

Title: A Mature Church is a Praying Church

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Prayer is the backbone of any good and godly church. Without prayer, the Body of Christ lacks the necessary power to accomplish anything of eternal substance.

Prayer is the vehicle of communication between God and man.

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Imagine that, the God who created all that is, the God who called all things into existence by the word of His mouth, the God who holds all things together by His awesome power, wants to talk with you.

Yes, you, personally.

Paul is turning his attention back to the priorities Timothy should deal with as he pastors the church in Ephesus. And prayer is at the top of the list. Prayer should be the priority of any local congregation.

Pastor/author Warren Weirsbe said this...

"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!"

Well I'm thankful to tell you this morning that this is not the testimony of our church!

Did you know that we have Seven Connection Groups going in our church and that there are approximately 150 people throughout those groups? And one of the priorities of these groups is prayer!

There is substantial and meaningful prayer taking place in these groups and this ought to be so because prayer is God's priority for His Church.

But today's sermon isn't about the necessity of prayer as much as it is about who we should pray for, how we should pray and what we should be praying for.

Main Idea: The Church Must Pray With Godly Priorities

Paul, in his continued mentoring of Timothy lays out three areas the church should focus her prayer. The first focus is...

1. We Must Pray for All Types of People (vs. 1-2)

1 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

As I mentioned earlier, prayer is a priority for every local church. This is what Paul means when he says, “First of all...”

But notice he doesn't just tell Timothy to have the church pray, but he URGES them to pray in specific ways.

Supplications - it's asking God to meet a need. God delights in us humbling ourselves and asking Him to fulfill something we cannot fulfill on our own. God loves to help us in our time of need.

Prayers - The general term that has the idea of worship.

We are praying to God; prayer is an act of worship, not just an expression of our wants and needs. There should be reverence in our hearts as we pray to God. - The Bible Exposition Commentary

Intercessions - to draw near and speak intimately with. Sharing the burden of your heart with the one who can hear and do something about what you are asking.

Thanksgivings - Thanking God for who He is and what He has done for us and what He will continue to do. A thankful heart is a heart that is content and at peace with whatever lift throw at it.

These components of prayer are common in Paul's instruction about prayer.

Philippians 4:6 (ESV)

do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

So this is the formula of prayer (the how), but what about the “who” of prayer?

Look again at the text...

1 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Paul wanted Timothy and his congregation to understand what the scope of our prayer should be. We should pray, supplicate, intercede, and give thanks for all people - yes, all people!

Certainly we cannot pray for everyone in the world by name, but we can pray that all people in the world would have the opportunity to hear the gospel and be saved.

On the other hand, we can pray for ALL the people in our circle of influence - and we should do this by name.

Pray regularly for...

Your family by name

Your neighbors by name

Your coworkers by name

Your classmates by name

Your friends by name

Your church family by name

Your ministry partners by name

Your Connection Group family by name

Do the hard work and create lists of people in your circle of influence - and pray for them by name. (Share what you do...)

In addition to this we are to pray for *“kings and those in high positions...”*

Why would Paul emphasize this with Timothy?

Well, first of all, do you know who was king of the land at the time of this writing?

Nero. Yes, Nero - the Christian killer. He would purposely tar and set on fire Christian martyrs to illuminate his gardens.

And Paul wanted Timothy and his congregation to pray for a guy like that? Yes!

Why? One thing prayer does powerfully is it changes our heart toward others, especially those in leadership. When you pray for someone your perspective changes of them. And in Nero's case, he was in desperate need of salvation.

By the way, this attitude change will change the way you live.

1 Timothy 2:2 (ESV)

for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

“The early church was always subject to opposition and persecution, so it was wise to pray for those in authority. “Quiet” refers to circumstances around us, while “peaceful” refers to a calm attitude within us. The results should be lives that are godly and honorable.” - The Bible Exposition Commentary

In the next point we will see Paul give us the reason we should pray, but for now, realize that your prayers and the prayer of this church are purposed and substantial.

God tells us that we need to pray on behalf of those we know and those we don't know. We must pray for those who are saved and for those who are not saved.

We must pray for those people we like and those we do not like.

Those in authority over us and those who are underneath our authority.

Do you get the point? The primary responsibility we have as Christians and as a church is prayer.

"The pillars on which our ministry rests are, under God, the prayers of our people." - C.H. Spurgeon

ABC, we must never grow slack in our prayer - especially for one another and those outside of our fellowship. Those who need salvation.

Yes, I am pleased with how many people in our congregation are involved in Connection Groups and thus praying corporately. But there is room for you to join us in prayer.

Don't let the pressures of life keep you from prayer! The pressures of life should drive us not just to prayer, but corporate prayer - prayer with one another so we can bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Here is the application point this morning - pray for all kinds and types of people and do it with others who are part of this church.

Review - The Church must pray with Godly Priorities

- We must pray for all Types of People

2. We Must Pray for People to be Saved (vs. 3-4)

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Praying for all types of people is good according to Paul. It should be a significant part of the individual Christian's life, but also it must be part of the corporate church as well.

Just a side note, there are two major responsibilities of the Elders. They must be given to PRAYER and the ministry of the word. Prayer is one half of our responsibility as elders!

All of this prayer is pleasing to God because it shows our absolute dependence on God.

Notice what Paul says about God. He is our Savior - Savior?

Yes, God, more than anyone else desires for His creation to trust Him and follow Him!

And this Savior God not only desires for His children to pray for all people, He also *"desires for all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

So, what did Paul want Timothy and his congregation to pray for? The salvation of the World - from top to bottom. He wants his people to pray for all people that they might be saved from eternal hell.

Now, to be clear, we know from the Scriptures that not all will come to salvation, but it is offered to all. Most are content in their sins and do not desire to turn from their sin to the saving, loving restoration that God offers.

This is not God's fault, it is those determined to remain in charge of their own soul.

We are often tempted to blame God for not saving everyone.

But God did all he could do while remaining true to his loving, merciful, and JUST nature to save us.

He sent His Son, the second person of the Triune God-Head to be born a slave and to die a criminal's death on a cruel Roman cross so God the Father's wrath and just nature would be satisfied so you can go free.

God set me free from His just wrath in 1991 (33 years ago) and my life has never been the same. God did all He could do to save me.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

God's gift of salvation, motivated by His graciousness toward me through the agency of faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. His salvation of me is not accomplished by me, but by Christ. Yet it is offered to me so that I can enjoy eternal life with the one who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Friends, if you are born-again here this morning, I wonder what your prayer life looks like.

Are you praying for the salvation of the world?

Are you praying for the salvation of your family and friends?

Are you regularly, faithfully bringing the names of people you know who need eternal salvation to the throne room of God?

There are several well-documented stories of individuals who came to faith through the faithful prayers of their friends or family. Here are a few notable examples:

George Müller and the Conversion of His Friend

George Müller, a Christian evangelist and the founder of several orphanages in Bristol, England, is renowned for his faith and dedication to prayer. Müller prayed for the conversion of five friends. After many years, three of them came to faith during Müller's lifetime. One of the remaining two accepted Christ shortly before Müller's death, and the last friend came to faith a few years later, demonstrating the power and perseverance of prayer.

Monica, Mother of Augustine

Monica, the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo, is a classic example. Augustine led a wayward life for many years, but Monica never ceased to pray fervently for his conversion. Her prayers were eventually answered when Augustine experienced a profound conversion, becoming one of the most influential theologians in Christian history. Augustine himself acknowledged his mother's prayers as a key factor in his spiritual journey.

The Story of Charles Spurgeon's Father and Grandfather

Charles Spurgeon, one of the most famous Baptist preachers of the 19th century, had a heritage of prayer. His father and grandfather were both ministers who prayed earnestly for their children and grandchildren. Spurgeon attributed much of his own spiritual fervor and success in ministry to the prayers of his forebears.

Reese Howells' Intercessory Prayer

Reese Howells, a Welsh intercessor and founder of the Bible College of Wales, was known for his powerful ministry of prayer. One of the remarkable stories from his life involves his prayers for a young boy who was deeply involved in witchcraft. Through persistent and fervent prayer, Howells saw the boy delivered and come to faith in Christ, showcasing the transformative power of intercessory prayer.

The Salvation of C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis, the renowned author and Christian apologist, came to faith largely through the influence and prayers of his close friend, J.R.R. Tolkien. Although not a family member, Tolkien's persistent discussions, prayers, and encouragement played a significant role in Lewis's conversion from atheism to Christianity. Lewis later became one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the 20th century.

These stories highlight the significant impact that faithful, persistent prayer can have on the lives of those we care about.

My mother-in-law, Trudy prayed faithfully for me that I would become a follower of Christ. She was so confident that I would be saved that she later told me that "I didn't stand a chance of not becoming a Christian because too many people were praying for me."

Who are you praying for?

Do you have faith that God will bring them into His family?

I want you to do something very specific for the next foreseeable future.

I want you to start a list of your Ten Most Wanted. That is, ten people in your circle of influence that need salvation.

I want you to pray for this list at least once per week.

Ask God to give you and others opportunities to share the life giving Gospel with them.

Review - The Church must pray with Godly Priorities

- We must pray for all types of people
- We must pray for people to be saved

3. We Must Pray That All Understand the Truth (vs. 5-7)

1 Timothy 2:5-7 (ESV)

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Paul was called by God and determined to communicate the truth of the gospel to all who would hear.

What is the truth? He tells us in verse 5 and we do well to pay attention to this sentence.

"For there is one God..." - In an ancient culture that embraced Polytheism, Christianity stood with Judaism as being monotheistic.

Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

"...and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." -

Mediator is a go between (My brothers at Christmas)

"...who gave himself as a ransom for all..." - **ransom** - *"a payment given instead of a slave or prisoner — that is, in substitution for him or her. The person holding the slave accepts the payment as a substitute. According to [Galatians 3:13](#), Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. The law held us captive in its condemnation, and no one but Christ could pay the price to release us from this bondage."* NKJVS

Matthew 20:28 (ESV)

even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

"which is the testimony given at the proper time." - In other words, just at the right time the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Galatians 4:4 (ESV)

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

Jesus came at the proper time, under the Law, to demonstrate He could live under the mandates of the Law (something you and I cannot do) to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Sins we could only truly understand because of the Law.

And now Paul and others were the witnesses to this amazing truth and are testifying accordingly! This is why he says...

1 Timothy 2:7 (ESV)

For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

God appointed him a “herald” - someone who calls out the truth of the Gospel. Someone calling out for repentance.

God appointed him an apostle - someone sent with a message.

God appointed him a teacher - someone who explains the text of Scripture and the things of God

God appointed and sent Paul to go to the outer most parts of the world so that ALL would hear and UNDERSTAND the TRUTH.

This TRUTH must be very important to God...

Truth?

When Jesus was standing before Pilate...

John 18:33–38 (ESV)

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

What is truth?

People today tell us that truth is relative to the person. Truth is whatever the individual determines it to be.

Apparently $2 + 2 = 4$ only if it feels like it.

Feelings and emotions are the authority over truth.

But friends, let me give you some hope this morning.

Truth is not relative. Truth is not subservient to feelings and emotions.

Truth is squarely rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 (ESV)

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the **truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

And it was Paul's mission in life, appointed by God to preach and teach about FAITH in CHRIST who is the personification of TRUTH!

Friends, as we understand Paul's mission we must also understand that this mission of TRUTH was rooted in PRAYER.

Look at these amazing and humble words that Paul says after He challenges those in the church at Ephesus regarding putting on the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:17-20 (ESV)

and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Can you believe it!?

The great Apostle Paul recognizes how much He needs the empowering prayer of the Saints to accomplish the ministry God has entrusted to him...

He wanted the saints to pray for Him so he would speak boldly so those who needed Christ would hear and understand the TRUTH!!!

"Since man, on account of the flesh, could understand nothing but what was of the flesh, behold, the Word was made flesh that man might be able even by the flesh to hear and understand the things of the Spirit." - Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Do you remember the the Top Ten List of those who need Christ I challenged you to create and pray through on a regular basis?

Well you just got something very specific you can pray for each one on your list.

Pray that they would UNDERSTAND the TRUTH and place their FAITH in Christ.

Don't just pray, *"Dear Lord bless or be with so-and-so."*

We often pray this generic type of prayer for those in our lives.

Let's do better than that. God answers specific prayers.

In fact He says you do not have because you ask wrongly.

Let's purpose to be specific as we pray for those we are in need of a relationship with the Lord.

Pray that they would UNDERSTAND the TRUTH and place their FAITH in Christ.

Review - The Church must pray with Godly Priorities

- We must pray for all types of people
- We must pray for people to be saved
- We must pray that all understand the truth

Conclusion

What if every Christian in this room this morning took the Main Idea of this sermon seriously? What if we, in our morning worship service, in our Connection Groups, in our Youth ministry, in our Children's ministry, in our Men's and Women's ministries, our Deacons and Elders...what if we all prayed for...

All types of people to be saved from the wrath of God and disciplined so they understand the truth?

Do you think God would answer that kind of prayer with a YES?

I do. Please pray this prayer as individuals.

But as a church - we must, in every ministry incorporate this prayer.

By God's grace we will. And by God's grace, we need a bigger vision of what He wants to accomplish through us and maybe even a bigger building!