He was willing to go to redeem us – *“... who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”*
2. Jesus shed His own blood for us on the cross – bearing the weight of the penalty for our sins and paid the price in our place when He died for us – ***Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7***.
3. Again, the *“for all”* remains in the context as a reference to those for whom we are specifically praying and among whom we have interaction and influence.
4. Christ’s ransom is seen in this statement as *sufficient for everyone*, but

we understand that it will be *efficient only for those who believe* – also called the elect.

III. PRAYER ANIMATES GOD’S PROCLAMATION – 2:7

A. The Exclaiming of the Truth

1. Again, recall this text is a call to prayer for the believer, that God desires to save those around us for whom we are praying.
2. This message is the very message that all believers are called to proclaim – seeking to reconcile the world through the message of redemption found in Christ Jesus alone.
3. Paul specifically bore the weight of the apostolic calling to proclaim the Gospel – *“For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”*
4. There are two primary ways that the Gospel message is verbalized – once we have prayed:
 - a) *“I was appointed a preacher” [κήρυξι] – an official entrusted with a proclamation – a “herald” who proclaimed the message as far and as loud as could be with one commission – get the word out.*
 - b) *“I was appointed ... an apostle” [ἀπόστολος] – an envoy, delegate, or messenger; “one sent” with a message.*
5. In this sense, our verse demonstrates that we must go beyond praying and move to proclaiming the truth of the Gospel.
6. The specific audience to which Paul was sent was as *“... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”*
7. There seems to be a twofold focus of his “teaching:”
 - a) *“in faith” – a reference to that which is necessary to come to Christ.*
 - b) *“and truth” – a reference to that which is necessary to grow in Christ.*

B. The Empowering of the Truth

1. Behind the effectiveness of the Gospel ministry stands the advocacy for the *“faith and truth”* through prayer.
2. As a “preacher” and “teacher of the faith and truth,” Paul was an avid prayer – cp. *Romans 10:1*.
3. Yet Paul knew that prayer was key to the work of God in redemption and thus declared that he wanted men to pray *“in every place.”* (v. 8).
4. Prayer is the force that energizes the Gospel message wherever it spreads:

- a) ... for boldness - *Ephesians 6:19-20*.
 - b) ... for the Gospel to spread - *2 Thessalonians 3:1*.
5. God does bless us with having a part in the glory of His work in redeeming sinners not only as ambassadors proclaiming the Gospel and pointing sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ – the one Mediator between God and man; we are also intercessors calling upon the Lord, the Sovereign Savior of men to bring them to the knowledge of the truth.

So What?

1. You are never more aligned with God than when you are calling on Him to save the people you are seeking to reach for Christ.
2. When you pray, you demonstrate that you believe Jesus is an effective Mediator who redeems sinners.
3. To be effective in seeing the lost saved, you must appreciate the breadth of God's call for men to come to Christ.
4. From our point of view, we must see every sinner as eligible for grace and seek to point them to Jesus ... and pray to that end.

**Prayer tunes the heart of the believer to God's passion
for the souls of lost sinners.**